RECORD™

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Dale Bozzio: "I mean, we might put my feet on the next album cover."

Rounding Up Missing Persons

By Dan Forte

LOS ANGELES—"This year we've grown so fast," sighs drummer Terry Bozzio, "too fast for our own good." Bozzio and the other two principal members of Missing Persons, wife Dale and guitarist Warren Cuccurullo, have just left the recording studio and regrouped at producer/manager Ken Scott's house to conduct a quick interview on the eve of a six-week tour in support of their debut LP on Capitol, *Spring Session M.* 1982 was a year filled with interviews, photo sessions, sold out one-nighters, video shoots, and recording sessions, and 1983 seems to be shaping up much the same way.

"All of a sudden, we're selling out the Long Beach Arena, 13,000 seats," Terry continues. "That's like competing with 'giant' bands. If we blow it, or if we blow an interview on *Entertainment Tonight* or something, we're blowing off thousands of people. So the pressures on us are really serious. Plus the fact that once you get a little momentum going you've got to cram it home, or else forget it. This isn't a vacation. We haven't had a day off except the days that Dale was sick in Florida last November, and then I was doing an average of three phone interviews a day. I don't mind telling you, we're tired!"

Missing Persons is no overnight sensation, but of late their relatively brief career has been snowballing too fast for magazines to keep up with them. To make a short story even shorter: Following a three-year stint as Frank Zappa's drummer, Bozzio went on to play with Group 87 and U.K. before forming Missing Persons in January of 1980 with fellow Zappa alumnus Warren Cuccurullo and his (Bozzio's) wife Dale, a former Playboy bunny from Boston who moved to Hollywood and, as she told a reporter from *BAM*, "ran into Frank, fell in love with Terry and a whole new path opened up." Prior to Missing Persons, Dale's only experience as a recording artist had been as lead vocalist on Zappa's single, "I Don't Want To Get Drafted." The trio rehearsed continuously and collaborated on material for almost a year and a half, during which time they added to their ranks keyboardist Chuck Wild and another Zappa bandmate, bassist Patrick O'Hearn. At the suggestion of Zappa's wife Gail they teamed up with Ken Scott, who had produced records by Kansas, Supertramp, David Bowie, Devo and others, and recorded a four-song demo tape that they shopped all over Hollywood with no luck. Packaging and releasing the demo as an EP on Scott's KoMoS label, they began getting substantial FM airplay in L.A., and their theatrical live shows, featuring Dale in homemade, often skimpy costumes made of posters, phonograph records, and plastic tubing, began attracting larger and larger audiences. The same record companies who had passed on the demo began showing interest and the band signed with one of them, Capitol Records. Capitol re-released the EP as a 12-inch disc, replacing a cover of the Doors' "Hello, I Love You" with "Words," which the label also issued as the band's first single. "Words" and the second single culled from the "mini LP," "Destination Unknown," both

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Business As Usual, The Pat Benatar Way

By David Gans

LOS ANGELES—Pat Benatar holds the cream pitcher up to her nose and sniffs before risking its contents in her coffee. Even though we're in one of Los Angeles' finest hotels, the last couple of years of touring have put her in the habit of checking out her food carefully.

It's not that Benatar objects to artificial foodstuffs—"There's no way to avoid them," she says cheerily—she just wants to know what she's dealing with. It's bad enough when the hotel, restaurant or airline gives you little plastic containers full of "Melloream blend" or other "coffee lightener" that's never been anywhere near a cow, but some establishments have the audacity to put these non-dairy substances into vessels from which we've grown accustomed to pouring real milk or cream.

"I usually smell 'em," says Benatar. "If I get that smell, I say, 'This ain't milk! You lie! Gimme something that's real milk!' " She then names a restaurant chain with a lot of outlets along the Interstate Highway system and notes that it is "notorious" for the Melloream Switcheroo.

Fortunately, the hotel has sent up real half-and-half along with our pot of real coffee. As we scan the room-service menu, Benatar admits that her reputation as a junk-food expert is a justly deserved one. "What do you want to know?" she asks generously.

After we phone the lunch order in, Benatar giggles on about fast food, unself-consciously betraying tastes that no self-respecting status-seeker or desperately hip *poseur* would ever cop to. "I just found a great new junk food," she enthuses. "At Jack In the Box they have these things called Crescent Sandwiches. They make 'em with croissants—they slice them and put ham and eggs and cheese inside, then they put 'em in the old microwave. They taste pretty good. I love 'em!

"I think I loved Cheez Whiz when I was little, too. That's sickening, I know," Benatar adds guiltily. Then she flashes a conspiratorial look and says, "I'd *kill* for an Egg McMuffin, but I never get up early enough. When we're on the road I'm so happy, because we stop around 7:00 in the morning—when they're making Egg McMuffins—and I send Suds [the tour bus driver] out and say, 'Go get some!' I just love 'em." The suggestion that this fine hotel and its fine food are wasted on

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Asia Recording Second LP; Tour Follows June Release

LONDON—Steve Howe, Carl Palmer, John Wetton and Geoff Downes, known collectively as Asia, are proceeding at a leisurely pace towards finishing their second album. Perhaps one can take this attitude when a debut album clocks in with five-and-a-half million copies sold worldwide. Whatever the case, there's apparently no rush to get out the second Asia LP: early June is being mentioned as a release date, and the recording proper, which should begin shortly in an undisclosed city in Canada, will continue, according to a source, "for the next few months."

Wetton says he and Downes have written enough material for more than one album, but the final track selection won't be made until all the songs have been recorded. Once again, Howe, Palmer, Wetton and Downes will perform the instrumental chores unassisted ("Real men don't need session men," says Asia's manager, Brian Lane), and Mike Stone will be producing.

Asia will tour the U.S. following the release of the album, but details have yet to be firmed up. "We're saving the U.K. and Japan for 1984, if the world hasn't disappeared by then," Wetton says of the band's concert plans. "Everybody told us in America that big shows are dead, that records weren't selling and that the rock business was finished. It was all incredibly negative when we started. We've proved them all wrong." **—Debbie Geller & Chris Welch**

PHOTO: NORMAN SEEFF

Asia

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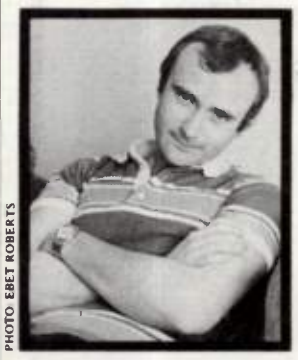

PHOTO: EBET ROBERTS

LETTERS

Defending The Who

ALTHOUGH IT APPEARS THAT your publication is doing a great job covering the latest in popular music, it seems that many of your writers are out of touch with rock 'n' roll itself.

Once a fine critic, Dave Marsh has already been publicly humiliated by Pete Townshend for obvious reasons. Let me add that Dave's top 40 record choices of 1982 show just how out of touch he really is. With *Sacred Speech, Chant And Song In An Appalachian Church* as his number three choice, I see no reason to elaborate further.

Jonathan Gross, an obvious,cynic and disillusioned rocker, simply should not have been allowed to do a cover story on the Who. Anyone who has seen the Who knows they give more than their blood on stage; they literally give their souls. So it is with great anger that I read how Gross praises the Stones for building tours "to last," and then criticizes the last decade of Who tours as being "a blur of twirling microphones." I have seen the Who six times on their farewell tour, and not one of them came close to being "no big deal," as Gross opined. After seeing Springsteen, the Clash, and the Stones all more than once, I must conclude that the Who are simply better than anyone, bar none.

In the review of *It's Hard*, by someone whose name escapes me now, the writer referred to the Who's set as "gutless greatest hits" that will not change anyone's lives, "as if any part of the rock experience could do that these days." C'mon, guys, this smacks of cynicism, not criticism. And as for gutless, how about Paul Weller cloning the Who to get his start in the music business, then breaking up the Jam when he became aware of their inability to do anything original? To add insult to injury, Weller finds it necessary to blame bands like the Who for becoming "old and embarrassing." Embarrassing is reading Weller's comments on America. Please tell Paul that we don't want him here, either, and if he ever has the guts to play here he may get booed off the stage by a horde of Who fans who showed up just to see what a good clone band can do.

In conclusion, I feel that the Who have contributed an incredible amount to rock music. They should not be subjected to the judgments of aging cynics who are busy trying to discover the next big thing. As the '80s move on, rock will evolve, and the new bands must remember the energy as well as the humanity of the Who.

JOHN CHADWICK
Rochester, NY

Townshend-Marsh

I SINCERELY HOPE YOU plan on running the Townshend/Marsh feud as a monthly feature ("Townshend's Rebuttal," Letters, December RECORD). It was extremely entertaining, but I do have a couple of questions on the latest round.

First: does Marsh really think that the Who's endorsement of Schlitz will have any effect on the drinking habits of the average 15-year-old, other than possibly getting him to switch his brand of beer? And second: when Townshend talked about keeping the prices of tickets down, did he mean lower than the $75 I paid to see them in Philly or the $100 I telecharged to see them in Worcester?

K.J. VALLANTE
Boston, Mass.

Linda Ronstadt

GEOFFREY HIMES' REVIEW of Linda Ronstadt's *Get Closer* (January RECORD) was a pleasure to read. He realized just how much she has grown as an artist. Unfortunately, Mark Mehler's comments on Ronstadt's appearance at Radio City reflect most critics' biased and cynical attitudes towards Ronstadt. He couldn't get past what she looked like long enough to just enjoy the music. Mehler's review could have been written four years ago, damning her for wearing a Cub Scout uniform instead of a cheerleading outfit. But Linda's voice at Radio City was fresh and exuberant. Those who listened were touched deep inside. If that didn't happen for Mehler, then maybe it is he who is missing the point.

CARL KRESTOW
New York, N.Y.

Tom Petty

AS LONG AS TOM PETTY ("The War Is Over," January RECORD) is in the music business, I wouldn't count on the war being over. I get the idea part of him would like to relax, but after getting burned bad, he's out to make a difference. He seems to feed off trouble, and that's what keeps him going.

Listening to Petty's music is indeed like being on a date, complete escapism in very pleasant company.

STACY JACKSON
Albion, Michigan

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4 **STRAY CATS** *Built for Speed* (EMI)
5 **BILLY JOEL** *The Nylon Curtain* (Columbia)
6 **PHIL COLLINS** *Hello, I Must Be Going!* (Atlantic)
7 **PAT BENATAR** *Get Nervous* (Chrysalis)
8 **THE CLASH** *Combat Rock* (Epic)
9 **MICHAEL JACKSON** *Thriller* (Epic)
10 **MARVIN GAYE** *Midnight Love* (Columbia)
11 **LED ZEPPELIN** *Coda* (Swan Song)
12 **LIONEL RICHIE** *Lionel Richie* (Motown)
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14 **THE WHO** *It's Hard* (Warner Bros.)
15 **BOB SEGER & THE SILVER BULLET BAND** *The Distance* (Capitol)
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18 **MISSING PERSONS** *Spring Session M* (Capitol)
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20 **OZZY OSBOURNE** *Speak of the Devil* (Jet)
21 **JOHN COUGAR** *American Fool* (Riva)
22 **DIRE STRAITS** *Love Over Gold* (Warner Bros.)
23 **PETER GABRIEL** *Security* (Geffen)
24 **PRINCE** *1999* (Warner Bros.)
25 **SQUEEZE** *Singles, 45's and Under* (A&M)
26 **SUPERTRAMP** *"...famous last words..."* (A&M)
27 **FOREIGNER** *Records* (Atlantic)
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29 **THE J. GEILS BAND** *Showtime!* (EMI)
30 **GROVER WASHINGTON JR.** *The Best Is Yet to Come* (Elektra)
31 **LUTHER VANDROSS** *Forever, For Always, For Love* (Epic)
32 **RUSH** *Signals* (Mercury)
33 **ENGLISH BEAT** *Special Beat Service* (IRS)
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35 **CROSBY, STILLS & NASH** *Daylight Again* (Atlantic)
36 **BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN** *Nebraska* (Columbia)
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New Artist

PHOTO: DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Culture Club's Boy George O'Dowd: "Standards are pathetic."

Culture Club's New Standards

By Jonathan Gross

LONDON—One glimpse of Boy George without his makeup and you know better than to ask him to pose for a picture. We won't go into details, but on this particular wintry afternoon in his local office, anybody who had the fortune—or misfortune—of running into Culture Club's dreadlocked diva would not, as so many have done, mistake him for a girl, much less Miss Congeniality.

