RECORD™

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PHOTO LAURIE PALADINO

The "very unfashionable" Men At Work: (from left) Greg Ham, Colin Hay, Jerry Speiser, John Rees, Ron Strykert.

Men At Work Deliver The Goods

By David Gans

OAKLAND, Ca.—Australians are different from Americans. For one thing, they drink beer—mass quantities of beer—out of motor oil-sized cans. For another, the water in their toilets swirls counterclockwise when flushed, as opposed to the charming clockwise swirl we're so fond of in the northern hemisphere.

Australians do share Americans' fondness for rock music, but the bands in Oz (as the Aussies call their country) by and large have a different mind set when it comes to competing for listeners. Seems they like to be original and unique. "The thing that Australian bands have got is a fair helping of character," notes Greg Ham of the Oz-based Men At Work. "In America you get a sense of faceless bands, touring megaliths like Journey and Toto. I have trouble telling their music apart."

That's the closest thing to a nasty remark Ham has to make in the course of a 90-minute interview, and he immediately mitigates it by adding, "Part of that is because I just don't listen to their music very much." Ham doesn't have to pound his chest about the merits of Men At Work or boost his ego by slagging other groups. The Men's debut single, "Who Can It Be Now?", has cracked Top Tens all over the world without trying to sound like anything else you've ever heard, and a debut album, *Business As Usual*, is approaching Number One on U.S. charts as this story goes to press.

Peter McIan, an American who went Down Under to produce *Business As Usual* and several other albums by Oz bands, recently explained the Australian emphasis on originality in an interview in *Cashbox* magazine: "The people (in Australia) go out to clubs several times a week, so they expect something new every time. The competition just to survive is so stiff that only the best make it. With such a critical public, there is a tremendous pressure to keep on refining the act and creating new material."

It's only a little over three years since Men At Work banded together in Melbourne and hit that city's club circuit. They had been at it less than two years when they recorded *Business As Usual*, but by then they were the highest-paid unsigned band in Oz. "Who Can It Be Now?" and the followup single, "Down Under," hit number two and number one respectively, and pushed the album to number one in the Australian charts in 1981, where it stayed for ten weeks, longer than any other domestic release in Australian history apart from Split Enz's *True Colours*. Across the Tasman Sea in New Zealand, *Business* entered the charts at number one and was the first album by an Oz band to *ever* hit the top.

The Men came to America in August to work on their second LP and to play their first North American shows, including a series of dates opening for Fleetwood Mac. I met woodwind and keyboard player Ham and guitarist Colin Hay, whose smokey voice alternates with Ham's saxophone on the melody of "Who Can It Be Now?", in a Los Angeles watering hole. Both of them eschewed beer in favor of mineral water, stereotypes notwithstanding. The two complement each other in conversation pretty much the way they do in their music, joking back and forth and completing each other's thoughts here and there without giving the impression that they've rehearsed their rap or that they're always in agreement.

Despite the vaguely paranoid flavor of "Who Can It Be Now?" (which Hay notes is simply the plaint of a tenant who's hiding from the rent collector), most of Men At Work's songs are clever, pleasant and full of the atmosphere and character of Australia. For instance, "chunder," which rhymes with "thunder" in the song "Down Under," is an Oz colloquialism for throwing up. Must have something to do with the amount of beer they drink, wot? Ham traces the word to a popular satirist of the '50s and '60s who "was making fun of Australians when it was really uncool to do it. He was a real pioneer in that sense. But I never actually met anyone who uses the word."

It's interesting that Hay's lyrics are so steeped in Oz lingo, since he spent his first 14 years in Scotland before his family moved to Melbourne. Asked whether the rest of the Men are natives, Ham replies uneasily, "Yeah. Well, Australians."

The term "native" is apparently reserved for aborigines. So what's the proper term for a natural-born white Australian?

"Fool?" offers Hay.

"Bruce. Craig. Darrell," says Ham, and both men laugh.

"Lots of Bruces and Darrells," Hay agrees. "And Gregs."

"There aren't that many Gregs," protests Ham, thunderstruck. "There are *heaps* of Cols!"

Moving right along . . . Vegemite, also mentioned in "Down Under," is some sort of foodstuff introduced in Oz by an American company, Kraft Foods. Ham theorizes that Kraft "is still testing it on Australians" for possible long-term side effects. "Some people just refuse to admit that it's actually edible," he says.

"It's a natural product, just yeast extract," Hay notes. "I think it's got a bit of axle grease in it—"

"—just to make it smooth and run nicely off the knife," Ham adds. "It's salty and sort of sharp to the taste, so it's not the sort of thing you eat after you have your tonsils taken out."

The Kraft people contacted Men At Work after some fans wrote in about Vegemite. They didn't endorse the stuff, but the idea was fun to kick around for a moment. *This is Men At Work for Vegemite. We use it before every show*—"But we're not saying what we use it for," says Hay with a wink.

Men At Work is first and foremost a live band. Hay and Ham insist that the success of their album will not pervert their emphasis on enjoying life while they're growing as musicians. "We're not the kind of people who could cope with it otherwise," says Hay. "We're not that serious. I think we'd break up if we couldn't get a laugh out of it. But it's not that we go around slapping each other on the back—"

"—or giving each other a hotfoot," Ham chimes in. "Everybody in the band's been through all the sorting out of head space. We had all those things pretty well straightened out long before we came to the band. We don't wear strange costumes, we don't have smoke bombs or boa constrictors.

Continued on page 11

The Who: A Last Stand

By Jonathan Gross

LARGO, Md.—The right hand windmills ferociously. Blood runs between his middle and index finger. Each successive leap grows wilder, rising towards a personal best. Suddenly, the song is over as quickly as it had begun.

"We know how to finish," quips a wounded but clearly purged Pete Townshend. "It's starting we have difficulty with."

Rousing applause ushers Townshend and the rest of the Who off stage at the Capital Centre. Though just a soundcheck, mostly to benefit cameras shooting for corporate sponsor Schlitz (about $1 million worth of sponsorship), the boys had grabbed a little preliminary gusto. No substitutes this time, the Who served warning they were going to be the real thing on "The Long Good-Bye," as they've dubbed their farewell tour of North America.

As it stood on opening night September 22, the final campaign would include about 40 dates, basically tracing the steps, less ten or

Continued on page 12

Pretenders Regrouping?

LOS ANGELES—If all goes well, the re-constituted Pretenders will begin recording a new album with producer Chris Thomas in December. Between now and then, though, Chrissie Hynde and drummer Martin Chambers must find permanent replacements for the late guitarist James Honeyman-Scott

PHOTO LYNN GOLDSMITH

Chrissie Hynde

and bassist Pete Farndon, who left the band shortly after Honeyman-Scott's death on June 16. Thus far, four months of auditions have proved fruitless.

Recently, Hynde and Chambers cut a single, "Back On The Chain Gang," which has been released in England on the Real label. Accom-

Continued on page 6

Contents

PHOTO: KATE SIMON

PHOTO: LAURA LEVINE

LETTERS

Townshend's Rebuttal

DAVE MARSH'S CYNICAL article on the Who tour ("The Who Sell Out," American Grandstand, October RECORD) and its sponsorship by Schlitz Beer Company is insulting to me, our long-standing friendship, your readers' intelligence, and obliquely endangers the advertising revenue of your own newspaper and thus his own career.

To end his crass little "exposé" with an inference that the Who are now motivated only by greed indicates that this ace rock parasite, now working on a book about the Who, is taking leave of his senses. Contrary to his argument, the level of ticket prices maintained by promoters on this tour are kept lower than they might be by the indirect subsidy of our sponsor. I refused to do a tour of such gruelling length (ten weeks) without a private plane. The sponsor's fee nearly pays for this plane and makes for better shows without raising ticket prices. We are doing this tour for our fans, for rock and roll and hopefully to make some sense out of twenty years of confusing history in which none of us became millionaires, despite much written to the contrary.

We are not ashamed to be paid well for what we do, nor for what we have done in the past. I think rock music carries people like Marsh on its back. Until he and others like him realize that until they take a chance, like Cameron Crowe did with *Fast Times At Ridgemont High*, and do something of worth outside of rock and roll criticism, they have to face up to that charge.

The Who give blood, literally, on the road. Every dollar a fan pays to see us is worked for and cherished. If someone buys a t-shirt with our name on it, I'm delighted that for the first time myself and therefore my neglected family share in the profit. Dave loves his kids, and works for them, I know. I'm sure they'd be proud of the zeal with which he does publishing deals for himself for their ultimate security and benefit. Rock newspapers that Marsh writes for are subsidized by advertising, radio stations that play the music he criticizes are subsidized by advertising, publishers like myself who contract writers like Marsh to write magnum opus' about rock are looking into the potential for sponsorship by major league advertisers with a yen for rock association to help underwrite the large percentages commanded by successful writers like himself. The circle of so-called hypocrisy comes neatly around.

Radio in the States is heavily formatted just now, maybe as a result of over-dependance on advertising revenue and high ratings. But the Who do not need to bend over to improve their rating. We have already fought long and hard for it, devoted to a form of music we believe in so passionately we have been prepared to die for it. A few Schlitz flyers in the arena won't sublimate our passion.

The Who name carries a lot of weight. It has a financial value outside of what we now do because it represents all we have already achieved. Part of that value is owned by a girl who lost her father, Keith Moon, to rock and roll. Both Marsh and Schlitz realize the value of the name. Marsh is writing a book about us and not about the equally worthy Keith Jarrett or Tom Waits; Schlitz is using our concert tour as a way of keeping their name before the public. In a sense, they have been just as good to us in their patronage as Marsh has been in the past. They gave me this typewriter by the way; it has a memory erase section. Maybe Marsh should get one. If I was forced to choose between the two levels of exploitation—Marsh or Schlitz—I would think twice about having my life dredged over again by a critic and take the beer. Or at least the price of the beer. Your round, Marsh.

PETE TOWNSHEND

Dave Marsh replies: The issue raised (albeit satirically) in my column is the propriety of corporate sponsorship of rock tours. Fans, musicians, road crews, record store clerks, radio broadcasters, club d.j.s, record executives and, yes, critics, all play productive roles in the creation and use of rock music. Beer and perfume companies don't, and they aren't interested in becoming involved in any productive way; otherwise, they would throw some of their financial clout behind struggling performers, rather than bankrolling only established stars.

Sponsors and advertisers do have a chilling effect on the level of discussion in any medium. Pressure from liquor and brewery advertisers is the reason that most American magazines don't write about the extremely serious issues of teenage drinking, the death and destruction caused on our highways by drunk young drivers and the personal devastation caused by adolescent alcoholism. As a critic (and as a parent), I believe it's irresponsible to encourage kids to drink.

For years, Peter Townshend and I have traded occasional brickbats as well as bouquets in the press; meantime, we've remained friends offstage. If the discussion has now gotten out of hand, I regret it. Obviously, if the Who weren't a band whose basic principles I have admired, and if Townshend and his bandmates weren't persons for whom I care a great deal, I wouldn't have bothered to make those criticisms of them, much less be writing a book about them. Cheers.

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TOP 100 ALBUMS

1 **BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN** *Nebraska* (Columbia)
2 **FLEETWOOD MAC** *Mirage* (Warner Bros.)
3 **THE WHO** *It's Hard* (Warner Bros.)
4 **BILLY JOEL** *The Nylon Curtain* (Columbia)
5 **MEN AT WORK** *Business As Usual* (Columbia)
6 **MICHAEL McDONALD** *If That's What It Takes* (Warner Bros.)
7 **JOE JACKSON** *Night and Day* (A&M)
8 **JOHN COUGAR** *American Fool* (Riva)
9 **STRAY CATS** *Built for Speed* (EMI/America)
10 **DIRE STRAITS** *Love Over Gold* (Warner Bros.)
11 **THE CLASH** *Combat Rock* (Epic)
12 **RUSH** *Signals* (Mercury)
13 **PETER GABRIEL** *Security* (Geffen)
14 **LINDA RONSTADT** *Get Closer* (Asylum)
15 **LIONEL RICHIE** *Lionel Richie* (Motown)
16 **BILLY SQUIER** *Emotions in Motion* (Capitol)
17 **HALL & OATES** *H_2O* (RCA)
18 **ALAN PARSONS PROJECT** *Eye in the Sky* (Arista)
19 **A FLOCK OF SEAGULLS** *A Flock of Seagulls* (Jive/Arista)
20 **LUTHER VANDROSS** *Forever, For Always, For Love* (Epic)
21 **KENNY LOGGINS** *High Adventure* (Columbia)
22 **CROSBY, STILLS, & NASH** *Daylight Again* (Atlantic)
23 **DIANA ROSS** *Silk Electric* (RCA)
24 **OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN** *Greatest Hits Vol. II* (MCA)
25 **DON HENLEY** *I Can't Stand Still* (Asylum)
26 **ARETHA FRANKLIN** *Jump to It* (Arista)
27 **THE GO-GO'S** *Vacation* (IRS)
28 **THE TIME** *What Time Is It?* (Warner Bros.)
29 **ROBERT PLANT** *Pictures at Eleven* (Swan Song)
30 **NEIL DIAMOND** *Heartlight* (Columbia)
31 **JUDAS PRIEST** *Screaming for Vegeance* (Columbia)
32 **STEVE MILLER BAND** *Abracadabra* (Capitol)
33 **ASIA** *Asia* (Geffen)
34 **SANTANA** *Shango* (Columbia)
35 **KOOL & THE GANG** *As One* (De-Lite)
36 **ANDY SUMMERS & ROBERT FRIPP** *I Advance Masked* (A&M)
37 **DONALD FAGEN** *The Nightfly* (Warner Bros.)
38 **CHICAGO** *16* (Full Moon/Warner Bros.)
39 **ABC** *Lexicon of Love* (Polygram)
40 **ELVIS COSTELLO & THE ATTRACTIONS** *Imperial Bedroom* (Columbia)
41 **EDDIE MONEY** *No Control* (Columbia)
42 **STEVE WINWOOD** *Talking Back to the Night* (Island)
43 **EVELYN KING** *Get Loose* (RCA)
44 **PSYCHEDELIC FURS** *Forever Now* (Columbia)
45 **GEORGE THOROGOOD & THE DESTROYERS** *Bad to the Bone* (EMI/America)
46 **PETE TOWNSHEND** *All the Best Cowboys Have Chinese Eyes* (Atco)
47 **THE BLASTERS** *Over There* (Warner Bros./Slash)
48 **JEFFERSON STARSHIP** *Winds of Change* (Grunt/RCA)
49 **DONNA SUMMER** *Donna Summer* (Geffen)
50 **ENGLISH BEAT** *Special Beat Service* (IRS)
51 **GLENN FREY** *No Fun Aloud* (Asylum)
52 **GAP BAND** *Gap Band IV* (Polydor)
53 **LOVERBOY** *Get Luck* (Columbia)
54 **THE ROCHES** *Keep on Doing* (Warner Bros.)
55 **MISSING PERSONS** *Missing Persons* (Capitol)
56 **BAD COMPANY** *Rough Diamonds* (Swan Song)
57 **THE MOTELS** *All Four One* (Capitol)
58 **MARSHALL CRENSHAW** *Marshall Crenshaw* (Warner Bros.)
59 **ZAPP** *Zapp II* (Warner Bros.)
60 **ROXY MUSIC** *Avalon* (Warner Bros./E.G.)
61 **SURVIVOR** *Eye of the Tiger* (Scotti Bros.)
62 **UTOPIA** *Utopia* (Network)
63 **PAUL CARRACK** *Suburban Voodoo* (Epic)
64 **SQUEEZE** *Sweets from a Stranger* (A&M)
65 **KIM CARNES** *Voyeur* (EMI/America)
66 **SPYRO GYRA** *Incognito* (MCA)
67 **.38 SPECIAL** *Special Forces* (A&M)
68 **SCORPIONS** *Blackout* (Mercury)
69 **HAIRCUT 100** *Pelican West* (Arista)
70 **GENESIS** *Three Sides Live* (Atlantic)
71 **HUMAN LEAGUE** *Dare* (A&M)
72 **WARREN ZEVON** *The Envoy* (Asylum)
73 **REO SPEEDWAGON** *Good Trouble* (Epic)
74 **FAST TIMES AT RIDGEMONT HIGH** *Soundtrack* (Full Moon/Asylum)
75 **AEROSMITH** *Rock in a Hard Place* (Columbia)
76 **ROMEO VOID** *Benefactor* (415/Columbia)
77 **WILLIE NELSON** *Always on My Mind* (Columbia)
78 **THE ROLLING STONES** *Still Life* (Rolling Stones)
79 **TEDDY PENDERGRASS** *This One's for You* (Phila. Int'l)
80 **DREAMGIRLS** *Soundtrack* (Geffen)
81 **PAUL MCCARTNEY** *Tug of War* (Columbia)
82 **STEVIE WONDER** *Original Musiquarium I* (Tamla)
83 **ADRIAN BELEW** *Lone Rhino* (Island)
84 **PAT METHENY** *Offramp* (ECM)
85 **THE POLICE** *Ghost in the Machine* (A&M)
86 **VAN HALEN** *Diver Down* (Warner Bros.)
87 **ALABAMA** *Mountain Music* (RCA)
88 **SOFT CELL** *Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret* (Sire)
89 **X** *Under the Big Black Sun* (Elektra)
90 **DAVID JOHANSEN** *Live It Up* (Blue Sky)
91 **RICK JAMES** *Throwin' Down* (Gordy)
92 **ELTON JOHN** *Jump Up!* (Geffen)
93 **PATRICE RUSHEN** *Straight from the Heart* (Elektra)
94 **ROCKY III** *Soundtrack* (Liberty)
95 **JUICE NEWTON** *Quiet Lies* (Capitol)
96 **FRANK ZAPPA** *Ship Arriving Too Late . . .* (Barking Pumpkin)
97 **DAVE EDMUNDS** *D.E. 7th* (Columbia)
98 **APRIL WINE** *Power Play* (Capitol)
99 **THE GO-GO'S** *Beauty and the Beat* (IRS)
100 **RAY PARKER JR.** *The Other Woman* (Arista)

New Artist

PHOTO: LARRY WILLIAMS

ABC (from left): Stephen Singleton, Mark White, David Palmer, Martin Fry

Attitudes, Ideas, And Attitudes: ABC Reinvents The Love Song

By Stuart Cohn

NEW YORK—Like many people who take life very seriously, Martin Fry has a good sense of humor. Sitting at a round table in the conference room outside the office of Polygram Records president Guenter Hensler, the ABC lead singer (who records for Polygram subsidiary Mercury) chuckles, lowers his voice and refers to himself as an "agent provocateur."

Whatever plot Fry and ABC have to conquer the universe—or at least the music business—is definitely of interest to Mr. Hensler. Without so much as singing a note in America, Fry and company have made themselves quite a reputation. Rising from the ashes of a little-known Sheffield, England funk-rock group called Vice Versa, the group—which also includes Mark White (guitar and keyboards), Stephen Singleton (alto and tenor sax), and David Palmer (drums)—scored three top ten U.K. singles during the past year: "Tears Are Not Enough," "Poison Arrow," and "The Look of Love" are the standard-bearers of the funk trend which has ruled British pop in 1982. Fry, an ironic, mischievous gleam in his eye, has been peering from the cover of every British magazine, and a critic from the *New Musical Express* called ABC's debut LP, *The Lexicon of Love*, "one of the greatest albums ever made."

The 24-year-old Fry appreciates the praise, but accepts it modestly. "When we set out," he says, "we wanted to write songs that were potent, that we could compare to past masters such as Smokey Robinson, and Burt Bacharach and Hal David. We saw a lot of the best music coming out of American rhythm and blues—Motown, Stax, the golden age of soul. So we've tried to mix that with a sting in the tail, along with the Englishness that we can never escape from."

Given these influences, it's not surprising to discover that the members of ABC view themselves as something other than a four-piece rock band. Instead, they perceive ABC as a collection of attitudes and ideas—in short, a group of songwriters.

"Ideas are the core," Fry emphasizes. "The level of musicianship is crucial, but being in ABC extends to how we package the record sleeve and the way we carry ourselves—with music being the most important feature. We try to do everything we can to perpetuate an attitude."

"The level of musicianship is crucial," says Martin Fry, "but being in ABC extends to how we package the record sleeve and the way we carry ourselves. We try to perpetuate an attitude."

The ABC vision was transferred to vinyl by producer Trevor Horn, formerly of the Buggles and Yes, who lent a lush, heavily orchestrated slant to the quintet's basic R&B.

"We didn't want to limit it to the four of us," says Fry. "We think of ourselves as working from a screenplay and we add anything we can to articulate a song."

The method resembles that of Becker and Fagen of Steely Dan, two other American musicians whom Fry counts as influences. Steely Dan *is* Steely Dan no matter who plays on their records, simply because of the writing team's caustic outlook on life, "the sting in the tale," as Fry puts it.

