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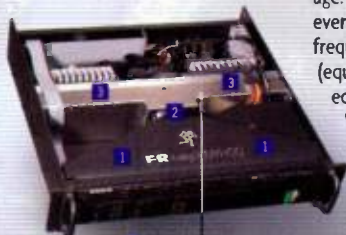
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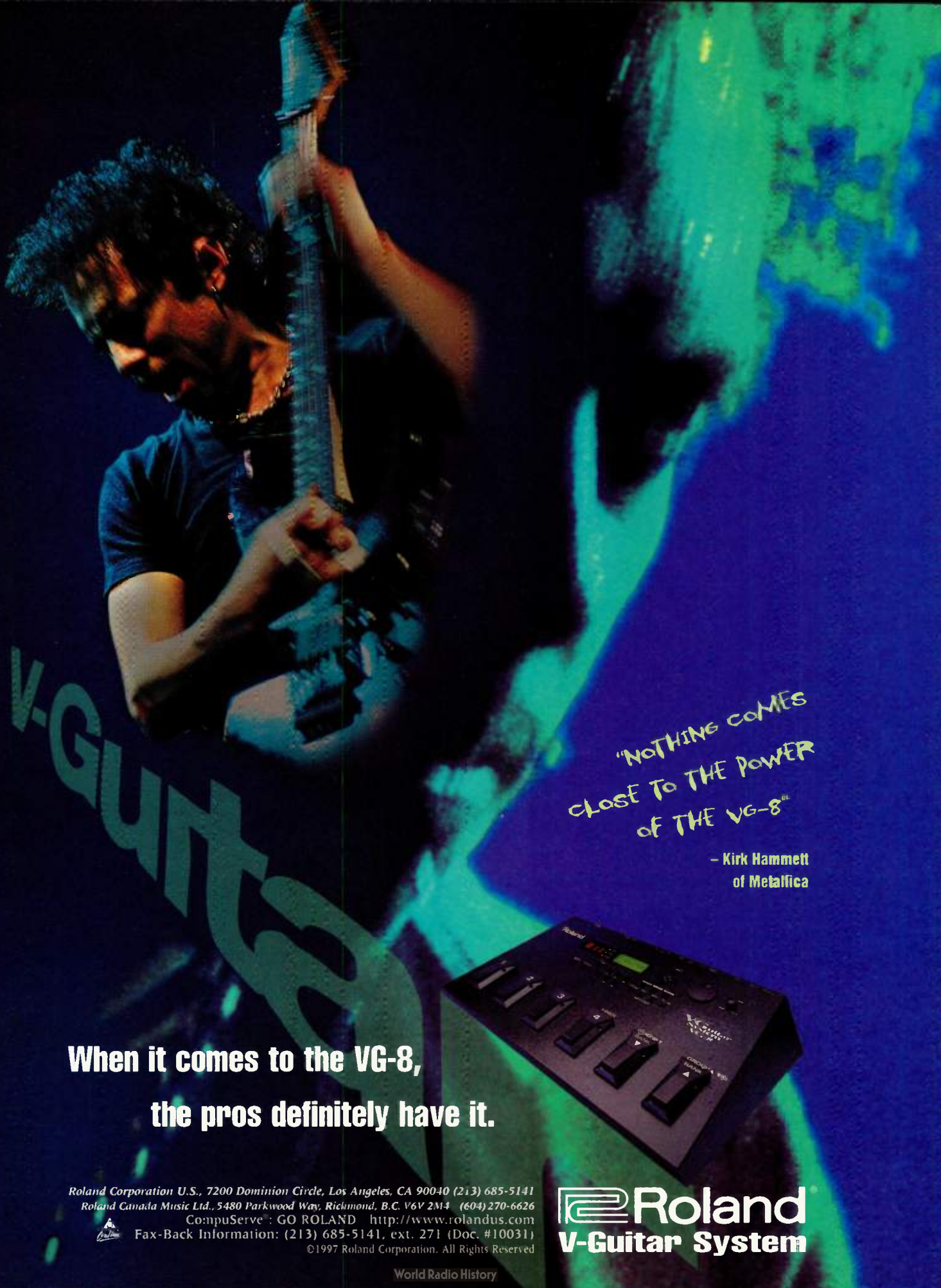
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World Radio History

production milestones

While I agree with many of your choices for "Ten Albums That Shook the Studio" (July '97), there were some glaring omissions. One that springs to mind is the third *Peter Gabriel* album, from 1980. This was the first appearance of the gated-reverb drum sound, which defined a backbeat sound that lasted a decade. Besides that, the absence of cymbals left the rest of the foreground material to provide "air" for the mix. No other record sounded like this, then or now. It was easily the Eighties what *Gish* was to the Nineties.

kevin brunkhorst
KB305@aol.com

Your decathlon of best-produced albums of all time struck a definite chord with me; I've always felt that producers are the unsung, unseen, and unrecognized heroes of recorded music. But of course I wanted to bring a few omissions to your attention. Eddie Offord did a superb job of harnessing the sound of Yes for almost twenty years. *Fragile* (1972) was a watershed for Yes and other groups who followed their art-rock aesthetic. Tribute must also be paid to the production savvy of Frank Zappa, who strove for excellence with more than fifty albums over three decades. And I can't resist fawning over Ted Templeman and Donn Landee, whose *Van Halen* and *5150*, respectively, siphoned the greatest rock & roll guitar playing ever recorded from one Edward Van Halen. The huge sounds attained on these albums transcend Eddie's rapid-fire notes until, like the dinosaurs in *Jurassic Park*, they begin to breathe on their own.

peter roche
cleveland, OH

I really enjoyed the "landmark albums" story. But (isn't there always a "but?") how could you leave out Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours*, Jane's Addiction's *Nothing's Shocking*, and the Human League's *Dare*? Each helped shape a generation of rock or techno pop. And My Bloody Valentine's *Loveless*, with its blurred lines between samplers and guitars, gave way too many lesser bands careers in the early Nineties.

Jo-I
VeerChasm@aol.com

Let's not forget the groundbreaking innovations of Stevie Wonder (*Talking Book* or *Innervisions*, take your pick) and Roy Thomas Baker's glorious work with Queen in the Seventies.

rob bonfiglio
norristown, PA

I completely enjoyed your "ten landmark albums"

article. I especially appreciate your selection of the Beatles' *Revolver*. We've all been saturated with *Sgt. Pepper*, but *Revolver* is the one that started it all. Thanks to Mac Randall for providing us with insights where we thought it had all been said already.

randy stern
brooklyn, NY

I'm a singer/songwriter. I do my own promotion and managing. I send out my flyers and solicit the same victims unfortunate enough to be my friends over and over again when I have gigs. I'm trusting that if I keep at it I will eventually get somewhere.

That is, on a good day I feel that trust.

But there are bad days when I'm ready to give up and get that "real job" my parents keep talking about.

This is where *Musician* comes in. As you said in your Feb. '97 issue, the magazine provides a "common ground," a "marketplace of ideas" where stories like mine can be documented. Listening to the words of so many of the artists I admire (and I say "listening" rather than "reading" because their voices jumped off the page at me), I was encouraged, enlightened, and often amused. I did feel from reading your articles and interviews that I'm a member of a community that, as you put it, breathes a different kind of air.

What sets *Musician* apart is that the artists featured on its pages are exactly that. They aren't songwriting machines driven by the sell-sell mentality. They're not dropping names and listing credits. They're talking about music. And as we all know, you can have music without a music business but you can't have a music business without music.

Thank you for creating such an intelligent and thorough forum. Here's to another twenty years. No, make it forty. Or sixty. Or ...

sam shaber
new york, NY

david byrne

I'm getting a little tired of David Byrne's snobby justifications for choosing not to perform with Talking Heads anymore (*Frontman*, July '97). "You have inspiration, excitement, and naiveté in a rock band that's coming up; you can't rewind the clock and get that again." So why did Byrne's last two U.S. concert tours feature a heavy concentration of

Talking Heads songs? Is it somehow that songs written fifteen or more years ago are only fresh when played by musicians who didn't record them? Surely he wasn't "only doing it for the money, blah, blah, blah."

michael grabowski
fullerton, CA

more bad times

Thank you for a very insightful article on the music industry ("Bad Times in the Music Biz," June '97). As an indie label owner, I can attest to the validity of your story. After being told the check was coming, Camelot Music declared bankruptcy, and I nearly had to do the same. Not being able to pay artists and struggling to get new product out has been a nightmare for me over the past year. I'm suggesting that all my artists, and anybody in the industry, read the article to better understand what's going on.

bree freeman
blue duck/blue swan records
pittsburgh, PA

Twenty-six thousand albums were released in 1996; only 56 of these were million-sellers. Out of those 56 I calculate that only three were worth listening to. Records today sound like anyone can get a record deal, like you don't have to know music. As long as you can play three guitar chords, scream your guts out, have a chip on your shoulder, do your hair like a nest of rats and smell like a dead one, you can make it. You don't even have to be in tune; they'll fix it in the mastering. Do the record company executives ever *listen* to what they're selling? The consumer does—but we don't have to buy the albums.

j. a. maymon
nashville, TN

I was amazed that your June '97 cover story didn't mention two forces that may contribute to "bad times in the music biz." The first is cost. The price of CDs is inflated. Production costs have come down to about fifty cents, not much different from LPs, but the industry has not passed along the savings. The second, possibly, is that baby boomers have completed the conversion from vinyl to CD.

david biddy
drbiddy@estimators.vpad.uab.edu

Your "Bad Times" article was informative and well-written. I just want to add one "survival tip": Be generous with your music. You might be surprised how many people outside [cont'd on page 90]

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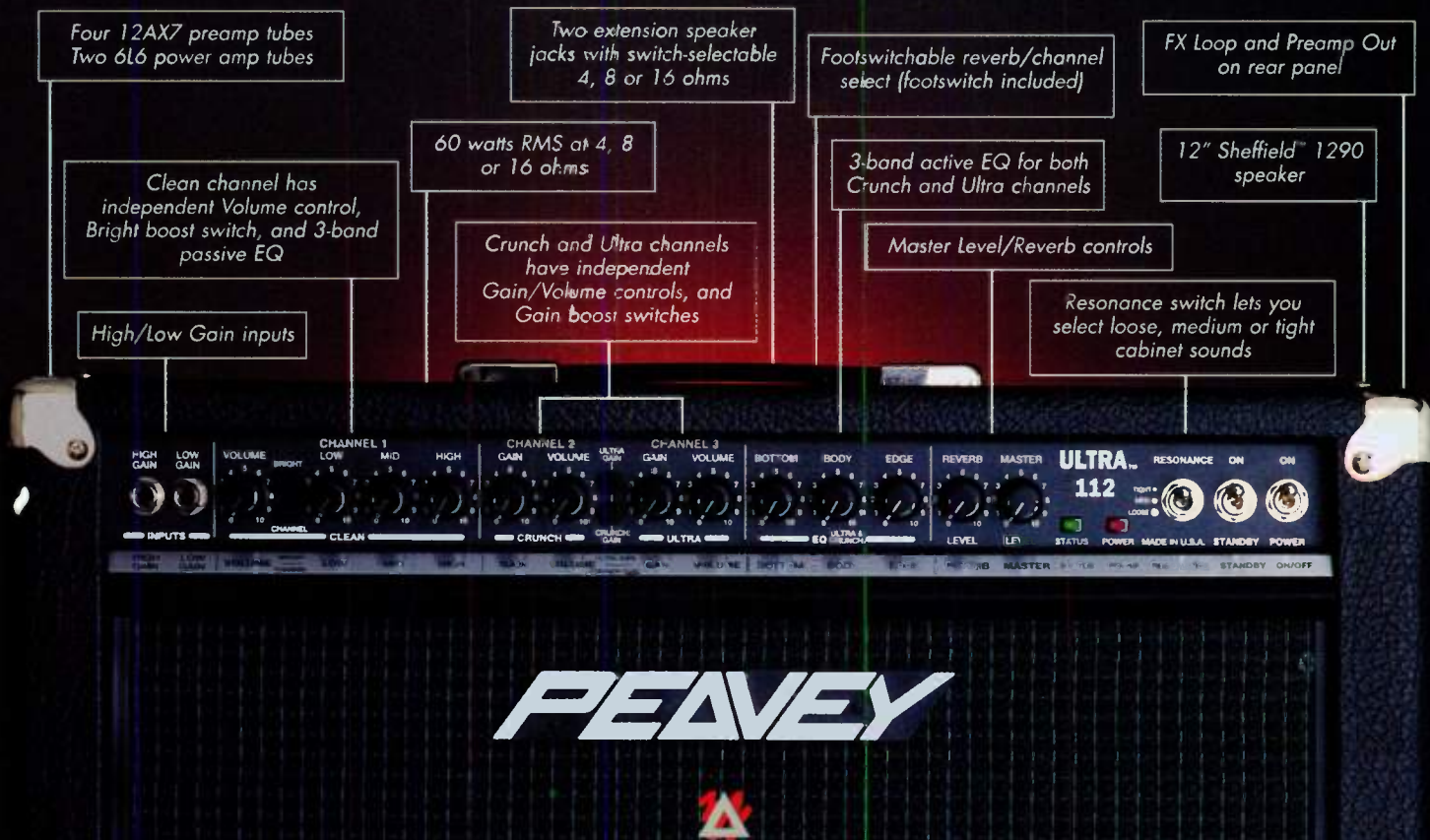
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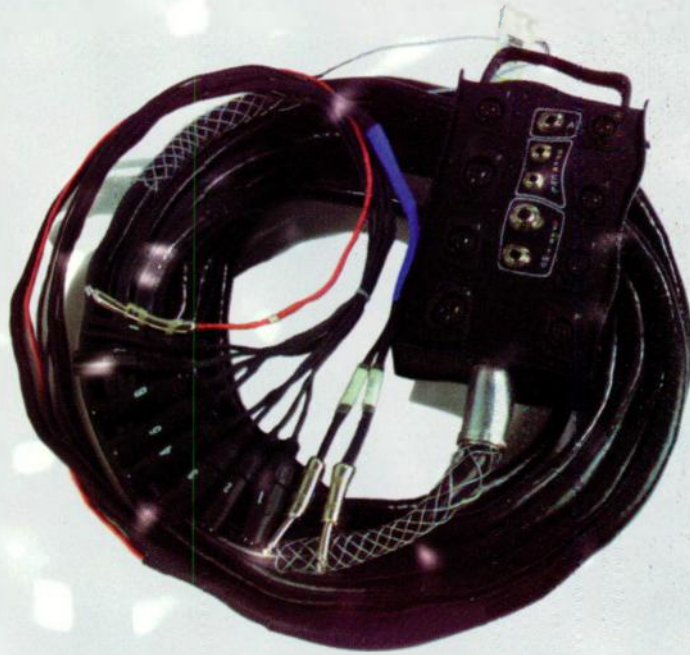
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Karl Wallinger

It's been four years since your band *World Party* was last in the public eye. Now you're getting ready to tour behind a new album, *Egyptology*. Are you looking forward to playing again after being away for so long?

Yes, it's good fun. These days I feel less self-conscious than ever, and I think that improves your performance. You're coming out of yourself more, and people respond to that. I'm older and less precious about things—I'm not so, "Oh, what'll they think of this tune? Or these trousers? And who am I anyway?" I'm me, and that's it.

*It sounds like the material on *Egyptology* will give you more room for live spontaneity than the songs on the last album, *Bang!*, did.*

That's partly because the songs are more straight ahead, and partly because this time I played just about everything myself, so I'm bound by my own limitations, which is a good thing as far as transposing it into any other combination of people. Actually, Chris [Sharrock] played drums on, I think, eight out of the fifteen tracks. You can tell which ones they are, because the bass drum and the hi-hat happen at the same time [laughs].

You own your own recording studio, Seaview in London. Do you find that you're continually upgrading your gear because of the rapid developments in music technology?

Absolutely. One of the reasons it's been four years in between albums is because I ran into a little thing called an Apple Mac 7100, and consequently spent two out of the four years mastering the different programs on that—not just music, but graphics and film editing programs too. I've got [Digidesign] Pro Tools and Sound Designer II, [Adobe] Photoshop, Quark, all that stuff. I don't want to go into battle dressed as a 1945 GI, I want to go in as a high-tech soldier.

So a lot of the tracks were recorded straight into the computer.

Well, the basic tracks start on tape. That's the easiest way round soundwise. I haven't found a way of recording drums straight into a computer that makes them sound any good. You've got to have the tape compression. Same with vocals. But there's a lot of the album that I can't remember where it originated—something that sounds organic could still have been recorded on a computer.

Do you go into the studio with any preconceived ideas?

Not at all. The way I work is very spontaneous. It's just straight in there, hit the red button, and start doing something. On the way in, I might think, "Ooh, fast," or "Um, loud," but that would be it. I'm not interested in getting things right. I'm interested in vibe and atmosphere and getting some emotional impact. I don't want to sit and listen to bass drum sounds for days on end; that would turn me into a psycho killer.

Are you still recording those painstaking note-for-note, track-for-track covers of Beatles songs?

Yeah, in fact I did "Penny Lane" as one of the B-sides in England. I learn my own craft by doing that. It's like I'm a painter and I like to knock off a quick Mona Lisa. We are in the age of the vacuous, superficial, image-conscious statement, so it's nice to get with a few old masters occasionally. I think a lot of today's music

is analogous to Damien Hirst's sheep in a box—utterly pointless and incredibly annoying.

Surely more people are making well-crafted pop music than there were a few years ago.

Definitely. It does worry me that a lot of it's based on things that are thirty years old. But the difference between something like Oasis or Cast and the dance stuff is that I don't find I ever want to put dance stuff on at home. Yeah, it works great in a big hangar with lots of strobe lights, and there's an anonymity and a non-specificity about it that agrees with a lot of people's world view. But it's so superficial and, in the end, unsatisfying. People still need songs. You can almost start believing these days that songs are things we invented in 1965. But human beings have been writing and singing and listening to songs since the beginning of time, and they're not gonna go away because someone thinks we should all be into Kraftwerk, you know what I mean?

—Mac Randall

"Listening to bass drum sounds would turn me into a psycho killer."

R. Goldstein

résumé

Christopher Dowd
Dionne Farris
Michelle Malone
Edwin McCain

You spent nine years leading your own band, Follow For Now, before playing your first session. What was it like to shift gears like that?

My very first session was with Cassandra Wilson. I guess she had heard the slide guitar work I had done with an open G tuning on demos with Dionne Farris for "I Know." So she called and said, "We're doing a version of 'I Can't Stand the Rain,' and we'd like to fly you up to play slide on it." I said, "Well, I'm really not a slide player. That was the first time

I'd ever played slide," but they were like, "Oh, no, we heard your stuff. We'll send you a tape of the arrangement of the song. Come on up." So I grabbed my Danelectro and my slide, and I went to New York. When I got there, though, I realized that the song goes from major to minor, and I couldn't figure out how to do it, because I had to dedicate my tuning to one or the other. I was saying, "Maybe you guys should get Chris Whitley," but they said, "No, you can do it." We started the song, I played through it once, and they said, "Okay. Try playing a little bit less during the verses." We tried it again: "Uh, maybe this time just play on the chorus." We go through it again: "Just lay out until the bridge."

That must have been hard to handle.

I was really dejected. I felt terrible. But as I was walking back to catch a cab to my hotel, I realized that I had learned a lesson from this, which was, if there's something you can't do, there's nothing wrong with saying you can't do it.

You want to be hired to do what you can do.

Absolutely. That's why I've never done commercials and stuff like that. I try to just play on stuff that I know I can contribute to in a creative way.

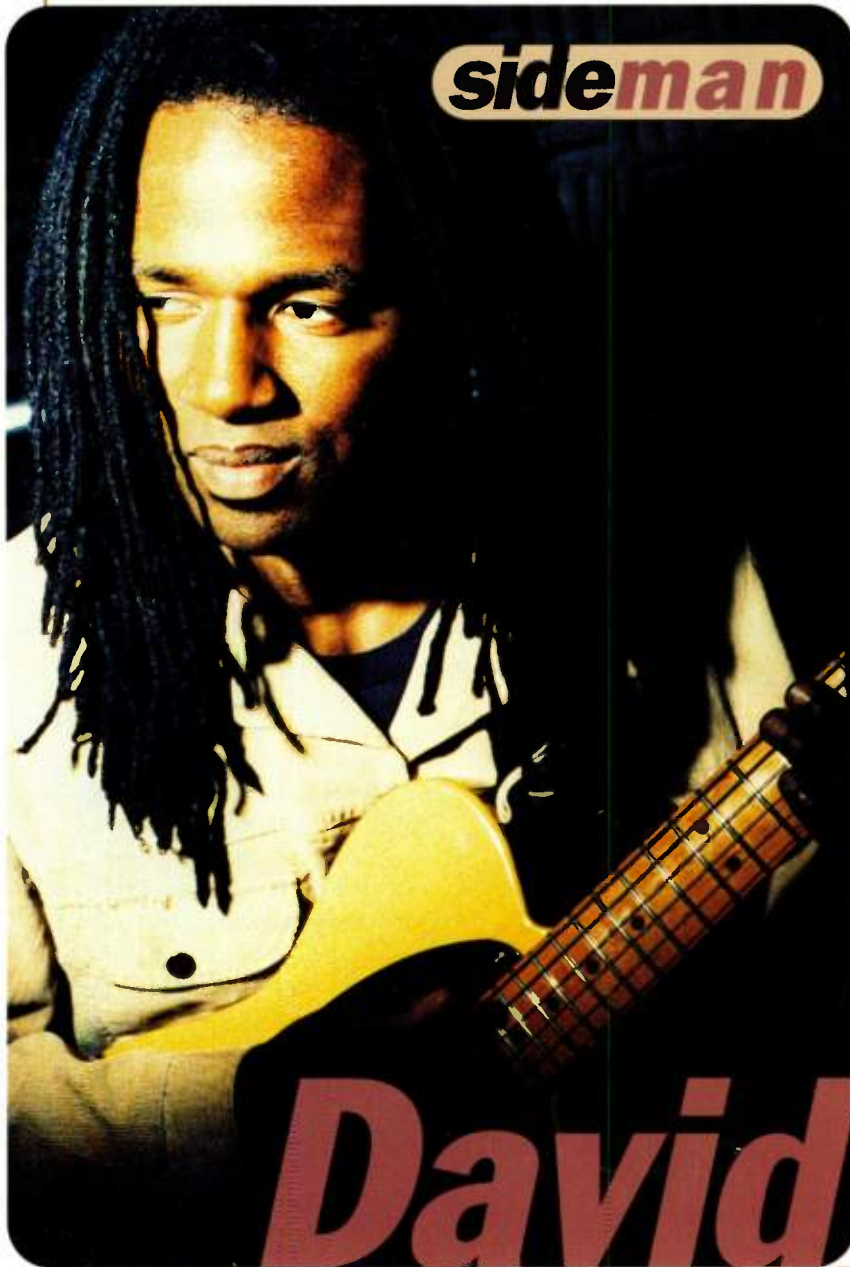
As bandleader for Dionne Farris, you had to hire people for her road band. How should musicians prepare to audition for that type of gig?

You have to be able to play the music as it is on the recording or the tape, but you also have to go the extra step to interpret in your own way. If you're so stuck on playing the parts verbatim without learning the ins and outs of the changes, you won't make it. That's especially true of the drum chair. There were some sequenced rhythms with Dionne, so the drummer shouldn't just play a very straight, non-varying pattern, even if that's what's going on in the record. There's an implied license there.

Your self-titled debut album comes out in late July on 57/Columbia. How did your sideman experience affect your approach to doing that album?

It helped me learn how to hire people for what it is they can bring to a recording. You alleviate a lot of problems if you don't hire David Harris to play a Chris Whitley slide part [laughs]. 57 is Brendan O'Brien's label, and he told me that when you play all the instruments on someone else's song, you're sort of competing with yourself and taking away from your own gig. So while I get a rush from helping other artists realize what they're trying to say, it's really time for me to not be a sideman anymore. —Robert L. Doerschuk

sideman



**"If you can't
do something, there's
nothing wrong with
saying you can't do it."**

**David Ryan-
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talents

It would have made a lot more sense if Sean Beal had admitted that **Big Back Forty's** sound came from watching *The Donny and Marie Show* when he was a youngster. But no, the band's singer and guitarist explains that the band's combo platter of a little bit country, a little bit rock & roll, partially comes from his background in bluegrass and gospel music. "Fortunately and unfortunately, I guess, it seems to be the flavor of the month right now," he says. "It's certainly not hurting us right now—who knows if it's going to bite us in the ass later on down the road?"

While they're busy avoiding the alterna-country moniker, their songs are a luscious blend of each. Big Back Forty's sonic recipe includes bassist Steve McGann's and drummer Pat McGann's love of AC/DC and

guitarist/pedal steel player/singer Barry Hensley's passion for traditional country. Of course, having come out of some of the most rocking bands Columbus, Ohio, has seen, the members of Big Back Forty admit that their new style has been quite a switch for all concerned. "I got tired of playing loud all the time," Beal says. "One of my goals in this band was to have a bit more range, a broader dynamic, and not so one-dimensional."

While their Polydor debut, *Bested*, includes a tight collection of songs, Beal feels that the band is still experimenting. "We're finding our sound together as a band," he says. "I hear a variety of stuff on the one record. Everybody has their own take on where they're coming from towards a song, but we all end up there together and it seems to work out pretty well. I know my background is different than the other guys, but that's where I'm coming from." Beal laughs. "I'm the Cyndi Lauper of alterna-country."

—David Farinella

big back forty



When the **Old 97's** formed, they were sick of rock & roll. "We wanted nothing to do with what everybody else was doing," explains singer/guitarist Rhett Miller, "so we became like a back-porch band."

"I didn't even want to have a drummer," confirms bassist/vocalist Murray Hammond. "Unless it was, like, a single snare drum and that's it."

But as soon as Philip Peeples' galloping drums were added to the mix (along with the contributions of second guitarist Ken Bethea), the Old 97's started chugging like the steaming locomotive they were named after (via a Johnny Cash tune). On their major label debut, *Too Far To Care* (Elektra), they draw

As a founding member of Poi Dog Pondering, a busker on the streets of Paris, a Billie Holiday devotee, and a wandering coffeehouse folkie, **Abra Moore** has made some very smooth, inviting sounds. On *Strangest Places*, her major label debut on Arista, the singer's invitation stands, but her mellow proclivities are giving way to some unsettlingly bodacious grooves.

"Well, I didn't just suddenly say, 'I want to be a rock chick,'" laughs the well-traveled 27-year-old. "It's just that it's in me to express myself, and this time I expressed myself a little more loudly."

Her current expressions embrace catchy pop tunes, country blues ballads, lush lullabies, and cranked-up boogie, with soft and smoky vocals bringing a distinctive personality to these varied musical vibes. Working extensively with producer/multi-instrumentalist Mitch Watkins and mixer Jack Joseph Puig to bring the richly arranged tracks to life, Moore got what she was after. "The songs grew as we worked on them, but we ended up with something that sounds pretty close to what was in my head to begin with. This is very present-tense, the state of my personality right now."

The Austin-based songwriter isn't coy about the personal tone of her material. She allows that the friends and lovers addressed in song are really out there somewhere and admits that the sheet-tossing libido workout "All I Want" is an expression of some real lust. "I guess my writing is personal, but that's the only way I know how to do it. I write straight from experience. It's the real stuff, and I have a lot of it to pull from. Why make up broken hearts when I can use real ones?" —Chuck Crisafulli



abra moore

Dennis Keely

on their folk and rock backgrounds, infuse them with a bit of twang ("Growing up in Texas, you just get [the country influence] by osmosis," says Miller), and deliver it with the propulsive energy of bands like Possum Dixon and X.

Miller's lyrics, meanwhile, adeptly capture both the most mundane and colorful moments in life—sometimes his own, sometimes other people's. Still, a band

touring the four corners of the country.) "They did just as much work as I did; they couldn't have real jobs, they couldn't hardly keep a girlfriend 'cause they were never home."

