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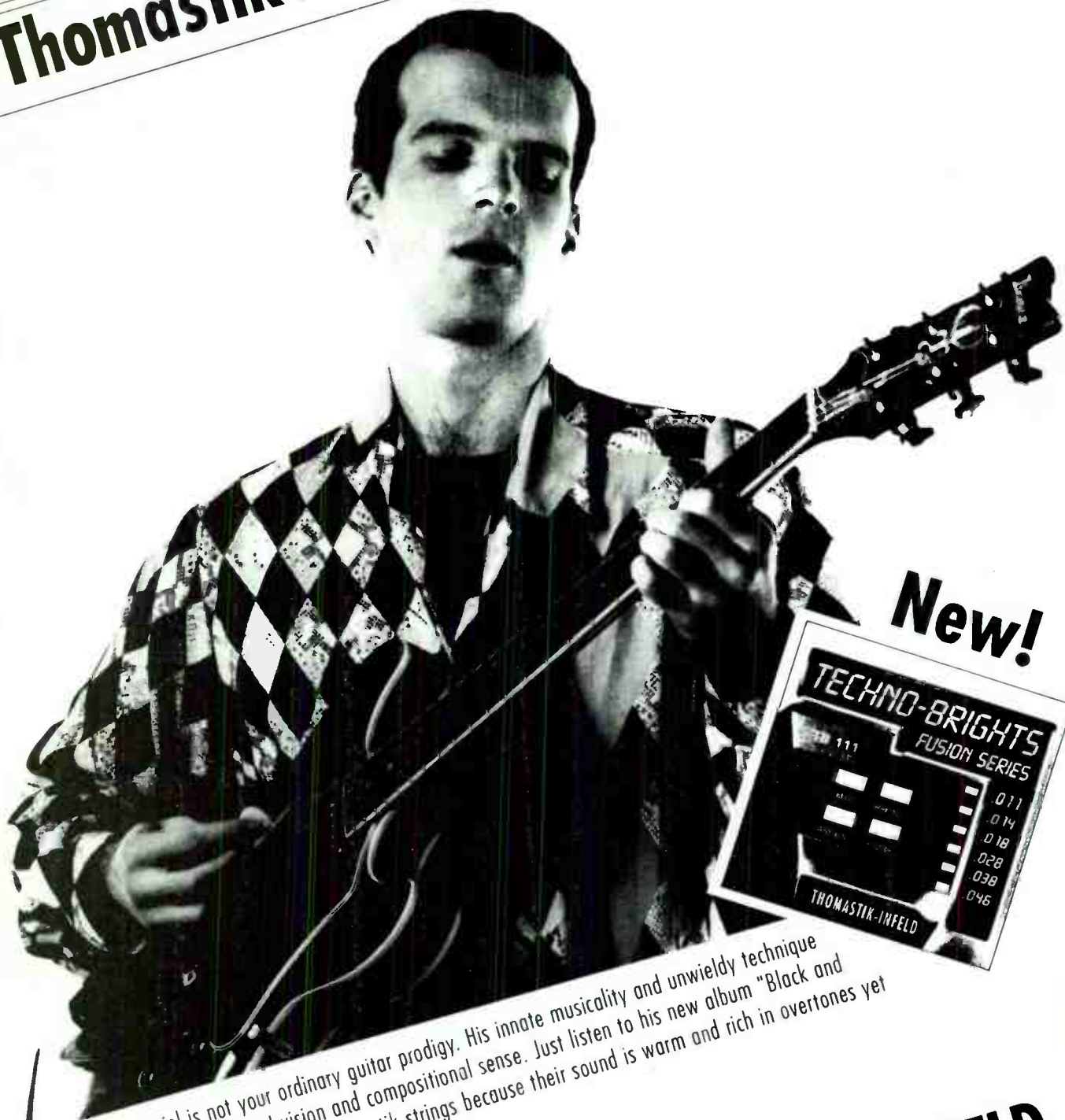
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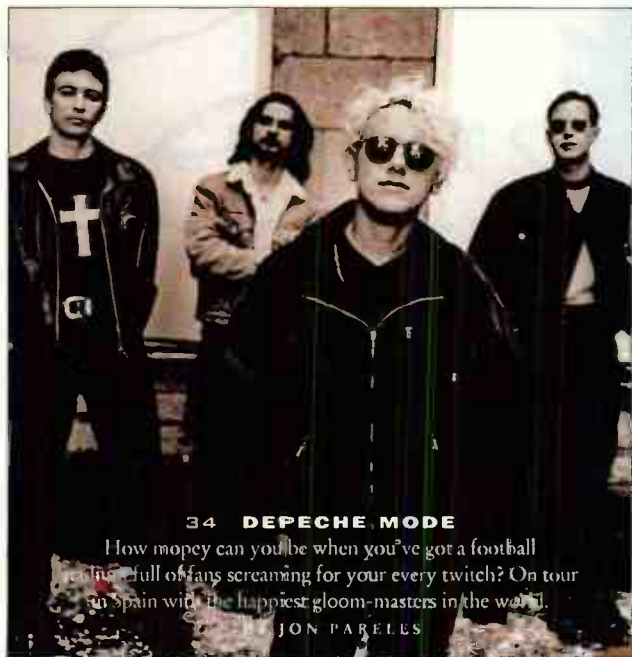
Out of respect for the purity of Eric Johnson's music, we won't tell you whose guitar synthesizer he's playing. But, if you happen to notice the logo down below, well, we can't do anything about that.



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34 DEPECHE MODE

How mopey can you be when you've got a football club full of fans screaming for your every twitch? On tour in Spain with the happiest gloom-masters in the world.
BY JON PARELES

7 FRONTMAN RAY CHARLES

What keeps a 63-year-old man on the road when he could have retired years ago? What do you think?

BY KRISTINE MCKENNA

19 ON STAGE **PAUL WESTERBERG**
The post-Replacements debut of the Beloved Entertainer.

BY BILL FLANAGAN

19 ON STAGE **PETER WOLF**
Ten years after leaving J. Geils, Wolf finally plays out.

BY JIM MACNIE

21 VERVE

If you're swaying back and forth in a psychedelic trance, this is the band you want to sway to! "It's like being involved in this ridiculous movie"

BY KATHERINE TURMAN

22 BENNY CARTER

He's recorded in each of the last eight decades; one of his bands included Miles, Max, Art Pepper and J.J. Johnson; just don't call him a jazz musician.

BY JOE GOLDBERG

26 THE POLITICS OF MTV UNPLUGGED

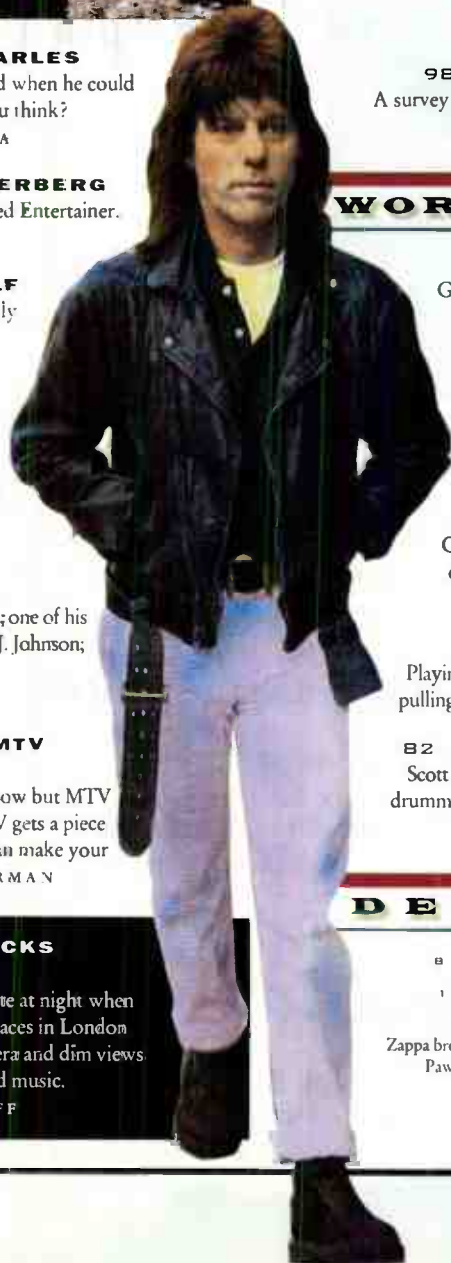
Here's the deal: You help pay to make the show but MTV owns it. If you release a record from it, MTV gets a piece of the royalties. Why do it? Because MTV can make your record a hit.

BY KEVIN ZIMMERMAN

42 JEFF BECK UNLOCKS HIS SECRET

What really goes on in Beck's basement late at night when lights are low? The reluctant master surfaces in London with two albums, an eye on a Puccini opera and dim views on the business of making good music.

BY MATT RESNICOFF



CONTENTS

MUSICIAN MAGAZINE
OCTOBER 1993 • ISSUE NO. 180

30 WOODY ALLEN

Sure he's a musician! The famous clarinetist talks about what's wrong with movie music and what's right with trad jazz.

BY BILL FLANAGAN

52 NIRVANA'S POISON SKIN

Enough rumors! Kurt Cobain wants the world to hear his side of the Nirvana story. While recording *In Utero*, Cobain, his bandmates and all the other key players bared their souls about the feuds, sicknesses, recriminations, screwings, drug problems and money disputes that almost destroyed the music.

BY MICHAEL AZERRAD

98 ROCK STAR PSEUDONYMS

A survey of the ridiculous names famous musicians use when registering in hotels. BACKSIDE

WORKING MUSICIAN

73 GUITAR WAYNE KRANTZ

Getting past the instrument to make meaningful statements: A composer/improviser decodes the fretboard.

BY MATT RESNICOFF

75 PIANO IAN MCLAGAN

The Faces' keyboard vet on shuffles, chromatic extensions and the martial art of boogie piano.

BY ALAN DI PERNA

76 TECH GENERAL MIDI

Can a restrictive addition to the MIDI standard really bring electronic music to a world of technophobic musicians?

BY WARREN SIROTA

78 BASS TOBY MYERS

Playing the bottom end for John Mellencamp, Myers discusses pulling up simple music by its root.

BY RICK MATTINGLY

82 DEVELOPMENTS FORMAT WARS

Scott Litt judges MiniDisc and DCC. Also, Roland MIDI drummers and Lexicon busts the price barrier for digital effects.

BY MUSICIAN'S CANNED TUNERS

DEPARTMENTS

8 MASTHEAD

10 LETTERS

13 FACES

Zappa brothers, Debbie Davies, Paw, Slim Dunlap...

87 RECORDINGS

Hiatt and Mellencamp, Nirvana, Cypress Hill, Bird, Crow, more

90 NEW RELEASES

97 READER SERVICE

COVER

Photograph by Charles Peterson

12 perfectly great new
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"perfectly good guitar"
"cross my fingers"

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World Radio History

I had always thought someone should write a book entitled *Bands That Coulda Been Contenders*. It would teach us what *not* to do. Your article "Getting Signed, the Day After" (July '93) is pretty close. Keep up the good work.

John Ivan
Big Guitars from Memphis
Memphis, TN

I have just finished reading "The Day After the Day You Get Signed," and now know I did the right thing. After meeting major labels and publishers, trying to survive various contracts—my attorney's bill was much larger than my advance—my manager and I started our own label. Is it a business headache? Sometimes. Do I own my own product? Yes. Do we sell upwards of 20,000 units a year all by our little selves? You bet.

The reality is this: Our industry is sadly lacking in visionaries. The "majors" are run by attorneys, merchandisers and marketeers who may think they know the next "big thing," but may as well be pulling names out of a hat. Music means nothing to them, artistry even less. Thanks for the reassurance.

Ann Reed
A Major Label, Inc.
Minneapolis, MN

Thanks for your terrific articles for aspiring musicians. The sidebar on the 10 Most Indefensible Recording Contract Provisions was especially informative.

I find that artists have very little information about standard practices of the recording industry. They often don't know what rights of ownership they have, and so have no idea of what they stand to lose by signing a standard contract. (Sadly, this is sometimes the case with managers, too.) I often tell them to check out the books at their local library; now, I'll be able

to refer them to your series as well.

(By the way, our standard contract has none of the provisions you listed. We also don't touch publishing income, and we guarantee promotion. On the downside, our artists pay their own recording costs up front, which does allow them complete control over the recording process. I tried to create a contract that I would feel comfortable signing if I were the artist, and overall, I think I succeeded.)

Kristi Wachter
Racer Records
San Francisco, CA

TOWNSHEND

Your interview with Peter Townshend (July '93) was an exciting and informative journey into the mind of a true genius. As one of the music industry's most provocative and accurate critics, Townshend remains more than just rock 'n' roll's greatest songwriter. The man who once hoped to die before he got old has proven to be ageless.

Jordan Kurland
Glencoe, IL

In the '60s I had a concrete list of ways that the Who, the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix (along with massive doses of LSD) were changing my life. As a 41-year-old college sophomore, all I can ask is "whatever happened to all that lovely hippie shit?" I think Pete wants it to be a rhetorical question, and I couldn't agree more.

Dave Farrell
Lancaster, PA

I was thoroughly impressed with the Pete Townshend article by Thom Duffy. His writings, as well as Bill Flanagan's and Matt Resnick's, have re-established my per-

spective on magazine interviews with concise, intelligent questions.

Sue Ryan
Owings Mills, MD

The day I went searching the newsstands, I would have bought any magazine featuring Pete Townshend; fortunately, what I found was *your* July issue. Thanks.

Victoria Rowan
Granville, NY

THE BUSINESS

I was happy to see the article on repairing amplifiers in your June '93 edition. I know Gene Andre and the guys who work there, because I always bring my amps, guitars, etc. to them to be repaired. These guys give "down-home" customer service and always are trying to please; most important, their prices are fair. I'd love to see a regular column on amps featuring Andre electronics. These guys deserve it.

Lorrie Keith
New York, NY

Enough industry/advertising-driven pieces on personalities and gear! How about a couple of pieces on rehearsal technique, road-tour prep and other facets of a working band?

Chris Alastair
Washington, DC

Thanks for the view on royalties from Lipsky & Lipsky in the June '93 issue. I am quite curious, however, about why you printed the article and its attendant pie graph with no alternative perspectives.

At the recent NAIRD Convention, the most fascinating piece of information going around was about the pieces of this "pie" as it relates to major-label sales versus

independent-label sales. In 1993 the percentage of record sales from indie labels is estimated at over 14 percent. This is not a figure major labels would readily let you believe, but it is the truth.

It is indeed a very small number of artists who are enjoying the profit of major-label status. So what happens to all those artists that don't make the cut? They most likely pursue their careers on indie labels.

My main point is that *Musician's* readers deserve a broader perspective on how these kinds of issues come to bear on the careers of artists of all types. Your readers are people like me who buy this mag to get big-picture info and drool at the ads. We don't need a couple of lawyers promoting a vision of the biz that is purely clichéd and not just a little cynical as well.

Chuck Gross
Urban Resource
Tucson, AZ

ROBERT PLANT

I just read Robert Plant/Frontman in the July '93 issue. I never liked the band, but from this column I will go out and buy *Fate of Nations* immediately.

Jordan Dyas
Ridgewood, NJ

I think Robert Plant is absolutely right when he says: "People are fed up with pop idols who don't mean it." Maybe other readers who wrote about their support and adoration of U2 and Prince should keep that in mind. Van Morrison is one artist who is still alive and kicking and has never stooped to MTV for any reason. He does not claim to be a "sexy m...f" like Prince, but it is what's *inside* the physical package that matters the most.

Rosemary Maguire
Washingtonville, NY

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FACES



Slim Dunlap

THE LAST of the Replacements to issue a solo record, guitarist Slim Dunlap says he deliberately avoided the big-budget, months-in-the-studio approach preferred by his former bandmates. "Everybody spent over \$200,000 on theirs; mine was under \$10,000. I think it's gotta cost under that to be a real rock 'n' roll record. I don't mind a few mistakes. It feels real, at least. People are so afraid to reveal they're not perfect. To me a solo record is hardcore you, your personality to the extreme. Take it or leave it."

The Old New Me reveals Dunlap to be one gritty soul—it's full of barroom rock shouts, recycled Muddy Waters scatology and wiseass, Keith Richards-inspired guitar. It celebrates the absurdity of the rock industry ("Ballad of the Opening Band") while paying tribute to the music's brazen fury ("From the Git Go," "Just for the Hell of It").

Says Dunlap, "It's about hearing riffs I've played my entire life and working them into a little different hodge-podge. It's not cutting-edge—I wouldn't be honest if I made a record that didn't have Keith in there, because his way of playing rhythm guitar like it's lead guitar is very important to me. Lead guitar is completely clichéd, and boring—the next Jimi Hendrix probably isn't gonna be a guitar player."

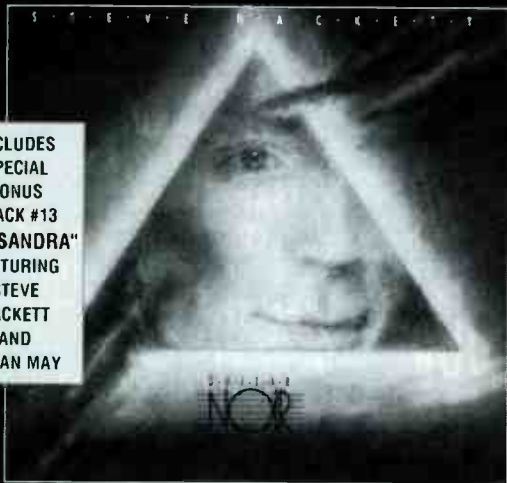
Dunlap says he and the other ex-'Mats are happy to be doing other projects: "The whole curse of that band was, even if we were good, people didn't like it as much as when we completely fell apart. We got away with murder. Which is why I'm glad we're not alive anymore."

