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Billy Zoom, John Doe, Exene, D.J. Bonebrake: Rock in the American mode.

PHOTO LAURA LEVINE

X: Poised For The Breakthrough

By Eric Flaum

NEW YORK—X is honest and American and wants to sell lots of records and be successful. Not that these qualities are interconnected, but each one's important when the discussion concerns a band on the verge of a breakthrough. Little more than two years ago, X was just another L.A. new wave group recording for an independent label, Slash Records, under the production guidance of a familiar name in rock circles, former Doors keyboardist Ray Manzarek.

Then the press accolades started pouring in for the band's two Slash albums, *Los Angeles* and *Wild Gift* (the latter was named by several publications as 1981's top album). When sales of *Wild Gift* topped the 100,000 mark, the big companies suddenly took notice; one, Elektra, proffered a contract. Now X's first major label LP, *Under The Big Black Sun* (also produced by Manzarek), has been duly acclaimed as one of 1982's finest releases, and the band suddenly finds itself inching ever closer to mainstream acceptance without having to compromise its musical standards.

All this commotion, plus a rigorous touring schedule, is emotionally and physically exhausting, but bassist-vocalist John Doe at least puts it in the proper perspective when he allows as to how "it's a lot more fun being in a successful band that's so busy you never have any time than it is having an unsuccessful career, a lot of time on your hands and no money to do anything."

X is justifiably in demand. And more people are being given a chance to see the band in its natural element as the current tour takes it into larger venues, such as the 3000-seat Palladium in New York City. That these shows equal the intensity of the club performances proves X belongs at this plateau.

In concert, guitarist Billy Zoom stands practically immobile, positioning himself in a considered stance, with a thin smile plastered onto his face. When he rips out an infrequent solo, the crowd cheers but the smile never broadens. Drummer D.J. Bonebrake is another case entirely. He works on his relatively small drum kit with subdued ferocity; as the band launches into "The Hungry Wolf," he unleashes a relentless assault that gives backbone to the song's rhythmic thrust.

Doe and his wife, Exene Cervenka, are the visual center of X's show. Trading off lyrics with furtive smiles and knowing glances, Doe shuffles back and forth across the stage with his bass, while Exene floats about in a slow, surrealistic dance. She assumes the spotlight naturally; but unlike, say, Blondie, you can't imagine X having to hammer home the point that it is a band: Exene, Doe, Bonebrake and Zoom function too consciously and too sympathetically as a unit.

Offstage, Doe and Exene remain X's focal point and its most verbal members. Exene is about five feet tall, with streaks of blonde dyed into her black hair. She looks like a new wave Raggedy Ann with a touch of the Bride of Frankenstein. First and foremost, Exene considers herself a poet, and her abiding philosophy is that "people should experience as many different things as possible." She propogates this notion in the lyrics of her songs, but her politics, she is quick to point out, are strictly of the sexual kind. "We don't rant and rave about politics," she declares, "and we don't rant and rave about what's wrong with society. It's obvious, and people don't go to gigs or listen to records to hear that."

Though soft-spoken, Doe speaks openly about any subject that pops to mind, and turns out to be articulate and often brutally honest. He has, for example, alienated many of Los Angeles' hard-core new wave fans by labelling the more extreme ones "Nazis." Doe admits he might be better off keeping his mouth shut sometimes, but says he believes it's more important "to be as honest as you can if you feel something at a particular time and someone asks you about it."

X's honesty may have caused trouble on occasion—and Exene, apparently cognizant of this, has been known to jump into conversations and steer them off onto a different tangent or simply stop them dead in their tracks—but it's also been the basis for the band's progress. As committed as they are to new music, the musicians realized after the release of *Wild Gift* that

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Where's Stevie?

By David Gans

FANTASY ISLAND, Ca.—On the kitchen table in Mick Fleetwood's Malibu mansion sits a model of the stage design for Fleetwood Mac's upcoming American tour. In between the tiny amplifiers, drums and pianos stand cardboard cutouts representing the five members of the band. There's a Lindsey Buckingham doll, a John McVie doll, etcetera. Why does the Stevie Nicks doll have a cigarette burn where her heart is supposed to be? And why is a hand crumpling the flat, white expressionless thing into a little ball and tossing it into a trash can?

MALIBU, Ca.—This scenario is entirely fictitious. It is a product of a demented writer's imagination, fueled by observations of Stevie Nicks's apparent hostility towards the rest of Fleetwood Mac, encouraged by a sadistic editor, and starved by the brain-damaged illegals who run the hotel where I ordered a room-service burger that never came and attempted to write about what *really* happened at Mick Fleetwood's house that afternoon.

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Quarterflash Working On New Album

NEW YORK—You expect the leader of a hot new band to come on a bit confident and cocksure of himself—after all, how many new bands can actually say they broke through in 1981? You can count

PHOTO CHRIS WALTER/RETNA LTD

Rindy Ross

them on the fingers of one hand. So say hey, Marv Ross, how did Quarterflash handle having a hit record first time out?

"We've been scared to death for a year" is Ross's straightforward, somewhat disarming reply. He goes on to explain that this particular state of mind applied even before Quarterflash began recording its de-

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PHOTO LAURA LEVINE


PHOTO LYNN GOLDSMITH ©1982

LETTERS

Heart

NEVER BEFORE HAVE I SEEN a writer give a more accurate examination of a band or an album as Mark Mehler did in your July issue ("Heart's Biggest Gamble"). I think it's about time writers gave Heart a break, rather than devoting an entire article to their personal opinions of the band.

Heart is just about my favorite band, and I really was shocked to hear about the personnel changes. I hope the new players are good replacements, because I just spent $120 for second row center seats to their concert at the L.A. Forum. If you think that doesn't clean out a teenager, you are *so* wrong!

KELLEY PARK
Fountain Valley, Ca.

"I WONDER WHAT PEOPLE are thinking," Ann Wilson pondered in your July Heart feature. Well, I'll tell ya, Ann. It's nice to hear about this musical change of Heart, but it's saddening to think about what caused the change. In '76, Heart was a breath of fresh air in the "stuffy" world of rock 'n' roll "stars" and business Barracudas: a band that cared more about their music and their fans than about living out their star roles. Just like one of us—KIDS, living and loving rock 'n' roll. It's too bad they had to grow up.

Fine. Well, keep in touch. Next, please . . .

HEART FAN #728
Tacoma, Washington

Ozzy Osbourne

OZZY FAN DAN ROBBINS ("A reader Stands Up For Ozzy Osbourne," Hit Man, July issue) must come from a town something like the one I live in. When I moved to New Brighton in February of '81, I'm sure the stores couldn't keep *Back In Black* in stock. Then came *Dirty Deeds*. If it wasn't very good in '76, why is it so great now? Then came sacred Ozzy Osbourne. I've memorized all of his songs—and I don't even like him. I was at a party two nights ago with all of these musically aware people. And I said, "I think Ozzy sucks." I knew it would hit a nerve. I also said something about how I thought all modern guitarists patterned themselves after guys like Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page and Jimi Hendrix. I asked, "Didn't you ever hear of the Yardbirds?"

Someone said, "That sounds like fairies." I left.

Anyways, what I wanted to write about was all of the over-synthesized music now. Asia is a disgrace to all of the groups this "supergroup" 's members came from. Another one that's pretty sad is Aldo Nova. For shame! I only mentioned two groups, so here's some more: J. Geils, Foreigner, Journey (too commercial, always), Tommy Tutone—you know, the thing that bums me out is that I'm starting to listen to this crap. Even some of the older groups are adopting that "sound": CSN, Jethro Tull, Heart, Pete Townshend (yea, Pete!), Paul McCartney. My faves are the Doors, Cream, Bad Co., Deep Purple, Beatles, Uriah Heep, Steely Dan (just recently)—all groups I'll probably never see. I wish I was born earlier than '65. Hey, keep up the good work.

CINDY KRESTAUT
New Brighton, Pa.

LIKE DAN ROBBINS, I'M FROM Connecticut, but I have a different impression of Ozzy Osbourne.

To begin with, he's just a fad. His fans will soon get sick of his unamusing stunts with animals and people. Anyone who does the things he does isn't normal. And the fans who get a kick out of it are really sick, too. I think we have to stop the jerk.

In the March issue of Record there was a six-paragraph section of Ozzy's quotes on Black Sabbath, himself, Billy Graham, his ex-wife, family and life. Maybe he was telling the truth, but the way he worded everything was the worst.

My friends call him a dick, asshole and other words that describe him to a T. And as you might have guessed, we love him just as much as we love homework.

Dan Robbins might like to know that the newspapers said that the concerts in New Haven and Hartford were terrible. And for his information, the Rolling Stones are pure rock 'n' roll—not a fad. Pure, stick-to-it, speaker-shaking rock!

RONDA HODGE
Coventry, Connecticut

EARLIER THIS YEAR I HAD the misfortune of being "kidnapped" and taken to an Ozzy Osbourne "concert." I have never heard such noise being passed off as music.

The only vocal phrasing I could hear was Mr. O's numerous pleas of "raise your hands." We left after 30 minutes, due to fear of eardrum damage.

I can only add that Mr. Robbins must be between the ages of 12 and 16 and *almost deaf*! Anyone deriving any enjoyment from Mr. O would probably have enjoyed Hitler's antics.

DON MILLIKEN
Ft. Smith, Arkansas

I ONCE HAD THE HONOR OF being front row center at an Ozzy Osbourne concert and can state unequivocally my admiration for his skill as a showman. I do hope, however, that on his next visit to T-town, he will see fit to kiss my ass.

GARY HAMILTON
Tulsa, Oklahoma

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TOP 100 ALBUMS

1	**FLEETWOOD MAC** *Mirage* (Warner Bros.)	
2	**ASIA** *Asia* (Geffen)	
3	**ROBERT PLANT** *Pictures at Eleven* (Swan Song)	
4	**THE ROLLING STONES** *Still Life* (Rolling Stones)	
5	**CROSBY, STILLS & NASH** *Daylight Again* (Atlantic)	
6	**PETE TOWNSHEND** *All The Best Cowboys Have Chinese Eyes* (Atco)	
7	**SURVIVOR** *Eye Of The Tiger* (Scotti Bros.)	
8	**ALAN PARSONS PROJECT** *Eye in the Sky* (Arista)	
9	**PAUL McCARTNEY** *Tug Of War* (Columbia)	
10	**JOHN COUGAR** *American Fool* (Riva)	
11	**GENESIS** *Three Sides Live* (Atlantic)	
12	**STEVE MILLER BAND** *Abracadabra* (Capitol)	
13	**HUMAN LEAGUE** *Dare* (A&M)	
14	**REO SPEEDWAGON** *Good Trouble* (Epic)	
15	**ELVIS COSTELLO & THE ATTRACTIONS** *Imperial Bedroom* (Columbia)	
16	**THE MOTELS** *All Four One* (Capitol)	
17	**THE CLASH** *Combat Rock* (Epic)	
18	**STEVIE WONDER** *Original Musiquarium I* (Tamla)	
19	**WILLIE NELSON** *Always On My Mind* (Columbia)	
20	**FRANK ZAPPA** *Ship Arriving Too Late . .* (Barking Pumpkin)	
21	**KING CRIMSON** *Beat* (Warner Bros./E.G.)	
22	**TOTO** *IV* (Columbia)	
23	**ROCKY III** *Soundtrack* (Liberty)	
24	**JOE JACKSON** *Night and Day* (A&M)	
25	**.38 SPECIAL** *Special Forces* (A&M)	
26	**RICK JAMES** *Throwin' Down* (Gordy)	
27	**SQUEEZE** *Sweets from a Stranger* (A&M)	
28	**ROXY MUSIC** *Avalon* (Warner Bros./E.G.)	
29	**VAN HALEN** *Diver Down* (Warner Bros.)	
30	**STRAY CATS** *Built For Speed* (EMI/America)	
31	**CHICAGO** *16* (Full Moon/WB)	
32	**LOVERBOY** *Get Lucky* (Columbia)	
33	**JUDAS PRIEST** *Screaming For Vengeance* (Columbia)	
34	**GAP BAND** *Gap Band IV* (TE/Polydor)	
35	**DREAMGIRLS** *Soundtrack* (Geffen)	
36	**APRIL WINE** *Power Play* (Capitol)	
37	**A FLOCK OF SEAGULLS** *A Flock of Seagulls* (Jive/Arista)	
38	**SCORPIONS** *Blackout* (Mercury)	
39	**KANSAS** *Vinyl Confessions* (Kirshner)	
40	**HAIRCUT 100** *Pelican West* (Arista)	
41	**MARSHALL CRENSHAW** *Marshall Crenshaw* (WB)	
42	**ADRIAN BELEW** *Lone Rhino* (Island)	
43	**X** *Under The Big Black Sun* (Elektra)	
44	**AIR SUPPLY** *Now and Forever* (Arista)	
45	**GARY U.S. BONDS** *On the Line* (EMI/America)	
46	**GLENN FREY** *No Fun Aloud* (Asylum)	
47	**VANGELIS** *Chariots of Fire* (Polydor)	
48	**ELTON JOHN** *Jump Up!* (Geffen)	
49	**SOFT CELL** *Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret* (Sire)	
50	**E.T.** *Soundtrack* (MCA)	
51	**EDDIE MONEY** *No Control* (Columbia)	
52	**HEART** *Private Audition* (Epic)	
53	**THE GO-GO'S** *Beauty and the Beat* (IRS)	
54	**RICK SPRINGFIELD** *Success Hasn't Spoiled Me Yet* (RCA)	
55	**KARLA BONOFF** *Wild Heart of the Young* (Columbia)	
56	**DAVID JOHANSEN** *Live It UP* (Blue Sky)	
57	**ALDO NOVA** *Aldo Nova* (Portrait/CBS)	
58	**PAT METHENY** *Offramp* (ECM)	
59	**ASHFORD & SIMPSON** *Street Opera* (Capitol)	
60	**JOAN JETT & THE BLACKHEARTS** *I Love Rock 'n' Roll* (Boardwalk)	
61	**CHEAP TRICK** *One on One* (Epic)	
62	**PATRICE RUSHEN** *Straight From the Heart* (Elektra)	
63	**DAVE EDMUNDS** *D.E. 7th* (Columbia)	
64	**JUICE NEWTON** *Quiet Lies* (Capitol)	
65	**QUEEN** *Hot Space* (Elektra)	
66	**PETE SHELLEY** *Homosapien* (Arista)	
67	**BLONDIE** *The Hunter* (Chrysalis)	
68	**RAINBOW** *Straight Between the Eyes* (Mercury)	
69	**SAMMY HAGAR** *Standing Hampton* (Geffen)	
70	**J. GEILS BAND** *Freeze-Frame* (EMI/America)	
71	**THE POLICE** *Ghost in the Machine* (A&M)	
72	**HUEY LEWIS & THE NEWS** *Picture This* (Chrysalis)	
73	**ALABAMA** *Mountain Music* (RCA)	
74	**XTC** *English Settlement* (Virgin/Epic)	
75	**JOURNEY** *Escape* (Columbia)	
76	**GRAHAM PARKER** *Another Grey Area* (Arista)	
77	**RAY PARKER JR.** *The Other Woman* (Arista)	
78	**CAMEO** *Alligator Woman* (Chocolate City)	
79	**SPLIT ENZ** *Time & Tide* (A&M)	
80	**BLUE OYSTER CULT** *Extraterrestrial Live* (Columbia)	
81	**LAURIE ANDERSON** *Big Science* (WB)	
82	**BONNIE RAITT** *Green Light* (WB)	
83	**TOMMY TUTONE** *Tutone 2* (Columbia)	
84	**THE O'JAYS** *My Favorite Person* (Phila. Intl.)	
85	**RY COODER** *The Slide Area* (WB)	
86	**DENIECE WILLIAMS** *Niecy* (ARC/Columbia)	
87	**BOW WOW WOW** *The Last of The Mohicans* (RCA)	
88	**ATLANTIC STARR** *Brilliance* (A&M)	
89	**SIMON & GARFUNKEL** *The Concert in Central Park*	
90	**GANG OF FOUR** *Songs of the Free* (WB)	
91	**QUINCY JONES** *The Dude* (A&M)	
92	**TOM TOM CLUB** *Tom Tom Club* (Sire)	
93	**THE SECRET POLICEMAN'S OTHER BALL** *Various Artists* (Island)	
94	**TALKING HEADS** *The Name of This Band Is . . .* (Sire)	
95	**JETHRO TULL** *The Broadsword & The Beast* (Chrysalis)	
96	**THE JAM** *The Gift* (Polydor)	
97	**STEVIE NICKS** *Bella Donna* (Modern)	
98	**CAT PEOPLE** *David Bowie/Giorgio Moroder* (Backstreet)	
99	**THE ROYAL PHIL.** *Hooked On Classics* (RCA)	
100	**QUARTERFLASH** *Quarterflash* (Geffen)	

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New Artists

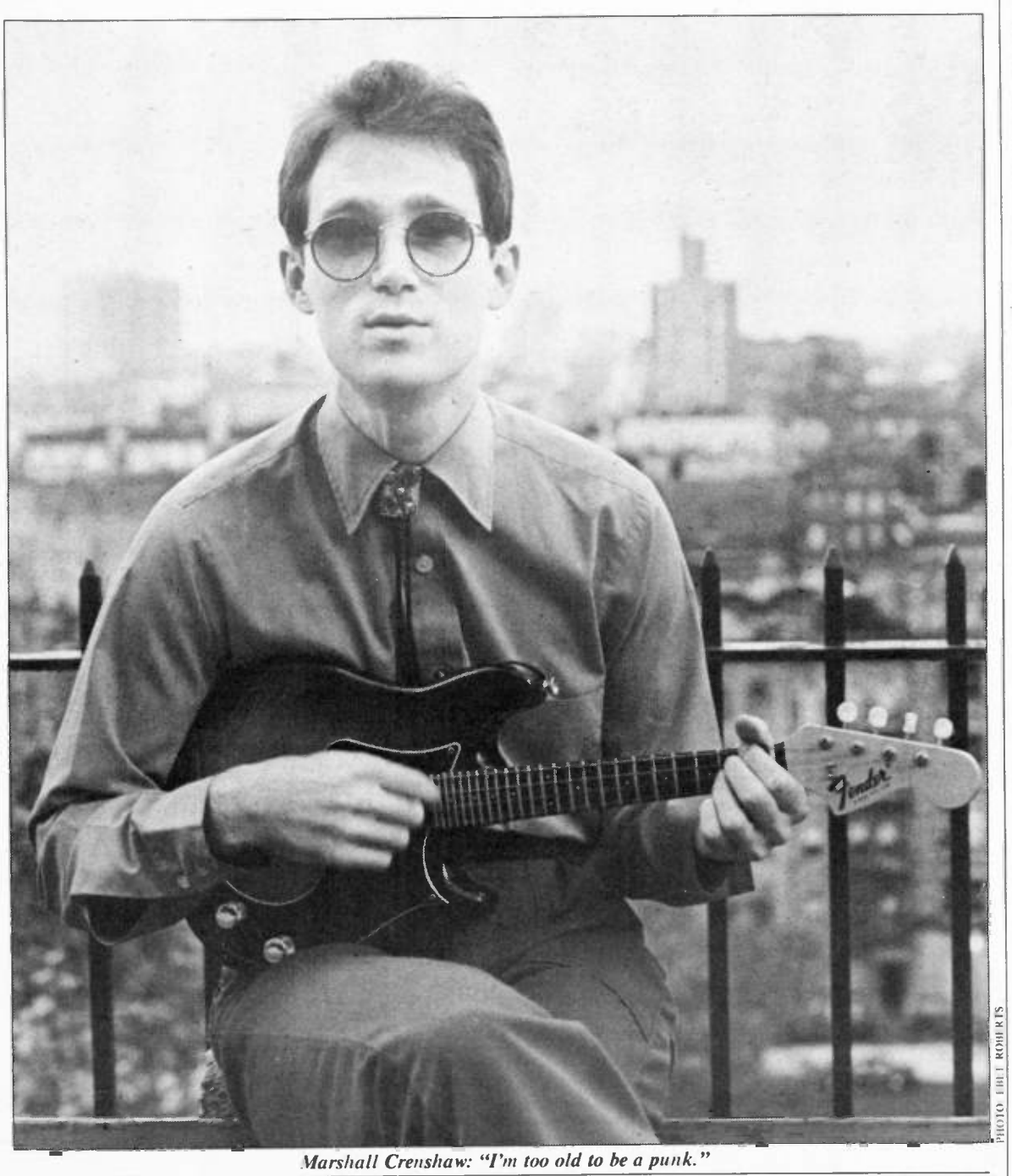


PHOTO: ERIC ROBERTS

Marshall Crenshaw: "I'm too old to be a punk."

The Traditional Mr. Crenshaw

By David Gans

SAN FRANCISCO—After Marshall Crenshaw's performance at a local night club here in early June, punkers could be seen sulking and slouching around as if they'd suddenly realized that *this* might be the next fashion for them to follow and that they might have to put smiling back into their emotional repertoires. Dancers on the floor and scene-watchers lining the room all shared in the exuberance of Crenshaw's show; I can't remember the last time a club set—or an album by a new artist—left me so breathless and hungry for more.

Offstage, Crenshaw seems as blithe as the Eisenhower/JFK years his musical persona evokes. He spins platters and makes with the chatter at a college radio station in Berkeley, seguing with an impish grin from Eddie Cochran to "Lara's Theme" by Ray Conniff to a track by Slade. Ask him about musical influences and you'll feel as though you've entered a time warp: Les Paul and Mary Ford, Phil Spector, Brian Wilson, Little Richard, and—above all—The Beatles. "I like the early Beatles best by far," he says. "I'm sure not too many people agree with me, but I think they said as much with four instruments on songs like 'Please, Please Me' and 'I Want to Hold Your Hand' as they did later on when they added everything else."

It's the *sound* of those records—as well as the strength of the material and the way the instruments were recorded in the days before technology began influencing style—that has held Crenshaw in thrall through the years. The 28-year-old Detroit native picked up the guitar at age eight and absorbed Buddy Holly's style just in time to be knocked over by The Beatles. Through the usual spate of school-years bands, playing a little of this and a little of that style, from surf music to country & western, Crenshaw always found his attention returning to the music that first captured his heart. "I followed rock music sort of day-to-day until around 1972, when I just couldn't latch onto very much contemporary rock music at all," he explains. "I didn't like any of it, so I just completely blew it off and got really interested in old rock 'n' roll.

"If you listen to the FM radio for an hour, you're going to hear mostly stuff that was made between around '69 and '74. I don't understand what's so good about that music. It's not so good that people have to hear it over and over again, year after year. Rock 'n' roll in general is too good and has too much depth and too much variety for anyone to be obsessed with one little aspect of it."

Interestingly, it was the Sex Pistols that pulled Crenshaw back into present-day music. "I heard the Sex Pistols, Nick Lowe, Elvis Costello and Dave Edmunds all in about the same week, and it was a real treat," he says. "To hear all that stuff at once and have it all be something new that I really liked was a real departure for me. I thought the Sex Pistols were great, and funny and interesting and cool. I still think their record is great.

"That's what got me back into listening to contemporary rock music at all," he concludes. "I'm too old to be a punk, but I like diversity—I'm not going to throw all my eggs in one basket."

Following a brief and fruitless trip to Los Angeles and an 18-month stint as John Lennon in a road company of *Beatlemania*, Crenshaw set out to try his luck as a songwriter and performer in New York City. He worked up his songs on a four-track tape recorder in his apartment, deliberately going for a sound that emphasizes spirit and character over smoothness, and then he and his brother, Robert, a drummer, turned their attention to putting a band together.

"I didn't know exactly what kind of band to have when we first started. I thought in the beginning about getting a pedal steel guitar player, because I'm a big Hank Williams fan and I love really raunchy steel guitar. Then I thought for a second about getting an accordion player, or something like that that would give our show a weird sound . . ." He pauses to picture it in his mind, then laughs and says, "And besides, people might get violent, you know?"