They also have a pact with one another that the Old 97's will only exist so long as it's the four of them. But it's all starting to pay off—they even have a roadie now. "It's not like we can totally afford



Danny Clinch

in the truest sense, **old 97's** *van life* they divide their publishing royalties four ways. "It's not like the others weren't in the van every minute of every tour," argues Miller. (They've spent the last two and a half years

Miller. "But we figure, if we're on Elektra Records, we should at least have someone there to change our guitar strings."

—Dev Sherlock

London-born tabla player **Talvin Singh** has added his exotic beats to music by Björk, Massive Attack, Baaba Maal, Courtney Pine, Bim Sherman, and others. Now this hip 27-year-old steps out on his own to introduce the latest in East-meets-West fusion via his own label (Omni), his own London-based club night, and an eye-opening compilation entitled *Anokha: Soundz Of The Asian Underground* (Omni UK/Quango/Island), a cool collection of Middle/Far Eastern-influenced music that combines, among other things, Indian classical instrumentation and voice, cutting-edge jungle/drum & bass dance beats, trip-hop, and Singh's own tabla break-beats. It's a progressive yet organic take on the techno-fortified world music of artists like Trans-Global Underground, Bally Sagoo, and

Banco de Gaia.

As a young fan of hip-hop in the Eighties, Singh would play tabla along to his Roland TR-808 drum machine. At fifteen he travelled to India, where he



Horst

talvin singh

spent three years studying with one of the great masters of tabla, while most kids in England were picking up electric guitars. "I thought I was being even more rebellious by learning tabla and then bypassing the snobbery [that exists] in the world of classical performing in order to be more involved with what's happening on the street," Singh observes.

He's even invented "tabla-tronics," which allows him to electronically process his tabla and interface with MIDI in order to trigger additional loops and voices. Surely this has ruffled the feathers of the purists? Singh says not. "Because I've studied hard and they know that I can play a classical gig, I suppose they feel that I'm somehow qualified now to sorta fuck around with it." —Dev Sherlock

Raised on U.K. raves, Nico, and Bobbie Gentry, **Beth Orton** found her epiphany far from dance clubs and Sixties vinyl. A veteran of record sessions with electronic gurus William Orbit and the Chemical Brothers, the lanky singer found a rebellious streak within her during a visit to the Far East.

"Why come to the most beautiful place in the world and make it so ugly?" she remarks, commenting on the rave culture's habit of trashing pristine locations while dancing until dawn. "That turned my stomach. So I went to meditate in Thailand as a joke. But then I became a serious Buddhist nun. I took the vows, meditated fourteen hours a day, fasted from noon to midnight. I suppose I was falling from Western reality."

Like an oddball angel sailing between the earth and stars, Orton's *Trailer Park* (Dedicated/Heavenly) matches earthy folk friendliness with hip electronic babble, all imbued with her strangely pleasant, Okie-sounding vocals. Her calm presence has endeared her to the U.K. electro fraternity, who see in her the embodiment of chill.

"My family life was total chaos," she recalls. "That's why I write the songs I do. It's the most punk rock thing I could do to become a folk singer. I was surrounded by complete confusion as a kid, so I just went into my own world. I found my calm out of that chaos."

Claiming she is basically "technophobic," Orton nevertheless fills her gently strummed tunes with weird gurgles and broad trip-hop scapes. "I'm not sure if I like technology, but I understand it. It does have a heart, it does have a soul. Initially, it fascinated me, this faceless, soulless form of music. It got me intellectually, then emotionally. I'd do some Es and dance. I just loved it; it was the nearest I got to having a religious experience." —Ken Micallef



beth orton

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newsigning

Ask anyone associated with Slider's debut release, *Sudden Fun*, about the signing process, and you'll get the same answer: "Hmm, I can't remember. It was so long ago." From singer/guitarist Matt Winegar to manager David Lefkowitz to A&R rep Jim Phelan, the response is consistent. The truth is, though, that Winegar signed his deal with A&M in 1994 and was all ready to release the album *Fremont* in October of '95—but then, as Winegar says, "All hell kinda broke loose."

Right before the release of Slider's original debut album, Winegar's best friend and bass player, Wick Coleman, delivered a big-time news flash to the label. Turns out that Coleman had bailed from the recording sessions, and A&M was getting a little testy. "The record company called Wick and asked if he was going to commit to the band," Winegar explains. "Wick just used me as an excuse and said that the reason he left was because I was a drug addict. I did have a drug problem going on for four years, and I was dealing with it as best I could at the time. Me and Wick had agreed that this was my business and we didn't want to turn it into a big thing. The record company was pissed off at me because I

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didn't tell them about the fact that I was a heroin addict for years and years."

But after Coleman blew the whistle on him, Winegar leveled with the label. "I told them that it had been an ongoing thing and in the past year I'd been trying to get treatment. I'd been seeing a doctor and doing all these detoxes and different medications and trying to work. I was making these demos and having all these meetings with record company executives. It was just a huge pain. It was finally nice to be honest with them, though. The problem with not being honest was that I'd go to get treatment, and they'd say, 'Okay, you need to fly to L.A. for a show at the Viper Room. Then we have this little tour with the Presidents of the U.S.A.' I'd be running around, trying to be on this 21-day methadone treatment, and as soon as I had to go and do something, that would ruin it and I'd be back in the drugs."

After months of drama, Winegar began a year-long methadone treatment; he's been clean now for almost two years. Although he recently moved back to Los Angeles to be closer to his band, which includes Josh Freese on drums and the newly recruited Zach Schaffer on bass, he did a year in Utah to make his program even stricter. "It's been good hanging out in Mormon town," he says. "I've got a nice little apartment there with 75 channels of cable, no friends, an acoustic guitar, an amp, and a tape deck. I sold all of my other gear for drugs—my whole recording studio, all of my Marshalls, my Les Pauls, and my Telecaster."

After a couple of years on the back burner Winegar is ready to get back into the action. "When you come out of the fog from all that shit, it's kinda like, 'Well, let's work.' I don't like to dwell on how fucked it was and get down on myself. I did what I had to do. I survived it, which is amazing in itself, and the music was really good, considering what I was going through at the time."

That's exactly why, says A&M's Jim Phelan, the record company remained patient. "It was a combination of the people involved: Josh Freese, Matt, and Wick at the time. They're incredible guys. I've been around a lot of records over the years, and this is as good as a record as I've ever been involved with. It comes down to the people, the music, and some element of my personality that's really stubborn. If you throw that all together, that's how we got here."

For Phelan, the Slider adventure began

when he received a tape from a former client of his, producer Matt Wallace. "I was like, 'Wow, these are instant pop hits, one after the other.' I went to see them, and it was very immediate. There was no denying it." So Phelan jumped into the ring with reps from Capitol and Columbia, according to manager Lefkowitz, while Interscope was sniffing around the edges. "There wasn't a bidding war or anything like that," Phelan says. "But we were fully aware that there was plenty of competition out there."

Shortly before they inked the deal with A&M, Winegar was looking for the final piece to his trio. As he was talking with Matt Wallace—the two knew each other from their San Francisco days, when Wallace was producing Faith No More and Winegar was co-producing the first Primus album—about finding a drummer, Wallace commented that Josh Freese, whom he had worked with on a School of Fish record, was looking for a band to join. Wallace played the drummer Slider's demo tape. "I had been doing a bunch of studio stuff here and there, but I'd been waiting to have a band," says Freese. "I've tried doing my own band thing before, but it's always been tough. So Matt came to my house and played me some stuff. I said, 'God, I want to join this band. This is why I turn other projects down: I've been waiting for something, and this is it.'"

Freese, who had been playing with such acts as the Vandals, Paul Westerberg, Devo, and Juliana Hatfield, clicked right away with Winegar and his music. "Elements of it sounded like they liked the same music I did. Matt writes songs the way I wish I wrote songs," Freese admits with a laugh. "The thing about Slider is that there's nothing about it I have to make an excuse for. Other times I've been in bands with people where I've said, 'Well, we're great live, but the record kind of sucks.' There's not a whole lot for me to second-guess or make excuses about with this group, though."

In hindsight Winegar believes it was the sessions for this album, in part, that changed his life. "I don't know if I would have ever gotten well if I didn't go in there and do all that [recording]. It was inspiring to work that hard. I was trying to get my shit together, but everything was going so fast with the band that it was hard. The record shows what hell I was in and how hard I worked. There's a lot of blood, sweat, and tears on that record. I'm so glad it's finally coming out."—**David Farinella**

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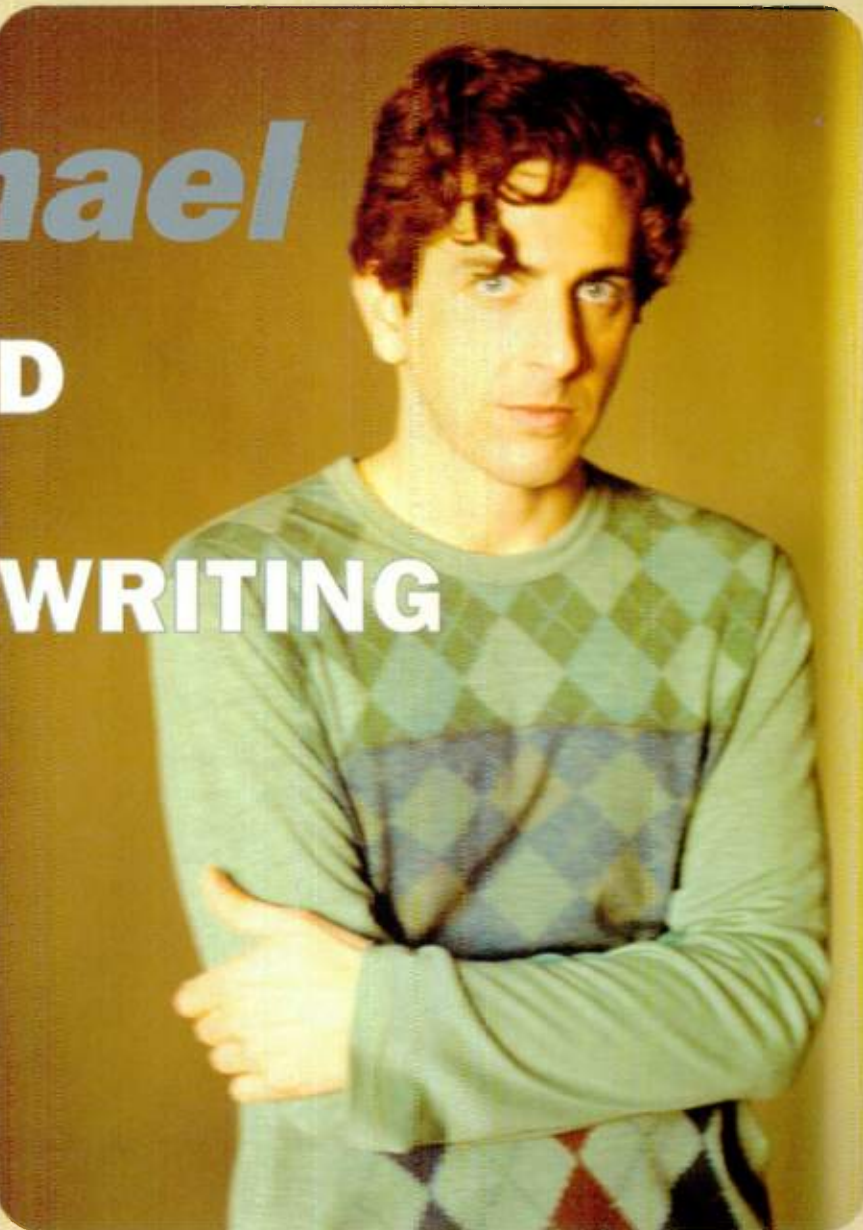
Honesty, cliché avoidance, and chorus launching

by Bill DeMain

I still look at an aspect of songwriting as inventing, and the really great stuff is from the people who come up with the basic patents," says Michael Penn. The three-and-a-half-minute inventions on his third and latest disc, *Resigned* (Epic), certainly uphold the best aspects of the design pioneered by the patent-holders of pop music. Like Dylan, Penn has the ability to zigzag between the poetic and the conversational in his lyrics without missing a turn. The language that ebbs and flows through "Like Egypt Was," "Out of My Hands," "Figment of My Imagination," and "Small Black Box" works its dramatic effects with half-confessions, intriguing imagery, snippets of dialog, and a strong narrative voice tempered by a Lennon-esque gift for flat-out stunning melodies. With producer Brendan O'Brien lending the proceedings his trademark fuzz-laden exuberance, Penn's new disc should place him at the forefront of contemporary songwriting, with his patent for pop composition firmly in hand.

How would you describe your ideal environment for writing?

A block of time in a place that's comfortable in some way. I have to sit and go through



a lot of nonsense for several hours before any real work gets done. There's an inertia—like a hill I have to get up when I first get in writing mode. What it sometimes means is just getting comfortable with the way the guitar or piano sounds in the room that I'm in, then maybe I'll have to play an older song or two to get used to hearing the sound of my own voice. Then I feel comfortable playing and developing ideas.

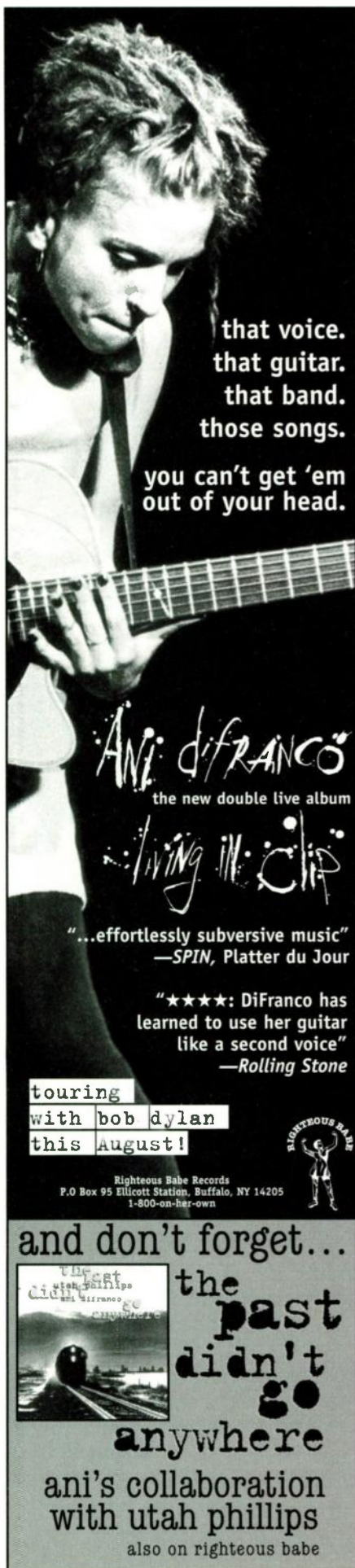
In the early stages, do you like to have some kind of intention?

Whatever it's about is what's motivating it. So it's really just a matter of trying to get the feeling out in words or music initially and trying to hook into something. That doesn't mean that it can't instruct me somewhere down the line that it might want to be about something different. There's usually some theme that I want to write about, but I don't know necessarily which angle I'm going to come at it from.

Does it help you on a song like "Me Around," where the lyric seems fairly pointed, to have a specific person in mind?

Sometimes it does. To me, it's less important that that be true and more important that it successfully capture the vibe. There's something to be said about a song being pointed only enough to enable you to be honest, but being

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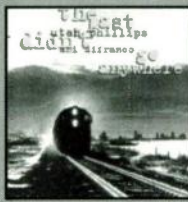
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How do you strike the balance between the personal and the universal?

I write to communicate, and to me, that can be achieved a number of different ways. I think direct is good, I think emotional is good, and I don't think they necessarily prevent each other. I guess what I'm saying is that one can be direct and not communicate. One can be direct and it can be a laundry list. That doesn't interest me. One can be obscure to be obscure and that doesn't interest me. It's funny, this balance of being somehow universal and allowing a person to be able to apply the words to their own life where the specifics may not be the same. For me, it's like every song has its own way of taking a tone and I think there are aspects of the songs that are more direct and there are aspects that are—to use the "P" word [laughs]—poetic. I don't want to change what I'm saying intentionally to force it to be more universal at the risk of betraying whatever it is that I'm about, whatever it is that I'm writing about. So if something is honest to me and truthful to me, I'm just going to put it down. The other thing is, lyrics can communicate on all kinds of levels. I think of the Cocteau Twins. Their lyrics are essentially just phonetics, but I get an emotion from it. So there's that aspect to lyrics that you can't ignore.

If you're working on a song and you have a great verse, but you keep running into a wall where the chorus should be, what helps you through it?

There are some basic tricks. If I have a chorus and for whatever reason it isn't lifting me, the first thing I'll do is try to change the key and see if some kind of modulation is called for. I try to explore all the avenues with the raw material I've got. Then the other thing is to just sort of begrudgingly go, "Well, maybe this isn't the chorus for this song," and what generally I'll do is play the verse through, then stop and just listen and try to feel where it's headed, then try a different approach. It's definitely about launching. If the verses are succeeding, they're taking me some place. It's like you're walking up a hill to something and the view that you see when you get up there might or might not be expected—but whatever it is, it has to justify the climb. That's usually something that I can recognize or say, "No, sorry, that's the wrong vista."

What makes a successful pop melody?

As far as I can gather, there really are no laws regarding this. I just try to avoid the trappings of clichés. If I'm writing something where I'm constantly thinking, "This has been done," or "This is too much like another song," those are the things that make me really frustrated and make me edit myself. Then I'll have to find a way to either abandon it or find some aspect of it that I can pull something new out of. That's what I'm trying to discipline myself to do, because my instinct is usually just to toss it.

Do you find that you gravitate towards certain keys and chords?

That's usually dictated by my limited vocal range [laughs]. Apart from that I don't spend too much time with it. That's the wonder of the magical capo [laughs].

Do you let yourself be very influenced when you're in a writing mode?

Sometimes, yes. If a record has really stimulated me I'll aspire to try to capture something of why that touched me. During the making of this record, I was listening to—and I don't see the connection—but some of the records that knocked me out over the last few years were things like the first Liz Phair record. That floored me. I thought it was absolutely unique and wonderful. I also love the first Beck album.

If you were hired to teach a workshop on songwriting, what would your curriculum be like?

I'd probably play them a whole lot of records and say, "You see why this was original?" and "You see why this was something really personal and unique?" and "You see why this other thing is a feeble attempt to capitalize on the popularity of what was going on at the moment?" There are uniquely personal statements and then there's all this other stuff that's copying that. Then I'd say, "Now go out and read a bunch of stuff so you can use language to its best function." I certainly wouldn't suppose to tell them that I know how to do it better than somebody else. I'd just say, "Here's stuff that I listen to, you should listen to it too." I don't feel like I'm very good at talking about songwriting. It's something that everybody finds their own way of approaching. To me, it's just trying to be honest, emotionally and lyrically—just trying to reveal something.

Contributors: Bill DeMain is a songwriter and a member of the group Swan Dive.

Technology doesn't mean jack unless it makes you sound better.



"The [Yamaha] DG-1000 is easily the most authentic sounding tube amp simulator we've heard," says *Guitar Player* magazine.* After that, any talk of advanced physical modeling and the incredible processing power in the DG-1000 digital pre-amp is superfluous.

Suffice it to say that it took Yamaha—the creator of the 02R digital mixing console and the very first physical modeling-based synthesizer, the VL1—to create the technology that could precisely reproduce the warm tone and behavior of a vacuum tube to the point where it could satisfy even a purist.

Despite the hard-core engineering under the hood, *Guitar Player* magazine calls the DG-1000 "a snap" to use. To nail your tone, just select an amp, twist a few knobs on the front panel and you're ready to play. There's no need to scroll through countless menus and parameters in search of your sound.

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Clean Picking with

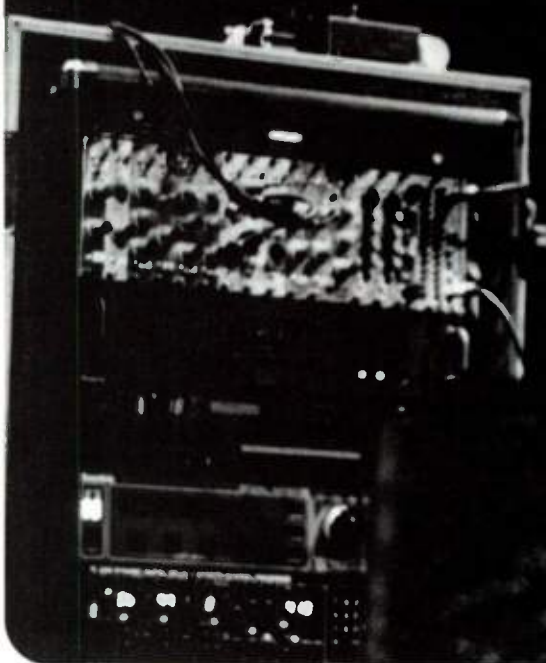
by mac randall

In the liner notes to *Epitaph* (Discipline Global Mobile), the latest release from the King Crimson vaults (featuring live recordings by the original 1969 Crimson), Robert Fripp addresses the subject of his early guitar style rather critically, to say the least. "The guitarist," he writes of himself, "was an intense and driven young player. ... After King Crimson in 1969 he practiced a lot more and got better. This album suggests in 1969 his solos were pretty feeble. [Bandmate] Ian [McDonald] didn't like his guitar playing very much and, on the evidence of this album, I have sympathy with his view."

That's being slightly unfair to oneself, wouldn't you say? While it's true that Fripp had not yet achieved the dazzling technical facility of later years, the imaginative comping on songs like "Epitaph" and "Moonchild" and the blistering fuzzed-out solo of "21st Century Schizoid Man" were still pretty distinctive and more than a little influential to generations of players. But Fripp stands by his evaluation of his younger self. "I was a good ensemble player, but in terms of soloing, I hadn't found my own voice. What improved radically from practicing was my capacity to go into a solo event and improvise. My aim was to practice to a point where really good players would let me play with them, so I could learn from them. And I was very fortunate to play with and learn from the musicians in the '69 Crimson."

It may be that Fripp's standards are higher these days. After all, over the last twelve years he's spent a good deal of time listening to and coaching other guitarists—about 1200 of them—in his Guitar Craft seminars. He's probably taught those guitarists a thing or two as well, though you won't hear that from him. Fripp insists he is "not in charge of" Guitar Craft. "If aspirant musicians are waiting for someone to tell them what to do," he says, "nothing will ever happen. Students work from their own initiatives. What a good instructor will do is present the student with techniques which will save the student a lot

Robert Fripp



of time. The student's already connected to the mains; the instructor switches on the current."

One way Fripp engages his students is by getting them to pay attention to the smallest actions. "I can look at the way a student holds a pick and can extrapolate from there how they live the rest of their life. If you change the manner in which you hold the pick, inevitably you'll change the rest of your life as well. Why? Because how we organize one small part of our life is how we organize all the small parts of our life, and all the small parts of our life taken together are our life."

Much of Fripp's concentration in Guitar Craft, therefore, is focused on such apparently rudimentary topics as the proper way to hold a

pick. But before any playing is done, Fripp asks his students to try something that would seem to be even more simple. "One of the first exercises on a Guitar Craft course is to do nothing for half an hour. It's very, very hard to do nothing. Some people have found it impossible; they have to leave the course. When we do nothing, we become aware of all the noise going on in our brains. You discover that your body responds to a particular thought in a particular way—perhaps my shoulder goes or I twitch or I find myself smiling or being angry. Gradually we become aware that the actions of our hands are intimately connected with our thoughts and feelings, but that's a more advanced stage of doing nothing as much as



A master guitar craftsman discusses hand placement, practice habits, and the discipline of doing nothing

you can."

From doing nothing we move on to doing something: sitting on a chair, picking up a guitar, and paying close attention to placement of the left and right hands. According to Fripp, the thumb of your fretting hand should be planted firmly on the middle of the neck, not sprawled along the side. Using this method, the fretting hand forms a conspicuous arch over the fretboard. Fripp didn't always play this way, but he adjusted his hand positions when the music he was hearing in his head proved too tough to be played otherwise. "In the summer of 1971, when I was writing what became 'Larks' Tongues in Aspic Part One,' my thumb wasn't quite in the middle; it was a little further around

the side of the neck. It was impossible for me to play those fast running lines unless my left hand was efficient. So that summer I retrained my left hand, re-established its center of gravity, because of the musical demand placed upon it." Although he acknowledges that many players find it helpful for bending and vibrato to hook the thumb all the way around the neck, Fripp maintains that he can bend a minor third with one finger on the left hand and his thumb still right on the center of the neck. "Unless you've developed the musculature within the fingers, you won't have the physical strength to do that," he admits. "But if you begin on the assumption that you have to play [with the thumb around the neck], you'll never develop

the musculature

As for the picking hand, it should be angled so that the plane of the pick is perfectly parallel to the strings. To demonstrate the right way to do this, Fripp first shows us one wrong way—his wrist curves upwards at an angle that's awkward but easily recognizable as a common position for many players. "What is this? It's a start reflex, like horses have just before they start a race. It brings tension into the wrist, and sooner or later that tension will move elsewhere; the player is then always tense. In *Guitar Craft*, we ask not for a start, but a beginning." He moves his wrist down a notch, so that it continues the straight line of the forearm. "This way, if you pick a string up and down, you're just releasing and returning the hand. That's a small example of effortless effort."

The next order of business is finding what Fripp calls a "normative beginning point" for the fretting hand. "If you know you're going to play something in the third or twelfth position, then you make that accommodation. But if you don't know where you're going, then the best beginning point is in the seventh position with the fingers established between the third and fourth strings. Why? Because it's in the middle, which is nearest to everywhere you might go."

How much should a guitarist need to practice before these positions become second nature? "Eight hours a day for three months, however long eight hours a day is for you—because time is subjective and depending on the quality of our application and presence. For some people, eight hours doesn't take very long on the clock. But for others, you need sixteen hours."

In his conversation, Fripp repeatedly stresses these seemingly rudimentary aspects of guitar playing; for him, the term "foundation" is all-important. "Most players move too fast from where they are," he says. "They'd rather rush on to whatever instead of establishing a foundation. If you don't establish a solid foundation, your playing will always be undermined by basic flaws." But if you have established such a foundation, you may find it easier to explore unknown territory. "One of the main problems that most guitarists have," Fripp concludes, "is that they assume they know what they're doing. They play what they know. But the bigger challenge is to play what you don't know."



A couple of years ago, Elie Garfinkel started looking in the want ads and scouring all the music stores.

He was looking for a good, used Taylor.

He says he knew "he would probably have better luck winning the lottery," but he kept looking. He believed in fate.

Then, after a year of searching, he decided to end his frustration. He took the plunge and bought a brand new Taylor 510 model.