Yet George's sexuality, or lack thereof, is the big issue as the U.K.'s hottest pop group takes its trendy fashion, its cross-pollination of reggae and R&B and a succession of Top Three singles, on a membership drive to North America. Just how will America react to this made-up mug, a confessed nonpracticing bisexual who says he hasn't slept with anyone "for two years, and that's good"?

"Most people set standards for their own sexuality," answers George, chopping off the sentences with barely-concealed impatience (it was the holiday season and he wanted to do some last-minute shopping before crossing the Atlantic). "To see someone like me, number one you're going to think I'm a girl; and when you find I'm a bloke it's even worse because you think, Wow, not only is he not a girl, but he's wearing twice as much makeup as a girl and probably dressing up more than a girl.

"Standards," he avers, "are pathetic."

And George contends this gender-bender of his was neither cause nor effect of stardom. According to the singer, who's in his early 20s, he's been dressing up for eight years and gained early notoriety as a gossip gadfly on fashionable King's Road and then as a make-up artist for the Royal Shakespeare Co. While designing clothes for the trendy punk boutique The Foundry, George (proper surname O'Dowd) got his start in music through fellow King's Road habitué Malcolm McLaren, who'd had a falling out with Annabella Lwin and brought O'Dowd into Bow Wow Wow as a temporary replacement for the nubile songstress.

Smitten by his brief fling in rock, George thought of forming his own band, an idea that gathered momentum when he was introduced to drummer Jon Moss in the spring of 1981. Moss had been around the block a few times with the Damned and an early edition of Adam and the Ants (in his words, "I was playing rock for eight years and got as far as I was going to go"), but experience of this sort wasn't exactly what George had envisioned in his musicians.

"Jon's been in a lot of bands and I didn't want that," he explains. "He'd learned by his experience, though, and some don't. I was worried about him when he came in, but Jon had the right attitude. One of the attitudes I was most adamant about was that everybody would put their ideas in without being bigoted by them."

And, hopefully, be able to play some instruments too, since George couldn't play a lottery number. He and Moss enlisted a couple of London journeymen, guitarist Roy Hayes and bassist Michael Craig, both of whom could translate George's ideas into real music. The live formation is fleshed out with four more musicians, including a backup singer. George himself has developed into a vocalist of considerable presence (visual and otherwise), whose alternately plaintive and playful androgynous crooning has been likened (at its best) to that of Michael Jackson and Stevie Wonder. Together with Moss, Hayes and Craig, O'Dowd offers up an infectious, synthesizer-bolstered blend of reggae syncopation, Motown-style soul and Latin rhythms and melodies.

"We've taken various aspects of music from all over the world from funk to rapping to Spanish horns to Latin and Anglicized them," says Moss. "England's like a laboratory. Nothing starts in England, but Britain tends to take the music and do something different with it. I mean, you can pick out loads of influences."

George cuts in: "One of the reviews of our album from a very trendy journalist said that we can't work out whether Culture Club is ABC, Grace Jones or Michael Jackson, and the writer thought that was bad. I thought it was brilliant."

But, for all their protests, Culture Club remains "after a fashion," a mod Mardi Gras with the same

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American Grandstand

By Dave Marsh

As The Crow Flies

In 1980, I concluded my review of Bob Seger's *Against the Wind* by saying: "Maybe rock 'n' roll never forgets, but the best thing anybody who ever had any hope for Bob Seger can do is try not to remember *Against the Wind* and pray for something better next time. I wouldn't hold my breath." It is now time for me to exhale, take another deep breath and prepare for a public bite of crow. *The Distance,* Bob Seger's first new album in almost three years, is the best rock 'n' roll record I have heard since *The River*, and more importantly, it is Seger's most committed, cohesive and exciting album ever.

What's most amazing about *The Distance* is its ambition. This is Seger's first focused set of songs—the first time he's attempted a song cycle in the fashion of Jackson Browne and Bruce Springsteen. Seger is a better singer and a more creative melodist than either Browne or Springsteen, but he's never had their shamelessness, their intense reach.

In "Against the Wind" itself, Seger moaned of having to decide "What to leave in/What to leave out" and the schematic programming of his other albums (Top 40 ballads versus AOR rockers, "serious" versus fun, sex versus romance) is perhaps their worst limitation. (Although it is important to note that *The Distance* provides Seger's voice with its first worthy sonic showcase, courtesy of producer Jimmy Iovine and the inevitable Shelley Yakus.)

> "It is essential to remember that the music which is speaking most directly to the needs and concerns of Americans is coming not from trendy British bands or voguish new wavers but from the center of rock."

The Distance begins and ends with love songs, "Even Now" and "Little Victories," which are really anthems of indomitableness—personal relationships as metaphors for a vision of the world and the way that it works, and what it takes (and costs) to cope with such a place and time. When Seger sings the key lines of "Little Victories"–*Every time you keep control when you're cut off at the knees/Every time you take a punch and still stand at ease*–he is obviously singing to every broken worker back home in Michigan as much as to broken-hearted lovers. And this is true whether or not the subtext was planned, because the best music here is explicitly and defiantly about what has happened to Seger's constituency in the past few years.

This political context is easiest to see in the album's best rock song, "Makin' Thunderbirds," which is an unemployed auto worker's paen to the way his life (and those cars!) used to be. For those three minutes, the singer is as "young and proud" as ever. But in the very next song, "Boomtown Blues," he's coping with the Depression: moved South, found a job, and a life robbed of whatever dignity, meaning and sense of connection to anyone else it ever had. As an exposure of the false promise of industry's Southern strategy, "Boomtown Blues" is the most radical and incisive track Seger has ever made. And he keeps the mood going with "Shame on the Moon," a Rodney Crowell song that illumines the new terms on which people deal with each other in the time of New Federalism: *Some men go crazy/Some men go slow/Some men go just where they want/Some men never go.* This is the world in which Seger's characters try to maintain their "little victories," whether returning shattered to a hometown that has barely changed ("Comin' Home") or leaving a shattered home for a life that has to be better but never quite is ("Roll Me Away").

In its portrayal of alienation and isolation and their consequences, personal and political, *The Distance* is most akin to *Nebraska* among recent rock albums. Seger's vision is less bleak than Springsteen's and I suspect that makes it more realistic: people less often go crazy and commit murder in times like these than they simply stumble homeward, seeking what's no longer there, or wander aimlessly, trying to locate what they've falsely been promised. What *Nebraska* and *The Distance* share is a sense that times are more terrible than most men and women can bear and that every time anyone maintains human dignity in face of the terror, something of consequence has been achieved. It is in their denial of nihilism that such albums are most valuable.

So Seger's triumph stands not in isolation, but acquires greater meaning when linked with *Nebraska*, Billy Joel's *The Nylon Curtain* and even something like Don Henley's *I Can't Stand Still.* All of these are dealing with the real issues in people's lives right now, the sense of injustice and hopelessness that overwhelms most rock listeners. I think it's fascinating that with the recent release of albums by Springsteen, Joel, Tom Petty and Seger, it is Petty's album, which is the only one that proceeds as though nothing has changed, which has met the most resistance. (It took nine weeks for Petty's *Long After Dark* to reach the *Billboard* Top Ten; the other made it in two to three weeks.) So much for the apolitical apathy of the mainstream rock audience.

But it is also essential to remember that the music which is speaking most directly to the needs and concerns of Americans is not coming from trendy British bands or voguish new wavers, but from the center of rock. Most superstars are indeed immobilized by their success (that is both the overt and covert theme of *Against the Wind*). But the great ones find a way to struggle through and speak the truth again. And that is the reason that *The Distance* is a record that moves me to the core and makes me want to apologize to Bob Seger.

Consider it rendered.

London Calling

By Chris Welch

Pete's Demos Go Public

PETE TOWNSHEND IS releasing a surprise new solo album. Called *Scoop*, it will be issued on Atlantic here, and consists of a selection of Pete's legendary demo tapes made between the years 1964 and 1981. Throughout the group's history Townshend has long worked in a variety of home studios producing demos of his songs for The Who, playing all the instruments himself including drums and keyboards and even over-dubbing the vocal harmonies. Many of the recordings are indistinguishable from Who performances of classics like "Pinball Wizard" (Pete's demo of this song is already available, on the flexi-disc accompanying Richard Barnes' Who biography, *Maximum R&B*) and "Substitute." Full track listings were unavailable at press time. Townshend also plans to record a jazz album later in the year as part of his policy of musical expansion. And what's the current state of The Who? "They're still together at the moment," says their London office.

Auditioning The Beatles

BEATLEMANIA REFUSES TO die. The whole subject was aired in an hour-long TV documentary here which showed newsreel film of The Fab Four undergoing mob hysteria in the '60s and film of more recent Beatle conventions. Even the ancient and prestigious Sotheby's auction rooms in London have not escaped the growing interest in the long-

PHOTO SKR RETNALL

This band is very popular

defunct group. At an auction of Beatles memorabilia, gold discs, suits, photographs, and even bubble gum cards went under the hammer for 10,000 pounds, much to the reported annoyance of Paul McCartney.

One of the top buyers was a Japanese businessman, Mr. Kosaku Koishihara, who bought nearly a quarter of the 320 pieces of rock history for a Tokyo department store. Some 13,000 pounds was paid for the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* gold disc, and 2,000 pounds for George Harrison's 1966 stage suit with grey pocketless jacket and velvet collar. He also paid 4,400 pounds for two 1965 pen and ink drawings by John Lennon. The businessman later confided that he was not a Beatles fan and thought some of the items were junk, but they were for display to people who would treasure them. A sad business.

Zak Starkey, Ringo's son, has been barred from his local pub near Ascot after noisy scenes which resulted in Zak being escorted from the premises. Zak has his own group and has been building up a reputation as a fiery drummer, after being given a kit by the late Keith Moon, who took the young Zak under his wing. Said Zak recently: "Being Ringo's son is the biggest pain in my life."

Deep Purple To Reunite?

EX-MEMBERS OF DEEP Purple have been offered a million dollars to reform for an American tour and they are seriously considering the offer. The lineup would consist of Ritchie Blackmore (guitar), Ian Paice (drums), Ian Gillan (vocals), Roger Glover (bass) and Jon Lord (keyboards). All would be free locally except Lord, who is currently committed to the highly successful Whitesnake, which is just poised to mount a new assault in search of fame in America and the Far East. David Coverdale might be highly displeased at such a reunion, as it could steal some much needed thunder from Whitesnake.

Maybe Ian Paice wouldn't mind a Purple reunion after a hectic tour with the new Gary Moore Band. The group played a gig very close to Ian's Surrey home, and found they were booked into a hotel for the night—one hundred miles away!

Jagger Hires Scribe, Miles Hires Eric

MICK JAGGER HAS finally chosen his official biographer, after a long search of eager rock journalists. In fact, much to their disappointment, Jagger has gone up market and chosen the deputy literary editor of *The Sunday Times*, John Ryle, who is expected to earn 50,000 pounds for the job, while Mick nets a million pounds. How much will Mick tell about his life and loves? We shall have to wait another year to find out . . . Miles Copeland, manager of The Police, is busy putting together a pilot TV show called *The Rebellious Juke Box*, hosted by Eric Burdon who's making a comeback after years in the wilderness since the demise of The Animals and his various New Animals. Eric's role as a night club owner comes as a life saver for the singer. After years living in Los Angeles, he admits he's "broke" and wants to live in London again and form a new blues band. Eric will be welcoming distinguished guests to the show like The Police, The Go-Go's and Jools Holland, formerly of Squeeze, along with Godley & Creme. Copeland hopes to sell the show to American TV networks, and calls it "a comedy spoof on the rock business."

PHOTO EBET ROBERTS

The English Beat: The focus is on personal politics.

From a Mallet to a Nutcracker: The English Beat Lightens Up

By Michael Goldberg

SAN FRANCISCO—There's a certain pride that a rock 'n' roll band can take in having a record banned in England. For one, it puts you in the company of those arch political rockers the Sex Pistols, whose "God Save The Queen" was banned in 1977. In 1980 the English Beat checked in with a caustic attack on British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher entitled "Stand Down Margaret," and found the song promptly banished from the airwaves, but not before it had received substantial play and made the U.K. Top 20.