TOM MOON

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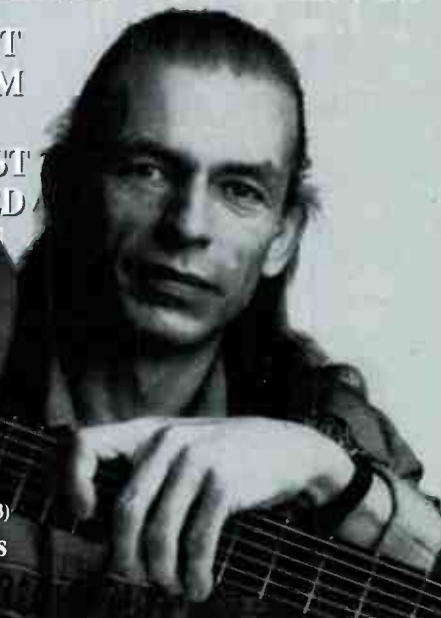
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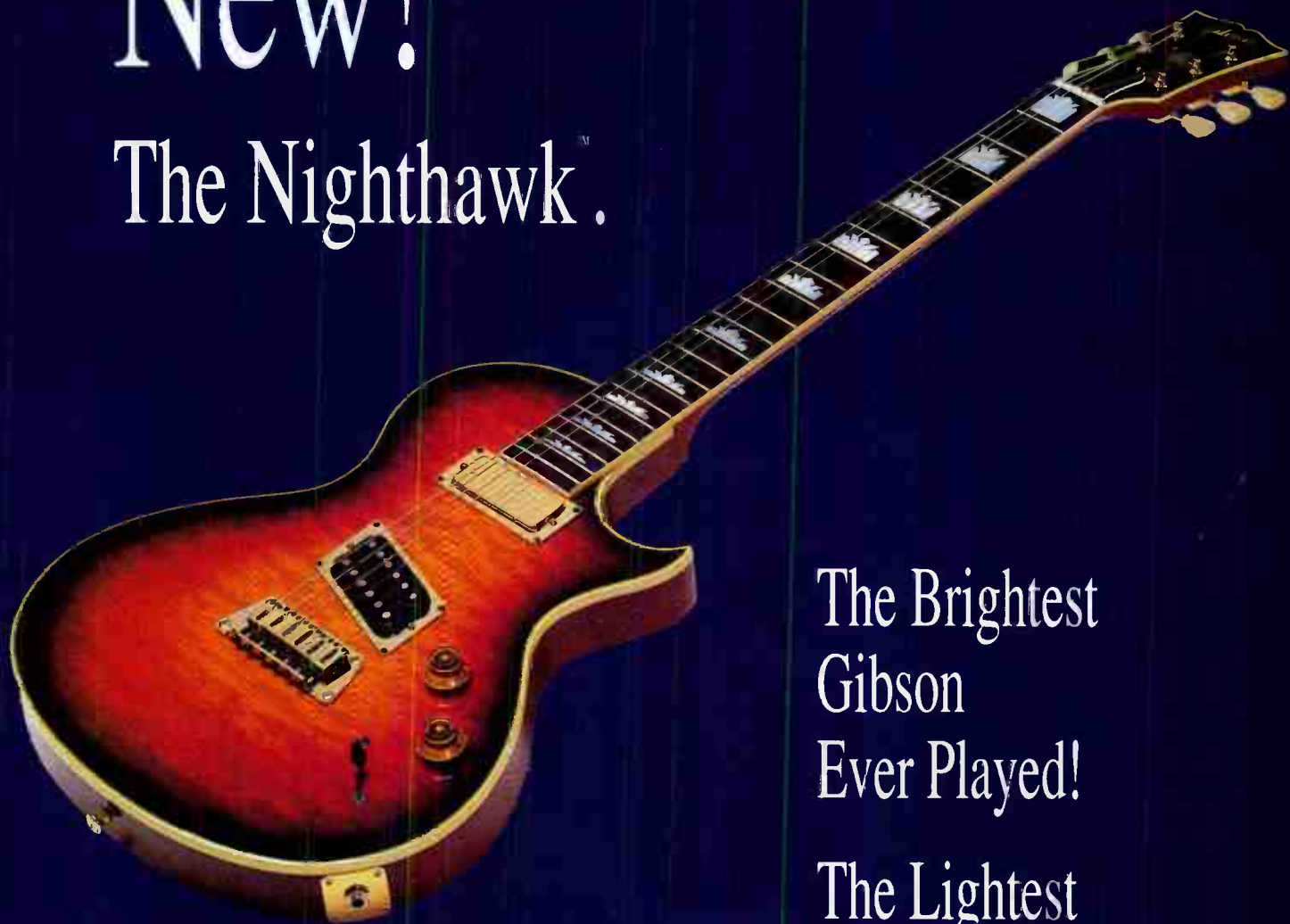
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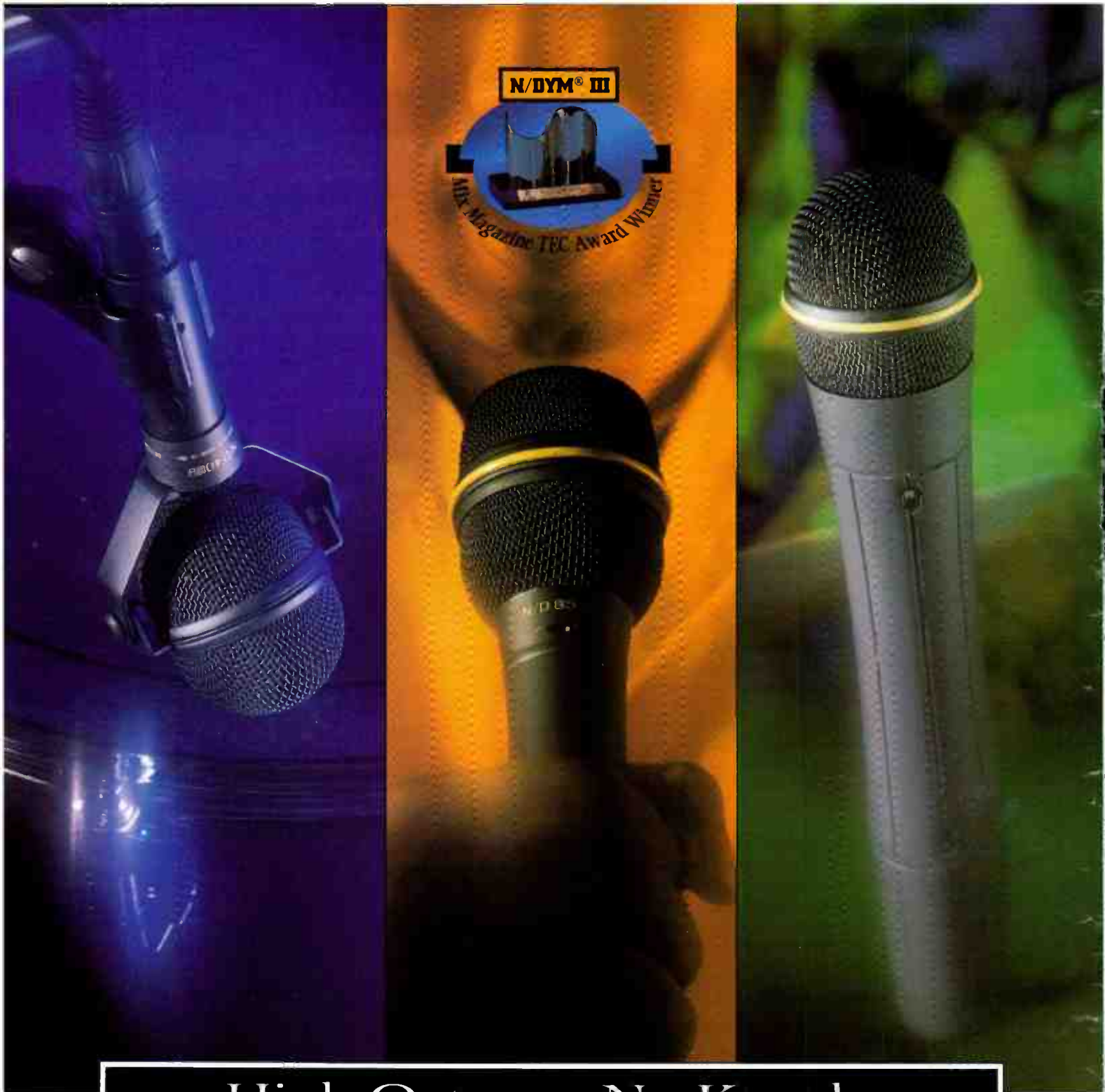
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World Radio History



ON STAGE

PAUL WESTERBERG

PAUL WESTERBERG WENT straight from Next Big Thing to Beloved Living Legend without making the usual stop at Really Successful Rock Star. Yet on his first tour since the breakup of the Replacements—a series of summer club dates preceding theater shows in the fall—he confirmed his place on the top floor of the tower of song. After nearly two hours of rampaging rock 'n' roll at New York's Irving Plaza, Westerberg pulled out his acoustic guitar and sang "Sadly Beautiful" and "Here Comes a Regular," songs so powerful that whether your idea of the king of that particular hill is Hank Williams in '52 or Dylan in '65 or Neil Young in '73, your heart would tell you that in 1993 Paul Westerberg is at the top.

Westerberg dared comparisons to his old band by sticking with the Replacements' format—bass, drums and two guitars. His new team (Neighborhoods guitarist David Minehan, Raindogs bassist Darren Hill and drummer Josh Freese) set the Mats' legend on fire and held it aloft. The advantage the new guys had was probably less musical than psychological—the Replacements were so emotionally entwined that if one of them started screwing up during a show, they all went over like a row of dominoes. They could be great or mediocre, so at the first indication of mediocrity they'd dive straight for the third option: deliberately horrible. Unfortunately there were too many



shows where one member would pull the "horrible" cord while the other three were still shooting for great. At Irving Plaza there were several moments when things went wrong and Westerberg got that "Let's parachute!" look in his eyes, but each time the new band kept rocking like bastards, laughing it off, and before long Paul would find a place to climb back up and continue. Which is a great thing because Paul Westerberg sailing through "Left of the Dial," "Mannequin Shop," "Achin' to Be," "Things," "Can't Hardly Wait," "If Only You Were Lonely," "First Glimmer," "Answering Machine," "Dyslexic Heart," "Merry Go Round" and "Alex Chilton" is as satisfying as rock 'n' roll gets. In the audience smelly, sweat-soaked strangers jumped up and hugged each other.

What at first seemed to be Westerberg's worst song choice turned out to be the best: When the band kicked into "I'll Be You," it felt as if that one song should have been left to the Replace- [cont'd on page 25]

PETER WOLF

YOU GO CRAZY, AND I'll go twice as crazy, you go three times as crazy, I'll go four times as crazy, you go five times as crazy, I'll go six times as crazy, you go seven times as crazy! I'll go eight times ahhh!!! Whether that's a promise or a threat is debatable, but at the recently reopened Lupo's Heartbreak Hotel in Providence, Peter Wolf—ex-J. Geils frontman and guy you'd most want to MC your bachelor party—certainly lived up to it. During a manic two-and-a-half-hour, four-encore show, the singer combined commotion, commitment and groove to reinvigorate a slew of rock's hoariest performance clichés. It was great.

Wolf had been in the studio working on his fourth post-Geils record, and booked a handful of mid-August club dates around New England to get a change of scenery. After a decade away from the stage, there were legit questions as to whether or not the singer could achieve, or would even want to achieve, the brand of patented [cont'd on page 25]



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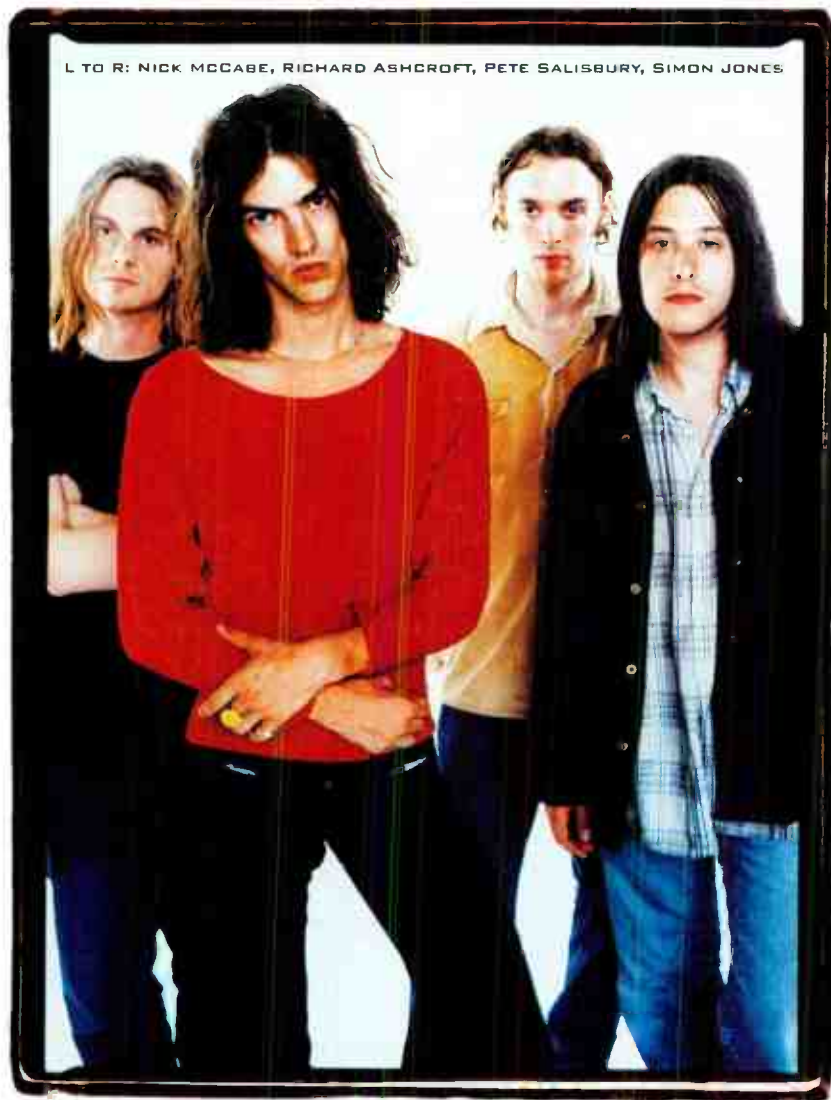
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VERVE: INTO THE MYSTIC

L TO R: NICK MCCABE, RICHARD ASHCROFT, PETE SALISBURY, SIMON JONES



HIPSTERS WEARING BELL BOTTOMS AND CENTER-PART HAIR ARE SWAYING ecstatically to Verve's electric trance music while snake-hipped, pouty-lipped singer Richard Ashcroft writhes under the colored lights on the stage of Hollywood's Whiskey-A-Go-Go. Welcome to the '90s?

In any event, England's latest darlings are living up to the hype of this sold-out event, along with the critical accolades surrounding their mellifluous American LP debut, *A Storm in Heaven*. From the dreamy, feedback-tinged "Star Sail" to the airy, hypnotic "Slide Away," Verve's live show underscores that album's gently psychedelic cacophony, the aural equivalent of sleepwalking. Guitarist Nick McCabe alternates between spacy well-placed notes and chordal washes of sound. Bassist Simon Jones and drummer Pete Salisbury provide the steady backdrop for Ashcroft's otherworldly stage pres-

ence, as his ecstatic ardor all but turns his audience into Peeping Toms. Not to mention Ashcroft himself.

"When it was all going on, I was in a corner of the room, looking down and sort of laughing at myself," he explains the next day, sitting cross-legged on a couch in the Virgin Records artist lounge. "It's such a surreal setting you can't help but get a kick out of being involved with it. It's like being involved in this ridiculous movie."

Mystically couched phrases permeate Ashcroft's conversation as well as his music, a sensibility some might find precious but which seems to spring from a genuinely spiritual point of view. The death of his father when Ashcroft was 11 prompted what he calls a "live life to the fullest" epiphany, while his stepfather is a Rosicrucian—"an adherent of a 17th- and 18th-century movement devoted to esoteric wisdom with emphasis on psychic and spiritual enlight-

"At the end of one gig I freaked out and started rolling on the floor."

enment," according to Webster's. Ashcroft's worldview includes offhand references to astral travel and seeing auras. "I've done all those things," he says. "You've got to concentrate but not be aware of any of your preconditioning, not listen to what your mind says."

"I've been daydreaming since I was 12 or 13 about music, and I treat daydreams as important as visualizations, which is an important part of meditation. If you want something, you visualize it, see it, smell it, touch it, walk around it. Before Verve, I played with Nick, and at the end of one gig, for some reason, I just completely freaked out and started rolling on the floor. All these kids were staring at me, going, 'What a wanker—what the fuck is he doing?' But I couldn't help it."

And a star was born, albeit one from the unlikely incubatory of Wigan, a smallish burg in the vicinity of more famous musical hotbeds Manchester and Liverpool. "It's not that small, but it's small in terms of having any social night-life or gathering," Ashcroft explains. "It's great if you wear patent leather shoes and drink 19 pints of lager; you'll have the time of your life."

The members of Verve eschew the shoes, but do indulge in social drinking and the benefits of other non-prescription drugs, which seem to have some bearing on the group's swirling, hypnotic sound. "We are really [cont'd on page 24]

BY KATHERINE TURMAN

BENNY CARTER'S EIGHT DECADES



SOME FACTS ABOUT BENNY CARTER:

He was leading a band before Louis Armstrong recorded with King Oliver.

A group he led in the '40s included Max Roach, Miles Davis, J.J. Johnson and Art Pepper.

He won a Grammy *after* he won a NARAS Lifetime Achievement Award.

He has a new CD, aptly titled *Legends* (on MusicMasters), on which he plays alto sax to Hank Jones' piano. The bassist, Christian McBride, is in his early 20s. On trumpet is Doc Cheatham, Carter's first great influence. He is two years older than Benny, who was born in 1907.

If you didn't know that, you would think he was in his 60s. Slim, erect, gracious, dignified, Carter carries an air of uncrackable if friendly reserve, one that doesn't quite jibe with what Miles wrote in his autobiography about Carter and Billy Eckstine: "B was tough. So was Benny Carter. They would both drop anybody they thought was disrespecting them in a minute."