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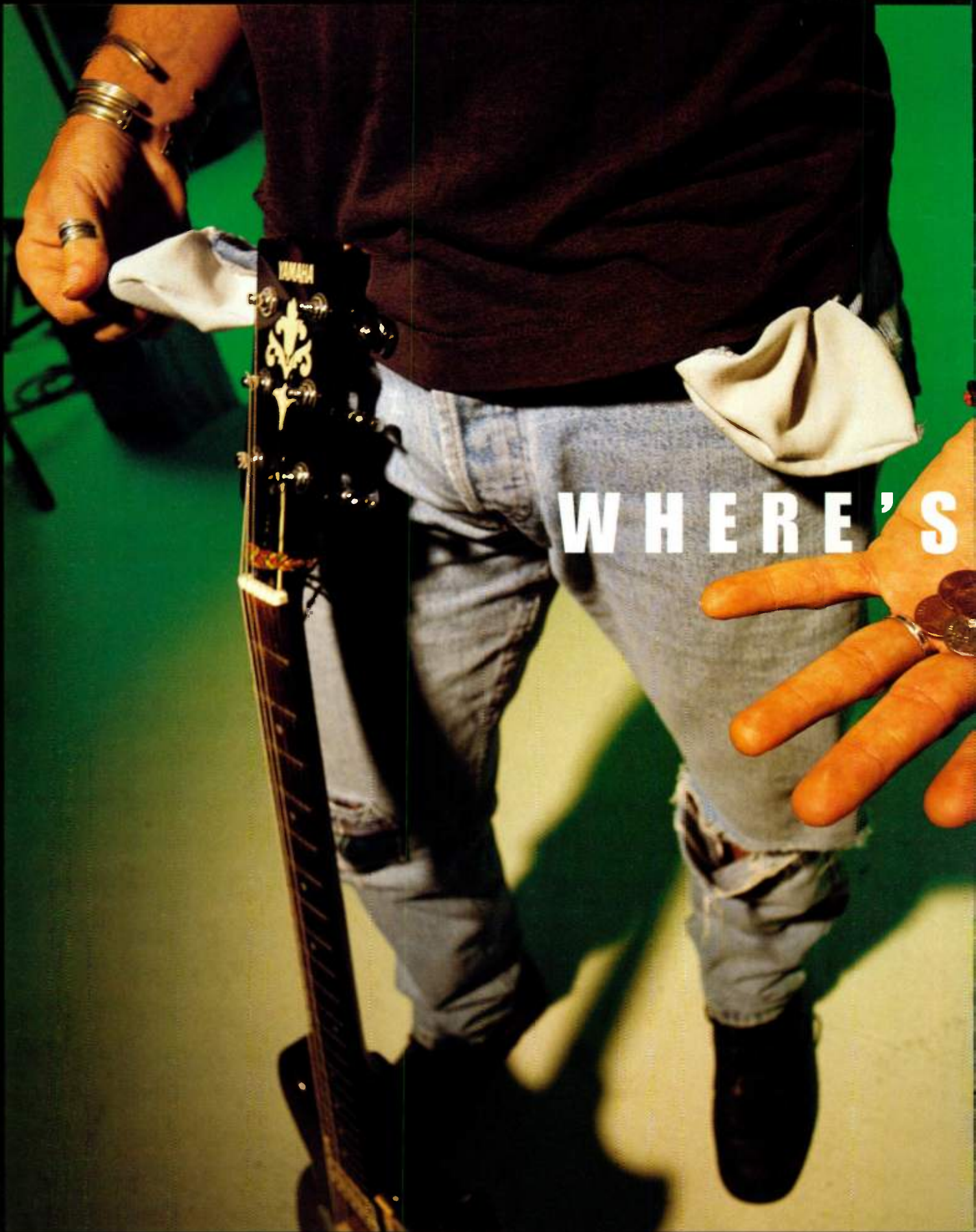
About three weeks later, out of habit,
he was glancing through the classified ads. The word
"Taylor," in boldface type, caught his eye.

It was an older model, in perfect condition.


At about the same time, his thirteen-year-old
son announced he was getting tired of his
electric guitar, and was ready for an acoustic.

Elie Garfinkel believes in fate.
He just knows that sometimes it's
a few weeks behind schedule.





WHERE'S



Nobody becomes a professional musician in order to make a lot of money--at least nobody in his or her right mind. If getting rich is what interests you, we recommend putting this magazine down and enrolling in medical school. (Or, as we'll see later in this article, finding some way of breaking into the music business other than by making music.) For the truth about this business is that there is plenty of money in the system but precious little of it makes it down the chute into the pockets of you, the player. • While this is obviously not exactly a surprise, there is plenty to learn in the recording and the performance insight is that, unless you make it into saturating stars, your take represents might have imagined. (And even if you do wind up in heavy rotation on MTV Hard Rock Café, there's no guarantee of success: One source reported Jimi Hendrix's assets at somewhere around

THE MONEY

names you may never know yet comfortable were it not for your countercultural rite to multinational poor have dropped from sight, and the extinction. In this sense, this scenario is merely a microcosm of modern society. What makes the music business unique, notes artist manager Mike Lembo, "is that, unfortunately, the most important part is disposable--the artist." • \$24,231: The average amount earned in 1996 by an American worker. • \$30-\$50 million: The amount of money one leading record executive was paid to not fulfill the last four years of his five-year contract. • money paid to members of the MC5 *Back In The USA* and *Kick Out The* • Rock is for the young. This is a refrain that rings bitterly true for 49-

year-old, self-described "anarchist" guitar player and one-time MC5 member Wayne Kramer, who's in a grouchy mood today. Blues Traveler manager David Frye has just told him he's been nixed for this summer's HORDE tour because Neil Young "wants to be the only Sixties guy on the bill." • That's a big deal for Kramer, who's on a tight budget. Even

middle-class artist slouches toward business, the rich have gotten richer, the poor have gotten poorer. • 6 cents per dollar: The amount of per album sold of the reissued *Jams* albums.

WHY MUSICIANS ARE BROKE— AND WHO'S TO BLAME

BY ROY TRAKIN
PHOTO BY JAY BLAKESBERG

.....

**YOUR ODDS OF BECOMING A ROCK & ROLL
STAR ARE SLIGHTLY LESS THAN YOUR CHANCES OF
WINNING THE PICK SIX AT A LOCAL 7-ELEVEN.**

.....

with Epitaph Records providing tour support, the veteran rocker earns somewhere between \$45,000 and \$50,000 a year—a livable wage, but hardly the stuff of rock &

roll legend. “I struggle to meet my expenses every month,” he says. A pause. “I’m barely surviving.”

He’s not alone. According to a recent

Soundscan study conducted over a three-year period on ninety thousand titles, three percent of all albums released accounted for 72 percent of sales, while 67 percent of all albums sold less than a thousand copies each. That makes your odds of becoming a rock & roll star slightly less than your chances of winning the Pick Six at a local 7-Eleven.

“As long as people are inspired by watching MTV to pack up the Pinto and drive to L.A., work as waiters and messengers until they achieve their rock dreams, then the music industry will continue to exist,” observes L.A. Music Network’s Tess Taylor, who publishes a newsletter which helps people network for jobs. “The reality is, few people make it. And when they do, quite often it’s not talent as much as luck, timing, and persistence. It’s hard, hard, hard work, and people don’t realize what’s at stake.”

“It’s a cruel joke on artists, this dream you’re gonna make it someday,” agrees Kramer, who earns between \$250 and \$1000 a night on the road and is too embarrassed to reveal what he can afford to pay his two bandmates. “It’s a great dream if you’re making a living. But if you’re not, it’s a joke perpetuated by lawyers, record company executives, and agents. Look at the lifestyle of these guys. They drive to work in a nice car, sit behind their desks negotiating deals, and then go back to a home they own. They have money in the bank, IRAs, health insurance. Their kids go to nice schools. When do musicians get ours?”

The problem, if you want to call it that, is that most musicians love what they do so much that getting paid is almost too good to be true—at first. “I used to think playing rock & roll was an act of rebellion, an edgy thing to do, but now it’s just a vocation,” sighs ex-Green On Red keyboardist Chuck Prophet, whose \$50,000 annual income includes sales of between thirty and fifty thousand albums in Europe and an

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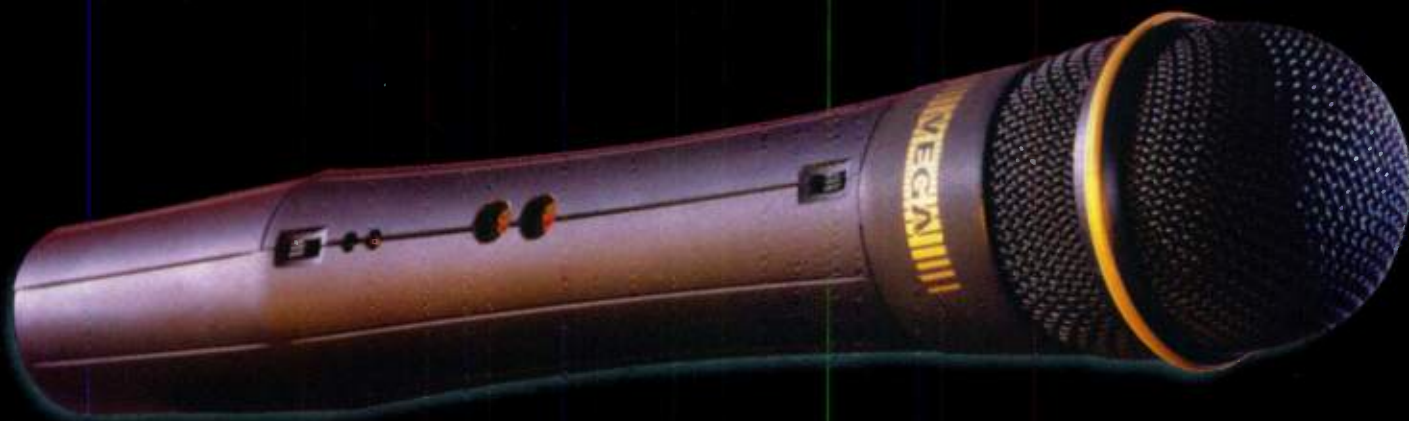


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annual, money-making two-month tour of that Continent.

"I've never been able to pay the rent playing live," admits Scott Thomas. His

debut album on Mercury languished, and soon he found himself off the label and earning barely enough to pay "for the gas I used to get to the gig." Luckily, Thomas

eventually became the object of an honest-to-goodness bidding war, in part because he booked himself into L.A.'s Café Largo, whose intimate size made it easier to pack with enthusiastic listeners. Today he's signed to Elektra.

"Maybe I'm not so great at managing myself," he shrugs. "When someone hands me a couple of hundred bucks at the end of the night, I'm going, 'Thanks, you're really a great guy.' Meanwhile, I guess I'm filling up the room. For me, seeing how that audience is going to react is the closest thing to waiting for Santa Claus when you're ten years old. It just feels good. I love it."

Ex-Wall Of Voodoo lead singer Andy Prieboy reveals that the most he ever earned from music in one year was \$75,000, in the form of a publishing advance which went mostly to "pay off the debts from the previous 35 years of suffering to clear the decks for another five-year cycle of poverty and obscurity"—and to give his Lincoln a paint job.

"If you want to have health insurance, make more than a hundred thousand dollars, and live a *Friends*, 'Let's have lunch at Swinger's' kind of lifestyle, go ahead and work at a record label," he advises. "Most of us are musicians because we saw a bunch of perverts on TV when we were eleven years old. We heard cool songs being played by drug addicts on the radio and thought, 'This is for us.'"

"I live a bohemian life. I'll probably die broke and old in a pauper's ward from some horrible disease. But this is what we asked for. So shut up and stop whining. There is no perk equal to the spiritual benefits of being a musician. There is a comfort in knowing I will sit at God's right hand and wave away the greasy smoke of certain industry people as they suffer the torments of eternal damnation."

Still, the current chasm of recompense on this earthly plane has the capacity to gnaw. Prieboy tells the story of a current major label head who once visited Wall Of

The advertisement features a portrait of Bill Frisell, a man with glasses and a dark suit, holding a light-colored electric guitar. Behind him is a large circular graphic with the D'Addario logo and the text "XI ELECTRIC GUITAR NICKEL WOUND • JAZZ". Above the logo is a small "E-SERIES" badge with a globe icon. Text on the left side of the image reads: "BILL FRISELL PLAYS EJ21S AND EXL115S LIVE AND ON HIS NONESUCH RECORDS RELEASE, 'NASHVILLE.'" At the bottom right of the image, it says "Photo: Kevin Ellsworth". At the bottom of the image, the contact information for J. D'Addario & Company, Inc. is provided.

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LOREN ALLDRIN, PRO AUDIO REVIEW.

As if inventing the MiniDisc format weren't enough, Sony took that technology one step further, with the introduction of the MD Data format rewritable optical disc—the heart and soul of all four-track MiniDisc recorders. It made it possible to record digitally on four tracks instead of two, which in turn led to the creation of the MDM-X4 MiniDisc Recorder. So don't be fooled by imitations. If anyone understands the capabilities of the MiniDisc format, it's Sony.

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MAY 1997, KEYBOARD MAGAZINE.

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CRAIG ANDERTON, EQ MAGAZINE.

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SONY

"THE MUSIC BUSINESS IS A MICROCOSM OF WHAT WILL EVENTUALLY BRING CIVILIZATION TO ITS KNEES."

Voodoo in the studio while they were recording. "He brought along a six-pack and a coupla bags of Fritos and made like he was one of the guys," recalls Prieboy. "Six months later, while we're looking at our accounting statement, we see \$15.67 subtracted for beer and chips. Unbelievable."

This incident gives you a bit of insight into how some record companies have practiced the art of "royalty recoupment." "The music industry is the only business that makes artists pay for their product in that way," says Tess Taylor. "They've done it for so long that I don't think the system will ever change. I'd always ask myself,

'How much is that limousine costing me? How much am I being charged for that party?' But no one ever questions it until the money's all been spent."

A top industry lawyer frames the issue more bluntly: "The part of this business that still amazes me is the degree to which you can't trust people's promises. As someone who identifies with the artist, I see them constantly get sucked into believing that some A&R guy at their label is their best friend who'll never fuck them. I can't believe the degree to which some people promise things to artists when they know it's not in their power to deliver them."

The pinch being passed down to musi-

cians isn't always felt by those on higher branches of the music tree. Though industry fortunes are volatile—see "Bad Times for the Music Business" in our June '97 issue—there's been explosive growth in profits over the past decade: Between 1990 and '96, total value of unit shipments rose from \$7.5 billion to \$12.5 billion. Typically label GMs and executive VPs can snare \$500,000 or more of these earnings per year, while heads of promotion are now in the \$300,000 to \$400,000 range. Marketing heads are increasingly in demand, with salaries for a good one moving upwards of \$400,000, while sales heads hover in the \$250,000 range. Publicity VPs earn a relatively low \$175,000 to \$200,000, mostly because that department has long been the sole domain of women in this boys' club. In each case, however, base salaries are just the starting point, with some labels rewarding employees with hefty bonuses that can total up to 75 percent of their income. Small wonder that Wayne Kramer jokes, "Actually, I'm looking for a job at a record label. I can be creative and organized."

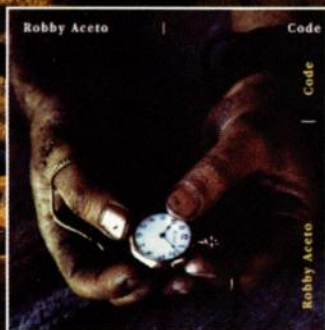
Record labels make more of a profit on breaking artists than on successful veterans, who've often renegotiated better royalty rates, sometimes to startling advantage. Indeed, over the past few years, big-money deals made with Aerosmith, Prince, R.E.M., and Janet Jackson haven't panned out nearly as well as labels would've hoped. If you're currently an unsigned artist, this does give you one small advantage: As in sports, developing rookie stars from your farm system before they become unrestricted free agents is usually preferable to buying aging veterans at premium prices.

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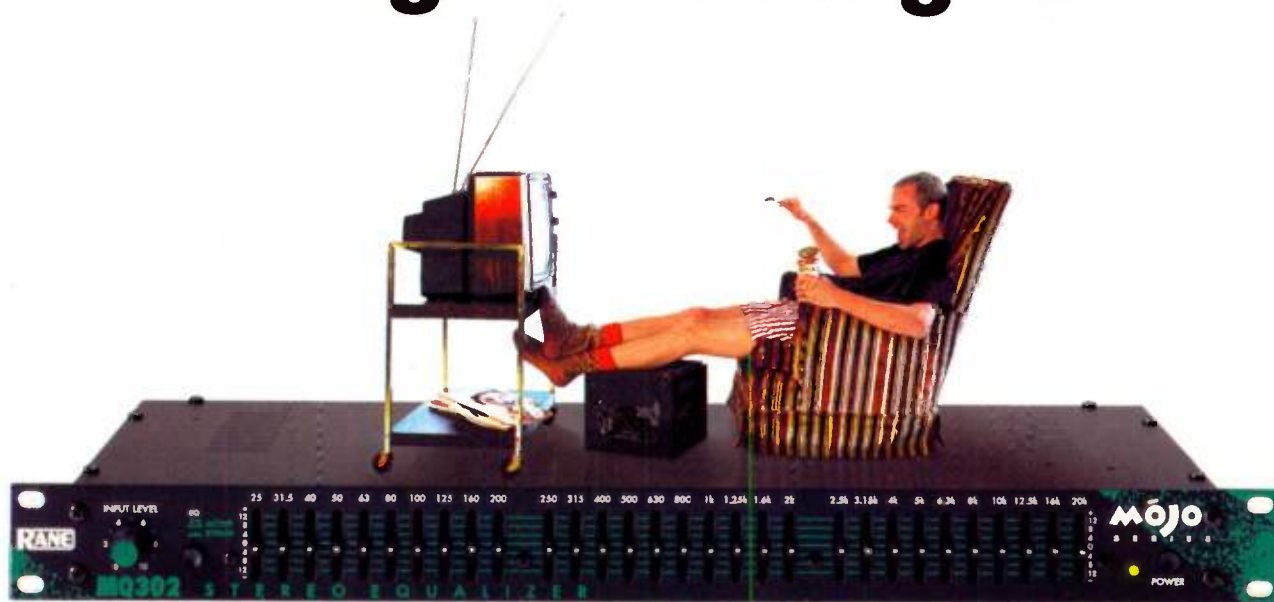
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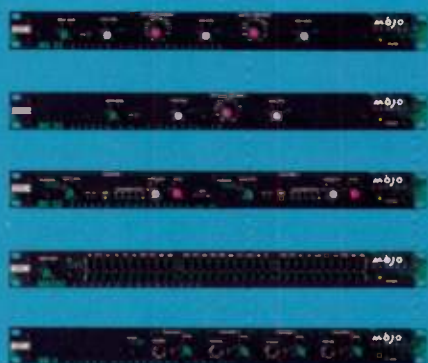
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In years past, younger bands could make their rent while developing their chops by taking their act on the road. But as label support shrinks, those days are

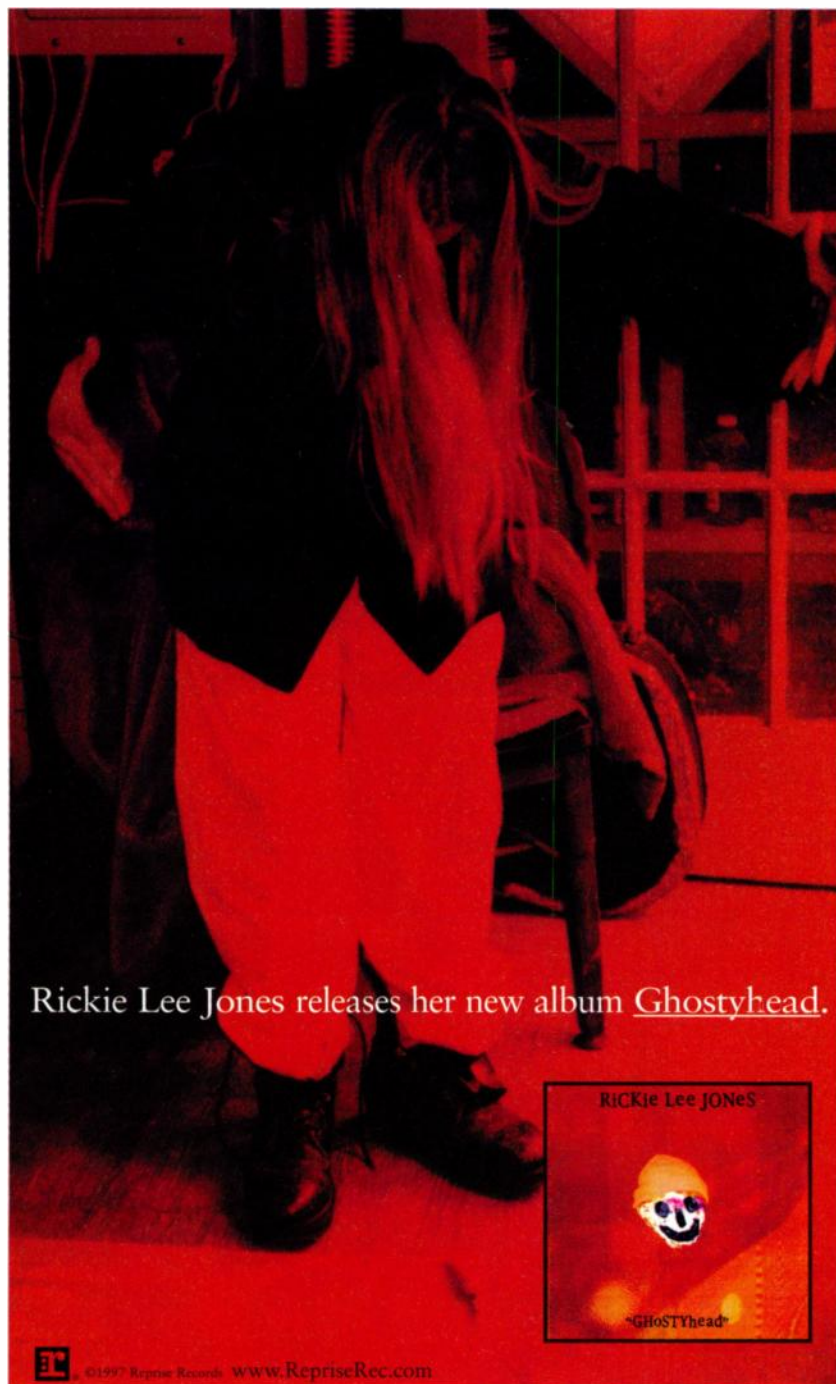
mostly gone. "Everything costs more and the bands are making less," says veteran road manager Gary Hirstius, who started out by driving a truck for Ricky Nelson at

\$700 a week, went on to manage the legendary L.A. punk-rock band the Circle Jerks, and currently pulls upwards of \$3,000 a week to oversee tour production for the likes of Don Was, Herbie Hancock, and Jill Sobule.

With record companies scrutinizing every penny of tour support, Hirstius says today's tour manager has to wear any number of hats, from working the computerized sound and light mixes to handling baggage and booking hotels. Count on spending from \$600 a week for a roadie with two to three years of experience to \$500 a day each for members of the A-list crew. "Instead of having four guys on a crew, you have one or two," Hirstius points out. "And without tour support, forget it. A band couldn't make it a week out there. These days, there's no frivolity. Label accountants want everything to the penny on paper. Everyone wants more for their buck."

It's not much easier on the other side of the bar, according to Clifford Antone, founder of the legendary blues club which bears his name in Austin, Texas. These days, with 177 venues in town offering live music seven nights a week, Antone faces heavy competition. Throw in rent, help, electricity, and a fourteen percent liquor tax, and the club owner needs to sell \$1,000 worth of liquor on a weekday and \$3,500 on a weekend just to break even at his 500-capacity nitery. Despite that, Antone continues to book local acts on weekdays and lets them play for the door after taking less than ten percent off the top for expenses.

"You just want to be playing, even if it's for free," he says of working bands. "If you have the talent, you need to look at it like a business, like you're opening a store. Keep working at it. Put the eight hours a day into your band you would for a job. This is hard work. You have to devote your life to it." Inspiring and truthful words—but the fine print is in Antone's recognition that many bands want to play ... "even if it's for



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IS A JOKE PERPETUATED BY LAWYERS,
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—WAYNE KRAMER**

free." Just try running a store that way.

With so many bands battling over gigs that pay peanuts, more musicians are finding their way into emerging specialized fields, including soundtrack work, indie production, and remixing. And if major labels are losing faith in long-term artist development, then guys like Big Management's Gary Salzman, whose roster includes red-hot remixer Todd Terry and songwriter Michelle Lewis, will fill in the gaps. Terry, for instance, whose drums & bass remix on Everything But The Girl's "Missing" re-ignited that band's career, now commands as much as \$50,000 plus

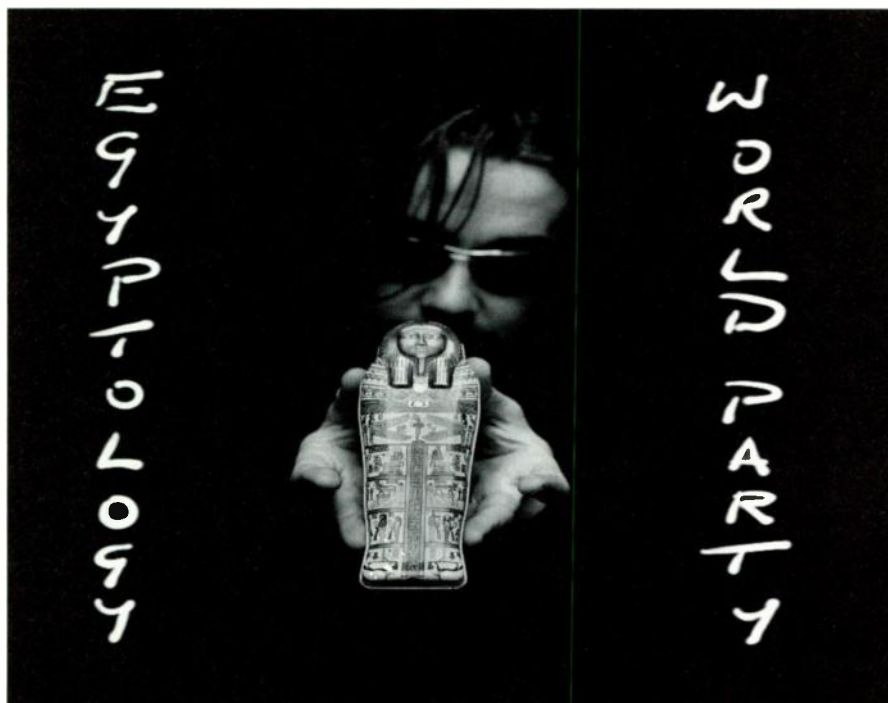
points on remix projects. "Nobody's overpaid in the music industry," Salzman says. "Todd's been doing the same thing he's been doing for the past two or three years. He's just getting more and better offers now because people see that his way works. If someone's willing to pay you, then you deserve the money."

One solid source of income for mainstream and fringe musicians alike remains that old standby, music publishing. Even Suicide's Alan Vega and Martin Rev, the ultimate anti-commercial act, hit the jackpot at least once. Former music industry headhunter Marty Thau claims that each

will earn more than \$100,000 in publishing and mechanical royalties from having Henry Rollins cover "Ghost Rider" on *The Crow's* soundtrack, which has sold more than 3.5 million units internationally. According to manager Mike Lembo, his client Jules Shear collects between \$200,000 and \$250,000 per year in songwriting royalties, having penned such hits as Cyndi Lauper's "All Through the Night," the Bangles' "If She Knew What She Wants," and Alison Moyet's "Whispering Your Name," which appeared on an album that sold 1.5 million copies in Europe, as well as on Moyet's *Greatest Hits* collection. Songwriters, of course, get paid publishing and performing royalties for each format in which a song appears.

"How many artists have been around as long as Jules Shear has, without having a hit on their own, and can make that kind of money doing what they love to do?" asks Lembo. "If you're going to survive as a manager, you need a few balls bouncing in the air at once, until you get that one big act. If you hit with something in publishing, it's like real estate—a real annuity."

One of the truisms of the record business is that you're nobody until somebody wants you. Average bands being pursued by two or three labels are now getting upwards of \$400,000 for two albums firm, while an all-out Prodigy-style sweepstakes procures offers of a million dollars plus. Of course, that can be a trap: The larger the advance, the easier the temptation to spend it on the making of an album whose overall cost will be that much tougher to recoup. These days, an average album by a new major label signing runs in the range of \$200,000 to \$240,000, with a top-flight producer like John Leckie (Radiohead, XTC, Kula Shaker) asking \$75,000 plus four points. Indie budgets are considerably less: Wayne Kramer's latest, *Citizen Wayne* (on Epitaph), was recorded with David Was as



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producer for a relatively paltry \$40,000.