" 'Stand Down Margaret' was played on the radio for two weeks in England before they realized it was about Margaret Thatcher," laughs Dave Wakeling, the English Beat's high-spirited lead vocalist, songwriter and guitarist. "That was really satisfying."

The English Beat continued to earn themselves a reputation as one of England's most political bands when they followed "Stand Down Margaret" with *Wha'ppen?*, an album filled with equally-pointed political commentary like "I Am Your Flag," "Drowning" and "Get-a-Job," all set to the jumping Jamaican beat of ska and the quick guitars of punk.

Portrayed in the U.K. press as a racially-integrated, socially-conscious left-wing collective, the English Beat—Wakeling; Ranking Roger Charlery, vocals and percussion; Andy Cox, guitar and mandolin; David Steele, bass and banjo; Everett Morton, drums; Dave Blockhead, keyboards; Wesley Magoogan and Saxa on saxophones (the former joined full-time in June of '82, while the latter, an original member, opted for a part-time schedule after one too many road trips)—seemed intent on following in the footsteps of the Clash, a band well-known for its successful combination of music and a message.

So it's at first surprising that the English Beat's third album, *Special Beat Service*, finds it focussed on matters of the heart. Wha'ppen? "It deals with personal politics rather than party politics," explains the 26-year-old Wakeling, sitting in a San Francisco hotel room smoking cigarettes with Ranking Roger.

"Having written a song about capitalism and one about nationalism and one about nuclear war, it would be really boring to do it again," continues Wakeling, whose light brown hair is cut short like Elvis Costello's. "When you write a song, it's like a catharsis. You get the worm out of your system during the weeks it takes to write that song. You don't solve the problem, but you come to terms with it yourself.

"But I thought it would be an awful stereotype to get into. 'Oh, the Beat, that political group. What's the politics on this album, lad?' And a lot of people were disappointed that it wasn't packed with political songs. Really, I'm glad they're disappointed."

"That's what people expected," says Ranking Roger, who talks with the same thick Jamaican accent one can hear on Beat songs such as "Spar Wid Me" and "Pato and Roger Ago Talk." He shakes a head of dreadlocks and reaches for cigarette papers.

"It would be really boring if what they are expecting was what was on the album," says Wakeling. " 'Cause then them and us would both know what was on the album before it was made so what would be the point of doing it? It would be boring."

There's certainly nothing boring about the English Beat. They mix an intriguing and occasionally unlikely variety of musical influences—reggae, '60s soul, punk, jazz, ska, African pop, calypso—to create an eccentric, yet infectious pop music uniquely their own. When they slow down the tempo, as on the album opener, "I Confess," they don't lose the intensity; like Elvis Costello, Wakeling knows how to inflect a vocal with just the right amount of desperation and bitter resolve.

The English Beat was born out of frustration in the winter of 1978. "Boredom. Nothing to do. Nothing whatsoever. No release for anything that you felt was real," says Wakeling, clearly agitated by the memory. "Couldn't buy a daily newspaper that seemed to talk sense. Just social frustration. Very little to do in the town we live in (Birmingham)."

Shortly thereafter, Jerry Dammers of the Specials—whose Two-Tone label was scoring a string of Top 10 British hits at the time by groups, like the Specials and Madness, that were updating and popularizing ska, a pre-reggae Jamaican pop music heretofore commercially unpalatable in both the U.K. and the U.S.—asked the newly-formed band to record a single. The Beat's remake of Smokey Robinson's "Tears of a Clown" broke into the English Top 10. "All of a sudden there's like every major record company phoning us and saying, 'Look, whatever he's offering you, we'll double it.' And we thought, Oh, this has just got serious. "

Rather than jump at the first glittering offer, the musicians spent a month figuring out exactly what kind of record deal they wanted. Recalls Wakeling: "It was like, if you've got all the choices in the world about how you want to be involved with a record company and make pop records, what sort of things do you want? We wrote big lists. And we went to a lawyer and said, 'What else have we missed?' Then sent it to all of the record companies and about three or four of them came back and said okay, and we picked the one that said okay the loudest."

Once signed to Arista in the U.K. (in the U.S., the Beat's first two albums were on Sire, and the band is now signed to I.R.S.), they proceeded to score three more Top 10 hits; their debut album, *I Just Can't Stop It*, remained on the English charts for 23 weeks.

In the U.S., where the Beat have toured six times during the past two years, they have been well-received by the critics, but a large audience is only now beginning to discover them. Wakeling credits I.R.S., the innovative independent label, with greatly increasing the group's visibility in America.

One might also point to the slicker, more sophisticated sound that characterizes *Special Beat Service*. Is the Beat "going commercial"? Negative, according to Wakeling. "I'd rather be subversive," he insists. "I think it would really be nice to have songs that sounded from five feet away as smooth and as safe (as other pop tunes); it's just when you get two feet away from the radio . . . 'What? What's he just said?' I think that's good. Cause 'Anarchy in the U.K.,' that's quite good but 18 months after that there were only die-hard acolytes who would listen to it. It probably alienated as many people as it converted.

"If you only need a nutcracker," he concludes with a knowing smile, "there's no point in using a mallet." ○

High School Hi-Jinks Propel Spoons Toward The Big Time

NEW YORK—Time was that for a rock 'n' roll band to make it big off a high school dance, it had to be one of two things—co-stars in a beach party movie or characters in an Archie comic book. Tell it to the Ontario, Canada-based Spoons.

"After we graduated high school in 1979," relates Sandy Horne, the 21-year-old bass player, "we convinced the principal of Aldershot High in Burlington, our old school, to let us play a final dance. Well, it got pretty rough. The kids thought we were a punk band so they were beating each other up, dropping eggs on peoples' heads, jumping on furniture . . . the Board of Education said we could never play at a school function again."

Hey, this isn't the way Frankie Avalon got started. So, welcome to the '80s.

"It didn't look good until a teenage publication called *Red Shoes* heard about the dance," Horne continues. "They thought it was great. Anyway, through *Red Shoes* we got hooked up with a band called the Diodes, and then with a Toronto promoter who booked us at his clubs. We cut a single, 'After The Institution,' and things really started happening."

In the summer of '81, Canada's Ready Records released the Spoons' debut LP, *Stick Figure Neighborhood*, and brought in noted producer John Punter (Roxy Music, Japan, Nazareth) to streamline the band's sound on a 12-inch single, "Nova Heart" b/w "Symmetry." The collaboration continues on the Spoons' first American release, *Arias and Symphonies*, on A&M.

Horne, a founding member of the Spoons with vocalist/guitarist Gord Deppe (the elder statesman of the bunch at age 23) and 20-year-old drummer Derrick Ross (keyboardist Rob Preuss, now 17, joined in 1980), says the group began as a Genesis clone, "but progressive music didn't go over very well" in the provinces.

On *Stick Figure*, the Spoons introduced a lighter, bouncier, less grandiose form of synthesizer-driven pop that met with high praise from Canadian critics. Punter took the sound a step further in the pop direction, not entirely to the band's satisfaction. Still, Horne notes, the Spoons have an eight-year contract with A&M and plenty of time to hone their style.

PHOTO P L NOBLE

Spoons

Meanwhile, the quartet is wrapping up a short tour of eastern U. S. venues while plotting out its next vinyl maneuver. Future concerts will be restricted to clubs and colleges; high schools need not apply. "It's too bad things got so out-of-hand," laments Horne. "The kids had a great time; they want us back."

—Mark Mehler

Saga's Keyboard-Heavy Rock Finally Rolls A U.S. Winner

NEW YORK—With apologies to Asia, the current keyboard rock sensation is Saga, a band that began dominating radio playlists last fall with its single, "On The Loose," and boasts not one, not two, but three keyboardists. Unlike Asia, whose 1982 debut went platinum almost overnight, Saga had been together for five years and five albums when America finally took notice.

Formed in Toronto in 1977 by Michael Sadler (lead vocals, keyboards, bass) and Jim Crichton (bass, keyboards), Saga (whose lineup is rounded out by Crichton's brother, Ian, on guitars; Jim Gilmour on lead keyboards and vocals, and Steve Negus on drums and percussion) had some mild success in Canada but bombed Stateside in '81 with the LP *Images At Twilight.* Undaunted, the quintet honed their act in the international arena, and last September tried the U.S. again with *Worlds Apart,* on Portrait. Two months later, both LP and single were bona fide go-rillas.

What does Sadler make of this "sudden" success? "I think we've just grown," he offers, adding that much of the band's development is attributable to the various musicians "getting used to each other. We know what makes up the Saga sound, and we go out of our way not to sound like anyone else."

Having recently opened tours for Jethro Tull and Pat Benatar, Saga is once again trekking across the States, this time in support of Billy Squier. And with that, Sadler finds Saga in dire straits. "It's become increasingly important to do another studio album as soon as possible," he states, "and the Squier tour pushes (sessions) back into the early summer. Now I'm concerned about the European market. We spent four years building it up, and it'll be almost two years between studio albums for them."

The solution? Keep on keepin' on. Observes Sadler: "You've got to take advantage of any exposure you can get in the U.S. We've released a live album overseas to keep them happy, but that's gonna wear thin after awhile, I'm sure."

Such are the burdens of stardom. After all these years.

—Greg Brodsky

Big Joe Williams Dead At 83

Blues singer Big Joe Williams died December 17 of heart failure in his home in Crawford, Mississippi. He was 83 years old. Best known for his composition "Baby, Please Don't Go"—which was covered by such artists as Mose Allison, Muddy Waters, Odetta, John Hammond, and Them featuring Van Morrison—Williams became "King Of the Nine-String Guitar" when he added three extra strings to his instrument, in an effort to deter amateurs from borrowing his axe.

Williams' recording career began in the late twenties, several years before Robert Johnson cut his first sides, and continued into the eighties. He recorded numerous sides with the legendary John Lee "Sonny Boy" Williamson I, and was backed on later records by the likes of Willie Dixon, Paul Butterfield, Charlie Musselwhite, and even Bob Dylan. He was still performing up to the time of his death, and he never deviated from the Delta blues style, marked by his gruff vocals and powerful, percussive guitar playing.

PHOTO TOM COPI

Big Joe Williams

Williams was mentor to many younger bluesmen, notably Musselwhite, who remembers, "We lived together in Chicago off and on between 1962 and '64, in the basement of the Delmark record company. We played clubs with myself, John Lee Granderson and Mike Bloomfield backing up Joe. I went to his place in Crawford last August, and we played together. He was as formidable, as strong as ever."

—Dan Forte

Deep In The Heart of Dexys, Kevin Rowland Mellows Out

NEW YORK—Though the short history of Dexys Midnight Runners is replete with internal problems, commercial disappointment, media baiting and premature departure, lead singer/songwriter Kevin Rowland hangs on as the founder and one sustaining presence. "I am," he says, smiling, "a little like Old Man River."

Of course, there are those who look on his three-day growth of beard, straggly dark hair and paleolithic blue jeans and suggest he's more like the old man who crawled out of the river. But that only makes Kevin Rowland laugh harder. Putting people off is a lifelong passion.

In his native England, Rowland has been referred to as "a folk hero of the '80s," and the fate of Dexys is something of a continuing soap opera. In the past two years alone, for instance, Rowland has twice disbanded and re-formed the band, moved from EMI to Polygram Records (probably to the relief of the former: Rowland had a reputation for being difficult to deal with, and as he told an *NME* reporter, "I wonder how I would have reacted to some prick coming into my office shouting and kicking things over . . . it was fucking pandemonium." At one point of his stay at EMI, Rowland looked on as Dexys' manager punched Malcolm McLaren, "their golden boy at the time," in the jaw "just to get our feelings across to EMI—and it worked.") and wrote and recorded a batch of songs for Dexys' second American release, and first for Polygram, *Too-Rye-Ay.* Dexys first U.S. album, *In Search Of The Young Soul Rebels,* was released by EMI-America in 1980.

PHOTO: DEBRA TREBITZ/LGI

Kevin Rowland: Happy at last?

Fortunately for the commercial future of Dexys, Rowland's major passion these days is music. On *Too-Rye-Ay,* he's cast aside the band's emblematic big brass sound for acoustic fiddles and strings, creating a low-key soul record heavily laced with Scottish and Irish folk, British music hall and Memphis soul. Though its lack of synthesized bounce and its penchant for looking back wistfully on adolescence from an adult point of view may doom it commercially in this country, you have to admire Rowland's boldness in recasting Dexys right out of the mainstream.