It's an outlook ABC shares. Fry says the group's songs present "a cross between the glamorous and the grotesque. Sometimes the glamorous and the grotesque are the same thing. Open up a magazine and it's full of air-brushed, idealized images. And then look out the window or in the mirror or around the room and you just spot an inconsistency there, you think 'I can't live up to that.' If you present surface veneer all the time—the cosmetic value of the world—it can really throw you off when you have to consider what's legitimate."

The conflict of surface and substance is brought out in ABC's love songs which present a character on an emotional rollercoaster of a love affair, detailing his subsequent growth in both awareness and sensitivity as a result of this relationship. Fry says that songs should be passionate and personal, yet ABC's lyrics have a universality to them, and the emotion in Fry's Bowie-esque crooning is real.

"We wanted to reinvent the love song," he states, "to take something as simple and stupid as the moon/June/rose garden ethic and fill it with currency, make it valid for today."

So far, so good. With an album of playful, witty, heartfelt songs, some clever video, and a front man who blends earnest thoughtfulness with charm and good pipes, ABC could go far. When they come to America to play, the men from Sheffield (which is also the home of the Human League) plan to bring along a string section, a female singer (for duets, "like Marvin and Tammi") and an elaborate stage set, all to bring *The Lexicon of Love* to life.

After that, who knows? "Of course," says Fry with a quick grin, "we could do a shoddy repackaging, *The Mexican of Glove* or something like that."

But don't count on it. Martin Fry is already thinking about a new direction, something about guitars . . .

American Grandstand

By Dave Marsh

Rebel Rouser

Bow Wow Wow's "Louis Quatorze" is the most exciting reworking of "Louie Louie" since Stories' "Brother Louie" (1973), which is pretty amazing, when you consider how fundamental that chunky beat was in the rise of punk rock. But "Louis Quatorze" is thoroughly up-to-date, as you might expect from a record co-written by the radical rock theoretician and consumer fraud expert Malcolm McLaren and produced by Joan Jett svengali, Kenny Laguna. Indeed, the old refrain crops up only in a couple of choruses and rather than the modified reggae of primordial "Louie Louie," "Louis Quatorze" has "tribal" (i.e., pseudo-African) rhythms underpinning a hard rock rhythm guitar and a vocal which is half-chanted, half-sung with genuine enthusiasm, not to say glee, by Annabella Lwin, Bow Wow Wow's teenaged front-person.

"Louis Quatorze," like all "Louie Louie" rewrites, has a plot. To synopsize: Annabella has a boyfriend, Louis Quatorze. Louis's idea of a nice surprise is to pop up at the front door with a gun in his hand and, sticking it in his beloved's back, act out a rape fantasy. Annabella squeals her delight at these events: *With his gun in my back/I start to undress/You just don't mess with Louis Quatorze/He's my partner in this crime/Of happiness/'Cause I'm just fourteen*. Louis has little to say except, "Close your eyes and think of England."

Where is the Au Pairs fan club when fantasies of teenage rape are being joyously portrayed by radical rock theoreticians and consumer fraud experts?

There are many intriguing questions about this record. For instance, what is implied by the fact that Annabella is herself only 16 years old, brown-skinned and female, while her bosses, McLaren and Laguna, are fortyish, white and male? What is the difference between "Louis Quatorze" and the Rolling Stones' similar inter-racial rape fantasy, "Brown Sugar"? Where is the Au Pairs fan club when fantasies of teenage rape are being joyously portrayed by radical rock theoreticians and consumer fraud experts?

Or, more to the point, what would the critical reaction to "Louis Quatorze" be if it had been sung by David Lee Roth, Rod Stewart, Pat Benatar or Johnny Van-Zant, rather than a new wave kingpin? Only then might one wonder where *Rolling Stone*, the *Village Voice*, the New York and Los Angeles *Times*, and the *New York Rocker* have been on this not-entirely-irrelevant recording.

The issue isn't that "Louis Quatorze" hasn't been condemned or that a flop single's bigotry is by itself especially threatening. The issue is that in the most prominent publications where rock is discussed, this song, which by my standards is at least crypto-racist and is certainly overtly sexist, has not been discussed politically at all.

This isn't an isolated example, either. Discussions about rock, when they can be taken seriously at all, have deteriorated to the extent that gestures speak louder than profitable behavior. For instance, when Malcolm McLaren made his speech at last July's New Music Seminar in New York, much attention was paid to his championing the cassette revolution. Apparently, no one picked up on his racist remarks introducing the topic: "If you walk on the streets of New York, the one obvious thing is the guy with the ghetto blaster, that huge bazooka, walking down the street. He's always black; he's never white . . ." Still, one does not comment upon an important rock entrepreneur's quite conscious connection of blacks with primitive power, weaponry and phallic symbolism. It isn't done. This is *Malcolm McLaren*, arguable auteur of the Sex Pistols, pioneer of situationist rock theory, tribune of all that's semi-popular and subculturally tribal.

There's a pushover mentality at work here that allows performers to define the terms of the discussion, even when those terms are largely irrelevant to the facts. Thus, Elvis Costello can assert that it is the press reaction to his remarks about Ray Charles which have caused his U.S. career to collapse, even though the press quickly forgave and forgot Costello's reference to one of the greatest artists American popular music has produced as a "blind, ignorant nigger." No interviewer bothers to mention that Costello's career is gasping for commercial breath in America because his music lacks appeal to lily-white radio stations. Meanwhile, the English rock weeklies blame the softheaded U.S. rock market for the ascendancy of Meat Loaf, even as his record stiffs here and rises to Number One in the U.K.

This standard of discourse is not enforced only to the benefit of new wave performers, although it is largely biased towards such as Costello and McLaren because the press has more clout with new wave acts. Yet matters have deteriorated to the point where Billy Joel, after his rabidly anti-political *Playboy* interview, can be praised for the courage of his "Vietnam song," "Goodnight Saigon," a piece of opportunistic, dead-hearted muck which piggybacks on the genuine guts of Dan Dailey and Charlie Daniels. But then, this sort of aversion of the eyes is axiomatic in a system in which sacred cows are protected—whether those cattle are holy because of their hipness or their profitability matters little. But maybe mattering as little as possible is the basic idea—sometimes I think Foreigner and Journey and the like might not be the only dinosaurs still afoot. It seems insane to me to live in a world where the hair-splitting of Gang of Four is so radically admired, and fundamental issues which strike to the heart of the relationship between audience and listener (and critic), are ignored. Like the music industry and radio broadcasting, what the rock press is creating only looks like a monument from a distance. Up close, it's just another headstone.

London Calling

By Chris Welch

Jimmy Page, Model Citizen

Jimmy Page, hero of Led Zeppelin, the Yardbirds and the History of British Rock, faced the biggest crisis of his career when he appeared in a London court charged with possessing cocaine. The possibility of a prison sentence and subsequent damage to his future loomed as he admitted possessing some 198 milligrams of cocaine. Page, arrested in Kings Road, Chelsea in December 1980 after the drug was found in his coat pocket, explained that it had been left behind by a guest following

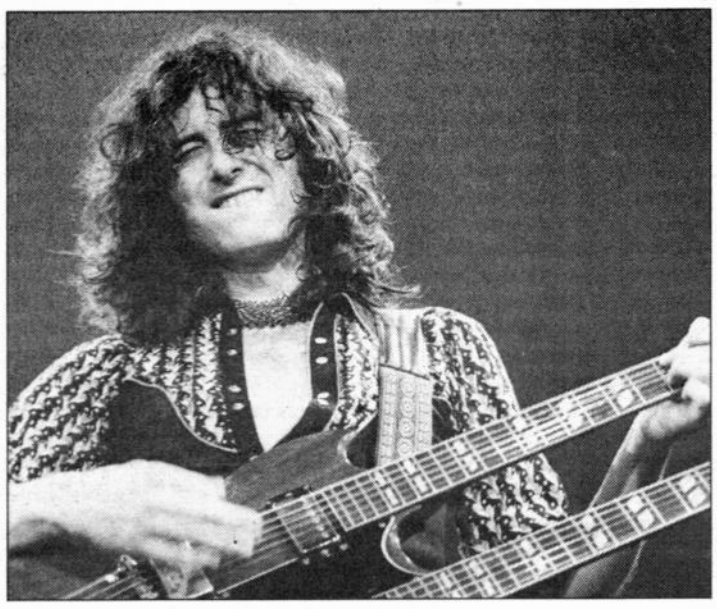


PHOTO: NEAL PRESTON

Jimmy Page

a party at his house and said he removed the cocaine so nobody else would find it. It was revealed in court that Jimmy was planning to launch a new band which will be touring America and Japan in the New Year, and his defending counsel said that Page would lose millions of pounds if he was jailed for the offense as he would be unable to tour abroad. The judge sentenced Jimmy to a 12-month conditional discharge and fined him 100 pounds. He took into account the fact that Page had "kept out of trouble for 38 years." The court room revelations of Jimmy's musical plans put an end to rumors that he was about to join David Coverdale's revamped Whitesnake. Said Whitesnake spokesman Tony Brainsby: "It would be nice to have Jimmy Page on guitar, but there's no truth in it." Page's office remained silent about the guitar hero's plans.

News and Notes

Punk revives the Swing Age! Can you imagine The Clash playing the music of Gene Krupa and Anita O'Day? Well it's almost come to that. Their ex-drummer Topper Headon is a man with catholic tastes. After trying to set up his own band with Fast Eddy from Motorhead on guitar and bassist Pete Way from UFO (which collapsed), Headon is now going to release a solo single of the old Krupa hit "Drumming Man." He's looking for a girl singer to take the Anita O'Day vocal part and a trumpet man to play Roy Eldridge's lines. "We may rock it up a bit, but we'll stick to the original bass line," says Topper. The drummer is also planning to form a new group with guitarist Chris Spedding and Dylan bassist Rob Stone in New York, if they can drag Chris away from his stand-up comic routine . . . Keith Emerson, who was last reported rehearsing with Pat Travers (London Calling, RECORD, February), is now talking about a comeback with a new band which includes ex-Genesis guitarist Steve Hackett, drummer Simon Phillips and bass legend Jack Bruce. It sounds just like the dream band Keith planned all those years ago when he wanted to work with Jimi Hendrix and Mitch Mitchell. Oh, what might have been! . . . Talking of the keyboard giants of yesteryear, it was saddening to hear that one-time Yes hero Rick Wakeman's concert tour company has crashed owing 100,000 pounds. He suffered huge losses on his concert promotions, and the man who once epitomized showbiz rock with shows like "King Arthur On Ice" failed to turn up to meet the creditors . . . Duran Duran's drummer Roger Taylor was knocked unconscious in a fist fight in a Munich disco, after he had been accused of purloining a German chappie's drink. Then bassist John Taylor walked through a plate glass mirror and nearly severed a finger. Enough being enough, the band cancelled its German tour . . . Annabella Lwin shocked singer B.A. Robertson when she was a guest on his BBC-TV chat show. The Bow Wow Wow girl told him the music business was overpopulated with boring old hippies "like you," and added that Robertson's show was "pretty shitty." Lwin stormed off, leaving the amiable Scotsman stunned and speechless . . . Musical Youth, the black Midlands reggae group that hit with "Pass The Dutchie," found themselves in trouble with the authorities after hitting the number one spot in all known charts here. The infants are all below school-leaving age (16 in the UK) and were forced to drop out of a support spot on tour with Kid Creole & the Coconuts. The education department said they wouldn't receive sufficient schooling. The group has already been on national and local TV shows and been featured in every publication. Their success effectively muted the October celebrations of the Beatles' 20th Anniversary, but "Love Me Do" still managed to get back into the charts, alongside The Animals' "House Of The Rising Sun " . . . Joe Jackson quelling a heckler at the Odeon Hammersmith: "I am on the stage . . . YOU are in the audience." It's called putting people in their place. And he got a hearty cheer.

Vangelis Gets Revenge

Polydor is disappointing Vangelis fans by denying there is any soundtrack album from the keyboard wizard of his music for sci-fi movie *Blade Runner*. They are putting out a three album boxed set instead including *Chariots Of Fire*, *China* and *Opera Sauvage*. The Greek wizard's next project is a ballet in Paris. Incidentally, you won't see many interviews with Vangelis in the U.K. press. He says they consistently ignored him when he was struggling under the patronage of Yes man Jon Anderson, and doesn't see why he should talk to them now that he is successful. Ah, sweet revenge.

PHOTO: PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Dave and Phil Alvin: Raised on the wisdom of rock's founding fathers.

The Blasters Figure It Out: 'There's Room For Our Thing'

By Wayne King

NEW YORK—Onstage or off, Phil Alvin usually has his mouth wide open. When working, he's belting out raw rock 'n' roll as the lead singer for the Blasters; right now, he's munching on a sandwich and, at the same time, offering a weighty discourse on the true nature of his profession. "There's musicians, and there's producers," he asserts. "Musicians, by our definition, control the way the air moves with an instrument. They control that thing: the drummer's head is two feet away from his drum and he hears the air move . . ."

There's more, lots more, but the man's relentless theorizing about sound and space—all centered on something called the "complex wave"—is baffling. Such convoluted analysis is the last thing one expects to hear from a band noted for its simple, basic, roots rock 'n' roll. But on second thought, it all makes perfect sense. The Blasters, you see, play American Music (as their only studio disc is dubbed), and take their work as seriously as that title and Phil Alvin's lecture suggest.

What the Blasters (Phil Alvin on vocals and guitar, Dave Alvin on lead guitar, John Bazz on bass, Bill Bateman on drum, the recently-acquired Gene Taylor on piano, supplemented by saxophonists Steve Berlin and Lee Allen—the latter a noted New Orleans session player, about whom more later) propogate is not so much a *style of* as an *attitude towards* music stemming from repeated exposure to the wisdom of rock's founding fathers.

According to Dave Alvin, each of the Blasters has "some long-haired skeletons" in the closet from the early '70s. He, for example, "was real fascinated by Eric Clapton—the guitar was so loud and fast—and Johnny Winter." At the same time, brother Phil, along with John Bazz, was playing in a band "where every song was like thirty minutes long.

"And then we met Big Joe Turner, Lee Allen and those people," Dave continues. Allen had an R&B hit in 1958 with "Walking With Mr. Lee," in addition to contributing mightily to numerous Little Richard and Fats Domino sides. He, along with Marcus Johnson (a saxophonist for Muddy Waters, and bassist on some of Jimmy Reed's Vee-Jay sides), taught the Blasters that "it's not the jamming, it's the song.

"How good would a Jimmy Reed record be," Dave queries, "if there was a ten-minute version of 'Baby What You Want Me To Do' "?

Childhood buddies who grew up in the same Downey, California neighborhood, the Alvins, Bazz and Bateman left their respective local bands and formed the Blasters after playing together at a mutual friend's wedding in 1979. In applying the old masters' lessons, the four musicians came up with what Dave calls "the perfect mixture."

"Phil's guitar style is very '20s, '30s, fingerpicking; and if you play lead—whooo!" he explains. "My style is real Carl Perkins, Elmore James, just thrash the guitar. And Bill sort of approaches the drumming . . . Bill's a blues nut—most drummers play (imitates light cymbal tapping) and Bill plays bomba-bomba-bomba. It was what rockabilly was, and what all the variations were. I was mainly doing the Chuck Berry sort of licks, and here's this very country blues thing Phil was doing and here was this jungle beat going on in the background. When that happened, we said, 'We got something here.' "

Local rockabilly aficionado Ronnie Weiser recorded the Blasters in his garage, and released an album, *American Music*, on his own Rollin' Rock label in 1980. The band eventually signed with Slash Records, brought on Taylor to pump the 88s and started piling up rave reviews for its live performances. Of late, the most important move in the quintet's career came when Slash inked a distribution deal with Warner Bros., giving the Blasters big-league visibility with all the comforts of home.

Currently, the Blasters are represented on vinyl with a new EP, *Over There*, recorded live at London's Venue Club. While the crowd seems raucous enough, the casual listener might not be able to detect what Dave calls the "shock and awe" with which European audiences greeted the Blasters. "We tend to play harder than the average European rockabilly or R&B band, with the exception, maybe, of Dr. Feelgood," he notes. "A good example was in Paris, where this French rockabilly group opened for us playing dunka-dunka-dunka-dunka"—Dave imitates a standup bass—"you know, singing *les rock*. Then we'd come on real strong da-da-da-da-da, like Black Flag compared to them."

Yet the Blasters' trans-Atlantic adventure proved heartening. Dave Alvin came away from the tour believing there's a place for the Blasters in the whole scheme of things. "In the world music scene, there's a lot of diversity, and that's good. In the early- to mid-'70s, a band like us couldn't exist on the level we're existing on; now, X can exist on a level near ours, and so can Soft Cell and George Jones. We figure there's room for our thing.

Continued on page 11

Lords' Tour Curtailed After Bators Suffers Arm Injury

NEW YORK—Stiv Bators is on the stage of New York's Peppermint Lounge, stretching a piece of bubblegum from the mike stand back to the drum kit and looking much the same as he did in 1977, when CBGB's was the home of his Dead Boys, and such buffoonery was *de rigeur*. There's one crucial, disturbing difference in the pioneering Cleveland punk's appearance this time, however: the presence of a cast on his right arm. That wrapping hides an injury which hurts his new band, The Lords of the New Church, as much as it hurts him. Explains bassist Dave Tregunna: "Stiv banged his arm at a gig in Poughkeepsie. He had knocked it around onstage with the Dead Boys, and it used to swell up, but this time it turned almost black. He's got to have it worked on or they said he might lose the use of it." This disability has cut short the Lords's first US tour by two weeks, effectively killing some of the momentum of their debut LP.

Such a setback is disheartening to a band that took so long to unite in the first place. Bators and guitarist Brian James formed a mutual admiration society during the latter's first Stateside visit five years ago with his old cronies The Damned, but continuing contractual confusion prevented their working as a team until last year. Bators grabbed Tregunna from the Wanderers, a late-period incarnation of Sham 69, and drummer Nicky Turner was recruited from his London group, the Barracudas. The first tune yielded by the Mick and Keith-like songwriting relationship (Stiv supplies words, Brian the music) was the album's opener, "New Church," which gave the fledgling crew a name preferable to the Lords of Discipline moniker they had been considering.

Turner and James regret that Bators' injury is putting a halt to their spreading the Church's gospel, which attempts to revive that old-time punk spunk and individuality. Being provocative is the goal, says Turner, who also counsels: "Take nothing for granted, don't believe everything you read." It's just too bad that the Lords's drive for Church membership may depend less on the righteousness of their cause than on the strength of Stiv Bators's right arm.

—Wayne King

PHOTO: ROBERT MATHEU

Lords of the New Church

The Time This Time Around: Doin' Right, Gettin' Ahead

NEW YORK—Out of the euphoric haze that was their last tour, The Time's Morris Day recalls one particular party—a New Year's Eve post-concert extravaganza in Macon, Georgia.

"We were sitting around singing 'Auld Lang Syne' and forgetting most of the words," says the 20-year-old freckle-faced lead vocalist and conceptualizer. "Suddenly I looked up and there were just mobs of people streaming through the door. There were people and potato chips all over the floor. It was the most amazing event of my life."

Hosts for the evening were The Time, a group of musicians living on the razor's edge between gaiety and statutory rape (fitting enough, it seems, for a Prince discovery). It was not a good night for Macon fathers.

Nearly a year later, The Time have captured the true spirit of New Year's Eve in Macon on their second LP, *What Time Is It?* "Wild and Loose," for example, features an extended rap on the subject of divvying up groupies. Day says it was simply a matter of turning the mic on and acting naturally ("Tell your momma you won't be home/ cause we got plans for you").

The Time, currently on the road with Prince through December—and beyond, perhaps, depending on the economy—seem to get a lot of mileage out of party in-jokes and their emphasis on "cool."

"Cool is just having self-respect," explains Day, who would never lend you his comb. "It's not the stereotype of the cigarette and not givin' a damn about anything or doin' all that illegal stuff. Cool is doin' the right thing and gettin' ahead."

Day says as a child he was inspired by the Jackson Five, who showed him "you could be anything you want even if you're a kid. I always thought I had to wait and pay dues."

He insists the current Time tour will be as wild and loose as the previous one. "We have such a good time on the road, and we like to share it with people. And there are always plenty of people around. That's all you need to party."

In other words, lock up your daughters. —Mark Mehler

Steel Breeze: No Plans For Alumni Meet

NEW YORK—You can imagine the saga of Steel Breeze as the sixth book of Moses. It would read, "And soft rock begat choral music begat heavy metal begat blues begat the 'Pat Benatar' sound begat disco begat mainstream pop." Drummers begat drummers, lead vocalists begat lead vocalists, until the coming of a debut album entitled *Steel Breeze* in late 1982.