BY JOE GOLDBERG

He lives just off of Mulholland Drive in Los Angeles. His Rolls Royce is parked in his carport. He has often been called the man who opened up movie and TV studio work to black musicians, but he rejects the idea that race was an impediment: "I don't deal with that. It's been difficult for many white musicians more talented than I was. It's just a matter of luck. There were other black musicians—Phil Moore, Calvin Jackson, Will Vodery. To me, it's irrelevant."

Carter has a large, spacious study in the rear of his house. The walls are adorned with concert posters and photographs, which include pictures of Carter with three U.S. presidents. There's an assortment of handsome leather bags and briefcases, which Carter loves to collect, and a number of tape recorders and microphones, which, surprisingly, he isn't sure how to operate. There is a Bible. Wall shelves are lined with records. One of them may or may not be

Tooting a horn for a jazz legend

the 1952 recording of *Funky Blues*, when Norman Granz got Carter, Johnny Hodges and Charlie Parker in the studio at the same time to set down what amounts to a brief history of jazz alto saxophone. "I think I have it in my library," Carter says. "I'm going to pull it out and listen to it one of these days. I must do that."

Perhaps Carter considers it unseemly to appear prideful of his life and its accomplishments. Besides, the critics do it so well for him. To Gary Giddins, Carter ranks with Parker, Hodges and Sidney Bechet for "claiming the saxophone as a key instrument in contemporary music." For KPFK jazz host John Brekow, Carter is merely "the greatest living jazz musician. The breadth of his talent is amazing."

Which is flattering, except that "jazz" is not a word Carter likes: "There are too many different kinds of music they call jazz. When you listen to Louis Armstrong or you listen to Dizzy Gillespie, you're listening to two different things. Wonderful and good as the music is today, why call it jazz? Does it sound good, does it move you, does it say something to you? Call it what you like."

It was a jazz ensemble Carter was leading when he came to Hollywood in 1942. "I came here to play the Swing Club, on Las Palmas and Hollywood Boulevard. It was run by Billy Berg



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[later, Berg would operate the club where Parker and Gillespie first played in California]. I brought a big band out. I was invited to do something on *Stormy Weather* [Lena Horne's film debut]. I never made any money off the big band, and the musicians that were with me never made any money, but they were content to work for what I could pay them, which was certainly much less than they were worth."

In his career, Carter has scored 40 films and performed on more than 100. Another 100 sessions were recorded and released on which Carter was the bandleader. He's among the very

exclusive group of musicians who have recorded in each of the last eight decades.

Carter's views on current pop trends are unpredictable. He has kind words for traditionalist big bands like Doc Severinson's and Harry Connick Jr.'s, while also praising Miles Davis for incorporating rap into his last recordings. "You'll have to admit that the beat is very infectious," he says of rap. "I think that if the beat were used in jazz, or so-called jazz—the music we play—I think the music would be found much more accessible."

He is always on the lookout for what is new, and was on the panel that voted young tenor whiz

Joshua Redman the winner in the Thelonious Monk Jazz Institute competition, thus launching Redman's career. Still, he says, "I'm impressed with the fact that no great strides have been made since Charlie Parker. He was an original."

What is Carter doing now? A prolific composer, whose "When Lights Are Low" is probably his best-known piece, he also wrote the lovely "Blues in My Heart" and "People Time," which was on the last album Stan Getz released. "I'm attempting to be selective, and in so doing, I'm giving myself more time to write," he says. "I'm kind of loath to have professional writers write with me, because I can't guarantee a performance. I don't mind spending my own time, and in the process, I'm learning a lot about lyric writing. I don't know if I can write for 'today'—quote, unquote—but I hope that what I'm writing today might come back into vogue."

Is there anything he hasn't done that he'd still like to do?

"I've never been 86 years old," Carter points out, a few weeks shy of the mark. "That's something I want to do. And we'll take it from there."

Patty Larkin

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REQUIRED READING


BENNY CARTER plays a Selmer Mark VI alto saxophone and K-modified Selmer and Dentzen trumpets, the latter horns with a mouthpiece gifted by Doc Cheatham in 1932: "It's the only mouthpiece I've ever played on." He uses an Arnold Bilhart mouthpiece for the alto sax. "And I've never needed a microphone, because I play so hard."

VERVE

[cont'd from page 21] serious about the band, but we're also relaxed. We don't have set practice times, we just get together and jam and try to mold a song out of it. The actual construction of the songs is really natural. It rolls."

It's an approach that's met with success since Verve released their initial EPs in England in 1992. (*Melody Maker* has since written about the band so much it might as well be their official house organ.) Before their record deal, however, Verve's members spent several years on the dole. "I got my flat repossessed about five months ago," Ashcroft recalls. "I owe the landlord about 3000 pounds and my phone was turned off before that. I'm terrible with finances."

Now a mature 21, and in the throes of fan rapture, he can still cast a sober look at the future. "What the hell do you do when it all ends?" he ruminates. "We've got another 10

years only, probably. Once a song hasn't gone a bit further than the last, once we've hit a plateau and can't go any further up the mountain..." He manages a wry grin. "That's when we'll sledge back down into obscurity." 

DREAM WEAVERS

NICK MCCABE plays a Gibson 335 and a Fender Strat with Jim Dunlop picks. SIMON JONES plays Fender Jazz basses with Fender medium picks. Both use Ernie Ball strings. Amps include an Ampeg SVT 11 bass head and an 8x10 bass cabinet, a MESA/Boogie MR3 and Marshall 4x12 JCM 800, with a Yamaha SPX90 delay. Effects include a Quadverb, a Roland GP-8 with FC100 foot control, Boss Super Overdrive, Ibanez flanger, DOD programmable distortion and a Ruschweiler vocal pedal. Drummer PETE SALISBURY plays a Premier kit with Remo Ambassador coated heads and a Ludwig 6 1/2" free-floating snare, with Sabian cymbals.

WOLF

[cont'd from page 19] frenzy that has been his stock in trade since blasting out of the Boston blues scene in the early '70s. With a tight, emphatic backup band of juke-joint journeymen, the uncertainty was squashed almost immediately. Wolf has only one speed, full-on.

All the classic rock staples of the Geils Band flew by, hyphenated by a few tunes from Wolf's solo records. As the set played out, it became easy to see why the solo albums stiffed. Not a great singer, only an adequate writer, it's in the realm of performance that Wolf thrives. You need to *see* him to dig his truest talents, and at Lupo's, display was the operative word.

That kind of entertainment principle is somewhat at odds with the current post-punk aesthetic of performance. Cobain and company may wreak impressive havoc with their smart-assed wallop, but there's a fair amount of implicit shrugging onstage at a Nirvana gig, a Dino Jr onslaught or a Royal Trux "concert." Slacker rock doesn't go out of its way to woo an audience. Even older guys like Los Lobos just do their thing (quite wonderfully) and leave it at that.

So Wolf's "c'mon everybody" attitude had a bit of an anachronistic feel. Factor in the notion that the Geils material is literally dated, the beer-soaked audience had a Beavis and Buttthead vibe, and the general boyiness of the evening's fare, and you have an ever more stunning victory for Wolf. Sheer power of personality got him out of more than a few shticky situations.

Like David Johansen, Wolf can straddle the thin line between show-biz fanfare and genuine rock 'n' roll frolic without forfeiting any credibility. "I want me a suit/An El Dorado car/I've *already* had me a Hollywood star," he bellowed. All the stock moves were there. All seemed pretty damn vital. Crazy.

JIM MACNIE

WESTERBERG

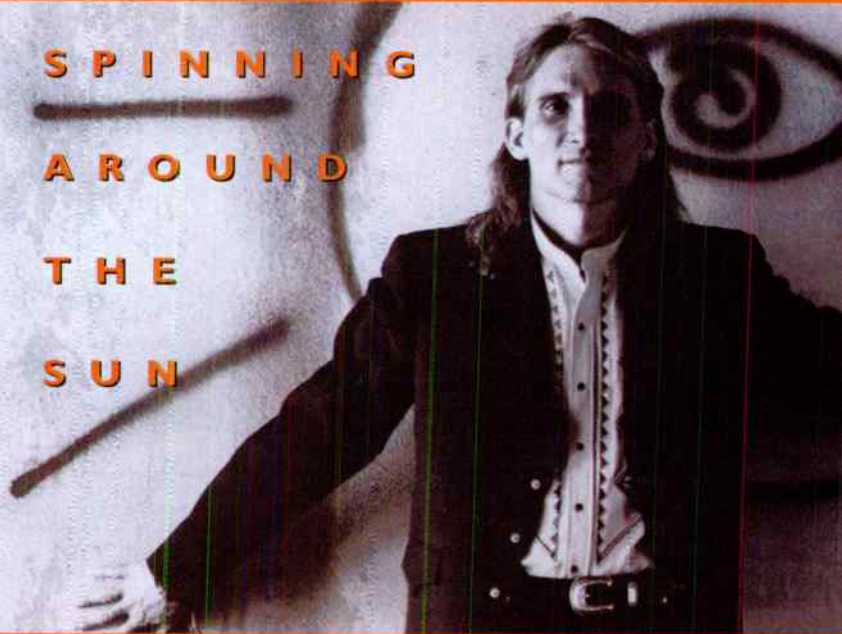
[cont'd from page 19] ments. It was the closest they ever came to a hit single and the song's sentiment ("A dream too tired to come true left a

rebel without a clue...If it's just a game then let's hold hands just the same") spoke for the special circumstance of those four friends united against the world. Yet when Minehan and Hill moved forward and howled the words along with Westerberg, "I'll Be You" became an anthem not just for the Replacements, but for the Neighborhoods, the Raindogs and every other great band that did not get the success they deserved. And for every other person in that overcrowded bar who had not given up on youthful dreams. And for those too far gone to ever get back.

BILL FLANAGAN

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THE POLITICS OF "MTV UNPLUGGED"



Pairings such as the Indigo Girls/Michelle Shocked and Sinéad O'Connor/the Church followed, leading to the show's first-ever solo act, Don Henley, on April 18, 1991. "At the beginning," says John Cannelli, the network's senior VP of music and talent, who helps book the show, "we had to do a lot of convincing to get people involved. Once we got people like Don Henley, it started being looked upon as a good thing and as a fun thing." Henley's appearance led to bigger and bigger acts: Sting, Elton John, Paul McCartney.

According to McCartney publicist Geoff Baker, "Paul liked the idea of getting away from the stadium and in a situation where you can see the people in the back. Paul was into doing it but wanted to do it really properly, really unplugged."

The show was filmed in North London in January '91, Baker says, recalling that the next step marked a significant evolution in "Un-

*Who gets on and what
do they give up?*

plugged": "Paul asked somebody on the production team if they had a cassette he could listen to on the ride home. He thought it was great. Macca also realized that every bright spark under the sun would be taping the thing and bootlegging it, so he just thought, 'Well, we'll do our own bootlegging.'"

The resulting *Unplugged—The Official Bootleg*, pressed as a limited edition of 500,000 copies, sold out quickly. "I'm sure there are quite a few people at Capitol who wish we'd done a few more, especially in light of what's happened with Eric and Rod Stewart," Baker laughs.

What happened with Eric Clapton is already the stuff of legend. "Neither Eric nor I were keen on doing it at first," says Clapton's manager Roger Forrester. "It just didn't appeal to us."

After watching some of the other shows, however, Forrester began to come around to MTV's thinking. "I sent tapes and tapes to Eric of other people doing it, and he wouldn't watch them." Uninterested in either the show or an accompanying album at the start, Clapton has now sold 6 million copies of *Unplugged* and won six Grammy awards.

"We actually put off release of the album three times" until Clapton finally agreed, according to Forrester. "Eric was convinced it would never sell."

RECENTLY MTV INTERVIEWED NEIL YOUNG ABOUT HIS DECISION TO follow Eric Clapton, Rod Stewart, Paul McCartney and other '60s legends into the world of "MTV Unplugged"—a TV show/album release double whammy that has become the blood transfusion of choice for rock 'n' roll graybeards. "Hey, you know," Young smiled, "it's a huge haywagon going by—either get on and check out what's happening up there or...watch it go by."

Since its humble start on October 31, 1989, "MTV Unplugged" has grown from an occasionally tasty Halloween treat into the Beast that Devoured the Music Industry. "In the beginning we'd book pretty much anyone who said yes," recalls the show's producer, Alex Coletti. "I felt it was quite a coup to get Difford & Tilbrook for that first show, because I'm a big Squeeze fan and we were a little scared of being perceived as a folk show." At that point "Unplugged" was hosted by Jules Shear and featured two or three different acts—"singer/songwriters sitting around jamming," in the words of Coletti.

BY KEVIN ZIMMERMAN

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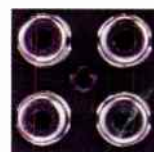
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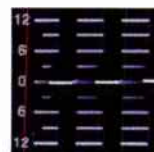
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WOODY ALLEN, MUSICIAN



I'M NOT SAYING THIS IN ANY FALSE MODEST WAY," WOODY ALLEN ANNOUNCES within moments of entering his Manhattan office. "I don't consider myself even a passable musician. I think I'm quite terrible and if I was not well known in another field I don't think anyone would want to play with me, particularly."

All of which *might* be true, but after 25 years of playing New Orleans jazz clarinet every Monday night at Michael's Pub in New York, Allen has built a reputation as a jazz lover of the first order. Were his own standards not so high, Allen might even admit that he is as good a player as many who have no qualms about calling themselves pros. Allen has agreed to talk about his hobby in order to promote *The Bunk Project*, an album assembled and recorded by Allen's bandmate at Michael's, banjo player Eddie Davis.

"We did a couple of sessions at the Harkness House in town here," Allen explains. "[Davis] brought in his recorder and recorded them. And then months later, without any doctoring of it or anything, he said, 'Do you want to put this out?' I said, 'If you want to put it out, put it out. But don't put it out as *my* band or anything. If I'm on it as a musician,

fine, if I don't drag everybody down.' I've never gotten any money for playing in all the years I've played. I strictly play for fun."

But Allen takes his fun seriously. He still sticks by an old statement that the first time he saw Sidney Bechet perform was the most satisfying artistic experience of his life (this from a playwright, actor, author and Academy Award-winning film director). As a 15-year-old kid he hired jazzman Gene Sedric to come out to his home in Brooklyn and give him clarinet lessons.

Davis and Allen are the only two musicians who play on every track of *The Bunk Project* (they are abetted by studio ringers such as Greg Cohen), and if the recording sounds homemade, there is an innocence to Allen's playing on old chestnuts such as "Weary Blues" that evokes a time when jazz and simplicity were not contradictory terms.

"My favorite kind of jazz is traditional New

On movie music and trad jazz

Orleans music," Allen says. "And from a popular music point of view I really go up to the '50s: Cole Porter, Gershwin, Kern and all those people. I'm not much on contemporary popular music, I've never been interested in it, but I have heard and loved a lot of modern jazz. I loved Coltrane, Monk, Dizzy, Charlie Parker, the Modern Jazz Quartet. I love them all, I think they're beautiful—but my main love is New Orleans music."

The scores of Allen's films have introduced new generations to the music he loves. Gershwin songs suggested sophistication and élan in *Manhattan*, New Orleans rags (played partly by Allen himself) brought pure joy to *Sleeper*, and the Prokofiev score trudging along under *Love & Death* (a last-minute substitute after a Stravinsky soundtrack killed all the jokes) added to Allen's deadpan comic suffering. Allen the director has strict rules about what a movie score should and should not do: "It should support the picture as opposed to jump out and be something on its own. That's why I have never used Sidney Bechet or George Lewis or Johnny Dodds or the people that I really feel so deeply about behind scenes. It always distracts me and I feel it will distract the audience. You want a certain kind of music behind there that's not too demanding on the audience. I use a lot of Djan-

BY BILL FLANAGAN

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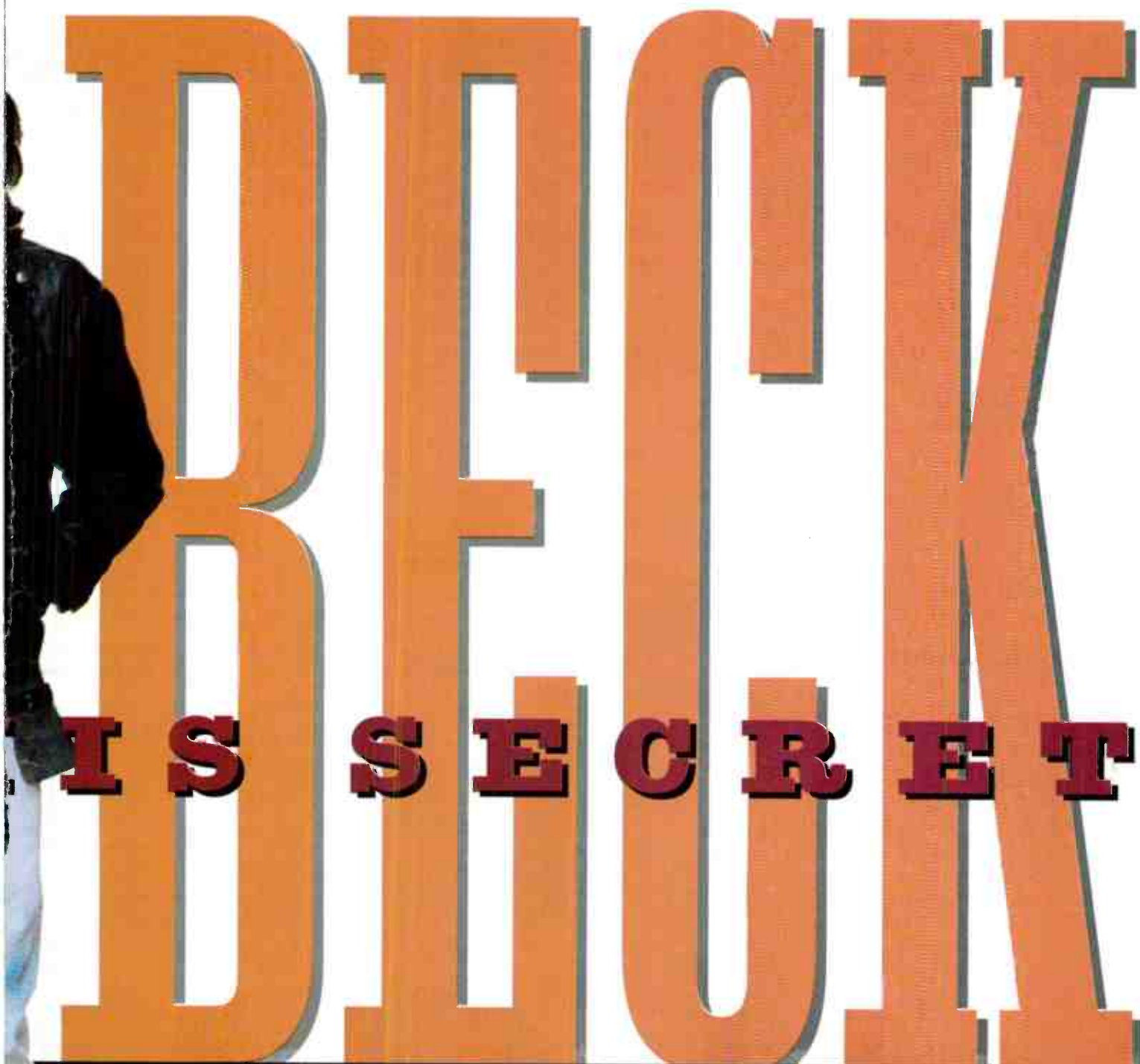
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BY MATT RESNICOFF

Ernest and Ralph have a task, and his name is Jeffrey. As he's handed his peppermint tea this gray London morning, Jeffrey jokes with Ralph about gold watches, some warm gibe about how being 21 years along in their relationship makes it seem fairly pointless to switch now. "Twenty-one years—and 23 with Ernie," Jeffrey Beck smiles. "Whether it's good,



UNLOCK THE



BECK

IS SECRET

I don't know. I suppose it's good." This hardly seems like an exchange between a major star and his manager. "It's gotten to be too much of a business, *that's* the trouble," Ralph shrugs. "It is," Beck says immediately. "It's like wrapping french fries."