The group came together, Crenshaw notes, when bassist Chris Donato stepped in. "When I saw what he could do I said, 'This is it; the three of us can really take this somewhere.' "

Crenshaw says that the trio format kept the band's overhead low enough that they could afford to work for next to nothing, "just to get out in front of people, without draining anybody's resources. Once we proved to ourselves that people liked what we were doing, we concentrated on developing our approach to the songs, and the labels started coming around to see us."

Richard Gottehrer (Go-Go's, Robert Gordon, etc.) and Crenshaw co-produced the album, *Marshall Crenshaw*, but the record sounds remarkably similar to the four-track demos that Crenshaw made at home. "It wasn't easy to achieve the intimate feeling in a 24-track studio," Crenshaw observes. "It's much easier at home, alone, but I used the same basic approach in the studio. Sometimes I had to work on Richard a little bit to get him to take the sound into left field—I like to garbage the sound up more than he does.

"I'm out to have a good time when I record," Crenshaw continues. "I like not getting hung up on little details. The only things about records that matter are the feel, the atmosphere—that the overall sound has some quality that stirs the imagination. I don't want to sound too dramatic about it, but I want to give some feeling of the human spirit at work—and I want records to be fun to listen to."

American Grandstand

By Dave Marsh

The Only Rock That Matters

Early in July, I saw Dan Daley play at the Bottom Line, as the opening act for the estimable Marshall Crenshaw. Crenshaw's musical vision is so precisely focussed that it immediately and unavoidably drew attention to the limitations of Daley's more scattered presentation. But in a way, all this contrast between crafty stylization and awkward enthusiasm only made Daley's potential seem more impressive. At least he wasn't afraid to stand before a gaggle of hipsters and play heartland rock 'n' roll.

Daley is blond and lanky, and he still wears t-shirts and jeans onstage, the last sort of rocker you'd expect to find in Greenwich Village these days (Crenshaw may be from Detroit but his horn rims provide an immediate stylistic connection to the new wave). Daley's stage presence is grounded more in intensity of desire than charisma, and his band, which played fairly well, looked as if the members had not known one another long enough to feel polite in suggesting appropri

In the end, the only proper response to industry propaganda about the loss of profits is: 'Why don't you record something somebody needs to hear?'

ate remedies in one another's garb. Their arrangements are rather elastic, heavy on guitars (which we owe more to Gary Rossington than Robert Fripp), and Daley's songs tend to be terse proclamations of faith and stories of conventional rock 'n' roll citizens, rather than parables of metaphysics, ethnology or ideology. That is, there's not much about Daley or his music that's hip, except that he happens to have written some very good music, including "Still In Saigon," the only great song about Vietnam, and one of the most powerful songs I've heard in the past five years.

When Charlie Daniels released his version of "Still In Saigon" a few months back—and came close to having a hit—one Cleveland disc jockey burst into tears over the air after playing it. When's the last time you heard a deejay act like a human? But "Still In Saigon" is that kind of song; it wrenches humanity from unsuspected corners. If, for Bruce Springsteen, the legacy of Vietnam is "like some dark street," in which the worst shadows lurk, "Still In Saigon" is the moment in which the demons dwelling in those shadows spring to life, reminding each of us how little recovery we have made. "Still In Saigon" speaks not only for the Vietnam combat veterans about whom it was written, but for all of us who were torn apart by the war: the sense Bobby Muller of the Vietnam Veterans of America has in mind when he refers to an entire generation of Vets. "Nowhere to run to that I didn't feel that war," as the lyrics say.

And this comes across more clearly in Daley's version; Daley never served in the military but listening to him sing, you realize he never needed to. His demo is a simply shattering piece of music, and when he comes to the bridge—"Every summer when it rains/I smell the jungle, I hear the planes/Can't tell no one, I feel ashamed . . ."—the horror of what we visited upon ourselves in that conflict comes home with tearful power.

Daley's "Still In Saigon" remains only a demo, because no record label will make a commitment to recording him. As I hope I've made clear, Daley's music is ragged right now; it needs a great deal of development. But when record labels try to justify price increases and blank tape taxes, their argument is that they develop talent, and that this is expensive.

This is a lie, and it has been a lie for some years. Once, performers like Dan Daley worked out their problems in the course of making albums and singles, with the aid of professional advice. No more. Today, the performer develops him or herself, without any label assistance; and when that development is nearly complete, the labels step in to reap the fruits of the artist's labor, while singing their "talent development" song.

Labels used to provide such guidance, and also had the patience to stick with a performer through many false starts. This is the process that gave us Bob Seger, Bruce Springsteen, the J. Geils Band—the cream of American rock, and some of its most profitable performers. Today, all of these artists would either remain unsigned or be dropped from a major label artist roster after their first two albums failed to "produce." And these artists would also be coerced into signing shamefully exploitative deals—barely livable advances, scandalous publishing arrangements—merely to obtain the chance to record.

Dan Daley isn't alone; I could name a half dozen other cases almost as outrageous. But when I think of the refusal to get such an important recording as Daley's own "Still In Saigon" onto vinyl, the temptation to fling the moneychangers from the temple grows especially great. Because "Still In Saigon," with its broad-based musical ambitions and lyric concerns, might put us back on the track of what made rock great in the first place—which was not hummability but commitment, passion, relevance and soul.

What goes on now in the record business is not only gutless but stupid. Well-bred cultural values weren't what made rock into a profit gusher—the biggest rock in history was among the most deeply felt and involved stuff ever written. In the end, then, the only proper response to industry propaganda about the loss of profits is: "Why don't you record something somebody needs to hear?"

London Calling

By Chris Welch

Stones Storm Wembley

The Rolling Stones held court as heads of rock 'n' roll royalty when they played their first London concerts in six years on June 25 and 26 at Wembley Stadium. Backstage, the Stones' organization swung into action, with myriad passes controlling each section, allowing a free flow of celebrities, VIPs and photographers. Comedian Billy Connolly and Police guitarist Andy Summers were among those spotted hobnobbing with the Stones between sets. Earlier, the group rehearsed at the old Shepperton film studios, starting at midnight and jamming until 9 a.m. Keith Richards can only play after dark, or so legend has it, and the rest have to lose their sleep to keep up with him. There was also time for medical checkups, as each member of the band is insured for two million dollars. Keith passed with flying colors, and was in high spirits, chatting cheerfully about his Ferraris, while Charlie Watts mulled over his 15-year-old Gretsch drum kit, with its ancient, blackened cymbals, and resisted all attempts to get him to buy a new setup.

The Stones played at their best at Wembley, bringing the mixture of old hits, blues and modern material to 70,000 fans. Upset that London's local government banned their projected firework display, they released thousands of balloons over the city instead. Despite claims of a sellout, there were still a few empty seats at the back of the stadium, and ticket touts were selling 10 pound tickets for five pounds each after the show started. The group is estimated to have made 500,000 pounds alone from the sale of t-shirts and souvenirs.

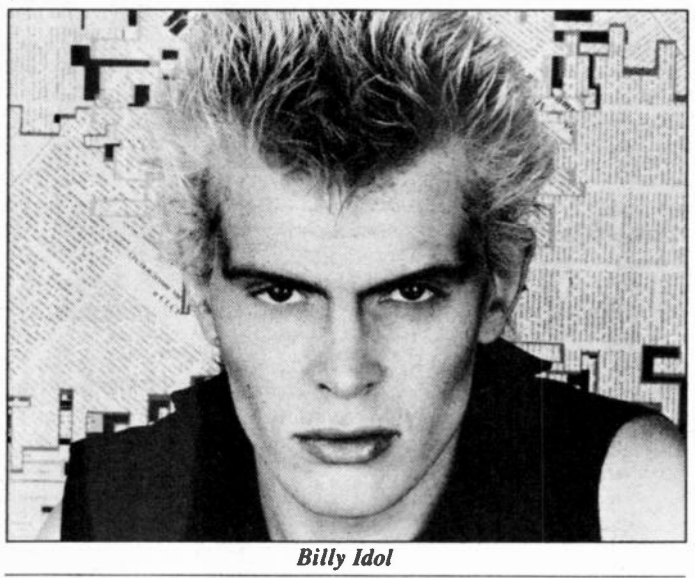
The Copeland-McCartney Jam

Stewart Copeland is writing the music for a new Francis Ford Coppola movie titled *Rumble Fish*. Says the drummer: "It's basically a percussive concept." He has also been heard jamming with Paul McCartney, and the results were so good that Paul has reportedly written some lyrics to fit the riffs. Expect another blockbuster forth-

PHOTO: JOEL AXELRAD

Ian Anderson

with . . . Trouble brewing in the ranks of Jethro Tull? After long-serving drummer Barriemore Barlow left the group, he was replaced by Mark Cramey, who in turn was succeeded by Jerry Conway. Now Jerry has left after completing the recent European tour and Ian Anderson is looking for a replacement . . . Billy Idol, ex-Generation X



Billy Idol

singer, and until recently a New York City resident, has released a solo album. I called Chrysalis Records here and asked how it was doing. There was a pause. "In what sense?" came the reply from a rather haughty press lady. I understand that William may put a band together in an effort to promote the record. Then, of course, he may not.

Ian Gillan's Hairy Situation

The Ian Gillan Band is heading for the Far East on one of the first-ever Malaysian government-approved tours. In this part of the world they are not too keen on Western decadence and try to make the trains run on time and keep the sidewalks free from litter. Thus, there are stringent conditions attached to any tour by hairy rockers. Rule number one in the contract says: "All band boys, including Gillan, must tie their long hair back or wear a hat. They should not let their long hair be on their shoulders on stage, or anywhere in public." The Malays are so hung up about hair that they even turned back Cliff Richard at the airport once, when he allowed a wisp to curl over his collar. None of this should bother Gillan's bass player John McCoy. He is totally bald . . . The band that many are expecting to cause riots and other commotion in the closing months of the year is Lords of the New Church. Currently on a U.K. tour and scheduled to visit the U.S. in August, the Lords have Brian James, formerly of the Damned, on guitar, and Stiv Bators of Dead Boys on vocals. Kermit of Sham 69 is on bass and Nicky Turner, ex-Barracudas, is on drums. They're being called "the new Doors"by their producer, Paul Rothchild, who, after all, did produce the Doors himself. And so the world trembles.

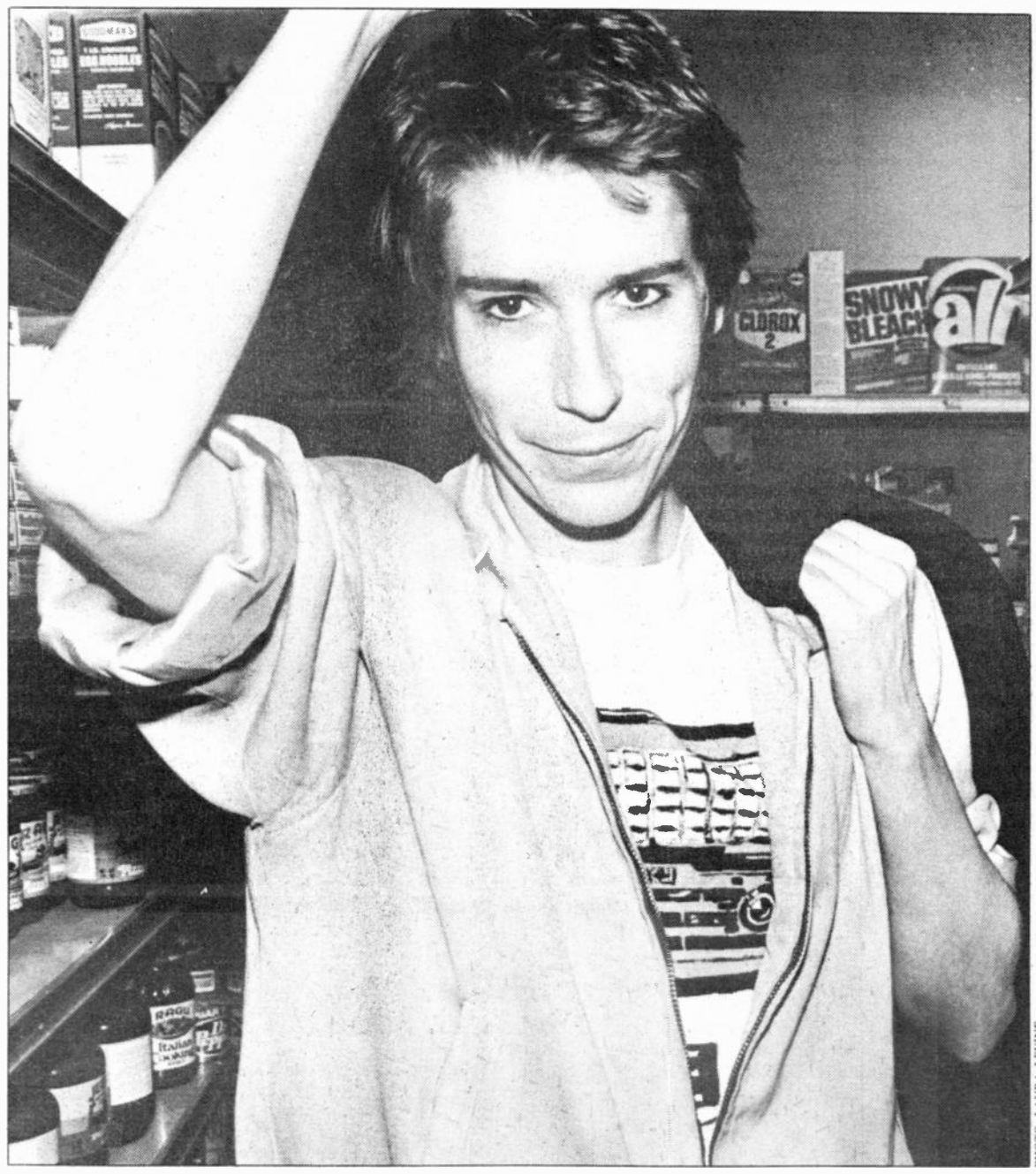


PHOTO: LAURA LEVINE

Richard Butler: Fusing punk energy with 60's ideas.

The Psychedelic Furs Retool For An Assault On The U.S.A.

By Chip Stern

NEW YORK— Critics and fans have been playing pin-the-tail on the donkey with the Psychedelic Furs since they first hit the United States, probably because their music incorporates so many genres it's hard to nail down what bag they're coming out of. The sound of *Psychedelic Furs* and *Talk, Talk, Talk* was a Spectorish garage melange, bathed in echo and reverb until everything surged together into a single rush of anthemic hooks and bittersweet vocal sentiments—as if Johnny Lydon and Roger McGuinn got hooked up in a back-alley brawl (with David Bowie holding their coats).

"Yeah," admits Richard Butler, singer-lyricist for the Furs, and the group's conceptual lightning rod. "We were going for a wall of sound then. Definitely. And although I do like Phil Spector, that's not the reason for it. I was really into the Velvet Underground, and a lot of bands that used that big sound with a lot of force behind it. When we started out, it was all punk rock over here in England, and we called ourselves Psychedelic Furs partly as a rebellion against the fact that bands were called all these heavy names like the Stranglers and the Sex Pistols; also, all these bands were putting down the music of the '60s, which seemed a little narrow-minded to me, seeing as how I was very influenced by them. So there was no point in me going along with the fashion and saying, 'Yeah, I agree, all those old hippie bands were useless,' when, in fact, I liked them a lot. Given those influences from the '60s, what was interesting about the punk thing was the energy it had. And the Furs, I guess, fused the energy of punk rock with the ideas of the '60s."

For Butler and the Furs, who've been plugging away since 1977, an American audience now beckons like the faint glimmers of light and romanticism that occasionally flicker through the dark, gnarling haze of their songs. One can hear the rapprochement beginning with *Talk, Talk, Talk*, where if Butler doesn't exactly sound tender ("Into You Like A Train"), he at least seems reconciled to the ambiguities of life and loss. "The second album is mainly just love songs," says Butler, "whereas the first wasn't about any one thing in particular—it sort of darted here and there. When you make a first album and get in the studio, you sort of go, 'Wow, let's try this!' and 'I want to sing that,' so it becomes a little bit jumbled."

Certainly the results were unified by the Furs' waves of sound and emotion, yet more often than not any distinctions between foreground and background, music and vocalist, were obscured; and the content of the lyrics and the arrangements tended to contradict each other. "You're right about that," Butler concurs. "We feel songs work best when the feeling of the music works in with the feeling of the words, as opposed to the sound of the first two albums where there were a lot of songs that were very heavy musically that needn't have been that way."

Which is part of the reason why Butler and the Furs decided to make significant personnel changes and seek out an American producer (Steve Lillywhite had worked on the band's first two LPs) for their third album, ending up by making *Forever Now* with Todd Rundgren behind the board at his Bearsville, New York studios. "That wall of sound still comes through in a couple of places—it's almost a trademark, if you like—but we're not doing it to the same extent. We just thought it was time we got a little cleaned up—bring out more of the melody.

"That was part of the reason for using an American producer, because we'd like to do well in America. People over here tend to listen to music through much higher quality systems; even the car stereo systems sound really good. Todd's drum sound is even bigger than Steve Lillywhite's. Steve goes for much more—I don't mean to insult him—of a mushy sound; the snare is a bit trebly, and the bass drum and toms are a bit muddy. Steve wants things felt as much as heard, and the bass went very much in with the drums. That's *his* sound and he does it on purpose. Todd goes for a much rounder, deeper, fuller tom sound—much more separated—and the bass is much cleaner sounding, which can actually make the music sound more powerful. Todd said that when the album came out people might think it was he who'd augmented and directed the change in our sound, but we'd already done all the arrangements—with cellos, marimbas and things—*before* we came to him. There were some horn section arrangements Todd helped us with, but because the material was sounding exactly like the first two albums, we figured we needed to change, which is why we got rid of the saxophonist (Duncan Kilgore) and the other guitarist (Roger Morris). We'd gone along long enough, and it just didn't work anymore."

The release of *Forever Now* marks the first stage of an extended foray into the United States, designed to take advantage of the Furs' support with the college market, so the touring band (including Butler, brother Tim Butler on bass, guitarist John Ashton and drummer Vince Ely) will be criss-crossing the country from mid-October through December, with tentative plans to flesh out the studio sound with some additional musicians. The new album's songs (like the piss-take on right wing politicians, "President Gas," and the dreamy "Sleep Comes Down") represent a distillation of the Furs sound, not a fashionable about-face. And with the continued exposure to American audiences, the music and the subject matter can only get deeper. "With the Clash," Butler observes, "they'd been singing songs that were specifically British, and when they got over to the States, they saw that the issues were a lot wider than they were in Britain. I think that did their writing a lot of good. And

Continued on page 21

Looking In On Ted Nugent: 'Let 'Em Think I'm Crazy'

NEW YORK—When you're given to making statements like " 'Wang Dang Poontang' is a rock 'n' roll classic,' " then you'll invariably find yourself without many allies in an argument. Which accounts, at least in part, for the overriding circle-the-wagons mentality on Ted Nugent's latest LP, titled simply *Nugent*. Nearly every tune is a hard rock ode to self-reliance, physical and emotional toughness and outright hostility. Flying in the face of pacifism (and reason), Ted urges Americans to "fight" because "fight is right," on the jingoistic "Bound and Gagged;" "Can't Stop Me Now," "Don't Push Me" and "Tailgunner" are similar examples of in-your-face rock 'n' roll.

Yet the artist, relaxing in the offices of his new label, Atlantic Records, appears to be anything but angry or suspicious.

"I'm a very self-protective person, for myself and my family," he states with a smile. "And I know what I want and how things oughtta get done. Before this record, I took a good look at where my career was going, and I made a lot of changes. I'm producing myself, I dropped my management, I got a new record company. There was too much waiting around, conflicts of interest, disagreements. I'll take some verbal abuse if it's necessary, but I'm gonna make my stand when I have to. That's what the album's all about, making your stand."

"There's a natural tendency for maturity to subdue an individual, but that will never happen to me," he says. Nugent, who hasn't had a legitimate hit record in more than four years, states further: "I got all the money any white man could ever want. I don't gave a damn about sales. I like my music, that's the bottom line."

How seriously then do we take any of this? Remember, the man rates "Wango Tango" with "Light My Fire" and calls himself the "best damn guitarist in the world."

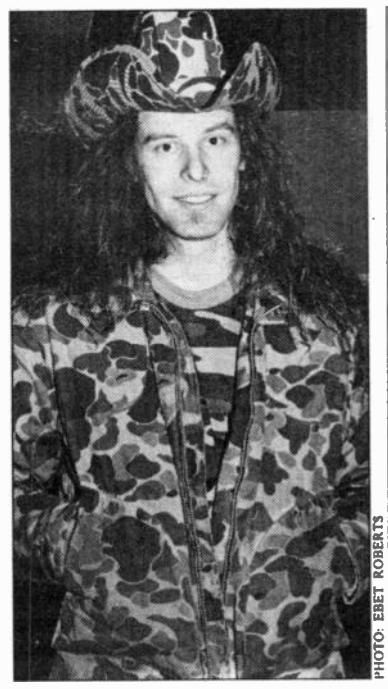


PHOTO: EBET ROBERTS

Ted Nugent

Still, he apparently believes it, and that's worth something.

"I want all my senses to be acute, I want to never stop rocking my ass off. People think I'm crazy—fine, let 'em. Everybody's got to sweat. I got the intelligence, the experience, the authority. I'm settin' my sights on the elimination of compromise."

—Mark Mehler

In Case Of A Broken Heart, Take A Tip From Haircut 100

NEW YORK—Many's the musician who'll claim to have joined a rock band so he could get along with the beautiful girls. For the founding members of Haircut 100, though, it didn't quite work that way.

Just over a year ago there was no Haircut 100. Nick Heyward, Les Nemes and Graham Jones formed the group one day in the wake of being ditched simultaneously by their respective girlfriends. It's not as though they've re-formed Our Gang's He-Man Woman Haters Club or anything, but Jones talks like they're all better off today. "When you go out with girls you tend to lose your mates," he says. "So we re-discovered each other and started playing together." Three months later, Haircut 100 ("It was the silliest name we could come up with," explains Heyward), with percussionist Mark Fox, drummer Blair Cunningham and saxophonist Phil Smith added to the lineup, had a hit single in England.

The words most often used to describe Haircut 100 are clean, normal, cute and young. They don't smoke or drink and one of them still lives with his parents. When the group arrived here to begin its American tour, each musician wore a tie and knee socks, and tended to act like a playful kid. Interviews often lapsed into a madcap exchange of one-liners reminiscent of the Beatles' press conferences.

While England has gone ga-ga over the sound of Haircut 100 (a blend of dance rhythms and pop melodies, with some jazz-influenced soloing), the country has become even more enamored of the band's concept. Nemes says the group knows full well that they owe much of their appeal to an ultra-positive image. Heyward adds: "People think that because bands in England come out with gloomy lyrics that that is representative of what goes on in England. Average teenagers don't want to hear about the country's problems—they just want to listen to good music."

And what, pray tell, does *Pelican West*, the title of Haircut 100's debut album, mean?

"It's in the grooves," says Nemes. "Look for it."

—Laurie Lennard

A Full-Scale Tribute To Bloomfield

NEW YORK—Mike Bloomfield, the influential blues guitarist who was noted for his work with the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, Bob Dylan, the Electric Flag and others, will be remembered on record and in print come fall. On September 15, Columbia Records will release a two-volume set of Bloomfield's recorded work entitled *Bloomfield*, to be followed on October 1 by the publication of *Michael Bloomfield: The Rise and Fall of An American Guitar Hero*, a biography written by veteran rock journalist Ed Ward.

Bloomfield died of an apparent drug overdose in February of 1981.