Keyboardist Rod Toner and songwriter/guitarist Ken Goorabian, the founding fathers of Steel Breeze, note that since the band's birth seven years ago, 31 different musicians have passed through its ranks—seven drummers, a half-dozen singers, bassists and guitarists. Add four full-time crew members, a few jugglers and clowns and you've got the rock 'n' roll version of the seed of Abraham.

Toner notes that before the band began its first LP, it had already survived at least seven musical "eras," playing four sets a night, six nights a week in Sacramento, California nightclubs.

Enter producer Kim Fowley, who brought with him buckets-full of confidence and encouragement. Steel Breeze subsequently dialed for dollars and, after raising over $100,000 from family and friends, recorded an LP. From the stages of their favorite nightclubs, they beseeched audiences to urge local DJs to play Steel Breeze demos. Eventually, some stations picked up the single, "You Don't Want Me Anymore," and record companies came to town, money clutched in hot little hands. RCA won the bidding war.

Earlier this year, the members of Steel Breeze quit their day jobs, thus ending their tale's lengthy first chapter.

"We were always looking for a style," adds Ken Goorabian. "Now we've found it. Natural-sounding, not a lot of trails and echoes, vocals out front. Pleasant, positive, almost classical in its deep tones. We knew what we wanted; it just took a long time to find the right people."

To those dozens of Steel Breeze musicians who have come and gone, they, like the generations of Israel, were instrumental in progressing the story. "We're all pioneers," says Toner.

—Mark Mehler

The Bus Boys Take A Chance And Make Music A Priority

LOS ANGELES—The Bus Boys believe in rock 'n' roll, and they've also learned a great lesson of history: that to rock without a sense of humor is impossible. Yet on their second album, *American Worker*, the quintet's retreated a bit from the novelty act pose they assumed on their debut in favor of a more straightforward, purely musical approach. And, naturally enough, the critics who hailed their coming are now dumping on them because the Bus Boys refuse to remain a comedy band.

Case in point: the first single from *American Worker*, "Last Forever," is—horror of horrors!—a love song written by keyboardist-vocalist Brian O'Neal. "A lot of people think that doing a love song—something that might fit into a top 40 radio format—is stepping away from the challenge, that we're no longer hip or taking as provocative a stance," O'Neal says. "What they don't realize is that to present those themes and ideas in the same breath as our other material is *very much* a challenge. The Bus Boys are artists who are continually growing, and I think people want that from artists."

Recognizing the visual appeal of the band as well as the power of its music, the producers of the film *48 Hrs.*, a cops-and-robbers comedy starring Eddie Murphy and Nick Nolte (scheduled for release on December 10), drafted the Bus Boys to appear in a night club scene and perform five songs on the soundtrack. "The Bus Boys have several different points of appeal," O'Neal notes, "and I intend to exploit all of our potential—but I don't want to overdo it." So when the band was offered the starring roles in a weekly television series (O'Neal says it would have been like "a 1980s Monkees"), the Bus Boys turned thumbs down. "The money was great, but the answer was no—and an easy no, too," O'Neal says. "We're willing to sacrifice certain financial things for what we believe in."

—David Gans

PHOTO: PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Bus Boys

Translator's Modus Operandi: 'A Human Approach to Music'

NEW YORK—So what can you say about a band from San Francisco that creates music brimming with idealism and eclecticism and whose principal songwriter wants their record to escort listeners "on a little trip"? That maybe they're about fifteen years too late? Well, that's not the case with Translator, a quartet aspiring to universal appeal with a thoroughly modern approach.

"Maybe, after the 'me' decade, people can open up and say, we share things in common," proclaims guitarist and songwriter Robert Darlington. "Despite all the frustration, sadness and anxiety of contemporary life, there are places within it where we can find peace, and some sort of strength, by working together." This sense of community is apparent enough on Translator's self-titled debut album, a powerful, often compelling mixture of New Wave drive and mid-'60s instrumental and vocal textures. The three-year-old band was founded in Los Angeles by two San Francisco natives, Dave Scheff (drums) and Larry Decker (bass), who promptly hired Steve Barton, a native Angeleno who plays lead guitar and also writes songs. Darlington was the last to come on board. A move back to the Bay Area paid off in a deal with local 415 Records, which, now that they're distributed by CBS, gives Translator a larger platform than any of the band members anticipated—and that's important to an outfit that feels it has something to say.

PHOTO: DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Translator

"The album is not a forced political statement; there's no proselytizing," insists Darlington. "We just feel we have to get back to a human approach to things, and deal with them on that level. We've been criticized on the song 'Sleeping Snakes' "—a plea for disarmament whose key line is "no more missile building"—"for being morally naive. I don't understand that; to me, there's only one thing to do, and that's to stop building them. If that's naive, that's fine with me."

Translator's music is as straightforward as Darlington makes it seem, and the band's been duly praised for its efforts. Moreover, as they prepare for their second album (due next spring), the musicians are certain they'll justify the faith placed in them by both critics and fans. As drummer Scheff puts it, "When one gets some support, one feels more confident."

—Wayne King

Pretenders Regrouping?

Continued from page 1

panying the two Pretenders in the studio were guitarist Billy Bremner, late of Rockpile, and bassist Tony Butler, who played on Pete Townshend's *Chinese Eyes* LP.

A spokesman at Warner Bros. Records indicates the single should be released Stateside (on Sire) before the year is out. The B-side of "Chain Gang" proves to be one of Hynde's more interesting compositions. Titled "My City Was Gone," this autobiographical account of the singer's return to her native Ohio finds Hynde surveying the overbuilt and now-unfamiliar terrain while weighing her memories with quiet, revealing despair.

Tour plans are still uncertain pending the selection of the new Pretenders plus two more musicians to augment the band's musical lineup on the road.

—Susanne Whatley

The Hughes-Thrall Marriage: Hard-Rock Billing and Cooing

LOS ANGELES—When Glenn Hughes calls Pat Thrall "a dreamboat of a chap," he's perfectly serious. And Pat Thrall's comments about Glenn Hughes are even *nicer* when his partner's out of earshot. When Thrall found out that a Hughes bass line was a great place on which to hang his guitar chords, he says he discovered perfection: "Glenn and I fill each other's gaps, and it's getting better all the time."

Clearly, while Hughes-Thrall succeeds as a mutual admiration society, it's a lucky British/American musical pairing as well, if their cogent, self-titled debut album is any indication. The duo's complementary execution of guitar and vocals is based on the California tradition of respecting the other guy's space. While Hughes's bass creates a reverberant, distant landscape, Thrall defines the dimensions of the songs with guitar and guitar synthesizer, using an attack-and-withdraw approach which allows for the trade-off of front and center with Hughes's vocals. The latter displays a four-and-a-half octave range in alternately laying down some amazing ultrasonic shrieks, then bringing forth a full, throaty sound *a la* Danny Joe Brown.

The LP's nine songs were skimmed off the top of an extensive collection of tunes the prolific pair have produced since getting together last year. But then, Hughes came into the arrangement well-stocked—he was Deep Purple's bassist for three years and spent a period of involuntary hibernation in Los Angeles after quitting the group in 1976, waiting for his ten-year contract with it to end and writing "bags of songs." During that time, Thrall was earning his stripes as a guitarist playing esoteric rock fusion with Go and more conventional rock with the Pat Travers Band.

For a couple of years before Hughes won his freedom, he and Thrall swapped ideas about forming a band; after finding common ground, they then found an interested label—CBS-distributed Boulevard Records.

"I'm singing and playing better than ever," Hughes states, before adding in humbler tones: "I'm just fortunate to be back in, because not many people get second chances."

Adds Thrall: "There's a lot of sides to us musically, and we got to show them off, but we kept the album very song-oriented. I may even get flack because I was conservative in my own guitar soloing. But that's not all I do."

—Susanne Whatley

Glenn Hughes (left), Pat Thrall

Michael Stanley Gathers His Resources for the Long Siege

NEW YORK—Being from Cleveland, Michael Stanley has become an expert on surviving hard times. So when he declares he's "got a way for the record business to get back on its feet," you listen, even if it's not E.F. Hutton speaking.

"If our new record (*MSB* on EMI-America) can break out in a huge way," Stanley suggests, "every label that has a Michael Stanley Band LP or one of my solo records in its catalogue would be in terrific shape." Since that covers virtually every label in the business, a monster hit might, indeed, have a salutory trickle-down effect.

Though Stanley's been in search of just such an animal for 15 years, he appears to have gathered his resources for the long siege. It's a life, you know. "I'll go on as long as the music makes me very angry or very happy," he says of his *raison d'etre*.

On balance, *MSB* may not change the band's fortunes, but that doesn't seem to be the point this time out. For Stanley it was an important project. "There are things on this album that are just therapy for me," he explains. "One cut, 'In Between The Lines,' is basically an angry letter to myself. I realized I've been accepting a lot of things in my life without questioning. I had a lot to get off my chest."

The seven-piece Michael Stanley Band consists of five musicians from Cleveland and two from nearby Youngstown. While the industrial belt appears to be dying, Stanley claims it retains a "vibrancy" off which the band feeds.

"Overall, we see our audiences becoming very cynical," he observes, echoing similar statements made about the area by J. Geils's Peter Wolf. "The spirit is definitely damaged. And as chroniclers of our time, rock 'n' roll bands ought to reflect the dark side. But we have to give people a means of lightening up for a couple of hours, too. To some, the Michael Stanley band is seven faceless guys; to us, we're seven kids from Cleveland's suburbs who haven't given up on our city, our country or ourselves. We're a metaphor, like the Cleveland Indians. I've been rooting for 34 years, and I still think they'll be a winner."

—Mark Mehler

Amos Garrett: A Back-Door Guitar Hero

LOS ANGELES—Amos Garrett. No, he is not a drawling, good ol' boy deputy on *The Dukes of Hazzard,* or some southpaw pitcher in the major leagues who farms tobacco during the off-season. Amos Garrett is a guitar player, one of the best to ever pick a string. But if you've never heard of him, well, you're not alone, because Amos is something of a back-door man—in other words, the fans don't know, but the musicians understand.

Garrett's inimitable guitar style—a combination of breathtaking lyricism, a whimsical sense of humor, a thoroughly unpredictable string-bending technique and a tone that alternately stings and caresses—has been displayed on recordings by Geoff and Maria Muldaur, Paul Butterfield's Better Days, Emmylou Harris, Rodney Crowell, Jesse Winchester and Elvin Bishop, among others. But when it comes to renown, Garrett has a ways to go before he'll catch up to Eddie Van Halen, or even Frank Marino.

That situation isn't likely to change soon, even though Garrett has a new album out, *Amos Behavin'*, the first to feature his band of Bay Area musicians. The LP is available only on Canada's Stony Plain label so far, although he's hoping for U.S. distribution as well.

The new band, Garrett explains, "is a real flat-out R&B group, and I'm doing the kind of high-volume soloing that I'm not really known for. I'm in the business of selling beer now, so we jump the joint—we have to."

"My following isn't massive," the guitarist adds, "but in every city I've ever been to, there's always a bunch of people at a show sitting at tables in the front row, doing strange things with their left hands and the tablecloth. I've got some new ones for 'em, too—I've come up with another oddity on the guitar that I think those people will like a lot."

—Samuel Graham

Looking Back, Looking Ahead

PAUL KANTNER *and* GRACE SLICK

Take Stock of the Starship

PHOTO RANDEE ST NICHOLAS

PHOTO RANDEE ST NICHOLAS

The Starship, Class of '82: (from left) new drummer Don Baldwin, Craig Chaquico, Paul Kantner, Mickey Thomas, Grace Slick, David Freiberg, Pete Sears.

PHOTO KOKER RESSMEYER

By David Gans

Burbank, Ca.

WINDS OF CHANGE, THE TITLE OF THE NEWEST JEFFERSON Starship album, would have been appropriate for most of the 21 albums released under the Starship or Jefferson Airplane names. Since its formation in 1965, the Starship/Airplane has seen more comings and goings than Liz Taylor's nuptial bed—the latest being the departure of drummer Aynsley Dunbar after the tracks for *Winds of Change* were completed in August. He has been replaced by Don Baldwin, late of ex-Doobie Brother Tom Johnston's band.

The only constant throughout the band's history is rhythm guitarist and founding folkie Paul Kantner. While he's never been the band's mealticket, he has certainly been its conscience. Artistically, Kantner's songwriting has defied all trends, combining speculative fiction, political commentary and wry social observations. His contributions to Starship albums add a depth of character rarely encountered in the big-time rock world.

Kantner has been the principal architect of the Starship's transformation from psychedelic folk-rock iconoclasts into the mellow-metal hitmakers they are today. Though he disavows any claim to group leadership, Kantner carries himself with a spacey, offhand kind of authority. Playing guitar in a rock band, Earth-bound pursuit though it may be, affords him the freedom to develop his vision—but his gaze often seems fixed in another dimension, as if he'd rather be commanding an inter-stellar cargo vessel or smuggling forbidden texts into occupied solar systems.

After the Starship's fall tour ends, Kantner will put the finishing touches on his second solo album, *Planet Earth Rock 'n' Roll Orchestra*. It's the soundtrack to the novel of the same name, which he wrote in longhand over the last two-and-a-half years, about a band whose friends develop some interesting and powerful technology. Certain military and religious types try to gain control of these devices for their own political uses, and the story takes off from there. It's the kind of book that you might expect from a rock 'n' roll science fiction freak who pays attention to politics and religion.

Grace Slick, Kantner's partner in music (and, for a time, in life), joined the Jefferson Airplane in 1966. She rose to prominence as the singer of "Somebody To Love" and "White Rabbit," and as an outspoken proponent of outrageous behavior during the Summer of Love. She also collaborated

with Kantner on several projects outside the Airplane, including daughter China (now 11), and released a solo album in 1974. After founding the Starship with Kantner and David Freiberg in early 1974, Slick embarked on a solo career in 1978, only to return on 1981's *Modern Times*. Although her tongue has become considerably less sharp since she gave up drinking a few years back, Slick remains one of rock's most challenging and charismatic characters.

The following interview took place at the Hyatt on Sunset, "the only hotel in L.A. with a view," according to Kantner, and later the same day in the Burbank studio where *Winds of Change* was being mixed.

Have your reasons for making music changed much since you started in this business?

Paul Kantner: I don't know why I was doing it when I started. You don't know why you do it—you're drawn to it. There's no reason to do it: it's not a secure job; it didn't even pay the rent for the first year, and nobody expected it to. Why were you doing it, then?

Grace Slick: Because it's fun, and we like the music.

Kantner: It's like somebody comes down and gives you a magic language, and when you go [blithers and blathers some nonsense syllables], *this* happens. You don't know what "[blither and blather]" means, or why *this* happens, but it does! And we've spent a lot of time trying to figure out how a certain song can bring a tear to your eye, how "The Marseillaise" can stir the heart of a Frenchman to valor and all that. Music is an unknown. It's like electricity—nobody knows what electricity does. They can create it, control it and disperse it, but they don't know why it does what it does, or from whence the power comes. And we don't know why music does what it does.

Is the subject matter you deal with now as important as the subject matter you dealt with then?

Kantner: Love songs?

***Volunteers*?**

Kantner: That was one album.

Slick: An album has ten songs. One song will say, "Fuck you, we do what we want," and the others are talking about the only thing you cannot go without, which is love. No way around it. You can be punk for five years and say "fuck everybody in the world," and you'll either die or have to change. Period. No question about it. The only thing that sustains you is love, so most of the songs are going to be about that.

And you've got to have a little humor. Without Paul's songs, and without—and this is patting myself on the back—my attitude, I think you're (makes snoring noise). Love's important, but humor, to me, is second to love and should be combined with it.

The atmosphere in which music is being made is radically different now. When you guys came up, music was a central force. The Beatles said that we can change the world and "All you need is love," and it motivated—

Kantner: It's still very true.

Slick: It's not as easy to operate on that level as people thought.

Kantner: "All you need is love" extends a *long* way beyond anybody's capacity to function. That's your basic Jesus—a person who loves everybody extremely well and lives his life completely right.

You mean it looks good on paper but it's hard to do?

Kantner: Exactly.

Slick: People say, "What went wrong with the philosophy of the '60s?" The only thing that went wrong—and it wasn't really *wrong*—was naivete. We felt that it was possible to make a change in the attitudes of people so that they would try to operate on that level.

Kantner: But naivete itself is one stage that you go through as a person, so it's totally natural to me that you enjoy it, appreciate it. For a child, awareness of the world is a beautiful thing at first, and then it learns about all the shit in the world and becomes an adult. That's the process that we sort of revolted against and tried to hold back. We wanted to keep some of that naivete about trusting people. Eventually, you get enough people who fuck that trust around a little too much that you get a little less naive and a little more world-weary. But we don't want to let that overcome the naivete, and that's the struggle—to maintain the child in ourselves.

Is politics less important to the Starship than it was to the Airplane?

Kantner: No. That's what was going on in that period. Politics was a real important thing to check out. We found out what it was about and that turned into the Vietnam War, and Nixon eventually leaving office, and a whole bunch of other stuff, and we moved on.

Meaning music is more important to the Starship.

Kantner: Music is more important than any individual musician, I think. Jefferson Starship makes music, and hopefully moves somebody to some end—one end being just enjoyment of music. That takes you to a place that . . . I don't know what it's like. It's something you can't explain, like the taste of coffee.

On another level, we have an opportunity to move a lot of people. Part of being in love is connecting a song or two to that person. Fifteen years after you've broken up with them, you hear that song and you remember the good things that went on rather than what stopped it. It's a privilege to zap into that area, whether you make money on it or not. I'm not going to give my 12-string guitar away if rock 'n' roll goes away and Jesus music takes over.

Leaving aside politics, where might music go?

Kantner: You can't ever tell. That's why it's so interesting. Nobody knows what the next big thing is going to be. They've been trying to figure that out since the Beatles, and there hasn't been any Next Big Thing since the Beatles.

Slick: There is the machinery, though. A lot of people say that the machines are too cold, but it depends on who's using them. This sounds weird, but there's a tremendous spirit drive or something—you can damn near make things operate *for* you. They become animated, almost, spiritually animated. I'm not talking about Jesus, I'm talking about the spirit, just the human drive.

So maybe the '80s are about acquiring a healthy relationship with machines.

Slick: Oh, yeah. Get to know your machines, friends. I went to have a checkup, and the doctor didn't do anything. They hook you up to a whole shitload of machines. The machines all said I was okay. "Hey, I'm in good shape—the machines said so!" So I've got a song. The machines said I'm okay, and I'm real glad about that. I don't give a shit what the doctor said, you know, 'cause he has to check to find out what the machines say before he can tell me anything.

Kantner: Why didn't you use that on this album?

Slick: Because it's a high-tech kind of song, and it's not even played by anybody—it's *all* machinery.

Kantner: My kind of stuff.

Is *Winds of Change* organic and human, with "hands-on" musicianship?

Slick: Two-thirds of it.

And what's the other third?

Slick: The inside of Paul's brain.

Grace Slick: "On a variety of levels we have all seen little signs on the road that say 'CLIFF,' and have said, 'Hey, that looks like fun – accelerate!'"

That's what makes it interesting: the members of the band are totally different. I don't mean fighting—it's interesting to hear Paul's "Out of Control" on the same album with Pete and Jeannette's (Sears) "I Will Stay," two opposite ends of the spectrum. Ordinarily you don't get that.

Kantner: It's the "variety show" approach. Rather than one person doing everything and the band being backup people, it's sort of like a parade of people that weaves in. Some people get taller here and there, some people get louder—but it's all a variety show.

It's not "This is Paul's tune, so Paul tells everybody what to do"?

Kantner: Some people will bring a tune in and basically throw it into the pit and some people exercise more control. I like to think I do it more like throwing it into the pit. Craig Chaquico is getting more to wanting everybody to play certain things, up to a point.

Are you all comfortable with that?

Kantner: Not really.

"Fuck you, we do what we want"?

Kantner: (laughs) Right. When they're not listening, you sneak in little things live. Sometimes they hear it, sometimes they don't. Playing the same part over and over. . . you have to expand a little.

These times now that we're living in are going through rapid changes so fast that people are just boggled—bad and good. There was a novel called *The Sheep Look Up*, I think, by John Brunner. It was a follow-up to *Stand on Zanzibar*, in which he theorized that the island of Zanzibar could hold everybody in the world. Once the population of the world started trickling off the island into the water, that's when things would start getting crazy. In the novel, they had reached that point. There were something he called "Berserkers"; you'd just be walking down the street and some guy'd go mad and start hacking up people, or shooting people. It's like that rat society: when they start getting real crowded, they all stop drinking water and will only drink alcohol, and they go into these psychotic phases.