There are no platinum record awards adorning this flat. There is nothing to distinguish it as Beck's office of 20 years except the tousled presence of Beck himself, a welcome sight, straight from the garage. Ralph Baker quietly administers Jeffrey's business from an unassuming desk here in the central city; several miles north, jovial Ernest Chapman

serves as the civilized world's only other direct line to the guitarist. All others seeking an audience or a guitar solo for their record can only hope to raise him from his basement. To summon Jeffrey one must chase and harangue, sell him wholly and completely. It probably takes all the strength of two managers just to drag him to an airport.

That much hasn't ever changed for this most agreeably contrary icon, the archetype dabbler whose every effort and experiment—from the Yardbirds to commercial rock/jazz (!) to a note-for-note tribute to Gene Vincent and the Blue Caps guitarist Cliff Gallup called *Crazy Legs* with the Big Town Playboys (“showing kids today what triplets are about, and they weren't Eddie Van Halen”) to the spare TV soundtrack *Frankie's House* with keyboardist Jed Leiber—suggests utter boredom with the rock form. At his best Jeff Beck sounds impulsive and appears transcendent; at his worst he simply goes unchallenged. Like the demands of industry, his music has to harass him, burrow its way into his brain as recurrent motifs just to get his attention. One can only imagine what gets thrown out.

Beck has in every sense survived a crippling business—he says he still grieves friends like Hendrix and the Who's Keith Moon—but remains unsentimental. Rock 'n' roll for him seems to have paused in the late '50s, scuffed and dropped dead somewhere in the '80s: “It upsets me to hear the mechanical fakery on the radio and see that things have deteriorated to that level,” he says; his not-so-effortless attempts to push past the blues align him more with a '70s association like “McLaughlin/Beck/Di Meola” than the neophyte public's '60s



very, very deeply moved. It took me five minutes to rewind the tape. I was just completely wiped by the harmony, the colors, the voice control, the volume control; it's like on a *board*, like sliding up these different sections of 50 voices—I don't know how many voices there are, but they sound like 50. [laughs] And I heard sort of semi-Beach Boys barber-shop disappearing into blues, all in one chord. More than the average ear can take, I suspect. I got to figuring out one chord sequence, took me about half a

day, and before I got to the end, I'd already got my song, you know?

I wanted to do a note-for-note guitar version of one of their songs. I thought, “First I have to work out a basic chord structure for the singing.” I got to five, six chords, and I didn't need to go any further. It made the cycle complete for a Western-style song. Whereas if I continued I'd be going *down* and down, or up and around, going to something that didn't have a repeat pattern, which I wanted. I had enough by scooping half a handful rather than going for the whole bagful, and that's great, because now I've got impetus to carry on.

MUSICIAN: Are you recording it?

BECK: I'm right in the middle of writing it. I also got a line on some Puccini. There's this woman—I can't even remember her bloody name—who's *incredible*, she sang in '57 on a Puccini opera, and I

“I DON'T EXPECT TO BE REVERED BY THE P

trinity “Clapton/Beck/Page.” And quite unlike many of his rock colleagues, Beck surrounds himself with very considerate people, which only stresses the distance he keeps between music and career concerns.

The historical patterns make sense even in 1993. Beck is friendly, frank and clever, repulsed by stories of rock-industry venom, perplexed by the high American demand for caffeine. His contentment discredits the myth that preferring to stay home is a symptom of eccentricity. On an earlier occasion he professed a fascination with the choir Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares, so I gave him my advance copy of their latest record.

MUSICIAN: How did you first hear the Bulgarian women's choir?

BECK: I think Tony Hymas gave me a tape. I thought I was going to hear some outrageous sax—he's into this wild, avant-garde jazz—and to my amazement these cascading, *brilliant* swirling voices came across, and I was

can hear, *that is my guitar*, you know? All the quavering, the vibrato with the speed-up towards the end of the note, the dive down, it was just whammy-bar supreme. I won't actually do Puccini if I could get inspired to do something along the *lines* of that, but if I can't I'll do Puccini.

MUSICIAN: When we talked about Guitar Shop, you said that as soon as things started to happen—when you were setting up and jamming—that's when you wanted tape to roll. Which is why I thought it surprising when you first told me you were learning Cliff's solos; as if it were an attempt to reclaim some of the fire that made you begin playing.

BECK: Oh, that's right. I knew I had a backlog of solos I'd learned that were not fun to play because they would have been wedged into new songs they didn't fit. And also, it wasn't *me*—I discovered me at that time, around the 20, 23 mark. I fortunately had enough behind me then to make up some nonsense in the studio that impressed people, but didn't know enough to say, “I want the song to go like this or that”—I just knew my job

AS CLIFF GALLUP, 1993



was to come up with something surprising, and which lent something to the record that wouldn't be there with a normal guitar player.

MUSICIAN: *Gallup's reputation is unique, eh? He'd leave a group in the middle of a tour because of the discomforts of travel...*

BECK: Yeah, it must have been so much worse for him touring only in the States, which meant long distances many times a week. And I suppose once you got into that kind of music business in the '50s, you were on long trips from the first minute you had a hit record. But we were touring England, which is a lot easier 'cause you jump in a van and you're back in your own bed, you know? But out there you could be gone, God knows, months on end. And if you're a home-lover, that's not a good thing.

MUSICIAN: *I can't imagine being nauseous and having to get up on a stage and be great.*

BECK: Yeah, we're superhuman, you know that? [laughs]

MUSICIAN: *Well, it certainly takes the humanity out of being an artist.*

BECK: I suppose back in the '40s, you opened the box, got the band out and they all had to be shiny-new and happening, playing inspired solos. There are inbuilt energies released when you start on a professional scale, and when that wears down, you're left with yourself and start feeling more vulnerable to the illness or tiredness, and you've got to put on an act rather than do what we did in the early days, which

or Scotty Moore?" And when I started playing like Paul Burlison and went into the original "The Train Kept A-Rollin'," they were right behind me, the bass player goin' [mimes upright walking line], and there was an album sitting on our doorstep. I realized with those quality players you can have fun acoustically with one electric guitar and yet it still sounds like the whole place is blowing apart.

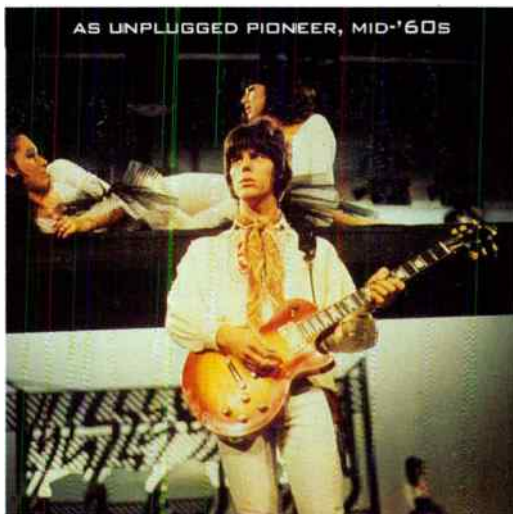
MUSICIAN: *Cliff used two fingerpicks and his thumb, didn't he? So how do you...*

BECK: I used fingerpicks—one on my thumb, one on my first finger and

one on the second, but he used a straight pick between the thumb and first finger and used fingerpicks on the ring and middle fingers. So in other words, his thumb and first finger were taken up with use of a flatpick, and I tried that and there's no way I could play like that.

MUSICIAN: *Because you weren't accustomed to playing with a pick after the last few years of playing with only fingers?*

BECK: That, coupled with these two other picks hanging out in the breeze, you know? [laughs] But I was still using the same



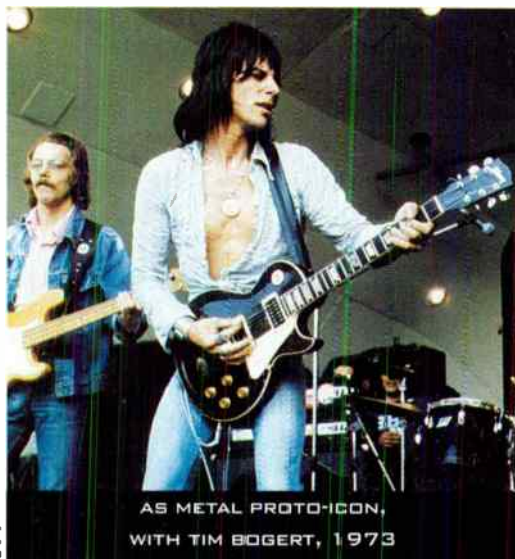
OP-BUYING PUBLIC, AND I DON'T WANT IT."

was, "Get me on that stage, I wanna kill!" And then, as you say, it becomes like a box of chocolates: You're unwrapped and got out for display, you've gotta look and sound good. Terrible. You can keep that. [laughs]

MUSICIAN: *During the sessions you admitted you were getting into the mindset of when you were still untried as a player. I don't mean to imply you're bored, but making music does mean different things at different times in your life. Because you vaulted to great success, you might*

now have financial or emotional obligations that aren't as rewarding.

BECK: Yeah. I start to panic when I hear the radio, just...despair. So when you get a close friend raving about a band like the Big Town Playboys, you go see 'em quick. That took me out of a hole. And this friend, he's very pushy. "Why don't you play with them?" I did when everybody'd gone; I'd had too much to drink and it was a disaster. We organized a rehearsal and that didn't happen as well, because I had long forgotten how to play proper controlled music, you know? The less volume I had, the better it sounded. [laughs] To the point where I might as well have shut the amp off. And I had to quickly flip back millions of pages in my head and go, "Can I still play like Cliff Gallup



action with the first two fingers and the thumb—with the thumbpick clipped on independently from the others. It was a pretty easy transition, although it was a nightmare for the first couple of weeks, because the picks were much more articulate than the flesh of the fingers. There would be a lot of clanking when you hit the pickups and stuff; I had to reposition, and play in between the bridge pickup and the neck pickup. But I got it pretty good.

And the sound was automatically 90 percent more like Gallup because of the picks. I couldn't figure out why I wasn't sounding like him, and I thought, "Well, if you don't mechanically have the basic technical requirements, which are the metal picks or some form of a hard pick, you won't get that amazingly sharp clarity that he has." And the instant I picked up the picks the sound was there, and it gave me a lot more inspiration to carry on with that style

because the sound was so accurate.

MUSICIAN: *So you used metal picks?*

BECK: I've got two metal and a plastic one on the thumb. The metal one on the thumb was too hard, you know.

MUSICIAN: *It must have been more difficult not just because of the attack, but because you're not really feeling the string, so you're not as close to the source.*

BECK: Exactly! You have to play that much further away because the picks protrude further than your finger would, so you're constantly adjusting and finding the right angle for them to hit the string. [laughs] It'd be like playing with a pair of gloves on.

MUSICIAN: *Gallup used his pinky on the whammy bar; are you...*

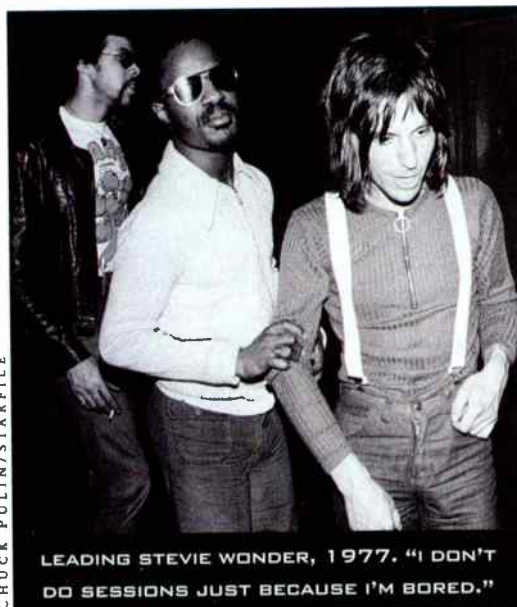
BECK: Yeah, the same thing. In fact, you have to adopt a right-hand attitude; when you find yourself playing really fluently, you look in the mirror or at a reflection in the glass and your hand automatically looks exactly like Gallup's! *[laughs]* From the few pictures I've seen, they're spread like a bunch of bananas over the strings.

MUSICIAN: *Do you dread people yelling "Freeway Jam" while you're...*

BECK: Yeah. *[laughs]* Let's hope we can play "Freeway Jam," but I don't know whether that would work with this arrangement.

MUSICIAN: *It could, as a shuffle.*

BECK: I know damn well if we toured, say, in three months, they're not going to be household numbers, so if you stick in a number like "Freeway Jam" there will be some reaction, I hope, but we don't want this hiccup in the middle of our set. We're still finding our feet with it. It doesn't *feel* as though we're radiating the energy we're putting in: We looked around and our respective girlfriends were talking amongst themselves. *[laughs]* I went, "Uh-oh. If this is not gonna go any further than the edge of this platform we're playing, maybe we should put it on ice."



LEADING STEVIE WONDER, 1977. "I DON'T DO SESSIONS JUST BECAUSE I'M BORED."

MUSICIAN: *That must be strange. You're caught between standards applied by your audience and what you really want. Is it difficult to get inspired?*

BECK: It sure is. Yeah. The only way I can seem to crank up anything is to sit there and *sit* there, with nothing more than the Strat, or a Tele. I have a beautiful Tele which talks to me sometimes—sometimes it doesn't say anything. But on the Strat, every day I'll come up with something I've never played before, and I won't even record it, I'll just wait and see if anything brews up. I guess that's how...I'm unlocking the secret, you see, I've never done that before. But I've never been asked the question which has triggered that thought, and I suppose that's what it is—I sit there with the guitar and *wait* until I have put enough information back here, in the back of the head, that it comes out, you know? So I don't use a tape recorder. If I can't remember it, and I have to play it back...obviously, when I get to the stage of wanting to record a piece, there's no way you can't. But what I'm looking for is the ingredient of movement towards something special, and that has to be up here in my head before I'll commit anything to tape. If I *recall* what I did last week enough times—I go, "Yeah, that's really something special"—then I'll put that on tape. And I haven't got many tapes! *[laughs]*

MUSICIAN: *You need a recurring theme, not just a flash.*

BECK: Yeah. I don't sit there thinking, "How am I going to gas 'em out now?" That comes afterwards. If I've done anything which I think is reasonably good then I'll wonder what credibility it has, or what it'll get. But I try not to think of anybody else until I please me. I won't write for anybody else. Of course, if I was...sometimes I play heavy metal stuff, just for the fun of it, and I just wish that people could see

me. *[laughs]* But I'd never play it outside my own studio.

MUSICIAN: *Why is that?*

BECK: I don't know. I just get whipped up into a rage and go down and plug in, dial up a good sound...just to console myself that I can do it, and do it much more *evil* than the guys that are doing it. *[laughs]* And I think, "Better keep that under wraps." But had there been a drummer around, we'd've had some of the wickedest metal on tape. I've got some metal somewhere on tape. I must tidy those up. And burn them. *[laughter]* Lest I should die and leave them for someone to...

MUSICIAN: *You're ashamed of metal.*

BECK: No, no, it's *wonderful*; it's the most satisfying. It's a nice feeling to have somebody scratch the right itch, and that does the trick. But it's so easy to play badly that there are a plethora of bands doing it, and I'm not even saying they're playing it badly—they've molded themselves a little easy street by playing power E, power A, a little bit of this *[mimics two-handed tapping]* on a simple riff, and it sounds impressive. But if you take that distortion pedal off, it doesn't sound very good! *[laughs]*

MUSICIAN: *So what other things do you do when you're off in that exploratory mode?*

BECK: Oh God, I would not like it to be known exactly what goes on in that music room.

MUSICIAN: *It doesn't involve nudity, does it?*

BECK: Nudity? Oh, no! Well, maybe, if I came down and forgot my pajamas. No, there's no logic to what I do. I don't sit down and go, "Right, I'm gonna finish this piece." Forget that. I just sit and watch TV and flip the channels and I play along with it. And I try to put the most ridiculously unsuitable backing to a soap opera! *[laughs]* I probably have gotten a fair way to

film music inadvertently by providing a backdrop to crap television. I don't want the people to go away thinking that I sit watching TV all day—if, after a hard day *slogging* somewhere else, I happen to be there with my feet up, nine times out of 10 the guitar is there, and I grab it and play it, and if I feel particularly amazing some days I shut the TV off altogether and plug in and play. But I won't even have an amp; I'll just listen to the sound coming straight off the guitar, play a series of chords and see if anything clicks. Usually chords rather than single lines.