"I hate anything that comes in a movement," he says. "Back in 1976, when I played for awhile in a punk band, the Killjoys, I got conned, too. I believed all the pathetic punk ideals. It was all a sham. I guess everything this band has done since is a reaction to movements."

In general, Rowland says the music now is more atmospheric, more understated, less angry, bitter and strident. He is no longer the same man who rained terror on a recalcitrant record company. With his new lineup of guitarist/co-writer Billy Adams, fiddler Helen O'Hara, drummer Seb Shelton and bassist John Watson (plus assorted other musicians on the road), he is content to tour and record, come what may.

"I have to say my early life wasn't very happy," he concludes. "But when I look back on it now, it's a joyous thing. A song on the album, 'Come On Eileen', is about convincing a girl to have sex with you. Not fun at the time, but a joy to look back on."

—Mark Mehler

X to Test Europeans' Taste, Then Resume LP Sessions

LOS ANGELES—Is X England's type of band? Not if you believe the music press, which makes a habit of slagging off the L.A. quartet as a mere American imitation of punk. However, a recent TV appearance in Britain, plus radio airplay on a pirate station, generated some good will towards X. By the time this story reaches the reading public, X will be winding up a tour of England and selected cities on the Continent which the band's manager/attorney Jay Jenkins hopes will "crack the top of the pops," and getting ready to resume work on their next album for Elektra.

As for the English trip, guitarist Billy Zoom has set his sights on horizons considerably more modest than Jenkins'. "We're going because we get a lot of fan mail from there, and they like us," he shrugs. "But generally, nobody really cares. It's like one of the smaller states. We'll go there and find the people like us and the press hates us. They're snobby and jealous that way about anything American. We're more interested in the Continent; they're more attuned to us."

Zoom also scoffs at reports that the higher-ups at Warner-Elektra-Atlantic (WEA) suggested a bit of special grooming to make X palatable to Britons: "If they suggest we change something, we'll ignore it. Or maybe just do the opposite."

Zoom reports the new LP should be out in late summer, and will contain "more love songs, less death songs." X's recent *Under The Big Black Sun* dealt extensively with Exene's sister who died in 1980.

—Susanne Whatley

PHOTO: LAURA LEVINE

Exene Cervenka

Trio Casts Wary Eye On Modern Life

NEW YORK—It's called the New German Happiness.

As defined by Stefan Remmler, lead singer of the German group Trio, it's an attitude, "a type of humor where you don't know whether to laugh or cry."

As heard in Trio's international hit "Da Da Da," the New German Happiness is the spark for one of the season's most novel infectious dance numbers. But the novelty is undercut with an all-too-real sense of alienation—"I don't love you, you don't love me"—which is hard to laugh off.

"Da Da Da" is the featured cut on Trio (Mercury), a six-song EP which includes the similarly phrased "Anna—Let Me In, Let Me Out" and "Sunday You Need Love, Monday Be Alone," bringing the best of Trio's 1982 German debut album to America.

PHOTO: BBC/RETNA LTD

Trio: (from left) Peter Behrens, Kralle Krawinkel, Stefan Remmler

"The lyrics are not an ideology," Remmler explains in the same flat, nasal voice he uses to sing his songs. "It's not a new way people should be, it's just how things are. What else really moves me but relationships which build up and go away? I'm not proud of it, just observing with a sad eye."

Remmler's world-weariness gets a stripped down treatment by the band members; his occasional Casio keyboard lines are augmented only by Kralle Krawinkel's guitar and Peter Behrens' stand-up drums. The minimalist sound of Trio—refreshingly out of step with most of today's wide-screen dance rock hits—is molded by producer Klaus Voormann, who is no stranger to the bare bones approach, having been a member of John Lennon's Plastic Ono Band.

Based in Grossenkneten, a village in Northern Germany far from the music capitals of Berlin, Munich, and Hamburg, Trio has been free to develop its own unique sound. American music is an important influence on the group; lyrics are a mixture of German and English phrases. Remmler says that when he was growing up, he'd get up at six o'clock every morning to catch the hit parade on Armed Forces Radio. He cites Bob Wills, Bing Crosby, and Chuck Berry as his early favorites.

Yet at the same time, Remmler says Trio is reviving a tradition of German cabaret which was banned by the Nazis and remained buried while German culture rebuilt itself in the years after World War II. This is seen in Trio's live act, where Remmler converses with the audience and tells jokes in addition to singing.

"It is only now," he says, "that we in Germany have the freedom of picking American rock 'n' roll as well as a fifty-year old German show tradition."

And combining the two with a wry cynicism. The New German Happiness may be just a convenient banner for a new international pop music. Either way, it seems to be working for Trio.

—Stuart Cohn

After Years of 'Quiet Fuming,' Rough Trade Comes Stateside

NEW YORK—"I've been quietly fuming for years," admits Carole Pope, lead singer of Rough Trade, a Toronto rock band still relatively unknown in the U.S. but boasting an extensive following in Canada, where the band's first LP, *Avoid Freud* (released 1980), was certified platinum (meaning 100,000 units sold in Canada). And though Rough Trade's live shows invariably attracted a star-studded audience, U.S. labels looked the other way.

"American labels didn't think we were commercial since we were writing about sexuality," continues Pope. "They didn't think we could get hits on Top 40 radio."

Pope (vocalist-lyricist—she won 1982's Juno award for Canada's most promising female vocalist) and Kevin Staples (keyboardist-guitarist), the nucleus of Rough Trade, have been writing songs and playing together since they met in 1968

In the years since they've developed a sophisticated style of electronic rock that is equally influenced by the wit of traditional songwriters such as Noel Coward, Cole Porter and Stephen Sondheim and the passion of American soul music. More contemporary influences include Talking Heads, Bowie or whatever English band they like at the moment. "We like different bands every week," Pope says. "The Associates, Simple Minds, Thomas Dolby."

On Rough Trade's first U.S. release, *For Those You Think Young* (on the Boardwalk label), Pope and Staples explore politics, "fashion victims," and brutality in sexual relationships. Pope delivers her fragmented lyrics in a voice that is at once inviting, but detached, sort of like Bowie in his more sardonic moments.

But will American audiences take to this band? A country that has been known to embrace sensationalism probably won't be turned off by Pope's notorious stage antics, among them simulated masturbation. Staples, though, believes that the music will ultimately gain more recognition than Pope's theatrics: "There are kids out there who come to see us because they think she's going to say something dirty and she's going to grab herself, or they do come because they like the music lyrically, or they come to dance."

—Helene Podziba

PHOTO: LISA LEAVITT

Rough Trade's Kevin Staples and Carole Pope

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The Genesis of Phil Collins

By Derk Richardson

AS A MEMBER OF THE PENULTIMATE PROgressive-rock group, Genesis, Phil Collins is situated in the lap of luxury. Celebrating its fifteenth year, with Collins on board for 12, Genesis commands surprising staying power in the marketplace—its thirteenth album, 1981's *abacab*, was its best selling, and crowds of up to 50,000 still turn out for concerts—and provides Collins with all the perquisites of corporate rock at its grandest, including a seven-bedroom house in Surrey in the southwest of England. But Collins, the 32-year-old drummer-turned-lead singer, can't sit still.

For the past two years, in addition to his multiple roles in Genesis, Collins has cultivated a solo career which is gaining such momentum that, in some areas, it might eclipse the success of the mega-group mothership. In 1981, he released his first solo LP, *Face Value* (Atlantic), a stark, deeply-personal collection of songs, including two hits, "In The Air Tonight" and "I Missed Again." *Face Value* went gold and is edging toward platinum but may well be surpassed by Collins' most recent release, *Hello, I Must Be Going!* Riding on the strength of a surprisingly faithful and chart-climbing remake of the Supremes' 1966 Holland, Dozier & Holland smash, "You Can't Hurry Love," *Hello, I Must Be Going!* is winning Collins new fans, some of whom probably find Genesis' music impossibly ponderous.

Collins' solo works are marked by frank songwriting, spare arrangements and taut instrumentation—qualities rarely associated with the bloated, grandiose school of progressive art-rock. On *abacab*, though, Collins introduced his streamlined R&B taste in the form of Earth, Wind & Fire's Phenix Horns and the briskly-paced single, "No Reply At All." More startling were the lean, danceable rhythms and structures of *Face Value*. Rather than abandon the grand, spacious sound associated with Genesis (particularly the vast thunder of the drums), Collins dramatically scaled down the number of elements so smoothly joined together and opened up windows in the surface, allowing the vulnerable human characteristics of his high, everyman's voice to burst through.

Collins joined Genesis in 1970. By 1975, lead singer Peter Gabriel had left to pursue his solo career and Collins moved out front. When guitarist Steve Hackett departed two years later, Genesis became the current trio of Collins, keyboardist Peter Banks and bassist-guitarist Mike Rutherford. (Guitarist Daryl Steurmer and drummer Chester Thompson join for touring.) As his duties in the band expanded, Collins branched out in other areas as well, co-founding the heavy jazz-rock fusion group, Brand X, while playing on, and more recently producing, recording sessions for other artists.

A compulsive worker, Collins was forced to re-examine his life and his art when his marriage collapsed following Genesis' 1978 tour. His soul-searching resulted in the musical daring and bleak imagery of *Face Value* and the more confident and assertive, but no less penetrating *Hello, I Must Be Going!* His seven-bedroom house is now occupied by only himself and his girlfriend, Jill Tavelman, but his time is taken up with an endless parade of projects. In the past year, Collins produced *Something's Going On* for Frida (ABBA's Anni-Frid Lyngstad), and John Martyn's *Glorious Fool* and played drums on Robert Plant's *Pictures At Eleven*. Possible projects in the near future include work with Pete Townshend, Air Supply, Manhattan Transfer, Daryl Hall and Maurice White.

Last December, Collins embarked on his first solo tour, "Phil Collins in Concert with The Fabulous Jacuzzis & The One Neat Guy." Although he had planned to end the tour in Los Angeles, the success of the single, the album and the concerts prompted Collins to get back on the road, after a two-week vacation in Hawaii, playing several more North American dates. The strains and tensions of the tour had threatened to ravage Collins' voice and he had cancelled a spate of interviews. But in San Francisco, in between a sushi lunch and a sound check for his concert in Berkeley, Collins made time to talk about his evolution as a solo artist and the relationship of his career to his personal life. Unlike the flamboyant showman on stage, the Phil Collins who sat back for an hour in a hotel lounge was relaxed, reflective and refreshingly straightforward.