Part of the song "I Came Back from the Jaws of the Dragon" deals with that. This isn't paranoia, but I think a lot of what happens is orchestrated—allowed to happen, in order to sort of soften people up. A little "people tenderizer"?

Orchestrated by whom?

Kantner: The famous "they." You know, "them"? Whoever conceives of themselves as running the huge mass of a world. A lot of people are trying to *insert* influences. Nobody controls it, I hope (laughs). It doesn't appear (that anyone does)—if they do, they're real bad at it. But I think there are people who allow things to happen in order to tenderize people.

In "Dragon," they get you to the point where they give you one little thing—like lowering the interest rates one point—and everybody goes, "Oh, they're so wonderful! They're great! They're our saviors!" They've been beaten down for four years, then they get one little thing and they feel good. The song says, "And you become so happy, you don't send them to jail" for all their other shit that you found out that they've done.

Is it that somebody's *actively* fucking with it?

Kantner: It's not as active as sending the troops into Chicago (the 1968 Demo convention), or People's Park in Berkeley when they were shotgunning people (from) the roofs. They found that they can't get away with that—they *tried*, and they sort of thought maybe they could, but they couldn't, really. So I think it's become much subtler. The economic times, if you'll notice, turn a lot of people back to Jesus, back to God and country and the American Way.

I've been following these religious programs a lot, because TV is so bad. Some of these programs are so bizarre that they're amusing. They've taken to mentioning us as being Satanic. They're getting into backward masking—putting stuff in records backwards. I've heard some of it myself, and some of it's quite real, like Black Oak Arkansas and other groups saying "Satan is Lord." And Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven": if you listen to things backwards, they may be there and they may not. As I hear them, they sound pretty much there, though—"Here's to my sweet Satan," "Satan is Lord," and stuff like that.

But I think of people in back rooms all day listening to all the rock records that ever existed instead of going out and stumping for Jesus and seeing that people get fed and clothed. The Jesus people have included us in it, and I'm getting upset about that. I'm gonna go talk to a couple of them and say, "Hey, we do a lot of non-Satanic things, like benefits for the Vietnam veterans, retarded children, and Cambodia. You're gonna be cutting off the money to all these things if you destroy us as a group."

Have you done all these benefits at the expense of the Starship's financial security?

Kantner: We've never made very good money, with a few occasional exceptions, but even by our minimal standards, we're paid obscenely for what we do.

Considering that you'd be doing it anyway?

Kantner: That's not the point. Almost any movie or rock star is paid too much money for what they do. But I think it's our duty—and it's almost a privilege—to run some of that money back into the causes that we think deserve it. To me, it's an obligation. I don't know if it's my Catholic upbringing, where you're taught to tithe your church. I'm not a church person at all, but I feel you have to tithe your planet. If you're in the position that we are, you're obligated to run a lot of that back in, or it won't last.

Stephen King did a real interesting thing recently, and some rock stars—ourselves included, when we get real rich—ought to take notice of it: for his next novel, he took a dollar and he told the publisher to spend the rest of the million dollars that they were offering and spend it on encouraging new writers. That's a real good gesture; putting it on the publisher might give them some responsibility.

It's also handing the money over to the robbers, in a sense.

Kantner: They're not all robbers. That's like saying all record company executives are robbers. They're not; some people, somewhere in there (chuckling) are actually interested in doing a good job. I've met some of them; I've worked with some of them over the years. A lot of them have gotten fired and they're not in this business any more, but I've worked with a lot of them.

Yeah, and you've worked with a lot of musicians, too. In fact, you said earlier, "Nothing is for keeps in this band—ever."

Kantner: This band is built on change. Thomas Jefferson's attitude that there should be a revolution every five years hold true for bands as well.

Slick: It's a symbiotic condition. My solo albums don't sell like Airplane and Starship stuff does, but I make more money on solo albums than I do in this band. But I can't leave; I'm too related to the Starship. I *belong* here. Even if they were a bunch of accountants it might be that way. It's frightening. It scared me. I thought I was strong enough to say, "Fuck this shit! New chapter in my life." It didn't work. You don't have to leave a band just 'cause you want to jerk off on a solo album. You can go jerk off and also stay with the band, unless you hate everybody.

This band has been through so many disasters and changes it seems as though you've spent your nine lives, and maybe nine more.

Kantner: Personally, I've got 18 on a list that I wrote, and I stopped writing after a while. Everything, including a motorcycle accident at 40 miles an hour headfirst into a telephone pole. My skull was shattered, but I was out of the hospital in ten days.

We've had a guardian angel over us all of our lives, somehow—uh, knock on wood.

Having gone into many dragons's mouths and come out smiling, you start to get a little cocky about it after a while. Then eventually you get humble, or thankful.

Slick: On a variety of levels, we have all seen little signs on the road that say "CLIFF" and said, "Hey, that looks like fun—accelerate!" We've all done that to a certain extent, and each had his own way of doing it.

Kantner: And not with the thought that we were going to crash. We thought we were going to fly.

On Stage

'The Very Definition Of Soul Himself'

James Brown/
Wilson Pickett
The Palladium
New York City
October 2, 1982

By Vince Aletti

On the way to the recent James Brown/Wilson Pickett concert at the Palladium, I'd worried that the performers had become artifacts—stale, aging, frozen in their roles (Soul Brother Number One and The Wicked Pickett, or as Pickett now calls himself, The Last Soulman), and fossilized somewhere in the past. What is that cliché?: "mere shadows of their former selves." But, strutting and sweating on the Palladium stage, there were no shadows, no fossils. These are no longer young men but they crackle with a warmth and vitality that many younger singers, muffled in cynicism and conceit, never get near. If there was weariness here, neither man betrayed it in his blitz across the stage, though Brown seemed to be straining some to live up to his reputation, invoked in a repeated chant by his MC, as the Hardest-Working Man in Show Business. But he needn't have pushed it because his audience was older too, and eagerly indulgent. Nearly half the sell-out crowd was black and middle-aged, people who'd grown up with Pickett and Brown, some with canes now, some with grandchildren to hold on their shoulders and offer up onstage. They left the dancing in the aisles to the kids, including an enthusiastic contingent of white new wavers, but they shouted and they waved and they were not to be outdone by the children among them: when Pickett pulled a willing teenager onstage, she was danced right off by a woman twice her age who sprang up and did a joyous, grinding bop. This was not a night of musty memories, it was a celebration of endurance and endless, stubborn hope.

Women were already vaulting onstage during Wilson Pickett's second song, dancing for a moment in the reflected spotlight or rushing in for a kiss before the bouncers whisked them off. And no wonder: Pickett was still wickedly handsome, a little beefy, perhaps, but agile and powerful—a boxer's body in a western-style tan suit with his initials sewn on the back pockets, an enormous silver medallion, and a coppery satin shirt ready to be ripped open. He did an abbreviated set with two built-in encores and no real surprises, but if the songs—six of his biggest hits, none less than ten years old—were no longer fresh, the delivery was. Pickett retained his trademark stance—bent forward from the waist, hand on hip, propelled across the stage on tapping feet—but he was animated by something more than familiar moves or rerun routines. If he was glowing from the moment he strode centerstage and jumped into "Midnight Hour," he was absolutely radiant by the final encore, "Land of 1000 Dances." It wasn't just that he was basking in the heated screams from the crowd, though he did seem more moved and grateful than his swaggering younger ego would ever have allowed. Pickett's exhilaration surged from a mixture of relief and pride: there must have been some scary times, low years, but he'd gotten through, his voice remarkably intact—rough, raspy screams, and all his tough appeal undiminished. Pickett is 41 and his songs are not modern, but he's as vibrant and spirited as any 20-year-old (he could get down with Grandmaster Flash anytime), and when he ran off stage, the crowd gave him up reluctantly.

PHOTO: EBET ROBERTS

James Brown: "The definition of soul himself."

For some time now, James Brown has seemed a caricature of himself. He looks neither young nor old (though he's now 54) because his face appears mask-like, gleaming and sculpted, iconic (like Mae West) even when it's mobile and vivid. He was never the most subtle of performers—he and his band (now the JB's International, but as great as ever) gangbanged every song, throbbing, pumping, thrusting, etc. with a zesty lasciviousness, never missing a step in their complex, non-stop routines. Yet Brown is utterly riveting and no matter how many times he's done exactly this same sequence of songs (you know the ones), he convinces you he's giving his all every time out. His image remains bizarre, cartoonish, especially when his long straightened hair fluffs with sweat and he looks like a rough prison matron in a bright green pantsuit (very *Maude* or Louise Jefferson; my friend Judy said she'd had the identical outfit in high school). It's not really sexy any more, but he works it for all it's worth and he's a demon on stage: splits, twirls, quick little dances in place, and that crazy locomotion across the floor on one vibrating leg. The performance is breathless, with hardly a let-up except for a minute when he spieled out something rote and garbled about being "that same shoeshine boy who grew up in Augusta, Georgia" (not in them clothes you ain't) or the countless unnecessary times when his MC broke in to shout "James Brown! James Brown! The definition of soul himself!" And these same songs are of course never the same: he twists them and shakes them and wrings them out with impossible screams, yelps, groans. Like Brown, the music is neither young nor old; the show is one pulsing continuum of timeless beat. By the end, after nearly an hour during which he'd left the stage and rushed back a number of times, Brown and the band and the audience were frantic and still the wildness wasn't spent. He went off beaming, gracious, still in manic motion. Hit me! Hit me!

Men At Work

Continued from page 1

Still, I don't think it's a low-key performance. We've got heaps of energy on stage."

"The Australian pub scene is a good proving ground for bands," Ham adds. "It's great to play live. It does get to be a grind for some, but if you can cut it there you get so used to playing in front of an audience that when you get a record deal you'll do well—as long as you've got the tunes."

The broad range of styles they tackled in their club days proved to be a problem for the Men when record company people came by to see what all those packed pubs were about. "Record companies did come along, because we were attracting big crowds, but a typical agent would stay maybe ten minutes. He'd hear one particular style that we were doing at the moment and say, 'That's not going to happen,' and leave. If he'd stayed longer he would have heard us go through a whole lot of different styles, and we'd have gotten him at some stage."

Though their rise was swift, the Men didn't start out playing to packed houses. They had a regular Wednesday gig at a converted bowling alley in a seaside suburb of Melbourne, generally drawing 150 people in a club that could handle 1500. "We didn't have a record and nobody knew us," Ham explains. "It was a little bit soul-destroying."

One frequent and enthusiastic visitor was a man who told them he was with CBS Records and promised to get the bigwigs to come and hear them. "After he left we'd say, 'Yeah, sure. Just another sales rep that goes around to the stores, and he's coming into a pub and knighting himself,' " says Ham.

That salesman disregarded the empty seats and made it his mission to get Men At Work signed by CBS. He pulled a succession of stunts at the label's offices. "He really worked hard for us," says Ham. "He once barricaded the Melbourne branch's car park with scaffolding and signs saying 'Caution—Men At Work.' He got into the Managing Director's office and bolted the receiver onto the body of his telephone.

"Another time he walked into a meeting wearing overalls, with a saw and a ladder under his arm. He set the ladder up in the middle of the floor—I wasn't there, but I've heard the story corroborated by a number of people who were—and he climbed to the top and started playing the saw—'pwoinnng!'—and yelling, 'MEN AT WORK!' I don't know what the story would have been if he hadn't done those things."

When the CBS brass did start paying attention to the Men, Hay recalls, "they didn't really like us all that much. But we didn't like them all that much, either. They saw us on a bad night and laid a few raves on about how they weren't prepared to put money into us—not that we'd asked them for any money."

They were finally signed by the chief of A&R, a man Hay describes as "just our sort of fan: good grammar-school boy, middle class, small, close-cropped beard—"

"Used to be a hippie, refuses to admit it now," Ham interjects. "Peter came along and saw a couple of weeks' worth of shows, and we went to Sydney and did gigs up there. We wined and dined and skirted around the subject, y'know —nobody was actually talking about signing. We were talking about anything but! It was a bit like a marriage proposal." Band and label eventually did find their tongues and agree to do business.

When it came time to translate their club act into the concise and more-or-less calculated format of a record, producer McIan didn't change the music as much as help the Men focus it. "He gave us a bit of insight into putting together a commercial song," says Ham. "On 'Who Can It Be Now?' he said, 'We'll put the melody line as a hook right at the start,' where it used to have a two-minute intro. Peter's suss has been very important to us.

"When we put the album together, we had no idea what we were doing," Ham continues. "No, that's selling ourselves short. But we never really planned anything, and we certainly never tailored the music towards a market. Everyone in the band has different ideas about music, and we all listen to different things. The album has something for everybody."

"We never really planned anything," says Greg Ham, "and we certainly never tailored the music towards a market. The album has something for everybody."

"I don't think there's ever been a song that came out sounding exactly like I thought it would," says Hay, "but I've always been happy with the way they come out. The concept changes through dealing with five people, and it always changes for the better."

Although Hay sings nine of the ten songs on *Business As Usual* and wrote or co-wrote eight of them, he is not the leader of the band. "I don't think the other people would cope really well with that," he says. "I know I wouldn't if somebody was ramming things down my neck all the time."

Hay and fellow guitarist Ron Strykert don't divide their parts into "lead" and "rhythm." "Everything is nice and intertwined. The keyboards and the other sounds we use are embellishments, so you don't have huge chordal organs and loud, heavy guitars," Hay asserts. "Things don't get in the way of each other, which means that you can go back and listen to it again and hear something else."

Clean arrangements aren't the exclusive province of Oz bands, to be sure, but the blend of styles in Men At Work—and their emphasis on forging a group character—is refreshing on the American airwaves, which seem all too often to reward a lack of originality when it's time to decide what gets heard. "There's a reggae feel that's comfortable for us, and it's a groove that Colin writes really well in, but we're not a reggae band," says Ham. "We're a melodic band; Colin, particularly, is strong on melody." Add a lean and muscular rhythm section (bassist John Rees and drummer Jerry Speiser), mix up the grooves and instrumentation so you don't repeat yourself too often, and you've got, it seems, a future.

Throughout their admittedly brief career, Men At Work have shunned trendiness in favor of an honest sound unrelated to the current rage. "We've never tied ourselves to any particular fashion," says Ham. "In fact, I think we're a very *un*fashionable band. As soon as you tie yourself to a fashion, you're sounding your own death knell in a way, because they come and go so fast. Unless you can change credibly when the trends do, you're fucked."

Which is exactly what Men At Work want to avoid. So while bands go on repeating successful formulas *ad nauseam*, Ham vows he and his mates will "do what we did this time and not think about it at all" when sessions for the second LP begin. "That's all we can do, and it's all we're likely to do," he adds. "If we sat down and said, 'Guys, we're Old Romantics now,' or whatever fashionable thing, we couldn't agree on it. There's no way we could be that organized."

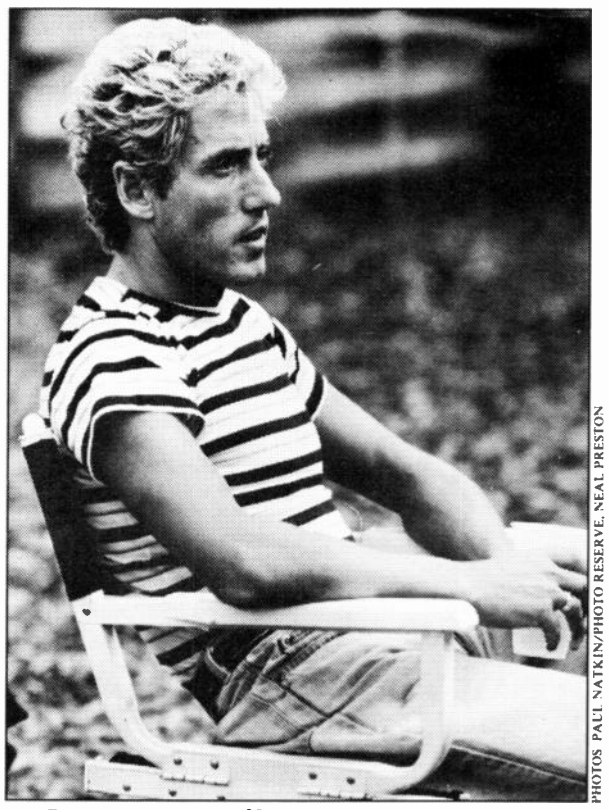
The Blasters

Continued from page 4

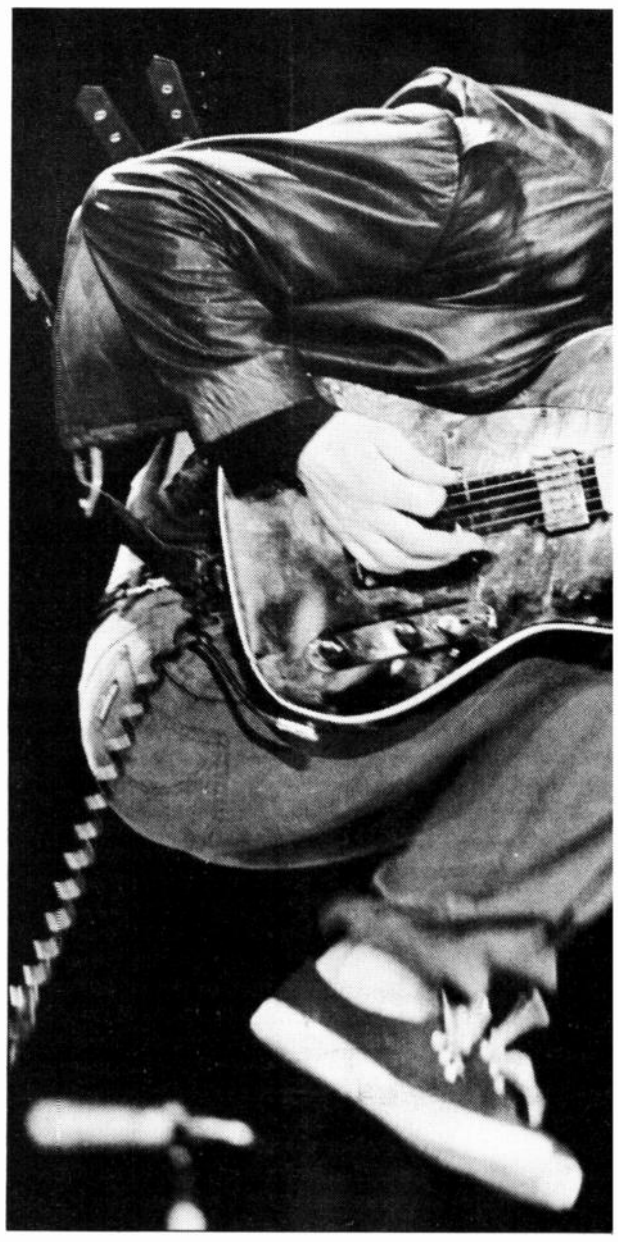
Dave, however, understands the ephemeral nature of fans's tastes, especially in this country. "Last August in L.A. we headlined at the Hollywood Palladium before about 4500 people. See, rockabilly's real hip this year. Next year, maybe we'll be playing in front of just a thousand people. But we'll be playing."

This, too, is a lesson taught by an old master—T-Bone Walker, to be precise—and it's proved to be the most valuable one of all. "I remember seeing T-Bone playing in some martini bar in Englewood, California," Dave recalls. "Twenty years earlier he was wearing the best suits, had a string of chart hits and was being real slick. When you see something like that, you realize that the reason why you make music is not for the rock star glamor and to be cool and all that—you do it because you like to make music. That's where we come from."

THE W



PHOTOS PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE, NEAL PRESTON



LAST S

Quick takes from the last tour: [from left] Roger and Pete in harmony; Roger in repose offstage;

Continued from page 1

so, of the Rolling Stones' '81 U.S. jaunt—they've even hired the Stones' publicist, Paul Wasserman. Financially, the picture is just as attractive: an estimated million fans will see the Who, with gross receipts totaling $20 million, a good chunk of which will end up in the quartet's pockets.

But what does it all mean, this rather mercenary "Retirement Savings Plan"? Is this really a dignified exit? The Who were given up for dead two years ago when it was more dangerous being in the band (due to the number of errant fists flying about) than it was playing before throngs of fanatics. According to Townshend, it's simply a matter of "knowing how to finish."

THE NEXT

morning, Townshend is entertaining individual members of the press in his suite at the Dolly Madison in downtown Washington. When the Stones played here last year, they wound up renting the entire hotel, but the Who are considerably less auspicious: the mood of the entourage is polite but guarded.

The Who's articulate, spiritual leader is stationed on an overstuffed couch which causes him to shift like a restless child every five to ten minutes. Actually, at 37, he looks kind of "slip kid," thanks to a new tousled, boyish coif and a lean year off booze and drugs. Rehabilitation has soothed his complexion and brought out the blue in his sad hound-dog eyes.