MUSICIAN: *Must be hard to hear the chords' detail without an amp.*

BECK: The amp is a distraction: Once you plug in everything sounds wonderful. It's gotta sound good without an amp. Then I really get on a roll. I think, "Listen to these three chords—*now* we get the amp." And then you're off, and the amp will inspire you to continue and let you write some more chords. And that's pretty much how I work: very, very erratic. I wish it wasn't. I sometimes play something that is amazing, then I put the guitar down, make a cup of tea and go out for a walk and forget about it. And I enjoy having the freedom to do that, *[laughs]* before they take me away in a straitjacket.

MUSICIAN: *I don't know how tight you are with Jed Leiber or how premeditated your score for Frankie's House was, but it's in line with parts of Guitar Shop.*

BECK: Yeah. Jed tended to sound like that because he's a high-tech keyboard whiz. But most of the inspiration was taken off the screen: Just sit there and watch the scene four or five times, and then slot something in, even just "Yankee Doodle Dandy" to make a scratch, and then gradually work around on it. That's the only way I work. I



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BECK: No, no, no. People I've never even met. When you are in the public eye, people home in on you like you got a shining domo strapped to your head that lights up. It's almost as though they look at you as if you come from another planet. Or they don't really know who you are, but they know that you're wealthy, and they treat you differently. The old curse of English people being reserved still ranks, but there's times when they get a little loose and had something to drink. I don't have any trouble, but I have heard remarks made. Somebody would single out a

record that I made, "Hi Ho Silver Lining," and sing it...you probably wouldn't interpret it as anything more than a friendly joke, but I happen to know it isn't [chuckles] because of the types of people.

MUSICIAN: And you hate the song so much.

BECK: Yeah. I don't know if they *know* I hate it, but they hang that noose around your neck because it's *kind* of a compliment and kind of an insult at the same time. But where I live, I've chosen to live there because it's beautiful, and it would take a hell of a lot of hounds to get me out. I get recognized in New York and

L.A. and it's a great feeling, because they're great compliments, and you feel 10 feet tall, you know? I don't look for that here, and I seldom get weirdos in the streets. I could enjoy a life of seclusion. Not that I would say no to a big album here and there. I just mess with guitars, and I don't expect what I do to be revered by the pop-buying public. I don't really want it; I don't want to be suddenly liked by a bunch of people that never liked me before, just because of one song.

MUSICIAN: So as you look back on this sprawling, auspicious career, do any personal or musical moments leap to mind that made all the hotel rooms and annoying people seem worthwhile?

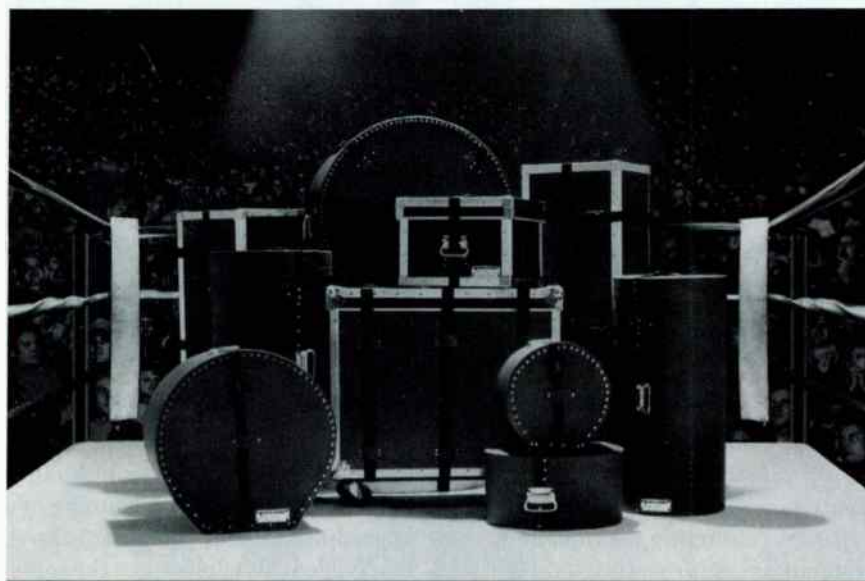
BECK: Precious little. Precious little. Moments you like, I guess, are when you see some genuine appreciation. You know, when kids come up and mean what they say. That is worth a million quid. Also, when you know you've genuinely impressed someone who's already a good player. That's the ultimate.

MUSICIAN: Give me an example.

BECK: Oh, gosh. John McLaughlin. That I couldn't fathom for one minute. Jennifer Batten; I thought, "She wouldn't know me from a bar of soap, playing for Michael Jackson." But she knew all my licks. So we might do something together. It's amusing, isn't it? All the macho heavy metalisms, she's got it down. [mimes two-handed tapping] I won't do anything on that line. But there's no substitute for thrashing, one-to-one. She's very dedicated. [laughs] Embarrassing. I just see her playing away in her little house somewhere, doing nothing else. Because you can't get that good unless you do.

MUSICIAN: You used two-handed tapping for a while there.

BECK: Sometimes. I'm getting tired of it. There are times when it sounds outrageously effective: In small doses you can turn someone's head 360 degrees, but when the ear latches onto what's happening, then the trick's out. It's like some guy pulling a rabbit out of a hat: You go, "Wow!" He does it 50 times, [laughter] "Okay, fuck the rabbit!"



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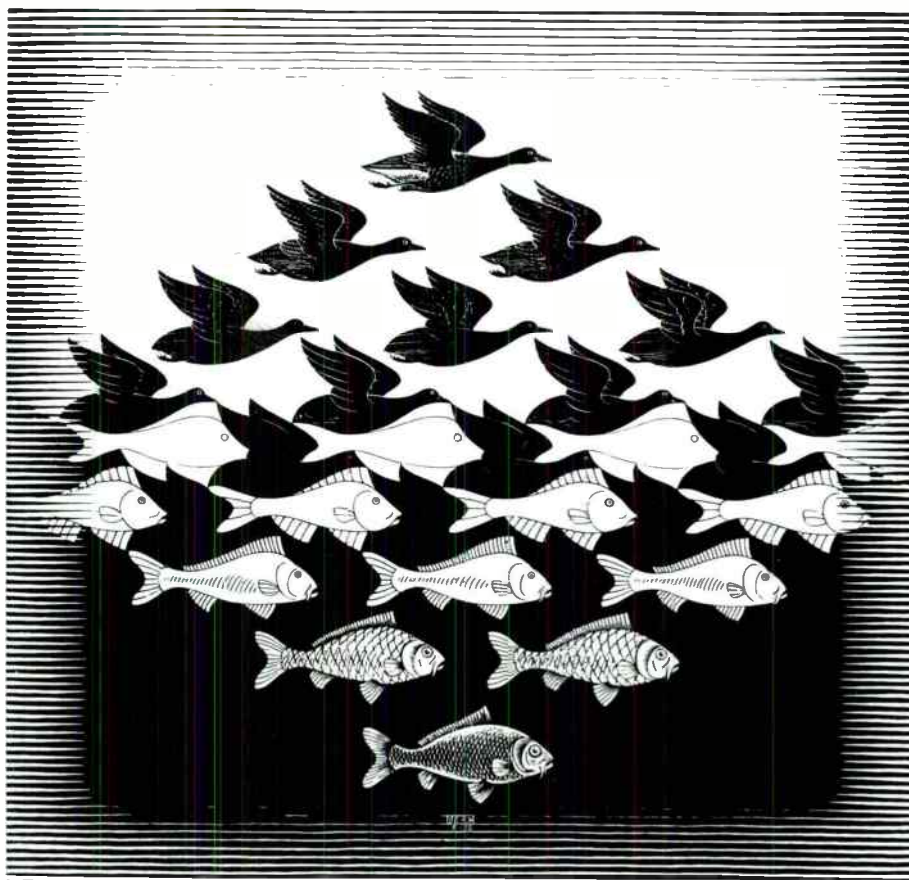
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If you think only your eyes can play tricks on you...



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Study the illustration. Are the geese becoming fish, the fish becoming geese, or perhaps both? Seasoned recording engineers will agree that your eyes *and* your ears can play tricks on you. In the studio, sometimes what you think you hear isn't there. Other times, things you don't hear at all end up on tape. And the longer you spend listening, the more likely these aural illusions will occur.

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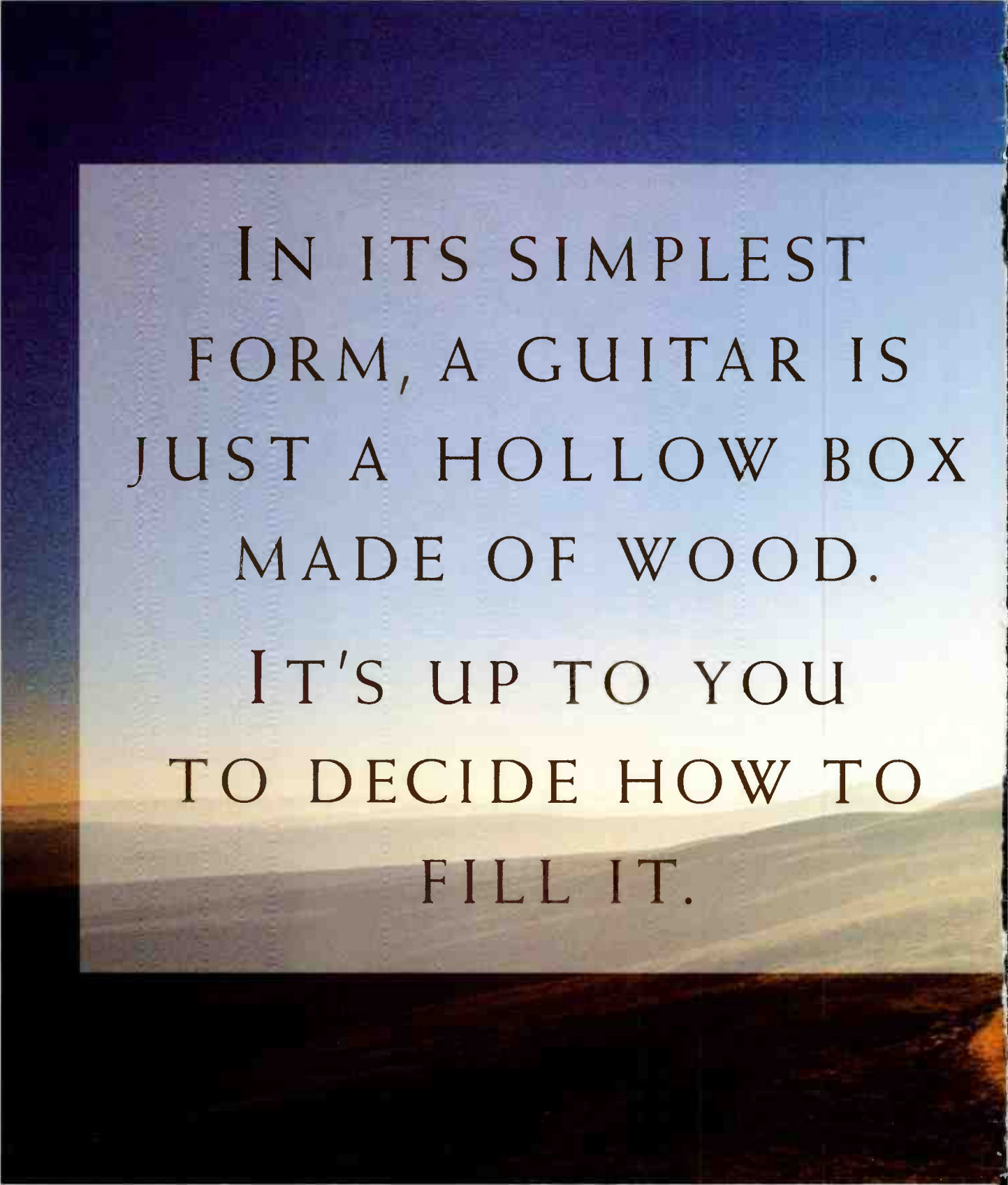


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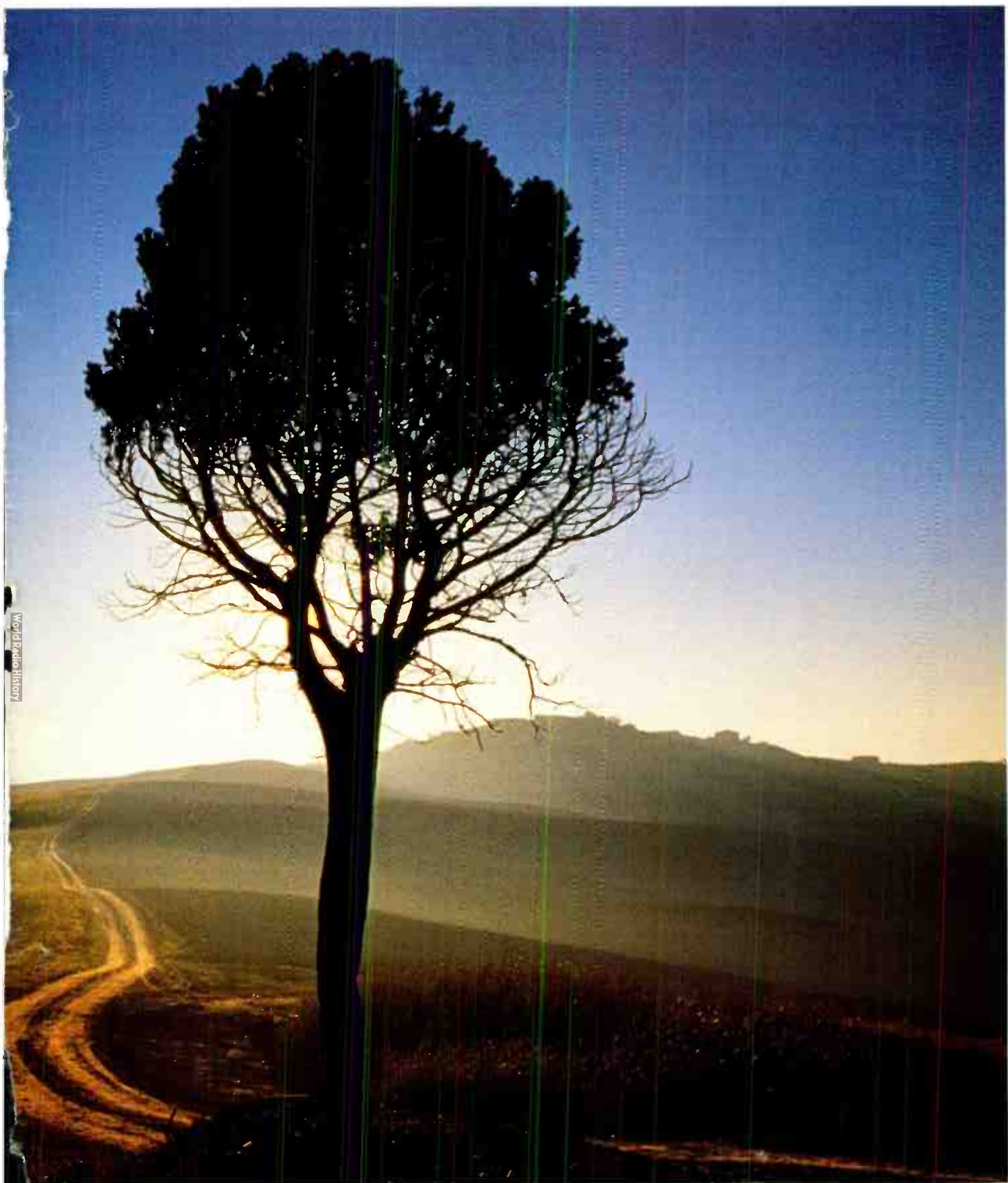
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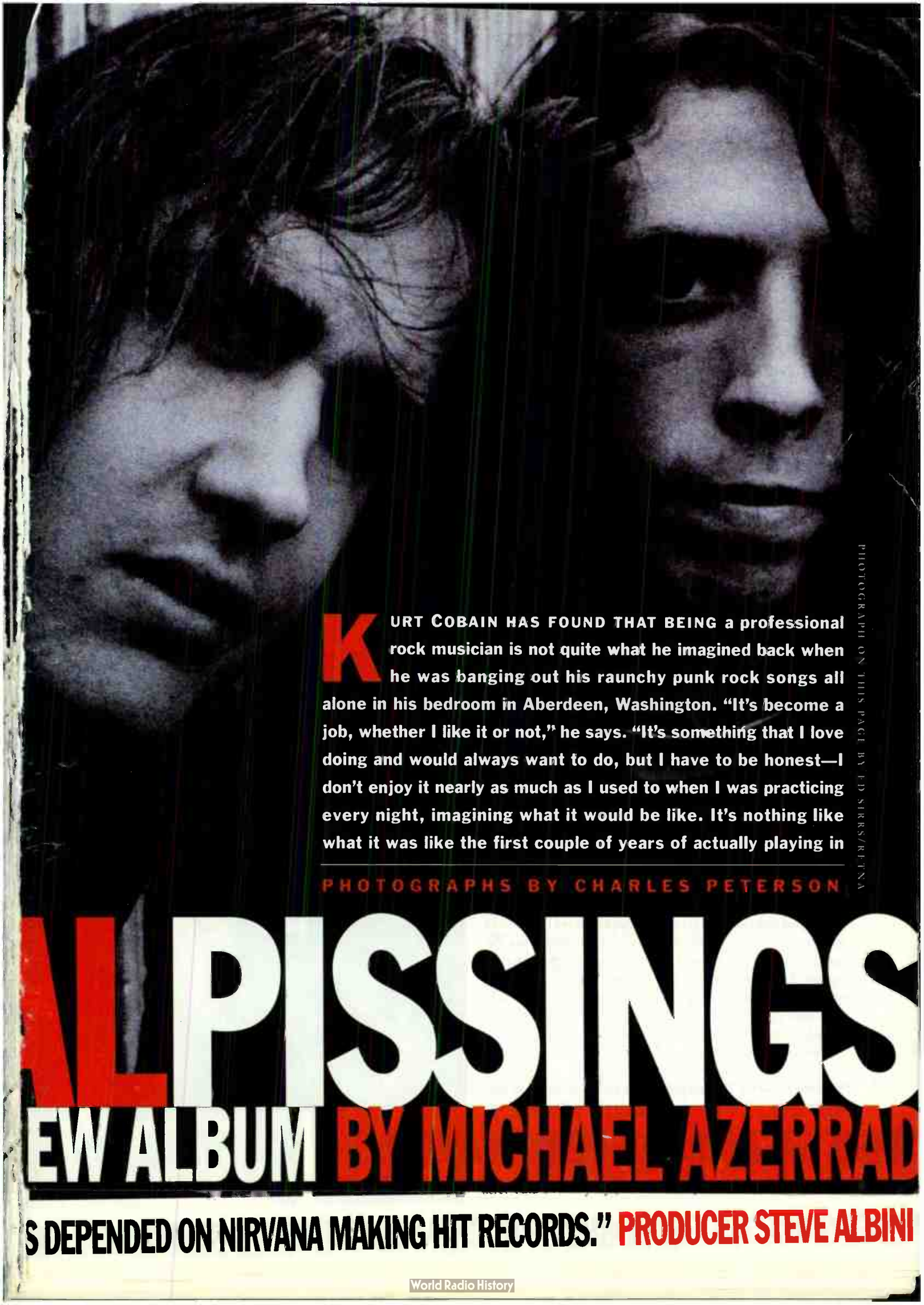
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TERRITORY