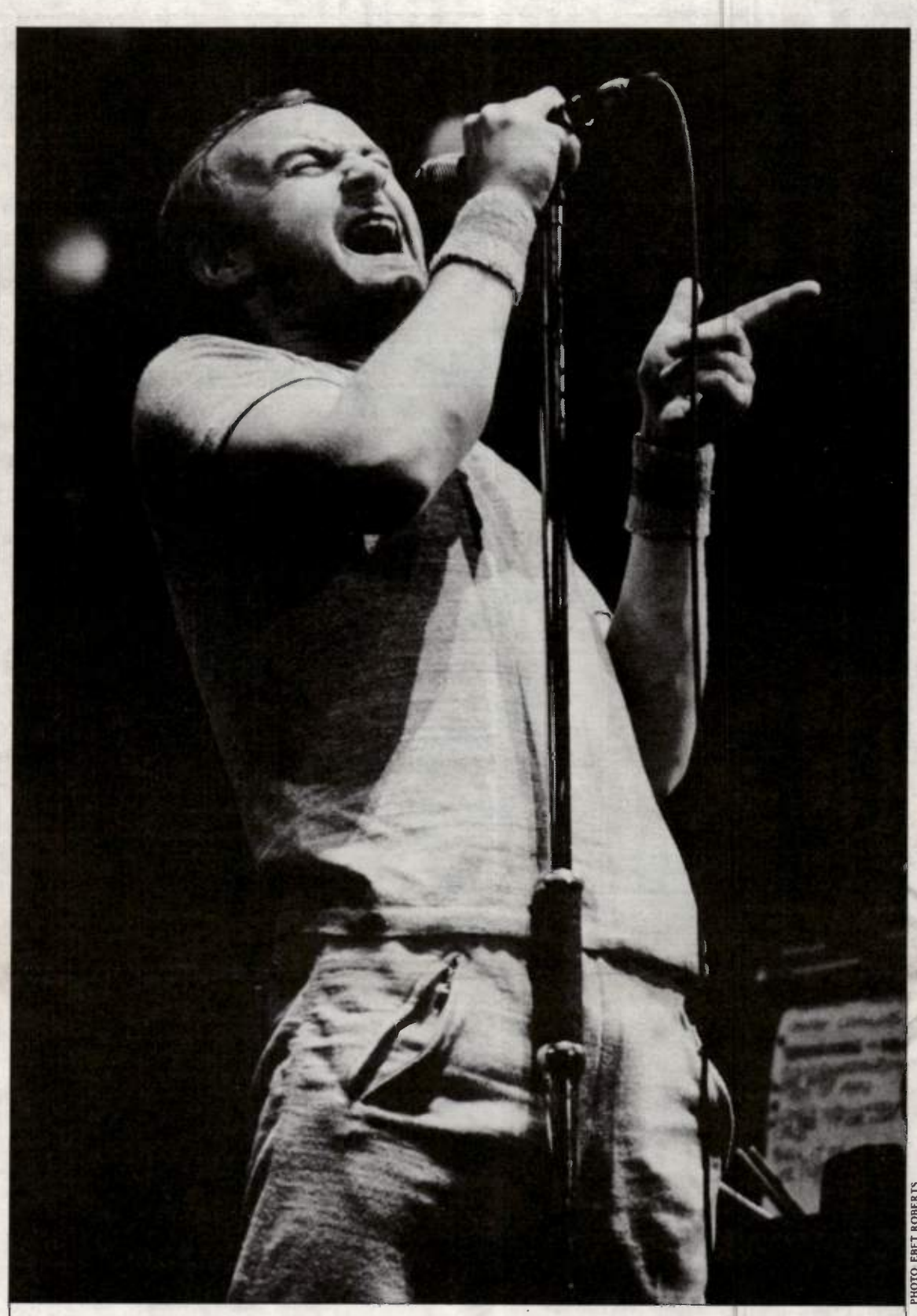


PHOTO EBET ROBERTS

Phil Collins: "Genesis is something else that I do. I dabble in it..."

How different is touring as a solo artist from performing with Genesis?

It's a lot different. Obviously it's all my own music, apart from one Curtis Mayfield tune and the Supremes' thing. It is real gratifying to see the audience enjoying it. The better it gets the more I panic, the more I want it to be better. It's a peculiar way of looking at it. As opposed to relaxing and enjoying it, I tend to get more and more tense, which is probably why I've had some voice trouble in the last few days. And for the first time ever, I actually think I've been working too hard. I do work an awful lot; I do lots of different things and I do enjoy it. I'm saying this to you because I'm just thinking out loud. It's either a question of me working too hard or this tension of me doing it on me own because I come off stage much less physically tired than I do after a Genesis show. I don't play drums as much in my own show, so maybe it's the playing that actually makes me tired.

In what ways is the experience different when you're up on stage with your own music and your own songs—apart from being less tiring?

I think Genesis is actually more personal than we ever used to be. We reach an audience and we make people laugh. We don't make people cry, although at the end of "Supper's Ready" sometimes you get the old tear from the emotional-religious freak. But there is more emotion in Genesis than there used to be.

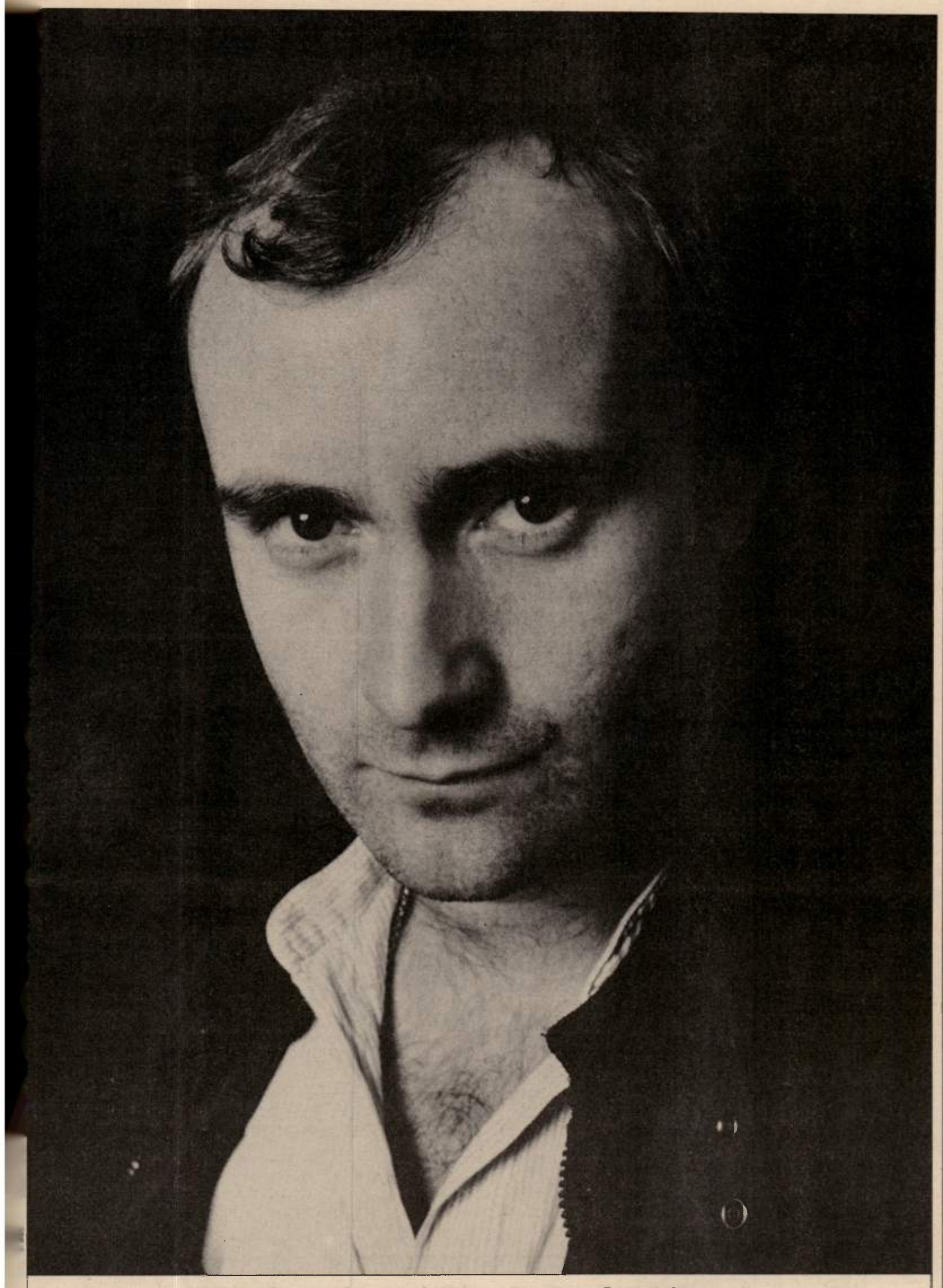
But with my music I can sit up there and sing "If Leaving is Easy," and I can mean that and I know that I mean it and I think people know I mean it. It's great for me to suddenly be able to sing songs that aren't about bread bins or things that I don't write. There's a theory that every singer sings his own lyrics better, so of course it's much more gratifying. But it's also amazing to sit there with Genesis in front of 50,000 people and to have that feeling as well.

Because it's my music, there's nothing that I'm singing that I'm embarrassed about. Sometimes when you're in a group, someone else writes words that you think, I could have done that a little bit, not better, but . . . I could have just changed it. But you know it's his lyric, it's his song, therefore put up with it. There are those kinds of compromises and when that becomes too much of a strain, that's the time to get out of the group. At the moment, there is no strain like that because we're almost all going in the same direction, much more now than, say, three years ago.

Away from the music, when you're between gigs or traveling, do you miss the camaraderie of Genesis?

Oh no. It is strange at first to get up in the morning and find different faces in the hotel lobby. But what I'm doing now is more important to me than anything else. The band I see as something else that I do. I dabble in it and I dabble in a bit of production. But myself, that's *my* thing and it's the most important thing. If you imagine a circle, I'm in the middle of it and I'm reaching out, doing all these different things, and one of them is Genesis.

The Genesis thing is so different now. Up to a few years ago, I would learn Tony's tunes and he would learn my tunes or Michael would learn Tony's tunes or whatever. It was a group but it wasn't a group. In the old days we used to write together from scratch or develop somebody else's idea. And that's what we're doing more of now. The next album I hope won't have any individual songs on it. I certainly won't give them any of *my* songs, because there's no point. I might as well do them myself in the way that I want to do them. It makes it very clean cut between what I do and what Tony does and what Mike does indi-



Of the divorce that sparked his solo career, Phil Collins says:
"Human beings tend to revel in that kind of thing. Most people like being depressed."

vidually, and the group just comes together to write together because it's something we can't do on our own. It seems to all work itself out very conveniently.

So there are still needs that aren't met in the solo career that Genesis fills for you?

I guess so but I don't often think about whether I *need* to do Genesis. I enjoy doing Genesis, like I enjoy doing the production work. Each thing I do is a bit different. [In Genesis] we never know what we're going to sound like on the next album, almost until it comes out. It's interesting to really have no preconceptions of what's going to happen. We're certainly not doing it for the money, 'cause I guess I must earn more on me own. My albums do better than Genesis albums in some countries. So it's not like we're gonna keep the band going for any mercenary means.

There's something when three people get together, there's a chemistry there and you sit down in a room, and you've got nothing, and someone starts tuning up and from that develops something that ends up like *abacab.* That's the magic of being in a group. It is something you can't do on your own, so there is something there that keeps *me* in the group.

When you did the show with Peter Gabriel to benefit Music and Rhythm, and then got on stage with him in Los Angeles, what sorts of thoughts did that provoke about his absence from the group?

When we did the benefit, we all laughed about it because it all came flooding back. Falling over things, pulling microphone leads out of sockets, it was chaos but it was also great fun to do. But I think it's a nice place to visit, wouldn't want to live there.

We've changed an awful lot. And although it was good fun to come back and just do it, we didn't want it filmed or recorded or anything because it wasn't that kind of event. We just wanted to do it basically as a "one-off" benefit. I spoke to him last night about the money side of it and he thinks that the whole thing was wiped clean by that one gig. So it did what we set out to do, which was great, and now all the other bands can be paid.

Do you listen to his albums?

Yeah, I'm a huge fan of the third album. I played on that—"Intruder" and "No Self Control." I think each album got better but the new album is a bit harder for me to get into. Last night, (at Gabriel's concert in Los Angeles) there were some songs that I've heard once or twice but didn't know well enough to enjoy. It's very demanding music, his set now. Our band talked about it afterwards and decided that it was very dark. It wasn't quite as joyous as it might have been.

What motivated you to do your own album?

My divorce, really. I was divorced; I was the injured party, as it were. After 1978, when Genesis did a whole year of touring—we did three tours of the States, two tours of Europe, and a Japanese tour—we came back and our marriage was over. Because I was the injured party, I got very depressed. In fact, I was going to move to Vancouver and live with my wife, because her folks lived over there and that seemed to be an answer. So I said to the band, quite irrationally, the night before I left, "If we can rehearse, write and live in Vancouver, we've still got a group." They said, "Okay, we're going to do our separate albums, you go ahead and sort yourself out."

So I went away thinking, I'm gonna live in Vancouver, I don't care what anybody thinks. Of course, out there nothing was different from the way it was in England. I went out there and we still argued the way we argued. I came back two months later and Tony and Mike had started their own albums. Therefore, I came back thinking, "Right, well, what am I going to do?"

We'd all bought these one-inch, eight-track machines with a 16-track desk. Mike and Tony were doing their own albums and I had nothing to do. I did a Brand X album but all the way through this time I tried to occupy myself doing things. I was learning how to operate this eight-track stuff, just trying to get things onto tape. I had nothing else to do. You've got two kids and a wife and a couple of dogs and suddenly you've got nothing. You're sort of at loose ends, you know? And I was sort of sitting down, writing a lot of music and putting it onto tape. On the *Product* album, that was Brand X, we did a track which was recorded at my house on eight-track because we'd run out of money. And the sound of the thing was very good. I suddenly thought, "With all of these things that I've been putting down, with drum machines and stuff, maybe they're good enough too."