He's attempting to make some definitive statement on the Who in 1982, but it's a tough go. "What we're doing is . . . what we're saying . . . what we must do is . . . keep everything that we've done and everything we represent and everything we stand for alone and solid so that it will remain a solid traditional pillar in rock which will always be a barometer," he says slowly while chain smoking a strong Indian cigarette. "Something that people can kick against and react to, throw things against. And, like the cover of *Who's Next*, piss up against."

But piss will never fell a pillar, although Townshend seemed to be asking for that to happen in 1978's death wish, *Who Are You?*, with its resonant cry of "music must change." Townshend, who once embraced the Jam as possible successors to the Who's throne, appears to be contradicting himself.

Music must change? "Actually we've departed from that way of thinking," he says matter-of-factly. "We are an institution. Nobody can argue with it. They may not like it. They might sneer. But they cannot argue with it. Neither can we. We don't like it any more than they do, but we are an institution.

"So our feeling at the moment is that it would be best for rock music and for the people who view society and everything else through the aegis of rock music, if we controlled our closing chapter, as it were, so that the pillar remains, rather than let everything dwindle out or maybe just keep working until one of us does have a heart attack on the golf course. Which I think would really fuck up that image.

"You know, some of the greatest images and some of the greatest pillars of rock and roll are people who have died, because it has cut short their career at its zenith. But at least it's been a clean edge and that's important. I don't want to go, let's say, the way of Buster Keaton, who, had he not made terrible films late in life, would have been remembered for his great work."

Pillars of rock 'n' roll. Great work. The Who are the former. As for the latter, it's been in short supply of late. In fact, most of the Who's great work—the monuments—is more than a decade old now. The enduring anthems, "My Generation" and "The Kids are Alright," date back 18 years to the band's Mod days. Aye, you couldn't ask for a noisier bunch of snotnosed punters back then. Townshend calls it "being more ordinary" and a "better example of a rock 'n' roll band than the Rolling Stones." Whatever, they were a great singles band and the first to enunciate a young man's primal instincts with a passion that wouldn't be duplicated until John Lydon turned Rotten.

Then it's on to *Tommy* and *Quadrophenia*, ambitious and inspired in both form and focus. Though time hasn't been especially kind to its content, "Pinball Wizard" should re-emerge on this tour with a new cachet among the Pac-Man crowd. But their best album is 1972's *Who's Next*, an epic set of diverse, eclectic proportions featuring "Won't Get Fooled Again" and "Baba O'Riley," both staples of the current live set. Interestingly enough, "My Generation" has been dropped from the repertoire.

The last four albums, *Odds & Sods* through *Face Dances*, were substandard, unaccountably dissipated and propped up by the pathos of their sycophants in the American rock press. The Who came apart at the seams in those years, both personally and professionally. Townshend owned up a few months back: "We have been guilty. We put out a record called 'Squeeze Box' that was as bad as 'Ebony and Ivory.'"

And then there are the lesser monuments of the Who's career. Keith Moon dead in 1978 of some bio-chemical failure; 11 fans trampled to death at Riverfront Stadium in Cincinnati in 1979; the death last year of Kit Lambert—the Who's manager in the '60s, and the one credited with encouraging Townshend's ambitious vision of rock 'n' roll—from injuries sustained in a fall down the stairs of his mother's home (he'd been beaten up in a London club the previous night), although rumors of suicide persist among Who historians.

These blows have somehow been internalized by Messrs. Townshend, Daltrey, Entwistle and Jones. Townshend's journeys to his personal heart of darkness are now reserved largely for solo efforts, but *It's Hard* has struck a common enough chord to be comfortably ensconced in the top 10 as this is written. When Townshend insists the album's "a fucking landmark for us," though, he's not referring to any musical breakthrough on the group's part; rather, he's expressing his astonishment over the Who having actually made another record.

"I had come back from California at the end of February and had just two songs when I went down to the studio," he recalls. "The band was working—they were active, they were writing. Roger was playing the guitar. If I had said right then and there, 'Listen chaps, I don't feel like making this record,' they looked as if they would have gone on and done something without me.

"And they weren't making any demonstrations to me, either. They were just doing it because they wanted to do it. It was really strange. I thought I'd really like to play with these guys. Do you know what I mean? One of the big problems is that it's been a long time since I felt that way because I always thought, 'Fuck, I've got to get everybody animated in the studio and try to fire 'em up, got to take them in a masterpiece to play, which they'd condescend to record with their monolithic dinosaur group.

"That's always the way I'd thought it. But this was just sort of low key. Six weeks later the album was finished and it was a natural, unconsidered, spontaneous record, the kind I would imagine a brand new group could easily make. Perhaps in the context of a lot of Who records, particularly *Who's Next* or *Quadrophenia*, it's not quite such a landmark, but from our point of view it's a tremendous record."

A question about the cover of *It's Hard*, which juxtaposes the title over a child playing a video game in which the Who are getting zapped, hits a tender nerve.

"I had very little to do with the cover and the title," he answers quickly. Puffing and fidgeting on the couch, he goes on to explain how, in some areas, the Who's vaunted internal dissension can be counterproductive. "One of the problems with the band is that we very, very rarely agree on policy. So where we should have a terrific album cover, we have a rather spineless cover because nobody works hard enough for it. Nobody fights. Now that we're all in our late 30s and we *do* listen to what the other person has to say, we're even more boring."

So what now? Stay a boring old solo sod until that fatal day on the golf course? "I don't really know," Townshend replies. There might be a European tour, most assuredly a stadium date in London, maybe one more Who album. All in all, he seems more certain of what he *doesn't* want to get involved in, most notably more film projects, "because of the cumbersome nature of the film industry," Townshend explains. "I saw Nick Roeg work five projects at the same time, trying to make five deals. Now I know you're not supposed to stand back and work and use your own money (the Who learned this costly lesson on *The Kids Are Alright*), but if I was Nick Roeg I'd get a day job, make 10,000 quid and make a 16 millimeter film. I'd go back to art. I don't think I could stand that kind of tension."

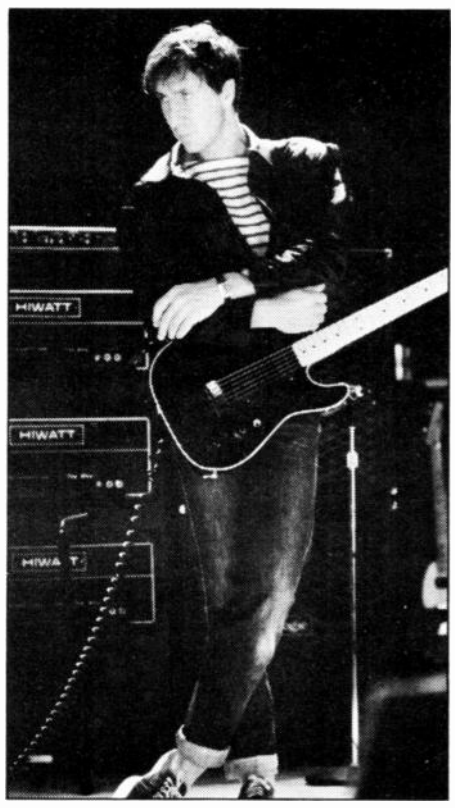
This is Townshend reverting to the impulsive brat, the punk of Ealing Art School who learned that self-expression could be as instant as, yes, smashing a Rickenbacker. It was one of his earliest roles. He plays it less frequently these days, preferring instead to temper his impulsiveness with a wisdom born of hard-won experience in the music business—a business he readily acknowledges offers him a degree of artistic freedom he might not find elsewhere. "For all the shit that's been tossed about the record industry, it's one of the most flexible areas to work in and the only area you're readily given money with no questions asked. You don't even have to have a hit. That's why this fuss about home taping is important. It's not depriving me of any money. I get paid lots. It's denying new talent the money for development."

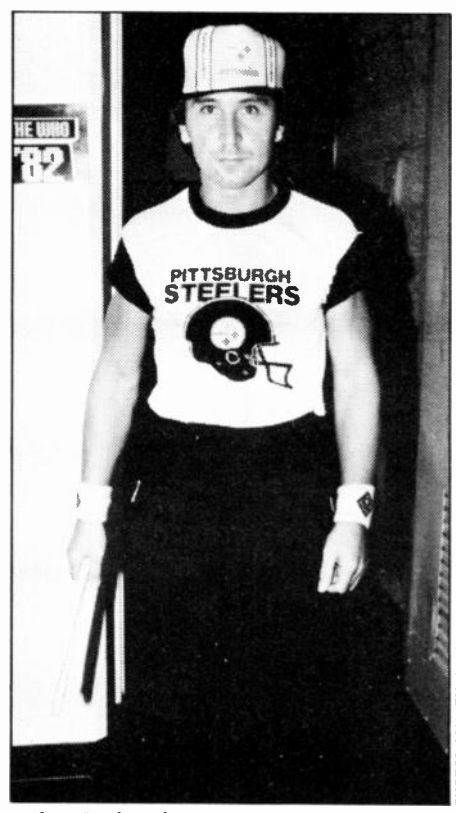
ENTWISTLE

is roomed a couple of floors below Townshend in a relatively austere suite, although the Dolly Madison does not scale down to a Holiday Inn mode of minimalism. Where Townshend travels with a four-

WHO'S STAND

PHOTO PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE





PHOTOS JONATHAN GROSS, NEAL PRESTON, NEAL PRESTON

Pete in a serene moment onstage; John Entwistle in full regalia; Kenney Jones, one brick shy of a load.

rack portable studio, Entwistle, who by his own admission "spends money as fast as I get it," surrounds himself with high-tech toys.

A graphite Steinberger bass rests on a chair, a Toshiba portable stereo in a specially-built travel case is perched on a dining table, a JVC video system, also in a custom case, is on the floor. Entwistle is dressed in his "uniform"—that is, a tacky polyester shirt, vest, jeans and a most prominent accessory—a huge "Boris The Spider" pendant, around his neck. Could the Who survive if this man hired a fashion consultant? He's not trendy and he couldn't give a shit. He lives for the road, all else be damned.

Among the Who, Entwistle was the most deeply affected by drummer Keith Moon's passing. Together they were the real rockers in the band, the punks, the borstal boys. When the Who were off the road in 1975, Entwistle went out and put together a short-lived outfit called Ox; and when the sun finally sets on the Who's empire, Entwistle, more so than Daltrey or Townshend, is an odds-on favorite to pursue a regular schedule of touring. That the Who pulled back so drastically on concerts as the '70s wore on is a continuing source of frustration to Entwistle. For one, he understands how special the band is on a good night in concert.

"I never really wanted it to change, I wanted it to stay the same," says the grey-bearded bassist. "For Keith and I, it seemed the band had worked so hard doing ballbusting tours in the early days, and then once we started earning money, we stopped the touring, cut it all down. We had worked for absolutely nothing.

"I couldn't care less if the Who made another album. The thing I care about is the stage shows. I believe the magic comes from playing different every night and trying to get ideas to work for something better than it was the night before."

DALTREY IS

further downstairs in his suite. Tanned, taut and sporting a modified ducktail, the diminutive singer, with his square, almost surly features, looks like he should be playing wing for a soccer team. He remains the "man" in the band, the father figure to Townshend's prodigal son.

Townshend claims he had to convince Daltrey to allow him back into the Who before recording commenced on *It's Hard*, and his story of this incident illustrates how much influence Daltrey wields in a band that is widely perceived to begin and end with Pete.

Relates Townshend: "After the English tour at the beginning of last year (during which he and Daltrey fought to the point of bloodletting), I simply didn't want to work with them and cancelled a European tour and basically goofed for the rest of the year.

"Roger felt that *that* was it and I was a lost soul; the band then started thinking seriously about splitting up. At the end of last year I suddenly realized I was in a real spiral and I had to do something about it starting with alcohol (cutting a bottle-plus per day brandy habit, not to mention heroin and cocaine). I then had to put my family together. Then I spoke to Roger and had to convince him that I really wanted to work with the band and wasn't going to goof off. Most of all I had to convince Roger that it was going to make me happy, because that was the thing he was most distressed about. He'd hate to see me go through a tour with the end result of it being a self-destructive depression."

Daltrey, as someone on the tour put it, doesn't believe he's a good interview and therefore keeps his distance from the press. Yet at the odd moment you can get a word or two out of him; enough, anyway, to learn that his attitude towards Townshend in the past year grew out of a deep, and not altogether unrealistic concern for what the Who were becoming.

"I'm the one who wanted to stop touring," he claims. "I thought it was important to stop before we started going downhill, which was in the cards. We are approaching our 40s and I, for one, find it hard identifying with being a rock 'n' roll singer sometimes. I mean, my son is 18 years old: He should be the singer. I should just be the dad.

"I didn't always think this way," he adds. "But when Pete went out on his binge, something happened to me. I was deeply hurt. And I no longer felt about the Who the way I had. I feel we are still going to do something truly great. But it's over."

THERE IS

no sign of greatness in the backstage atmosphere in the Capital Centre. Out front in the hall, Washington's royalist minions have come out of the closet with their Union Jacks, and their noise indicates they are ready for some form of rock insurrection. Occasionally, the crowd comes together for a surging call of "Whoooooooo" not unlike that for "Bruuuuuuuccccce."

But behind the curtain, this might just be another Journey merchandising meeting. It's definitely not an event of Stonesian proportions, and for visiting celebrities we must make do with one very starstruck Joan Jett, who came down to the show as part of her birthday party. The Schlitz cameras are here too, documenting nothing more than the ticking of the clock. Townshend appears in the same clothes he wore during the interview. It's all very run of the mill.

But the Who, as Entwistle indicated, haven't really made an indelible live statement, since Woodstock and *Live At Leeds*. You do "Summertime Blues," don't you? Stones tours are built to last, even the lesser exercises; but broach the subject of the Who's last decade on the road and most can remember only Cincinnati or the time in San Francisco when Moon collapsed on stage and a young drummer in the audience came up and lived out everyone's fantasy. The rest is just a blur of twirling microphone cords.

Is it anyone's fault but the band's? From 1975 to this tour, they played virtually the same set, adding a few cuts from *Who Are You?* for the 1979 and '80 jaunts. In a face-to-face interview a couple of years ago in *Melody Maker*, the Jam's Paul Weller scolded Townshend: "If you plan to go on, change your set."

Townshend says his hands are no less bound today than they were then: "One of the things is that you play what works best on stage; and what you play, most of it, has to fit into a level of dynamic energy which is there as soon as all four of us get out there. It would be impossible for Roger and I to walk out on stage and go into 'Lay Down Sally.' The material has to fit in with the atmosphere that is already out there." And indeed there are moments in the show when the desire, drive and urgency of the Who combine into something truly resonant. But for the most part, the boys use this indoor date as a warmup, having had only a Birmingham, England date coming in. A pointed pastiche, focussing on *Quadrophenia* and *It's Hard*— distant cousins in their "individual-and-collective" spirit—goes down well, although the middle section slumps. Response becomes polite and Townshend waves his arms trying to get the crowd going through the bog of "5:15".

They close with the exultant strains of "Won't Get Fooled Again," with Townshend offering some of his most graceful leaps of the night. Still, no big deal this one, and the Who pack it up after one encore, which includes the set's most enjoyable tune, "Twist and Shout," with a vocal by Entwistle.

For one brief moment, it appears Townshend is going to smash his guitar for this next-to-last D.C.-area audience (they played two shows here). Alas, he pauses at the top of his backswing and slices instead through a convenient microphone stand.

Maybe later for a Fender splinter bomb. Control, Townshend says, is the operative word this year.

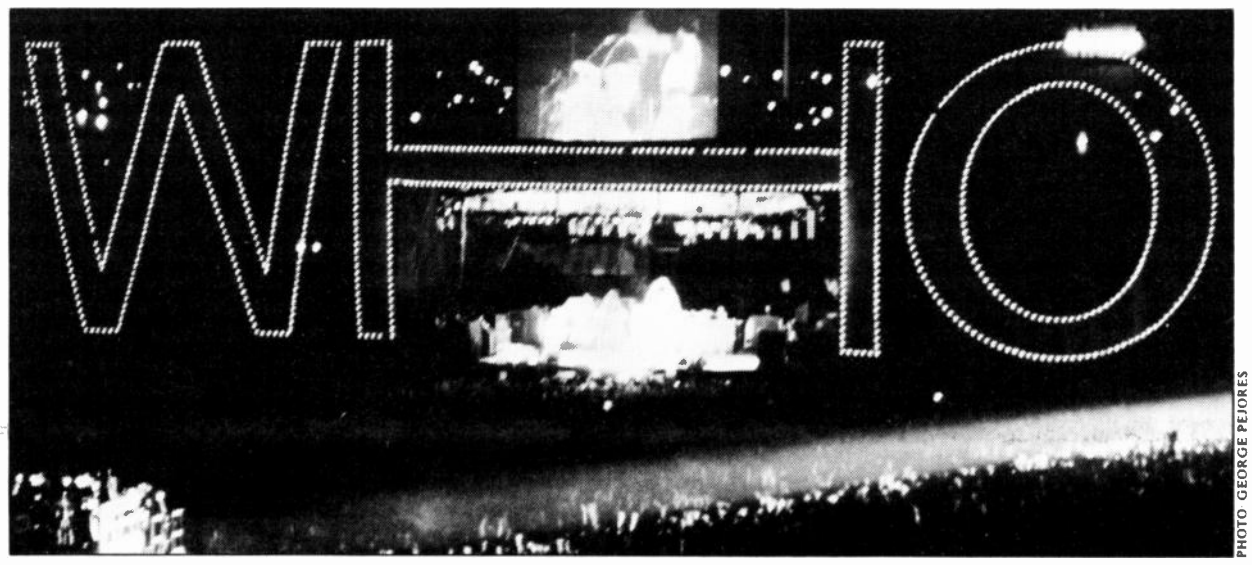


PHOTO GEORGE PEJORES

Sound Signature

Mick Fleetwood's Easy Beats

By Fred Schruers

When Lindsey Buckingham first entered a recording studio with Mick Fleetwood and the revamped, Californian edition of Fleetwood Mac in 1975, he was a bit overawed about playing with his heroes—until he gave Mick some instructions that the drummer couldn't immediately translate. "Lindsey was used to playing music with jigsaw parts, almost like some sort of musical scientist," Mick recalls. "He asked me to play some relatively simple thing, and I told him I'd have to work it out first. That blew him away. 'But I've been listening to you for all these . . .' And that was his first excursion into realizing you can do something without planning it out."

People are always embarrassing Mick Fleetwood by telling him what a great drummer he is. There's an easy, instinctual swing to his playing, a sound that is direct yet propulsive, and thankfully free of the ornate hot licks most drummers feel compelled to interject. He plays with the spare, deliberate snap and flow of groove-masters like legendary Memphis/Stax sessionman Al Jackson, or Chicago bluesmen Fred Bellow and Sam Lay—moving people through musical sensitivity rather than displays of calisthenic prowess. From the martial pummeling of "Go Your Own Way" to the ever-so-delicate hesitations of "Dreams," Fleetwood has established a distinctive sound signature—but don't try telling *him* that. "That 'Dreams' bit probably came about 'cause John (McVie) and I didn't know what we were doing," he laughs. "I do any number of things I could never repeat again."

Fleetwood initially identified with "blues players, New Orleans bands—music with a feel to it. Those guys may not be great technicians, but they swing like the clappers, which is the whole point of drumming to me—that ease of movement, you know?"

His key signpost has always been to follow the lead of his guitarists and singers—to accentuate their statements. "I'm eternally grateful to Peter Green for something he made me aware of, which was never to worry about being clever, but to *emote*. A lot of African music is shit-complicated if you pick it apart, but they put it across with emotion and wonderful movement—*that* is rhythm to me. The African players make it all very easy to listen to; you're not confronted with this uneasy feeling of stopping and starting. I don't personally like music which has no *flow*, and I think a lot of very talented musicians make that mistake, of not realizing what the essence is.

"I play to the song, trying to be supportive. I hope I'm sensitive to the dynamics that I got from those basic blues structures, where you get a rapport going with the lead player through the drums. You have to have that give and take, and a lot of drummers I don't particularly enjoy are more occupied with playing their drums, rather than being a person relating to someone they're meant to be playing in harmony with—they're not bloody listening! I'd much rather be known for holding down a good 2/4, than ruffling my feathers and rampaging around the drums anytime someone leaves an empty space."