"Should you go for a lot of money upfront?" asks a leading entertainment attorney who represents mostly new, young bands in their publishing and label negotiations. "Yes, if you have the leverage to get it. When all is said and done, the majority of bands that are signed fail, and you might as well have some money in the bank for going through the hassle. But you should go for it knowing that it has nothing to do with whether you're actually going to have a hit record or a successful career."

In other words, a big advance is no guarantee the label is going to push buttons for you. In fact, the two biggest acts of recent years, Alanis Morissette and Hootie & the Blowfish, signed relatively low-ball deals in the \$75,000 to \$100,000 range.

(After the albums hit, the A&R executives who brought them in—Maverick's Guy Oseary and Atlantic's Tim Sommer, respectively, were rewarded handsomely, Oseary with a piece of the company and Sommer with a reported million-dollar bonus and a brand new \$40,000 BMW, a gift from the band itself.)

Indeed, a big advance doesn't guarantee that you'll ever see the money at all. Despite selling three million copies of their first two albums, Collective Soul was broke and back home living with their parents, practicing in a rented \$700-a-month cabin, and living on \$150 a week apiece. Then there was TLC, who racked up ten million sales with their first two albums and ended up filing for bankruptcy. With this in mind, it's no surprise that Wendy Day of the Rap Coalition, a Brooklyn-based organization

that educates hip-hop performers about music industry basics, has observed that even a gold-selling artist can wind up working for less than twelve dollars an hour, the national average, after a label recoups its production, tour support, and promotional costs.

So what do you do? As noted at the beginning of our story, your choices are to check out of this madhouse and come to terms with a world that values office grunts more than artists. Or you can do what you know, in your heart, is the right thing, which is to keep practicing and playing. Even among fringe players, there remain proven strategies for survival. One is simple frugality. With the advent of the \$600 home studio, it's a lot cheaper to make a record than, say, a movie. (Of course, this can be construed as the ultimate argument against jumping into the film business, an even grimmer pit than the one we inhabit.) It also helps to maintain a will of iron. Marty Thau, who managed both the New York Dolls and Suicide and also discovered the Fleshtones, credits their success to "a specialized talent coupled with a willingness to persevere and survive, and maybe go through some tough times. You have to keep a global outlook and develop certain off-the-beaten-path markets."

Wayne Kramer has done all this and more. "I don't have any delusions about being the next big thing," he says. "I just want to be able to work, put out a record every year, meet my expenses, tour. There should be a way I can do this. I'm motivated by the fear of ending up homeless and sick. I'm scared to death of ending up on the street with no money. The myth is, if your picture's in the newspaper, you're somehow independently wealthy. On one level, I accept this lifestyle; my idols were always struggling jazz musicians, beatnik poets and writers. But there's a disproportionate number of people making fortunes while the people I consider my comrades, the musicians, end up with nothing."

Contributors: Roy Trakin is senior editor of Hits magazine.

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"ONE FOR YOU, NINETEEN FOR ME"

How British Rockers Get Rich

Not everybody in this racket of ours is a scuffling musician or obscenely rich executive. A few of us—a *very* few—are obscenely rich musicians. And if you happen to be an obscenely rich *British* musician bent on keeping your income secret, our advice is: Watch out for Cliff Dane. As founder, chairman, and entire staff of Media Research Publishing Ltd., Dane dedicates himself to telling the world just how much the aristocrats of rock in the U.K. actually make. His latest findings were published last May in *Rock Accounts*.

But why just British acts? "Because many leading British artists structure their financial affairs around limited companies," Dane explains, "which by the provisions of local company law have to file accounts in specified detailed formats in the

public domain."

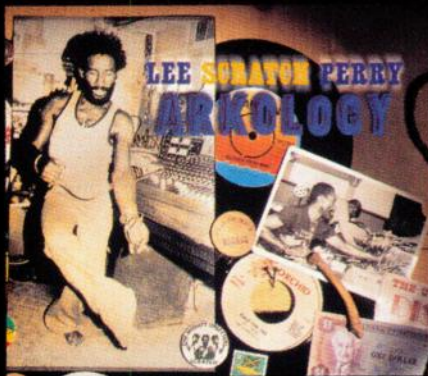
Dane has examined the stats on more than five thousand acts—enough to draw some provocative conclusions. "Over the last five to ten years, major artists have seen a very substantial increase in disclosed earnings," he reports. "Whilst this is due in part to cyclical up turns in the careers of certain artists, it also derives from ... the globalization and concentration among the major record companies, the switch to compact discs, and the general boom in sales and publishing revenues, (which) means that major artists can now command superior deals to those negotiated a decade ago, with larger percentage splits and advances."

According to Dane, there are several areas where British bands chasing big

bucks need to succeed. First is the international dimension: "The U.K. can only be a base for an assault on the world market," he insists. "Otherwise earnings will stall at the £1-2 million level. Thus, whilst Blur's *Parklife* can sell maybe a million copies in the U.K., Eric Clapton's *Unplugged* managed over seven million in the U.S."

A healthy division of income through recording royalties, music publishing revenues, and touring is also essential. At times a strong performance in one of these areas can compensate for weakness in others. "Touring, for example, can become the main income source for bands like the Rolling Stones," Dane says. "They toured regularly through the Eighties and Nineties, during periods when their record sales were not that spectacular, and the

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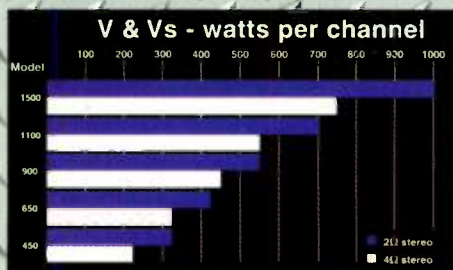
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gross receipts around the world from their *Voodoo Lounge* tour were probably close to \$300 million."

Tour sponsorship and merchandising has a lot to do with this kind of success. "Simple Minds received merchandising advances of around £500,000 for major tours, and Dire Straits Overseas Ltd. disclosed merchandising income of £1.4 million in 1992-'93," Dane notes. "And though amounts paid for tour sponsorship and product endorsement are generally not published, Dire Straits Overseas did disclose £3.7 million of sponsorship income in the period of their *On Every Street* tour."

The corporate downsizing trend is reflected in British music; we see more hired guns and fewer permanent band members on tours and recordings. More British artists also seem to be cutting back on management expenses by taking over their own business affairs. While Dane sees this as a dubious long-term strategy, he also points to contractual clashes between bands and their managers as a potential

source of disaster.

"Artists need to retain greater control over their recordings, both artistic and financial, than their predecessors in the Sixties and Seventies. Given the increasing evidence of longevity of rock music,

ROCK STAR DISCLOSED EARNINGS (1995)		
RANK	NAME	AMOUNT
1	Elton John	\$19,892,000
2	Sting	\$14,622,700
3	Eric Clapton	\$14,450,650
4	Phil Collins	\$13,630,700
5	George Harrison (Beatles)	\$7,745,350
6	David Gilmour (Pink Floyd)	\$6,021,300
7	Yoko Ono (Beatles)	\$5,582,800
8	Roger Waters (Pink Floyd)	\$5,473,050
9	Paul McCartney (Beatles)	\$5,332,000
10	Rick Wright (Pink Floyd)	\$4,250,100

arrangements whereby artists license their recordings for a fixed term rather than sign away the copyright in perpetuity obviously would make it possible to work out more lucrative deals in the future. In gaining favorable contractual terms opportunity can be a key factor: George Michael benefited from DreamWorks' need to launch their label with a major artist. Corporate developments in the industry, such as Seagram's takeover of MCA, should present an environment that favors major artists."

Then there are taxes. For British acts the situation is nowhere near as draconian as in the Beatle era, when certain slices of investment income could be taxed as high as 98 percent. Even so, many of today's players minimize their tax burden by reducing the amount of time they spend on British soil. This is one reason why the Republic of Ireland, with its tax exemptions for "creative" people, has become a popular residence for Def Leppard and other expats from nearby England.

So who *are* the richest Brits in the biz? Dane offers two answers, classified as disclosed earnings and what he calls "fantasy" earnings. The former is based on figures filed by the artists, estimated from company pension contributions plus net dividends recorded in 1995 (see Table 1). By this reckoning, the Rockefeller of British rock is **Elton John**. Though he lists **Sting** in second place, Dane notes that his music publishing and songwriting income may

not be included in his disclosed income, in which case his haul may surpass John's.

Who is the top-earning band in England? None other than our old friends, the **Beatles**. Thanks to an increase in his salary as a director of Apple Corps Ltd. and earnings from his own H.O.T. Records Ltd., George Harrison was the group's leading money-maker. All three surviving members, along with Yoko Ono, enjoyed substantial income through sales of *Live at the BBC* and the *Anthology* series.

"Fantasy" earnings offer a more complete yet less verifiable picture of total income. Dane derived these figures by supplementing the figures in Table 1 with estimates based on a variety of sources, including record sale stats from the RIAA and equivalent European organizations, annual statements from record labels, *Pollstar* compilations on North American tour receipts, articles and ads in *Billboard* and other trade magazines, and *The Value of Music*, a study of the U.K. music industry published in late 1996.

As shown in Table 2, the **Beatles** top this list, due mainly to huge sales for the *Anthology* series. **Oasis** comes in second as England's richest current band, thanks to royalties from *Morning Glory* and ample income from concerts.

There's lots more in Dane's book, from how money makes its way through the British music industry into the pockets of artists, to financial portraits of major performers. Write Dane at Media Research Publishing Ltd., Lister House, 117 Milton Rd., Weston-super-Mare, Avon, BX23 2UX England, fax [011-441-934] 64402, or you can email him at cliffd@premier.co.uk.

—Robert L. Doerschuk

ROCK STAR "FANTASY" EARNINGS (1996)		
RANK	NAME	AMOUNT
1	The Beatles	\$81,120,000
2	Oasis	\$42,250,000
3	Queen	\$33,800,000
4	Pink Floyd	\$25,350,000
5	George Michael	\$21,970,000
5	The Rolling Stones	\$21,970,000
7	Sting	\$20,280,000
8	Rod Stewart	\$18,590,000
9	Bush	\$16,055,000
9	Simply Red	\$16,055,000

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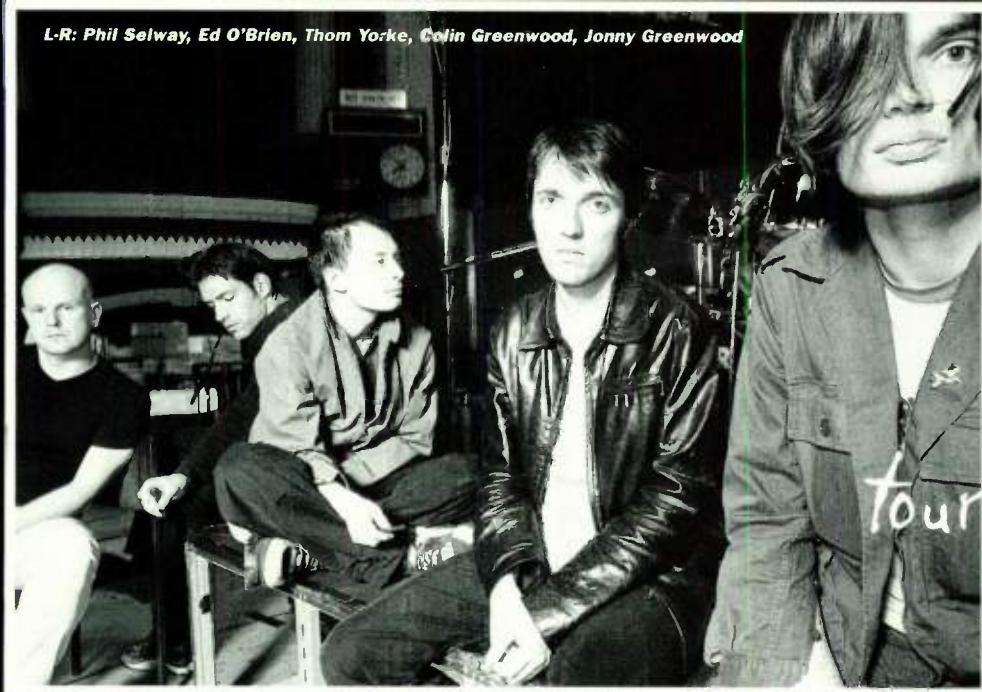


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RADIO HEIGHT

L-R: Phil Selway, Ed O'Brien, Thom Yorke, Colin Greenwood, Jonny Greenwood



On
in Spain
with five
musicians for whom the little
things mean a lot

It was just a simple question. I was sitting under a tent on the patio roof of the Claris Hotel in Barcelona with Radiohead's guitarist Ed O'Brien, bassist Colin Greenwood, and drummer Phil Selway on a warm May afternoon, and I was wondering which member of the band played the intricate guitar line in 5/4 time that begins "Let Down," a song on their new album *OK Computer*. • "That's Jonny," O'Brien said. Jonny Greenwood, Colin's younger brother, is the Oxford, England-based quintet's resident multi-instrumental prodigy. He's also Radiohead's closest approximation of a traditional rock lead guitarist—though you only need listen to his playing for a moment or two to realize that his approach is anything but traditional. • Okay, so Jonny's playing the 5/4 line at the beginning. How does the rest of the band know when to come in? Everyone besides Jonny is playing in 4/4, but on the album version, the song starts at a seemingly random point. Where's Phil going to start the count-in when they play the song live?





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In response, Selway took a deep breath. The corners of his mouth curled up in a bemused smile. Slowly, he spoke. "Well, that's the whole mystery of it, isn't it?" The smile became a wide grin, and the sentence ended with a loud laugh. "Actually," he revealed, "there's an acoustic guitar at the beginning that was mixed out for the album."

And that's when the argument started.

"We should try to have Thom play the acoustic guitar again at the beginning," said O'Brien, with a touch of heat in his voice. "I really think so." Thom Yorke is Radiohead's frontman, the one with the spiky hair and the voice that can travel from Johnny Rotten-ish bite to Bono-esque passion to choirboy purity in a matter of seconds.

"It sounds good without the acoustic on the album, though," Colin piped up.

"Yeah, but we didn't ever start the song like that before," Ed replied. "Doing it live, we need to establish that tempo."

"Otherwise, the drums might not lock

on," Phil warned.

"Exactly—it's so dodgy. With the acoustic, we'd know when to come in." Ed was pushing the point hard. It was obvious this wasn't the first time this debate had raged, and it probably wouldn't be the last. For a few seconds, all three members were talking loudly at each other. Then, just as quickly as it had started, the conversation ended. Everyone stopped. Selway looked around at the other two, turned to me, and said with a smile, "So there's your answer."

This brief exchange reveals a lot about Radiohead. First, it demonstrates how sensitive they are to each other, even while arguing. No throwing chairs, no kicking over tables, no yelling, just sensible making of points, and then a spontaneous end to the conflict as soon as the volume got too high, as smooth as if it had been pre-orchestrated.

Second, this three-way argument shows just how important the little details are to Radiohead. Guitar parts, drum grooves,

PLUCKY

When it comes to electric guitars, **THOM YORKE's** a Fender man, with a collection including a Seventies Telecaster Deluxe, a Seventies Jazzmaster, a recent Japanese-model Tele with stacked humbuckers, and a customized American Standard Tele with a Strat neck, one humbucker, and an active preamp control. His fave amp's also a Fender, a two-year-old Twin Reverb, to be exact, and he plugs into it by way of a ProCo Turbo Rat distortion pedal and a Boss digital delay. For the acoustic numbers, Thom hauls out a Yairi DY-88 acoustic/electric. When asked about strings, he replies: "I use them." **JONNY GREENWOOD** plays a slightly rewired Fender Telecaster Plus (the extent of its rewiring is apparently a trade secret) and a mid-Seventies Fender Starcaster through Fender Deluxe 85 and Vox AC30 amps. Effects include a Marshall Shredmaster, DigiTech Whammy, Small Stone phase shifter, Roland Space Echo and a few homemade boxes, including the tremolo pedal that Jonny uses on "Bones." He tickles the ivories of a Fender Rhodes electric piano, a Korg Prophecy, and a FATAR keyboard controller

connected to an E-mu Classic Keys module. **ED O'BRIEN's** list of electrics includes a '67 Gibson ES 355, two recent-model Fender Stratocasters, two Nineties Rickenbacker 360s (one six-string and one 12-string), and a guitar handmade by his tech called The Plank. Among his many effects are a Lovetone Meatball, DigiTech Whammy, MXR Phase 90, three Boss half-rack delays, Korg A2, Dunlop Tremolo, plus the AMS digital delay heard at the end of "Karma Police." It all runs into a Mesa/Boogie Tremoverb and a Vox AC30. Both Ed and Jonny use .010-gauge Elite strings. **COLIN GREENWOOD** plays two Fender Precision basses, one '72 and one '77, through a Gallien-Krueger 800RB head into an Ampeg SVT 8x10 cabinet, "with a backup 400RB just in case the 800 ever goes down mid-rock." A late-Sixties 20-watt Ampeg combo is also employed for over-drive purposes. Other electronics include a dbx 160T compressor, an Alembic tube preamp, a Companion distortion pedal, and a Novation Bass Station synth for "Climbing Up The Walls." He uses Elite Stadium Series strings. "They're great for playing clubs," he says. **PHIL SELWAY** pounds a four-piece Premier kit with Zildjian cymbals. He also uses Zildjian sticks, size 5A.

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World Radio History

slight manipulations of an arrangement—it's all cause for constant discussion, and all five members are involved. When it comes to playing or talking music, their enthusiasm is rarely dampened.

That enthusiasm, that attention to detail, and that intra-band sensitivity, along with a large amount of imagination, talent, and skill, have helped bring Radiohead to an enviable point. After two albums that have sold in the millions worldwide (the second of which, 1995's *The Bends*, also garnered critical raves by the truckload), they've become an Important Band in the eyes of their record company, EMI (Capitol in the U.S.). And so, for the followup to *The Bends*, they were granted the freedom to record wherever and however they liked, with whomever they liked, and take as long as they liked to do it. The band returned the favor with *OK Computer*, a self-produced collection of twelve songs that takes the daring sonic and structural experimentation of *The Bends* at least five steps further. It's a thrill to listen to, but it doesn't exactly sound like it's going to knock the Spice Girls out of the Top Ten.

Regardless, EMI welcomed it with open arms—or so we've been led to believe.

Which brings us to Barcelona. The dark, mysterious medieval streets and grand tree-lined boulevards of the Catalan city have long made it a favorite band destination, and so they chose to play a couple of warmup shows here, debuting some of the *OK Computer* songs onstage. "We didn't want to start in the U.K.," Yorke explains, "because we had a lot of obligations in Europe. But now, because we're a big band, you see"—he breaks into a grin—"we can say to people, 'Actually, we're *not* going to play all around Europe for a month going through airport X-ray machines and getting sterile, so we'll choose a city.' And that was Barcelona."

Before my interview with Thom and Jonny, Jonny takes several photos of me; he explains they've been doing this with everyone they've met on the trip. And the whole shebang, including our interviews, is being filmed. No one knows exactly what'll be done with the footage, maybe a documentary sometime down the line. All they know is that this period of time has to

be captured for posterity. "Nothing's been documented ever in our history," O'Brien explains, "and this week is something we wanted to document."

Why? "Don't you think it's unusual? We're in this beautiful city, and all these [press] people have flown in just to see us. It's a pretty bizarre time."

The buildup to this "pretty bizarre time" began back home in Oxford, when the members of Radiohead decided they didn't need a producer for their next album. Instead, they'd buy their own recording equipment, set up their own studio, and do the work themselves, with technical help from their engineer Nigel Godrich. "That came from us realizing we enjoyed recording our B-sides [with Godrich in their Oxfordshire rehearsal space] more than the traditional recording," Jonny says. "Moreover—which is a word I've never used before—our B-sides were occasionally better than anything we'd done. So someone was trying to tell us something."

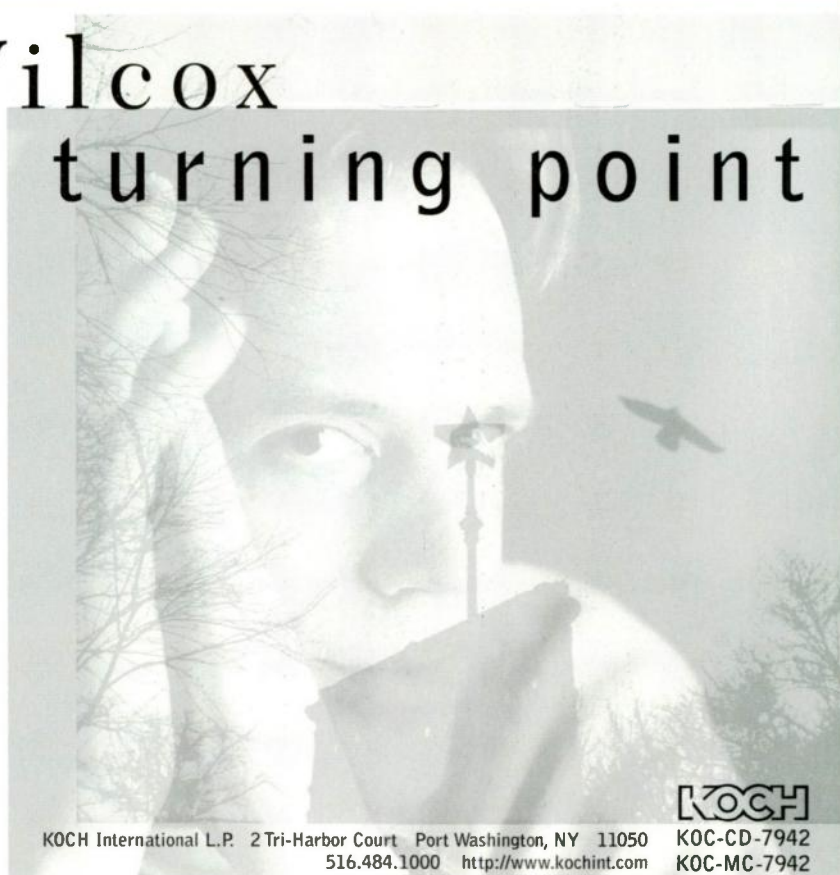
"And we listened," Thom adds.

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"Actually, it was our manager who dropped this bombshell by saying, 'Look, you should buy your own gear.' We'd been talking about producing ourselves anyway, but this whole trip of getting your own gear, being responsible for it, putting it in cases, you take it where you want, it's your shit—that was the most exciting idea. We'd been listening to Can at one point, and they used to record that way, in big rooms with bits of blankets and beds and shit on the walls, and Holger Czukay would endlessly tape, tape, tape and then splice it together. It just sounded amazingly cool—basically four-track gone badly wrong.

"The one thing we knew we wanted was a huge plate [reverb]—that was Jonny's idea. Other than that, we got whatever Nigel told us to get."

It should be noted that the gargantuan reverb on Thom's voice during "Exit Music (For A Film)" was not produced by a plate, but by the stone floor of a large hall in actress Jane Seymour's fifteenth-century mansion near Bath, where the band did some later tracking. "The initial recordings were done in our rehearsal space," Thom says, "and the problem with that was we could go home when we wanted. It was impossible to commit yourself to it when you knew you had to go home and do the washing up. So we had to find somewhere else, but we didn't want to be lab rats in a studio, and someone mentioned this house. It was in a valley stuck on its own, nothing anywhere, and it had the most enormous ballroom. I spent my whole time there terrified, because everything constantly reminded you of your own mortality."

The Bends was distinguished by sterling production from John Leckie, for whom the band's had nothing but good words. The relationship was clearly a pleasant one, so why not continue it? "We wanted a clean slate," Thom replies. "It would have been more meaningful if we'd chosen a different producer," Jonny says. "The fact that we chose none at all is no reflection on John Leckie. It's a reflection on producers generally, I suppose. But then we keep meeting them and they say, 'I'd love to produce you but you patently don't need me.' Scott Litt said this to us, which was a lovely compliment."

Would the band ever consider using a producer again? Ed: "Only if there was

something a producer could do that we knew we couldn't do. If we needed a Teddy Riley-type sound, we'd hire him," he says, at least partly in jest.

Still, the band is humble about the achievement. "We didn't put the word 'produced' on the album," Thom says. "We put 'committed to tape,' because that's what it was."

Of the twelve songs on *OK Computer*, four may already be familiar to Radiohead fans. The bleak but melodic "Subterranean Homesick Alien" (featuring Ed on Rickenbacker 360 12-string and Jonny on Fender Rhodes), the gorgeous "Let Down," and the album's sole heavy rocker, "Electioneering" (written in double dropped-D tuning), were all tackled by the band live over the last year or so. The dramatic "Lucky" was first featured on the War Child charity album *Help*, released in 1995. The band hemmed and hawed about including it on their own record and even attempted to remix it, but eventually went with the original version. "The song deserved a bit better than what it had gotten," Jonny says. "It was indicative of what we wanted to do," Thom adds. "It was the first mark on the wall."

This large amount of older numbers doesn't mean the Radiohead songwriting well has run dry; it simply indicates that, as Thom puts it, the age of a composition "wasn't very relevant. What was more important was how we approached the song, how to find a way in. Nigel said all through the sessions, 'It doesn't matter how you get there as long as you get there.'"

OK Computer's newer songs are riskier structurally, loaded with odd numbers of measures, disorienting key jumps, and time-signature skips. ("We have gotten a bit sick of the number four," Jonny comments. "Like the Pixies did. I mean, is repeating that riff a fourth time going to make your life any better?") The album's leadoff single, "Paranoid Android," is a six-and-a-half-minute, four-movement epic that sounds like it owes something to Seventies prog rock. Jonny, who was responsible for writing a large chunk of it, downplays that influence: "I've been trying to find some good prog rock, but every last record is ter-

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rible, sadly, except for the use of Mellotron." Prog or not, the song was recorded in three sections at different times, and then grafted together later. "Our working model for it was 'Happiness is a Warm Gun,'" Thom reports. "I didn't honestly think it was going to work, so when we put it together it was a shock."

Although Thom remains the band's principal writer, Jonny's contributions have increased considerably. "It used to be hard to say, 'Listen to this,'" Jonny says. "You know, 'I can't sing a note, but what do you think?' But something like the 'rain down' section of 'Paranoid Android' was worth doing—it just needed a context."

"I always get to a point in a song where I can't go any further," Thom says, "and I'm not the world's most interesting or interested guitar player; it always has been a totally functional thing for me. So to respond to something that someone else has put forward is far more exciting."

Creating the sounds to go along with the songs was apparently more than half the fun for Radiohead. The opening track, "Airbag," features a distorted drum track that sounds almost as if it were looped—if only there weren't so many variations. Yorke chuckles when asked about it. "It took two days to put that track together," he says. The band weren't happy with the drums as they were played live, so Yorke, Selway, and Godrich used a Mac and an Akai S3000 sampler to cut up, rearrange, and generally manipulate them. "We took inspiration from the way DJ Shadow cut up and reassembled rhythm tracks," Phil says. "I went in and drummed for a quarter of an hour, and we took the three seconds' worth of any value out of it, and then put it back together to form this angular track that you don't generally get from programming or loops."

"We were trying to imitate an old demo that we'd done when we were very young, with Jonny putting a drum track through his Moog, sampling it, and then fiddling with the EQ," Thom says. "I wanted something that sounded organic, so you'd never think it was a loop." As for the song's funky, lurching bassline, Colin swears it wasn't a product of the recording console's mute button; he really played it with all those gaps. "I was thinking originally I

might put something else in those empty spots, but we never got 'round to it."