PHOTO: JON SIEVERT

Mike Bloomfield

"I've done this biography because I believe that if somebody doesn't get onto his story pretty quick the contributions that he made are going to be ignored," Ward explains. "They're going to be lost. Another thing is to tell the story of somebody who was good, but not successful, so that people realize that commercial success is not the only arbiter of determining the worth of a musical performer. Michael Bloomfield knew the difference between music that's real and music that is manufactured."

Highlights of the LP include short interview segments with Bloomfield conducted in the early '70s in San Francisco by blues aficionado Danny McCloskey, as well as unreleased versions of "Got My Mojo Working" and "East-West" by the Butterfield Blues Eand; "Killing Floor" and "Texas and Wine" by the Electric Flag; an unreleased Flag version of "Going Down Slow" and, from the *Super Session* album (which teamed Bloomfield with Al Kooper and Stephen Stills), "Shuffle" and "Stop."—

Helene Podziba

'But Gary, Don't You Have Anything To Say About This?'

NEW YORK—"My epitaph? You mean something to be written on my gravestone?" Gary U.S. Bonds hesitates before answering the question. "I don't know," he says at last. "How about, 'He's not in!' Or, 'Out to lunch!' "

Thus did the once and future Gary Anderson inadvertently sum up his participation in two Bruce Springsteen/Miami Steve Van Zandt-produced albums that have helped lift him off the oldies/disco/Holiday Inn treadmill. Although Bonds gets co-credit (with his daughter) for writing two songs on his latest LP, *On The Line,* Springsteen and Van Zandt wrote eight of the 11 tunes, and put their stamp all over the instrumental and vocal sound of the album. That much more control being centered elsewhere might bother some, but Bonds wouldn't have it any other way.

"It's basically like Motown," he offers. "After a while you get tired of hearing Holland/Dozier/Holland working with the Four Tops, right? No way—it didn't happen to me and it didn't happen to millions of other people, so I can't see it happening with Bruce and Miami. They are exactly what Holland/Dozier/Holland were: writers and producers."

Beyond this, Bonds has curiously little to offer about the working relationship between himself, Springsteen and Van Zandt. To wit:

Q: Did you learn anything from working with Bruce and Steve?

A: I'm not a musician like they are, so it didn't do much for my writing. I have to write to what little piano I can play.

Q: When you saw Bruce and Steve working out half-formed ideas, did that help you in your own songwriting?

A: I don't think it did anything.

Okay. Nevertheless, Bonds can still stir up a crowd, as he demonstrated recently at New Jersey's Byrne Arena on a co-headlining date with Southside Johnny. Still, when a guy makes the major miscalculation of including in his repertoire a Miller Beer commercial he cut last year (it had him "going down to the river" just like you-know-who), one wonders where it's going to end up for Gary Bonds.

PHOTO: GARY GERSHOFF/RETNA LTD

Gary U.S. Bonds

Asked if he wonders about his place in rock history, Bonds shrugs. "I've had a good life," he answers. "I've rocked."

Haven't we all.

—Wayne King

Patrice Rushen Urges Radio To 'Give People A Choice'

LOS ANGELES— The cloudy L.A. skies have now cleared, and through a window of the spacious conference room at Elektra-Asylum the sunlight sparkles on dozens of laboriously-beaded braids dangling against Patrice Rushen's shculders. "It takes four days to do these," she sighs, looking at the braids. And that's about the only downbeat moment of the day. Her seventh album, *Straight From The Heart*, has jumped from the R&B charts into the top 40 of the pop charts; once again Patrice Rushen has crossed the boundaries of "black radio" that she asserts are restricting her and other black artists.

"Because of the way records are marketed," Rushen explains, "if you're black you're either classified as doing R&B or jazz. But that doesn't mean that the only people who buy that music are black. They should start dropping these titles and categories. Give people a choice. They may say, 'Well, I don't listen to jazz.' If you've ever been to a movie, you do—you hear jazz all the time. Or, 'I don't like classical music.' Well, what are you listening to when you watch soap operas? Do you know what you're listening to?"

Rushen's '74 debut, *Preclusion*, on the Prestige label, and its follow-up, *Before The Dawn* (both all-instrumental) were praised as imaginative fusions of jazz and classical ideas. However, subsequent LPs incorporated more R&B elements and resulted in some crossover pop hits (notably "Haven't You Heard" and "Look Up"). *Straight From The Heart* retains all of these influences, and incorporates a prominent pop beat in the current hit single, "Forget Me Not."

A child prodigy who was classically trained as a pianist, Rushen says her music reflects an attitude she grew up with—one that she believes simply doesn't exist in this day of "pure" formats and market research. "I'm a product of a lot of different music," she explains. "My parents always listened to the R&B, pop and jazz of their day. I've always lived in a multi-racial and multi-ethnic environment. I don't know what it's like to be locked into one particular way of doing things.

"Your music has to be such that people from various backgrounds can get into it," she continues. "There's got to be some common denominator within the music that hooks up the dancers, the listeners, the old people, the little kids from the midwest, the east, the south—all of that. (Categories) limit an artist's creativity and keep them from opening people up to something new—not something black or white, just something else."

Does she really think radio will respond?

"It had better happen. People think they're listening to one kind of music, but that music is influenced by other things. The music itself has become an amalgamation of all the different elements. You just can't draw those lines anymore."

—Vicki Greenleaf & Stan Hyman

Is The CEN A Pipe Dream?

NEW YORK—"We don't want to look as if we're just another group of rock promoters coming onto a college campus to do a show, take the money and run." So says Bob Skinner, director of corporate communications for the Campus Entertainment Network (CEN), a satellite-delivered service with plans to broadcast to the nation's smaller colleges live concerts featuring the top names in rock. To date, 26 colleges have signed up with CEN.

However, CEN has yet to sign an act for the series, although Skinner asserts the first concert will be aired in October. CEN's plans call for four to six events during the upcoming school year, with Pat Benatar, Billy Joel, the Go-Go's and the Rolling Stones on Skinner's list of headlining possibilities.

In exchange for the right to broadcast at the affiliated colleges, CEN will lend schools the use of its video equipment and technical expertise, along with signal decoding equipment and promotional materials. Each school will receive five percent of the gate (all tickets are five dollars) to cover other expenses, such as hall rental. At the University of Nevada at Reno, the first school to sign with CEN, Activities VP Alan Hopper is hoping to book the unused Jai Alai Fronton at the MGM Grand Hotel, which has staggered seating for 2100. Hopper feels CEN is a considerable plus for college entertainment. "This is a great idea," he says. "Schools have little bargaining power when it comes to major acts, and CEN can be a big help in that respect."

—David Abels

Oblivious To The Modern Age, The Stray Cats Hit The Road

NEW YORK—"We're young, and we're playing teenage rebel music," boasts Brian Setzer, singer and guitarist for the Stray Cats. Looking at him sitting there with his blonde hair piled high and tattoos running the length of his arms, it occurred to me that perhaps I'd stepped through a time warp into the year 1958. Certainly the Cats (including drummer Slim Jim Phantom—present for the interview—and bassist Lee Rocker, who was absent) could have been cast as toughs in *Grease II*. Their music, which worships at the shrine of Presley, Cochran, Vincent and Wray, also reeks of a bygone era of tail fins, chrome and raw rockabilly sounds. But rather than being nostalgic for a time they're too young to remember, the trio says its image is simply a way of aligning themselves a bit more dramatically with the music they adore.

"If you really like the music, you look like this as well," Setzer asserts.

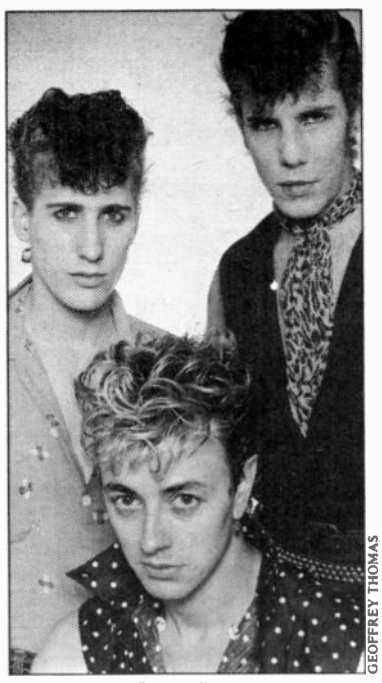
"Rock 'n' roll is obviously not a fad" is Slim Jim's pertinent observation.

Though the Stray Cats' lack of concern with current fashion and the strictures of radio playlists—Setzer states, "When I write, I can't worry, 'Well, is WFART gonna play this?' "—is admirable, it's also a bit naive for native Americans.

The band's success in England, a country still mad for rock 'n' roll roots, shouldn't obscure the fact that these guys hail from Long Island. And unlike British revivalists such as Matchbox, the Stray Cats should know that the American rock system is a little more entrenched in its ways.

In case their initial U.S. release, *Built For Speed* (a combination of the Cats' two British LPs, plus some new material) doesn't receive much airplay, the band has been getting some exposure in a time-honored way: by hitting the road for the summer with the same show that was hot enough to mesmerize the Rolling Stones, who invited the Cats to open some dates on last year's American tour. Judging from a recent performance at New York's venerable Roseland Ballroom, the unique lineup of guitar/standup bass/standup drum kit (Jim's simple explanation for this oddity: "I feel more comfortable with it.") provides more than enough firepower onstage to convert the uninitiated. And if there are still doubters, then the band's next record, to be produced by Dave Edmunds in London, might be a strong argument in its favor. Should that fail, Setzer says the group won't lose hope. "Maybe we'll go back to England," he muses. "All I know is, we're going to give these old fart bands a kick in the ass."

—Wayne King



GEOFFREY THOMAS

Stray Cats

Franke And The Knockouts Are Following That Dream

CHICAGO—Be happy for Franke Previte. Things are tough all over, but Franke's dream—part of it, anyhow—is coming true.

"We did that Jersey bar band thing for a lot of years, separately and collectively," he says of his band, Franke & the Knockouts. "Under different names. We'd get together every six months and put a band together and try to get a record deal. It'd always be the same bunch of guys. But I refused to learn somebody else's material—I'd go home and do whatever I could to make a living and write songs."

Last year's debut album, *Franke & the Knockouts*, was a major success, complete with two hit singles. The current follow-up LP, *Below The Belt*, shows signs of doing just as well. And the band is being well-received by audiences around the country.

Naturally, Previte and his longtime collaborator, guitarist Billy Elsworthy, have their own view on how it happened, and just where they are now that it has.

"Billy and I were in a group called Bull Angus, back in the early '70s: A heavy metal, riff-rock band. And we stayed together, writing tunes, after it broke up. But eventually, he said, 'I gotta go play rock 'n' roll.' And I said, 'I gotta stay here and write songs.' "

Today, they compare themselves with Ted Nugent, Bob Seger, even Alice Cooper—"beating around the Midwest rock 'n' roll circuit," as Elsworthy puts it, "until they got a deal."

"There's two sides to the band," says Previte. "We come up with that mellow groove, and it feels good—we can't fight the feeling. And that's our roots—I listened to a lot of Rascals growing up, all that R&B shit."

Unfortunately (because he is a nice guy, deserving of better), Franke Previte seems unaware the Knockouts are already typecast. The brass ring he's clutching is worth a lot at the bank. But it's not likely to admit him to the club he thinks he's joining.

"Our main plan," he says, "is to be a mainstay rock 'n' roll band."

Dream on, Franke.

—Bruce Meyer

Quarterflash Working On New Album

Continued from page 1

but album for Geffen Records. "Everything made us nervous and insecure. When we were making the first album, we had no idea we'd even get a chance to make another one, let alone get a hit. We were scared to death about warming up crowds for Elton John on our last tour, but that worked out okay, too."

To celebrate their recent escape from paranoia, Quarterflash's next album will be "lighter, more upbeat, more major chord-oriented," according to Ross, who adds: "The first record was all about the problem of maintaining relationships, very serious stuff. I think we're ready to do a fun record this time."

Working once again with producer John Boylan, the band will begin sessions in Los Angeles in November with an eye towards a January release. Among the tunes currently slated for the record is "Take Another Picture," which the band used as its closing number on the Elton tour.

"It's a rock tune about two events in my childhood," explains Ross. "I wrote it back in 1978 and I've just rewritten the music. The first verse describes a picture of my father squinting into the camera. As a kid, I remember I was impressed that this guy was my father. The second verse is about a dirty book I found under some of my father's ties. It had a woman in a black slip. She was smiling and I wondered why. Really, 'Take Another Picture' is about catching a moment in time."

Other tunes on the new LP, which might also be titled *Take Another Picture*, are Jack Charles' "Party Down, Party Down," and Ross's "Lonely." The former is a tongue-in-cheek look at the fast lane, the latter a typical Quarterflash rocker, featuring vocalist Rindy Ross on sax.

"We may be a lot more relaxed and sure of ourselves now than we were a year ago," concludes Ross, "but we still have some things to learn. Being on the road with Elton's band was a good lesson in basic professionalism. It was a nice difference from the normal craziness."

—Mark Mehler

STEVE MILLER

Only The Strong Survive

By Yale Williams

Steve Miller has been making music, he is quick to tell anyone interested, for 26 of his 38 years. From high school dances in Dallas, Texas, to the frat circuit around Madison, Wisconsin, to blues bars in Chicago.

In the late '60s, when the underground music scene stationed itself in San Francisco, Miller checked it out, sent for long-time partner Boz Scaggs, and within a week the Steve Miller Band was a mainstay at the Fillmore Auditorium and Avalon Ballroom. While A&R men were flocking to the Bay area waving contracts, Miller demanded, and got, a degree of artistic control with Capitol Records that changed forever the concept of a rock band's record deal. Capitol's investment didn't really begin to pay off until 1974 when Miller's LP, *The Joker*, crossed over to AM radio. By 1976, the guitarist had found a seemingly foolproof formula for catchy three-minute hits with *Fly Like An Eagle* (which included "Take The Money And Run," "Rock 'N Me," and the title track) and its followup, *Book of Dreams* (containing "Jungle Love," "Jet Airliner" and "Swingtown").

In 1978, though, Miller decided to take some time off; he didn't return to the active list until 1981. His comeback release, *Circle of Love*, was anything but auspicious, with the single "Heart Like A Wheel" making a brief appearance on the charts and the album selling a disappointing 500,000 units (as compared to the quadruple- and double-platinum figures of its two predecessors).

Early this year Miller took a new young band into the studio to record *Abracadabra*, sort of an '80s version of the old Miller hit factory. "It's going to be a blockbuster," he promised before leaving for a European warm-up tour prior to his fall tour of the States. Three weeks later, the album's title tune had penetrated the top 10 of the singles chart.

This interview, which took place in Lake Tahoe, Nevada in the wee, small hours of the morning following the start of the first leg of his U.S. tour, finds Miller in feisty form: his remarks about punk rock, the old San Francisco scene, his development as an artist, and the frustration of dealing with recalcitrant industry executives are strictly of the bare-knuckles variety. If Jerry Butler hadn't already cut it, Miller might well use "Only The Strong Survive" as his theme song. The author, too, for that matter. Read on, and you'll understand.

Rock radio is aimed at younger and younger kids it seems. Is it harder, as you get older, to write songs directed at that audience?

Oh, sure. Absolutely. You get farther and farther away from it. One of the things I was trying to do with *Circle of Love* and "Macho City" was get out of that, and get into this. See, the real problem is, where is my audience? Where is the audience that bought *Book of Dreams*? They're all 25 years old now, with kids, buying dental work, trying to buy a house. And they don't go to record stores at *all*. So you go from selling five million copies to selling 500,000 or something. Now what we have to do is we have to find a new place for our audience to come see us. Because I'm not through expressing myself as a musician by any means. When I was in Chicago the guys I was learning from were all in their 50s. Muddy Waters is 65 years old now and still playing. At my age I'm not through writing. It's hard for me to write a tune for a 14-year-old kid. I think the lyrics on *Abracadabra* are a lot more sophisticated than on my previous albums. I think it's a good blend of everything. So I want to find where my audience will come to see me play. I'm trying to express myself on a more mature level now. And it doesn't bother me at all to come out and play to 1000 people. It works. I'm having a good time. See, I've got to play.

At various stages you've been lumped in with San Francisco rock, stadium rock, middle America/ Fleetwood Mac/platinum rock— Chicago blues-rock, underground rock. "The most far-out creative band . . ." The horrid establishment rock. I've been in every one of them.

Did you ever feel like you really belonged to any of those categories? In terms of San Francisco rock, it seems like Quicksilver, the Airplane and the Dead had more of a common bond with each other than Journey, REO and Styx do today.

Yeah, I had a lot more in common with those guys than everybody else because we were all in an area where we were surrounded by other artists and other kinds of people who were helping make the scene happen. So it was a real unusual scene. We played for *free* in the parks and did all that stuff. That's what makes us different from all these other people. I mean, the punks will never get their trip together like we got our trip together, because there's not enough energy and not enough help around it; it's too negative, too sensationalistic. Guys want to make it now so they can get money. They're misguided. They want to make money and get laid and buy houses and lord it over everybody else, whereas I went to San Francisco because I was looking for a place to express myself and play other than in a bar.

Do you think there's any carryover of the San Francisco atmosphere and musical style into the material you've done since then?

Oh yeah, sure. When you see our show you'll think, 'How's he still doing this? How's he getting away with this?' The second song in the set is "Space Cowboy." It's a carryover from high school. I was doing "Gangster of Love" when I was 16 years old in Dallas. I'm still doing it now. And they still love it. It just works. But San Francisco is a real important part of my development; the Beatles were a real important part of my development; Stockhausen was real important. I was listening to Stockhausen in 1960. Just recently a friend of mine who recorded my first sessions ever, when I was 15, sent me those tapes. You'd be amazed at how good they are. Our first recording session, 1959 or whatever. It was recorded by Jack Maxon, who now runs Showco, who did the Rolling Stones' sound. All these people have played big parts in my development, right from Les Paul at the very beginning. Les Paul was a friend of my father's and showed me my first chords. I knew what multi-track recording was in 1948. I was five years old, but I understood that Mary Ford could sing with herself because Les Paul had eight tape recorders that had these little electric motors that made them all run at the same time. My dad had one of them—a Magnacorder. I was playing when I was twelve-and-a-half. And there's nothing unusual about that. People should not think that that is unusual. The truth of the matter is, that's when you want to take kids and teach them and put them in a studio.

When you came to San Francisco had you already written material along the lines of *Children of the Future?*

Children of the Future was put together in 1964. You have to understand something: a lot of what happened in San Francisco happened in Texas first. Chet Helms and Janis Joplin and all those people were hippies from Austin. And I was in Chicago and then went to California from Austin. California was ready to happen, but if Chet Helms hadn't come out there with Janis and some artists and that peyote vision, that peace, love, happiness kind of thing—it wouldn't have happened the way it happened. That's why it was such an unusual scene, because so much energy came from so many different places. It wasn't just a bunch of snotty kids who wanted to be rock 'n' roll hotshots *a la* today. It was a bunch of people who were literally having religious visions. And a lot of it came from Texas. But San Francisco was the only place that would allow that to happen, the only place in the whole United States. If they tried to pull that off in Texas, they would've killed them. Or else we'd just be getting out of jail now.

You were recently quoted as saying that the punk scene was "fast and quick and negative." Don't you think there were also some positive things that came out of that movement?

Oh, yeah. When you talk about punk, it's like talking about rock 'n' roll. Everywhere I go people think I'm going to be like Black Sabbath or Led Zeppelin. "Well, you're a rock 'n' roll band." There's a lot of hucksters, man, in the punk scene who have no integrity and who are using the musical scene for their own self-aggrandizement and are really selling a lot of trash. At the same time there are a lot of other people who are good. One of the goofiest things about the punk scene is there's a lot of bands sort of like the Monkees, who've been put together by older people and are being totally manipulated and pushed. Musically, I think what's happened in the punk scene has been real interesting rhythmically—like disco was for bass players. Seemed to me like disco finally got us some really good bass lines, after the same old bass lines forever. Now, I think with new wave, the interest has come from the programmed rhythms; it's really a percussion revolution more than anything else. As far as lyrics about murder and soft-worm vinyl and stuff like that, there's a lot of trash, a lot of nonsense. But I think it's a new energy, and what you have is a bunch of young people who want their own music. Just like I don't want to go see Dean Martin—I don't like it, I'm not interested in his TV specials

from Zoo Land and Fish Land—I think it's real natural that there's a rejection of all the rock 'n' roll that went in front. It's interesting to listen to. When I was down in L.A. making *Abracadabra* I listened to new wave a lot, and found that it was more interesting than listening to the Eagles sing the same old stuff one more time.

How much of your criteria for liking a band has to do with their technical ability? Can you appreciate a band than can't necessarily play their instruments?

I can't appreciate a band that can't really play their instruments, that doesn't really have anything to say, that's just copping an attitude. Anything that detracts from the music, that deteriorates music, is harmful. That bothers me when I see things like that. Some of these bands have had some ability, some integrity, some social conscience. I've liked the new wave bands that could play. If it's just guys bashing their instruments, singing, "I'm not gonna, I don't wanna, I'm gonna commit suicide, but not in front of you," I think they ought to be held by the nose and kicked in the ass and moved off the stage. Wearing Nazi insignias and being outrageous just to be outrageous—basically, what you've got is a bunch of malcontents who aren't doing the music scene any good, who are providing a lot of sensationalism for the press to cover. And the press is so easily manipulated by that. They'll go see some band kill dogs onstage and throw them at the audience before they'll go listen to good music. The press in its weakness for that kind of stuff has really helped a lot of nonsense go on. Even a group like Adam & the Ants—you know, it's just like the Monkees—commercial shuck and jive.

When you were first signed to Capitol Records at the peak of the Fillmore/San Francisco scene, you pretty much revolutionized the concept of a rock band's first contract by demanding and receiving a specific royalty and a high degree of artistic control. In what ways have you, as your own manager, changed the structure of the original deal as you've become more successful?

When I sold a million copies of *The Joker*, Capitol had a great deal. I think they were paying me about 45 cents an album. So they were making a lot of money. They never offered to upgrade my contract. So I went to them and said, "Hey, I just sold a million records, I'm going to go out and do this and this. Why don't you give me a new contract? Why don't you encourage me like a capitalist should? Instead of trying to screw me out of six cents or something, why don't you give me a nickel raise?" (Capitol president) Bhaskar Menon's response to that was, "Because I'm an anti-hero, Steve. I'm not here to be a hero and make you feel good." So I said, "Bhaskar, you're going to sit there and wait for two years to get my next record. You're going to wait until you give me a new deal. I'm going to outwait you, pal." They're just not used to having anybody talk to them like that. He waited two years and eight months till he got my next record, and when I handed him that one I told him it was going to sell four-and-a-half million copies. He looked at me like I was nuts—but it sold four-and-a-half million copies. They didn't understand it. I went out and promoted that whole goddamn album myself at my own cost, and they, of course, think they made it happen. Not that they didn't do a good job of printing records and moving them and being a distributor later, when it was real obvious that it was selling. And right when I was hot, in the middle of that, I had to grab them by the throat and say, "I'm not giving you *Book of Dreams* till you give me a new contract." I already had finished most of *Book of Dreams*. And he fought and fought and *still* wouldn't upgrade my contract. And I'd taken it from 45 cents with *The Joker* to 75 cents with *Fly Like An Eagle*. And at the same time they gave Carole King a contract for a buck and a quarter a record. I mean, they're just stupid in the way they deal.

You must have thought long and hard about why *Circle of Love* was so poorly received.