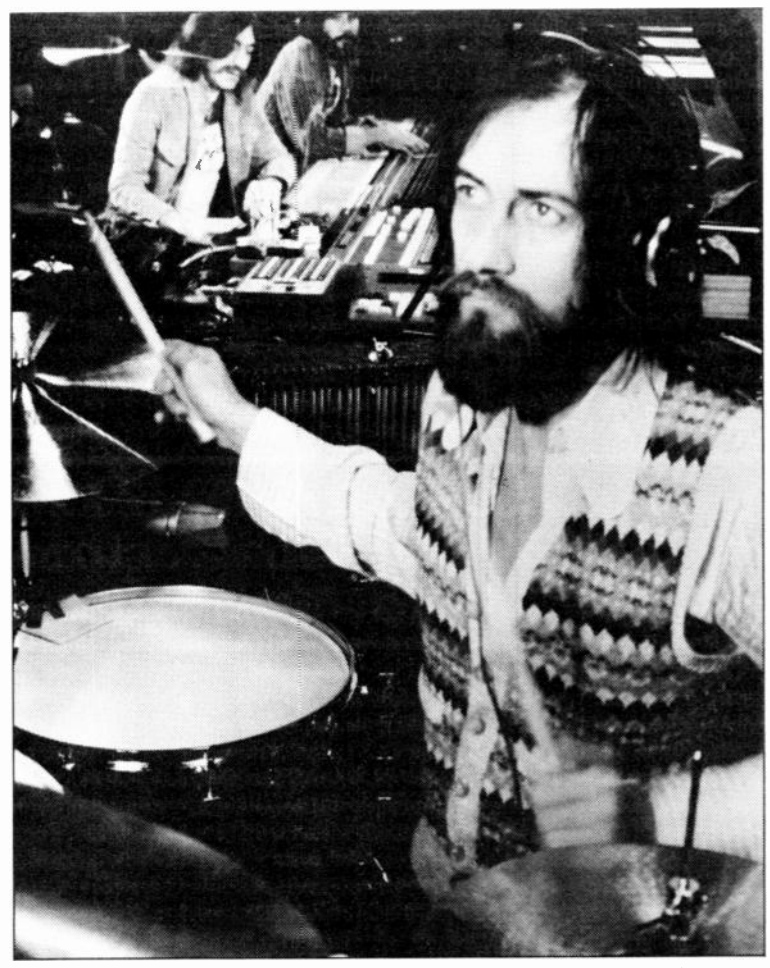


PHOTO: STEVEN FINESTONE

Mick Fleetwood: "Never worry about being clever—emote."

Fleetwood's approach to equipment is equally straightforward. His basic set-up is comprised of Tama drums and Paiste cymbals, with an oversized kit for the arenas and a much smaller set for the studio. "Yeah, they're just big and healthy," he smiles, referring to his stage kit, with its odd-sized power toms, 20" floor tom and (gasp!) 28" bass drum. "It's like a cannon, that one—it works, like WOOOF, this big gust of air. You need that in those enormous halls, because they just swallow up the low frequencies." And in tuning his kit, Fleetwood admits that he unwittingly mirrors the slightly out-of-tune vocal harmonies of Buckingham-McVie-Nicks. "That interplay creates a tension within itself, so it pulls, but it's still harmonious—it draws you in. I tune to the sound of the room, using your basic frosted Ambassador heads. I've tried other sorts, but there's no *crack* to them when you get turned up. Also, I never tune the resonances out. I like the drums to have some life in them—I like an open sound, tuning the kit so each drum is sympathetic to the other, like a choir. Just so long as it hasn't got some weird little harmonic coming off it into the mics. God, I hate a kit that's all covered in gaffer's tape—it's like playing practice pads."

Then, of course, there's Fleetwood's use of the African talking drum, a concert highlight. Still, his recent trip to Ghana was not intended to invest him, or his 1981 lp *The Visitor*, with a command of African music. "I'm not Mr. Polyrhythm, and I wasn't trying to make a connoisseur's album. But if people felt that at no point was there a meshing of things, I'd be disappointed—I'd have failed." Fleetwood is now hoping to steal time to head out on another musical excursion, back to Africa or perhaps Brazil, yet even for someone with his commercial credentials, it's an uphill battle to get support from a label—or radio programmers—for such projects. "I don't know if people are scared of new things, but the people *in control* of getting the music out there may be scared—people are not given a comfortable opportunity to hear 'exotic music.' When they see me in concert with the African drum, they probably just think it's some tall madman up there hitting a block of wood or something. I would like to think otherwise, but . . ."

Sound Signature

Billy Zoom's Chainsaw Guitar

By Dan Forte

Denise, my wife, listens to the new stuff, but my record collection stops at about 1963," admits Billy Zoom. "Depending on my mood, I listen to Hank Williams, or old '60s R&B, Ronnie Hawkins, Django Reinhardt, or Lambert, Hendricks & Ross."

Although his band, X, is quite possibly the premier musical aggregation among American "new stuff," and he is obviously one of new wave's most accomplished guitarists, Billy Zoom is in many ways an anachronism. From his blonde pompadour and baby face to his Silver Jet metal-fleck Gretsch guitar, Zoom looks (and sometimes sounds) more '50s than '80s. But when he teamed with bassist John Doe, drummer D.J. Bonebrake, and lead singer Exene Cervenka in 1977, it was clear that X had stumbled onto something very different, and very new.

Billy began playing "cowboy guitar" at age six in his hometown of Davenport, Iowa and studied saxophone, clarinet, flute, piano, violin and accordion. He played in a variety of R&B and lounge groups, but his true love was the rockabilly sounds made by guitarists such as Carl Perkins, Eddie Cochran, Scotty More, Cliff Gallup, and James Burton. "I studied them pretty thoroughly," he says. After recording several sides for Rollin' Rock Records, Zoom broke up his rockabilly band after seeing the Ramones perform live. "I read a review of a Ramones show in '76," he recounts, "and the reviewer was just trashing them. He said they played everything too fast, their songs didn't have enough changes, the guitar player never took a solo. I thought, 'Gee, I bet that sounds great.' So I went to see them next time they came to town, and they were the first band I'd enjoyed seeing live in about eight years. To me, it just sounded like rockabilly turned up to 10."

Through a newspaper ad Billy met John Doe, who soon brought his girlfriend, Exene, to a rehearsal and asked her to sing. "Up to that time," according to Zoom, "we had a lot of good ideas, but we sounded like a lot of other people. With Exene it started sounding like something different. We had a couple of different drummers, and I had this running joke that I wanted a drummer with just a parade snare who just hit it on 2 and 4 real hard. John called me about 1:30 one morning and said, 'Hey, I'm over at the Masque, there's this band called the Eyes, and they got this drummer with a parade snare—just beating the shit out of it on 2 and 4.' I said, 'Okay, ask him what he wants to join our band. Promise him anything.' So D.J. said he wanted a lifetime supply of Coca-Cola and bubblegum."

Rockabilly, surf, and Chuck Berry influences crop up in much of Zoom's work with X, though his distorted guitar sound is often anything but reverential, sounding more like a McCulloch chainsaw. "When I first started playing with X," he recalls, "I knew I had to play real loud to get that crunchy heavy metal tone. And that was probably the only kind of music I'd never played. I just turned my amp up all the way and tried to imitate the stuff I'd heard on the radio but never really listened to. 'Don't all those guys do something like this a lot?' But I didn't actually know any of the heavy metal riffs, so I sort of played fractured rockabilly riffs, trying to sound *sort of* like a heavy metal guitar player *kind of*. That developed into the way I play now."

Billy Zoom is one of the few rock guitarists since George Harrison with an affection for Gretsch hollow-body electrics. "Gretsches are the best guitars there are," he states. "They sound good and they're real versatile. My '58 Strat isn't near as versatile as my Gretsch. You can play heavy metal or jazz or anything on it. I play a '55 Silver Jet with X; got it for $35.00 from a guy at the Masque. Then I paid $600.00 for another one to have as a spare. And I have a '58 Chet Atkins model. They're all stock except for the tune-o-matic bridges I put on. The only repair guy who will ever touch my Gretsches is a guy named Steve Soest at Main Street Music in Anaheim."

Zoom isn't quite as particular when it comes to his amplifier. "As long as it's a Fender," he feels, "it's okay. My favorite's the old brown Concert amp or the 4 x 10 Bassman. Onstage I just take a Quad Reverb— it's a Twin with four 12's instead of two. In the studio I use a 50-watt Traynor bass amp with a homemade 4 x 10 cabinet. It's one of the most terrible sounding amps I ever heard; anything past 2½ or 3 is just total distortion."

Over the course of X's three albums—*Los Angeles* and *Wild Gift* for Slash and *Under The Big Black Sun* on Elektra—Billy's romantic respect for the past has often been at odds with the high technology of the present. "Everybody's forgotten how to make good records," he sighs. "The hardest thing to do in the studio today is to get something to sound natural. The multi-track aspect has made it too easy on engineers. Most new engineers never had to learn anything about acoustics and miking things properly. They just separate everything totally and put everything on its own track. This time, at Cherokee Studios with Brad Gilderman, it was a lot better. He came up with the idea of putting me in a really dead room miked up close, like Van Halen, and damned if he wasn't right. But to me, taking advantage of the technology is just struggling with the studio to get things to sound the way they did twenty years ago."

PHOTO: PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Billy Zoom: At odds with today's high technology.

Sound Signature

Gibson's New Gold Standard

By Chip Stern

After years of ill-conceived "new" models (the Howard Roberts Fusion and Chet Atkins Electric Classical being innovative exceptions), Gibson appears ready to reclaim some of its mystique with a limited edition re-think of what many consider to be the ultimate rock and roll guitar—the Les Paul Standard. This limited edition isn't merely a "vintage" clone, but rather a summation of Gibson's most important developments on the Les Paul since its introduction in 1952, and a belated response to the demands of players for the ultimate Les Paul of old.

In the 1930s and '40s, *Mr.* Les Paul was a top jazz and recording artist. Before he perfected his design for an 8-track tape recorder and concepts of multitracking, overdubbing and ambient effects such as echo (paving the way for modern rock albums), he was experimenting with guitar designs—trying to minimize feedback and extend the duration of a note. As an experiment he mounted tuners, pickups and bridge on a solid block of wood, later adding solid side-pieces to make it look more like a guitar. The people at Gibson were offended by the concept and suggested he attach straw to "The Log" as he'd dubbed it, and make a broom. As it so happens, among Les's Californian neighbors were guitarist Merle Travis and a machinist named Leo Fender, so, literally over the back fence, there was an exchange of ideas that led to Fender introducing the first commercially successful solid-body electric, the Broadcaster (later re-named the Telecaster) in 1948.

Gibson responded by designing what they thought would be a real jazz snob's guitar. But with its luminous greenish-gold finish, massive mahogany body (for warmth and sustain), carved "deep-dish" maple top (for attack and brilliance), one-piece mahogany set neck (with a 24 $^3/_4$" scale length as opposed to the traditional 25$^1/_2$", for reduced string tension and softer action), rosewood fretboard, two single-coil pickups and a trapeze-type tailpiece (which Les Paul used to palm chords, pedal-steel style), the Les Paul Standard was instead adopted by the blues and rock crowd. Somewhat confused by this initial response, Gibson refined the instrument by replacing the trapeze tailpiece with an innovative tune-o-matic bridge and stop bar tailpiece combination (allowing individual intonation adjustments for each string, and user-adjustment of down-pressure along the neck). In 1957 engineers Seth Lover and Walter Fuller applied for a patent on the concept of a double-coil, humbucking pickup (the PAFs); in 1958 they introduced the cherry sunburst Standard, and those models, with their book-matched, flame-maple tops, became *the* most prized Les Pauls among players and collectors—because in 1960 Gibson discontinued the Les Paul in favor of a double-cutaway, all-mahogany model—the SG.

PHOTO DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Les Paul 30th Anniversary: 1950s, souped-up T-bird cool.

Re-introduced in 1968, modern Les Pauls were criticized mainly on the basis of sound (too midrangey, not enough bite) and feel (slippery, somehow *too* easy to play). By returning to the old headstock pitch of 17° (instead of the more recent 14°) on the LP-30, there's much more down-pressure on the nut; this yields a much firmer action, which while still agreeably low, provides much truer intonation, particularly when holding notes, and hammering off on others. Additional benefits are increased sustain and tuning stability—even with the pearloid Kluson-type tuning machines—plus more string and attack sound, not just the hyped up output of the pickups. Also, by tweaking with the resonant peaks, they've allowed more highs to pass through, so these PAFs don't overemphasize the dark character of the LP-30's massive body. The bridge pickup has a terrific squawk, just like the '50s Les Pauls, and wonderful harmonics for split-tone, Jeff Beck-Tele effects, while the neck pickup produces a pearly "jazz" tonality, with just enough edge to maintain definition, even when rolling off volume. Nothing anonymous about the sound of this guitar—plenty of volume and sustain without becoming overbearing, and lots of *character*.

The one-piece mahogany neck is very sleek and velvety ('50s necks were much chunkier, to accommodate heavier string tension); three-piece maple neck models seem to provide a sharper, snappier attack. The deep-dish top lets your arm rest comfortably just in the center-spot between the pickups, so you can easily mute notes with your palm for funky rhythmatic effects. And the gold finish is just pure, 1950s, souped-up-T-Bird cool; in fact, the numerous stages of lacquer and buffing add considerably to the price, but when you open the case the guitar smells sweet; that wood is still alive and breathing—it will age and mellow, take on the personality of the player, unlike many exceptional Japanese instruments finished with polyurethane (you'd better love the way they *initially* sound, because the character of the wood is literally frozen). If Gibson ever abandons their classic finish they should simply pack it in.

In short, the Les Paul 30th Anniversary model is everything it's cracked up to be—an instrument worth selling your first-born for (well, almost), at $1199 for the maple neck, $1299 for the mahogany neck, and $129.50 for the vintage case. The plan is to introduce the key features of the LP-30 to the rest of the Les Paul line in 1983, so you no longer have to fantasize about what it must have been like to play a '50s Les Paul—now you can own one.

Sound Signature

Zapp: New Funk, Old Feeling

By Chip Stern

A kaleidoscope of colors comes pouring out of the monitors in Warner Brothers's New York conference room, a funky mardi gras of sound, somehow ultra-modern and ancient at the same time. I'm listening to *Zapp II* with the songwriting/arranging Troutman brothers, percussionist Larry and multi-instrumentalist/co-producer Roger, both decked out in *serious* eye-talian style suits right out of a "Man from Glad" commercial. Their brothers (bassist-keyboardist/co-producer Zapp and drummer Lester) are nowhere to be seen, but I can feel them kicking me in the chest, while a vocal dialogue between rhythmatic guitars, keyboards, horns and singers pulses left-right, right-left in the stereo mix. There's a swimming sensation to "Dance Floor," a kind of futuristic hambone rave-up, as I find myself backstroking through waves of synthesized vocals (like a chorus of Jews Harps), cleverly voiced in spread harmonies. Vocorders?

The taciturn Roger eyes me through his shades, as brother Larry speaks up. "No, that's a Voice Box, and it's difficult to play. Like with a Vocorder, if you spoke into it and pressed a key you'd come out sounding like Donald Duck and wouldn't have to do a damn thing. But if you put a Voice Box in your mouth and wanted it to vibrate, you'd have to *sing*—really sing." Hmmm, very interesting I think, as my mind flashes on B.B. King, Wes Montgomery and Jimi Hendrix during the course of Roger's sundry guitar breaks, when suddenly "Doo Wa Ditty (Blow That Thing)" takes me back to the days of doo wopp, street-corner harmonizing and harmonica skiffle. Roger lights up. "Yeah, we wanted to use an instrument that's universal, and harmonica's in music from Switzerland, country & western, disgusting, hard, broke-down blues, even in jazz. That'll catch the ear of every listener. Right? So using that and some 1982, electronic, slappery-type funk as a bedding, we tried to incorporate lyric content from the 1950s—that is, if you're going to say nothing, then say *something* as you say nothing . . ."

Larry falls out with laughter. "Right," he adds, "there's somethin' wrong with sayin' nothin' and still bein' offensive. Why say nothin' and then say fuck? If you're going to say nothin' at least make it a pleasure to listen to and sing along with."

Zapp is a road band that made good, a hard-working, home-grown product of Dayton, Ohio, and the vision of their father, Rufus Troutman Sr.; a slick, progressive band animated by technology, but in no way dependent on it. "You see," Larry explains, "my father and mother realized at an early age that Roger was a very special talent, and they put a lot of energy and money into his instrumentation—and there are no instruments he can't play—so in order to recoup some of that, as the record companies say, it was necessary for us to have a band."

And unlike so many groups sitting around, praying for a Big Daddy, Zapp took to the road and built a following. "You see," Larry says, "waiting is a habit, and that means you'll just wait more—and nothing ever happens. We'd go to a town, advertise ourselves, build a base and work—all the way from Tacoma, Washington, to Hialeah, Florida."

"And when you listen to our music," Roger adds, "you'll get a sense of having heard pieces before—you'll identify with it—because I'm always drawing on popular roots. I mean, who's so damn creative, anyway? It's like pieces of a puzzle, broken down, put through a machine and put back together. But we keep technology in perspective because when we tear songs apart electronically and piece 'em back, it still sounds like old Motown—songs that were done one shot, one deal, one mic, one room, hit it and bam. And that sound is achieved not in the mixdown or mastering, but in the inception."

Though Roger and Larry take pride in Troutman Enterprises's 24-track, fully automated studio, they're secure in the knowledge that they could achieve similar results without any sophisticated gear. "If you don't use the stuff right, it diminishes your capabilities. I mean, Ray Charles would go to all these places with horrible pianos, with maybe one register in tune, and he'd keep peckin' until he got an octave together, and he would just come up with all these weird sounds. The delight of it all for him was that he was going to play it right and make it happen *on anything*. And instead of making him an inferior performer, it made him a superior performer."

Nevertheless, Zapp eventually got to the better goods, and Roger's guitar arsenal is imposing: a Gibson L-5, Flying V and Les Paul Custom; a G&L 500 Strat-type guitar; a double-neck Rickenbacker, bass and guitar; three Ovation six-string acoustic-electrics and one 12-string; and a Roland Guitar Synthesizer. "For mellow, progressive, Wes-George Benson, fat, mature licks, I lean towards the L-5, mainly because of the richness of the body sound, while the G&L is very effective for rhythmatic things. And the hell with all the sound coming from your amp. If you're going to make the sound, make it mechanically. The guitar is like a percussion instrument, anyway—you can *feel* it. When you're stroking with a big pick and big strings, there's a certain amount of pain, but you don't want to stop because it feels so good—you have to play. So you tend to *attack* it with that aggressiveness, just like the skin on a drum. And that's what makes the sound really happen, for me."

Larry and Roger Troutman: **"Waiting is a habit."**

RECORDS

Men Without Women
Little Steven and The Disciples of Soul
EMI-America

By Wayne King

If you happen to be one of the lucky few aware of Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes' 1978 masterpiece *Hearts Of Stone*, then get ready, because *Men Without Women* is the record you've been waiting for ever since. The premier release by Little Steven (aka Sugar Miami Steve Van Zandt, rhythm guitarist for the E Street Band and one of rock's true Renaissance men) and his Disciples of Soul is so perfectly constructed and performed that it just about defines what rock can still be in this day and age.

The legendary status of *Hearts of Stone* stems from the unified sound producer Van Zandt elicited from the Jukes in which emotion was imparted by a pure and vital structure that almost re-invented white R&B. Where *Men Without Women* impresses is in its diversity, both in the music's pacing and in its texture. Unlike *Hearts*, which alternated from ballad to rocker, *Men's* sequence is varied, and depends greatly on the unique sonic coloring—congas, maracas, chimes, flute, accordion—that Van Zandt adds where necessary. The only hint of formula comes on the numbers most like *Hearts*' uptempo tracks: "Inside Of Me," "Angel Eyes," "Forever." The presence of *Hearts*' sit-in drummer, E Streeter Max Weinberg, and the former Miami Horns (now called La Bamba's Mambo Men) probably accounts for the similarities, but these are irrelevant in light of how fresh the old formula is rendered. Perhaps not so coincidentally, the aforementioned songs, along with "Princess of Little Italy," also feature the most deeply-ingrained lyrical clichés. The primary topic of discussion is a man's need for a woman, but Van Zandt's observations often start out on a certain macho level that can appear patronizing. Like much of Bruce Spingsteen's recent writing, Van Zandt's compositions use a common relationship as a reference point, but whether or not they succeed in conjuring up archetype or stereotype is all a matter of perspective. Given rock's misogynist history, Miami Steve actually comes out fairly clean. It's important to note that soul, the man's consuming passion, often dealt with deeper questions by way of the association between men and women, and that one would hardly expect enlightenment from seeing the words printed to, let's say, a Wilson Pickett song.

On the other hand, the positive qualities offered by Miami Steve's on-again, off-again small-time hood persona are loyalty and a rigorous push for independence; "I've worked hard so nobody owns me," he asserts. Both his devotion to form and his willingness to pay off obligations are demonstrated here. By means of a vocal which evokes the nasal pitch of Keith Richards, Van Zandt, in the title song, makes good on a stylistic debt owed the most valuable Rolling Stone. And the followup, "Under The Gun," offers a step-by-step lesson in how the World's Greatest Rock 'n' Roll Band staked its claim to that title.