Another particularly noisy track, "Climbing Up The Walls," is distinguished by the use of several tape loops (Thom: "We had tape running around the room on that one"), as well as a bassline played by Colin on a Novation Bass Station synth. "There's no distortion on it; it just gets that squelchy analog sound naturally. Jonny told me the notes to play," Colin says dryly, "cause I'd never seen a keyboard. Now for the gigs we've got colored dots on the keys so I don't get it wrong." "Karma Police" ends with an explosion of distorted guitar peppered with ugly dropouts, courtesy of a rackmount AMS digital delay. "That machine malfunctions wonderfully," says Thom. "Ed played the notes that started it, but basically it's the machine playing itself." Ed explains that the noise was made by turning up the delay's regeneration, then slowly turning the delay speed down.

That sonic burst leads directly into "Fitter Happier," basically a bit of poetry written by Thom and intoned by the Macintosh, using its built-in SimpleText voice generator. "It came out like a shopping list," Thom says. "I write stuff like that all the time. I wouldn't normally use it, but I responded to the way the computer voice pronounced it. That voice seemed a logical extension of this list mentality."

Did anything in particular inspire the making of these trippy, disturbing soundscapes? "We've just been obsessed by [Miles Davis'] *Bitches Brew*," Thom says. "That is a record for the end of the world."

Jonny: "But it's the drumming and piano playing we get off most on, rather than the guitar and trumpet."

Thom: "Well, [John] McLaughlin must have felt a bit fucking lost. Two drummers, two Fender Rhodes players, and all those bloody wind instruments. But the sound of the trumpet, the delays on it and stuff, is what Jonny's trying to do with guitar."

"My ears get bored quickly," Jonny says. "Sometimes a guitar plugged into an amplifier isn't enough. I can't play trumpet, so it's not going to sound *that* much like *Bitches Brew*. We don't have access to an orchestra, so it's not going to sound much like Morricone, either. But you aim for these things."

"Aiming and missing is the whole

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premise really," Thom continues.

As we speak, the first finished copies of *OK Computer*, complete with final art, are being examined by the band's management in an adjoining hotel suite. Everyone's excited that MTV has agreed to play the animated video for "Paranoid Android," and that the single, despite its length, is being broadcast regularly on Britain's Radio One. Still, as Ed points out, this is a bizarre time for the band. "We've just finished the record," Colin says, "and we haven't got a clue what's going to happen."

"If a band has a successful album and then they start making records that don't sell," Ed says, "that's when the record company's really got you, because they've given you this taste of what it can be like, and they're like, 'Now you're not selling, we're going to tell you what to do.' It would be scary if that happened."

"We'd get put in prison," Colin says, "or be shot." He laughs as he says this, but the underlying uncertainty is real.

There's no detectable uncertainty in the band's performance later that night. Radiohead's first Barcelona warmup show takes place at a nightclub called the Zeleste, which is in just about every respect exactly the same as any rock club you've been to, except that the stage is a little bigger. The computer-spoken words of "Fitter Happier," on tape, greet the band as they come on; the Catalan youth don't quite get it but cheer anyway.

Before the adoring crowd, Thom confesses, "This is the most fucking nervous we've been in about two years." Honest as this remark may be, it's in no way borne out by the playing. Though tonight the band don't always achieve the inspirational heights that they can attain in concert (a show I saw them play at New York's Mercury Lounge a couple of years ago ranks in my all-time top five), they're still better than 97 percent of what you'll see out there. It's a well-paced set, interspersing new songs with favorites from *The Bends*. The band's obviously pleased with at least some of the new material live; the break back into the heavy guitar riff toward the end of "Paranoid Android" gets everyone smiling.

It helps to have a solid frontman, and Thom Yorke is perhaps the most compelling in rock today. On older tracks like *The Bends*' "Bones," he still does his familiar writhing, gesticulating, Mr. Uncomfortable act; on newer ones, he's more subdued but no less engaging. With just a tiny wave of his hand or a subtle vocal inflection, Yorke conveys several acres' worth of emotion.

While Thom holds the audience's attention front and center, Ed and Jonny go about their work like old-fashioned alchemists. For "Lucky," which opens the set, Ed scrapes the strings above the nut of his Strat with a razor blade; during "Exit Music" he does a good job of approximating the background noise of the album version by methodically scratching his pick along the strings over the fretboard, from sixth string to first. On "Bones" Jonny bends over his tremolo pedal, turning the rate knob manually; the act seems invested with magical significance, like an ancient ritual. Throughout the show, Jonny frequently jumps from guitar to keyboard and on to more unusual instruments—xylophone on "No Surprises," transistor radio on "Climbing Up The Walls." When he does step out on six-string, he snaps his picking arm back violently after every gutsy stroke; no wonder he's wearing an arm brace for repetitive stress disorder.

The band gets called back for three encores. "The Tourist," the slow, spacious album closer, is a standout. It benefits, as so many Radiohead songs do, from a fine guitar arrangement. For the final part of the song, Ed strums chords, Thom plays a melody line on the low end of the neck, and Jonny solos up top. The parts mesh beautifully; this is that rare three-guitar band that is always tasteful, never overbearing. Ed, Thom, and Jonny stay out of each other's way and each other's frequencies. Sounds easy. It's not.

One song is conspicuous by its absence from the set list. And that is—you guessed it—"Let Down," the song with the five-against-four line that Ed, Colin, and Phil were arguing about earlier. Evidently, the band still hasn't agreed how the song should start. But knowing Radiohead, I imagine they'll get it sorted out soon enough. And there's little doubt that the song will be better for the effort.

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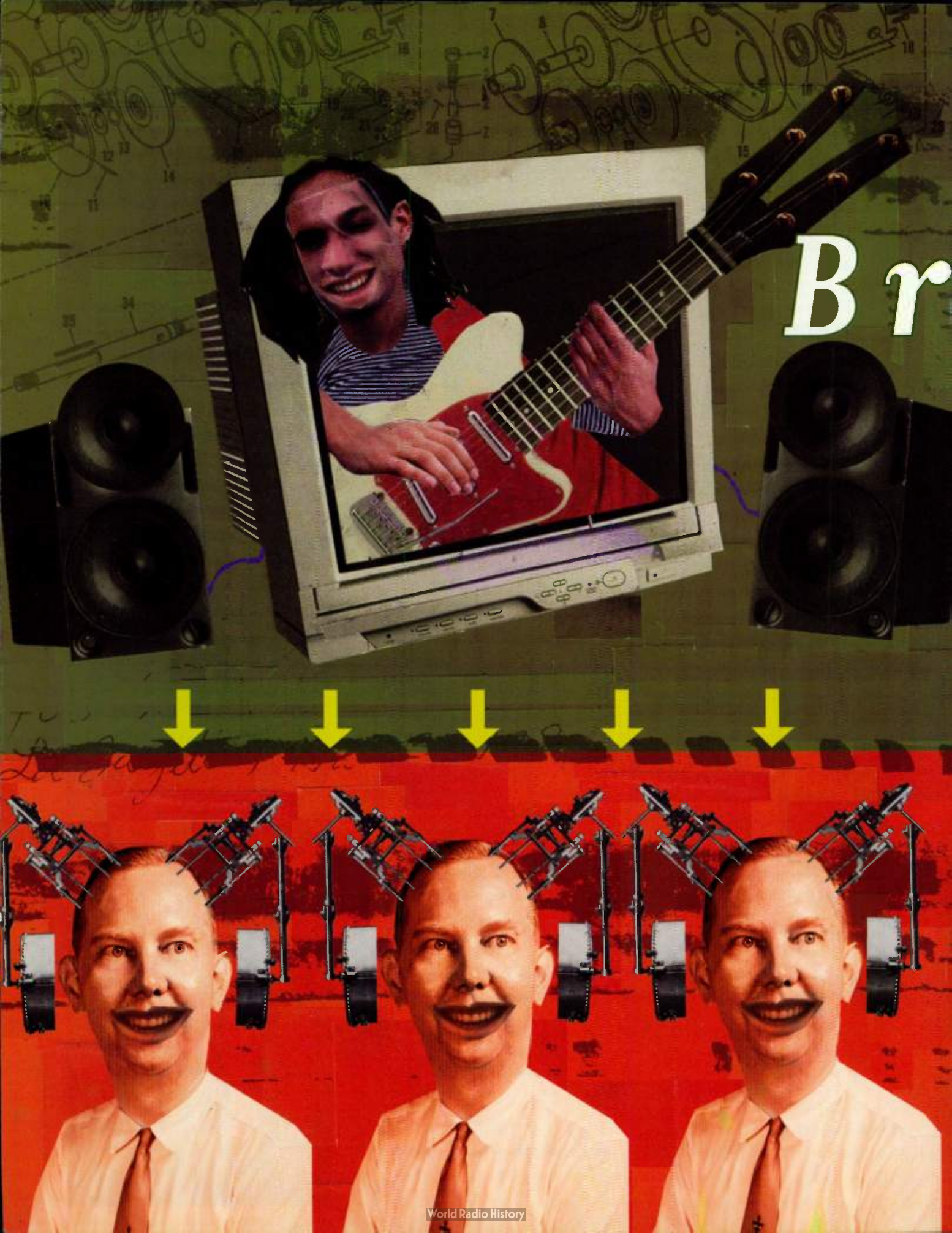
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about fifteen minutes to download a three-minute audio file in traditional formats. Streaming works around this problem and offers audio quality that has improved in one short year from a poor AM radio crackle to near-CD fidelity.

Impressive as these innovations are, the change we're looking at is even bigger. We're at a point now where the traditional underdogs of the music business—the musicians, and especially the mavericks and nonconformists—can seize control of their careers online.

But how do you do it? There are three choices for Web-hungry bands. One is to get yourself signed to a label with a Web site of its own. The Tragically Hip, for example, are offering the U.S. an Internet-only release of their new live album, *Live Between Us*, distributed by N2K's Music Boulevard (www.musicblvd.com); the label's Rocktropolis site (www.rocktropolis.com) staged a live cybercast last May to promote the effort. The band plans to take an "Internet Tent" on the road with them to post interviews and exchange email with fans.

The second path is to pay a fee to add your music to an established site. They'll help you with the necessary technical stuff and usually create your page for you. This is the easiest way to go, but the tradeoff is that you'll be one in a crowd of artists, with little creative control. Some sites, like Rockonline (www.rockonline.com), offer this service for free. For others, like Kaleidospace (<http://kspace.com>), artists post for a small fee; the staff sets up the page and helps you link to various search

engines. This site has excellent online distribution and promotion as well as secure online ordering.

Perhaps the most ambitious of these sites is Internet Underground Music Archive, or IUMA for short (www.iuma.com). This site boasts more than 300,000 accesses per day for approximately nine hundred online musicians who post videos and music as well as exchange email with their audience. Fans can also post reviews and purchase products online. The basic service, available via a submission form on the site, costs \$240 for one year. It includes one song (under five-and-a-half minutes, plus a twenty-second excerpt), up to two pages of text, and two images. Extras include video, stats on your page, additional songs, images, and text, all available for small fees. Labels can also join for \$660 a year, which includes two full IUMA band sites.

The third path is to create and post your own site and attract people to it through word of mouth, advertising, links with other pages, or whatever other means you can devise. Of course, self-produced sites require a significant investment of time to keep the pages updated, as well as a variety of computer skills and programs to get it up and running. There's a parallel to the difference between recording your album at home and going into a pro studio with engineers: You have more control if you do it yourself, but the hassle factor may not make it worth the effort.

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Liquid Audio (www.liquidaudio.com) have developed a method by which audio files transmitted over the Net can be compressed and tagged with copyright information. "We're offering a total music commerce concept, from preview to purchase," says the company's electronic marketing manager Tom Murphy. "We're not only raising the bar on a fidelity level; we're dealing with asset protection, copy protection, and those many issues you need to deal with when people download music and burn it onto a CD."

At the heart of the system is Liquid Audio's authoring system, Liquifier Pro (\$995). This software, which runs on Windows or as a plug-in for Digidesign Pro Tools on the Mac, optimizes your files for Internet delivery and encrypts a copyright watermark without affecting the audio quality. These invisible digital watermarks will identify the original purchaser of the music, thus discouraging unauthorized resale of downloaded files.

Liquid Audio's "watermark" is actually the ISRC (Industry Standard Recording Code) copyright tag, which is added to music files during the recording process. When a user buys a file online, he or she is assigned a "key," which lets them play the file and make a certain number of copies from the computer into which the file was downloaded. The number of copies that can be made is set by the original provider of the music. This key also prevents copying the music to different computers. During the downloading process, the user is also assigned a second personalized watermark, which identifies him or her as the original purchaser. In theory, the files are now copy-proof. But even if a hacker somehow gets past the key and makes ten thousand illegal copies of a file to sell, each of those copies will still bear the original buyer's personalized watermark.

Several online sites have leaped at the brass ring being dangled by Liquid Audio. IUMA, which currently sells CDs on consignment for artists posted on the site, is about to launch a program of distributing sound files through use of Liquid Music Server (\$20,000), which enables the delivery of high-fidelity audio produced and mastered with Liquifier Pro. (The Liquid Music Server also allows online music transactions via various Internet

providers and automatically tracks copyright/royalty management.) And N2K (www.n2k.com) was planning a market test for July's Plug-In conference in New York as we went to press.

"We're going to get feedback from our customers, who are already pretty savvy online," says Chris Bell, N2K's vice-president of creative technologies. "We want to work on viability and program flow. By the end of the year we plan to be doing this on a larger scale. There's a lot of customization going on in terms of integrating Liquid Audio with our commerce engine and customer service. 'e-mod' is our end-to-end process, beginning with discussions with artists all the way to dealing with royalty issues, and Liquid Audio is a very important enabling technology that sits right in the middle of it."

Technology aside, perhaps the most important aspect of the Web is the community that it has created. People all over the world can suddenly share ideas, gripes, and common interests with a keystroke or two. This is where the power of the medium really lies—in the potential as the ultimate tool for grassroots communication.

Roger Black, formerly art director for *Rolling Stone*, and now president of the Interactive Bureau (www.iab.com), is developing an online music site for launch later this year. "The record companies are still waiting for the next Beatles, but I think that's very unrealistic," he says. "People aren't listening to music along the lines of their generation or geographic location any longer. Our entire society—and its musical taste—has diversified tremendously; everything has become very granular. Artists who can sell thirty thousand records worldwide on the Net wouldn't have a chance going through traditional record company channels. They couldn't even get a deal. But now, on the Internet, they can make a very nice living by selling their music themselves online. That's why the record companies are in a state of panic. They're fucked, and they know it. I can well imagine that the David Geffen of the year 2000 will emerge from the Internet."

"Before we were on the radio, people who were surfing the Net would come across other music pages that would have a link to ours," adds Jeff Beres of Sister

METAL

to

JAZZ...



"With Monster Cable, everything just sounds bigger and better... it's got this kind of 'otherness' that you can't really describe, but it's the same kind of thing that happens when you master a record." - J. of White Zombie



"When I play, I need the sound of my guitar to match what's inside my head. The cables I use are the link between my instrument, my audience and me. Monster Cable does that better than any other cable." - Lee Ritenour

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You wouldn't expect White Zombie's J. to share a stage with Lee Ritenour, or even the same page in a magazine, for that matter. J's make-your-ears-bleed style of metal and Captain Fingers' jazz finesse were never meant to inhabit the same worlds.

But these two accomplished guitarists have more in common than you might think. They both have a very distinct sound. And they're both very selective about the equipment they use to get it. That's why they wouldn't use anything but Monster Cable on their recordings and during live performances.

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Hazel. "That's how they'd find out about us. Now we have a section on our site where we link bands that we dig and pages that are cool, just like they used to do for us. All the bands start helping each other out this way, which is cool."

Nerissa Nields of the Nields (<http://pobox.com/~nields>) also values the community spirit of her band's Web site. "We've purposely made it very interactive. We see it as our home, and we go to it to see what our fans are interested in. There's a portion of the Web page where they can ask us all sorts of questions. We divide them amongst ourselves, then we answer them and post that on the site. There's also a section for our own band column, which we rotate every week; we write something or create a drawing or a cartoon to post. In addition, 'Nields Nook' is a chat area that we have up for our fans to talk with each other about us."

Keep in mind that if you want your music to be heard by this online community, people have to be able to find you. The Yahoo search engine lists more than

twenty thousand music sites, so searching for a specific piece of music can be an overwhelming task if you don't have the URL (the Internet address). Linking your site to a search engine is an important way to help your fans bookmark your site. This can be as simple as adding key words called META tags to the top of your HTML page. These META tags are seen by search engines as they scour the Internet in response to user requests. A user looking for "bluegrass" would discover your page if the word "bluegrass" was included in your META tag. (Because it tends to clog up the search process, though, it's considered bad Web form to overdo this, so be conservative in the number of words that you add to your META tags.) Some search engines also let you add your page to various search categories. Visit sites like Yahoo or Lycos to check out their policies for including your site in their listings.

There are other ways to let people know you're out there. Many bands include their URLs on all mailers and

mention their site from the stage. You can also check out chat areas and places where people post emails about music. Use your imagination.

As bandwidth becomes less of an issue, video will be more and more ubiquitous on the Internet. Like audio, videos can be formatted to stream to your computer, bypassing the necessity of downloading the whole file. Personalization is also a promising possibility. Companies like Firefly (www.firefly.com) will recommend music to their audiences based on preferences that the user provides. In this way, these recommendations are tailored to the taste of each individual user. "Push" technology will soon make it possible for you to receive recommendations—and music news that you alone might be interested in—without your even having to request it. These sound clips or information files will be waiting for you the next time you turn on your computer. Virtual reality and other goodies are still a bit out of reach, but it's just a matter of time before these and other exciting features are part of the everyday Web experience.

Major acts like David Bowie (www.davidbowie.com) and Todd Rundgren (www.tr-i.com) have released Web-only versions of their singles. Rundgren is also offering subscriptions to the recording of his next album: Fans will be able to download his latest studio cuts while the sessions are in progress, and hear the album as it comes together. Those who subscribe will receive the final CD as part of the overall package.

Sure, nobody's yet fully exploited the potential of this medium, but that's why it's so exciting. Somewhere out there is an artist who is going to use the Internet in a totally innovative way. If you let your imagination run with the possibilities, it could be you.

Contributors: Robert Raines (www.robert@rrcreative.com) is a musician and Web site designer. He created the recently launched Barnes and Noble site. His CD of electronic blues was released this summer.

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World Radio History

1 Veillette MK III baritone 12-string

According to people who ought to know, the Veillette MK III baritone 12-string (\$1650) is the first instrument of its kind ever. This semi-solidbody acoustic/electric (with Alvarez 500A piezo bridge transducer featuring three-band active EQ) has a 26 1/16"-scale maple neck bolted on to an alder body with figured maple top. The fingerboard's maple too, and offers that most endearing of features, a zero fret. Tune from C to C, B to B, A to A, or whatever makes you want to rumble and jangle the most.

► **Veillette Guitars, 2628 Rte. 212, Woodstock, NY 12498; voice/fax (914) 679-6154.**

2 Kurzweil K2000VP

Keyboardists craving vintage analog synth sounds might want to take Kurzweil's K2000VP (\$1995) out for a test run soon. For a limited time, the K2000VP will be sold along with a 30-disc library of classic ARP, Moog, Oberheim, Sequential Circuits, Roland, and other synth sounds. Even without the discs, though, there's plenty to enthuse about: 61 keys, 24 voices, 32-track sequencer, DSP software, 3.5" high density disk drive, 64MB of RAM and PRAM, and sampling capabilities. ► **Kurzweil, c/o Young Chang America, 13336 Alondra Blvd., Cerritos, CA 90703-2245; voice (310) 926-3200, fax (310) 404-0478.**

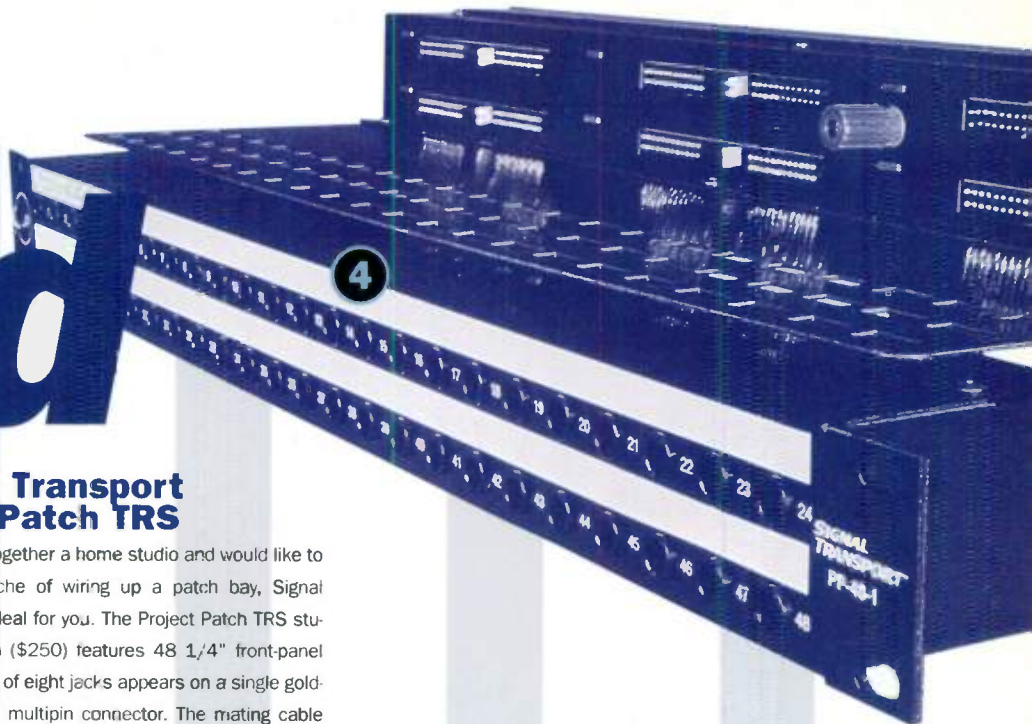
3 Evans EQ1 coated bass heads

Due to popular demand (yes, drummers, your opinions *do* matter!), Evans has reissued its EQ1 coated bass drum head. (Actually, the heads are frosted, not coated—makes them look cooler in photos.) The EQ1 is a single-ply, dry-vented head with an internal E-ring; the frosting dampens the head's vibrating plane, giving it less attack than a normal bass head but a fuller low end. It's available in 18" (\$46.10), 20" (\$49.70), and 22" (\$54.70) sizes. ► **Evans, c/o J. D'Addario & Co., 595 Smith St., P.O. Box 290, Farmingdale, NY 11735; voice (516) 439-3300, fax (516) 439-3333.**

fast for



ward



4 Signal Transport Project Patch TRS

If you're putting together a home studio and would like to avoid the headache of wiring up a patch bay, Signal Transport has a deal for you. The Project Patch TRS studio wiring system (\$250) features 48 1/4" front-panel jacks. Each group of eight jacks appears on a single gold-plated, rear-panel multipin connector. The mating cable connectors are stackable end to end for easy subdividing into any combination of two-, four-, or eight-channel circuits. There's no need to solder or crimp a single wire.

► **Signal Transport, 3219 Pierce St., Richmond, CA 94804; voice (510) 528-6039, fax (510) 528-6043.**

5 Cakewalk Pro Audio 6.0

Those Cakewalk people just keep adding interesting stuff to their software. Version 6.0 of Pro Audio for Windows 95 includes several new wrinkles: CFX, which gives you pro-quality effects like pitch shifting, compression, reverb, flange, and delay directly inside the program; StudioWare, which lets you create software control panels for any hardware that supports MIDI; and support for all Microsoft DirectX-compatible audio plug-ins. All this and more for \$399 (\$499 for the Deluxe version, which includes a two-CD-ROM collection of multimedia tools).

► **Cakewalk, P.O. Box 760, Watertown, MA 02272; voice (617) 926-2480, fax (617) 924-6657.**



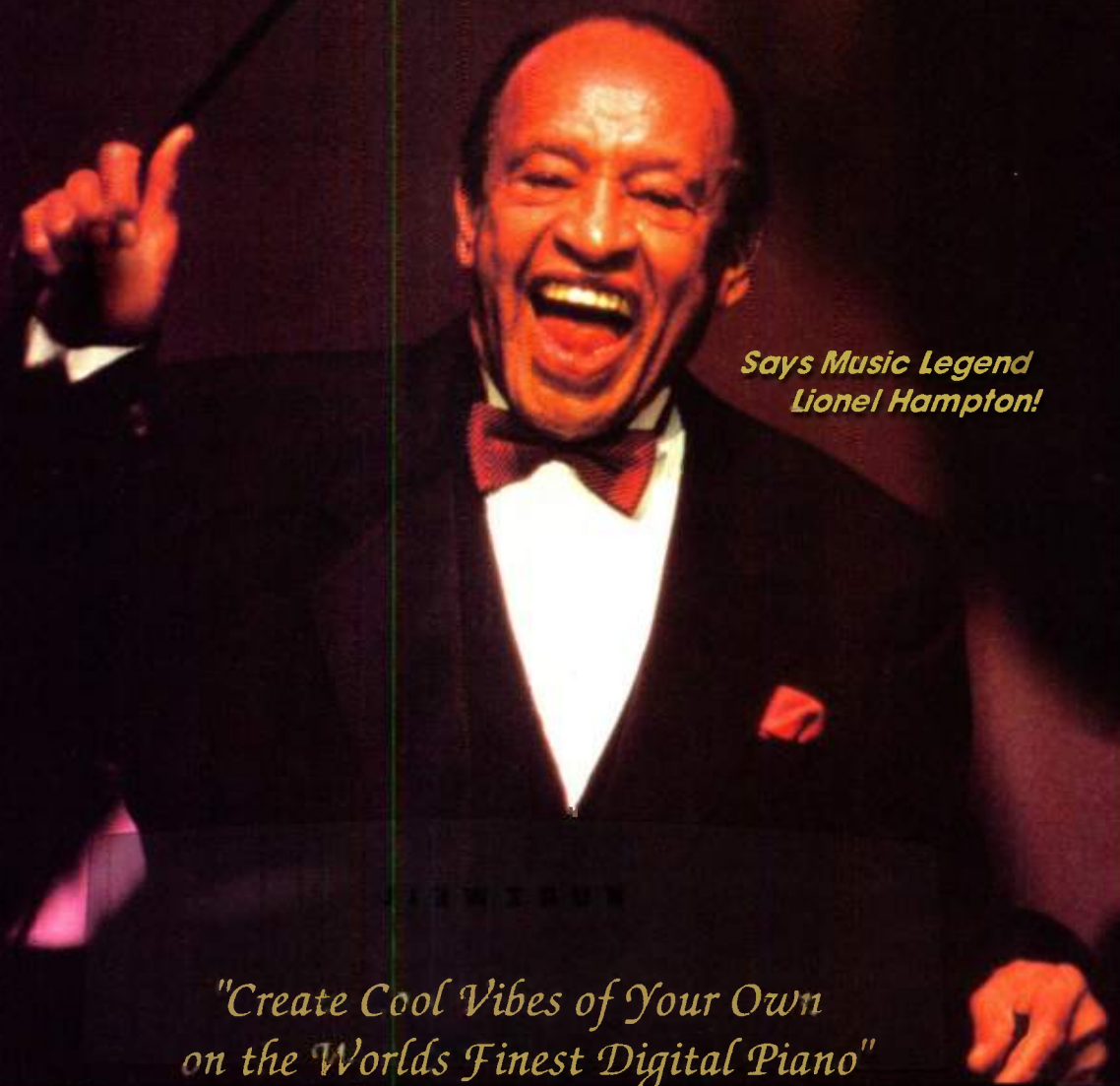
6 Galaxy Audio Far Outlet

Playing an outdoor gig? Need power? The Far Outlet (dig the name) Personal Power Station from Galaxy Audio is a fully self-contained portable source of 110-volt, 60Hz household current. About the size of a lunchbox and lightweight enough to carry in one hand, the Far Outlet provides up to 250 watts continuous and 400 watts peak power. It's guaranteed clean as a wall outlet (which, by the way, is where you plug it in to recharge it), and it goes for \$299 (battery not included). ► **Galaxy Audio, 601 E. Pawnee, Wichita, KS 67211; voice (316) 263-2852, fax (316) 263-0642.**



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Ah, semantics. In a recent, otherwise coherent interview, Paul McCartney spoke of how many of today's young musicians are "tributing" (*sic*) the Beatles. It is perhaps in this spirit that a Silicon Valley company called Desper Products claims that their

concept is simple, although it reads like magic: The left-right stereo image is altered so that it wraps around you in a 270-degree arc instead of lying in a flat plane—even though you're listening from just two speakers that are physically in front of you.