I didn't have to think too long or too hard about it. I think it was poorly received because the people who reviewed it didn't even listen to it. The comments made about the lyrics in "Macho City" were obviously made by people who didn't even know what the lyrics were about. All it is is just an atmosphere piece—something to put on and to roll through the room, to listen to. In L.A. I got a really ugly review, and they kept running it, over and over—they ran that review five times in the *L.A. Times*. At first, you know, my feelings were hurt, and then I went back and listened to the record. And then I just started playing it like one of my favorite albums. I really enjoy the record. And it will be a success probably by this time next year; it will probably be double-platinum. When I served my record up, (the critics) were just looking for somebody from the '70s to take a chance. All the other guys who sold 14 million records just disappeared and never did anything. They wouldn't come out and take a chance. The Eagles, Fleetwood Mac—they just stopped. So everybody just wanted to tear us up. It's like students making fun of the teacher—we were the guys who they wanted to say, "This is the decadent, mindless platinum rock of the '70s, slash, slash, slash." And they're listening to the Waitresses. So what happened was, my record company completely chickened out. I told them "Macho City" was the single, the most important piece on the album. I gave them a three-minute edited version of it. They took it and cut all the offensive lyrics about El Salvador and the war. They sent me a copy and said, "Can we release it like this?" I was so offended by what they did; I said, "No, I want you to put this out this way." And a bunch of middle-aged guys are saying, "No, 'Heart Like a Wheel' sounds real familiar, it's the single. I figured if they were that fired up, let them go, and then do "Macho City" next. I made a mistake. They never released "Macho City." Capitol Records is like any other corporation. They're slow, and they have their formulas, and they don't understand anything but their formulas. For example, I called them up and said, "Okay, guys, I'm going to do a major national tour. What are you going to do?" They said, "We're going to do this and this." "Wait a minute. This tour is going to cost me a million three, and I'm going to go to 45 cities for you and sell records. And you're going to spend $66,000 for some radio ads and a couple of ads in *Billboard* two weeks later? That's what you're going to do? Last time I did a thing like this you guys grossed sixty million dollars! Wake up." We're still arguing. I think *Abracadabra* is going to be a blockbuster, and they're just being real stupid about it. It's not even a question of cold feet, it's just a question of Dumb. They don't know when to break their rules. They'd rather wait seven or eight months to see if a record is going to do anything, instead of being aggressive and saying, "This is a good record, Steve Miller is a major artist, let's get out there and push it." But it wouldn't matter if it was Capitol or Warner Bros. or CBS or Elektra or David Geffen. They're all the same. They don't take chances, and they don't understand. You have to remember that Capitol Records is the same company that would not release more than three singles off *Fly Like An Eagle* because they felt it pressed their credibility with radio. They stopped advertising the album when it was selling 140,000 copies a month—because it had been going so long and they want to put out another record, and they didn't know how to advertise *Fly Like An Eagle* and *Book Of Dreams* at the same time. You look at these kind of guys and you wonder how they're in business.

(The Who) really haven't done much. I don't think Pete Townshend is much of a guitar player, and I don't think much of their music or their writing. They're just that gi-gan-tic Bri-tish hype.

What would have been the fourth single?

"Wild Mountain Honey." They would have played it forever. Capitol wouldn't release it. It's crazy. It's just corporate funk. They succeed by default.

When you have to go up against the record company, do you battle with the Capitol execs yourself, as your own manager?

Yeah, which they don't understand very well. It's hard for them to deal with artists. And I have to do this to them all the time. We've been arguing and fighting for twelve or thirteen years now, and it astounds me how little protection they do give you as an artist and how dumb they are. They seem perfectly content to let this record fall apart and to lose the kind of business I'm capable of doing. And if I didn't fight for it, they would. Artists, you know, aren't supposed to last more than three years anyway.

Did you purposely go right back into the studio to put out a new album because *Circle Of Love* had been panned?

No. Here's what I'm doing; it's real simple, and it's the same thing I did last time. When I made *The Joker*, all of a sudden I got my first chance to go do big gigs, right? I did a zillion of them and I was so burned out I couldn't follow it up with anything. So I learned that if you go out and you're hot, the smartest thing you can do is have another record ready in the can. I learned that when I met the Beatles in 1969. They were working on *Let It Be*, something else was out, and they had another one in the can. They were always a year-and-a-half ahead of themselves as far as releases. This is another example of how *dumb* Capitol Records is. What's the worst thing that can happen to a record company? They get a real big hit and then never get another record. Once they've got everybody paying attention, the second album you just release it and say, "It's out." When you're hot, you don't have to spend $65,000 on ads; you spend $250 and all the tickets are sold. That's what I learned a long time ago. So I had *Book Of Dreams* ready when *Fly Like An Eagle* was delivered; I deliberately held tunes off *Fly Like An Eagle* to put them on *Book Of Dreams*. It was three-quarters done already. By the time you get yourself cranked up writing songs and you're good in the studio, you always quit. But that's the time to stay for three more months and do it good. You've got the engineer who knows what the hell you're talking about; the room's tuned in; the guys are writing. That's the time to do a lot of work.

Most bands would be so insecure they'd probably cram every possible hit and hook onto the first album.

PHOTO: NEIL ZLOZOWER

Steve Miller

Twenty-six years of playing, man. That's why I get away with what I get away with; that's why I'm the way I am onstage; that's why I can come into this club here and knock them on their ear. It's just hours, it's just experience. You finally learn. I mean, three hit singles on an album sells a lot of albums. If you've got six hit singles, you're throwing three of them away when you put them all on one record. If I'd had *Joker, Part II*, I'd have sold 3,000,000. So this time it's not going to be *Fly Like An Eagle* and *Book Of Dreams*, it's going to be Number One, Number Two, Number Three. The advantage of this is, if you're really popular and everything's hot, you've got no problem. You just sit there and you hold that record. Like they sat on *Book Of Dreams* for a year before they released it. Then they were finally able to use their expertise and say, "*Fly Like An Eagle* is moving this way. Now let's come with *Book Of Dreams*." And we never even blinked. And when it came out, it sold I don't know how many million copies in six weeks, then another two million in the next six months. And when *Greatest Hits* came out it was a million-four in six weeks. So when *Circle Of Love* didn't happen, and stopped selling at a certain level, then it was time to come out with something else. And I was holding *Abracadabra* back for the next record. The smartest thing I can do is not break the flow of product.

As successful as you've been in terms of records sold and that sort of popularity, you never made the transition from rock musician to celebrity.

"Twenty-six years of playing, man. That's why I get away with what I get away with; that's why I'm the way I am on stage. It's just hours, it's just experience."

Did you see the Pete Townshend interview in *Rolling Stone*? That's *shtick*. And I feel sorry for him. I saw that. I mean, there was a time when I wanted to be real famous. I watched the Beatles in *A Hard Day's Night*, and I just went, "God!" It was star fever for a while. Then I started watching what happens to people who are stars. They're lonesome, egocentric, sick, unhappy, screwed-up people. They travel with accountants and get manipulated. Not that I didn't go through that—what does it really mean? You know, what kind of music has he done? The Who, to me, have always been kind of a goofy group anyway. I remember when I first saw the Who on television, and Townshend had on his little red and yellow and black hot-shot mod coat, and the band stunk—they couldn't play for shit—and he started smashing his guitar. It was just like what's happening right now—assholes who can't play music. Everybody thinks the Who are one of the greatest bands in the world. They really haven't done much. I don't think Townshend is much of a guitar player, and I don't think much of their music or their writing—never have. They're just that Gi-gan-tic Bri-tish Hype. I feel sorry for people who have to live that way, and I really feel sorry for somebody like Townshend who doesn't think Little Richard has anything to do with rock 'n' roll. I think Townshend finally opened his mouth too much. And I like Pete Townshend (laughs). After saying all that stuff about him, you know, I like the guy, but I wish he'd just get his shit together and write some good music. Which he has done. I think his solo albums have been much better. The one with Ronnie Lane (*Rough Mix*), I thought, was great.

If you really think the Who are so bad, then which groups do you feel *have* played great rock 'n' roll? A lot of people would put Townshend on that kind of pedestal.

Yeah, but you see the reason people think Townshend is of that stature is because Townshend has spent zillions of dollars on his press. It's like when Roy Rogers has himself crowned King of the Cowboys at the end of his movie. Townshend's always having himself crowned King of Rock 'n' Roll until everybody believes he's King of Rock 'n' Roll, and they don't even know what rock 'n' roll is about. To me, I still look at people like B.B. King, man. I saw him just the other day and thought he was brilliant. On the other hand, I thought Billy Joel wrote some great things. I thought there was a good example of somebody who really finally came out and wrote some brilliant rock 'n' roll pop music and got just beat up (by the press) because he didn't know how to handle himself—just ended up being attacked by everybody. I think he's a really fine writer; he's written some standard songs that will still be around when we're all old. People will still be doing his tunes. I doubt if they'll be singing *Tommy* (laughs). Generally, I don't take rock 'n' roll that seriously anyway. I think Jimi Hendrix wrote some great stuff and played some great things; Led Zeppelin's written some great things; Paul Butterfield did some great stuff. I did like the Specials. I thought the Specials were really a *special* group. There was something about them that rejected everything and yet had a positive feeling and a good blend of music.

How tight a grip do you keep on your finances? With your studio costs, tour expenses, and the salary for a seven-piece band, you must be spending a lot of money.

I *made* a lot of money. I made a *lot* of money. I sold 14,000,000 records and was getting paid $60-70,000 a night. And I was the manager—didn't have to give fifteen or twenty-five percent cut to anybody.

But doesn't controlling your art get more and more complicated the more money is involved?

Yeah. That's why each time I've had a big success I've had to stop and become a businessman for awhile. I've been very lucky, business-wise. It's the most boring thing in the world—I hate it. But you can't go to someone and say, "Here's a check for $9,000,000. Take care of it for me, will ya?" Of course they'll steal you blind and screw you. So you literally have to take it and put it in the bank. My philosophy is, I pay my taxes. So I pay *humongous* taxes. You know, three and a half million dollars one year in taxes. Hell, I paid $500,000 in state taxes in the state of Oregon one year. But I got to keep that much, too. You can simplify your life if you pay your taxes. You want to get fucked, try and save $800,000 of the $3,500,000, and then you'll have assholes bugging you for the rest of your life. Fortunately, I learned that when it was like a $400,000 deal instead of $10,000,000. I used to have a lot of tax attorneys, and all they did was complicate my life, make me nervous. And there was enough money for me to pay my taxes and do the things I wanted to do. I've invested my money wisely and very conservatively—tax-free bonds and a big fat allowance forever. It's sort of a trust fund kind of thing.

You laid out for four years and could have just as easily retired to a life of leisure. What was your motivation to come back?

If you start playing for money, you really lose it. Sometimes you're not sure why you do things, once you get real successful. But I've been playing since 1956, professionally since then. I started out when I was twelve-and-a-half and I was getting paid for it, and I worked re-gu-lar-ly, all the time. And I have from then till now. Why do it? I certainly don't need to. This is the hippie in me still: I really felt like coming out and playing again because I felt like I had to put something positive back into the music scene. I didn't want to just roll over and say, "Oh yeah, I was a big star in the '70s. Yes, it's true, I sold millions of records and now I'm going to go do Tic-Tac-Dough on TV and be a celebrity." That's just not where it's at. I like to play music. And it wouldn't matter to me if I had two trillion dollars and a stack of cars and all that monetary stuff—I like playing music, and playing for people. And I will be playing as long as I can.

Toto: Mercenaries Or Band? Jeff Porcaro Has An Answer

By Mark Mehler

*NEW YORK—"We are the elite mother f**kers of the world."*
Jeff Porcaro

No, it's not a parody of "We Are The Champions." The "We" here refers to the session musicians of the music business, who, according to Porcaro, represent a cadre of highly-skilled professionals constantly seeking new challenges in studios throughout the land. But there is the other side of the popular myth—the session musician as the restless, cynical mercenary without rock 'n' roll conviction, willing to prostitute his craft and his art for a few pieces of silver.

It is the latter image that has dogged Porcaro's band, Toto, since the release of its first LP four years ago. Co-founded by Porcaro and David Paich, when both were still in high school, Toto is composed of six veteran sessionmen who have worked on albums by Boz Scaggs, Randy Newman, Paul McCartney and Steely Dan, to name the most prominent. Porcaro himself came to prominence in the mid-'70s as the 19-year-old drummer on Steely Dan's *Katy Lied*.

"Nobody considered me a session player back then," he recalls. "They said, 'Hey, let's bring in that little rock 'n' roll asshole to play drums for us.' Now I'm tired of all the misconceptions about playing sessions. They're damn hard to do, and I'm proud to say I'll be playing sessions for the rest of my life."

At this moment, though, that choice is more a matter of personal preference than of necessity, for Toto—which many thought would go the ignominious way of most so-called session bands—has a major hit on its hands. *Toto IV* has been in the top 10 for several weeks, and a single, "Rosanna," has been steadily climbing the charts—as of this writing it is number two and looking like an odds-on favorite to knock the Human League's "Don't You Want Me" out of the top spot. The group is also about to finish the first leg of a headlining tour of the U.S. before heading overseas for three weeks of dates in September. More Stateside concerts are planned for late fall. In short, this group appears to have a future.

Porcaro emphasizes this fact when he speaks—only half in jest—of how *IV's* success has bought Toto "two more years as a band.

"We've been playing for 10 years or so," he says, "and we'll go on playing together regardless of record sales—in other words, for ourselves, if nothing else. But let's face it: a hit album allows you to get gigs. You can't put two sixteen-foot semis on the road without having something on the radio. We get better equipment this way, and some of the fringe benefits are nice."

Paich, whose major credit prior to Toto was as an arranger and backup musician for Boz Scaggs, feels *IV* shows a band returning to form after having been through a bad patch following its first LP's strong chart showing. "On the second and third records, we did a little soul-searching," he says. "This new record gets us into a more progressive sound, closer to the pop roots of the guys. We've matured lyrically, harmonically, and emotionally, which more than anything accounts for the good luck we've had lately."

Recently, Toto underwent its first personnel change, but it caused barely a ripple within the sextet. Bassist Mike Porcaro—brother of group members Jeff and Steve Porcaro—replaced David Hungate following the release of *IV*. Hungate, according to the band, left to spend more time with his family in Nashville. Explains Jeff: "It's good to get fresh blood, particularly when it's a relative. But we miss David. I think he was the *one* most excited and proud of the new record, but he figured there were more important things than sticking around for the star fringes."

At the end of the current tour, Toto will take a short break and then re-enter the studio (Montserrat in the West Indies) in early '83 to begin work on a new LP. "We've got some material written already," says Paich. "We've been closing our shows with two tunes of mine which'll be on the fifth album. 'Where The Sun Doesn't Shine' is a flat-out rocker with some sort of where-the-grass-is-greener theme. The other cut is 'Runaway,' which is similar to Rod Stewart's 'Stay With Me.' It's about falling in love with a girl and kicking her out in the morning."

Meanwhile, all six Toto members are keeping busy with studio work. Paich, Porcaro (Jeff, that is) and Steve Lukather recently played some dates on Randy Newman's next LP ("Newman's great, a west coast version of Fagin," says Jeff). The three Totoites also pitched in on Quincy Jones' production of the Michael Jackson-Paul McCartney single, "The Girl Is Mine," described by Paich as a "beautiful, slow, shuffling R&B ballad." Lewis Johnson of the Brothers Johnson is also featured on the tune.

"But Toto is still the thing with all of us," Paich stresses. "The concept in putting the band together was not having session men who work efficiently in the studio; it was getting a bunch of writers to do their thing as individuals and help each other out in the process. It's a good concept, because none of us feels frustrated; we all get our stuff on every album."

Jeff Porcaro agrees, and adds that the original description of Toto's music remains unchanged: basic pop-rock as played by "a bunch of normal people.

"The sessionman and the guy in the band both like to play music every day, because that's the life. The rest of it, the fringes, it's boring. That's why we want to record in the West Indies. Get up at 6 a.m., work all day, sleep at 8:30. Just air and water and music. What else do you need?"

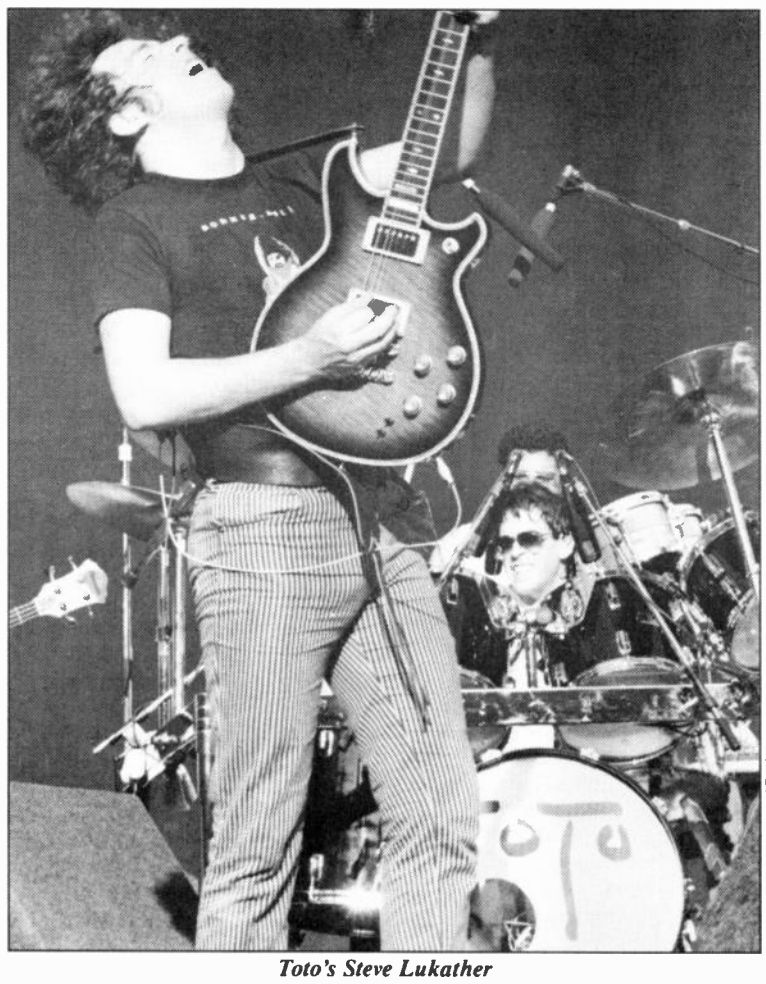


PHOTO: DEBBIE LEAVITT/PIX

Toto's Steve Lukather

FLEETWO

Continued from page 1

Certainly Mick Fleetwood, Lindsey Buckingham and Christine McVie, who were all present for the interview, did nothing to suggest the above fantasy; but all three did speak somewhat wearily of the constant speculation on the part of the press and public about the future of the band. They also acknowledged that there is more grist for the rumor mill than ever before: The roaring success of Nick's solo album, *Bella Donna*, and her absence from recording sessions, interviews (at least those concerning Fleetwood Mac) and tour preparations seem ample evidence to support the notion that the singer has reached the point of self-sufficiency.

Whether the topic was songwriting, recording or personalities, the conversation kept drifting back to the subject of Stevie Nicks, while the equally-absent John McVie was discussed only briefly and in the most benign of terms. The bassist, a road animal and an acknowledged studiophobe, was sailing in the Virgin Islands at the time of the interview and was due to join the band a few days later to rehearse. Nicks, on the other hand, was scheduled to show up only for the last ten days of work prior to the start of the tour.

"She phones her part in," says McVie without a trace of irony. "She asks what songs we plan on doing and what songs we want her to do. The rest of it will be decided between Mick, Lindsey and me."

"I'm not that excited about touring myself," admits Buckingham, who frequently expresses his preference for working in the recording studio. "But it's something we should do, so I'm definitely going to do it. If you do an album, you might as well complete the cycle—otherwise, why do the album?

Fleetwood notes that "for the better part of six years, we all had a huge commitment to Fleetwood Mac. All we did was tour, make albums, tour, make albums, and tour. I think that if after this much time there isn't some sort of base that can withstand a certain amount of pounding from the people who helped create it, then it's pretty useless.

"People have been waiting for us to break up for years, and the subject's coming up again. The most likely one to disappear is Stevie, but there's absolutely no way of telling whether she will or not. I'm sure at times she wants to go off and not be a part of the band, and at other times it's the opposite."

But there's more to it than that. In arranging this interview, it was apparent at nealy every turn that Stevie Nicks has set herself apart from the rest of Fleetwood Mac in a way which is not exactly in the spirit of commitment. She has a record company virtually all to herself—Modern Records has released no product other than *Bella Donna*—and she alone among the Mac is represented by the industry's most grudgingly-respected hardballer, Irving Azoff. Azoff, it should be noted, owns no piece of Fleetwood Mac's action; and though his interest in this matter is solely Stevie Nicks, there's no evidence to indicate that he's responsible for pushing her away from the band.

No one in the Fleetwood Mac organization seems to know for sure what Nicks's intentions are with respect to the band, and when asked if she would respond to specific issues raised in the interview with the others, a representative of Azoff's company said, "She just wants to work on her record."

It's not hard to understand why Nicks might be reluctant to return to the enforced democracy of a five-piece band after having established herself as a triple-platinum act with her own material and musicians—both in the studio and on the road—whose defined role is to play her music her way. But would Fleetwood Mac survive her departure?

"Why not?" asks Fleetwood from the vantagepoint of one who's seen some key personnel losses in his time: Fleetwood Mac numbers among its alumni Peter Green, Jeremy Spencer, Danny Kirwan and Bob Welch, all of whom were seen (by outsiders at least) as vital components of the Mac's music. "I don't think there'll be any reason to madly look for someone else. If someone disappears, then that's what happens. Who knows? The whole thing might blow up."

"I might leave," McVie chimes in. "How about that?"

Fleetwood then offers the ultimate scenario: "When it's all totally finished I'll probably still be standing there, totally deluded and thinking that everyone was still around me, waiting to go on stage." *Touché.*

Fleetwood seems less concerned with the prospect of another personnel change than with maintaining an emphasis on musical growth. "I respect the fact that we're still being creative and enjoying ourselves. The reason why we're still here is that there is an underlying commitment to respecting the band, no matter how many times you might get fed up with it."

"There is definitely a chemistry that transcends everything else that might happen before or after we're on stage," McVie elaborates. "We play well together and sing well together. That side of Fleetwood Mac I really enjoy. And I feel very comfortable working with Lindsey. Dare I say this with him present?" She casts an affectionate wink his way. "I have a lot of respect for this man; I don't really imagine anybody else being able to do what he does with my songs.

"There have been many rough times," she continues, "but we've always ended up on some high note, standing around and jamming, or whatever, just really getting a charge out of playing together. It's a joyous situation, and that takes over the bad points."

"That may have something to do with why Stevie is the way she is now," Buckingham suggests. "Because she is not a musician, she doesn't share in that thing with us. She can feel totally out of her depth—which she is, on some levels—and you can understand why she doesn't want to come down to the studio or be involved in certain things."

In spite of the overwhelming commercial success of her solo album, there is a certain, well, amateurish quality to Nicks's songs. The way she lays a lyric across a melody sometimes makes for awkward phrasing and contributes to the spaciness of her musical persona, as does her rather childish lyrical point of view regarding life and love.

Buckingham, Nicks's former lover and a bandmate of hers since the late '60s, when both were members of a Bay Area group called Fritz, admits to having always considered her songs "a little flaky." But, "there's obviously something about her material that people relate to. She's always been a little bit hard for me to take seriously, because I really appreciate a beat, having been weaned on Elvis and Little Richard and Chuck Berry.

"There's something emotional that gets through, though," he says, "and her voice is so recognizable. I've been listening to Stevie sing for years and years, and when you're that close to it, it's easy to overlook certain aspects of anything."

"Stevie's very prolific," McVie notes. "She writes constantly, and all her songs are like babies to her, even though some of them are rubbish. When I write, I sit down and work on an idea until it's finished, but Stevie cranks out songs all the time."

Between her songs and the way she appears to be conducting her life, Stevie Nicks comes off as a modern-day equivalent to the movie queens of the '30s, reaching inside herself for some ill-defined personal misery to fuel her creative machinery. Buckingham says that in all the time he's known her, "Stevie has never been very happy, and I don't think the success of her album has made her any happier. In fact, it may have made her *less* happy.