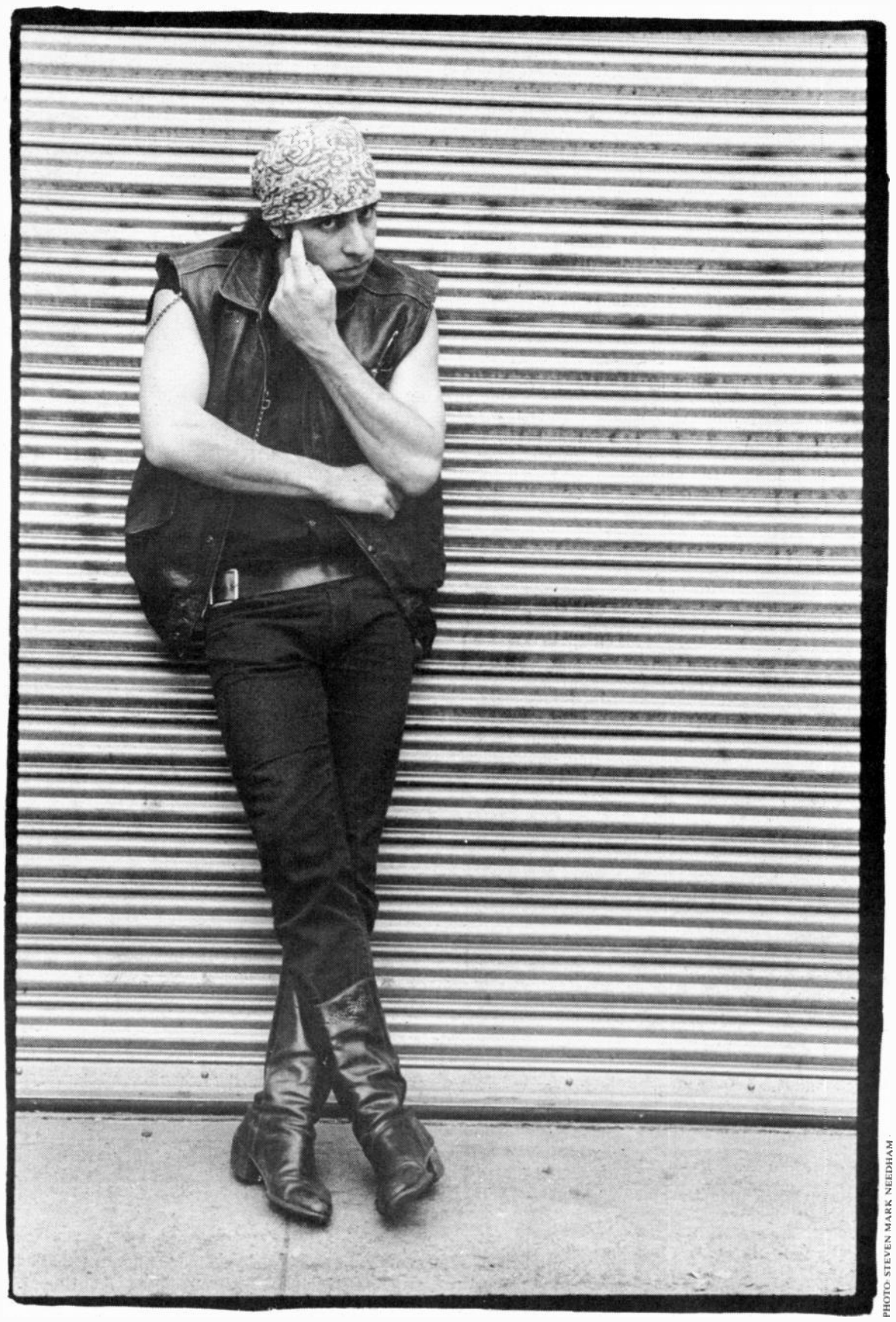


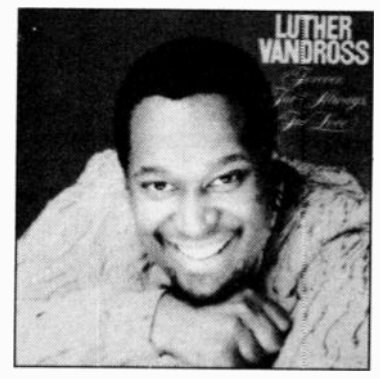
PHOTO STEVEN MARK NEEDHAM

Consumed By Soul's Passion, Miami Steve Makes His Stand

From an opening tinged with Eastern-influenced horn playing that would have done Brian Jones proud, layers of instrumental work—slicing rhythm guitar, solid off-the-beat drumming, heavy maracas—pile up with such relentless precision that the effect is not one of skilled re-creation but of knowledge gained firsthand. Unlike most records and bands relying on rock's older forms, none of the music in *Men Without Women* ever hints at mere replication or revivalism.

Van Zandt's assimilation of many of rock's classic urges is so rich, so complete, that any number of moments stand out as examples of how well he's succeeded on every level. For me, one such instance, buried deep in the lovely ballad "Until The Good Is Gone," reveals the extent of the artist's lifetime passion. The most poignant line in the song remembers: "It was something on the radio saying . . ."—the singing now drops to a beckoning whisper—"come on, come on." Only after repeated listenings to that recollection of rock's siren call did I realize those words form not only the title to the Chuck Berry tune that launched the Stones' recording career, but that "Come On" is also the same number which Steve quoted from on guitar when being introduced in his initial tour with Springsteen.

For the Who or the Stones, who've come to epitomize both the powerful traditions and distanced decadence of the old wave that punk tried vainly to shatter, the option of dissipation was always open. To Van Zandt, such an option is unthinkable; it is no accident that the name of his band suggests discipline and religion. Only by a concerted effort can rock's will be maintained, and only by such an abiding faith in the music's redemptive qualities can its power be summoned; he claims on "Inside Of Me" that "it never died, it's still alive inside of me." On the album's closer, "I've Been Waiting," Van Zandt sings "Don't you tell me the dream is over" as an organ hums solemnly in the background, thus arousing a remembrance of the music's gospel roots and its message of salvation. At its best, *Men Without Women* is a profound, deeply-felt statement of belief in the transcendent capacity of rock 'n' roll; its joyful noise should inspire those who listen as greatly as it does those who create.



Forever, For Always, For Love
Luther Vandross
Epic

Don't Walk Away
Sweet Pea Atkinson
Ze/Island

By Vince Aletti

It may have been his debut album, last year's unexpectedly accomplished and immensely successful *Never Too Much*, that sent Luther Vandross shooting into sudden, dazzling ascendancy as the brightest new star of soul, but it's his work since then as a producer/songwriter—notably on Aretha Franklin's stunning *Jump To It* album—that confirms and consolidates that position. If Luther's own record raised impossibly high hopes for a follow-up, his sensitive, generous and intelligent work with others only intensified those expectations. It's not so surprising, then, that the second Vandross album, rather than playing to this inflated anticipation, opts for something rather less spectacular. *Forever, For Always, For Love* is a modest, charming, comfortable collection of love songs—all but one originals—that feels like a sigh of relief and quiet satisfaction, as if Luther had worked through (and realized) his most compelling ambitions on the production projects and just wanted to relax here.

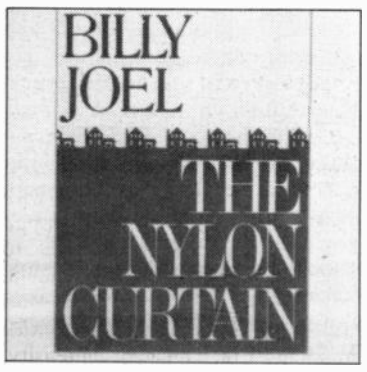
As a result, the album shimmers with intimacy and sweet delight but it's far from gripping. Without a passionate peak like "Never Too Much" or a dramatic tour de force like "A House Is Not A Home," *Forever, For Always, For Love* falls back on more delicate shadings of emotion; rich, creamy vocals; and an infinitely stylish, classically restrained production. The album is cozy, a pillow of pleasure, but after a while one longs for a jolt of juicier, fiercer feelings. Working with this more subdued emotional palette, however, Vandross proves to be endlessly expressive, a master of nuance and phrasing, sighs and whispers. He fills his songs with moments of hushed intensity, surges of joy, rapturous, rippling scat work—all sustained and accented by understated but grandly orchestral arrangements of instruments and voices. It's all perfection, subtlety, exquisite polish—and yet the material never seems smothered in technique or choked with control; Vandross lets it breathe, pulse and glow from within.

But after a while all this splendor makes me squirm. Vandross is so refined here he's nearly stripped his songs of tension, drama, dark edges, and surprise. His style is so relentlessly smooth that it offers very little to grab hold of; if you can't sink into this lovely romantic haze, you slide right off. When Luther calls for everybody to roll back the rugs for a house party in "Bad Boy," the album's first single release, you're more than ready to break loose (especially when he brings in tasty bits of Sam Cooke's "Having a Party" for spice). Yet in spite of a lively scenario and all the right ingredients, the party never quite takes off; it bubbles but doesn't boil. The album, unfortunately, suffers a similar fate.

Perhaps Luther should listen to Sweet Pea Atkinson, who advises, "Dig deep. Like a knife/Get yourself a slice of life/Dig deep. Don't be so nice/If it hurts, you're doing it right." That's from Atkinson's debut album, *Don't Walk Away*, produced by the decidedly left-field Detroit duo known as David and Don Was or Was (Not Was). Sweet Pea doesn't consistently dig deep here—in fact, given the Was's aggressively *avant* posture in their work ("Wheel Me Out," "Tell Me That I'm Dreaming"), this is a surprisingly accessible, mainstream album—but he has the sort of grit and energy I miss on Luther's record, and he's not afraid to take a lot of risks his first time out.

Atkinson's voice is big, husky and tough—he sounds like Wilson Pickett without the shouting—so he's absolutely convincing on the slashing "Dig Deep," the teasing, boastful "Girls Fall for Me"—both chugging dance numbers—and on a scorching version of Eddie Rab-

bitt's rocker, "Someone Could Lose a Heart Tonight." But what makes this album work is Atkinson's willingness to turn this bruising growl into raw honey and the Was boys's ability to come up with just the right songs to make this transformation worthwhile. Immediately after the Rabbitt song, they slip into a wonderful, respectful version of the Tymes classic, "So Much in Love," with a quirky twist: the backing vocal is provided by a Vocorder synthesizer to subvert the romance but not the charm. Elsewhere, there's a fine duet (with Carol Hall) on "Anyone Who Had a Heart" that would not be out of place on a Luther Vandross album, save for its tangy metallic edge. But the highlight here is a torchy ballad called "Should I Wait" that has Sweet Pea agonizing almost Billy Stewart-style over a lost love, sweeping strings and all. Beyond introducing a superb singer and a terrifically tight, stimulating studio band, *Don't Walk Away* (whose title track, a welcome revival of a General Johnson song, is another standout) is remarkable both for its adventurous range of material and for the strength of the sensibility that holds these selections together. Was, Was, co-producer Jack Tann, and Sweet Pea Atkinson have pulled off an eclectic coup of sorts, a balanced blend of old wave and new, rock and R&B—exactly the right thing to showcase this year's shooting star.



The Nylon Curtain
Billy Joel
Columbia

By J.D. Considine

Any artist trying to demonstrate his depth runs the risk of succeeding only too well. Consider this most recent effort of Billy Joel. A gifted melodicist capable of turning out the sort of songs that quickly become standards, and a lyricist whose often biting observations come in the form of a well-turned phrase or two, Joel offers some of his most finely-worked melodies and vivid lyrics on *The Nylon Curtain*—truly an achievement in terms of realized potential. Yet for all that, he hasn't assembled the benchmark songs he was obviously going after; the pieces are there, but they never seem to set right. As a result, Joel's very good ideas don't add up to great songs, and the album finds him distinctly out of his depth.

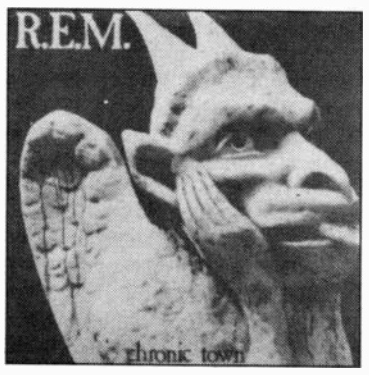
That's not to say that the LP is without its gems. "Goodnight Saigon," for example, may well be one of the best songs ever written about the Vietnam War. Playing against a lexicon of camaraderie native to the Armed Forces, Joel sketches out the passage from Marine bootcamp to active duty in South Vietnam; through snippets of shared struggle and communal pleasures; building up to the glorious chorus of brotherhood, "And we would all go down together." Taken at a purposeful plod and backed by thundering chords, Joel attains a stately, hymn-like quality that underscores the fraternal solemnity and hope of their vow. Then, just a verse later, he turns that majesty in on itself as he describes how those same Marines moved in to try to take a Viet Cong position in the highlands. As the fat assault copters carried the Marines in, the Cong "counted the rotors/And waited for us to arrive/And we would all go down together. . ."

It's a stunning ending, because Joel has set the stage for it with the lyrics *and* the music. By building the first part of the song around that transformation from bonds of friendship to an identification with the grand call to fate that accompanies a soldier's destiny, he makes the inevitable pay-off all the more horrible. More importantly, he matches the progression of the lyrics with an escalating intensity in the music, so the effect is organic. By the end of the song, you needn't have heard all the lyrics to fully grasp the pointless tragedy of delusion it depicts.

Not so the rest of the album, I'm afraid. "Allentown," for example, does a fine job depicting the resigned bitterness and diminished expectations in the depressed industrial northeast. The lyrical perspective is perfect, taking the view of a child facing adulthood with the knowledge that he'll probably be unable to even equal his parents' standard of living, much less progress beyond it the way they moved beyond that of their parents—but the music leaves much to be desired. Joel sets his recitation of broken dreams against a melody so buoyantly poppish that it overpowers the lyrical message, undercutting the images of industrial decay with hummable suburban complacency. Unlike Steely Dan's "Barrytown," which also coupled biting lyrics to a seemingly innocuous melody, Joel doesn't flavor his song with the tang of sarcasm. While it's not entirely inconceivable that the dichotomy between his razor-sharp lyrics and cotton-candy melody was meant as irony, it doesn't come off as such, and we're left with the impression that Joel's music doesn't always know what his words are doing.

Or maybe it's just that Billy Joel can't pass up the opportunity to write a good pop tune. Certainly the most consistent failure on *The Nylon Curtain* is his inability to match his angry lyrics with a suitably venomous verse or chorus, and the most obvious reason is that his songs are frequently just too tuneful and appealing to sting the way they should. Joel seems to realize this, and attempts to compensate by dressing up the arrangements, either with the dreamy strings of "Scandanavian Skies" or the hyperactive synthesizers and reverberating guitars of "Pressure," but dressing up the songs in suitable instrumental finery just doesn't bridge the gap the way sufficient content would.

None of which should be taken to mean that *The Nylon Curtain* is a bad album. It isn't. In fact, it's one of the better pop albums of the season. But take it as a statement on the quality of life today, on the convolutions of American morality, on anything beyond the lure of a good melody, and it comes up wanting. I suppose if you're out to prove that you're a great artist—not merely a talented tunesmith—that's undoubtedly some kind of failure, but I hope it's nothing Billy Joel will take to heart. After all, artistic depth may be a rare thing, but tunesmiths of his calibre aren't exactly common, either, and we'd do well with more of both.

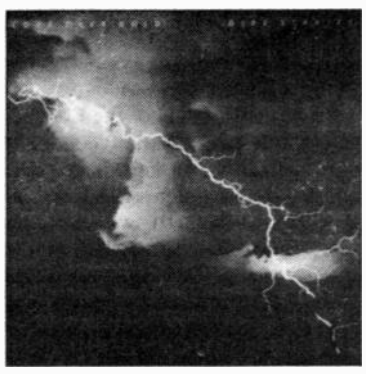


Chronic Town
R.E.M.
I.R.S.

By Nick Burton

If you can imagine a cross between the Strawberry Alarm Clock and the Jam, you'll have a good idea of R.E.M.'s strange but effective hybrid approach. *Chronic Town,* a five-track EP, was produced on a garage band budget, and the resulting trashy sound makes for a striking aural backdrop. All five tracks here are commendable, thanks in large part to each musician's technical prowess. On "Stumble" and "Gardening At Night," Pete Buck's 12-string guitar lines come floating in from another era—remember flower power?—yet sound right on the mark in this context; "1,000,000" and "Wolves, Lower" finds the band employing a harsher, more contemporary attack built on repetitive chorus and refrain sections punctuated by Mike Mills' steady bass and Bill Berry's rock-solid drums and percussion.

It would be nice to add that R.E.M.'s lyrics match their musical sparkle, but Michael Stipe's vocals are pushed so far back in the mix that it's difficult to understand exactly what he's singing about. I've listened to this record countless times, and I still don't know if the songs deal with moody introspection or disco roller skating. But *Chronic Town* is worth checking out, if only for the music. Unlike so many EPs, this one's consistently fascinating.



Love Over Gold
Dire Straits
Warner Bros.

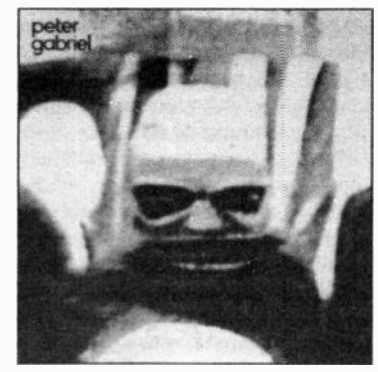
By Chip Stern

Mark Knopfler is an evocative guitarist with an almost surreal sensitivity for nuance, shading and dramatic emphasis; a cinematographer's eye for atmospheric contrasts of color and light; and a bluesman's ear for confessional tone and subdued menace. So why, with all that going for him, does this ex-English teacher turned rock star aspire instead to make a grand poetic statement? Knopfler doesn't really consider himself to be an improviser, nor does he choose to emphasize the instrumental aspects of his craft—everything is subsumed to the dictates of the song. And there's the rub, because for all the promise of Dire Straits's gripping debut (and the underrated moodiness of *Communique*), Knopfler is suffering from a profound case of linguistic constipation brought on by years of incessant touring. There is a palpable sense of strain to *Love Over Gold* which constantly threatens to engulf Dire Straits, and it is a testament to the band's instrumental signature that this album stands up at all to repeated listenings.

Why has Knopfler's persona stuck in his throat? Clearly words are not his strong suit . . . but then, how does one account for such poignant songs as "In The Gallery," "The Wild West End," "The Lion," "News" and "Follow Me Home"? Beginner's luck? On those songs the balance between the subliminal frontier imagery of the music and the romantic longing and bitterness of Knopfler's narratives created a deceptively understated tension.

The tension in Knopfler's music through *Making Movies* and *Love Over Gold* is between the realization of his ensemble sound, and the failed ambition of his lyrics. As a writer he's too literal; as an instrumentalist, he's slippery and allegorical. Knopfler leaves more notes to the imagination than he plays, so there is a sense of the unexpected—the sound can mean many things, but in the dismal B-movie romanticism of Knopfler's stories, half-digested ideas rummage through back-lots and tin pan alleys full of lazy cliches. Even such potentially powerful songs as the acoustic title tune and the concluding "It Never Rains" (with its riveting wah-wah solo) seem half-finished. There's enough of a presence in his gruff, flirting, slightly wounded voice to *almost* pull off the unarticulated feelings behind the words, but the myth he draws on seems learned—not earned. When he emerges from the frontier past and comes out on Springsteen's stretch of U.S. Interstate 287 on the "epic" "Telegraph Road," Knopfler mitigates the power of the musical imagery; and on "Industrial Disease" he sounds downright silly.

Usually I can ignore the words on rock 'n' roll records, or else get into their subliminal effect, as images accumulate gradually, but Knopfler's sing-song cadences dominate the mix, and in cultivating an artistic persona, the expectation is that you better deliver the goods. If the songs disappoint, the band doesn't. Occupying a netherworld between the Band, Springsteen and Steely Dan, their performances are sweet and stinging, although ex-drummer Pick Withers sounds like he was being paid to, like,. uh, lay back, man. Knopfler's Stratocaster playing has grown bigger and bolder even as his songwriting has stiffened, his arranging (employing classical and flamencan elements) growing more deft and imaginative. One has to wonder if this talented musician hasn't bitten off more than he can chew, and if he'll be able to merge his twin aspirations in some coherent form anytime soon.