THE BATTLES BEHIND NIRVANA'S



KURT COBAIN HAS FOUND THAT BEING a professional rock musician is not quite what he imagined back when he was banging out his raunchy punk rock songs all alone in his bedroom in Aberdeen, Washington. "It's become a job, whether I like it or not," he says. "It's something that I love doing and would always want to do, but I have to be honest—I don't enjoy it nearly as much as I used to when I was practicing every night, imagining what it would be like. It's nothing like what it was like the first couple of years of actually playing in

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHARLES PETERSON

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AL PISSINGS

NEW ALBUM BY MICHAEL AZERRAD

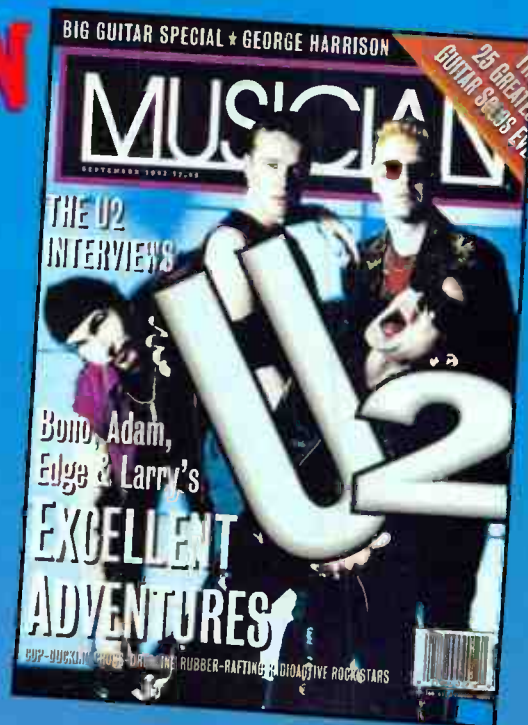
S DEPENDED ON NIRVANA MAKING HIT RECORDS." PRODUCER STEVE ALBINI

front of a few people, loading up the van and going to a rock show to actually *play*. The privilege of that just can't be reproduced after doing it for 10 years. The same feeling is everywhere."

BELOW Chris Novoselic, Kurt Cobain and Dave Grohl. 1993.

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Ian McLagan: *Face the Face*

*On the finer points
of three-chord karate*
by ALAN DI PERNA



Ian McLagan likes to tell how his self-taught piano style was an endless source of mystification for the late Rolling Stones pianist Ian Stewart. "Stew would look over my shoulder and say, 'I don't know what the fuck you're doing.'" McLagan laughs as he impersonates his old friend's lantern-jawed, clenched-teeth delivery: "What the fuck are you using *that* finger for?"

Silver-haired but still quite modishly coiffed, McLagan belongs to the fraternity of British pianists—Stewart, Nicky Hopkins, John Mayall—who took their cue from American blues masters like Otis Spann, Johnnie Johnson, Lafayette Leake, Roosevelt Sykes and Pine Top Smith. McLagan has one of the best resumes in rock: Small Faces, Faces, Rod Stewart, Dylan, Stones, Springsteen, Bonnie Raitt, Chuck Berry.... He keeps up with the new generation of rockers as well, and can be heard on recent discs by Izzy Stradlin and Paul Westerberg.

A cup of good English tea in hand, I follow McLagan into a small side-room of his house, where he keeps the weathered black upright he bought from Richard Manuel of the Band. Ian kicks into a shuffle in C buoyed by the boozy amiability that is his stylistic trademark. McLagan can also play a fine ballad: His Hammond work on "Itchycoo Park" and "Maggie May" set the standard for ethereal rock organ. But his exuberant identity comes across most clearly when he's pummeling the ivories on some three-chord rocker.

McLagan is forever "rippling" inverted thirds. His right pinky generally plays the top note, but he'll grab the bottom one with his thumb, second or even third finger. Chromaticism also has a big role—the guy *loves* to linger over passing tones. As he reaches the V chord (G), he holds the G with his left hand while his right hand rolls B \flat and G \flat dramatically. He milks this dissonant interval for all it's worth before finally moving on to A and F—common extensions of the V7 chord.

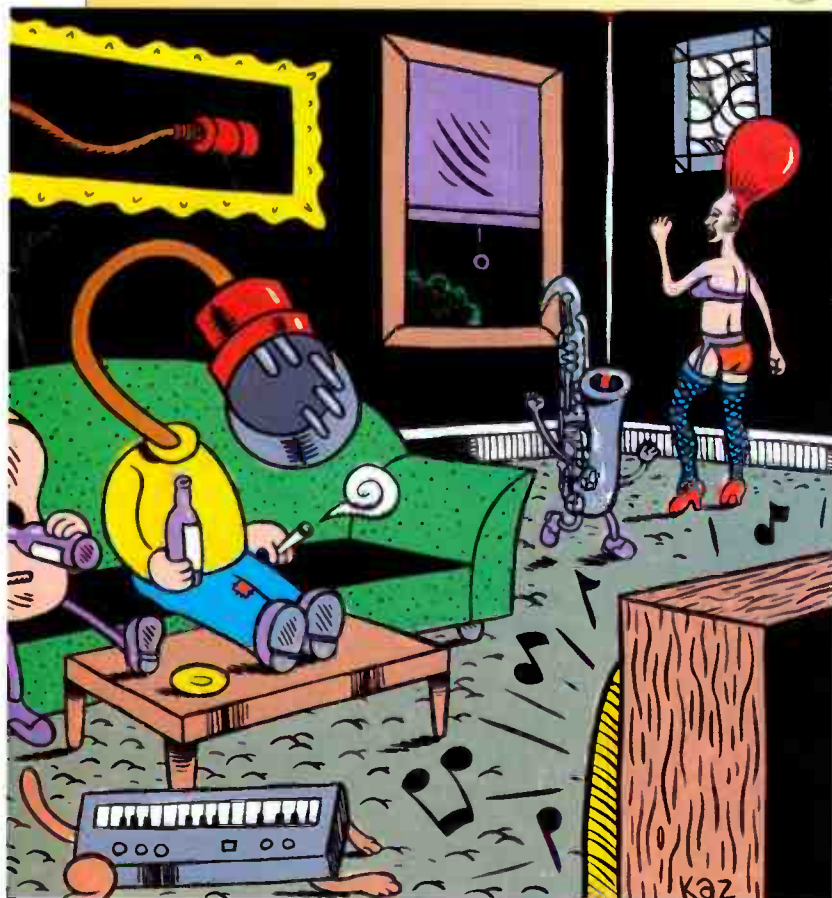
Springsteen's producer Jon Landau once complained that McLagan's playing on a particular track was too genre-ish: "I told him, 'Well, you hired *me*, didn't you?'" Based on McLagan's rhythmic sense alone, one might classify him as a one-man blues subgenre. For a turnaround, he might play octaves in both hands—just four consecutive Gs (if the song's in C). Harmonically, it couldn't be simpler, but the syncopated way he divides the rhythm between both hands drives the shuffle forward like a crisp snare roll.

"I keep my left-hand figures simple," McLagan offers. "My left hand has been lacking these many years, mainly because as a kid I learned that Chuck Berry rhythm riff on guitar." He plays the familiar root-and-fifth to -sixth pattern. "I just transferred it to piano. Sometimes I'll play the root in octaves. I was never much good at this...." He plays a walking boogie-woogie. "That was more Stew's line. He was more into the Meade Lux Lewis/Albert Ammons/Peter Johnson thing."

When Ian's left hand does come to prominence, it's often to play a nimble little lead-in figure that introduces a big hook or chorus. The pick-up phrase on *[cont'd on page 80]*

A Synthesizer in Every Living Room

*Better living
through General MIDI*
by WARREN SIROTA



Synthesizers have been around since the late '60s, but it took MIDI to bring them into the mainstream. Still, to some extent MIDI itself remains the domain of wire-heads and techno-dweebs. For better or worse, a recent extension of the MIDI specification, General MIDI (GM), promises to democratize MIDI once and for all.

Essentially, the General MIDI spec is a list of

128 instrument sounds and 48 drum and percussion sounds that can be found in any GM-compatible synth (keyboard, module or computer add-on card), as well as the locations of these sounds in the synth (that is, the patch numbers in which the sounds are stored). Theoretically, if you play a GM sequence on a sequencer that's connected to a GM synth, the result will sound pretty much as the producer of the sequence intended: MIDI patch-change messages set the synth to play the proper sounds on the proper MIDI channels, so the piano track triggers the piano sound,

the string track triggers the string sound, and so on.

The most immediate benefit of General MIDI is that every GM synth offers a reasonably complete set of reasonably realistic instrument sounds. (If you're synth-savvy, you know that "reasonably realistic" varies. Many synthesized/sampled pianos, vibes and percussion instruments are excellent. Most electric guitars stink. Some boxes do good trumpets, others do better saxes.) If you want to sequence a song for acoustic bass, jazz drums, electric piano, sax and flügelhorn, you'll find what you need right there, in pre-defined, consistent patch locations. Probably, you won't even need to look up the patch numbers in the manual—you'll select the instruments by name from a pop-up list in your sequencer.

But what's it good for? New applications seem to crop up every month. Basically, GM is handy any time you want a conventional set of sounds that can be accessed in a standardized way. If you're a cover act using pre-programmed sequences, GM makes it a plug-and-play proposition. For producers of low-budget films, presentations and the like, GM offers an easy way to customize library music for the production at hand. If you upload a sequence onto a computer bulletin board, people are more likely to hear it as you intended—indeed, to hear it at all—if it conforms to the GM spec. Computer games pump out their dramatic scoring in GM. Likewise, CD-ROM presentations use GM to store music as MIDI rather than data-hungry audio.

Here's a rundown of the GM spec:

The *patch map* guarantees that MIDI patch-change messages call up similar sounds on different synths. The 128 patch-change numbers are divided into 16 groups of eight, covering the range of conventional instruments: 1–8 call up piano sounds, 33–40 basses, 65–72 reeds and so on. Need a recorder? Try patch 75. A slap bass? Two varieties are provided, patches 37 and 38.

There's still room for variation among synths. First, each unit uses its own samples or synthesis algorithms. Second, GM doesn't define standard volume lev- [cont'd on page 81]

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"It's hard to describe. It's like hearing more of the piece or the different feelings evoked because of the key it's played in."

"I can listen to myself better and hear what I'm doing, allowing me to express myself better."

"It's amazing how easy and simple Perfect Pitch is. After understanding it, it was like the pitches were at the 'tip of my ear.'" C.L., piano, guitar

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"I used to sleep in instead of practicing in the morning, but since starting your course I haven't skipped one day. My improvisations have improved." M.S., piano/synthesizer

"I have already acquired abilities I never dreamed of having 2 years ago, as well as an overall zest for music. You've really made a difference in my life." M.G., piano, Germany

"I wish I could have had this 30 years ago!" R.B., voice

"It feels like I'm singing and playing 'my' notes instead of 'somebody else's' notes—like music is more 'my own.' Improved delivery because of being able to make more natural music." L.H., voice/guitar

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"My improvisations have improved. I feel more in control of what I'm doing." I.F.B., Costa Rica

"Although I was at first skeptical, I am now awed." R.H., sax

"A few days after starting the course the music did seem more colorful and vibrant." J.P., guitar, Australia

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"Mr. Burge has given me the key to what I once considered a closed door." D.H., Ph.D., voice/piano professor

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Toby Myers' Low-Down Melodies

*Thumbing it with
Mellencamp's bassist*
by RICK MATTINGLY



Sitting on a stool in his home in the woods near Bloomington, Indiana, Toby Myers loads a cassette of John Mellencamp's forthcoming album, *Human Wheels*, into his tape deck and fast-forwards to "Suzanne and the Jewels." As the song begins, Myers' bass stays simple behind the lyrics, playing mostly whole-note roots with an occasional embellishment. But in the instrumen-

tal breaks between verses, the bass sets up a counter melody to the guitar, still landing on a root note whenever the chord changes.

"The basic concept is to establish the chord and then embellish the hell out of it," Myers says, picking up an old Teisco Del Rey bass ("A great little bass," he says with affection) and playing the part. "I have to move around a little with my parts or else they bore me. But John gives me a lot of room, and he's patient enough to give me a couple of passes to lock the part in. Obviously I have to stay out of the way of the

words, so I try to pick my spots to embellish what John has just sung."

Myers says that the way Mellencamp records has a lot to do with his ability to create melodic basslines. "Usually, we put the bass on last. When everyone else goes on before me, I can see where I can go and what I can do. Also, since the track is being built on the drums, the bass isn't required to be that rhythmic, so instead I try to be as melodic as I can."

Toby can, however, be extremely rhythmic when the situation warrants it. "My part on 'Rooty Toot Toot' [from *The Lonesome Jubilee*] was pretty poppin', and on the new album I played a rhythmic part on 'When Jesus Left Birmingham,'" he says, playing a funky Bo Diddley rhythm in which he hits fat low notes on the fourth string with his thumb, syncopating the rhythm with octaves pulled with his first finger on the second string. "You could almost pop the whole part," he says, demonstrating, "but then you have all that slap sound. This does the same thing, but it's rounder."

While Myers strives to function as a traditional bassist in the midst of his melodic lines, he doesn't limit himself to always landing on the root every time the chord changes. "I did this really wild line on 'Melting Pot' on the *Whenever We Wanted* album, and I ended up on a D while the rest of the band was playing a C chord. It made it sound like some jazzy-ass chord, but it worked."

Much of Myers' concept for melodic bass playing developed when he was a member of Roadmaster during the '70s. "Roadmaster's writing was heavily influenced by Laura Nyro," Toby says, "and she'd have the bass note moving against the chord. Roadmaster made three albums for Mercury, and I took the melodic thing as far as I could without going over the top."

Born in 1949, Myers acquired his first bass in '65. Most of his instruction came from listening to records. "Norm Sundholm from the Kingsmen was a big influence," Toby recalls. "The bass was so loud on those records that it was easy for me to play along until I had it right. And I learned the cycle

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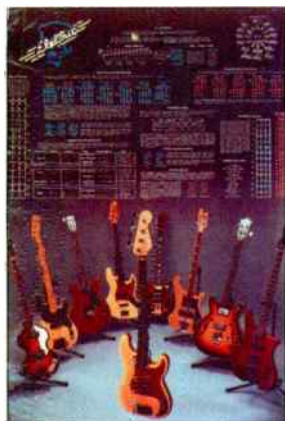


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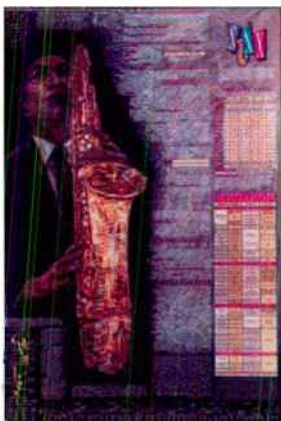


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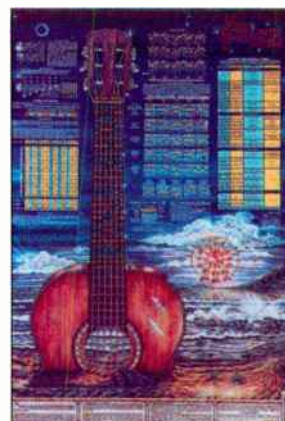
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of fifths from a song called 'Blues in F,' which was on the flip side of 'Gimme Some Lovin' by the Spencer Davis Group.

"But Paul McCartney had the biggest effect on me. His basslines were really inventive, and when the Beatles put out 'Rain,' I don't think bass had ever been that loud on a record before. When you're a fledgling bass player and you hear a line like that, it's like, JEEEEEE-sus Christ! And it's such an easy lick. I used that lick in every song I played for the next month.

"That carried over to Chris Squire with Yes. He was playing great melodic lines, playing the fifth against the root a lot. I'd never heard anybody do that, but when he referred to Stravinsky in an interview, I picked up everything I could by Stravinsky, and then it was, 'Of course he's playing the five against the one!'

"I was playing in this bar band in Bloomington at the time," Myers laughs, "and we did a 30-minute Yes medley. Of course I had a Rick-embacker 4001 and a million amps, and I had the treble turned up so high that a guy came up to me one night and said, 'They call that thing a BASS. Turn that fuckin' treble off.'"

Myers has since come to appreciate the boomier aspects of his instrument, to the extent that he has altered its tuning. "I have to give credit for this idea to Dean Lozow, who runs September Recording Studio in Indianapolis. I use a four-string bass, but on the bottom I've got a B string from a five-string bass tuned to D, my third string is an E string tuned to G, my second is an A string tuned to C, and my highest is a D tuned to F.