"She's flexing some kind of emotional muscles that she feels she can flex now that she's in a more powerful position. There's a certain amount of leeway in how you can interpret Stevie's behavior, I'd say, but at the same time there's no denying that her success is making her feel that she can pull things that she wouldn't have felt comfortable pulling before. And most of them aren't particularly worthwhile, but she's venting something—loneliness, unhappiness or something."

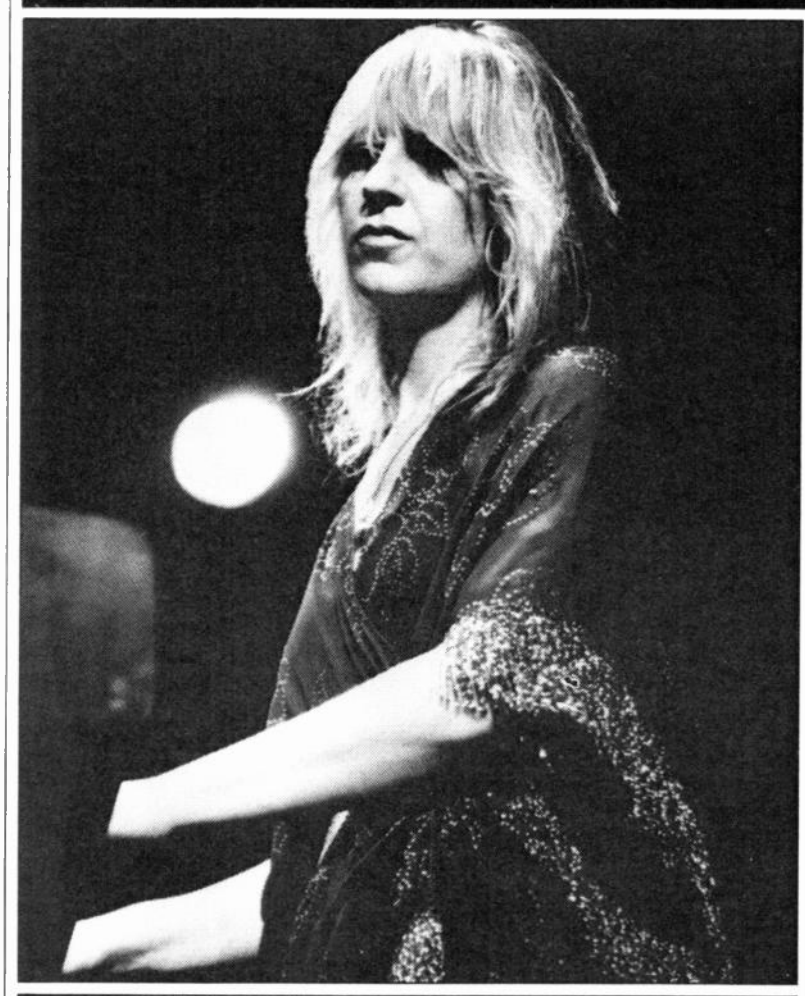
When a band member chooses not to participate fully in the process of making an album, it puts a certain kind of pressure on the people who do the work. Given the unique approach that Buckingham takes to record-making, it's easy to see how an artist as moody as Stevie Nicks could second-guess what he does to her material.

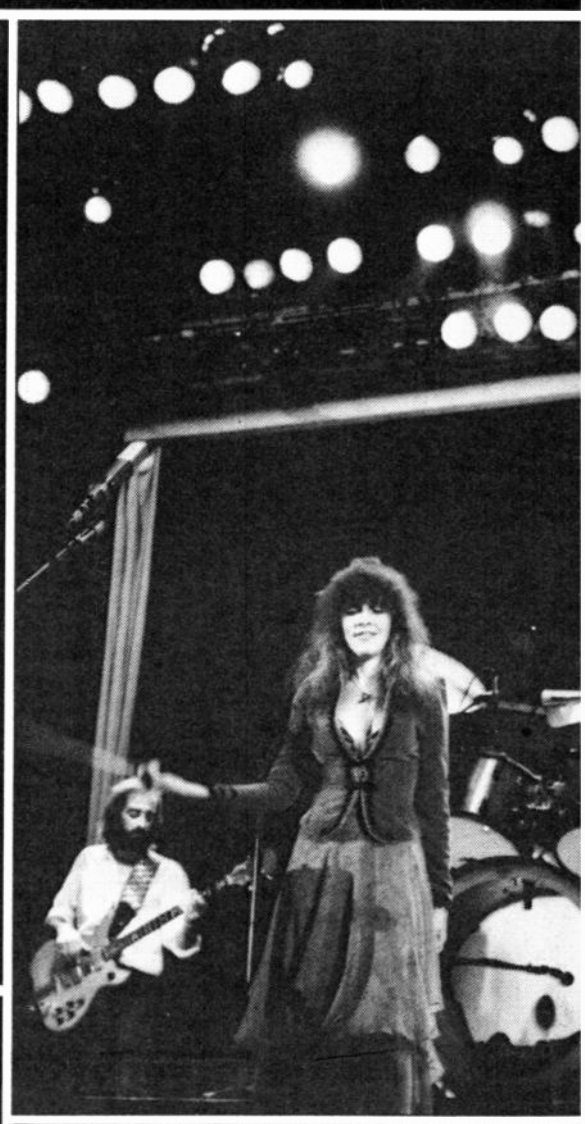
It's in discussing the musicians' studio relationship that the most complete picture of Fleetwood Mac emerges. Here, egos collide and coalesce for months on end; the pop magic that results has, ultimately, little to do with technology or technique, and everything to do with talented artists following the late sportswriter Red Smith's dictum on how to do your best work: "Open a vein and bleed."

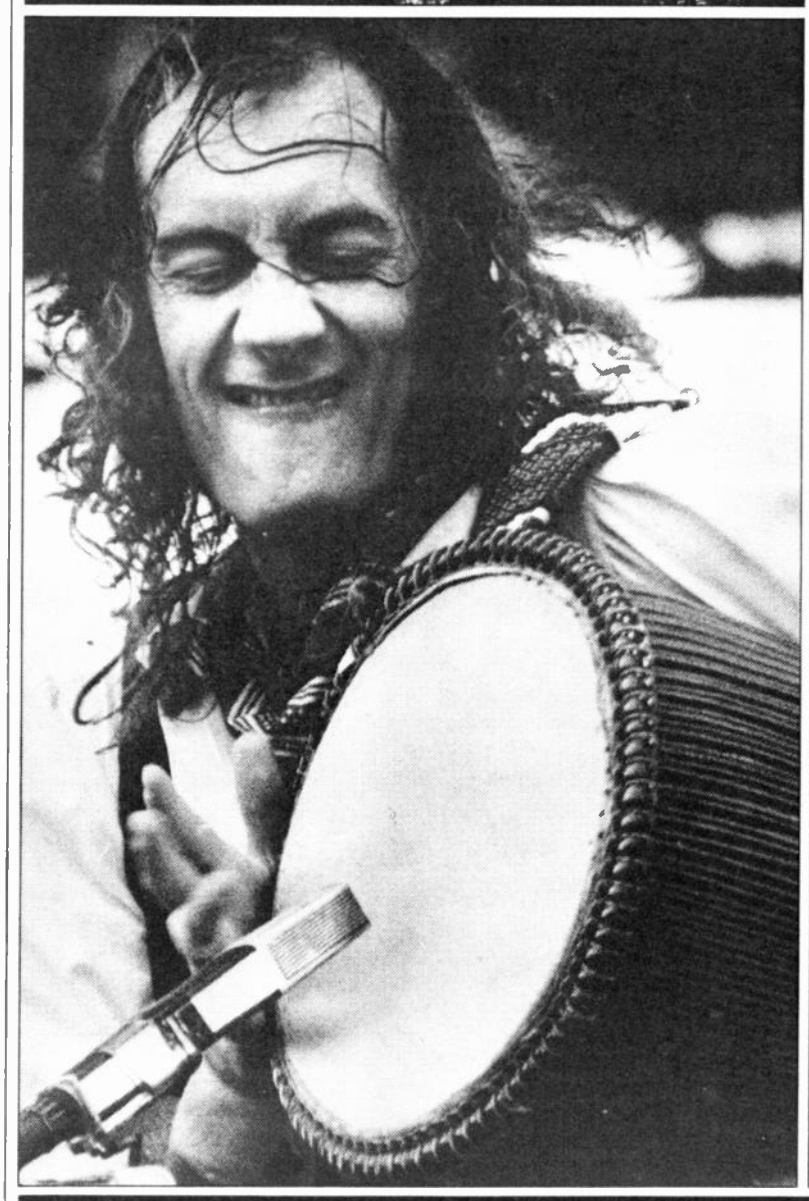
"There's an exquisite sense of checks and balances in Fleetwood Mac, and that's one of the things that makes the band work," Buckingham observes. "Everybody's always checking each other out to a certain degree, not only i the material but on eve our creativity. Maybe th utes to the albums takin they do—it's not the m way to do things. But it effective in the end."

While it's not unusual member to walk into t criticize the music and out again, Buckinghan sophical about it. "It's thing you expect to ha time to time," he says. " with the territory."

Fleetwood agrees. "W have a problem sometim vie and John, but if they in the studio then they







The band plays on: (clockwise from top left) Christine McVie, Lindsey Buckingham, Stevie Nicks; Buckinghan

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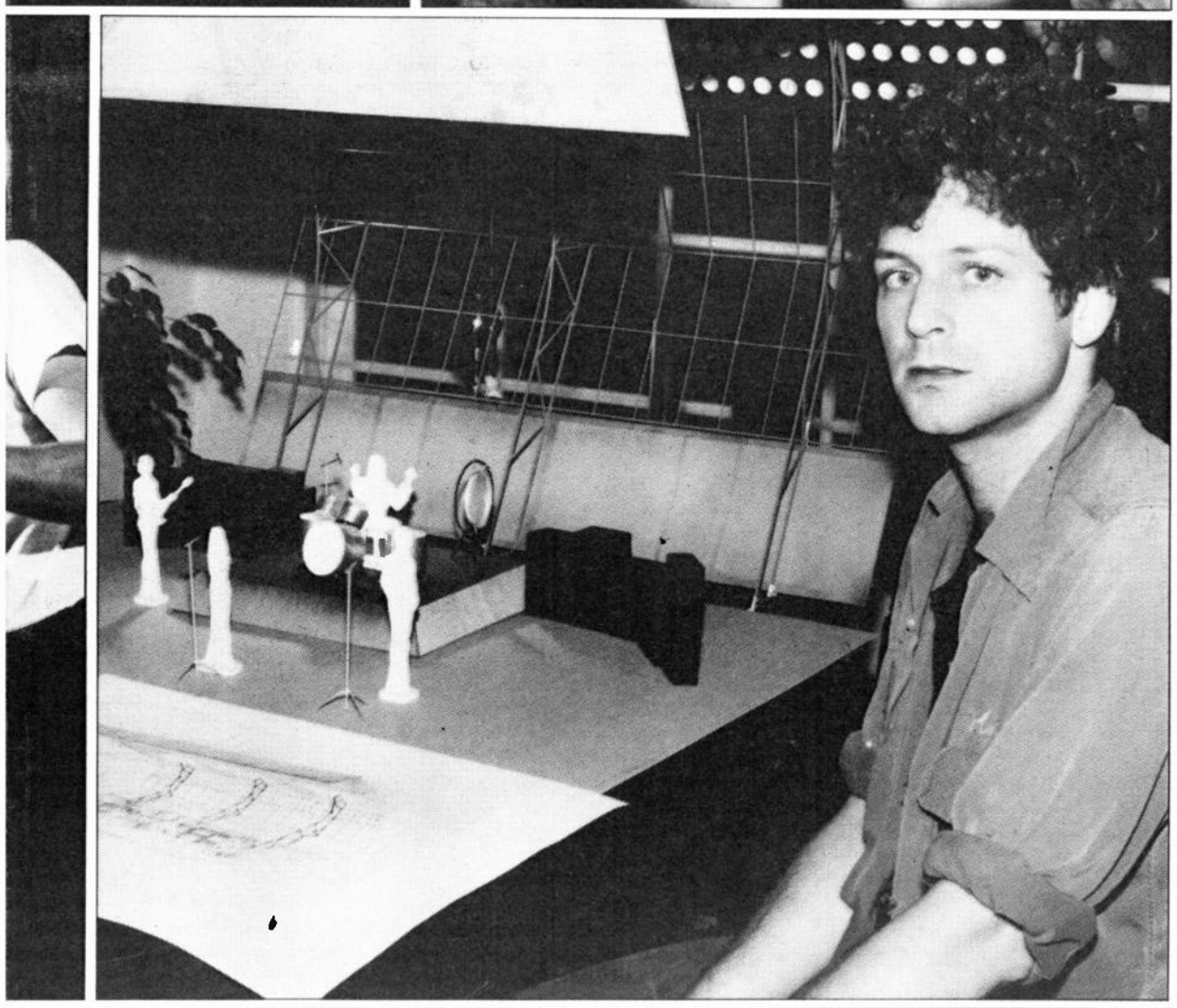

with a scale model of the band's new stage design; Buckingham and John McVie; Mick Fleetwood

Mick Fleetwood: "The reason we're still here is that there's an underlying commitment to respecting the band, no matter how many times you might get fed up with it."

Buckingham extended his *Tusk* experimentation on his solo album, *Law and Order*, and brought the fruits of his labors to bear more subtly on *Mirage*.

"One of the reasons *Tusk* happened the way it did was because I wasn't doing any solo work," Buckingham says. "On *Tusk* I was doing a lot of things at my house, playing a lot of instruments myself, just like I did on *Law and Order*. That's a valid approach to making records. But this time I wanted all my songs to be *band* songs, and the result of that is an album that is a little less bizarre. *Tusk* had things that were good artistically, but it wasn't good for the whole band, and I thought that I should limit that to my solo albums. If I want to be in a band, we should play as a band—and maybe the result of that is that *Mirage* is a little more traditional in some senses."

Traditional in every respect, one might say, except that 14 months passed between the first sessions (at Le Chateau in Herouville, France, later switching to Larabie Sound and the Record Plant in L.A.) and the album's release. Buckingham quips that "Fleetwood Mac albums take about five years off your life," but is stumped when asked to explain why.

McVie jumps in. "Well, this particular one wouldn't have taken quite so long had it not been for all the other albums (meaning Lindsey's, Stevie's and Mick's solo LPs) that were being made as well."

It's fitting that McVie came to Buckingham's aid when he was at a loss for words: although it's not generally recognized, the two share a mutual respect for each other as musicians that pulls the band together in a special way. "I'm a musical stylist," Buckingham states "I'm not really a writer. That's not my strong point, lyrical or melodywise. 'Trouble' (on *Law and Order*) is a good melody, 'Go Your Own Way.' I've had my moments, but I don't consider that to be my strong point at all. It's the style involved."

Says McVie: "I don't tell Lindsey, for example, 'I want you to play such-and-such kind of guitar, that lick,' That's why Lindsey has got the (additional production) credit on the album—he's been largely responsible for helping to bring across on the record the atmosphere that I want to come over on a song that I write."

"She and I have a real valid kind of rapport between us," Buckingham continues, "something that was there before we even met. It's like she can play the piano and I can play the guitar just wonderfully along with her. It's almost like parallel lines during our formative years of music until we met, and it gave us a lot of common ground."

For McVie, the bottom line is that "we play well together, we sing well together," referring to the entire band. "A lot of parts of Fleetwood Mac are really fun and rewarding. Of course, there are other people that we all play with and work with that are just as much fun, but not quite in the same way, I dare say, just because of the amount of years we've had together."

"When you play with other people, of course, it's a lot of fun," Fleetwood states, "but I would say it's very unlikely—certainly for myself—that this situation will ever happen again in the reference of a musical combination. That commitment's really the reason why the band is still here."

With the mention of the word "commitment," the talk again turns to Stevie Nicks. The disinterested observer can't help but question her contribution at this point, but the musicians who work with her are a bit more charitable in their analyses and deductions.

"There've been many times when she might come out in the studio and try and sing along, and we'd tend to say, 'Don't do that right now, let us work this out first,'" Says McVie. "Now she'll just go to the studio and go, 'There's no need for me to be here.' She does feel left out."

Fleetwood's take on the whole situation is that the process Fleetwood Mac goes through from day one in the studio through to the finished product is a highly-disciplined one, and that "Stevie doesn't have that appreciation. She just emotes and goes into something, which is exactly her forte. But she does that all the time rather than being able to control and place where she does it—which is not a fault, it's just the way it is."

But the key to understanding Fleetwood Mac in 1982 is not in wondering so much about its future without Stevie Nicks, but in understanding that the point is, was and always has been to make good music, and have fun doing it. Maybe that's why Fleetwood himself can seem so unconcerned when discussing Nicks—the band plays on, regardless: "That notion is *the* most important thing: appreciating in a non-belabored way that the key element with all the people in Fleetwood Mac is that you're not involved in making an album which is a bloody bore! A lot of people make the mistake of being very boring, and realizing all too late that they are fucking boring. Then the magic's gone; whatever's there has long since passed you by.

"I consider myself very lucky to have been involved in a situation which had a lot of groundwork that led you to being able to make very objective, humorous analogies to what you're doing, and having no puffed-up illusions about how important you are."

And at that point, the question of whether or not *Mirage* is the end of Fleetwood Mac as we now know it is moot. In fact, McVie says "it definitely isn't.

"This band has lived from day-to-day for seven years or so," she points out, "and there's always been some kind of turmoil from within—that's common knowledge. I'm quite sure we'll go on for another seven years doing the same thing."

PHOTOS CLOCKWISE NEAL PRESTON (McVie, Buckingham, Nicks), DAVID GAHR, SAM EMERSON

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have less right to complain about what's done. That's just a matter of fairness—and that's why I hate being *away* from the studio. There are usually two or three poignant moments during the making of an album where there are hurt feelings walking around—'What have you done to my songs?' or that sort of thing. But there's also a lot of stuff which is appreciated by the others."

"Having a producer's kind of mind, I might take something too far," concedes Buckingham, "but it's better to have too much on a track and prune it back than to not have enough."

"Lindsey's never that adamant about keeping a track a certain way," comments McVie. "If everyone says that they think it's caca, then obviously he's not going to feel happy about it being on there anyway."

Buckingham has been referring to *Mirage* as a "a reconciliation of opposites" from the time of the first sessions. "There are some aspects of *Tusk* and some aspects of *Rumours*," he explains, "but *Mirage* is much more of a band album than *Tusk* was. After *Rumours* sold 16 or 17 million copies, we had the freedom—and the courage—to try some other things.

"I got a lot of support from the band during the making of *Tusk*, but when it became apparent that it wasn't going to sell 15 million albums, the attitudes started to change. That was sad for me in a way, because it makes me wonder where eveyone's priorities are. To me, the point of making records is to shake people's preconceptions about pop."

Fleetwood says that making *Tusk* was crucial from a strategic standpoint. "It was no big master plan, really, but *Tusk* may be the most important album this band will *ever* do—strategically, apart from the music.

"If we hadn't done *Tusk*, Lindsey would have a problem expressing himself within Fleetwood Mac," he continues, pointing out also that

On Stage

The Stones Wicked At Wembley

By Allan Jones

LONDON—Fortified by a swift beer, I was on duty in the Royal Enclosure at Wembley Stadium waiting for the Stones to troop out of the players' tunnel and spread it about the park.

I was also thinking that I'd probably have more fun at home pulling out my toenails with a pair of blunt pliers.

At Earl's Court in '75, the Stones had been a pathetic disappointment. Keith Richards had spent most of that evening grappling with a sense of misplaced gravity that found him flat on his butt for much of the show, and Jagger looked like he'd just fallen off the top of a second-hand Christmas tree.

You couldn't even hear them for the echo and they had the old eyelids meeting in the middle faster than anything this side of a Pete Townshend interview.

More recently, friends had returned from the Scottish shows with a disillusioned report and much huffing about their redundant, anachronistic, tediously contrived performance.

I was prepared to believe it all, despite some glowing accounts of the band's display of musical muscle during its guerilla raid on the 100 Club.

And now I'm eating dick.

If the scale and presentation of the Wembley shows was gross and grasping, it should be eagerly acknowledged that the music on Saturday was at least carried off with a delirious wallop, and buzzed with an energetic conviction that left me with my heart rattling against my teeth.

"Under My Thumb" was a shaky opening shot, but "When The Whip Comes Down" was *on*: bristling with seething clout, it lit the fuse.

Rowdy, loose and exciting, there was just nothing about this performance that was tired, lifeless or jaded: not even Bill Wyman, who was good naturedly cheered every time he came into close-up on the video screen high above the stage. Clowning, hamming it up with hilarious cheek, Jagger's athleticism was genuinely astonishing, while Keith Richards was content to lurk like a legend behind him.

Whistling through "Shattered" and "Neighbours" with a sporting zeal, this was the Stones and rock 'n' roll at maximum crank, with Charlie Watts' mulekick backbeat urging on the frontline with deliberate glee.

There was a marvelous moment during a raging "Beast of Burden" when Jagger and Ron Wood were falling around on an elevated platform to the left flank of the stage. Shrugging off an early reluctance to seize the spotlight, Richards sauntered down the opposite catwalk.

Whipping the tune to a furious climax, he suddenly dropped to one knee, killed the song with a lethal little guitar flourish and punched the air with a clenched fist salute.

He knew he was hot and the band was burning.

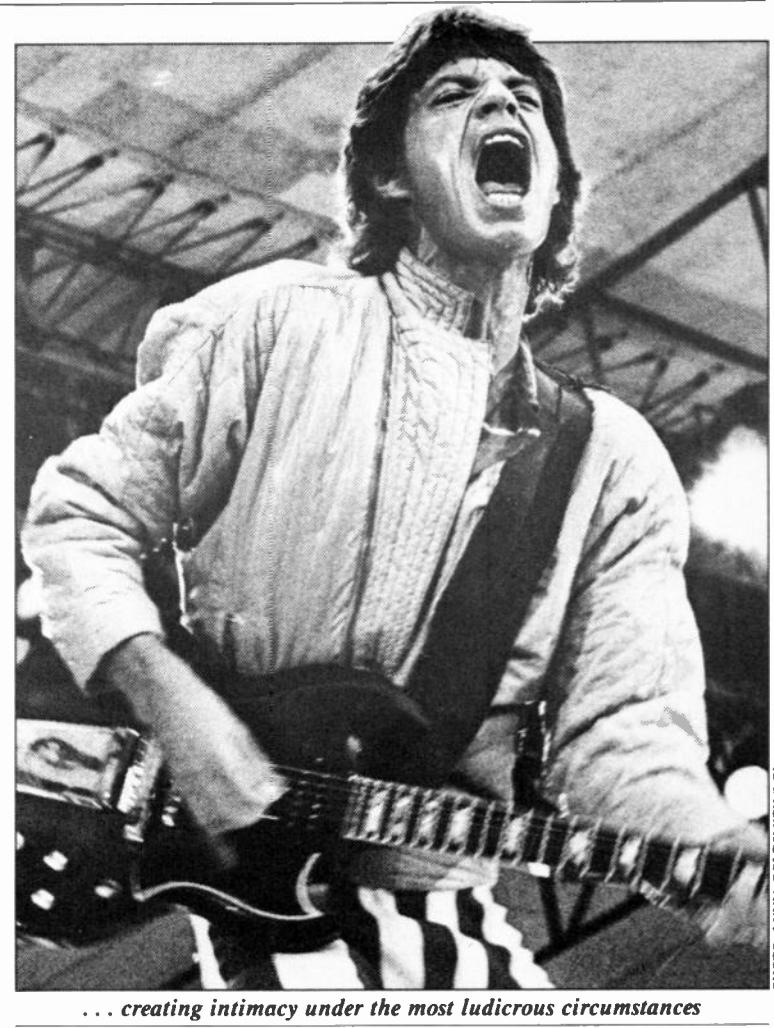


PHOTO: LYNN GOLDSMITH/LGI

. . . creating intimacy under the most ludicrous circumstances

Later, taking a solo stroll down the left wing, he gratefully accepted a bottle from someone in the audience, quickly checked the label, evidently decided it was the business and took a thirsty slug.