I had "In the Air" and I had "If Leaving Me is Easy," and "Hand in Hand," and "I Missed Again," and "Thunder and Lightning," all the basic backing tracks. And Clapton had come around and he'd played on "If Leaving Me is Easy." I thought, "I can take this stuff that I've already done into the studio and just copy what I'd done from eight-track to 24-track. Like the album made itself without me knowing it. There was never any conscious time where I sat down and said, "Right, I'm going to do an album." It just sort of crept up behind me.

A lot of the words came spontaneously because it was a lot of personal things, like an open book, you have a diary. For it to be as successful as it was, having come from a beginning like that, was a big surprise, 'cause it was basically just home movies.

Did *Hello, I Must be Going!* develop in a similar way?

I knew by this time what I was gonna do. I did Frida's album in Sweden and while I was doing that, I thought, I'm gonna do me own album, I'm ready for it. I haven't got any songs, I've got a few bits and pieces but I'll just go home, set myself a time limit, like seven weeks, put it down on eight-track, and try to do it in a different way, rather than be spread out over a year like *Face Value.*

I also didn't have the same emotional kick in the ass, so I had to write things from a different point of view. Some of the songs, like "Don't Let Him Steal Your Heart Away," "It Don't Matter to Me" and "Why Can't It Wait 'til Morning," were actually written around the time of *Face Value* but were never finished.

I'd always been a bit reluctant to do this sort of thing. I had Brand X, which is sort of a mistress, if you like. But I'd never really written songs. I'd written bits, and my strength in Genesis was really as an arranger. I was probably a better musician than the other guys, in terms of a player. I couldn't write but I could play better. And suddenly I discovered I could finish a tune. "Misunderstanding" was one of the first things I finished, and "Please Don't Ask," which are on *Duke.* And that was all around the same time as this period when I had nothing else to do other than write.

Did it take something like a divorce to let yourself invest emotionally in a song, in its lyrics?

Well, when I'd written lyrics for Genesis they were like stories. The

Phil Collins

music in Genesis used to be hard to sing personal lyrics to. It was more like an idea. The divorce thing . . . I was very fond of the kids and I was still very fond of my wife. The only things that were coming out were things like, "When she was this . . ." It was a very stimulating time although I was miserable as hell. Human beings tend to revel in that kind of thing. Most people like being depressed. And I tend to tap that period quite often for lyrics.

A common reaction to depression is to work harder.

Yeah. I've always done that. That's one of the reasons why my marriage broke up, because I was working so hard.

On *Hello, I Must Be Going!* there seems to be an interesting contrast between your songs, "I Don't Care Anymore" and "It Don't Matter to Me," which are saying something about impatience and cynicism, and your choice of the Supremes' song, "You Can't Hurry Love," which is about waiting for the right time.

I never think too much. I just *like* the Supremes' song and I love the Sixties. That period was when I was listening, with the Beatles and the Atlantic and Motown stuff. Most black music is about happiness; it's very joyous, like Earth, Wind & Fire's lyrics, "you're a winner," "don't give up," all that. I actually tried (that approach) with "I Can't Believe It's True." I thought, I wonder if I can write lyrics like that? "When I walked past you on the street, I could not believe my eyes." And it sounded terrible. It did not work at all. So I tore the lyrics up. I felt so self-conscious singing them that I went back and wrote some more lyrics that were really downers, which actually was relating to getting this letter from my wife's lawyers asking for more money. The figure was going up and up and up and up and I opened the letter and I couldn't believe my eyes.

Do you feel freer to use different musical inspirations in your solo work than with Genesis?

A group is a compromise, and I suggested the horns on *abacab* purely because I thought that "Wouldn't it be interesting to see what people would think?" You know, "Genesis and Earth, Wind & Fire, Christ! Gotta check this out." I tried to shake people a bit and take them off automatic pilot. They have put us in the bracket with Yes and the Moody Blues and Pink Floyd and ELP and Jethro Tull and we've always been a bit more conscious of the music, I mean the songs, than those other groups. And people have to have it rammed down their throats that we're different now. A lot of people have blamed me for the change in Genesis and it's not anything that's set a precedent. If it happens on the next album, it'll be because it works for the next album. It's good for us to change. We never have really been what people think we are anyway.

Certainly people would not have associated you or the band with black music until you brought it in with the horns.

I've had more time and energy for the group since I've been on my own. Therefore my taste is reflected more in the group now because I've been submitting more. People ask, "What kind of music do you like?" and I say Weather Report and I suppose that is evident in some of the things I do in Genesis. But when I say Earth, Wind & Fire or some of the early Ohio Players or Kool & the Gang, it takes people a bit by surprise. I think they don't really like what I'm trying to do in the band anyway; they like the band for the wrong reasons, almost. But to each his own.

When you did your albums and chose the covers, were you feeling like you wanted to get your face more out in front of the public?

The main reason I chose that kind of picture was because the music was autobiographical and open. I wanted it to have a picture of me, as close as you could possibly get while still recognizing who it is, not that anybody knew who I was, because we'd always been a pretty faceless group. But the idea was, "this is an open book, you can't bullshit with that face, because it's there. That is it, mate."

And I wanted the second album to have a feeling of being part of a set. But I wanted it to be different at the same time. *Face Value* was a pretty stark period for me. Now I've actually got a bit more color in my cheeks, so that's why it's in color as opposed to black and white.

With your tendency to work hard, do you plan tight schedules?

I have to. I've got certain periods available to me to do things. People come up to me and say "Can you do that?" and I have to plan ahead and say, "Well, I can do it between July and September or between February and May." And obviously Genesis has to have some kind of long-term projected touring dates which, of course, can be thrown out the window any day, any time. If we don't get it off on the next album then there's no more Genesis, irrelevant of the fact that maybe there've been tours arranged for the end of the year. We have to play it by ear a bit. But our manager has to have some sort of plans so we let him go ahead and make them.

The next album hasn't been started yet?

Oh, no, no. We haven't even written it yet. Sometime in March we'll start. Then we'll go on the road in November of this year.

Are you able to work one day on Genesis and go home and work on your own things?

Yeah, I don't find it that hard to flit from flower to flower, as it were. I just do a project, then see it through and finish it.

Do you find it hard to flit from work to play or is it all work to work?

Work to work. No time to relax. Weekends I don't do anything. Up until I came on this tour, my kids were living in England. Now they're living in Vancouver, so I won't be seeing them every weekend like I used to. I'm going to be able to go on weekends to see some football or something. I've got a local pub that I go to. I'm gonna buy a pub actually. That's one of the outside things that I do. I drink. (Laughs) I don't do much else.

Will you serve drinks?

Probably, yes. I serve drinks at my local pub anyway. There's great people down there, nothing to do with music. All very normal people, keeps your feet on the ground.

Do you want to have another family?

It's very hard, actually. I don't even know if I want to get married again. I'm living with a lady and it's going fine. I don't want to ruin it by getting married. I've got a fantastic son. And my daughter is also fantastic, but she's my daughter as opposed to my son, and she was by my wife's previous engagement. It would be strange for me to have another son, considering how much I think about mine, you know, not having his dad and stuff. That's what hurt me more than anything else, when we broke up, actually looking at him and thinking, I know what my dad was like but he ain't really gonna know. Fortunately we do have a relationship whereby we see each other very often.

But it's not fair on your mate to say you don't want another family, because that's undermining any confidence in the emotions you've had. But at the moment, I've just got over one thing and I'm holding on for a little while yet.

> "It's great for me to suddenly be able to sing songs that aren't about bread bins or things that I don't write. There's a theory that every singer sings his own lyrics better, so it's much more gratifying (for me now)."

Missing Persons

Continued from page 1

made the top forty, and the self-titled four song disc made *Billboard's* album chart, only the third EP to do so. Last summer they recorded their debut LP at a total cost of $60,000. With the inclusion of the two singles from the EP, *Spring Session M* (an anagram of the group's name), released in October, will most likely be certified gold by the time you read this.

Although the band's four instrumentalists rank among the most sophisticated musicians to be found in any rock unit, Missing Persons' music, they have stated repeatedly, is aimed at the man on the street, not at some esoteric cult following. Terry Bozzio, easily one of the most talented and dynamic of rock drummers, adds cymbal and roto-tom flourishes to a steady, danceable 4/4, while Warren Cuccurullo intertwines any number of abnormal guitar sounds between Chuck Wild's synthesizer wash and Patrick O'Hearn's synth bass. Above it all is the controlled abandon of Dale Bozzio's hiccupping vocals, sounding alternately cartoon-like and seductive. Though comparisons are never totally accurate or fair to either side, it's safe to say that Missing Persons sounds a whole lot closer to the Cars or Devo than to Frank Zappa, U.K. or anyone else its members have been associated with.

Bozzio, Bozzio & Cuccurullo are the songwriting team for all of the group's originals, each responsible for lyrics, music and/or arrangements in every conceivable combination. Terry recently acquired some portable recording gear, and Warren a suitcase full of effects devices, so that they could compose and fine-tune some new tunes while on the road.

"I really don't want to do too many standard-type things, as far as sounds or parts go," relates Cuccurullo. "When I play my guitar in this band, it has to mean so much to the arrangement and whatever is going on in the song. It has to be something that's very pertinent to that. And I want it to be something that I can get off on playing, too."

At this stage, most groups would be mapping out or even recording their follow-up album, but Bozzio admits that they're not quite ready for that and wants to avoid going into the studio unprepared. "I do have a lot of respect now," he states, "for the bands that did a great debut album and had a lot of success, and then got shoved into the studio immediately and didn't do such a good job on the second one. I can easily see how that could happen. One of the reasons we put so many good songs on our first album was so several singles could be released from it."

If the LP spins off more hit singles—strong candidates being "Tears," "Bad Streets," and "It Ain't None Of Your Business"—that would buy the band extra time, but Terry feels they'd still need four to six weeks off the road to arrange all the new material that is currently in bits and pieces. "We've got three or four songs that are complete," he points out, "but we felt they were too mainstream to do live at this point, because the rest of the set is pretty aggressive. But they could become serious MOR hits. It's an omni-directional band; we can and will do anything we want to do."

None of the material not on vinyl has made its way to Missing Persons' live show, so the band finds itself in the position of headlining large venues with only about an hour-long set. And despite Terry's and Warren's descriptions of the diversity of their material, some critics have taken them to task for the sameness of their songs, even at sixty minutes flat. This coupled with their costumes and set design prompted Robert Hilburn of the *Los Angeles Times* to write, "Now there's a dumb band."

"I always wanted to have video things happening and make it like a Fellini film," says Terry.

"One time we had Dale come out in a little racing car," Cuccurullo laughs, "and she'd wear a Miss America costume for one song. All kinds of strange things, right from the beginning."

"To me, we have the music to back it up," says Terry emphatically. "So after you get through the visual barrage and settle down, there are the songs to back it up. And if you didn't hear it on the radio or see it on MTV, you wouldn't be there in the first place."

Considering how physically attractive all the members of Missing Persons are offstage—Dale's attributes are readily apparent, 32-year-old Terry looks closer to twenty-two, and Warren is, in Terry's words, "a major sex symbol—you should read some of the fan mail"—one has to wonder if all the make-up and plastic tubing are really necessary. "You need something to keep it in your mind, like a picture," says Cuccurullo. "Just like when you hear a song, you remember a melody or something. You need something visual to be imprinted in your mind."

"We're doing this," Terry explains, "because we're all sort of eccentric, and we feel the need to express ourselves in the way we dress, and make some artistic comment. It's not enough to hear a concert; you go to *see* and hear a concert. So why eliminate that whole sensual realm from a performance? It's just like more for your money."

The obvious trap that an emphasis on theatrics leads to is the need to continually outdo your previous performance and come up with an even more outrageous costume, an even more elaborate set design. However, for Dale, the group's visual focus, such pitfalls are easily surmounted. "My tastes and my dress change every day," she states, running her fingers through her pink and blonde hair. "I just go with the way I feel. I could dye my hair a different color next week. I get very bored with the same thing all the time, so I need a new outfit or something to give me some new energy to go out and perform. I'm an entertainer as well as a singer, and my costumes are entertainment for the audience and for myself. I wouldn't go onstage in my jeans, the same way I wouldn't go to a party in jeans. I try to present myself in a glamorous way."

"We think it's kind of stupid that people have played up the sexuality aspect of this band," says Terry. "I don't think we're flaunting anything; it's all done in good taste."