"John writes a lot of songs in D and G, so it's great to have that open D on the bottom. It enables me to get lower, but not obnoxiously low. Sometimes with a five-string, the note is so low it flaps and you don't hear it. That doesn't work so well in the kind of rock 'n' roll context we have with John. But this way, I can get a little deeper in the mix and be closer to where the bass drum is."

Myers finds that he gets the best sound from those large strings by picking with his right-hand thumb. "When I'm striking with the biggest appendage I've got on my body, except of course for my..." Toby smiles modestly, finishing the sentence by looking down at his jeans. "Anyway, it's a nice, fat sound. And when you use a little bit of thumbnail you add some click to the sound. Some speed things dictate that you use your fingers, but picking with my thumb works best on most of John's stuff."

Toby has learned to accept the fact that much of what he plays can't be heard on car radios and cassette players. "When we entered the era

of BIG DRUMS it was kind of over for bass. I guess I get my rocks off listening to playbacks when it's still loud in the mix, and having David Grissom or Kenny Aronoff turn to me and go, 'Yeah!' In the end, I'm just support for John. But after 11 years in the band, I've got to do a little bit for my heart, too."

THE BOTTOM LINE

I don't see why equipment has to be a huge, complicated deal," TOBY MYERS says. "A bass is just a big, low thing that goes boom, so give me a nice bass, clean power and speakers that don't distort." He uses a Guild Pilot bass with active pickups. "I love the bass, but it had the ugliest headstock I'd ever seen, so I put it on a bandsaw and made it look like an old Tele headstock," Myers says. "Then I laminated part of an old Monet calendar onto it so it looks like a swath of flowers." His Martin strings are .065, .080, .105 and .130. "Those are some big-ass strings; they're not for the faint-fingered." Myers uses two Hartke 7000 amplifiers and three Hartke cabinets: one with four 10s and two with two 15s each. His wireless unit is a Nady.

KRANTZ

[cont'd from page 73] where everything is, because that's what gets in the way most, like when we're stuck in segments of the guitar to deal with certain chords. That always bugged me. If you're interested in improvising, then to think of Cmaj7 as just an arpeggio shape, which is generally how it's taught, makes it harder to be free with the information. I'm into deciphering guitar as a bunch of notes we can put together without relying on patterns our fingers remember in a certain order."

One excellent Krantz method involves confining a practice zone to a fretboard location, a finger to a fret, and playing only the notes in a scale or chord, say, D7b9—D, F#, A, C, Eb. After time, shift around the neck and continue the exercise until the structure melts into an array

NICE PIECES, GOOD SOUNDS

WAYNE recorded *Long to Be Loose* with a Pensa Strat-style with Fender strings (.011, .014, .018, .028, .034, .044) through a Fender black-face Deluxe, Alesis' MicroVerb and Boss' digital delay and Super Overdrive.

of defining notes. "They exist in those frets in locations that don't coincide with the two shapes you might know," he says, "and exist as information which can be accessed in any order, with big or small intervals, arpeggiated, melodically, rhythmically—we can make music out of them. What about leaving out the fifth if it's too much of a stretch? Why not imply D7b9 with only three of the notes? That's where soloing and comping meet: You're dealing with the same information, it's just that one you deal with linearly, the other simultaneously. Piano players don't have two places to play that chord; they can put notes together in any way they care to, and that's what I want to do on guitar. *Anywhere* on a guitar.

"But ultimately it comes down to, 'Now you know the notes, then what do you do?' That's where it gets complicated—or easy, depending on your frame of reference," he says, smiling. "The next step is what we're playing about, what the message is. The difference between a really good player and a really good player is moot; we've expanded the 'ability' part. The guitar is a means of expression of the greater thing music represents. And that's what the voyage is about, to more deeply understand and articulate what that greater thing is. I'm concise with verbal language, and that doesn't get it. Because if it were a concise, verbal thing, we wouldn't need music to describe it."

MCLAGAN

[cont'd from page 75] Rod Stewart's recording of "(I Know) I'm Losing You" was of course copped from the Motown original. But McLagan made the D-natural riff his own by adding an E grace note. "That was a mistake! Now I always have to play it," laughs the pianist, who has just reunited with Stewart for the latter's "Unplugged" tour.

Then there's that great left-hand figure that sets up the choruses on Stewart's version of "It's All Over Now." The song is in G and the first chord of the chorus is D. To get there, McLagan does a chromatic lurch from B up to D, then a quick drop down to the D an octave below. Hearing him play the tune solo brings home just how much his syncopated piano work is responsible for the jaunty rhythmic feel of the choruses on the record. Ian staggers his "Chuck Berry" bass pattern with minor and major thirds, while his right hand ripples and roams freely. But for the verses he cuts back to a bare minimum. His three-note right-hand verse figure, he says, was meant as a "tribute to Brian Jones" and his riff on the Rolling Stones' recording of the song.

McLagan can remember lining up outside a

pub in Richmond to see the Stones for the first time, over 30 years ago. He recalls being less interested in Ian Stewart—"you couldn't hear him anyway"—than in Jones. If only more rock keyboardists were as keen on listening to the guitarist; down through the years Mac's perfected the art of enhancing guitars, while staying out of their way harmonically.

"What a guitar ain't got is this," he says, clanging a fifth in the piano's top octave. McLagan's a master of high and fast 16th-note triplets. Just listen to his bruising solo on "Silver Naked Ladies" from Westerberg's *14 Songs*. What's his approach to this difficult maneuver?

"Violence. It's a form of karate, actually." He demonstrates his "stiff-arm" playing posture. "See, the correct way to play them would be lightly, from the wrist. That's how Nicky Hopkins does it. But I do it from the shoulder, and occasionally from the crotch and sometimes even the foot."

No wonder Stew was mystified.

McGEAR

On the road, IAN MCLAGAN plays a Hammond B-3 through a custom Leslie setup that includes Gauss speakers and JBL drivers with Crown and Cerwin Vega amplification. His piano is a Korg SG1-D digital. His sole effect is a Korg A-3.

GENERAL MIDI

[cont'd from page 76] els, so it's likely that sequences will need to be balanced (using MIDI volume messages). Third, several GM patch names are alarmingly vague. Take patch 89: "pad 1 (new age)." What does that sound like?

Such questions are usually answered by looking at the Roland Sound Canvas, the first GM synth, which arrived even before specification itself. Because Roland was there first—and met with considerable success—other manufacturers tend to resolve GM's ambiguities by aping this device.

GM drum and percussion sounds, specified by the *percussion key map*, are accessible only on MIDI channel 10 and mapped across the keyboard in a specific way. For instance, "acoustic snare" responds to MIDI note 38, the D an octave above middle C. As with the patch map, the relative volumes among drums aren't standardized. But because they're all on the same MIDI channel, MIDI volume messages affect all sounds equally. The only way to balance them is to tweak the velocity of each note.

If you're thinking ahead, you might be won-

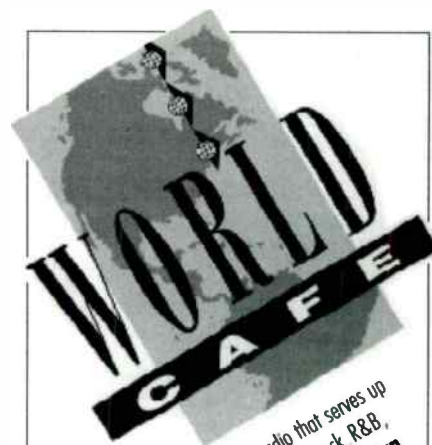
dering how to choose between several acoustic piano sounds or different drum kits in a GM synth (if, indeed, it offers them). Alternate instrument selections are usually made from a synth's front panel. When it comes to remote control via MIDI, a sensible convention has evolved for changing drum kits: Send a patch-change message on channel 10. For other instrument sounds, the closest thing to a standard method is the one devised by Roland for their GS standard (a slightly more extensive precursor to, and superset of, GM). This is actually a continuous-controller 0 message; the value is the number of the desired bank. With a Sound Canvas, sending controller 0 with a value of 1 followed by patch change 22 calls up "French accordion," whereas a controller 0 with a value of 9 followed by a patch change 22 gets you "Italian accordion."

A GM synth must be able to play 24 notes at once, on any MIDI channel. Voices are allocated dynamically, so you don't have to pre-assign voices to channels; the synth can allocate any or all voices to any channels at any moment.

As for MIDI continuous controllers, GM synths are supposed to respond to pitch-bend and after-touch (channel pressure), as well as mod wheel (controller 1), volume (7), pan (10), expression (11), sustain (64), reset-all-controllers (121) and all-notes-off (123).

What? You thought *all* MIDI synths were supposed to respond to these messages? Silly you. Those controller assignments were only *suggested* in the original MIDI spec. Now they're actually supposed to *work*! It's about time—although I still wonder what "expression" is supposed to sound like. (Incidentally, GM also specifies "registered parameter" controllers for setting pitch-bend ranges and tuning of receiving synths.)

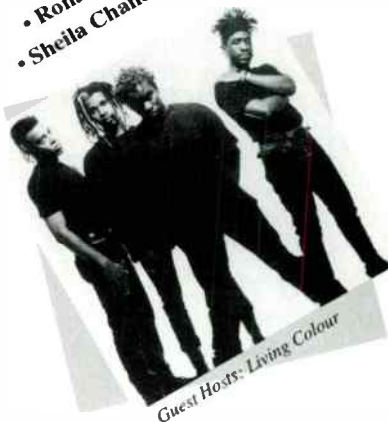
Some manufacturers and musicians have complained that General MIDI is limiting, and that they won't compromise their designs or music by bowing to a consumer-oriented standard. Likewise, including GM compatibility may divert resources that would be better spent on less standardized, more forward-looking capabilities. Still, GM itself doesn't inherently restrict manufacturers from providing whatever sounds they see fit in addition to the GM palette. General MIDI isn't without flaws—such as lack of support for multi-patch "performances," complete with effects settings and keyboard split points—but the concept already is proving useful to those making conventional music, and seems unlikely to pose significant dangers to musicians who live a little closer to the edge.



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MUSICIAN

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In terms of hi-fi audio, cassette tapes have always been compromised by slow speed and narrow width. On the other

hand, as recordable formats go, cassettes are user-friendly and convenient, and they're enormously popular. Still, ever since CDs virtually replaced LPs, we've been living in the digital age. Shouldn't we be able to enjoy the benefits of digital recording in a package that's just as convenient as the old-fashioned cassette?



That's the reasoning behind two new consumer-grade recording formats, Sony's MiniDisc (MD) and Philips' Digital Compact Cassette (DCC). (A few years back, it was also the reasoning behind DAT, which never caught on with the general public.) MiniDisc is like a 2.5-inch recordable CD. What's more, at any given moment, an MD player holds the next 10 seconds of music in a special buffer. If the machine is jostled and the head loses its place, the buffer can supply the music until the machine rights itself. This makes MD ideal for listening in a car or while jogging. On the other hand, DCC is a digital version of the cassette. Unlike MD, which allows you to locate songs instantly, DCC requires rewinding or fast-forwarding. DCC's strength is that, although it records digitally, it's also capable of playing analog cassettes.

The technology behind MD and DCC is entirely different from that of CD or even DAT. MD crams 74 minutes of music into a space much smaller than a CD. Meanwhile, DCC's tape speed is no faster than that of analog cassettes. As a result, both formats need to "thin out" the data that make up the music without sacrificing too much fidelity.

As it happens, the human ear doesn't hear sounds that fall below a certain level. Also, it hears some frequency ranges more accurately than others, and if two sounds occur at nearly the same frequency, you tend to hear only the louder one. By discarding components of the sound that you aren't likely to hear and recording less important ones less accurately, MD and DCC fit more music into less space—in fact, over 75 percent less space. This isn't "perfect digital sound." It's a compromise designed to sound as good as possible under the circumstances.

I don't have my nose buried in specs, and most of my knowledge of recording comes from hands-on experience. So when it comes to MD or DCC, the real question is: What does it sound like? To find out, I entered Ocean Way Studios with a Philips DCC900 table-top model (\$795) and a Sony MZ-1 portable MiniDisc recorder (\$750).

For comparing pre-recorded music, I used Paul McCartney's *Off the Ground*, the only title I could find in both formats (annoying shades of the early days of CD). I also recorded a number of selections myself. The two formats sounded surprisingly good, and very, very similar. As for the difference between the new formats and analog cassettes, it's night and day. Cassettes sound thin and lifeless by comparison.

Playing dubs (from CD) of an R.E.M. record that I worked on, DCC delivered a good sound with a warm, full low end. MD was brighter, with a wider stereo field and great clarity—but sometimes it was a bit too much and sounded harsh, much like early CDs. DCC sounded truer to the original. Another plus is that my analog cassettes sounded great on the DCC machine—better than on my Denon deck!

Both units are limited when it comes to punching into record on the fly, but MD has a slight edge here. When you start rolling from record/pause, MD begins recording instantly, while DCC takes a moment to kick in—but this isn't likely to create a problem except in situations requiring very tight segues. Also, recording a MiniDisc is like writing to a floppy disk in that it looks for empty space rather than writing over previously recorded material. DCC is linear, so if you record over Song A with a longer piece of music, you'll record over Song B.

In either format, you can encode a song's name, take number, date and other text information with the music. I was enthralled with this capability. Text shows up on an LCD screen as the music plays, and allows you to search for a piece of music by entering part of the title or date, instead of having to remember the index number. It's fantastic to be able to search for a song by name rather than number.

Both MD and DCC deliver sound that's significantly better than cassettes. MD is a sexy package, but to my ear it doesn't sound as true. On the other hand, DCC sounds great, and allows me to listen to my cassettes without transferring them to another format. Between the two,

DCC is my preference, and a viable option for musicians looking for an inexpensive digital mastering format.

SCOTT LITT

Scott Litt produced the last four R.E.M. releases, as well as albums by the Replacements, Patti Smith,



Indigo Girls, That Petrol Emotion and the Juliana Hatfield Three. He also contributed mixes to the new Nirvana release. Scott is currently building a studio based on vintage equipment at Ocean Way Recording Studios in Los Angeles.

• Sony, One Sony Dr., Park Ridge, NJ 07656; (800) 222-SONY. • Philips, 2001 Gateway Pl., Suite 650 W., San Jose, CA 95110; (408) 453-7373.

LEXICON ALEX EFFECTS PROCESSOR

YEARS AGO, if someone had told me that one day I'd be able to buy a Lexicon processor for under \$400, I would've told 'em they were nuts. Yet here I am, face-to-face with the 16-bit Alex (\$399). In dropping the price point so drastically, are the undisputed leaders in digital reverb slumming? Unequivocally not: This unit packs Lexicon's legendary studio-quality effects into a stage-savvy box that'll knock your socks off!

Based on the algorithms in the LXP series, Alex provides reverb (hall, room, plate, chamber, gated and inverse programs), six-voice stereo chorus and chorused delay, stereo flange, mono echo and four-tap stereo ping-pong delay in 32 patches. Only 16 are user-programmable, which may be the unit's greatest weakness.

One of Alex's greatest strengths is that each patch offers only three programmable parameters, making for supremely simple operation. Mostly, the editable parameters are just the ones you'd want, and their ranges and increments are nicely tailored. All patches feature programmable effect level, handy for switching among presets designed for comping and soloing. Reverb algorithms provide adjustable pre-delay and decay time. Multi-tap delays offer programmable delay time and regeneration amount. I do wish that, in chorus programs, the parameters

were modulation depth and rate rather than regeneration and effect level. Another nit: You can't exit from the save routine once you've initiated it, which is fairly easy to do by accident.

The unit doesn't respond to MIDI—a possible shortcoming in the studio—but it does offer exceptional, albeit limited, flexibility for changing patches onstage. You can use a footswitch to advance (but not to reverse) through the 16 RAM locations (but not the ROM), and you can pre-program the unit to skip patches (although you can't reorder them). You can also loop through a few contiguous patches and skip the rest. As for audio interfacing, Alex's no-fuss quarter-inch phone jacks send and receive unbalanced signals at both instrument and line levels.

All in all, Alex is an impressive bit of design, matching a well-thought-out feature set with great sound and a rock-bottom price. Quibbles aside, this box slays all competing effects devices in its price range. Alex is awesome.

MICHAEL COOPER



• Lexicon, 100 Beaver St., Waltham, MA 02154-8425; (617) 736-0300.

ROLAND ELECTRONIC DRUM SYSTEM

THE COURTSHIP of high tech and the elemental art of drumming has left many drummers in doubt that a marriage will ever take place. From the first Simmons kits during the '70s to present-day MIDI rigs, few drummers have found electronic pads as expressive as acoustic drums. Although we appreciate the sounds afforded by today's sampling technology, there's been precious little progress when it comes to controlling them.

Simply put, Roland's new drum system is a big step forward. The TD-7 sound module (\$795), PD-7 pads (\$125 each) and FD-7 hi-hat pedal (\$210) can be bought separately, or bundled with stands, cables and such into the TDB-7K and TDE-7K kits (\$1749 and \$2640).

The TD-7 includes 256 killer samples and a host of useful features: 32 "kits"; two effects processors; 12 trigger inputs that accept MIDI, CV and microphone signals; and four quarter-inch outputs (a stereo pair plus two individual outs). But on the drum riser, it's the control interfaces that are going to create the most

excitement. The PD-7 provides either of two sounds, depending on how hard you hit it, plus three unique features: First, each pad has a separate rim sensor that allows you to play a rim shot exactly as you would on an acoustic drum. Second, if either the rim or the pad is assigned to a long sound such as a cymbal, you can grab it after striking and choke the sound, just like a real cymbal. Third, the TD-7 senses strikes that hit both head and rim, producing a different sound (assignable, of course). Like the pad, the hi-hat pedal is something of a breakthrough. It allows continuous, real-time control of the hat's decay, making for a much more natural hi-hat ride than I've encountered elsewhere.

In the TD-7, studio folks will find a compact percussion module with a variety of distinctive sounds and excellent MIDI-velocity response. They may wish for more outputs or the ability to import samples, but, sound for sound, it's worthy competition for the popular E-mu ProCussion and Alesis D4. Meanwhile, drummers will find that Roland's system finally weds the advantages of high tech with a truly responsive instrument. It may well be the watershed we've been waiting for.