In turning every expectation on its head, the Stones were closing the gap; creating an impossible intimacy under the most ludicrous and possibly despicable circumstances.

Jagger was sometimes trite, but never really embarrassing; God knows, he just seemed to be *enjoying* himself. And anyone who didn't feel righteously stirred by his ringing vocal on "Let It Bleed" would be best advised to keep it to themselves within earshot of this hack.

After that, he could be forgiven any amount of showbiz puff and buffoonery (although waving a Union Jack like some British Legion drummer boy at the end of the set was calling the shot a little close).

Yet what can you do but cheer till your lungs hurt when you're confronted with a final, heady blast that included a blistering "Miss You," a simply cracking "Honky Tonk Women" (introduced with a slovenly "Okay, Keef" from Jagger), an exhausting dropkick in the direction of "Brown Sugar," a volcanic "Start Me Up" and a boisterous "Jumpin' Jack Flash."

Richards seemed so damned eager to get on with the show that he could barely keep himself backstage with the rest of the chaps while the crowd roared its demands for an encore. He was down at the front of the stage giving it an enormous amount of stick, well into "Satisfaction" before the curtains were even half way back towards the wings: the band had to double up quick to catch up with him.

Carried out above the crowd on a crane, Jagger still couldn't wrestle the attention from Richards' slumping twirls and grinning scurries.

Hell, I was impressed; knocked completely out of my stride. That's all I can say.

The Rolling Stones may be morally derelict, arrogant rock 'n' roll flunkies, perilously conceited, and their wealth may remove them from the kind of drudgery most of us have to endure; they may be playing out the final chapter in rock's longest-running charade; they may be conning everyone in sight, giggling up their bank rolls at their infinite capacity to capture and engage our attention; they may be an inflated myth that should years ago have been wrapped up and dispatched into more ordinary perspectives . . . I really don't care.

I just know they can party it up something wicked.

Sound Signature

Tom Verlaine's Rock Time Warp

By Chip Stern

Tom Verlaine is fragile, like some ancient piece of precious porcelain. The hairline fractures around his eyes make it appear as if he's just waking up, or is it that he's simply trying to get back to sleep? Verlaine (neé Tom Miller in Delaware) is a natural guitarist, a home-grown Bohemian artist who's fashioned a melodic signature and songwriting style that is a throwback to the fledgling days of tube amps and solid-body electric guitars. Wonder if he spends a lot of time staring at those long, expressive hands or does he simply face what's never there?

Tough break, that new wave tag, but then Verlaine literally built the stage at C.B.G.B.'s with his own hands, led one of the scene's most incendiary bands (Television), and paved the way for groups like the Talking Heads, Blondie and the Ramones. Haughty and detached, yet bemused and unassuming, Verlaine has the air of a man just doing his work—rock 'n' roll guitar. Perhaps the oblique, goofy, poetic airs of his singing and writing—songs that reveal themselves only in layers—dissuades casual listeners, yet anyone with more than a passing interest in the future of electric guitar can discover inspiration by entering his time warp.

The sounds he gets on albums like his most recent *Words From the Front*—generally underscored by a Stones-like rhythm guitar chug and punctuated by mysterious Dylanesque narratives and parables—range from bell-like crystal tones to reactor meltdowns where notes stutter, scream, expand and evaporate before one's eyes. Yet for his own part Verlaine characterizes his style as simply "trying to play in tune, with mixed results . . . although sometimes a little out-of-tuneness is a good thing. A good piano tuner will tune the high notes sharp so it's off, because of the way the ear perceives upper frequencies—you get more brightness out of it. So often a little bit of sharpness way up the neck on high notes is appropriate. The ear hears it as pleasing, whereas if it was right in tune the ear might pick it up as slightly flat." As for his famous vibrato "that's like digging in fairly heavy from fret to fret, rather than across the neck. The other one is is mostly up to the ceiling on the frets. Once in a while it's bending it up, then hitting it and bringing it back down with a shake for a backwards sound."

That's the *how* of things. *What* he plays is a product of his fascination with the best of '60s free jazz and rock, and an approach that demands as much from the player as from his ancient (often, *cheap*) equipment—in a word, character.

Verlaine's main guitar is a Jazzmaster (he also uses a Jaguar and Danelectro), now discontinued from the Fender line, but still the key to that Ventures surfing sound; a noisy, temperamental guitar with a totally unique sound. "I'll tell you what I really liked about it is when I went to put a band together I didn't have any money, and those were $90 on 48th St. back in 1972. The body contour was really comfortable, and the necks are a little different than the other Fenders. Jazzmasters aren't hard to find—but good ones are. I just got a real, real old one in California, like from the first six months, with a copper-iodized pickguard.

"I've seen a lot of people getting into Jazzmasters because of me, and, well, people don't know what they're in for. I mean, if you're looking for endless sustain, you're going to have to get it out of your hands (laughs). Which I think is a good thing. Because a saxophonist gets it out of his breath. You've got to work for it on the guitar—it means *you have to pull it out of yourself*, otherwise, what are you doing? You end up playing a lot of noise or scale exercises."

Because the Jazzmaster needs some help to beef up the sound ("I like the high end tone, and there's a mellow sound that has a richness to it, but there's a certain fullness of tone that's not easy to get."), Verlaine has scoured old guitar and electronics shops when on tour to find vintage tube equipment, like an old Fender tube reverb unit he used on "Days On The Mountain," closing up the springs by putting a cigarette box in between the lock, for just a touch of twang and slap to produce that pearly Jimi Hendrix "Rainy Day, Dream Away" sound; or a pair of tube compressors and an old German tape delay with a tube pre-amp. "I crank all this tube equipment before the amp, and the sound that comes out is like (makes exploding sound); I don't use it on everything, but for a louder lead-type sustain it's great, because when tubes heat up there's a whole different kind of sustain and distortion you get. Lindsey Buckingham does that, too, and Pete Townshend as well, I think. They use some kind of tube tape deck. A lot of old guitarists do that."

Yet for all the nuances of Verlaine's dusty old equipment and dedication to past technologies, it is his musical attitude that dominates. "When I first started playing, I found I was so wound up, I couldn't even hear what was coming out of my amp. There was just the joy and excitement of it—like getting something out of your system, and that was all that mattered. I don't think you can forget about that. You can't get so interested in just making sounds. The point of it all is some kind of expression."

Fair enough, putting ends before means. So what does one practice to keep that spark alive? "Practice?" Verlaine blurts out with an uncomfortable laugh. "I never practice. I just write songs and take solos."

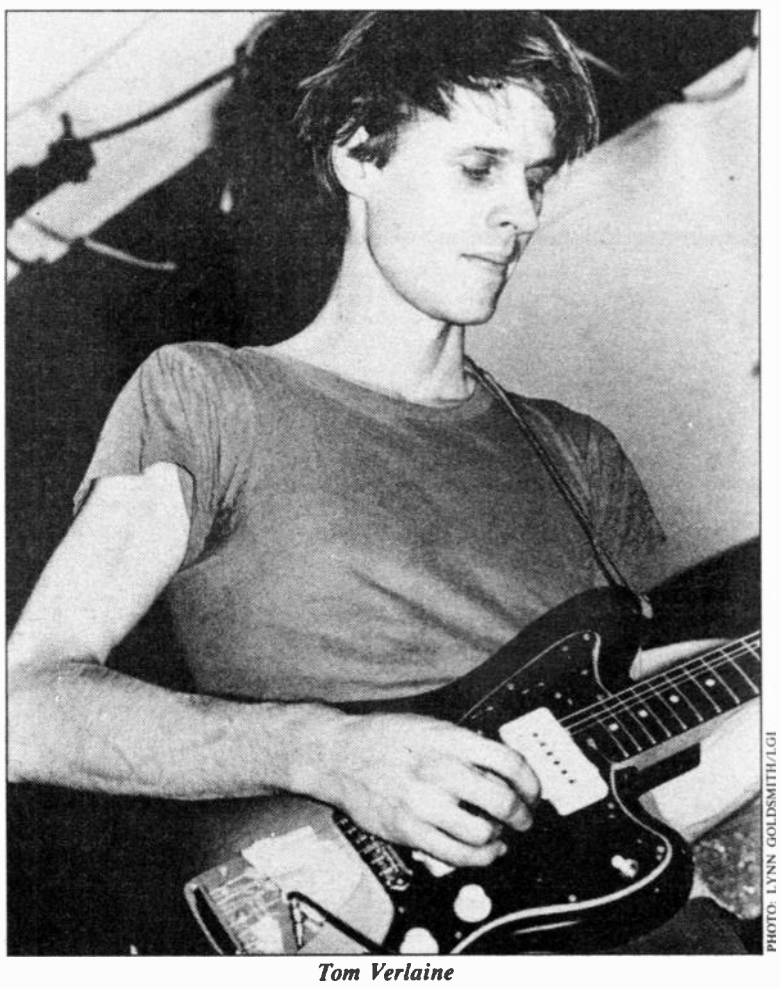


PHOTO: LYNN GOLDSMITH/LGI

Tom Verlaine

RECORDS

Imperial Bedroom
Elvis Costello
Columbia

By Dave Marsh

This album represents something more than the most successful pop music Elvis Costello has made since *Armed Forces*; it's the first album by any of the original British new wavers to fully reckon with recording technology in a pop song context. Though claims are now being made for Costello as a great pop writer in the tradition of Cole Porter and Noel Coward, such comparisons both underestimate and miss the point of this record's achievement. The proper antecedents of *Imperial Bedroom* are *Abbey Road* and *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, recordings in which the craft of composition is inseparable from the craft with which they are recorded, so much so that it is difficult to say where one process begins and the other leaves off.

There's a simpler way to put it: with a couple of exceptions ("Almost Blue," "You Little Fool") you need not expect many cover versions of these superbly constructed songs, because Costello's method of writing them isn't limited to staff paper. Like all the greatest writers of the rock era, he makes use of every technological facility available to him (kudos here to producer Geoff Emerick—one shudders to think what Nick Lowe's sonic ineptitude might have done to such sophisticated music): Steve Nieve's marvelous piano and organ playing; Costello's nasal vocal delivery; Emerick's mixes in which the voice and keyboard float around one another, like characters in dialogue; and the full orchestral scoring on several numbers are part of the bedrock conceptions of the songs.

Additionally, there is Costello's use of aural montage—not just segues *between* songs, as on *East Side Story*, the Costello-produced Squeeze LP, but fade-ins and -outs *within* songs, the most intelligent extension of such ideas since the aforementioned Beatles albums. There's nothing radical about what Costello is doing here—which may signify one of his limitations—but he's picking up the threads that have been left dangling for the better part of a decade. In its ability to fuse pop structure and aural ambition, without sinking to the cliches of Asia-level art-rock, *Imperial Bedroom* is just this side of awesome.

Nevertheless, Costello remains on the far side of paradise. His ambitions may be the equal of the Beatles, but his abilities aren't. Most insurmountably, where the Beatles were blessed with two great singers and a competent one, Costello has taken a half-dozen albums to perfect a style that's more-or-less listenable. Secondly, where the Beatles' (or any great artist's) vision is expansive—always extending the personal—the essence of Costello's style is contraction, spotting the personal elements in universal situations and proceeding to pore over these details obsessively. One reason my favorite Costello record remains *Armed Forces* is that that was the last time he seemed prepared to tackle the world at large, rather than addressing a cult. Maybe this is an inherent problem for a humanist misanthrope like Costello (as it sometimes was for a misanthrope humanist like John Lennon), but in the end, it's easier to excuse his lack of generosity than to forgive it. There's something a bit mean about Costello—symbolized by his first-ever lyric sheet, included with this album, being printed in an utterly unreadable form—that limits his work.

There are all kinds of allusions to the Beatles here, from musical paraphrases to the sing-song "P.S. I Love You," at the end of "Pidgin English" (and Emerick, of course, cut his engineering spurs working with *that* band), but Costello lacks the panoramic vision that could contain that ambition, and make it something more than a clever exercise. *Imperial Bedroom* deserves to be honored for its technical triumphs, and for its share of memorable songs ("Shabby Doll," "You Little Fool," ". . .and in Every Home," "Man Out of Time," "Pidgin English"). Yet it can't really be compared fairly to *Sgt. Pepper's* or any of rock's other masterpieces; in the end, *Imperial Bedroom* is an Eighties rendition of Love's *Forever Changes*: music that is truly timeless and unfortunately trivial.

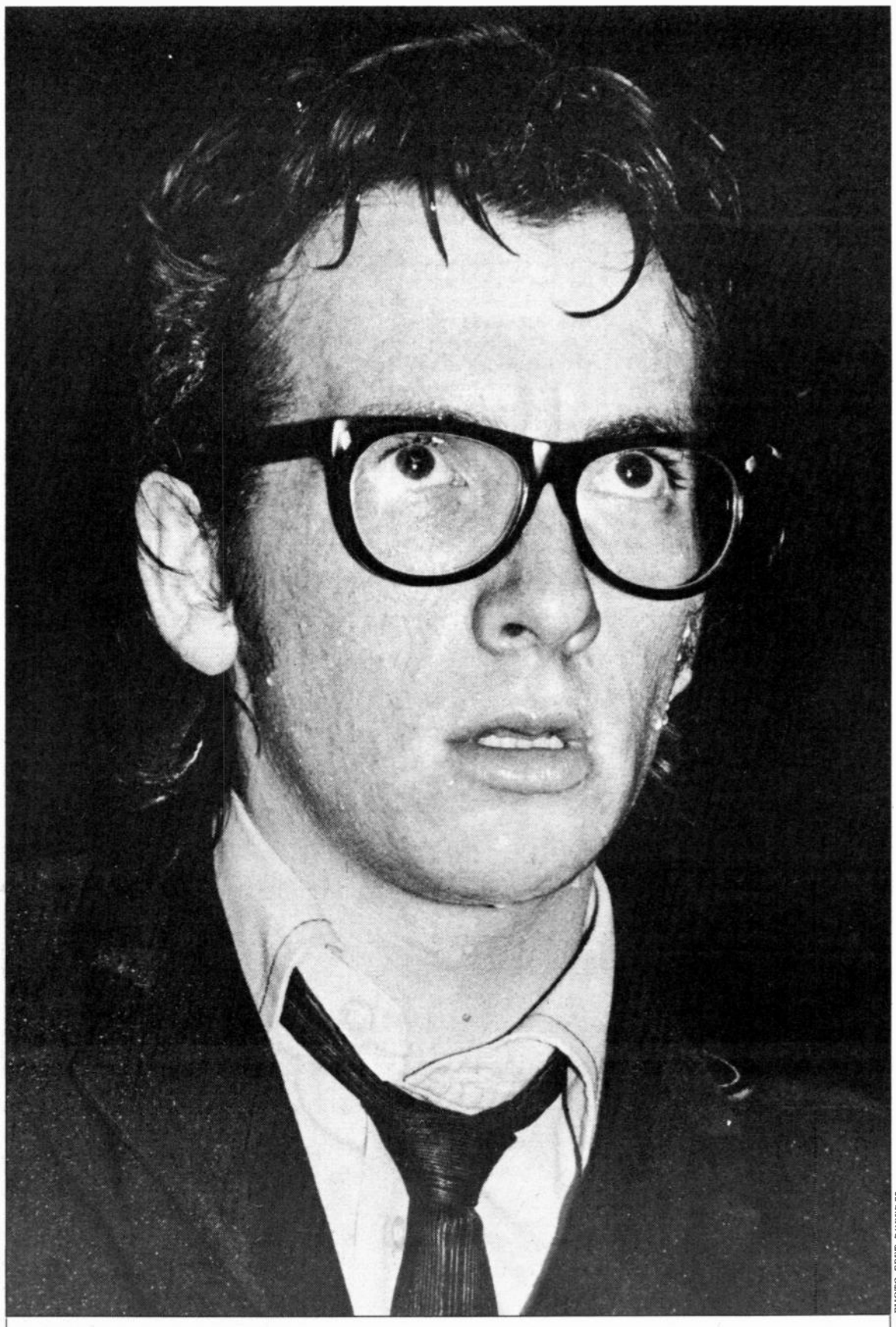


PHOTO EBET ROBERTS

Elvis's Studio Masterpiece: Timeless And Trivial Music

Revenge Will Come
Greg Copeland
Geffen

By J.D. Considine

Somewhere between the third and fourth eager replays of this stunning debut, it occurred to me that one of the miracles being worked before my very ears was the revitalization of the "L.A. Sound." The songs were subtle but taut, baring their teeth with an amiability that was anything but mellow; the singing, straightforward and assured, carried the easy twang and measured cadences of country & western without the slightest hint of cornpone; the perspective was distinctly personal yet without seeming to have tumbled out the confessional door. In short, Greg Copeland undoes in ten songs what a decade of studio flatulence has wrought upon the ideals of Gram Parsons.

Then again, reaffirming ideals seems to be a principal concern of Copeland's. Again and again, the songs on *Revenge Will Come* tell of the troubles that follow the betrayal of right for convenience, whether through the profiteering of a slumlord or the bloodlust of a vengeful killer. Taken as generalities, Copeland's harangues seem oddly moralistic—he champions divine justice to the point of dismissing its mortal equivalent, something which initially makes his outlaw sagas seem strangely unbalanced—but taken apiece, these songs form a statement of such unblinking power that comparisons to *A Pilgrim's Progress* are hardly out of line.

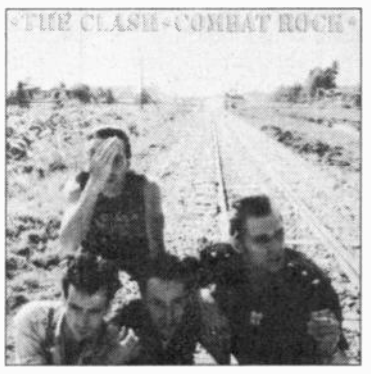
More accurate, though, would be a linkage between Copeland and the novelist Charles Williams, for like Williams, Copeland is firmly grounded in the vagaries of modern living. After describing the squalor of life among migrant farmworkers in Eagleston, Texas, where drugs seem like the only means to freedom in a town dominated by Air Force commerce, Copeland observes,

Satan the devil
he's got hundreds of names
Africa's hungry
Asia's in flames
Nobody cares what the devil has done out in the trailers in Eagleston.

The juxtaposition of scale is frightening, and that's the point. To Copeland's mind, it seems that the evils we could abate and haven't are far worse than those commonly considered to be "major problems."

Where Copeland is most effective is in bringing this sense of personal morality home with a wallop. His plain-speaking ballad delivery allows him plenty of leeway for sermonizing, but somehow his zingers are always given a rock and roll treatment. Take the way he drives home his notion of justice on "Used" by remarking that trying to lock up corrupt judges misses the point because "They've got to die sometime/And prison time moves slow"—then stops dead for four bars of pregnant silence before kicking back in with the basic pulse. Or revel in the anti-suburban, anti-materialist stomp of "Full Cleveland" as Copeland turns one of rock's favorite cliches on its head: "You'd just kill to let the good times roll."

While it would be misrepresenting *Revenge Will Come* to call it a party album, there is a certain sense of release behind Copeland's righteous rock, the kind of release few moralists can muster. Granted, a certain amount of that has to be credited to the cast of crack session players assembled by producer Jackson Browne; but the overall sense of purpose and unremitting drive seem to belong to Copeland alone, and it's that energy which ignites the ideas he puts forth. That he can give his messages not only substance but palpable dynamism is what, above all, makes *Revenge Will Come* essential listening.



Combat Rock
Clash
Epic

By Christopher Hill

It's been a mighty long way down rock 'n' roll for the Clash. Coming on in the beginning like a London bred MC5—smart and self aware, yet with working class connections that kept a sharp functional edge on their art—the Clash have wandered into a world of rock star girlfriends, personality crises in Paris, "Clash Clothes" and the cosmopolitan smorgasbord of styles heard on *Combat Rock*.

With *Sandinista*, it appeared that the Clash's reach was exceeding their grasp. Like the Beatles at mid-career, the Clash had allowed themselves to be made arbiters of modernism. It was never a question of overfed artistic egos: the Clash have little of the typical rock 'n' roll urge toward self-aggrandizement. Rather, one senses that in their earnestness and modesty, the "only band that matters" label became something to be lived up to rather than down. The effort to maintain this role has withered the resources of the best bands, and the Clash unfortunately, are not immune.

Though the single album format of *Combat Rock* curbs some of the scattershot eclecticism of *Sandinista*, the songs still reveal a band, for better or for worse, gone international in lifestyle. Both "Shaun Flynn" and "Straight To Hell" take us to Southeast Asia, using quiet oriental atmospherics to—cryptically—explore the price of war and peace. "Rock The Casbah" hides some ideological problems beneath its jolly English music hall satire of Islamic fundamentalists. Where the Clash has been known to deplore the world-wide spread of western culture, here they make a unique exception for rock 'n' roll—using the broadest of stereotypes to parody the militant Muslims' distaste for western pop. Are the Clash aware of the implicit double-standard here?

Mostly, though, *Combat Rock* is a view from the States, returning again and again to images of New York City and Hollywood. The album's confusing blend of inspiration and affectation is seen most clearly in the songs that stem from this obsession. "The Ghetto Defendent" may come from Brixton, but the feel is Harlem. The band finds the hypnotic, harp-haunted groove, and a chorus—" 'Ghetto Defendent' it is heroin pity! not tear gas nor baton charges that stops you taking the city"—that's both provocative and, thanks to Joe Strummer's poignant reading, a powerful hook. But then, inexplicably, they blow it, with embarrassing Noble Savage lyrics about "the ghetto prince of gutter poets" and a dumbfoundingly banal rap by Allen Ginsberg.

"Overpowered By Funk," "Death Is A Star," "Innoculated City" follow a similar pattern—a smattering of good ideas getting lost among fashionable unintelligible conceits. In all this polyglot, one looks for a genuine Clash voice.

You can find it in their jokes, for humor is still a key to this band's soul. "Should I Stay Or Should I Go" is a high-spirited tribute to vintage, dumb garage-band-rock, the band bellowing the choruses in Spanish like a bunch of frat cats trashing Tijuana on spring break. "Atom Tan" highlights Strummer's lovely amalgam of Cockney sputter and Dylanesque insinuation, as he leads his yowling backup singers in precise and rousing choruses. The jittery guitar and ominous piano rumbling of "Know Your Rights" are themselves wry comments on Strummer's indignant delivery.

Combat Rock documents a band at the nexus where radical vision and trend-hopping cross. Along with the Clash's broader scope has come the danger of becoming just one more rootless major rock act, their global committedness degenerating in dilettantism. It's not a unique dilemma; and the Clash's best work offers hope that they'll yet meet it with a unique response.

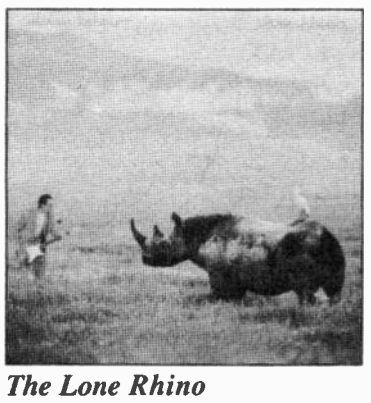
Pictures at Eleven
Robert Plant
Swan Song

By J.D. Considine

Everybody knew that sooner or later one of the surviving members of Led Zeppelin would turn up with an album of insta-Zep to cash in on the unwavering devotion of fans who'll probably still be writing John Bonham's name in rock polls five years from now. Jimmy Page has passed on his option, choosing instead to turn musicianly and write soundtracks; John Paul Jones was essentially invisible in the original and therefore would probably never come any closer than, say, Detective; and that leaves us with Robert Plant, whose astringent bellow and blues mannerisms have never been successfully imitated anyway.