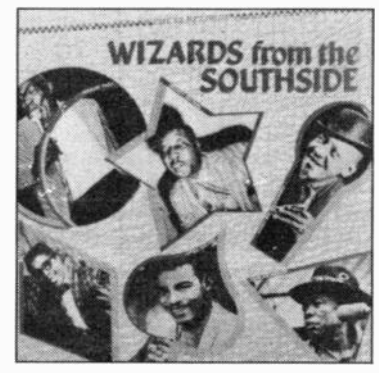
Security
Peter Gabriel
Geffen

By Deborah Frost

Despite spewing out a good amount of cosmic gibberish, the original Genesis often suggested that their genre was a choice, not a last resort. The players were accomplished, even awesome, technicians. And like a somewhat less sexual (and less glamourous) Bowie—whose groggy midrange he shares—frontman Peter Gabriel evinced a grand, theatrical imagination. The irony: it took the departure of Gabriel, the band's visual and spiritual center, to establish Genesis as a huge, if faceless, A.O.R. success. The pay-off: Peter Gabriel's fourth solo effort, *Security*, is one of the most exhilarating (if occasionally infuriating) experiences of the year.

On *Security*, Gabriel's instinctive, unorthodox matchmaking pits LA time-machine Jerry Marotta (and a Linn Drum Computer) against the elastic bass and nimble Chapman Sticking of King Crimson's Tony Levin. The result (along with a dash of Larry Fast's synth and a taste of Peter Hammill's dementia) is "Shock The Monkey," 5:23 of R&B neuron fibrillation to which words are an entirely inappropriate response. Or, as Gabriel blurts at the peak of another progressive Afro-pump, "The rhythm has control." And during "Shock The Monkey," "Kiss of Life," and "I Have the Touch," the rhythm rarely loses control. It is less compulsively guitar driven than King Crimson and less obsessively dense than Talking Heads, but just as fast and just as serious. And when a fire is raging, there isn't much time for words. Or much need, either. Perhaps that's why Gabriel becomes "self-conscious, uncertain" when he tries to articulate how "The Rhythm of the Heat" feels. He doesn't have to tell us: the drums have already made sure we know.

Gabriel is also reaching for something else on *Security*. Throughout his career, he's hidden behind elaborate costumes, elaborate characters and elaborate bad poetry. On *Security*, the man is emerging. Unfortunately, there's bad poetry, too. Both "Lay Your Hands On Me" and the help-you're-a-prisoner-in-a-nuthouse dirge, "Wallflower," might have made better insrumentals—or outtakes. But instead of devising new roles to play, Gabriel's beginning to struggle with his own humanity. In "Kiss of Life" and "The Family and the Fishing Net," he's trying, if awkwardly, to distinguish the dancer from the dance. Only on "Shock the Monkey" has he created a vocabulary as succinct and complete as his sound. But I'm grateful for small pleasures. For a few moments, Peter Gabriel's given us pop without frontiers, art rock with real discipline.



The Chess Reissue Series:

Muddy & The Wolf
Muddy Waters & Howlin' Wolf

Wizards From The Southside
Various Artists

Aretha Gospel
Aretha Franklin

The Dells
The Dells

The Great Twenty-Eight
Chuck Berry

Blowin' Gold
John Klemmer

By Cary Baker

To quickly recapitulate: Chess Records, a dominant force in rhythm and blues music in the '50s and '60s, was sold in 1969 by co-founder Leonard Chess to the

now-defunct GRT Corporation. Subsequently, the label almost vanished save for the release of a few credible, abominably marketed reissues, largely "twofer" reworkings of the Chess Corp's own pre-1969 Vintage series. Following the bankruptcy of GRT, Joe Robinson, then-president of GRT subsidiary All-Platinum Records, and currently major domo of Sugar Hill, retained control of Chess and found a resource he hadn't counted on in Leonard Chess's son, Marshall.

Marshall Chess spent the past year listening, researching, compiling and otherwise overseeing the new six-album "Chess Is Back" series. The first batch of four single- and two double-pocket compilations demonstrates a sufficiently mixed bag of music that should gratify a long-starved cult of collectors and, perhaps more importantly, provide young rock fans—or older ones who may have missed out on this in their youth—an important primer in the roots of rock 'n' roll. It's not an entirely successful endeavor, as is noted below, but it does help demonstate the breadth and depth of Chess's legacy to popular music.

The most overtly "commercial" endeavor in the set is the gatefold-packaged, single LP, *Muddy & the Wolf*, whose front cover touts a few super-sidemen's names (Steve Winwood, Eric Clapton and two Rolling Stones, among many). Therein lies the miscalculation, though, because both Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf cut most of their important work between 1948 and 1959, and an overview of that period could have been invaluable. What's here is fair-to-middling, but hardly essential. Waters's side is composed of highlights of the live *Father & Sons* album, recorded in Chicago in 1969, coupling reverent "sons" Mike Bloomfield, Paul Butterfield and Donald "Duck" Dunn with bluesdom's patriarchal "mannish boy" and his half-brother and long-time pianist, Otis Spann; all are in fine, furious form on crowd-reinforced renditions of "I'm Ready," "Walking Through The Park" and "Long Distance Call." The Wolf side, culled from *The London Howlin' Wolf Sessions*, portrays a waning but still-determined shouter surrounded by over-zealous backing from Clapton, Winwood, Charlie Watts and Bill Wyman.

The early works of Waters, Wolf and Chess stablemates Sonny Boy Williamson II, Bo Diddley, Little Walter and John Lee Hooker appear on the intriguing *Wizards From The Southside* LP, reminiscent of Chess's early *Blues Volume* and *Heavy Heads* anthology series, but with greater discographical information (a virtue of the Chess reissue series). Highlights include Waters's 1950 "Rollin' & Tumblin'" as a duet with bassist Big Crawford, and John Lee Hooker's timeless opus for guitar, vocal and foot, "Walkin' The Boogie" (in which he recalls the night his parents, thinking he was asleep, were heard to say: "Let that boy boogie woogie! It's in him and it's gotta come out."). The Howlin' Wolf selections, "I Ain't Superstitious" and "Evil," have been anthologized to death. The real surprise in this smattering of South Side wizardry is "She's Fine, She's Mine," a primitive, pre-7/4, 1955 blues number by Bo Diddley, flanked by a minimal ensemble of harpist Billy Boy Arnold, drummer Frank Kirkland and maracas demon ("Take It To") Jerome Green.

Aretha Gospel, originally issued on Chess's sister label, Checker, captures the artist performing live in her father's church at age 14. These raw, unexpurgated songs of faith and testimony, with Aretha accompanying herself on piano and responding in kind to the fervency of the worshippers in the Rev. C. L. Franklin's New Bethel Baptist Church in Detroit in 1956, offer a revealing glimpse of how much the church gave to Aretha and how much she took from it in developing her profoundly influential vocal style.

Now celebrating their thirtieth anniversary (with only one personnel change in that time), The Dells are represented by a splendid retrospective of sides cut following the group's late '60s exodus from Vee-Jay Records to Chess. Singles such as "There Is," "Oh What A Night" and "Stay In My Corner," fueled by the impassioned delivery of baritone lead singer Marvin Junior, hit both the pop and soul airwaves, and remain outstanding examples of soul music in its most urgent, most affecting, most potent form.

Dancing, juking and cruising more closely formed the topical lifeblood of Chess's biggest star, Chuck Berry, whose twice-issued, hit-studded *Golden Decade* album is virtually repackaged here a third time as *The Great Twenty-Eight*, a chronological layout (1955–65) that documents Berry's early, influential recordings and then traces his gradual decline which, while heralding a close to the golden decade, nevertheless found him producing the likes of "No Particular Place To Go" and "Back In The U.S.A." One curiosity is 1965's "I Want To Be Your Driver;" it was Berry's hardest-rocking track in nearly three years up to that point, and one wonders whether the pillaging British invasion and its open idolatry of Berry didn't perhaps provide some stray spark of revitalization before the decade passed on.

The Chess repackage one might not have predicted is the double-LP *Blowin' Gold* by saxophonist John Klemmer. For a label whose rich jazz bulwark on the Cadet label includes the formative catalogues of Ramsey Lewis, (perhaps their biggest moneymaker after Berry's star faded), Ahmad Jamal, James Moody, Yuseff Lateef, Kenny Burrell, Gene Ammons, Sonny Stitt and Oliver Nelson, the choice of Klemmer seems at first out-of-character. Sides three and four (a condensation of the artist's 1969–70 LPs, *All The Children Cried* and *Eruptions*), however, are indicative of the lucidity and far-reaching parameters of Marshall Chess's reissue program.

Blowin' Gold, the first disc of which was produced by Marshall Chess and Gene "Daddy G" Barge, fuses simple jazz melody to complex, airborne odysseys like "Garden of Uranus" and "A Mon Frere Africain." Interestingly enough, these albums were originally released prior to Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew*, yet are far more in sync with Muhal Richard Abrams than with the better-known Cadet jazz sound typified by "The In Crowd."

Klemmer, who's since gone on to record with Elektra, ABC, MCA and a handful of audiophile labels, weaves his Coltrane orientation into the earliest fusion fabric. Starting with "Excursion No. 2," with its echoplexed blizzard of early electronic horn effects (a Klemmer trademark), the three LPs condensed in *Blowin' Gold* display more growth in a single year than most artists achieve in an entire career.

Call Of The West
Wall of Voodoo
IRS

By Barry Alfonso

It's momentarily tempting to declare *Call Of The West*, Wall of Voodoo's second album, a grand statement about America, a sort of oddball successor to *The Band* or *Darkness On The Edge Of Town*. But to do so would be both an oversell (it's not all that profound) and an undersell (it's quite likeable and funny on its own terms). Let's leave it that it has *something to say*, goofy as it may be.

Though a product of the Los Angeles punk scene, Wall of Voodoo is only partially a rock band—the quintet draws much of its inspiration from spaghetti western film scores and other somewhat cheesy sources in constructing a sound built on the beat of a rhythm machine, clattering percussion, frazzled surf guitar stylings and harmonic wails. Musically, *Call Of The West* offers nothing new, but does find the group working creatively within its limits. Case in point: the instrumental "On Interstate 15," which manages to invoke Lorne Green, Vince Guaraldi and the Ventures all at once.

As in the past, lyricist/singer Stanard Ridgway gives wry 'n' sly looks at trod-upon losers ("Lost Weekend") and working class banality ("Factory"), but with a sympathy for his subjects that the likes of Devo ought to take note of. Though he strains for the Big Myth on the title song, an exploration of the "go west young man" mentality that gets too ambitious for its own good, Ridgway and his bandmates never lose their sense of humor. That's Wall of Voodoo's saving grace.

Highways & Heartaches
Ricky Skaggs
Epic

By Geoffrey Himes

Ricky Skaggs is in the paradoxical position of a young rebel who's teaching the country establishment how to sound old-fashioned. He's educating his elders to the undiminished power of hillbilly bluegrass picking and unhip honky tonk emoting. His lessons acquired commercial clout when his first major label album yielded four top 20 country singles last year. On *Highways & Heartaches*, his second Epic album (fourth overall), Skaggs turns from traditional classics to new songs in the old tradition written by his young colleagues.

The key to Skaggs' sound is his ability to underlay a bluegrass topping with country-rock kick. As a producer, Skaggs gets a fat electric bass sound and a subtle drum sound that carries the rhythm without pounding piano or crunching guitar chords. Thus there's plenty of room on top for Bobby Hicks' sweet, lonely fiddle lines and Skaggs' own sterling guitar and mandolin solos. Skaggs' wife, Sharon White, adds gospel choir harmony vocals, and her father, Buck White, adds sparse piano fills.

The album's first single is Guy Clark's clever "Heartbroke," which gathers a contagious momentum atop the biggest rock beat Skaggs has ever used. The rest of the album is more traditional. There's one well-preserved bluegrass classic, Bill Monroe's "Can't You Hear Me Callin'," but the other songs are unfamiliar. Wayland Patton contributes two new heart-tugging confessionals, and Skaggs' plaintive voice makes them credible without slipping into melodrama.

The album's highlights, though, are Larry Cordle's "Highway 40 Blues" and Rodney Crowell's "One Way Rider." These two "going-down-the-road" romps are greased by Bruce Bouton's slippery steel guitar and the finest ensemble picking to be found on any country record this year.

Versions
Robby Krieger
Passport Records

I Advance Masked
Andy Summers/Robert Fripp
A & M

By Chip Stern

Though all guitar instrumental albums are created equal, some are more equal than others. Usually the difference is that between "guitar music" and music in general; one owing its existence to the vernacular of the instrument, the other trying to transcend the guitar's built-in passwords and catchphrases. Often these distinctions mark good albums from great ones.

Robby Krieger's mysterioso blues signature with the Doors is gaining new converts every day, and *Versions* would seem ready made for the new generation of fans and FM programmers, being a vigorous, chopsmanlike workout that owes more to Jeff Beck's *Blow By Blow* than to Jim Morrison's memory. Krieger's sleek, lucid phrasing, silvery distortion tone and jazzy momentum (not to mention the first-rate musicianship of Arthur Barrow, Bruce Gary, John Densmore and Ray Manzarek) give this album a very agreeable flow; the doubling of lead and slide guitar in parallel harmonies on "Tatooed Love Boys," "Her Majesty" and "I'm Gonna Tell On You" adds a nice Allmanish-western swing flavor to the proceedings. "Gavin Leggitt" is the most fulminating original, and of the covers, "Crystal Ship" is the most charming (sounding at times like Wes Montgomery and the Wailers). But "Street Fighting Man" loses it in the bridge after a grinding good intro, and "Reach Out I'll Be There" is stilted; ultimately there is something limiting about trying to make a great vocal melody lay on the guitar—that and an absence of memorable melodies mitigates *Versions'* overall appeal.

I Advance Masked is another matter. Andy Summers probably spent a decade trying to unlearn all the cool devices Krieger still employs, while Fripp couldn't play a blues if his life depended on it. What Summers lacks in pure chops he makes up for in taste, harmonic sophistication and wily restraint; while Fripp turned a lack of aptitude for rote guitar gymnastics and phrasing into a formidable, distinctive style. Summers the melodist and colorist, and Fripp the polymetric empiricist: together they've resolved their considerable stylistic differences to create a seamless web of electric counterpoint and string quartet intricacy. In fact, it's often impossible to tell who's who, so sympatico are their improvisations. Conceptually it's Summers' date, and *I Advance Masked* depicts his interest in oriental music (the sublime "China-Yellow Leader"), jazz (the Pat Methenyesque melodies on "Still Point" and "New Marimba"), raga-like textures and meters ("Hardy Country" and "Under Bridges of Silence") and Bartok ("Painting & Dance"). Fripp is felt most deeply as a rhythmic underpinning, spinning out his swiftly picked counterpoint to create a surging momentum (his big solo splash being the heavy metal ballad "In The Cloud Forest"), as Summers flanges, choruses, delays and compresses a spatial chordal embellishment, with occasional touches of percussion, guitar synthesizer, sitar and acoustic guitar filling out the songs. Rarely have electric guitars been heard with so much delicacy, integrity and force—let alone beauty—as on *I Advance Masked*.

Raw Magic
Magic Slim
Alligator

By Cary Baker

There's an adage stating that a great blues record is yet to be cut on foreign soil. That adage, however, is getting up in years, and the debut American LP by Chicago bluesman Magic Slim—recorded in France by Isabel Records and leased for Stateside issue by Alligator—presents evidence that its veracity has passed.

As is obvious from the opening bars, the former Morris Holt doesn't play or sing much like Magic Sam, the late guitar pantheon in whose band Holt interned during the '50s. His playing is far more raucous and undisciplined, begging closer analogy to that of Hound Dog Taylor. His singing is deeper and darker, too. Neither, for that matter, is he particularly slim these days. Yet for the guarantee of a giddily rockin' blues set, Magic Slim is practically in a class by himself.

Seven long, extemporaneous studio cuts form a fitting composite of Slim's blues. His long, linear guitar lines are alternately declarative and punch-drunk, malleable enough to simmer their way through Wilson Pickett's "Mustang Sally," and evoke echoes of Hound Dog in "Ain't Doing Too Bad." There's even a hint of Slim's Magic mentor in "Gravel Road." If a Magic Slim trademark emerges, however, it's his penchant for improvising a bottleneck guitar sound by repeatedly shaking his immense fingers against the strings as if with a metal slide, reinforcing his blues with a throbbing urgency.

Holding no apparent delusions of becoming a marketplace barrier-breaker (like many of his Alligator stablemates), Slim's *Raw Magic* fulfills the promise of its title. In preserving that juke-jumping Blue Monday sound and properly committing it to wax—whether in Toulouse or on Chicago's South Side—he has few peers among his contemporaries.

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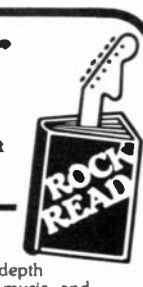

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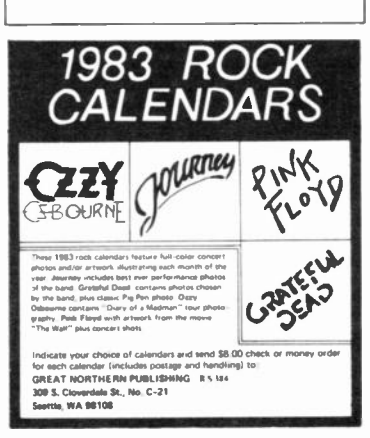
1983 ROCK CALENDARS



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Taking Stock of the Starship / Men At Work Produce

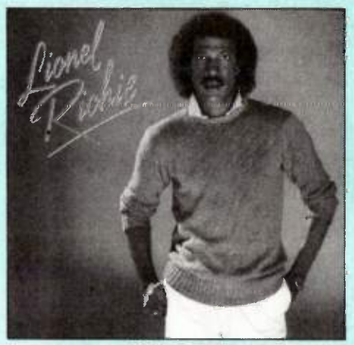
December 1982

THE 3 TOPS

TOP OF THE CHART

FOR ALL HIS MYTHOLOGIZ-ing about the highways of our collective dreams, one had to wonder what happened on the off-ramps of Bruce Springsteen's romantic vision? What of the modern day Tom Joads in this land of limited expectations and random violence? Where do they run now that the American frontier is closed? Who would speak for those without money or hope? Couldn't anybody articulate their seething resignation—this slow suicide of the spirit?

Well, Bruce Springsteen did, and against all odds, *Nebraska* has emerged not only as his most courageous statement, but as 1982's surprise chart-topper. Does this infer that reality can be commercial in the '80's? Perhaps. Certainly there's something re-assuring, yet unsettling about these home-grown tales of ordinary folk, rendered in a voice somehow more ancient than rock 'n' roll. Recorded on a Tascam 4-track cassette recorder in his bedroom, *Nebraska* is a chilling, compelling portrait of who we are, and what we yet might be. ◆

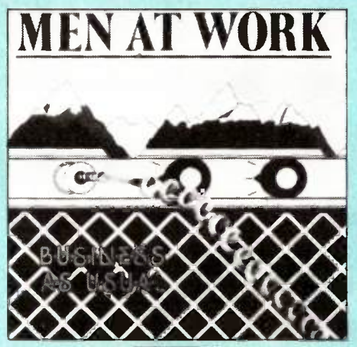


TOP NEW ENTRY

IN "WANDERING SONG," one of the pivotal selections from his debut album as a solo artist, Lionel Richie sings, "I must keep moving 'til I find me." It's a powerful moment—Richie caresses the lyric, and the effect is of the singer speaking intimately to the listener. That's typical of an album notable for its rich emotional heart and musical scope.

Produced by Richie and the Commodores' long-time co-producer James Carmichael, *Lionel Richie* moves from the assertive R&B-pop of "It Serves You Right" and "You Are," to the classically-influenced ballads "Truly" and "You Mean More To Me," to the subtle country stylings of "My Love."

Clearly, Richie's solo debut marks a new beginning for the composer of "Easy," "Three Times A Lady," "Sail On," "Still" and other Commodores hits. Says the artist: "This record pretty much paints the whole picture and captures what I'm about—it's got my insides all over it and it's not diluted in any way." ◆



TOP DEBUT ALBUM

MEN AT WORK MADE IT OUT of Melbourne, Australia's inner city because they did not join in the noise, but rather fashioned a pop sound unlike anything being exported from Down Under. The key ingredients? Dry, witty writing; haunting melodies; and some inventive use of saxophone and flute to create mood. *Business As Usual* is an extremely impressive debut by a band in only its third year of existence.

Among the highlights are "Down Under," a reggaeish rocker featuring Greg Ham's playful flute work; "Down By The Sea," a rock chanty which tugs at the heart via Ham's sax; 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 band whose sensibility is not measured in decibels. ◆