This psychoacoustic sleight of hand is accomplished by proprietary means, but basically here's how it works.

by howard massey

SOMETHING SPATIAL IN THE AIR

entry it is. The company is probably best known for its computer surround sound development (a slew of sound cards and PC speakers use a simplified form of this technology), although they have also maintained a line of high-end recording products, such as Pro Spatializer and Spatializer-8. These have quietly served as a secret weapon in the hands of top-level studios and engineers, and have been used on Grammy-winning albums by the likes

Desper Products' Spatializer Retro adds new dimensions to your audio.



The Spatializer Retro

technology enables musicians to happily "spatialize" sounds in the comfort of their home studios. And precisely what would you use for that purpose? A Spatializer, natch. (If anyone out there hears of a Tributizer, please let us know.)

Actually, I shouldn't be so flip, because the truth is that I love surround sound, which is what this is all about. And Desper's version of it is impressive, making their Spatializer Retro one very cool product. The

Stereo source material is fed into the Spatializer's processor, where certain midrange frequencies in the left-right difference signal are extracted and enhanced in a process which includes selective phase manipulation.

This signal is then recombined with the original "dry" signal and fed to a conventional speaker pair. The result is that some signals which are panned hard left and right seem to come right out from in front of the speakers and appear on either side of you, or even slightly behind you.

Depending on the source signal you feed in, the effect ranges from subtle to downright spooky, but the bottom line is that the sound is enhanced in an interesting and unusual way.

The Spatializer Retro is Desper Products' first foray into the home/project studio market, and a most welcome

of Michael Jackson, Bonnie Raitt, Aerosmith, and Gloria Estefan. But these products also had a very steep price tag (they've recently been discontinued) on the order of six grand and up, depending on configuration. Their demise is probably attributable in no small measure to the introduction of the Spatializer Retro, which carries a list price of just \$649 even though it boasts professional studio specs and includes much of the same technology used in its predecessors.

The Spatializer Retro also has a refreshingly uncomplicated design, with almost all of its complexities



hidden beneath the surface and away from the user interface. In fact, the front panel of this single-rack-space puppy sports just one big knob, two switches (one for bypass comparisons and the other to check mono compatibility) and two smaller knobs (used simply to set input levels). It's the big knob (simply labeled "Space") that does all of the work: The further clockwise you turn it, the more processing is applied. It's that simple, and you'll be up and running in minutes.

In tacit acknowledgment of the wide range of environments in which the Retro may find itself, both input and output jacks appear on standard 1/4" connectors and accept both balanced and unbalanced plugs. There's an input level selector (-10 or +4) which allows the unit to interface with any kind of mixer or tape recorder, and there's even a handy ground lift switch which can be engaged if you hear a nasty ground loop hum. (This may occur if your system isn't grounded correctly.) Ground lift switches are commonly found on direct injection ("DI") boxes, but this is the first signal processor I've seen that sports one—kudos to Desper for thinking of it! Just about the only thing missing from Retro's rear panel is a digital input/output, but that's admittedly a lot to expect from any product at this price point.

There are three basic ways that you can interface the Retro with your mixer. One is to send signal to it from a stereo bus or subgroup outputs and to return signal into a couple of spare input channels or effects returns. This is actually the best technique because it allows you to selectively route only those signals which are to be spatialized—simply send those channels into the stereo bus or subgroup. But this will work only if the stereo bus is separate from the mix bus, and not every mixer has this kind of flexibility. Alternatively, you can strap the Retro across mix bus inserts (assuming your mixer has this feature) or you can simply place it between the mix outputs and the input of your two-track. If you use either of the latter two configurations, all signal will always be passing through the Retro and you can decide which sounds are to be spatialized by panning them either to the extreme left or right—remember, it affects only those signals on the outside of the stereo spectrum. Of course, it's not the greatest idea in the world to always have to send all your signals through any device (the idea is to keep the signal chain as short and uncompli-

cated as possible, since every processor adds some degree of noise and distortion to the signal), but the Retro's audio specs are quite good, and in practice I found the signal degradation to be absolutely minimal.

There's a price to be paid for every good thing, and there are actually dual penalties imposed by the spatializing process, especially when it is carried out to an extreme. One is a reduction in mono compatibility; since it is the outside signals that are being enhanced, those components panned more to the center (typically, lead vocals, kick drum, and snare drum)

This is what home recording in the Nineties should be all about.

can start sounding relatively weak. This can, however, be easily compensated for in the mixing or even in mastering by simply increasing the levels of center signals slightly. (The Retro's front-panel Mono switch lets you check for compatibility as you work the Space knob.) The other sonic penalty is tougher to deal with—it's a general frequency "smearing" of the overall sound, with individual components losing their sonic definition. Again, this tends to occur only when the Retro's Space control is cranked too hard—used in reasonable doses (set at or around the twelve o'clock position), neither of these artifacts will present much of a problem.

The Spatializer Retro doesn't work on all signals panned to the outside edges; in fact, it is quite frequency-specific, affecting mostly midrange sounds—those in the 400Hz to 2kHz bandwidth, with "hot spots" at 500Hz and 2kHz. Generally, vocals, keyboards, and reverbs occupy this frequency range, and if you route a complete two-track mix to the Retro you'll usually find that those are the signals that are mod-

ified to the greatest extent. I experimented by spatializing tracks off Eric Clapton's *From the Cradle* CD and found that Chris Stainton's keyboards, which were usually recorded in stereo and panned hard left and right, were greatly enhanced, seeming to float in front of the speakers. In contrast, Clapton's vocals and guitars, which were almost always panned center or near center, were almost entirely unaffected. In other cases the Retro tended to work mostly on reverbs, which are often hard-panned, sometimes increasing their presence to an unpleasant degree and muddying the overall sound. In general, however, I found that small doses of spatialization tended to improve the ambience of just about every CD I played through it—and that's no mean feat.

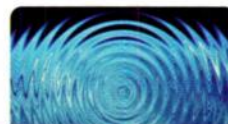
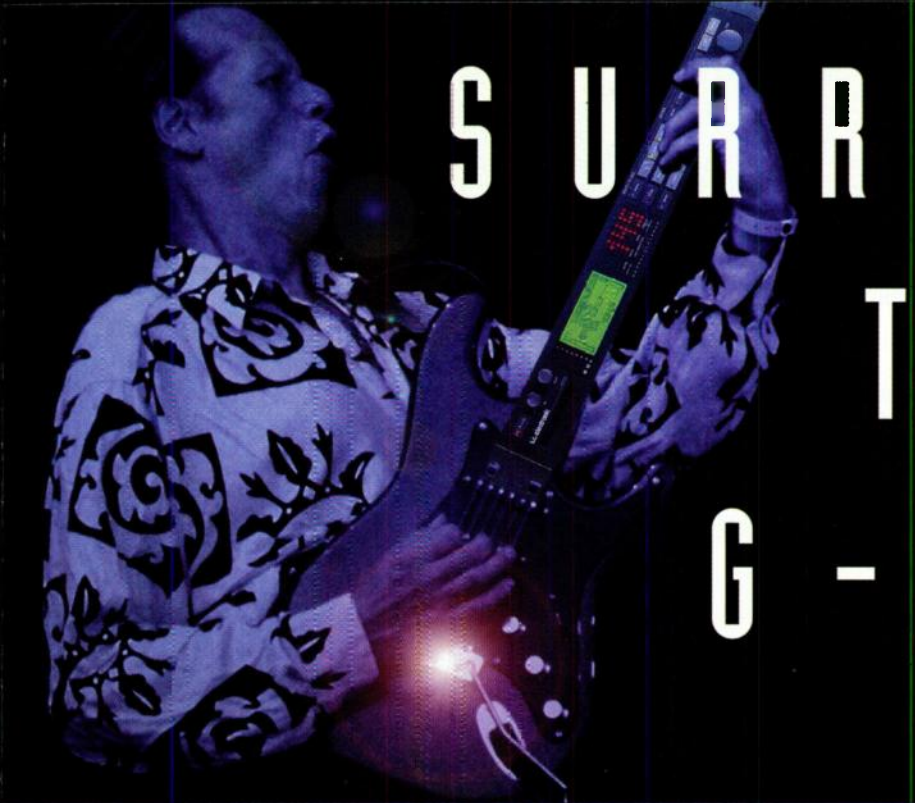
But the Retro is not designed primarily for acting on complete two-track mixes, though you can use it—sparingly—as a kind of *pièce de résistance* in final mastering. It's more effective to use it as a mixing tool, selectively sending one or two signals its way so that they will stand out from the crowd. Not surprisingly, spatialization works really well on backing vocal and keyboard tracks but hardly at all on drums and bass. It doesn't seem to have as much impact on guitars, though it does wonderful things to guitar effects such as echoes. I dialed up the "Detuned Ekos" preset on my Lexicon PCM 80, patched a distorted lead guitar solo (recorded in stereo) through it, and spatialized the entire signal. The effect was okay but kind of muddy. Then I experimented by spatializing only the return from the PCM 80, leaving the original guitar signal alone, and the result was sheer magic; the echoes were swirling around my head while the solo itself retained its cutting edge and sonic definition. Now this is what home recording in the Nineties should be all about!

If I were in a punning mood, I might suggest that there is indeed something "spatial" about this product and that, if you can't pick one up at your local music store, you might consider having it sent to you "spatial delivery." Fortunately, I'm not in that kind of mood, so you'll just have to discover for yourself that the Spatializer Retro is one of the hippest new products on the home studio scene—easy to use, powerful, and unique—and a worthy addition to anyone's arsenal of effects.

Special thanks to Anu Kirk.



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Guided By Voices

home

by **bradley bambarger**
photographs by **melanie weiner**

studio

Perhaps no band merits a home-studio feature more than those titans of lo-fi, Guided By Voices. From a basement laundry room in Dayton, Ohio, Robert Pollard, Tobin Sprout, and their various cohorts have concocted sprawling soundtracks of pop nostalgia and abstract melancholy at a prodigal pace for more than 10 years. And even though they've graduated to real recording studios of late, Pollard still has that home-brewed sound swimming in his head, necessitating four-track futzing for one of the Steve Albini-produced tracks on last year's *Under the Bushes Under the Stars* as well as the inclusion of three basement tapes on the newest GBV opus, *Mag Earwhig!* (Matador). Sprout is no longer in the day-to-day, touring version of the band, but he and Pollard still spend time in Sprout's laundry room, putting rudimentary tools at the service of febrile imaginations.

"In the beginning, we never had much success with recording studios," Pollard says. "By the time you booked the place and got everything together, the spirit of what you wrote would be gone. With the four-track down here in Toby's basement, we could just come over and do it. The important thing was the immediacy and the economy. Plus, it was with the four-track that we came closest to getting the sound that we had in our heads. For some reason, you sometimes get a better vocal sound in a kitchen or bathroom or basement than you can in a big studio."

A good chunk of GBV's 10 albums and sundry EPs, 7-inch singles, and discographical miscellany was recorded on Sprout's four-track **TASCAM Porta One Ministudio** 1, with vocals and other detail work cut in his basement and full-band tracks taped in drummer Kevin Fennell's garage. But after employing the Porta One for several songs on his and Pollard's solo albums of last year, Sprout has retired it in favor of a **Yamaha MT8X** eight-track 2, which he used to cut the epigrammatic *Mag Earwhig!* tunes "Can't Hear the Revolution," "Are You Faster?" and "I Am Produced."

Several Guided By Voices tracks feature a distinc-

tive vocal echo, courtesy of Sprout's **Electro-Harmonix Memory Man** delay pedal 3. "It's got this real warm, Sixties radio tone," Pollard enthuses, "like on James Brown or John Lennon's vocals. That's a pretty fucking inspiring sound." The effect was first introduced on *Bee Thousand*'s "Hot Freaks," one of GBV's recording breakthroughs—which, typically, came at the expense of commercial considerations. "I was having a garage sale that day," Sprout remembers, "and Bob was yelling 'Hot Freaks' down here at the top of his lungs and chasing all the customers away." The Memory Man has borne a marking on the appropriate setting for "the 'Hot Freaks' sound" ever since.

According to Pollard, lo-fi gear and the limited palette of four- and eight-track recording can be liberating: "Making records like that forces you to be creative, like the Beatles." More than anything, he says, "records don't have to sound like a million dollars. They just have to capture the spirit of the music. A lot of bands spend so much time recording their songs when they should pay more attention to sequencing and the titles, the graphics and packaging—that's the art of it."

For recording vocals, Sprout has come to adore a **Conneaut Audio Devices Equitek E-100** tube microphone 4 for its warmth and presence, in league with an **ART Tube MP** mic preamp 5; he also employs a Shure SM57, a **Shure Prologue** 6, and an **Electro-Voice RE18** 7, which works well with the Memory Man on vocals. He has a new drum kit, a spare mid-to-late-Sixties Slingerland, and an old drum machine, the **Roland TR-505** 8. Sprout records drums and vocals in the laundry room (pictured) and tracks piano and guitars in the adjacent garage, which usually

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HOME STUDIO PRESENTED BY
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L: Tobin Sprout
R: Robert Pollard

holds a customized **Hiwatt 100** head ●, as well as a Sovtek MIG 100 head, a Gibson Hawk, a Fender Dual Showman, a Musicman 212-HD amp, and an Ampeg SS-140C amp. In the garage, Sprout also keeps a Yamaha PSS-270 stereo keyboard and a George Steck upright piano, which belonged to his great-grandmother and is at least eighty years old.

Sprout's main guitar is a Fender Telecaster (a '66 or '67, he's not sure), and he also uses an early-Eighties Gibson Les Paul Studio and a Fender Squier bass; Pollard strums an old Harmony semi-hollow-body. Longtime GBV guitarist Mitch Mitchell brings over his Les Pauls and Marshalls for that "'Heavy Metal Country' sound," Pollard says (referring to the psychedelic power ballad on the recent *Sunfish Holy Breakfast* EP), and Pollard's brother and frequent collaborator Jim brings over his Gibson SG on occasion. For guitar effects, they'll use a fuzz box sometimes but mostly like to "turn

it up really loud and get that natural distortion," Pollard says.

Sprout and Pollard spend most of their recording time working on vocal effects, at times even taping the band live on one track and using the rest for vocals. Besides the all-important Memory Man, Sprout's other processing gear includes an **Alesis MicroVerb 4** ● and an **ART SC2** compressor/limiter/gate ●. For monitoring and dubbing, his setup is decidedly retro: a late-Seventies **Yamaha CR-240** stereo receiver ● he's had since high school, a **JVC TD-W218** dual-cassette deck ●, a small, early-model **Advent** speaker ●, and an old **Pioneer HPM-900** speaker ●. (The other speaker shown is basically a paperweight.)

Although he's recording songs on his eight-track for his second solo album, Sprout says he's getting frustrated with his equipment and is considering an upgrade to 16-track ADAT. Pollard, too, is seeking more expansive sonics. "You can get some cool

sounds at home, but you can't get a room-filling big rock sound—although I think we got a bit more crunch on our records than a lot of lo-fi bands," he says. "Our challenge now is to go into a regular studio and make records while incorporating all the things we learned in the basement. Still, I'll probably always want to record some things here: short songs, acoustic things, stuff that has no chance of getting played on the radio."

Both husbands and fathers, Pollard and Sprout fully appreciate the advantages of home recording, with the wife and kids close by and a beer-stocked refrigerator that never closes. But they realize the disadvantages, too, what with the wife and kids close by and a beer-stocked refrigerator that never closes. "Once Mitch and I came home drunk at four in the morning and cranked the shit up at my house," Pollard says. "We wrote 'Postal Blowfish' and some other cool songs that night. But then my wife almost divorced me the next morning."

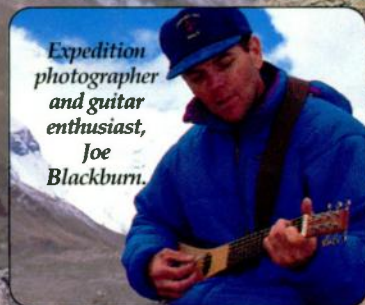
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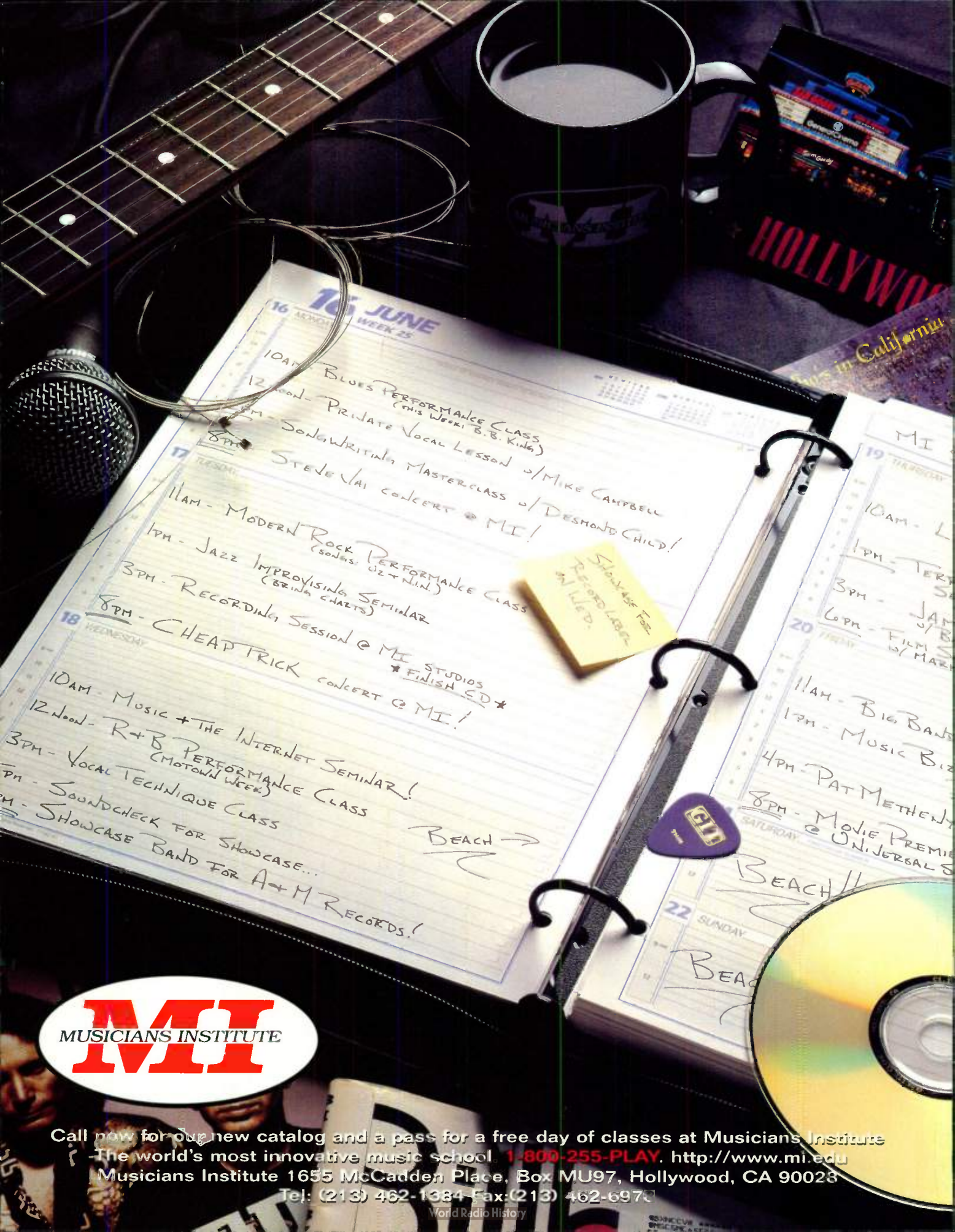
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In many respects, MiniDisc (MD) four-track machines look like typical four-track cassette recorders, with the standard trim pots, faders, pan and EQ knobs, and such. The two main factors that separate them from their older cousins are the media they use (digital MD-DATA discs, which will run you about \$15-20 each, as opposed to noisy, hissy analog cassettes which run a couple bucks a pop) and their disc transport system. The transport is where most of the innovative action occurs, whether you're talking about the jog/shuttle dial, with its array of inherently superior operational functions, or the menu of one-touch features that make older cassette-based machines look like Stone Age

by michael gelfand

relics. Fact is, each of the three currently available MD machines (Yamaha's MD4, Sony's MDM-X4, and TASCAM's Digital Portastudio 564) can make recordings that sound far superior to any recording you'll ever make on a cassette. Sure, due to the ATRAC data compression technology employed by these units (which maximizes disc storage

**Three MiniDisc
multitrack recorders
that can
change the way you
make music.**

space but also diminishes high and low frequency response), the audio quality from an MD recording isn't as crisp as the fidelity you'll get from a CD, but it's not far off.

These three machines share some basic performance

features and they all sound very much the same; though the Sony model is said to use a newer version of ATRAC than the Yamaha or TASCAM, I heard little or no sonic difference. There is compatibility between the three models in that disks recorded on one will play back on another model, but location points and other kind of marker data don't translate between models. Each unit offers at least four discrete input channels, and the Sony and TASCAM models offer supplementary channels as well; each of the four discrete input channels is equipped with variable gain and three bands of EQ. You'll also find effects send/return I/Os, selective monitoring (including group, cue, and

stereo), line-level I/Os, and jacks for headphones and footswitch. A short inventory of functions common to all three includes disc searching (like that found on CD players), track/section/song editing (like copying, dividing, combining, moving, reordering, erasing, and titling), manual and auto punch in/out with adjustable in/out points and pre- and post-roll lengths (the designated time period preceding and following the punch points), variable pitch control, an informational window to indicate signal levels, operational status/mode and time, and varying degrees of MIDI interactivity. Possibly the most amazing feature, shared by all three, is that you can bounce to a track that's already occupied; the machine simply transfers the already recorded data into a buffer and recombines it with the tracks you're bouncing. And since this ping-ponging is occurring in the digital domain, there's little signal degradation.

Yamaha's MD4 (\$1199) is the most compact and minimalist of the three MD recorders, but its small size and simplicity don't detract from its functionality. All of its buttons and knobs are clearly labeled and color-coded. Each of its four channels is fitted with 1/4" inputs, effective EQ knobs for high, mid, and low tweaking, and ergonomic faders. The master section includes level controls for stereo sub in, auxiliary return, and auxiliary monitor select (group, stereo, cue), along with individual cue level knobs and a stereo master fader. Both the stereo sub inputs and auxiliary returns can be used as additional input channels.

The disc transport section is easily the most feature-laden part of the MD4, so you'll need to have a secure handle on its various functions. Yeah, you might think your instincts are good, but trust me—trying to precisely adjust a locate point and changing the pre-roll time and volume before a rehearsed auto punch-in at a variable speed of -0.15 percent won't just happen.

The MD4's input and master sections are hassle-free, and the disc transport section is easy to use, although somewhat lean in the feature department when compared to the other two MD multitracks. The top-loading, manual-feed disc transport didn't feel as sturdy as the side-loading, auto-mechanized transports on the other two units,



Yamaha's MD4

but overall the MD4 is perhaps the easiest to operate. It has all the bases covered, though it doesn't come with all the amenities you might want, like XLR inputs, a jog/shuttle dial, undo/redo functions, or less limited song indexing. But these features come at a cost, and for the money, the MD4 (the least expensive of the three units) delivers plenty of recording and editing power.

If you judge Sony's MDM-X4 (\$1250) on looks alone, you might be fooled into thinking it isn't too refined. But guess again—this machine isn't fan-cooled just for the hell of it. Channels 1 and 2 are fitted with Neutrik balanced XLR inputs that also accept 1/4" plugs, and the MDM-X4 has 1/4" inputs for a supplementary Channel 5/6 that's equipped with a single fader, high and low EQ knobs, a balance knob, and group assign buttons. The rear panel consists of RCA jacks for stereo and monitor outputs, and individual jacks for MIDI (input,

output, and thru). Top panel features include two auxiliary outputs, two stereo pairs of auxiliary returns with their own group assign buttons and level knob (allowing dual use as additional line inputs), and pre-fader 1/4" outputs for channels 1-4.

The MDM-X4's side-loading disc transport is a cinch to use, with the most intuitive interface of the bunch. Edit and system buttons open up vast feature and parameter menus that are shown on the smallish LED window; navigating through the menus is easy via the jog/shuttle dial, and enter/yes and exit/no buttons let you input commands and/or adjust locate points or other settings.

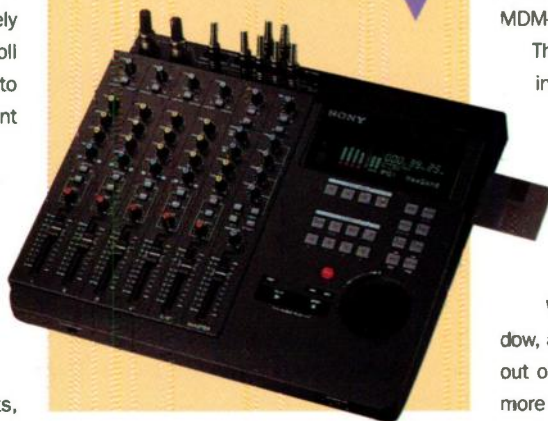
The auto punch in/out feature on the MDM-X4 takes some getting used to, as it either drops or raises the volume by 12dB at the punch point; this is user-definable. You can conveniently adjust the pre- and post-roll times that precede and follow your punch point in one-second increments, and you can use up to 11 location markers for editing or finding various points in a song on the disc. Unfortunately, you can only use 11 locate points per disc at a time.

It's hard not to fall in love with the MDM-X4's undo/redo functions, which keep you from being stuck with an unsatisfying rearrangement or a flubbed punch-in: Just press Undo and you're back where you started. I also appreciate the ability of the FS-A8 footswitch (included with the unit) to perform two user-definable functions at a time. The track/section/song edit features are great for experimentation prior to editing and they provide an extra measure of safety, but I found that the Sony took longer than the TASCAM 564 (\$1499) to initiate and execute some functions once their respective buttons were pushed. Even with the lag time, however, the MDM-X4 was easy to use.

The Sony MDM-X4 is a well-organized, incredibly versatile machine, and thanks to a superbly intuitive interface, it won't take you long to enlist its many editing features to perform sonic alterations you wouldn't have dreamed of making on a cassette machine.

With its tight layout, tiny backlit LCD window, and vast array of function buttons, the layout of the TASCAM 564 (\$1499) is somewhat more confusing than that of the other two

Sony's MDM-X4



machines—but that's what happens when you put so much technology in such a small package. Channels 1-4 are equipped with both XLR and 1/4" inputs, as well as variable gain; channels 1 and 2 even have dedicated insert jacks for outboard processors. Channels 5/6, 7/8, 9/10, and 11/12 are equipped with line-level, 1/4" inputs; channels 5/6 and 7/8 are fitted with balance knobs and high and low EQ knobs, and can be sent to the master fader or to cue monitoring. (Channels 9/10 and 11/12, intended for supplementary tracking, only have dedicated level knobs and are hard panned to either left or right on the master fader.) Channels 1-8 have their own faders and level knobs for effect returns 1 and 2, and along with knobs for master effects levels and cue, the 564 offers six different monitoring options, including independent left and right, effect 1 and 2, and external two-track input.