Still, the same A&R men who had previously passed on the band's demo tape began showing interest when presented with the same four songs wrapped inside a picture of Dale in a plastic bikini. "That's why we just put my face on the album," Dale smiles. "I mean, we might put my feet on the next album cover."

Artists have traditionally been terrible businessmen, so it's refreshing to see a group like Missing Persons succeed on its own terms, with little or no outside help. "At the very beginning, we had the same mentality as every other band," according to Terry. "We looked for the big father figure to come along and make us stars. After we made the demo and took it around, we realized that such a person does not exist. We had to take matters into our own hands if we were going to survive. Zappa was an inspiration in those ways, because I would always see this huge organization that all rotated around him, where everyone answered to Frank."

"After doing everything ourselves with the EP," Cuccurullo points out, "and then having the record deal come along, you don't want to just hand it over and say, 'G'head, make it a hit album.' You have to keep your hands on the reins. Capitol has been great, but we had to make lots of compromises."

Things may be moving too fast for Missing Persons, but at least it is they who are at the wheel. "We're controlling our own destiny," assures Terry, "and that's very rewarding." ○

Terry Bozzio: "We're doing this because we're all sort of eccentric, and we feel the need to express ourselves in the way we dress, and make some artistic comment."

PHOTO: BONNIE SCHIFFMAN

"I'm not the prima donna who comes walking in after the tracks are cut and says,'Am I in the right key? Point me towards the microphone.' I'm in there day and night, just like the rest of (the band), doing the same things they're doing..."

PAT BENATAR

Business As Usual

Continued from page 1

her brings a laugh and a quick nod of agreement.

In a little over three years, Pat Benatar has become the queen of American rock singers, with two Grammy Awards for Best Rock Vocal Performance and a wall full of gold and platinum discs to show for her effort. Yet the Pat Benatar who sits before me pleasantly talking junk food and platinum records is a far cry from the brazen belter who struts across the concert stage in skintight clothing. Of this paradox, she advises: "One doesn't have that much to do with the other.

"I don't mind looking good on stage. That, to me, is just condoning the standards that we've always lived by. But I've gone from being absolutely oblivious about my image to having this sex-goddess bitch bullshit slammed in my face," she says. "I was trying to be aggressive, but not necessarily sexy. And sometimes when you're aggressive, you look a certain way—especially when you wear certain clothes.

"I'm not going to say I was 'innocent' and have people jump down my throat—'yeah, she didn't know what she was doing. *Sure* she didn't'—because it wasn't totally innocent. But I never thought it would do what it did. When you've never seen yourself and you have no idea what you're doing, sometimes you just do things. When we're sitting around like this, I don't think I have it. When I go up on the stage, something happens.

"You know that thing about having it or not? Elvis Costello is very sexy on stage, but when he comes off I don't think he's sexy at all. Bruce Springsteen, too—when he comes off the stage, he's just a little guy. But up there, he's huge."

Benatar bristles at the thought that she's been molded and sculpted by some cynical and misogynistic media machine. "If you're successful, people always think that you've been manipulated, that other people are controlling your life," she opines. "If a woman goes on stage looking too good, either she's being slutty or she can't possibly have any talent, or she has no brains. Otherwise, why would she want to do that and exploit herself?"

When she first caught the public eye a few years ago, Benatar drew some criticism for her sultry poses and the sexual candor of her songs. The success of "Hit Me With Your Best Shot," from the second album, *Crimes of Passion,* engendered more critical flak. "A lot of women journalists wrote about how that's all we need now, a song about getting beaten," she says irritably. "Arrgh! They were missing the whole point!" What that song was saying, Benatar points out, was not "beat me," but rather, "go ahead and try it, asshole." It was a song of defiance and strength, not submission.

"Then I went through this other phase, thinking, 'Fuck them—I'm not going to wear anything that'll make me look like that in pictures any more.' So then there was this other, *bland* kind of personality coming out. I was covering things up, putting jackets on. I cut my hair off so I wouldn't look so glamour-girlish.

"Now I'm comfortable. Now it's 'fuck everybody—you don't like it, don't look at it. This is it.' " The ultimatum is delivered with a sort of good-natured irritability, as if to show that Benatar doesn't think her appearance should be the cause of such a fuss. Nevertheless it's an issue—witness the scene in *Fast Times At Ridgemont High* in which two characters, taking note of the transitory nature of fashion, observe three girls affecting "the Pat Benatar Look"—that she felt compelled to address on the cover of *Get Nervous* wearing a straitjacket, a fright wig and an unarmed expression. "The Pat Benatar Look" mentioned in *Fast Times* is, says the singer, "hilarious. It's one of those things, like a caricature of yourself."

Doesn't it hurt, though? Just a little bit?

"What can I say?" she shrugs. "You live by the sword, you die by the sword."

Are there still little Pat Benatars running around the suburbs?

"Yeah, you see them. But I think we see more little Go-Go's running around now." Spoken matter-of-factly, like a trouper.

Benatar's appeal can be credited at least in part to the Suburban Everywoman persona she embodies. Whatever controversy may have been created by "Hit Me With Your Best Shot" and her aggressive stance, Benatar reflects mainstream tastes and takes them only a little closer to the edge than the civilians themselves dare to go. Emulating her is an easier dare for adolescent misfit-testers to take, and a less horrifying one for parents who might find it unnerving to see their daughters dressing and wearing their hair like Cindy George (you read it here first) or Dale Mezzio.

Get Nervous, has just passed the million mark in sales on the strength of its first single, "Shadows of the Night." By the time "Little Too Late" and "Looking for a Stranger"—and maybe "The Victim" and "Anxiety (Get Nervous)"—finish their cycles on the singles charts, *Nervous* may prove to be her biggest seller to date, surpassing the triple-platinum performance of *Crimes of Passion*.

But beyond the sales figures, Benatar's story has more than a little to do with the carefully-crafted sound of her records. And that has more than a little to do with her producers.

Get Nervous was co-produced by Benatar's guitarist (and husband), Neil Geraldo, and Peter Coleman. The latter engineered Benatar's debut, *In the Heat of the Night,* and produced seven of its ten tracks, including the two hit singles, "Heartbreaker" and "We Live for Love." The other three songs were produced by Mike Chapman, who had a hot streak with the Knack, Nick Gilder and the early hits by Blondie, and about whom Benatar says, "Mike is like what I think Mussolini must have been like. He's great for new bands, though, because when you come into the studio for the first time, you don't even know left from right. He's like the father, showing you the ropes and bringing you along. That's great, but as soon as you get a mind of your own it's difficult to work with him. He wants to maintain control, and you're going, 'Forget it! I know what I'm doing now, Dad.' "

Keith Olsen, who produced *Crimes of Passion* and shared production credit with Geraldo on *Precious Time,* is "more musical" than Chapman, according to Benatar. "Neil worked great with Keith, just turning up guitars and going wild, getting all those sounds. But my main concern, obviously, is 'How am I singing this? Please, God, someone tell me if I'm doing it right.' " Coleman was brought in to work with Geraldo on the fourth album because "he has a thing that he does with singers that's terrific. He's one of the greatest producers to work with on vocals, and he's got such a smooth personality—no ego at all. Neil really likes him, too. They work great together. Neil is so crazed with working on the tracks, and Peter is a little more subdued, so between the two of them you get a nice blend."

The reason Benatar has only one (shared) songwriter credit on *Get Nervous,* she says, is that Geraldo and the other band members "were on a roll, coming up with so many songs, and they covered everything that I wanted to sing about." Did Geraldo the producer have problems judging Geraldo the songwriter? "He's worse than everybody else," Benatar replies. "He hates everything.

"Whoever writes the best stuff gets it on the record. If it's not good, it don't make it. I only have one song on the record because I couldn't come up with anything that was as good as what they had."

She does admit to being somewhat intimidated when it comes time to show her producer-guitarist-bandleader husband her songs-in-progress. "When you're married to each other it's twice as bad, because you have all these other embarrassments, little intimate things aside from being musicians," she says. "I thought it was hard to write songs with him before we got together, when I just knew him as my guitar player. I'd think, 'God, I can't give him this lyric—maybe it's horrible.' But now it's worse." However, that blade cuts both ways: when Geraldo shows his songs to the lady who sings them, "he goes outside" while she reads or listens.

Benatar chose the three songs on *Get Nervous* that came from outside writers. "Neil won't listen to the tapes—he goes nuts. He gave me a big box with about 600 tapes in it and said, 'Okay, you want to do this? Go ahead.' So every once in a while I'd play about 20 of those cassettes and see if there was anything."

The recording of her albums is completely collaborative. "It's hard to say who does what, in the end," says Benatar. "We do it all; I work on the arrangements with them, and everything. I'm not the prima donna who comes walking in after the tracks are cut and says, 'Am I in the right key? Where do I start? Point me towards the microphone.' I'm in there day and night, just like the rest of them, doing the same thing they're doing every day."

In Benatar's case, there's more to supervising a mix than merely wielding the ultimate power of the veto, or simply demanding that her voice be turned up. Well, once in a while she asks for a little more presence on the vocals, "but usually it's the other way—I don't get enough guitar. I love guitar so much! I always want to turn the guitars up and the vocals down. I always wanted to be a guitar player, but I can't play *shit.*"

But overall, Benatar credits her husband with the bulk of the work on her albums. "He has to physically write down what goes where. If you had to rate it on who does what, Neil would get 95 percent of the credit. But we figure out everything together—sometimes amicably, sometimes not." She explodes into laughter again.

Benatar knows it's important to keep things interesting for herself as well as for her audience and for radio programmers. "You just can't keep doing 'Treat Me Right' every record, you know? It's fine for record sales, and it makes radio happy, but you're bored stiff. So you find other things to do. You've got ten songs on an album, and they really only want two. So you give them what they need, and you do whatever else you want."

After a phenomenal success like *Crimes of Passion,* says Benatar, "you just want to kill yourself. There you are with six million records sold. You can't even turn the radio on because you're so sick of hearing yourself, and now the record company wants another album just like it.

"*Precious Time* was considered a failure [by the record company] because it didn't do as well as *Crimes of Passion,* but while we were doing it everyone knew full well that it wasn't going to do that well. It didn't have nine radio songs, but I like it better because it was a growth record for us. The pressure to do another record like the last one was ridiculous, so we just didn't try to compete with *Crimes* at all." The result could hardly be said to have hindered Benatar's progress, rising to Number One on the album chart almost immediately and yielding the hits "Fire and Ice," "Promises in the Dark" and "Take It Any Way You Want It."

For *Get Nervous,* the instrumental lineup was altered by the replacement of guitarist Scott St. Clair Sheets with keyboardist Charlie Giordano. "We were thinking of getting a keyboard player to augment what we had," explains Benatar, "and it just turned out that Scott was thinking of leaving. So it worked out just right." Giordano's playing contributes to what Benatar calls the "more modern, more danceable" sound of *Get Nervous*—particularly his percussive, catchy organ work on "Looking for a Stranger." "We were getting stagnant and bored," Benatar notes, "so we changed the format of the band and made this record different from the other ones."

Benatar's attitude shows that she is delighted and more than a little surprised at the good fortune she's had—not in a phony, "lucky-little-me" way, though. She's worked hard, paid attention, marshalled her talents well, and capitalized on the breaks that have come her way, and taken care to remember that fate has plenty to do with success.

The only thing Benatar seems to want more than what she's already got is a family of her own—immediately, if not sooner. Although it was widely reported that their romance had ended a few months previously, Benatar and Geraldo were married a year ago, and now maternity is on the singer's mind. "We both come from real *family* families," she says, "and we really want to have a family. I love doing this so much, and the only thing that's missing from our lives is children. Somehow we've got to try to fit it in. We're going to have to juggle this some way. I don't think I'm Superwoman, but maybe I can squeeze it in somehow." The next Pat Benatar album may be recorded live, eliminating a long stint in the studio and freeing the diminutive vocalist for pregnancy and motherhood without affecting the momentum of her career.

If she does take time out to have a baby, it's likely that Geraldo will pursue his interest in producing records. In addition to Benatar's last two albums, which he co-produced, the guitarist singlehandedly guided the solo debut of ex-Baby John Waite (*Ignition,* on Chrysalis). "I imagine I'll be staying home and he'll be out doing other things," Benatar muses. "This [being her bandleader] takes up so much of his time that he can't really do anything else." Still, Benatar is contracted to Chrysalis to turn in one album per year—"for the rest of my life!" she shrieks in mock panic. "I'll be fifty years old, going, 'I can't do this—the tights don't look good any more! Give me a break!' "

In a quieter moment, Benatar admits she's got a while to go yet before such a scenario develops. Then, with visions of junk food dancing in her head, she pats her thigh and adds: "But all those Twinkies are going to start showing up eventually." ○

PHOTO JEFF MAYER.