Still, bands do not live by a voice alone, and perhaps the most significant point in *Pictures at Eleven*'s favor is that everything from the slowed-down tempi to the drum mix feels like Led Zeppelin. Yet at the same time, there's enough difference that the similarities never seem forced; Plant paints with large strokes, so that as much as "Slow Dancer" captures the thudding groove of a Zep stoned-rocker, there's no attempt to approximate the intense detail Page would have given the guitar tracks or the sweeping breadth Jones would have infused. Instead, Plant sets up a basic outline, defines parameters for the band, and lets his voice do the rest.

Although to tell the truth, it's really his production know-how that shines through. Robbie Blunt is no Jimmy Page, but thanks to similar licks and identical tone you'd never know; ditto drummers Phil Collins and Cozy Powell, whose pro forma thrashings roll out of the mix sounding like Bonzo Bonham himself. In fact, the illusion is so well-worked it's tempting to resent it just on principle—except that by keeping to the rules Plant has turned in an album that's more consistent than *Presence* and every bit as listenable as *In Through the Out Door*. Granted, such effortless triumph of form over content doesn't speak too well of Zepomania in the first place, but if you worried about that sort of thing you probably never got past the first album.



The Lone Rhino
Adrian Belew
Island

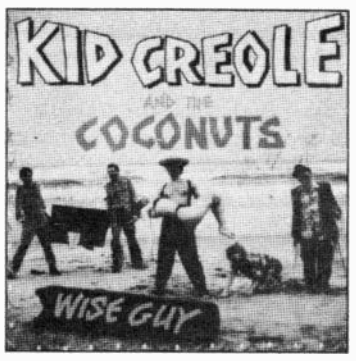
By Jonathan Gregg

Adrian Belew's first solo album almost delivers on the promise the guitarist showed during his apprenticeship with Frank Zappa, David Bowie, the 1980's Talking Heads safari and the current edition of King Crimson. Ultimately, though, *The Lone Rhino* too overtly and too often points up the debt Belew owes to his former employers.

Thus, "The Momur," "Swingline" and "Adidas In Heat" echo Zappa's quirky, fill-ridden style; "Stop It" is lifted from Bowie's "Watch That Man;" and many of the vocals bear the distinctive idiosyncrasies of David Byrne. Coupled to a songwriting style that often tends towards bombastic simplicity, these elements sometimes fall together in an uncomfortable fusion not as great as the sum of its parts.

There are many good moments, though, particularly when Belew's humorously offbeat lyrics explore the wild life of the urban jungle ("The Momur," "Big Electric Cat," "Animal Grace"). Best of all is the title track, a dignified, lumbering tribute to a rhinoceros in a zoo which has a melancholy charm uncommon to the other numbers here. Belew's chameleon-like guitar textures inhabit every crevice, producing effects ranging from bagpipes to rhinoceri.

Like a skillful lighting technician, Adrian Belew can conjure up a variety of moods. But texture is one thing and substance another; while "Naive Guitars" (a spectral weaving of guitar and guitar synthesizer) strikes a blow for the latter, one is still left wishing the artist would stick to one sound long enough to make a more provocative personal statement.

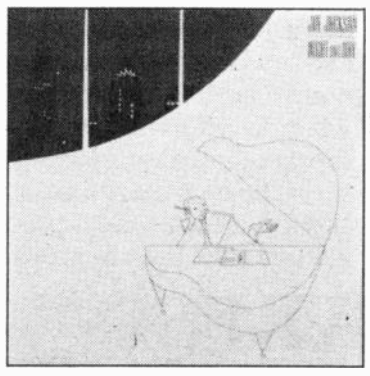


Wise Guy
Kid Creole and the Coconuts
Ze/Sire

By Vince Aletti

Kid Creole's last album, *Fresh Fruit in Foreign Places*, was a wildly ambitious, typically eccentric bit of personal and musical myth-making that cast the Kid (producer/composer/vocalist August Darnell, formerly with the Savannah Band) as a zoot-suited Odysseus on a knockabout, island-hopping journey in search of his elusive girlfriend Mimi. Conceived as the score for an as-yet-unrealized Broadway show, *Fresh Fruit* was a manic melodrama, a frenzied farce—and a wonderful record: witty, smart, subtle, brash, and so rich with allusions (musical and otherwise) that it was difficult to digest on one hearing. *Wise Guy* is an attempt to continue this modern mythology with a footnote and flashback to the odyssey (what is this, *Ulysses II*?) that finds Kid and crew shipwrecked in B'Dilli Bay, an island "where crime is the only passport and RACE MUSIC the only way out." If this intricate conceit isn't distracting enough, it should also be noted that *Wise Guy* was originally planned as an August Darnell solo album, "Coconutized" at the last minute with the addition of one cut by KC co-conspirator Andy Hernandez, and released to much dissenting comment from within the group. Knowing this, and the fact that Darnell regards *Wise Guy*'s r&b slant as such a "compromise" that he had to concoct the B'Dilli Bay scenario ("RACE MUSIC the only way out") to justify it, could easily dampen one's initial enthusiasm for the album. But listen: forget all this.

As with nearly every other concept album in existence, it really isn't necessary to know the theme to get the music. And since Darnell is awfully vague about the connections between the eight songs here—as opposed to the twelve songs on *Fresh Fruit*, which were all clearly, if whimsically, tied to the tale—it's easier to pretend a narrative doesn't exist and go on from there. The form is, after all, as loose and zany as one of those Bob Hope *Road* movies and the punch lines zing by fast and furious. Darnell is one of the most consistently clever lyricists working in any genre, with a fine sense of the absurd and an ear for twisted cliche, wacky rhyme, and jazzy double entendre. His songs are playful and street smart, with a sharp satiric edge that keeps them biting and taut. Just right for his dense, allusive arrangements, sliding through musical styles with abandon and delight. If *Wise Guy* is more conscious of pop r&b commerciality than previous Kid Creole albums, Darnell's "compromise" would be barely discernible to the average Commodores or Rick James fan. His rhythm mix—from reggae, calypso, big band bop and salsa to every variant of r&b—may not sound as startling or as radical as it once did, but it still sounds like no one else on record. Not surprisingly, the album's most commercial cut, "I'm a Wonderful Thing, Baby," is one of the freshest songs on the radio right now. An egotistic boast that never takes itself seriously, "Wonderful Thing" follows no formula, breaks lots of rules, and carries it off in an utterly idiosyncratic style. "Girl, I'm at my peak/And that's a fact," Darnell brags in his scratchy, insinuating voice. I suspect he hasn't actually reached that peak, but *Wise Guy* offers a dizzying panorama of the ascent.



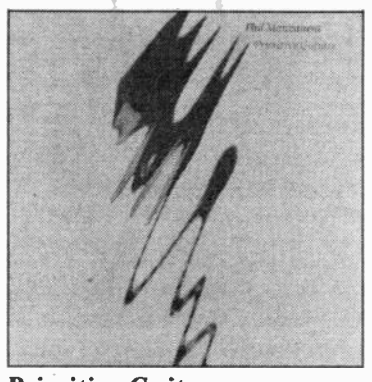
Night And Day
Joe Jackson
A&M

By Wayne King

Joe Jackson's been doing some more time travelling, it seems. Last year's *Jumpin' Jive* had everyone asking that '40s big band musical question, "Where's the action, Jackson?" With *Night and Day*, Joe's gone uptown to the plush setting of an even earlier time. As the cover drawing shows, Joe is now coming on as a George Gershwin/Cole Porter type. Yet this is no new sound that he's simply dabbling in. *Night And Day* returns the man to his roots, takes him back to his days as a cocktail lounge pianist. By integrating this style with some solid modern songwriting, Jackson has come up with the most comfortable and heartfelt music of his career.

This vaguely programmatic record can be looked upon as Jackson's equivalent to Gershwin's "An American In Paris." *Night And Day* shows the Big City, New York, from the viewpoint of a cynical '80s Englishman. The first side's songs run together and are linked by the sounds and beat (mostly Spanish, conveniently supplying Jackson with a wealth of strong piano rhythms) that dominate the city. It's a bleak picture he paints, one every bit as desperate as an urban artist's dead-of-night graffiti attack on the subway yards. Even on the brighter songs, there remains circumscription: *There's always something breaking us in two/everything gives you cancer*. Jackson's usual measure of bitterness is here, and he still spends too much time setting up and knocking down such easy targets as television.

For the first time, though, he's offered hope to himself (and therefore us). The "Night" side's closer, "Steppin' Out," is a harbinger with its loping, uplifting rhythm of the sunlight that peeks through a bit on the "Day" side. And with "A Slow Song," he gathers all the music's romantic qualities into one majestic statement. The protagonist here begs the DJ to play a slow one so that he and his new love can have *one more dance and/leave here with an understanding*. That might sound like a good old rock 'n' roll story, but it's not, because he asks for the soft number after being *brutalized by bass and terrorized by treble*. No matter—if, like Elvis Costello on *Almost Blue*, Jackson has used another medium to allow vulnerability into his work, so be it. What counts is that the battle in his heart and music rages on.



Primitive Guitars
Phil Manzanera
Editions EG

By Michael Shore

Virtually alone (John Wetton plays bass on one cut), Phil Manzanera has crafted one of the most challenging and satisfying of ambient albums. Like the best of genre (Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Eno, Robert Fripp's guitar/tape-loop Frippertronics), *Primitive Guitars* may be mood music suspended somewhere between foreground and background, but it's well worth the listener's attention.

What makes *Primitive Guitars* work so well is its *tension*, a tingly contrast between the muted mood on the surfaces of these nine pieces, and the dark power brooding in the shadows. Much of the time, Manzanera uses massed, percussively strummed acoustic guitars for both rhythm and texture; on "Criollo" and "Caracas" they take on a distinct Latin flavor, harking back to Manzanera's South American homeland. But the pastoral tone colors inevitably give way, through overlapping echo and sheer whiplash intensity, to staggered syncopation and edgy rhythms. At crucial moments (on "Ritmo de Los Angeles," "Impossible Guitar" and "Big Dome") the artist erupts into gripping, lyrical solos in his classic style, with a burnished fuzz-tone and keening sustain—sort of like Santana fried around the edges. Much of *Primitive Guitars* is cerebral, but just as much of it is weirdly danceable, and none of it is as facile as the accomplished art-rock on Manzanera's solo albums.

Street Opera
Ashford & Simpson
Capitol

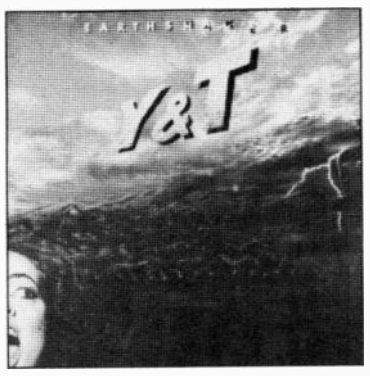
By Michael Goldberg

An album of sophisticated soul from Nick Ashford and his wife, Valerie Simpson, *Street Opera* is more than just a collection of immaculate songs that recall the Motown Sound of the '60s: side two of this album is a concept piece, "Street Opera," composed of a four-song love suite that manages to wrap romance around the trials and tribulations of surviving in the '80s.

The "Street Opera" half of the album is a gorgeous showcase for Ashford & Simpson's singing, songwriting and production talents. The story describes the plight of a "Working Man" played by Ashford who is snowed under by his job, can't make enough money to support the family, and believes he must leave them. In "Who Will They Look To," Simpson, playing his "Woman," counters with a melodramatic song in which she wonders just who her children will look up to and learn from if their father is gone. "You don't know how it is," sings a tormented Ashford. "You don't know how many tears a man cried." Replies Simpson: "I do know, I do care, I understand what's out there."

"Street Corner," the duo's funky soul hit, describes what the "Working Man" is up against in the real world: hookers and dope dealers tempt him like Sirens as they call from the street corner. The final song, a majestic piece that recalls "Ain't No Mountain High Enough," finds man and woman resolved to stay together, despite their problems.

This is certainly an overly dramatic tale, yet the spectacular vocal blend that Ashford & Simpson create, as well as the contrast between Simpson's tough lead vocals and Ashford's occasional falsetto, are truly gripping. Though side two's concept dominates this album, side one contains four terrific love songs—and as another prominent tunesmith once asked, "What's wrong with that?"



Earthshaker
Y&T
A&M

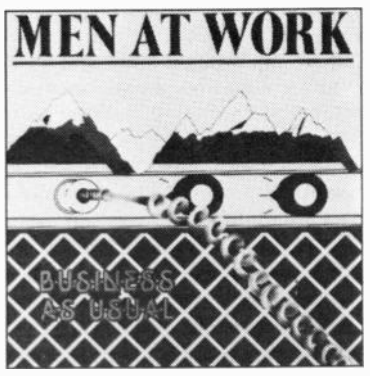
By Mark Mehler

Y&T is a 10-year-old Oakland, California quartet formerly known as Yesterday & Today. The current emphasis is on the former—it'd be hard to believe that the band has changed a thing since 1972.

Y&T trods the familiar ground of post-Clapton, formula blues rock, marked by hotly mixed guitars, strutting, posturing vocals and heavy-handed drumming. Though the group claims to be playing heavy metal rock, the Top 40 hook is paramount. Only three cuts— "Squeeze," "Hurricane" and "Knock You Out"—sublimate melody and verse for loud, manic blasts.

Lead vocalist/guitarist Dave Meniketti has the vibrato to reach the cheap seats and enough speed and flash to impress Jimmy Page fans. The rhythm section of Phil Kennemore (bass) and Leonard Haze (drums) keeps pumping, while Joey Alves offers some neat turns on acoustic guitar.

Yesterday & Today recorded two LPs in the '70s. Whether Y&T gets a second chance may depend on the public's appetite for rock nostalgia.



Business As Usual
Men at Work
Columbia

By Mark Mehler

On the song "Down Under," Men at Work explore the problem of being an Australian rock band: "Do you come from a land down under?/where women glow and men plunder/can't you hear, can't you hear the thunder/you better run, you better take cover."

The thunder is the sound of a hundred bar bands seeking recording contracts. Men at Work made it out of Melbourne's inner city because they did not join in the noise, but rather fashioned a pop sound unlike anything being exported from that continent.

Their writing is dry and witty, their melodies often haunting; and the use of saxophone and flute to create mood is a major bonus. *Business As Usual* is an impressive debut from a band in only its third year of existence.

Among the highlights are "Down Under," a reggaeish rocker featuring Greg Ham's playful flute; "Down By The Sea," a rock chanty which tugs at the heart via Ham's saxophone; and "People Just Love To Play With Words," a children's song with a subtext out of Elvis Costello's library of pain.

Colin Hay, vocalist and chief writer, guitarist Ron Strykert, and Ham are those most responsible for bringing this Tasmanian experience to America. Finally, an Australian sensibility not measured in decibels.

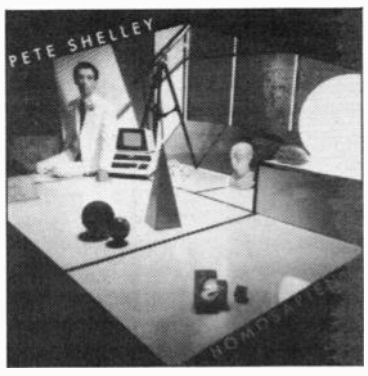
Built For Speed
Stray Cats
EMI-America

By Barry Alfonso

Unlike their U.S. neo-rockabilly counterparts, the Blasters, New York's Stray Cats seem less intent in keeping '50s rock styles alive than in appropriating them for their own punkish ends. Granted, the likes of Gene Vincent and Eddie Cochran were rebels of their time, but a line like "Your hair's all greasy and you feel like a slob" (from the Cats' "Runaway Boys") is a bit too raw to come from most traditional 'billies. I don't think the Stray Cats will ever end up fat and playing Vegas like You-Know-Who did.

The best tracks on *Built For Speed* (largely a compilation album drawn from the band's two British LPs) bristle with youthful ferocity. Vocalist Brian Setzer can sound celebratory ("Jeannie, Jeannie, Jeannie"), menacing ("Rumble In Brighton") or supremely cool ("Stray Cat Strut"). Backing up the swagger is his deft guitar work, sounding two parts Scotty Moore to one part George Thorogood. The rhythm section of Slim Jim and Lee Rocker jumps with appropriate snap.

Not all the tunes are up to snuff here—the title track, for one, isn't very convincing. For the most part, though, this is Class A rock, with or without the -abilly attached.



Pete Shelley
Homosapien
Arista Records

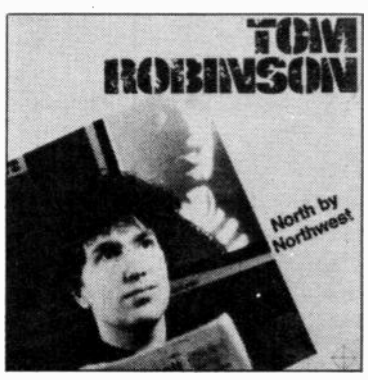
By David Keeps

Pete Shelley is a transformer. As principal songsmith for the now-defunct Buzzocks, he grafted singalong hooks and choruses onto noisy punk rock to create a string of hit singles in his native England. Now, on this solo debut, he blends '60s pop melodics with disco staples to forge a rock hybrid for the '80s.

Homosapien is a solo LP in its strictest definition—just Shelley's twangy guitar and voice in concert with automated keyboards and percussion sounds that do more than go blip and whoosh in the night. Freed by technology, he explores a broad range of moods and musical genres, which results in a more human, individual sound than attitude-mongering electropoppers like the Human League.

When he aims for the feet, Shelley conjures up compelling dance numbers like the propulsive "Homosapien" and its vibrant soundalike "I Don't Know What It Is." But there's also the wry honky-tonk synthaboogie of "Just One Of Those Affairs," and the Eastern mantra-cum-yodels of "I Generate A Feeling." Shelley's nasal voice lacks neither soul nor conviction, conveying every nuance of emotion from wistfulness to passion.

Although the title track has the classic sexual ambiguity of "Lola" and "Walk On The Wild Side," Shelley's aim is clearly not titillation. While he often acts the romantic fool, he is never less than compassionate and humane: "I don't want to classify you like an animal in a zoo...you're a homosapien too."



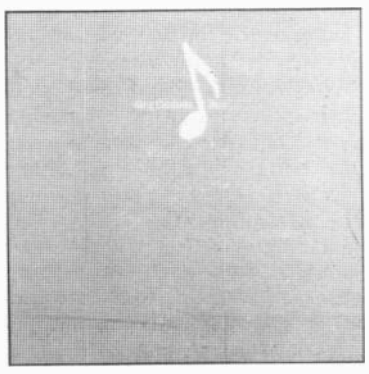
North By Northwest
Tom Robinson
IRS

By Wayne King

Tom Robinson has always been easier to respect for the intelligence and articulation he's shown in dealing with the press than for his artistry. *North By Northwest* does nothing to alter that impression; once again, he's failed to come up with a musical form as charismatic and clever as his own personality.

Recording in Germany on an eight-track machine, Robinson's intentions were to use simpler technology and production techniques to come up with a self-sufficient style. But the record is hindered by these limitations; the sound is consistent throughout, but its impact is muffled. Robinson's monotone singing has appeal but can't quite convey the urgency needed as counterpoint to the music. The entire experimental tone of the project seems more a matter of circumstance than artistic necessity, a feeling furthered by the number of leftover and collaborative compositions. There's one cover version, four tunes written with members of his last band—Sector 27—and two done with Peter Gabriel, with no hint of any new development. Most of the songs are sketches—often obscure—of recent personal events delivered without the kind of transcendent performance that might make them relevant or communicate their impact on Robinson.

Even after repeated listenings, Tom Robinson's talents cannot penetrate the awkwardness of *North By Northwest*. If he had already established powerful and recognizable stylistic concerns, the lighter, constricted feel of the album might impress one as a meaningful if minor exploration. But an artist still searching for ways to impart more of himself has to outline a musical profile more personal and direct than *North By Northwest*.



Beat
King Crimson
Warner Bros/E.G. Records

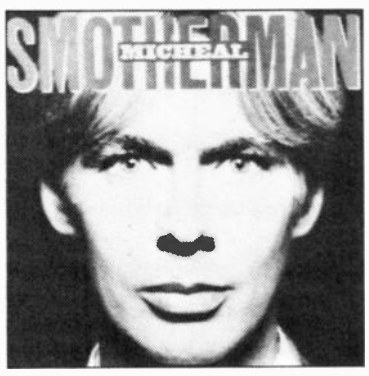
By J.C. Costa

On the first pass, *Beat* is a cool, lucid shot of musical intelligence in a sodden summer full of art rock reruns and housewife heavy metal music. King Crimson's precisely tuned instrumental gifts allow them to simultaneously probe deeper into the dark night of electronic improvisation, while offering up several ballads ("Heartbeat," "Two Hands") that could nestle comfortably on any AOR playlist.

And while *Beat* carries on Crimson's intricate signature ensemble passages and contrapuntal rhythms from last year's *Discipline*, there is enough here for a wide cross section of listeners to feast on. Guitar mechanics and the technocratic elite will no doubt be drawn to the blazing guitar/guitar synth rave-ups between Belew and Fripp on "The Howler" and "Requiem," definitive examples of electronic meltdown which provide the kind of free-form "indulgence" that Fripp fans have long been calling for.

Which brings us to a basic point about *Beat*: everybody seems willing to let it all hang out. Fripp plays more pure guitar than he has in years. Belew's lyrics, especially on "Neurotica" (an offhanded piss-take on the daily blur of the modern world), are both light and pointed; on love songs like "Two Hands" (surreal lyrics courtesy of Margaret Belew) Belew is naked and vulnerable, his lush, occasionally overripe vocals supported by his glass cathedral Stratocaster and Fripp's surprisingly sweet counter-melodies. Belew's voice and guitar—not to mention his wonderfully direct and consciously innocent way of looking at life—plays a crucial role in connecting all the elemental textures within the band.

At this point, Crimson is developing a healthy inner tension between concept and execution, stretching the limits of their collective potential as improvisers. Bruford, still resolutely complex and precise in his pursuit of the elliptical beat, shows signs of becoming . . . *funky*. The delicate percussive harmonies of his Simmons electronic drums and Tony Levin's sublime, supportive presence on Stick in the opening section of "Waiting Man" is a perfect example of the incidental musical smarts which immediately distinguishes Crimson from others flatulating under the guise of art rock or avant-garde music.



Michael Smotherman
Epic

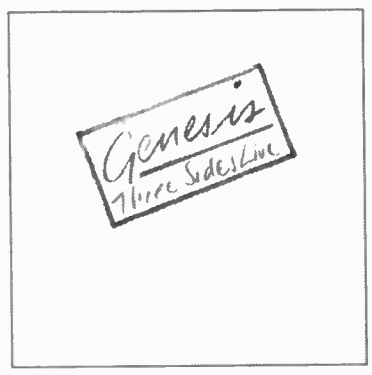
By Charles Paikert

Michael Smotherman's self-titled debut album is, at various times, odd, touching, quirky, engaging, affected, rollicking and sometimes even rocking.

Smotherman demands to be taken on his own terms. While this position is admirable in an age of formula songs, it's also risky. For this artist it's riskier still, because he's so eclectic. On some songs he employs Cajun-style polyrhythms, others come close to being simple folk ballads, while still others are in a Billy Joel pop-rock vein.

Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. At his best ("Cold Burn" and "Fais Do Do," for example), Smotherman combines original, engaging lyrics with a forceful, rhythmic underpinning; at other times, Smotherman can be both trite and pretentious, and that's when the music falls flatter than a collapsed soufflé.