One notable extra on the 564 is its digital coaxial S/PDIF output on the rear panel; it can be used to digitally send your final stereo mixes to a number of external devices, including a DAT deck, a computer, or any other compatible digital-based component. This is a definite advantage over the other machines in that it allows you to keep your mixes in the digital domain.

The disc transport section consists of the jog/shuttle dial, dedicated index/edit keys (set, trim, clear), a title button, and a bunch of function and mode buttons, some of which are illuminated with colored LEDs when engaged. Level monitoring takes place on an LED meter above the record function switches and dedicated buttons for undo and redo.

Many of the TASCAM 564's functions and editing options are similar to those on the Sony MDM-X4, but how each machine gets you to the final result is different. For instance, the TASCAM's bounce forward function is like the Sony's mix write recording function: Each essentially lets you simultaneously mix up to four tracks of recorded audio (with titling and index markers) and bounce that mix to one or two tracks on the same disc in real time. The difference is that the 564 allows for undo and redo functions, meaning that you don't have to re-record the initial mix if you're unhappy with the results—you simply undo them.

Adjusting location points is different on the TASCAM as well. The Yamaha and Sony require more trial-and-error timing to adjust (although slowing the pitch helps considerably), while the

564 lets you specify your chosen point by using the trim key, which repeatedly plays back the selected segment of audio immediately preceding your locate point; a slight turn of the jog dial will let you set the point wherever you want it, and a clockwise turn of the shuttle enters your new location point. It's a bit tricky at first, but it works really well once you get the hang of it.

The lesson of these three machines is that the MD format can claim a rightful place beside

analog cassettes, open reel decks, digital tape, and hard computer disks. Each MiniDisc recorder stands on its own merit, and with a select collection of mics, a few good outboard effect processors, and some solid songs, you'll be able to use them to take even the most basic demo to previously unimagined heights.

Contributors: Michael Gelfand plays bass in various New York City bands and writes frequently for *Musician*.

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Electronic Musician Mag.,
Brian Knave • July 1996

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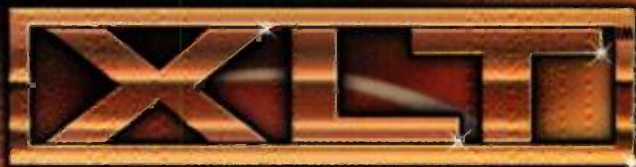
Pro Audio Review
Lorin Alldrin • Sept., 1996

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Feel the Buzz with Peavey's TubeFex

Like every other guitarist on planet Earth, I'm always looking for the perfect distortion sound—not too dirty, not too clean, but just right. Although many guitarists prefer tube distortion, that's not the only game in town. Solid-state distortion has its adherents, but computer-modeled distortion (where a micro-processor-based effects box runs an algorithm that emulates a particular type of distortion) is gaining ground. Each type has particular talents: Tubes have a fat, chunky ambience, solid-state is brash and aggressive, and digitally-modeled distortion is chameleonic in that it can approximate (although not necessarily duplicate) a variety of sounds, including tube and solid-state.

Unfortunately, all conventional distortion has one fundamental flaw: intermodulation distortion between the high and low strings. Simply stated, if more than one tone plays at a time, not only is there distortion on the individual tones, there's an additional distortion component from the interaction of the tones—and it doesn't always occur in a harmonically pleasing way. Maybe this is why so many guitarists play only the lower strings on power chords.

Get Down & Dirty

One solution is to use a hex pickup that has a separate output for each string, and distort each string individually through six separate distortion modules. This minimizes intermodulation problems, because each distortion module processes only one string at a time. But while this produces a cool sound, it's almost too polite and lacks the visceral grunge of more traditional distortion.

There's a middle ground: Split the guitar into two or more frequency bands and distort each band individually. Distorting the lows and highs separately gives a tremendously powerful sound from the lows, coupled with definition and presence from the highs. And since the lows don't mess with the highs, the sound is much more focused and less muddy. This is the same principle behind bi-amping loudspeakers.

One of the very few guitar multieffects that lets you do this is the Peavey TubeFex, which includes a "splitter" module. It's intended to split a mono signal for stereo processing or bi-amping, but we're going to do something a little different. We're also going to take advantage of the fact that the TubeFex provides more than one distortion type—namely, a traditional tube preamp as well as two different types of digitally-modeled distortion.

Here's how to create your own algorithm with the TubeFex. First use the splitter to split the compressor module's output into two channels. By setting the splitter into bi-amp mode, we can send the high frequencies to the left channel and the low frequencies to the right channel. The high frequency chain consists of tube distortion and a

Peavey's TubeFex

speaker simulator. The low frequency chain uses standard distortion and both 3- and 5-band EQ for post-distortion frequency shaping.

The key to all this is not to listen in stereo, but to mix the outputs back to mono again. This is easy to do with the TubeFex: Just use the mono out. If you have to set up in stereo to a console, then pan both channels similarly (e.g., to center).

Now play your guitar. Pretty great, eh? If you want to change the proportion of high distortion to low distortion, edit the splitter's Balance parameter. Also experiment with the bi-amp crossover frequencies for different effects. The compressor is just there to smooth things out a bit, so adjust its settings to taste. (If you can't enable all seven modules, add the compressor last.) A sustain setting of 2 gives a punchier sound.

Interestingly, if you listen to the high frequency chain only, it will sound like you're playing through a telephone; listen to the low frequency chain, and it's an ill-defined, massive bass blorp.

But combine the two together just right, and it's magic.

Contributors: Craig Anderton is the author of *Home Recording for Musicians* and *Multieffects for Musicians*, both published by AMSCO. He also hosts the AOL site "Sound, Studio, and Stage" (keyword: SSS), and lectures around the world on musical electronics.

by Craig Anderton

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Ask any great songwriter how they do what they do, and they'll be hard-pressed to explain. You need skill, to be sure, but also inspiration and the willingness to hear the inner muse and be open to new ideas. This may account for why many musicians don't write great songs—and, conversely, why many talented songwriters have relatively weak musical chops.

But every songwriter knows that it's rare when lightning strikes and all the elements are in place. A collaborator can help immensely, offering fresh approaches and objective

partially abandoned you.

Everyone knows about the power of MIDI sequencers: In conjunction with a multitimbral synth or sampler, they let you create complete orchestrations out of even the simplest musical idea. They also allow key transpositions, timing adjustments, and basic editing of regions and/or individual notes. But many of them also sport features that can spark the actual creation of musical fodder. Some, for example, allow individual tracks to be played backwards or even pitch-inverted. Don't laugh: Rumor has it that *Abbey Road's* "Because" was based on Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* played upside down, and it's entirely possible that an unexciting melody line played in one direction can turn into a dynamite hook when reversed. Other sequencers sport tools (such as the **Steinberg** Cubase Logical Editor, the **Emagic** Logic Transforms function, and **Cakewalk's** CAL programming language) that allow data to be radically altered by using

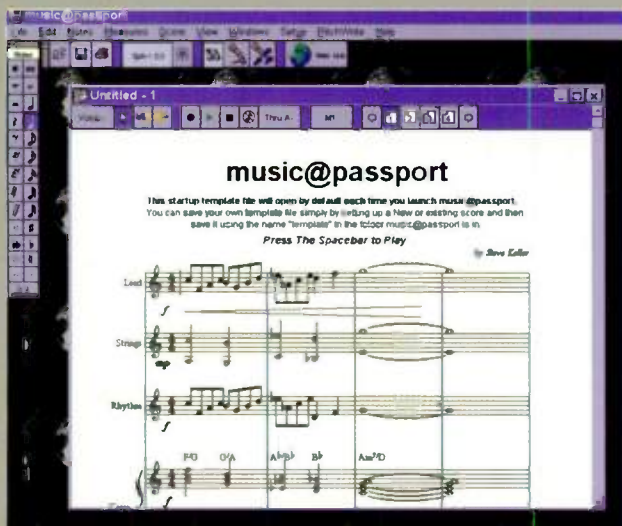
force you to play to a click—just play away, and the program's Sense Tempo function automatically creates a tempo map that follows your rhythms and sets the bar lines accordingly. (This is also a great program for technophobes, since it successfully keeps most MIDI operations under the surface and away from the user interface.) In a similar vein, **Opcode's** Vision has a Reclock feature that enables you to record your own click track after the fact, using it to line up data that was originally recorded freeform. Incidentally, most sequencers allow you to arrange short phrases into short "subse-

Software **for** SONGWRITERS

by **howard massey**

input. But if you've been unable to forge a great partnership with another musician (or even if you have), help is at hand from that beige or gray monster humming away quietly on your desk. Yes, this is the Nineties, and Computers Are Your Friend.

Well, maybe not exactly your friend (though it's probably only a matter of time before we start seeing "Lennon/McPentium" songwriting credits), but the fact is that there is a slew of powerful software tools out there designed to aid and abet in the songwriting process, and many of them can at least help get you over a hump by suggesting ideas and doing some of the sweat work if the muse has



Passport Designs'
music@passport

mathematical operations such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, scaling, and randomization.

The newest MIDI sequencers take a more free-form approach than their predecessors, making it easier to get into that creative groove. For example, the latest version (2.0) of **Mark of the Unicorn's** FreeStyle doesn't

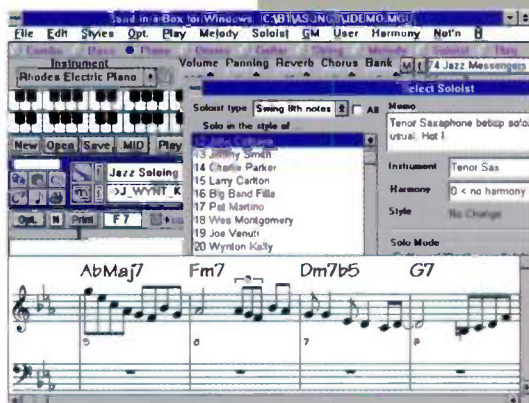
The muses are heard—if the program's right

quences" or patterns that can then be chained together for playback, but Vision utilizes a system that allows up to nine of these subsequences to be played back simultaneously, each triggered on the fly simply by typing a number on your computer's keyboard. This enables you to experiment with different combinations of musical ideas—a unique creative spark which can sometimes serve to fuel the songwriting process.

Computers can even make it possible for you to collaborate with live musicians who *don't* have computers. Most of today's MIDI sequencers offer notation features, translating your MIDI data into standard "dots on a line"

which you can print out and pass on to your partners. If you need to take things a step further, there are dedicated notation programs, such as **Passport Designs'** *Encore* and **Coda's** *Finale*, that can generate complete multi-staff scores from your MIDI sequences, with a full complement of engraver-quality features such as articulation and phrasing annotations.

What if you want to get into MIDI but you don't play keyboards? Fear not—there are specialized software products that let you sing or play a melody line acoustically (say, from a wind instrument) and then convert the signal coming from your mic into MIDI data. **Wildcat Canyon Software's** *Autoscore* does just that, adding an "Auto-score" MIDI input (and corresponding menu) to most Windows MIDI se-



quencers. The recognition can be a little iffy—you'll often need to go back and correct individual notes—but several handy features (such as Constrain mode, which limits notes to a user-specified scale) nonetheless make this a useful adjunct. **Passport Designs'** music@passport includes the same pitch-to-MIDI functionality and adds a basic sequencer/notation package, as well as a number of Web music publishing features. Other integrated hard disk recording/MIDI sequencing software packages (such as **Opcodes'** *Studio Vision Pro* and **Emagic's** *Logic Audio*, our July '96 Editor's Picks) perform this feat on prerecorded tracks, so you can hum a part into a cassette recorder in the middle of the night (when inspiration often strikes) and then convert it into a MIDI sequence in the morning (when the hangover usually lets up).

In the mid-Eighties, a slew of so-called "algorithmic composition" programs hit the market, each designed to allow a computer to act as a "ghost" composer (though one which wouldn't demand royalties). These included such titles as *M*, *Jam Factory*, and *Ludwig*, all built to spew out complete songs based on user-definable constraints (i.e., "stay in the

key of G minor for 32 bars, then modulate to F major and use a triplet feel in the melody but dotted eighth-notes in the bass line"). However, to my knowledge, they never actually produced anything commercially successful, and so they eventually faded away.

You'll find remnants of these programs in some modern sequencers (the "Interactive Phrase Synthesizer" in *Cubase* comes to mind), but their Nineties descendants—autoarranging programs like **PG Music's** *Band-In-A-Box*, **Soundtrek's** *Jammer*, and **Yamaha's** *Visual Arranger*—are much less intimidating and more user-friendly. All of these programs allow you to type in (or, in some cases, play in) a chord progression, after which they can automatical-

ly create complementary melodies, harmonies, bass lines, and drum parts, in any "style" you choose. Of course, each of these programs has its own strengths. *Band-In-A-Box* includes basic notation and can generate lead sheets; the latest version (7.0) can even generate solos in over a hundred styles, each based on the idiosyncrasies of well-known musicians such as *Herbie Hancock*, *Miles Davis*, or *Jaco Pastorius*. *Jammer* can compose its own chord progressions, which can be based on user-defined parameters or extracted from a melody line you enter via MIDI. And *Visual Arranger* takes a unique graphic approach that makes constructing complete songs as simple as connecting boxes onscreen.

Successful songwriting requires not just talent and discipline but the willingness to accept creative input from wherever it may come. The machinations of a computer, no matter how cleverly programmed, can never replace the endless subtleties of the human mind—after all, they were created by us. But in the right circumstances they can make a significant contribution to the creative process—and besides, they make great spel chekers! ☺

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records

Galaxie 500's greatest legacy is an intense ambivalence about being "entertainers"—such an inappropriate word for such a sensitive trio! On *Copenhagen*, a newly released 1990 show recorded shortly before the band's collapse, singer/guitarist Dean Wareham, drummer Damon Krukowski, and bassist Naomi Yang embody the tension between showbiz exhibitionism and loner self-consciousness that still looms large on the indie rock scene today. The Boston-based group's timid yet well-crafted sound came from a selective plundering of sources, which captured the poignancy but not the abrasion of the Velvet Underground, and the warmth but not the exuberance of R.E.M. Singing like Neil Young with his hand in a vise, and spinning delicate guitar textures, the somber Wareham makes an intriguing, albeit one-dimensional, protagonist. The kids loosen up when Yang takes the mic for a wonderfully delicate cover of Yoko Ono's "Listen, the Snow is Falling," freeing Wareham to coax cool, almost flashy noises from his axe. Otherwise, they're begging for a dose of caffeine.

Beginning with the wickedly funny Man Ray cover photo, Damon & Naomi signal a distinct change in sensibility on 1992's *More Sad Hits*, their first post-Galaxie outing, now reissued.

Though the monotonous acoustic guitars and impassive unison vocals suggest clueless souls under heavy sedation, a playful intelligence percolates behind the blind façade. Carrying a sorrowful languor to comic extremes, they ponder an airplane disaster in "E.T.A.," wallow in alienation on "Information Age," and expect the worst in "Once More," sighing, "I've been faxed bad news like this before." If the airy folk textures recall the dreamier side of vintage psychedelia, glimpses of passion offer an arresting reminder of the turmoil within. (See the bitter "This Car Climbed Mt. Washington" for details.) Damon & Naomi's deliciously wry style conveys major stuff like uncertainty and regret with rare eloquence.

Fast-forward to the present and new product in the form of *Pup Tent*, another attractive but unremarkable effort from Dean Wareham's Luna. Still working the passive/aggressive grooves he explored in Galaxie, Wareham at least makes a few token stabs at varying the menu these days. Producer Pat McCarthy treats his nerdy vocals with nifty effects on the vaguely funky "Ihop," while the quietly throbbing "Fuzzy Wuzzy" achieves a subtle, otherworldly power. Overall, though, Luna's approach is so unsurprising that it's easy to overlook the quartet's savvy songwriting. "Beautiful View," "Creeps," and "Beggars Bliss" would be snappy, irresistible pop tunes in bolder hands. Here, they're just tasteful background music.—*Jon Young*

Galaxie 500

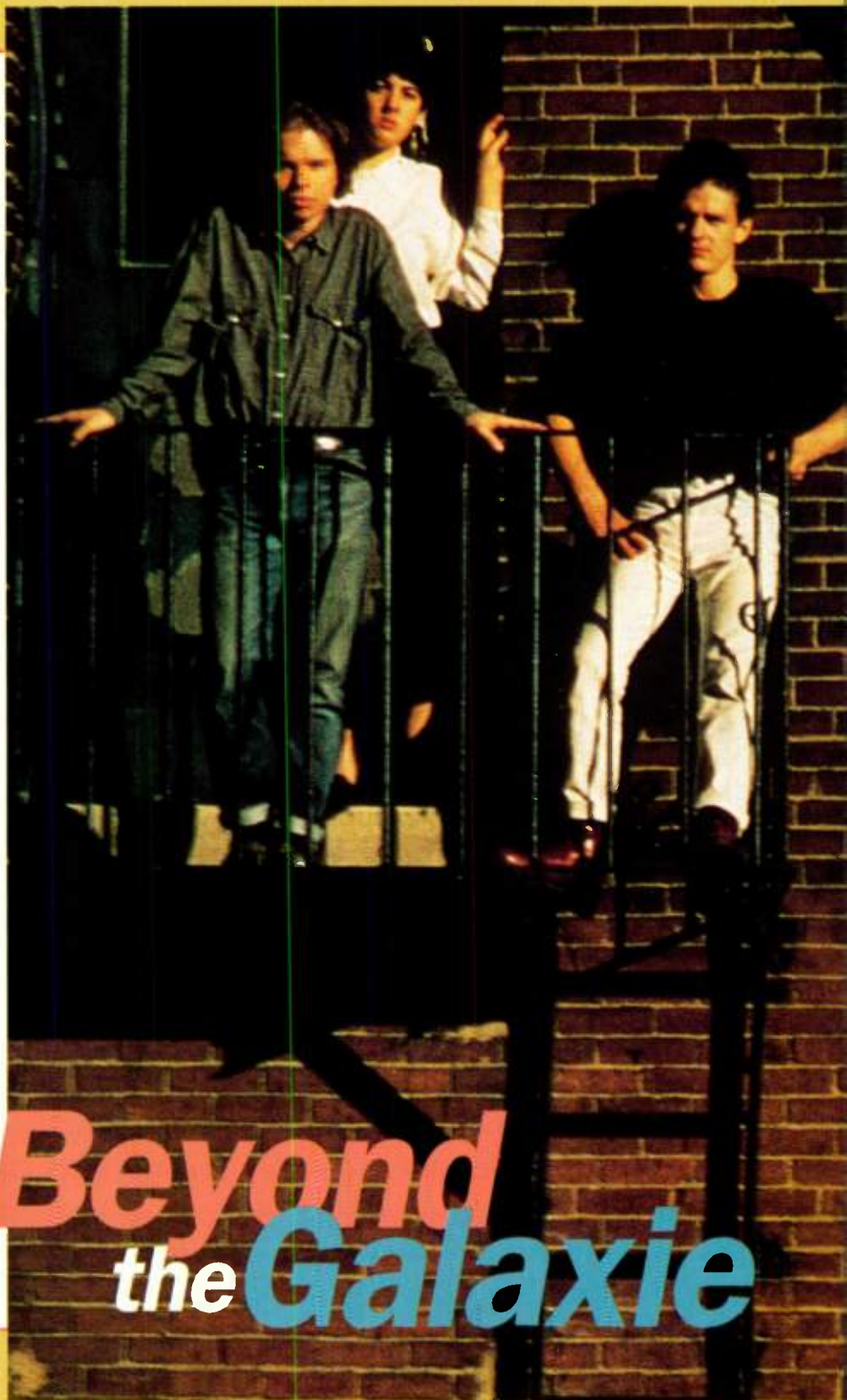
Copenhagen (Rykodisc)

Damon & Naomi

More Sad Hits (Sub Pop)

Luna

Pup Tent (Elektra)



Beyond the Galaxie

Throughout 311's three-album career the band has been known to promote good times over angst, so it's no surprise that scattered throughout the control room of Studio B at NRG Studios in North Hollywood are stickers that proclaim: "Work Free Drug Place." Over the old Neve board, by the tape machine, next to the two bongs sitting close to the mixer, these signs say all that need be said about the band's laid-back vibe. With the stickers, the casual attitude in the control room, and the comfortable space, this is in fact the perfect spot for this band to record their fourth major-label release, *Transistor*.

Chad Sexton, 311's drummer, sits back in the studio lounge and smiles while discussing the current recording sessions. "It went exactly like planned," he says. "There was no pressure, all flow. It turned out great. This is one of my dreams come true, to get in there and do it ourselves." For the first time the band is keeping the production responsibilities in-house, along with longtime soundman and engineer Scott "Scotch" Rafston.

The band, which has been known for its blend of rap, reggae, and thrash, adds a touch of ambient noise to the mix on *Transistor*. "There were some crazy things, some weird space noises and shit that got put on there," Sexton says. "I was like, 'Scott, just put this on there, it's the coolest.'" Check out tunes like "Prisoner" and "Galaxy" for examples.

Keyboard chores were split between Sexton and singer Nicholas Hexum. "It's real subtle," the drummer says. "You have to be a better than average listener to pick it up. Some of it is really quiet, way down in the mix, so you'd probably only know it was there if you heard it in the track before it was mixed. We like little textures, no big keyboard parts, just more ambient stuff." Sexton points out that these flavors have been a part of the 311 sound ever since the band's debut album. "If you listen to *Music* in the headphones, there's electronic shit all over the place. Maybe not keyboard noises, but I'm talkin' about drum machines, [Roland TR-] 808s, overdub snares, and electronic hi-hats."

Also popping up during the band's nineteen-song offering—they're making up for not releasing an album in 1996—are a bevy of vocal effects, another trademark of the band's sound. "I like effected vocals," says singer S. A. Martinez. "We didn't do enough of that on the last album. We did a lot of that on *Grassroots*, which I like." Both Martinez and Hexum relied on a random assortment of harmonizers, chorusers, and delays, as well as vocal doubling, for this sort

of processing.

As Martinez joins Sexton in the studio's lounge—he had been working on the band's version of "White Man in Hammersmith Palais" for the upcoming Clash tribute record—the two begin to discuss the songs on *Transistor* and where they stand with the rest of their albums. They agree that the list goes *Grassroots*, *Music*, and then 311. "Actually," Martinez muses, "there's a kind of space, and then I like 311. There's space for something else. Some of my favorite songs are on this album, and then there's some I like but I don't love," he says, singling out "Creature Feature" as an example.

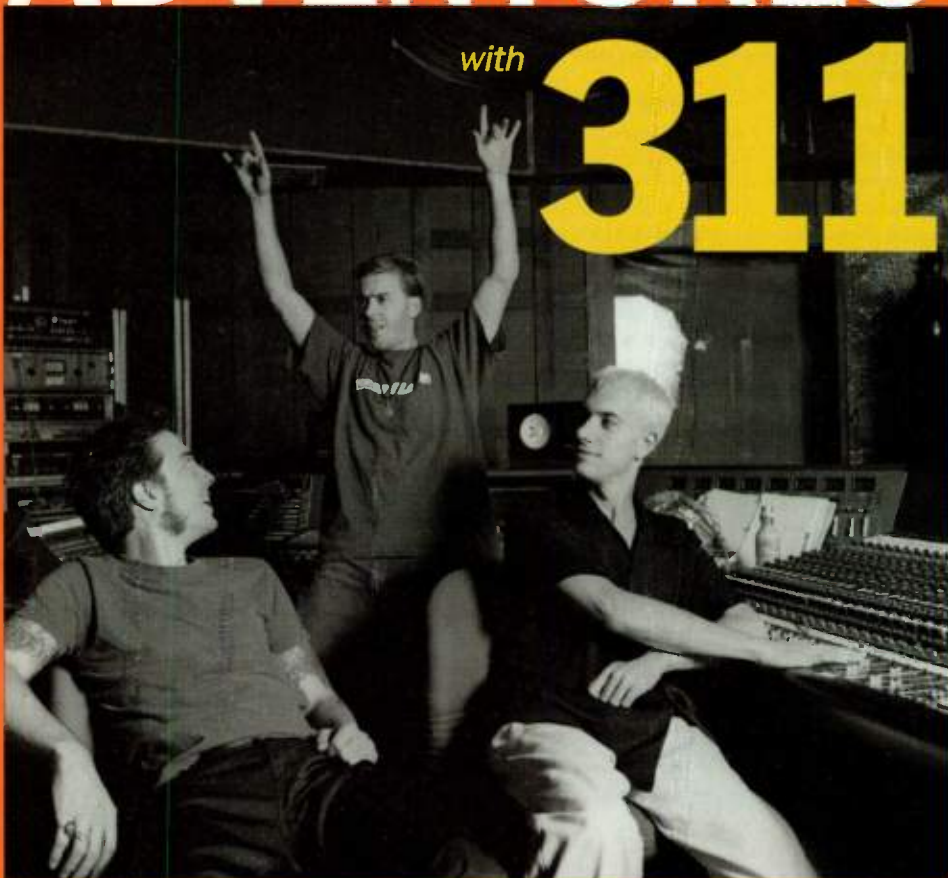
"I like it, but it's not like I can't wait to hear that song," he says. "I thought it would sound cooler. Maybe I'm being critical of what I did on it. The way I envisioned it in my head sounded cooler. Like I listened to 'Tune In' coming in today, and it fucking jams. That could be a single, after *Transistor*."

As other band members pass in and out of the lounge, Sexton returns to the control room to double-check the mix on "White Man in Hammersmith Palais," then work continues on the *Transistor* mix. "We are on a mission in here," he says. "I'm not going to say there was no pressure, because we did have deadlines. But we stayed on that thin line between rushing it and taking our time. We worked briskly enough to do what we had to do." —David Farinella

AMBIENT ADVENTURES

with

311



B-Real, Jacken & Duke

The Psycho Realm
(Ruffhouse/Columbia)
DJ Muggs

Muggs Presents ... the Soul Assassins
(Columbia)

What with all the dope smoke clouding the issue, it might be easy to consider rapper B-Real and mixmaster DJ Muggs of Cypress Hill a couple of stoney clowns rather than savvy hip-hop innovators. But across three Cypress Hill releases, the pair have worked as sonic and attitudinal pioneers, turning big, relaxed-fit beats and found sounds into irresistible rhythm tracks, spinning sly pop-culture-in-a-blender rhymes, and daring to look and sound like they were having fun as they put it all together. On these solo side projects, B-Real and Muggs demonstrate exactly what each one brings to the Cypress Hill bowl and indulge in some fine smoking of their own.

B-Real, Cypress Hill's main word man, teams up with L.A. rappers Jacken and Duke to share rhyming, writing, and producing duties on *The Psycho Realm*. Wisely, the trio doesn't try to out-Cypress Cypress Hill: Instead of sonic goulash, they serve up simple, repetitive beats in which texture is everything. The tinkle of a piano arpeggio, the crisp jangle of a tambourine, or the pop of a conga drum are all that's needed to set the smoky, laid-back atmosphere on tracks like "Showdown" and "Psy-clones." And samples that range from Dennis Hopper to Shakespeare add a bit of drama to the accomplished relay raps, which mostly avoid

wiseguy yuks to present a cold, wised-up view of the streets: Without ever turning maudlin, "Stone Garden" and "Lost Cities" convincingly express some deep sadness and pain about the state of things. Whether backed by Muggs beats or Psycho sounds, B-Real's got plenty to say that's worth hearing.