SCOTT MARSHALL



• Roland, 7200 Dominion Circle, Los Angeles, CA 90040; (213) 685-5141.

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LEAVE THE FAMILY



JOHN HIATT
PERFECTLY GOOD
GUITAR
(A&M)
JOHN MELLENCAMP
HUMAN WHEELS
(MERCURY)

It's hard to know what was in the corn those years, but John Hiatt and John Mellencamp are both products of the Indiana of the early 1950s. While their writing styles and personal dispositions may be about a continent apart, these sons of the Midwest have had comparable career trajectories belying their boomer backgrounds. Both started weak out of the gate in their 20s as semi-bad-boy rockers before finding more rewarding second winds in their mature 30s extolling sepa-

rate but equal sets of traditional virtues. For Hiatt, it was True Love; for Mellencamp, The Land. Now both face the question of where you go after you've grown up. Answer: a little middle-aged crazy, without making too ostentatious a noise about it.

Hiatt's *Perfectly Good Guitar* eschews the contented, balladic approach of recent records in favor of (yes) a guitar-driven, band-fueled album that's mostly about turning out to be the restless kind after all. The pace is set straight

away with "Something Wild," a tune Hiatt previously gave wild guy Iggy Pop but which really makes a much more appropriate overture for his own repressed soulman persona. "Now I'm hungry for the love/That doesn't know what it's dreamin' of," he sings, evoking that unnameable starvation like he hasn't since before the recovery trilogy that began with *Bring the Family* in '86.

In his comforting, been-there-done-that bedside manner, Hiatt still empathizes with wounded

lovers in songs like "Permanent Hurt," "Angel" and "Old Habits" like he was the Sympathizer General. But there's a return to first-person heartbreak too, with plenty of love lost in the aching icescape of "Blue Telescope." No treacle treads upon this emotionally fraught territory, thanks to the fully cranked, bare-bones production of Matt Wallace (Faith No More, Replacements) that makes this Hiatt's most fun album in ages, and to the inherent wit that underlies his songwriting even in its most earnest and truthful turns. Stay hungry, John.

It seems that Mellencamp, too, is having a tough time putting a name on just what it is that ails him, but he doesn't have Hiatt's sense of humor or polished craftsman's way with words to filter or mask his own discontent. So as he nakedly spins his *Human Wheels*, it sometimes sounds like the former Cougar hasn't quite gotten completely in touch with himself, as they say in the trade. Still, if the album seems severely scattershot and lacks personal focus, it's often quite brave, as much for what it isn't as for what it is.

What it isn't is Mellencamp's broad, '80s-

style message music. (Although he includes semi-topical allusions to conformity, the poor, the earth's divinity and false family values to keep in practice.) Listen to "What If I Came Knocking," probably the most tentative-sounding rock come-on ever directed to a girl, and ask yourself if the singer's warning that he may not be able to commit farther down the line is unusually forthright self-knowledge, a failure of courage, or both. What *Human Wheels* also isn't is musically melodramatic, which is the more remarkable shift. Always heretofore a forceful singer, Mellencamp turns in a remarkably muted vocal performance here, as if there were a baby in the next room he dared not awaken. The gentle deliberateness of his voice creates a good tension that draws you in. Same for the subdued but sufficiently funky arrangements, co-produced by Malcolm Burn, David Leonard and band member Michael Wanchic.

Meanwhile, what is it in the zeitgeist that prompts both Hiatt and Mellencamp to write narrative songs on their new albums about men who brutally slaughter their wives and/or families (Hiatt's funny/scary "Wreck of the Barbie Ferrari," Mellencamp's courtroom commen-

tary "Case 795")? Just a mutual need to editorialize on how far this modern frustration they feel glimmers of can go, no doubt. Still, it wouldn't hurt to have an extra ambulance parked outside Farm Aid this year.


—Chris Willman



NIRVANA

In Utero
(Geffen)

WELL, DROP A TEEN IN BLEACH—what was all that godawful fuss about? That talk of Nirvana using their *Nevermind* follow-up to give us all the big F.U. Of Steve Albi-



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ni, Rasputin-like, turning our depressed heroes into noise-puking haters of everything. That Geffen accountants were developing ulcers over unsettling, unlistenable, unmarketable tracks.

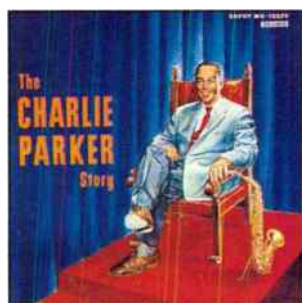
Now the big album's here, and if fans of *Nevermind* can't handle it, it will be their loss. While Nirvana's major-label debut was an addictive Whitman's sampler of post-punk pop, *In Utero* is a living, breathing, crapping beast of a record that eats expectations for breakfast. The opening track, "Serve the Servants," kicks in with an awkward, unpleasant sprawl of guitar. But then the tune picks itself up; instead of offering some Big Black-ened raspberry of contempt, it chugs into an honest-to-goodness monster rock riff, the kind of noisy, hard-punching stomp that would make Crazy Horse pull up and salute.

Nirvana powers its way through a dozen more unglossed tracks full of frayed nerves, primal yowls and those implausibly sweet Cobain hooks. The first words out of Kurt's mouth ("Teenage angst has paid off well/Now I'm bored and old") buy him a fresh start with a chuckle, and on the inverted "Teen Spirit" riff of "Rape Me," and the creepy "Frances Farmer," he sings like he's fighting collapsed lungs one moment and gargling with battery acid the next. The trademark harmonies on "Pennyroyal Tea" are as catchy and disturbing as a blast of Turtles in the middle of a traffic accident. Those hoping to have Cobain dissected by now will be disappointed; even with a lyric sheet, his songs are as inscrutable as they are powerful. Nonetheless, he's probably the only singer who can croon "I wish I could eat your cancer" sounding like the tenderest of lovers.

Of course, it's a three-man show. On "Heart-Shaped Box," Chris Novoselic's muscular bass waggles around like a python digesting a wild pig. And Dave Grohl's drums are still an explosive, slap-happy treat to behold—he pushes the song, never just the beat. Cobain's guitar work is deceptively raw and accomplished, forsaking the "right" notes for the

interesting ones. The A&R folk must have been chilled by "Radio Friendly Unit Shifter," with its baby elephant-through-the-sausage-grinder guitar intro. But despite that unpolished approach, this is a finely nuanced album, brimming with dynamics and depth.

In Utero needn't be heard as a kiss-off or a challenge. It's a generous gift from a band in its prime. Albini hasn't turned Nirvana into some kind of hideous anti-Nirvana or raging über-Nirvana, he's just managed to capture them at their honest, vital, plug-ugly best. Geffen may still be sweating it out over fickle teen dollars. But the scariest thing about *In Utero* is that it sets up about an inch in front of your face and hollers that, despite the packaging and hyping, pimping and primping that we've all gotten used to, rock 'n' roll, or some bastardly offspring thereof, can still matter. —Chuck Crisafulli



CHARLIE PARKER

The Complete Dial Sessions
(STASH)

The Charlie Parker Story

The Genius of Charlie Parker

The Immortal Charlie Parker

Charlie Parker Memorial Vol. 2

The Bird Returns

An Evening at Home with the Bird
(SAVOY)

THE MARKET FOR BEBOP ALTO SAXOPHONE colossus Charlie Parker is booming at the moment. Stash Records has issued a complete collection of Bird's seminal 1946–47

works for Dial Records, while Denon Records, which owns the Savoy catalog, is reissuing Parker's original Savoy albums with high-kitsch covers intact. It's hard to imagine a more essential purchase than the four-CD Dial set; the Savoy's are a mixed blessing.

The Dial sessions were cut during a period of creative inspiration and personal tumult in Parker's life and sometimes suggest autobiography. Leading off with an inspired March '46 session that produced such durable bop classics as "Moose the Mooche," "Yardbird Suite," "Ornithology" and "A Night in Tunisia," the set careens into the abyss with the horrific "Lover Man" session (cut just four months later), which found Bird unraveling in front of a studio mike.

Nothing else quite matches the '46 material in sustained brilliance or drama, but there are other great performances here—the "Relaxin' at Camarillo" session, with a revitalized Parker blowing warmly; the dazzling balladry of "Bird of Paradise" and "Embraceable You"; the swing of "Klact-oveseds-tene" and "Scapple from the Apple." Almost all the tracks on *The Complete Dial Sessions* are complete takes, offering a full-scale depiction of Parker's consistent inventiveness and the depth of his rhythmic and harmonic comprehension.

The Savoy's, most recently heard on a two-CD compilation of masters and a comprehensive three-CD box issued before Denon purchased the catalog, have been restored to discographical confusion. *The Charlie Parker Story*, which offers the complete November 26, 1945 session that produced "Koko," "Now's the Time" and "Billie's Bounce" (masterworks all), is the album to buy. The other records should be approached with caution. *Genius* offers all of Parker and Dizzy Gillespie's '45 recordings with hipster vocalist Slim Gaillard, but the "Koko" heard here is annoyingly mis-mastered. *Immortal* and *Memorial* are mixed bags of multiple takes; *Returns* and *At Home* are poorly documented live [cont'd on page 94]

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NEW RELEASES

ROCK

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

JANE SIBERRY

When I Was a Boy

(REPRISE)

WHEN SHE WANTS to, Siberry can be delightfully tuneful, and the most pop-savvy tracks here—like “Sail Across the Water,” with its heartbeat bass and ear-catching chorus—are as inventive as any recent Peter Gabriel tune. But because Siberry is more interested in emotional engagement than entertainment, she applies that melodic acumen to a saga of love and death that, at its most harrowing, surpasses even the intensity of Lou Reed’s *Magic and Loss*. Not an easy listen, but surely a rewarding one.

IGGY POP

American Caesar

(VIRGIN)

SURE, THERE ARE flashes of genius—the poetic longing of “Fucking Alone,” or his nervy, name-dropping rewrite of “Louie Louie”—but there are also long stretches of self-indulgence like the what’s-on-my-mind rant of “Wild America” or the half-baked poesy of “Social Life.” Though there’s more brilliance than banality overall, this is hardly the masterpiece it pretends to be.

SARA DEBELL

Grunge Lite

(C/Z)

SINCE SEATTLE’S BEST-KNOWN musical exports are Muzak and grunge, it was inevitable that some demented soul would combine the two. But this is more than just a genre-jumping in-joke, for between her whitebread resetting of “Smells Like Teen Spirit” and the perky Latin-lite rendition granted “Evenflow,” DeBell has spun a sly, smart homage to Muzak’s calculatedly reductive arrangements.

HUNTERS & COLLECTORS

Cut

(WHITE LABEL IMPORT)

FIGURES, NOW THAT the Hunters no longer have a U.S. deal, here comes their best album in ages. Not only does the groove handily bridge the gap between hip-hop currency and the band’s traditional tribal intensity, but the songs accommodate that rhythmic energy without relinquishing their melodic ingenuity.



DARYL HALL, *SOUL ALONE* (EPIC)

WHAT KEEPS HALL from coming across as a soul pretender is that there’s nothing ersatz about his vocal style—his mastery of R&B mannerisms is unaffected and unassailable. How else could he rewrite Marvin Gaye’s “When Did You Stop Loving Me” without seeming presumptuous? Or manage such an affectionate evocation of the Gamble & Huff groove on “I’m in a Philly Mood”? But Hall remains in touch with his pop instincts, too, and *Soul Alone* leaves plenty of room for effervescent melodies along the lines of “Borderline” and “Wildfire.”

MICHAEL McDONALD

Blink of an Eye

(REPRISE)

ALTHOUGH IT’S HARD to find fault with the tasteful musicality of McDonald’s funk-inflected pop, it’s equally difficult to be much moved by it. Entertained, sure—but engaged? Though McDonald’s manly moans occasionally offer a reasonable simulacrum of soul singing, there’s no grit in his delivery and no edge to this album’s overpolished arrangements.

SYLVIAN/FRIPP

The First Day

(VIRGIN)

PUT TWO OF prog-rock’s most adventurous iconoclasts together, and what ought to result is brilliant, boundary-breaking music. But all David Sylvian and Robert Fripp generate from this promisingly eclectic congress is empty posturing and well-craft-

ed atmospherics. Particularly disappointing is “Darshan,” a 17-minute ramble that manages to include nearly every cliché in the Frippian repertoire.

TAG TEAM

Whoomp! (There It Is)

(LIFE/BELLMARK)

ANYONE WHO DOESN’T believe that beats count for more than words probably hasn’t spent time with “Whoomp! (There It Is),” an irresistibly empty-headed tribute to rump-shakin’. And anybody who doubts that Tag Team’s multi-platinum success with that tune was anything but a fluke deserves to get stuck with the dozen B-sides that flesh this album out.

PAUL SHAFFER & THE PARTY
BOYS OF ROCK ‘N’ ROLL

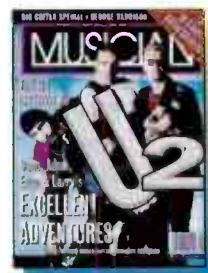
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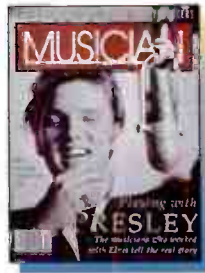
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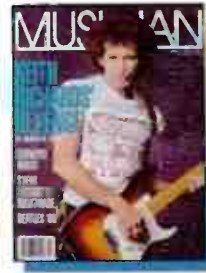
167
U2



153
Bonnie Raitt



168
Elvis



120
Keith Richards



134
Grateful Dead



157
Jimi Hendrix



126
Lou Reed



170
Roger Waters



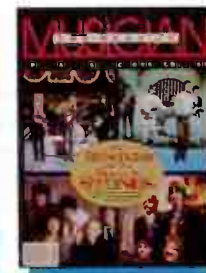
146
Slash



171
Best of 1992



142
Sinéad O'Connor



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PSEUDOS

The other day a pal of ours in a famous band called the office to say he was in town and let's get together. Along with the number of his hotel he left the message, "Ask for Charlie Brown." It occurred to us then that our lives are filled to overflowing with the constant embarrassment of asking for well-known musicians under the silly names they use when traveling.

If there is anything worse than having to ask a desk clerk to ring "Mr. Gonad," it is arriving at the front desk and not remembering the stupid name under which the famous person is registered. "Hi, I'm here to see Mick Jagger."

"I'm sorry, we have no one here by that name."

"Yes, you do. I just spoke to him. You know, Mick Jagger, I can't get no satisfaction, Brown Sugar, big lips."

"Sorry."

"Oh come on, you know he's here! Will you just call his room and let him know I'm down here?"

"Sorry."

We once went down an E Street Band room list looking for Bruce Springsteen and saw (right beneath "Mr. E. Train") the nondescript nomenclature, "Joe Roberts." We recalled the first line of his song "Highway Patrolman": "My name is Joe Roberts." That sort of puzzle-solving makes us feel like Batman. Unfortunately, most pseudonyms are tougher to crack. For instance, if you were looking for Neil Young, would you stop at the name "Bernard Shakey"?

We sympathize with the stars'

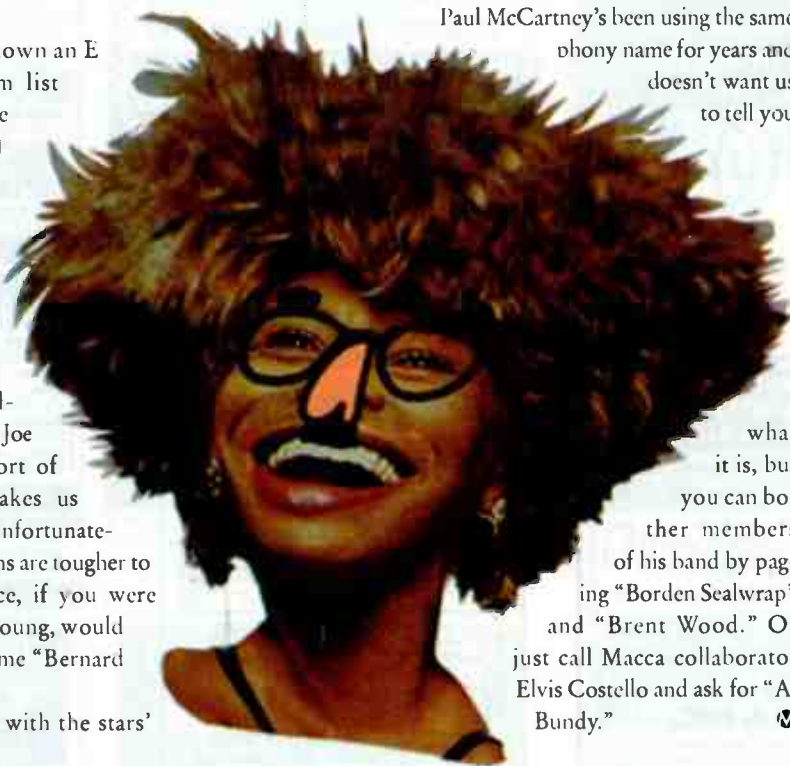
desire to not have fans calling to ask for autographs and threaten suicide when they're trying to take a shower, but sometimes these phony names get pretty silly. Is Paul Westerberg really so famous that he needs to hide behind "Elwood Peuce" or "Thaddeus Moonbeam"? Does he think going by "Mister Moonbeam" will really get him *less* attention? Or will Squeeze fans looking for Glenn Tilbrook not be able to guess that "Patio Doors" is not a real Ramada Inn guest?

Better to take a literary bent. Bono spent U2's last tour as "Mr. Yeats," Lou Reed used to register as "Ray Chandler" and Joe Satriani has been known to go by "Henry Miller."

Some rock stars get positively Dickensian. The intellectual Natalie Merchant is "Sara Bellum." The diabolical Jimmy Page is known to concierges as "Lou Cifer." The masticating Joe Walsh is "Mr. Gumm." Terence Trent D'Arby called himself "E.G. O'Reilly" for a while, which made no sense until we looked at the initials.

Paul McCartney's been using the same phony name for years and doesn't want us to tell you

what it is, but you can bother members of his band by paging "Borden Sealwrap" and "Brent Wood." Or just call Macca collaborator Elvis Costello and ask for "Al Bundy."



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