All things being equal, Smotherman's debut is most memorable for one great song, "Do I Ever Cross Your Mind," co-written with Billy Burnette. Here Smotherman applies the full, rich textures of his voice to a haunting tale of lost love that's given only minimal accompaniment. It's sincere without being sentimental, and effectively showcases Smotherman's strengths both as a writer and a vocalist. Here's hoping he builds on these next time around.



Three Sides Live
Genesis
Atlantic

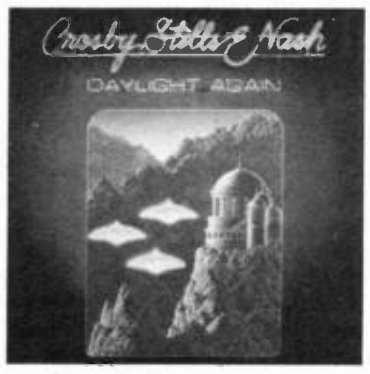
By Nick Burton

For the most part, *Three Sides Live* is nothing more than a souvenir of Genesis' 1981 tour, complete with many of their most popular tunes of the last few years ("Turn It On Again," "ABACAB," "Follow You, Follow Me," etc.). The songs are performed with Genesis' usual sophistication, and Phil Collins does a fine job of filling out the vocal work. In other words, it's fairly typical.

Of the live tracks, "In The Cage" is without question the best moment on the album. It's a rather speedy version of the song (from *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*) that segues into the majestic mid-section of "The Cinema Show" (from *Selling England By The Pound*) which in turn shifts into the instrumental break of "The Colony of Slippermen" (another *Lamb* track). The way the band slips and slides its way through this medley is a marvel, with Tony Banks proving that there is indeed room for tasteful synthesizer playing in pop music.

The album's fourth side is comprised of studio material, most of it very good. "Paperlate," "You Might Recall" and "Me and Virgil" are outtakes from the *ABACAB* sessions which subsequently found their way onto an English EP called *3 × 3*. "Paperlate" again features the Earth, Wind and Fire horns, and the song has a pleasant top 40 feel. Both "You Might Recall" and "Me and Virgil" benefit from Mike Rutherford's jangling 12-string guitar work. The fourth side's best tracks are Tony Banks' "Evidence of Autumn," and Rutherford's "Open Door," ballads from the *Duke* sessions.

FYI: the import pressing of this album has a live fourth side, featuring "The Fountain of Salmacis" (from *Nursery Cryme*) as well as a medley of "It" and "Watcher of the Skies" with Steve Hackett and Bill Bruford on hand.



Daylight Again
Crosby, Stills and Nash
Atlantic

By Wayne King

It shouldn't have to be pointed out that this is 1982, and a "group" releasing its third record in 13 years needs to prove itself again, especially since the California cultural scene that spawned it doesn't dominate the charts or hearts of today's audiences as in days of old. But Crosby, Stills and Nash are dissipating the good will engendered by past performances by releasing a record which, in the here and now, has little relevancy and exhibits virtually no signs of life. *Daylight Again* contains a few harmless Graham Nash numbers, including the obligatory "Our House" rewrite, "Song For Susan," while a seemingly-spent David Crosby checks in with one inconsequential tune of his own. The only surprise the album holds is a revitalized Stephen Stills, whose contributions total six, five of which are co-written. All are his usual assemblage of cliches, but just writing that many songs seemed beyond the man in recent, burned-out years. Yet even if these tracks had any strength of their own, none would break through the warmed-over production. Minus the spontaneity and quirks that a Neil Young can add, the end result is all studio, with the overdubbed construction of the sound working against the harmony that's supposed to be the foundation of CS&N's art.

There is one poignant moment here. The very last lines on the record, a reprise of *Four Way Street*'s "Find The Cost of Freedom," finds their voices joined by that of Art Garfunkel. Together, they ache and strain to produce the harmonies that once came, like their former success, so easy. If the same effort and honesty had appeared throughout *Daylight Again*, one might actually believe something could have come from the reunion. As it stands, there's simply too great a lack of care and thought demonstrated here to give one much hope.

The Other Woman
Ray Parker, Jr.
Arista

By Nelson George

At his best, as on last year's *A Woman Needs Love*, Ray Parker, Jr. is a suave veteran of the singles scene, spinning tales of lust and love with lecherous humor. Unfortunately, *The Other Woman* lacks the musical assurance and cutesy lyrical turns of his previous albums. This LP's deficiencies are most apparent when contrasted with the strengths of its two best songs, "The Other Woman" and "Stop, Look Before You Love."

The title cut is infectious pop-rock with a cooing girl chorus and Parker's droll phrasing giving the old "I fell in love with the other woman" routine a nice, sardonic edge. "Stop" features Parker's admirable mix of debauchery and deadpan vocalizing over an appropriately mellow mid-tempo rhythm.

The rest of the songs here suffer from the fatal combination of bad writing ("Street Love" is the son of "Other Woman") and lousy execution ("Let's Get Off," "Let Me Go"). One hopes *The Other Woman* is merely a one-night stand of mediocrity for this talented guitarist-writer-producer, and not the start of a lengthy affair.

Defying Gravity
The Sherbs
Atco

By Mark Mehler

Though this is only their second U.S. release, the Sherbs have been a major group in Australia—under the monicker Sherbert—for a decade. Thus, they've had plenty of time to hone their style of melodramatic, heavily-synthesized pop-rock.

Defying Gravity, a specially-priced, six-song mini-LP produced by the band and the appropriately-named Richard Lush, emphasizes the lead vocals of Daryl Braithwaite, an emotive, reasonably appealing singer. Mixing the vocals so hot, however, has the unfortunate side effect of accentuating the lyrics, which are insipid, even for music that seems equally influenced by Yes, Journey and Tom Jones.

The band's worst excesses can be heard on "Don't Throw It Away" and "We Can Make It," a pair of hand-wringing, overwrought tunes totally unsupported by the weight of the material. By contrast, "We Ride Tonight" is a neat uptempo anthem, while "I'm Alive" is a rather unpretentious British-style rocker.

Mostly, though, *Defying Gravity* is slick mood music that defies neither gravity nor pop convention.

Words From The Front
Tom Verlaine
Warner Bros.

By Roy Trakin

Tom Verlaine's third post-Television solo LP is a relaxed, free-floating work in which the artist playfully constructs sand castles, then astutely observes the ocean tide washing them away. This may well be sappy solipsism, but it also begs an important question: are Verlaine's nagging neuroses finally becoming unblocked, or is he trying to take advantage of the lack of audience expectations at this point in his career?

Whatever the case, *Words From The Front* make it clear that Verlaine is not the next rock 'n' roll guitar hero; his music's too sparse and eccentric for that, even if both "Postcards from Waterloo" and "Words From The Front" paint their scenarios with wrenching, Neil Young-styled solos. More to the point are "Present Arrived" and "Coming Apart": both spotlight the rising-and-falling, overlapping guitar chunks which have been Verlaine's trademark since his C.B.G.B. days, but they're closer to the linear, building style of jazz than to the circular, blues-based riffing of rock.

Still further afield, "Clear It Away" juxtaposes single organ tones with short guitar notes in one of Verlaine's whimsical "Yanqui Time" conceits, while the atmospheric "Days On The Mountain" reduces everything to a percussive plunk and a drum loop echoed by a wall-of-sound guitar orchestra as a lovely acoustic-type solo chimes to fadeout. This is Tom Verlaine at his most poetic. Nevertheless, as the artist turns ever-inward, it becomes obvious that he lacks the flamboyant spirit associated with great guitar communicators, though he remains an intriguing experimenter.

Round 1
Bruzer
Handshake

By David Manners

At last, an aural argument for euthanasia. How bad is *Round 1*? Let me count the ways.

Whiney vocalist Paul Frank is without a doubt the most grating, most obnoxious singer to come down the pipe since Slade's Noddy Holder, and that's about as low-rent as they get. As for the music, it runs the gamut of heavy metal/boogie cliches which are so obvious even Molly Hatchet wouldn't touch them, to uncommonly tasteless appropriations from the worst art-rock (Ed. note: don't be redundant). As for the musicianship, all you need to know is that Bruzer's drummer is Vinnie Appice, brother of the congenitally-tasteless Carmine, who carries on the leaden, unimaginative style you'd expect from someone bearing such an illustrious surname.

Even the *proofreader* sucks! Right here on the back cover the Zildjian cymbal company's name is misspelled! What a tough break, considering Zildjian probably donated its product in return for a credit on the album jacket. But then, breathes there a soul among us who truly wants to be associated with Bruzer? The hideous answer is in the grooves.

X

Continued from page 1

the promotional backing necessary to reach a wider audience could come only from a major label. "We recorded for independent labels," Doe says matter-of-factly, "and the point was made. And when we signed with Elektra the point was made well. We've showed new bands what can be accomplished."

And that, too, is the point. Whatever musical accomplishments are in the offing, it's certain that any number of young bands have taken heart from the establishment's imprimatur on X's efforts. "The idea behind having a band is that you get the opportunity to record albums," Doe points out, "and that you get the opportunity to make music for people." Exene admits that being "darlings of the rock press" didn't hurt X's cause, but stresses that "we did a lot of touring, so I'd like to think that because of that and our music *we* deserve some of the credit for our success."

Undoubtedly so. While the pressure of recording for a major label is often severe (witness the Motels having to record two different versions of their third album) and can often prove aesthetically debilitating (at which point the music becomes formula), X has, on *Under The Big Black Sun*, adequately demonstrated its abilities while improving on its strong point: the poetic beauty and (here's that word again) blatant honesty that make theirs some of the most acutely sensitive and observant tales this side of the early Bob Dylan. The entire record is pervaded by the gloom brought on by the tragic death of Exene's sister Mary in a car accident. "Riding With Mary" and "Come Back To Me" deal directly with Exene's loss, and a number of other cuts delineate the depression and questioning of faith that occurs in the wake of such tragedies.

The album's diversity of styles has caused critics to compare X with a plethora of bands, new and old: the Clash, the Doors, the Go-Go's, Jefferson Airplane. "I've never even listened to one of their albums," a clearly-puzzled Doe says of the Airplane. He tries to figure out reasons for the two bands being compared at all, and finally comes up with an answer: "We're both white people with male and female singers, which is as close as I can come."

PHOTO LAURA LEVINE

Exene Cervenka and John Doe: One floats, the other shuffles.

Comparisons with the Doors are easier to understand. Explains Doe: "We came from L.A., we were outside the traditional music business, we had interesting or involved lyrics, Ray Manzarek produced us, and we talked about life in L.A. So, like it or not, we were the 'New Doors.' But I think the Doors were a blues-synthesis band, and we're more rock 'n' roll oriented."

And what if X's breakthrough happens in a major way? Will success spoil X? The questions give rise to a certain macabre sense of humor in the respondents.

"If this album does really good and gets into the top 10," Exene says seriously, "we're going to say, 'Let's not take planes.' "

"I think you learn from other people's mistakes," Doe suggests. "Like not taking twenty-six reds on New Year's Eve."

"Or not renting a private plane in Clear Lake, Iowa," jokes Billy Zoom. His reference to the deaths of Richie Valens, Buddy Holly and the Big Bopper, though playful and arguably in bad taste, at the same time indicates the sort of role models X fancies. "We listen to every American music that ever had soul," proclaims Doe.

The other three are equally emphatic in stating their love for American music, and particularly for the founding fathers of rock 'n' roll, some of whom they feel have been unfairly slighted. Doe finds it ironic that "Gene Vincent and Eddie Cochran are gods in England, and the Beatles and the Stones are gods here in America.

"That seems really weird to me," he says after a pause. "It's like someone who's forgotten their culture, and that's sad."

And when Doe talks about learning the lessons of history, and following in the tradition established by his American rock idols, you get the distinct feeling that, apart from the music, certain matters of the heart are in order within the band. That could be the biggest breakthrough of them all.

Furs

Continued from page 4

I think the same thing applies to us. It probably opened our eyes and ears as well. There's a lot more cultural diversity, and you don't get quite so much prejudice about different musics—all the bitching and back-biting from other bands—that you get over here. In America things take longer to get through, but they tend to last a longer time; whereas in England it's a very quick flash and it's gone. Music and fashion are very closely aligned in Britain."

So as Butler and the Furs refine their music, is it possible that the distance between sound and lyrics could be bridged so that the singer doesn't always seem to be disguising his feelings? "It's not so much disguising things," reflects Butler. "I prefer to use third person whenever I can, and use the word *you* instead of *I*, and things like that. Maybe it's not a good idea to be absolutely personal. When you're writing a song it's not necessarily something you feel yourself—it's like something you feel should be said. If you're writing a book, you're not necessarily all the characters, yet you can still recognize what a certain person would feel in a situation. All your enduring lyrics get a mood over. You'd probably stand more of a chance of people saying, 'Yes, this is about me' in terms of third person. It probably does relate slightly to my persona in that you can recognize something. And maybe if you can recognize something, you felt it."

tv & video calendar

August

Tues/24

10 AM Showtime; also 8/29 — **Viva Las Vegas** (1964) Starring Elvis Presley and Ann-Margret. One of Presley's better celluloid efforts features the excellent Doc Pomus-Mort Shuman title song as well as Presley's red-hot version of "What I'd Say." Otherwise, it's all downhill.

11:30 PM HBO also 8/26 — **The Beach Boys In Concert** The sounds of summers gone by. "Good Vibrations," "Surfin' USA," "Little Deuce Coup," ad infinitum. Inspiration may have fled this group, but there's some special magic at work here that's utterly timeless.

Thurs/26

10 AM, 12:30 AM HBO; also 8/28, 8/30 — **Johnny Cash's America** The Man in Black performs a salute to American history and traditions in a 75-minute performance taped at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Cash's wife, June Carter, also appears. Guests Steve Goodman, John Prine and Rodney Crowell lend the proceedings a certain dignity.

6 AM, 7PM Cinemax; Also 8/29, 9/1 — **No Nukes** (1980) Starring Jackson Browne, Crosby, Stills and Nash, Carly Simon, Bruce Springsteen and others. Filmed at five MUSE concerts at Madison Square Garden and an outdoor rally at Battery Park. You may want to catch 40 winks when Browne or Springsteen aren't performing.

5:30 PM Showtime; also 9/1 9/4,9/7 — **This Is Elvis** (1981) Uneven docudrama of Elvis Presley's life. Actual footage is interwoven with patently-staged scenes featuring actors who bear only the slightest resemblance to Presley.

Fri/27

10 AM Showtime; also 8/31 — **The Trouble With Girls** (1969) Starring Elvis Presley and Sheree North. Presley's last film musical. The big production number is "Clean Up Your Own Back Yard." Is this any way to treat a King?

2 AM USA Network — **Night Flight** *Take Off: Self Conscious Over You*—the rock and politics of Northern Ireland

Sat/28

8:30 AM HBO; also 8/30 — **Earth, Wind & Fire In Concert** Hour-long performance taped at the Oakland Coliseum includes the group's hits "Fantasy," "Shining Star," "Let's Groove" and "That's The Way Of The World."

4PM, 1:10 AM Showtime — **Live Dead! The Grateful Dead In Concert** Last month's Video Highlight. A 78-minute concert special recorded live at the Dead's Halloween engagement at Radio City Music Hall.

12 PM Showtime — **Breaking Glass** (1980) The old, old story—sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll—in a punk setting. Hazel O'Connor is excellent, but the rest of the movie is nowhere.

5 PM Nickelodeon; also 8/31 — **Special Delivery: The Police** The best of the new wave in concert performing "Roxanne," "So Lonely," "Born In The 1950s" and "There's A Hole In my Life."

7:30 PM Showtime; also 9/2, 9/5, 9/8, 9/13, 9/17, 9/21 — **Country Goes To England** Filmed at the 14th Annual Festival of Country Music at London's Wembley Arena, this special features some outstanding artists performing before 40,000 enthusiastic fans. Highlights include sets by Don Williams, Roy Orbison, Terri Gibbs, Jerry Lee Lewis and Billy Swan. On the downside, there's Kris Kristofferson and Mel Tillis, but no one's perfect.

11 PM MTV — **Bob Welch and Friends** Taped in concert at the Roxy Theatre in L.A., Welch is joined by Mick Fleetwood, Stevie Nicks, and Christine and John McVie.

11 PM USA Network — **Night Flight** *Take Off: ELO*—the Electric Light Orchestra and its spectacular live show from England

Sun/29

11 PM MTV — **Liner Notes: Fleetwood Mac** Interview with members of Fleetwood Mac about the making of the band's new album; also shows scenes from videos shot for promotional use with *Mirage*

Mon/30

7 AM, 8 PM Showtime; also 9/2, 9/5 — **Elvis** (1979) Starring Kurt Russell as Elvis, Shelley Winters as Gladys Presley. Fair-to-middling TV movie chronicling Presley's career up to the Las Vegas comeback years. Russell's vocals are capably dubbed by Ronnie McDowell.

September

Fri/3

11 PM MTV — **Journey In Concert** Concert taped at the Houston Summit in Texas in November, 1981. Songs include "Open Arms," "Don't Stop Believing" and other tracks from "Escape."

Sat/4

5 PM Nickelodeon — **Special Delivery: Roger Daltrey–Ride a Rock Horse** Solo performance by the Who's lead singer features concert as well as concept footage

11 PM MTV — **REO Speedwagon In Concert** Concert at McNichols Arena in Denver in July, 1981. Songs featured include hits from *Hi Infidelity*.

Sun/5

11 PM MTV — **REO Speedwagon Special** Documentary featuring new video clips from the band's latest LP, *Good Trouble*. Songs include "Keep The Fire Burnin'."

Mon/6

11 PM MTV — **Rock Spectacular** Exclusive MTV special featuring the Rolling Stones, Robert Plant, Fleetwood Mac and other special guests.

Thurs/9

5 PM Nickelodeon; also 9/11 — **Livewire** The Nuts & Bolts of Rock 'N' Roll, Part 1: inside the music business with guests Sid Bernstein, concert promoter and manager; and Bruce Harris, VP of A&R, Epic Records.

Fri/10

5 PM Nickelodeon; also 9/12 — **Livewire** The Nuts & Bolts of Rock 'N' Roll, Part 2: guests include Don Wardell of RCA Records, Triumph's Mike Levine, and WBCN (Boston) disc jockey, Oedipus.

Sat/11

11 PM MTV — **Outlaws** Premier showing of hour-long concert film shot at the Tower Theatre in Philadelphia on June 29, 1982

PHOTO: LYNN GOLDSMITH/LGI

REO Speedwagon Weekend

For those so inclined, MTV offers a weekend double-shot of REO Speedwagon in September. On the 4th, the main attraction is a concert film of REO at the McNichols Arena in Denver in July, '81; the following night, fans will get the latest news about the band's activities via documentary footage and new video clips from REO's latest release, *Good Trouble*. 11 PM, Sept. 4 and 5, MTV.

Sun/12

11 PM MTV — **Double Feature** *Quadrophenia*—a story of alienation and self-destruction based on the Who's album of the same title. The Who's original music, plus oldies by Booker T., The Cascades, James Brown, The Ronnettes and others power the story in a way no other rock soundtrack ever has. The Police's Sting appears briefly in a cameo. Also on the bill, *Roger Daltrey: Ride A Rock Horse*—solo performance by the Who's lead singer features concert as well as concept footage.

Sat/18

11 PM MTV — **April Wine Special** Concert taped in London and Toronto includes on-location footage with members of the band. Songs include "Sign of the Gypsy Queen" and "Just Between You and Me." Followed by the premier of "Profiles in Rock," featuring an interview with April Wine's Miles Goodwin, who discusses the band's new LP, *Power Play*.

Sun/19

11 PM MTV — **Pete Townshend Special** Interview filmed on-location in England. Features new video clips from Townshend's latest solo album, *All The Best Cowboys Have Chinese Eyes*.

Mon/20

5 PM Nickelodeon — **Livewire** Life in the Fast Lane: coping (or not) with stardom. Guests include the Mamas and Papas; Dave Getz, drummer for Big Brother and the Holding Company; and Myra Friedman, author of the Janis Joplin biography, *Buried Alive*.

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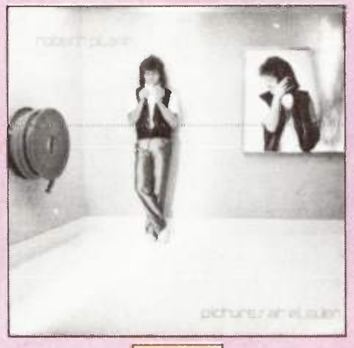
THE 3 TOPS

TOP OF THE CHART

ANCHORED BY THE TERSE, sinuous rhythm pulse of Mick Fleetwood and John McVie, Fleetwood Mac's singer-songwriters Lindsay Buckingham, Stevie Nicks and Christine McVie always seem to be on the brink of reaching critical mass, so different are their conceptions. Yet when they blend together into one sweet harmony there isn't a sound like it in all of pop.

Mirage might just as well have been called son-of-*Rumours*, depicting as it does a singular sense of unity against a backdrop of discord and dissolution.

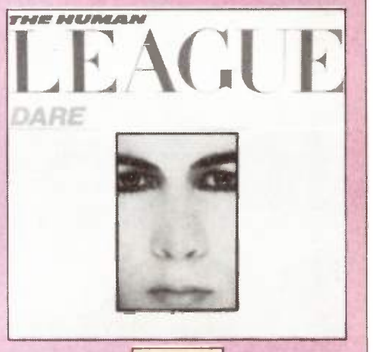
The sound is richly tempered and detailed, with Mac's usual wealth of airplay anthems, like Buckingham's futuristic '50s rock ("Can't Go Back" and "Book Of Love"), Stevie Nicks' gruff, sensual country airs ("That's Alright") and Christine McVie's bluesy lover's pleas ("Hold Me"). The strength of this band is the way they accent *each other's* songs—hopefully Fleetwood Mac will continue to grow together, because the sum is clearly greater than the parts. ◆



TOP NEW ENTRY

WITH HIS GLASS-SHATTERING cry, Plant epitomized arena rock vocals. Now, on his first solo outing, Robert Plant has come up with an album that's more consistent than Led Zeppelin's *Presence* and every bit as listenable as *In Through The Out Door*. Guitarist Robbie Blunt is no Jimmy Page, but thanks to similar licks and identical tone you'd never know; ditto drummers Phil Collins and Cozy Powell, whose pro forma thrashings roll out of the mix sounding like Bonzo Bonham himself. Such effortless triumph of form over content doesn't speak too well of Zepomania in the first place, but if you worried about that sort of thing you probably never got past the first album.

Perhaps the most significant point in *Pictures At Eleven*'s favor is that everything from the slowed-down tempi to the drum mix feels like Zeppelin. Yet at the same time, there are enough differences that the similarities never seem forced. Plant sets up a basic outline, defines parameters for the band, and lets his voice do the rest. ◆



TOP DEBUT ALBUM

WHETHER YOU POUND OUT the rhythm with a flat rock or synthesize it through a Linn Drum Computer, there remain certain eternal verities—love, lust, money, banana daiquiris. It is these truths that are affirmed in the debut album by the Human League, a British synthesized sextet with all 12 feet on the ground. Though the lyrics are often bland or clumsily sentimental, and Philip Oakey is a limited lead vocalist, it is heartening to find anybody out there using the high-tech tools of modern recording for something other than halfbaked asteroid angst.

In the opening cut, "The Things That Dreams Are Made Of" (with a nod to Shakespeare), the Human League insist life on Earth is the best of all possible worlds. "Open Your Heart" is Billy Joel-like pop, with a rich, Spector-ish arrangement, which concludes with the thought "there's no future/without tears."

For those inclined to pray to the aliens, the Human League is a good antidote. ◆

VOL.1 NO.11 $1.00

X's Breakthrough / Stones in London

SEPTEMBER 1982

RECORD

Fleetwood Mac

The Trouble With Stevie

Interview: Steve Miller

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