Muggs throws himself a great big beat party on *Soul Assassins*, pulling together some hashed-up, heavyweight grooves for such guests as Dr. Dre, KRS-One, MC Eiht, and buddy B-Real to launch their raps. Muggs makes his kitchen-sink approach to beat-building sound easy, but his skills can be measured in how well his work supports the varied vocals, from the angry indictments of Dre's "Puppet Master" to the high-concept hi-fi adventure of "Third World" and "Battle of 2001." Muggs isn't just a rhythm meister: He's a storyteller with a mixing board. And while he may save his best buzzing tales for Cypress Hill, he clearly has fun using the board to spin some new ripping yarns with the Soul Assassins. —Chuck Crisafulli

Primal Scream

Vanishing Point
(Reprise)

Back in 1991, Glasgow's Primal Scream unleashed the remarkable *Screamadelica*, which melded Stones rock and Beach Boys pop with the sort of acid house/techno sounds that then filled dance floors across Britain. This groundbreaker was followed by *Give Out But Don't Give Up*, an oft-derided homage to retro R&B/Boogie which nonetheless presciently heralded the arrival of Oasis and their Noelrockin' chums.

With *Vanishing Point*, the Scream move in yet another direction. Inspired by a 1971 speedfreak gearhead cult flick of the same name, which was rife with jumpcuts, boho cool, and post-Sixties cinematic symbollocks, the "Scream Team"—singer Bobby Gillespie, guitarists Throbert Young and Andrew Innes, keyboardist Martin Duffy, and newest addition bassist Gary "Mani" Mounfield (formerly of the Stone Roses)—banish *Give Out's* formalism in favor of the loose-limbed song structures and multitudinous manipulated sounds of classic dub. Guitar, bass, drums, and vocals are often processed to a point where they are rendered unrecognizable among the mind-bending mix of tablas, sitars, bassoons, theremins, and Lord knows what else.

Trad songwriting is plainly not the first order of business. The record opens with the thunderous blood and fire dub of "Burning Wheel," a driving seven-minute dreadnought that, along with the inclusion of their loopy theme from *Trainspotting*, sets the tone. "Kowalski" is a full-blown freakout that layers Mani's rampaging elephant of a bassline over an array of psychotic effects, samples, and a whispery Gillespie vocal. The album's pervading theme, the death of the party, is notably evoked on



herbie hancock
& wayne shorter

"Out of the Void," whose claustrophobic synth burblings capture the fear and loathing of the after-rave pharmaceutical comedown. The more guitar-based Scream of old reprises drugged-up cock rock on "Medication" before slamming into a twisted cover of "Motorhead." Redemption, however slight, comes only at record's end with the angelic desolation of "Long Life."

Though not the definitive crossover of *Screamadelica*, *Vanishing Point's* dub symphonics resound with funky experimentalism and genre cross-pollination. Forget post-rock: This record is post-apocalyptic, fraught with paranoia and bad, bad craziness, an audacious and original road trip down the lost highway. —Michael Krugman

Herbie Hancock & Wayne Shorter

1+1
(Verve)

Fact is, this isn't an easy album to listen to. It's easy to hear, in the sense that one hears music as an agreeable hum somewhere in life's soundtrack. Hancock's lushly harmonized pianistics and Shorter's long, liquid lines on soprano sax bathe much of this duo album in muted light. Their communication is thoughtful, with an interplay that values reflection more than garish posturing. They play together like intelligent friends having a conversation.

But the drone of conversation heard at a distance changes as you draw nearer. Nuances emerge, the well-chosen word and the subtle emotional twist, and the background buzz becomes a complex exchange, harder perhaps to follow but all the more intriguing. So it is with *1+1*. As Hancock builds eloquent voicings behind Shorter's generally spare explorations, rhythm takes a back seat;



primal scream

chuck's cuts

by charles m. young

Timothy Leary

Beyond Life With ... (Mercury)

At an otherwise inspiring speech in the early Eighties, Abbie Hoffman said, "I don't trust anyone who hasn't dropped acid," which I thought was a really odd variation on the obsolescent buzzphrase of not trusting anyone over thirty. Even in the Sixties there were plenty of sleazebags who had taken LSD and plenty of non-sleazebags who hadn't. Which summons the topic of Timothy Leary: Sleazebag or non-sleazebag? Basically, he was arguing that the good life is to live always in the irrational, and as supporting evidence he offered his charm, charisma, and epigrams. After a life in and around rock & roll, I have concluded that the wise person confines the irrational to art and music and spirituality, while relying on the relevant scientific and historical factoids to guide all other endeavors. So Leary is seductive as social history and unconvincing as a hero, which makes this album sorta work. Producers David Silver and Jim Wilson do a fine job building trance grooves around the Learyisms, while guest artist Al Jourgensen unloads a trippy guitar riff halfway between Ministry and Hendrix. Guest artists the Moody Blues get crippled by their lack of irony. As does Leary. Those with unalloyed love for the guy should take note how his megalomania often obliterates his humor.

Courtesy White Telephone

Everything Is Fun (Monster Island)

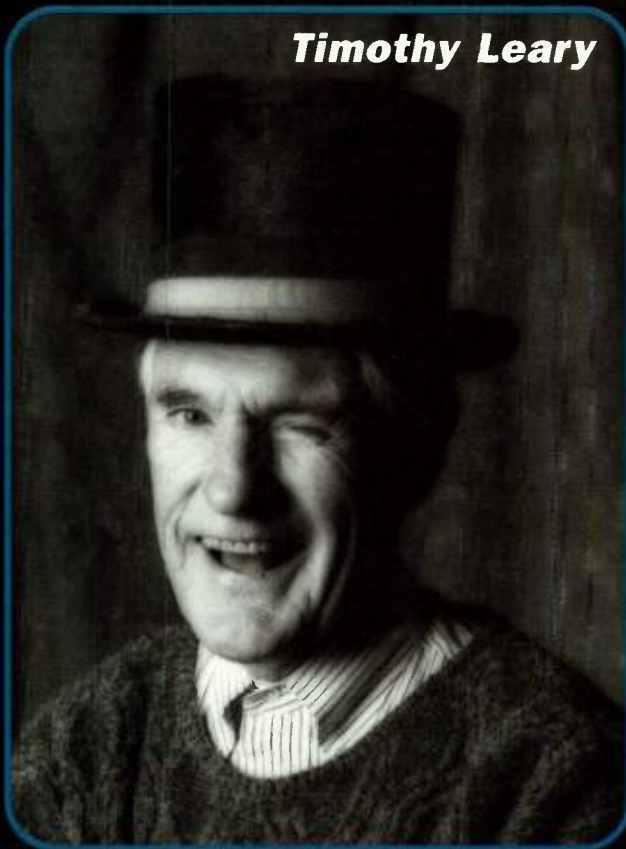
When they build the hall of fame for Humans Who Paid The Rent By Writing Celebrity Profiles With A Minimum Of Suck-up, Rob Tannenbaum will get a whole wing. Until then, he has this band and a moldering pile of old *Details* to show for his life. Led by Tannenbaum and some cyberputz named Garbled Uplink, Courtesy White Telephone will probably not rate a wing in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, but they do deserve an exhibit for their unrivaled precision in capturing what happens when two

guys who haven't gained a nanogram of maturity since junior high sit down to write lyrics. "Let's see, I think I'll write a song about male rape, and then I'll write a song about serial murders." Two weeks later: "Let's see, I think I'll write an-

viewed?," I will make two points: (1) Rock writers who seek to educate themselves by actually playing in a band should be encouraged; and (2) Someday I will have my own piece of dilettante fecal matter in need of a review, and Rob Tannenbaum will

century dance grooves. Imagine eating black bread tainted with ergot and hallucinating with a bunch of peasants from a Breughel painting while K.C. and the Sunshine Band jam with a squad of Viking berserkers playing bagpipes. All other rave music is hereby declared dilettante fecal matter. Contact Northside at 530 N. Third Street, Minneapolis, MN 55401 or www.noside.com.

Timothy Leary



W. C. Spencer Bluescat (Catscan)

Between the Dave Clark Five and Myron Cohen, Ed Sullivan used to present the guy who would ride a unicycle with 800 plates balanced on his forehead. It was marvelous to watch, and even more marvelous to think about the guy practicing for decades just to kill a couple of minutes between the Dave Clark Five and Myron Cohen. So it is with W. C. Spencer, who plays all the instruments on this album simultaneously and sounds just like a pretty good five-person electric blues band. Is it marvelous to think about a guy practicing for decades just to avoid having to tell the bass player to turn down his amp, or what? Listening to this extraordinary feat of concentration and dexterity is, unfortunately, a lot like listening to the unicycle rider with 800 plates on his forehead.

Bush Tetras

Beauty Lies (Tim Kerr/Mercury)

If you superimposed the timeline of Babes with Bad Attitude on the timeline of American history, you'd have to put the Shangri-Las on July 4, 1776, and the Bush Tetras somewhere around the assassination of William McKinley. So they weren't the first. And they aren't the last. But they made history. And now they're back, rating another notch in the timeline coinciding with the discovery of Al Gore's massive bald spot on the back of his bloated head. I predict the Bush Tetras will be remembered more favorably than anyone in the Clinton administration. They're still annoyed, and they still know a wee-nie when they see one.

other song about male rape, and then I'll write still another song about ... serial murders!" Thus the world is blessed with classics like "Prison Wife" ("You look so cute in that upper bunk/Come on down and feel my funk") and "Killing Spree," plus a nod to the difficulty of sexual communication in "Use Your Hand." If you're thinking "Frank Zappa," you're right, except that Zappa was arrogant and defensive about his talent, whereas Tannenbaum and Uplink are gleeful about having none. If you're thinking, "I've been working on my music in the basement for thirty years—why is this piece of dilettante fecal matter getting re-

help me out. That's how it works in New York, where everybody is somebody's prison wife.

Hedningarna Hlppjokk (Northside)

I love Garmarna, I love Drain STH, and now I love these guys. They're all from Sweden, so if just a couple of other critics take notice, we can call it a scene. Hedningarna plays all manner of weird instruments that I can only guess at visually (the souna, junghu, mouraud, mandora, and bass mandora, among other more conventional beasts) and generates a hell of a drone, making for the perfect mating of 13th- and 21st-

there's enormous breath in their phrasing. On the opening cut, "Meridiane—A Wood Sylph," the tempo is steady at first: A simple motif, reminiscent of the Bill Evans left-hand pattern on "Peace Piece," sets a delicate pace. But unlike Evans, Hancock develops this device into a more involved structure, opening it into rich romantic chords complemented by linear figures whose emotive rubato eventually dissolves the pulse entirely. After a brief free section, the harmonies evaporate into soft, minimalist clashes, framed by silences that set the stage for a recapitulation of the opening figure.

Throughout the album the approach is similar, with Hancock playing far more lyrically than usual: On "Sonrisa," he echoes Chick Corea's insistent rhythms and Keith Jarrett's effective use of simple inversions, but moves beyond both in his ability to explore virtuosic ideas with taste and musical integrity. Shorter rides smoothly on these pianistic waves, only occasionally overblowing or digging into his bag of quick licks. Hancock's habit of staying pretty much in the midrange of the keyboard creates a lulling monochromatic effect in the long run, which Shorter alternately exploits with his familiar tapered long notes and resists through squeals and dissonances that he milks a bit too dry.

Virtually all of this music is easy on the inattentive ear. But for those with the patience to appreciate improvisation as a dialog of minds in the language of notes, undistracted by effects and unbothered by the dull security of clichés, 1+1 is a joyful find. —Robert L. Doerschuk

Buddy Emmons

Amazing Steel Guitar:

The Buddy Emmons Collection

(Razor & Tie)

Various Artists

Sacred Steel

(Arhoolie)

Taken together, these two collections illustrate the enormously wide stylistic gamut the steel guitar spans—which is all the more remarkable when one realizes what young instruments the electric steel and, especially, pedal steel still are. Western swing steelers like Joaquin Murphy, Herb Remington, and Speedy West were already experimenting with jazz by the time Bud Isaacs introduced pedals with the Webb Pierce hit "Slowly" in 1954. It spawned countless converts, but Buddy Emmons soon proved the most accomplished and progressive. His genre-breaking 1963 LP, *Steel Guitar Jazz*, which comprises most of this set, was to pedal steel what Hank Garland's *Jazz Winds from a New Direction* was to guitar: proof that a country player could fly through jazz tunes like Sonny Rollins' "Oleo" and hold his own alongside jazz veterans like saxophonist Jerome Richardson with no qualifications or disclaimers.

Chronologically, *Sacred Steel* slides forward thirty years, but stylistically it predates Emmons' explorations by a quarter-century. After incubating in the isolation of Florida's black Pentecostal churches—where lap steel guitar, rather than organ, is the

primary instrument—this fascinating time capsule is finally opened, revealing all its primitive glory, thanks to recordings made by the state's Division of Historical Resources circa 1994. From septuagenarian Willie Eason, the man credited as the style's founder, to twenty-something Glenn Lee, who incorporates a wah-wah pedal, what comes through loud and clear is the raw emotion the steel is able to tap into, from haunting to joyous. Half the CD is devoted to live recordings of Keith and Jewel Dominion church services, and as Sonny Treadway stretches out behind Bishop Naomi A. Manning, with the sounds of the congregation's tambourines in the background, one can picture housewives getting the spirit, shouting, breaking into dance. What a rare treat to unearth a fresh, little-known genre with sixty years of tradition! —Dan Forte

The Bevis Frond

Son of Walter

(Flydaddy)

It's been over ten years now since Nick Saloman put out his first album under the imaginative moniker of the Bevis Frond. Recorded solo on a cheap four-track in the bedroom of Saloman's north-east London home, the Frond's debut *Miasma* was lo-fi in the extreme. But under the sludge, sensitive listeners could detect traces of clever songsmithery, thrilling Hendrixian guitar playing, and an unashamedly retro stylistic stance. In the ensuing decade, the Frond's made a dozen more albums, added (and subtracted) several members, moved into (and out of) professional studios, and won (and lost) a U.S. distribution deal. Yet the central figure remains Saloman, and the spirit of his music is also much the same. The Bevis Frond still explores the area where psychedelia, British folk, and garage punk meet, and still behaves as if the Mellotron and Vox Continental organ were the latest in music technology.

Son of Walter is the first Frond album in five years to see a stateside release, and the first in over seven to be recorded completely by Saloman at home. Though the sound quality is poorer than the recent norm (but far from horrible), the songs are generally more inspired than they've been on Bevis' last few U.K.-only releases. "Beautiful Sister" and "Raining on TV" combine heavy rock playing with delicate harmonies (the former gets bonus points for using a min7b5 chord), while the circa-1965 pop of "Driven Away" makes excellent use of a Baldwin electric twelve-string and Wurlitzer electric piano. As usual, lyrical acoustic ballads ("Forgiven," "Dead Man Sitting on a Train") are offset by lengthy lysergic freakouts. The twelve-minute wah-wah jam "Garden Aeroplane Trap" could easily have been cut in half at least, but the eight-minute "All Hope Is Gone With You Away" is a Bevis classic, setting echo-laden voices, dense layers of distorted guitars, and—most important—a simple but gorgeous tune to a pounding, almost subliminal floor tom beat.

Overall, the Frond's latest is a worthy addition to the catalog. It's not Saloman's best work; that dis-

tion's shared by *Inner Marshland* (1987), *Any Gas Faster* (1990), and the marvelous *New River Head* (1991). But you'll have an easier time finding *Son of Walter* in the U.S., and you'll still get a decent introduction to an underrecognized talent. Fans of the Byrds, Neil Young, Richard Thompson, and *Nuggets* will all find much to treasure here. —Mac Randall

shorts

Future Bible Heroes

Memories Of Love

(Slow River/Ryko)

This is the latest project from AM radio fanatic Stephin Merritt (the Magnetic Fields, the 6ths). Here he's joined by keyboardist Chris Ewen (once of Figures on a Beach), and regular sidekick Claudia Gonson. The collaboration neatly combines Ewen's electro-pop soundscapes and Gonson's dreamy singing with Merritt's sweet, Burt Bacharach-influenced melodies, droll lyrics, and occasional Cohen-esque vocals. Indulging in guilty-pleasure pop, the trio has created a home-studio gem eerily reminiscent of early Tears For Fears. —Dev Sherlock

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letters

[cont'd from page 8] of your "target audience" love what you have to offer.

I'm an unsigned artist with an independently produced record. I used to spend a lot of money, time, and energy trying to create a buzz. I passed out plenty of demo tapes and played gigs at a loss, only at carefully targeted East Village showcase clubs, because we were far more concerned about reaching A&R people and media than audience. You can polish your Web site and press kit, put together more and better demos until you're blue in the face, but are you giving people joy? That's why I've recently begun playing in the New York City subway system, and it's the most rewarding performing I've ever done. Making a platform of New Yorkers enjoy a pop tune is more real than worrying about which A&R guy responded to my tape.

If you can express something from the heart, far more people will respond than the relatively tiny group who go to a rock club. Play for everyone who will never get to your next gig. Play for your grandparents. Play for children. Make it your business to express the joy of what you're doing. That's how

you get the buzz going, and when it's strong enough, the music industry will line up at your door.

bibi farber
glow@idt.net

tony williams

In your Private Lesson interview with the late Tony Williams (June '97) he pontificates on the evils of upper body movement in drummers. Now, Tony was great, but since when does moving with the music make my hands less capable of conveying the emotion of a song? Suggesting that Jeff Watts is pretentious because he likes to swing along is beyond asinine. Should Manu Katché stop bobbing his head? Will someone please tell Terry Bozzio that he's "wasting energy"?

shaan fahey
oakland, CA

pounding pavement

The (false) premise of your Pavement article (June '97) is that professionalism and inspiration are

somehow opposites. But Pavement is simply inadequate to the task at hand. While the article suggests that they engage in risky group improvisation, the fact is that they aren't even up to playing a song without obvious errors. Risking failure is different than just consistently failing. Unlike, say, Fugazi or Jimi Hendrix, Pavement don't drive into uncharted territory; they simply let go of the wheel. Elsewhere in the issue you muse about what's wrong with the music industry. Lameness like this would top my list.

dan kozak
absolutely boxspring
boxspring@tomco.net

Put it this way: Would you go to Burger King if there was only a fifty percent chance they'd get the burger in the bun?

mike errico
popeXVII@aol.com

backside kicks

My friends tell me I've got a pretty good sense of humor. And I'm all for needling sacred cows once in a while. But I was puzzled by "Why I Hate Folk Music" (Backside, July '97). Here's a magazine devoted to music dismissing an entire species thereof! And it wasn't even funny. Feel free to pony up to your favorite demographic-of-the-moment, but y'ain't gonna do it with my subscription dollar. I've canceled the check I just sent for another year's worth of this dreck.

andy winston
mojowoykn@juno.com

Thurston Kelp was on the money with his "Why I Hate Folk Music" piece. So many people ask what punk/hardcore bands are so angry about, and I have to answer, "What are you guys so happy about?!" The punk community is tired of the sandal-wearing, coffee-house, folksy posers out there claiming to be musicians. That's why I hate folk music.

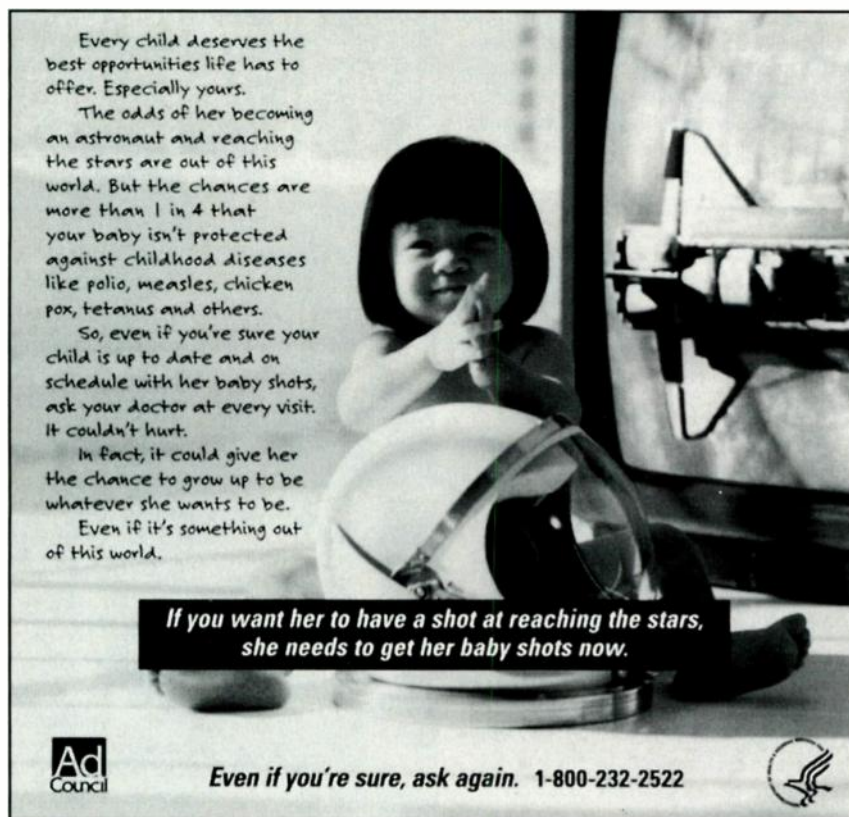
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semi-corrections

Our apologies to Telex for omitting reference to one of their recent ads in our advertiser index; you can find it on page 59 of our July '97 issue.

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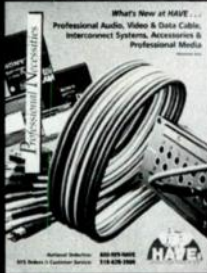
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ALBUM TITLE
ARTIST NAME
(RECORD LABEL)

*** 1 / 2

Slash 'n' thrash combo Artist Name's oeuvre is evolving from their neopunk revivalism through their Meat-Puppets-meet-Meet-the-Beatles meta-aesthetic of their infectious Motown-inflected hitmongering here. But on the eponymous, self-titled *Album Title* album they evince an assiduous evolution of label debut *Previous Album Title*'s chart eclecticism to their AOR-rock-radio-oriented roots. But the ethereal swirls of Style Council-style acoustic with its fingerpicking-good arpeggios awash in ditty synth here replaced by the veteran soundboard mixings of ministering ace master John "Jelly Roll" Benzedrine, who helmed R.E.M.'s IRS U.K. EP, TLC's WB R&B LP, and 311's #19 1994 45 "98.6" (recalling Dusty and Buffalo Springfield's blue-eyed solo work)—are good here. But while the twin buzzsaw-guitar thrash, squalls of cheesy Farfisa, and doomy bass whomp as well as both the dichotomy of *Title*'s ambient moods of poncey atmospherics undercuts Name's spot-on lyrical concerns—equating the postmodern quest for ironic significance against the travails of post-Thatcherite Britain suffusing and informing this outing—a lack of any coherent vision fails to emerge.

But lyrically frontman/guitarmeister-axeman-turned-percussion-avatar-and-(with backman/fretboard wiz Stig Artistname, ex-bass player of Scouse heavy metal stalwarts Former Bänd Nämey-

The Ultimate Record Review

Ratings

★★★★★
(5 stars)

Editor thinks he's friends with the artist

★★★★
(4 stars)

Editor actually is friends with the artist

★★★
(3 stars)

Reviewer slept with bass player

★★
(2 stars)

Lead singer snubbed review editor at listening party

★
(1 star)

Editor used to be friends with the artist

cowriter-and-(ably abetted by the nervy mixboard-sounding minestrone of veteran ace Grandmaster L. L. Cool Bean, *nom de duste jacquette* of ubiquitous knobtwirler Marvin Gardens)-self-producer Nigel Artistname, née Nigel Rotten, describes that anguish, from the contagious Peter Toshish buttered toasting of the self-penned "Song Title," with its seminal Indian-inspired modal six-string excursions through side one's anthemic "Another Song Title," with its Beatlesque *Nevermind*-cum-*Never Mind the Bollocks* allusions ranging from its dazzling "Let's dance/Let's dance/Baby let's dance"—the slight catch in Artist Name's voice revealing his hard-won, unresigned despair of ever finding such a solution—through the martial, McLuhanesque "Let's sing/Let's sing/Baby let's sing here," clearly some of the finest rock poetry since, well, "Dancing Queen." But to borrow the side-ending (CDphiles note: It's track 5), avant-my-MTV raveup "(Still Another) Song Title"'s opening line, which ends, "Let's dance and sing." Here's hoping next time Artist Name will live up to the promise only promised here.—**Tom Conroy**

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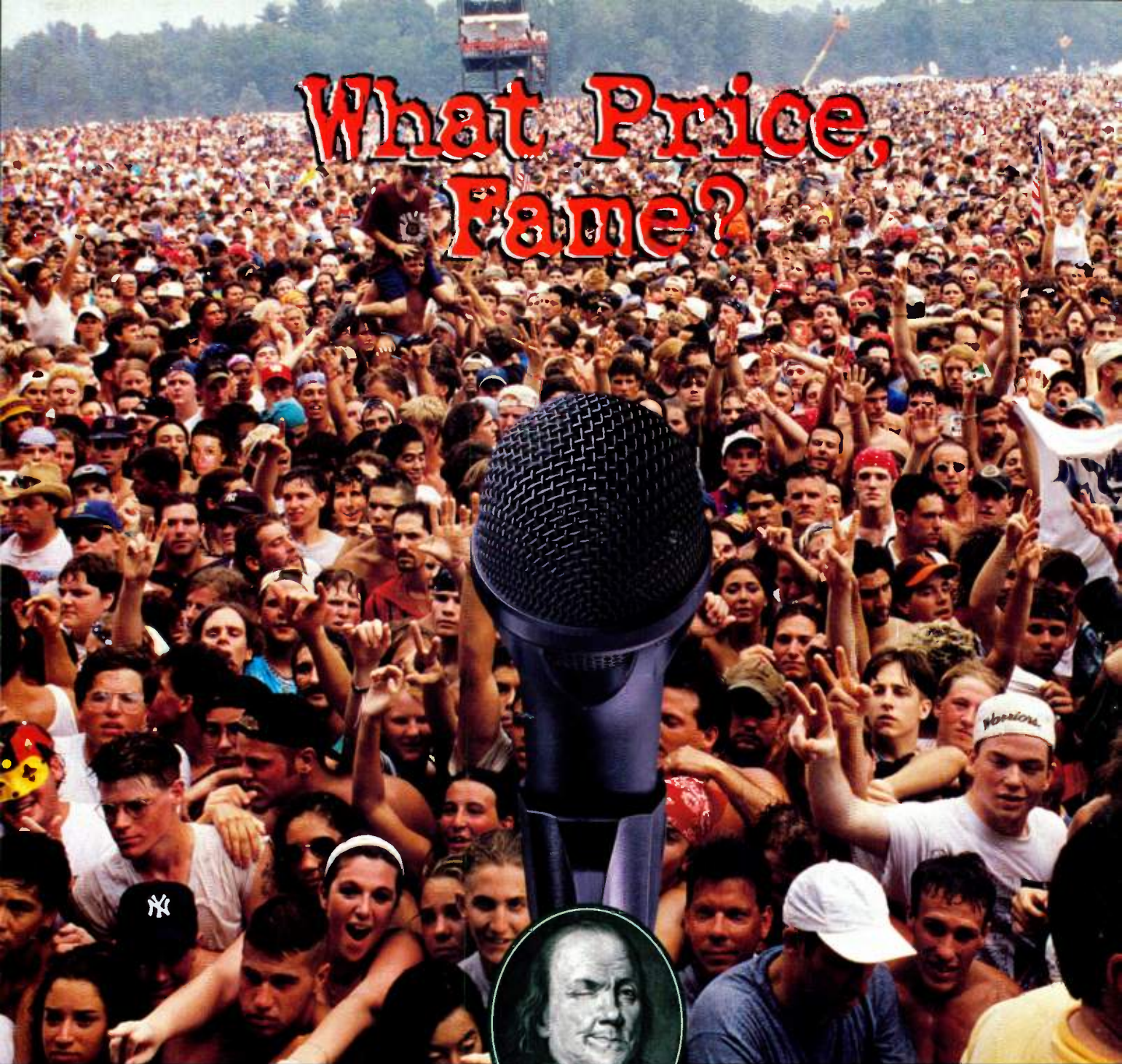
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