To her detractors Pat Benatar retorts: "I'm comfortable with my image. You don't like it, don't look at it. This is it."

Audio

Audiophile Cassette Survey: Alternatives To Home Taping

By David Gans

OAKLAND, Ca.—While the quality of home and auto stereo sound equipment has been improving steadily over the past few decades, it is only in the last couple of years that the quality of records and tapes has risen to the challenge. Some major record companies, while for the most part still addressing themselves to the tastes and budgets of the less-critical majority of listeners, have recently begun to market separate lines of "audiophile" discs and tapes, which are manufactured with more care and better raw materials and carry correspondingly higher price tags. But for the hard-core audio freak who wants the best possible sound, the '80s have seen the introduction of several very attractive alternatives to the run of the music mill.

The advent of component stereo systems for cars has spurred some of the audiophile disc manufacturers to enter the market with extremely high-grade cassettes. Anyone who's watched in horror as their thousand dollar auto stereo chewed up a seven-dollar pre-recorded cassette and spat out a few yards of tangled tape will appreciate the ephemeral nature of the regular-priced product. Flimsy, glued together shells and inferior tape stock often make for high-risk sound in the bouncing, vibrating environment of an automobile—and the less sophisticated the playback unit, the more likely it is to develop spontaneous cravings for mylar and styrene.

And although home units are less inclined to eat tapes, the relative quiet of the listening environment exposes the limitations of music as recorded on those cassettes. Even with Dolby noise reduction, which is rapidly becoming a given in conventional pre-recorded cassettes, the high-speed duplication process by which they're made shaves off much of the critical musical information contained in the higher frequencies.

Imagine a cassette made directly from the stereo master tape, recorded with noise reduction on the same kind of high-grade blank tape you use at home, with careful attention paid to preserving all the sounds the artist and producer intended you to hear.

One solution to the problem has been to buy good blank cassettes and record albums yourself at home—and that's what many recording industry executives feel has been cutting into the sales of records. That's a can of worms that's been opened enough, so we'll leave it out of this discussion. There are, however, a couple of alternatives that sound better than anything you can make at home: audiophile cassettes by Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab, Nautilus Recordings and dbx, Inc.

Though the tapes you make at home on superior cassettes may sound virtually the same as the discs from which you dubbed them, they are inferior to the store-bought ones in one respect: every click, pop and scratch is transmitted faithfully from vinyl to oxide along with the desirable information. So despite their limitations in other respects, pre-recorded cassettes are free from one important disadvantage of taping from discs. In addition, your homemade cassettes will still have all the distortion and dynamic limitations inherent in discs, particularly in the cuts near the center of the platter.

Imagine a cassette made directly from the stereo master tape, recorded with noise reduction on the same kind of high-grade blank tape you use at home, with careful attention paid to preserving all the sounds the artist and producer intended you to hear. Although it's not yet possible to obtain such cassettes with every title available in standard-editions, three manufacturers have growing catalogues of audiophile software for the discriminating listener—and the major labels are getting wise to the need to provide better sounding and mechanically superior tapes as a means of providing serious alternatives to home taping.

Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab, the first "audiophile" label to enter the cassette market, has long been marketing half-speed remastered editions of sonically-fine pop, jazz, rock and classical titles licensed from major labels and pressed on high-grade imported vinyl. Early in 1981 the company introduced high fidelity cassettes dubbed in real time on BASF Professional II Chromium Dioxide cassettes. Where conventional cassettes are copied *en masse* at high speeds (the playback and recording machines are run at speeds up to 64 times the standard one-and-seventh-eighths inches per second to save time and production costs), Mobile Fidelity's audiophile editions are dubbed in real time—i.e., the playback and recording machines are run at normal listening speeds to insure the best fidelity. In 1982 Mobile Fidelity began making cassettes available with Dolby C noise reduction in addition to the Dolby B version already available (MSFL does not market any non-Dolby cassettes).

Not all of the titles available on "Original Master Recordings" (MFSL's trademark) discs have been released as audiophile cassettes, but the following are among those available: Moody Blues, *Days Of Future Passed;* Pink Floyd, *Dark Side of the Moon;* the Rolling Stones, *Sticky Fingers;* the Beatles, *Magical Mystery Tour;* Steely Dan, *Aja;* Al Stewart, *Year of the Cat;* George Benson, *Breezin';* Genesis, *A Trick of the Tail;* Cat Stevens, *Tea for the Tillerman;* Supertramp, *Crime of the Century.* Upcoming releases on cassette include the Alan Parsons Project's *I Robot,* and Daryl Hall and John Oates' *Abandoned Luncheonette.*

Nautilus Recordings' SuperCassettes are also dubbed in real time, using digital copies of the original two-track master tapes licensed from various record companies—and also from backup two-track tapes of Nautilus' own original direct-to-disc recordings. Tape stock is Maxell UDXLII, with Dolby B noise reduction. Titles include: the Police, *Ghost In The Machine;* Linda Ronstadt, *Simple Dreams;* Quincy Jones, *The Dude;* Heart, *Dreamboat Annie;* and *Elton John's Greatest Hits* (all audiophile editions of previously available records from major labels). Original programming on cassette includes Tim Weisberg's *Tip of the Weisberg* and John Klemmer's *Straight from the Heart* (both originally available only on Nautilus direct-to-disc Superdisc); and Spirit's *Reunion* (recorded live to Soundstream Digital two-track), among others.

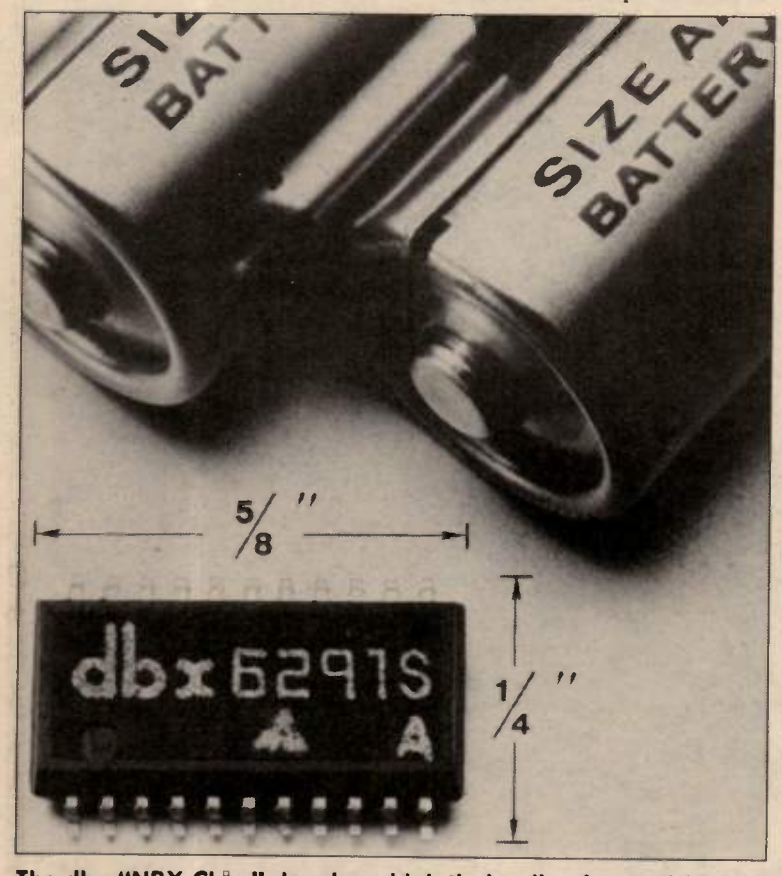
As for price, the dbx cassettes carry a $14.95 list, while Nautilus and Mobile Fidelity product fall in the $17.50 category. Steep, to be sure, but hard-core rock fans ought to allow themselves this luxury if only for the distinct thrill of hearing the sonic qualities of a production as grand as "Hello Goodbye" on *Magical Mystery Tour.*

While Dolby-encoded cassettes can be played back on non-Dolby equipment if you're willing to put up with a little hiss, dbx encoded tapes cannot be made listenable without the dbx circuit. The system operates by altering the dynamics of the program being recorded in order to take optimum advantage of the tape's properties and then restoring the correct proportion on playback to yield reduced background noise and a greater dynamic range than Dolby. The dbx system can now be put on a single integrated circuit chip, making it as convenient to manufacture into cassette machines as Dolby, so many manufacturers are making the system available in their new home and car units either instead of or in addition to Dolby noise reduction.

dbx, Inc. has licensed some material from major labels in the same way the other audiophile tape makers have. As the popularity of the dbx system grows more programs will be available, and other companies will begin making their recordings available in the format. Some rock and pop titles include: Heart, *Dreamboat Annie; Joan Armatrading;* .38 Special, *Wild-Eyed Southern Boys;* Police, *Ghost in the Machine;* Supertramp, *Breakfast in America* and *Even In The Quietest Moments;* Cat Stevens, *Teaser and the Firecat;* the Kingston Trio, *Aspen Gold* (a direct-to-digital recording from Nautilus).

Next month: A report on how the major record companies are coming to grips with the new tape technology. ○

Mobile Fidelity's Original Master Recordings editions are dubbed in real time—i.e., the playback and recording machines are run at normal listening speeds to insure the best fidelity. In 1982 Mobile Fidelity began making cassettes available with Dolby C noise reduction in addition to the Dolby B version already available. The cassettes are dubbed onto BASF Professional II Chromium Dixoide cassettes. Shown above: the audiophile editions of the Moody Blues' *Days of Future Passed* and Al Stewart's *The Year of the Cat.*



The dbx "NRX Chip," developed jointly by dbx, Inc. and Matsushita Electric Industrial Co., Ltd., will enable portable cassette and car stereo cassette players to provide the wide dynamic range and full fidelity sound which matches the sonic performance of digital audio systems in several respects. The dbx NRX chip solves two major performance problems inherent in portable cassette and car stereo players: limited dynamic range and tape hiss. The chip can operate on two AA batteries and as little as 1.8 volts.

Video

Video Singles: The New Quad?

By Mark Mehler

NEW YORK—Everyone remember quad? The four-speaker stereo system that was supposed to be the newest revolution in audio in the '70s, and instead became the music business' version of the Edsel? Don't look now, but the video industry may have come up with a quad of its own in the form of the "video single," a 10-minute, two-song videocassette equivalent of the 45 RPM record, priced from $15.95 to $19.95.

In February, Sony Corp. released the first three "singles"—Duran Duran's "Hungry Like The Wolf," b/w "Girls on Film"; Mike Nesmith's "Rio" b/w "Cruisin' " (culled from Nesmith's full-length *Elephant Parts* video); and two new tunes by Scottish video/rock artist Jesse Rae—for sale in record and video stores with suggested list prices of $15.95 in the Beta format, and $19.95 for the VHS configuration.

Dan Schwarzbaum, national sales manager for Sony's Video Software Operations in New Jersey, says the company plans to release three vid-singles a month for the next six months, and to double that output by mid-year. Schwarzbaum claims negotiations are under way with several "major artists," whom he declined to identify. New product releases apparently will consist of videos by both new and established acts.

Schwarzbaum concedes, however, that "for the young record buyer who's used to paying $3.99 for an LP at Crazy Eddie or some other discount store, $20 for two songs may seem like a lot of money." He sees a key market among videophiles—who currently purchase full-length concert videos for $50 or rent them for $2 a night: "We think video collectors are going to love the lower price point." Hopes are high as well for significant "crossover" to hard-core audio freaks when Sony ties the software to its new stereo Beta system, said to offer 80-db signal-to-noise ratio and negligible wow, flutter and distortion. "You won't have a greater listening experience with any form of music, with the exception of digital records," says Schwarzbaum, "plus you get a powerful visual presentation." Nevertheless, Sony's reliance on the popularity of Beta is risky—to date it has not proved as marketable as VHS, and in early January, in an effort to boost sagging Beta sales, Paramount released the film *An Officer and a Gentleman* with a $29.95 Beta price tag.

The Sony marketer notes that, in many cases, video singles will consist of the same promotional videos seen regularly on MTV. However, singles that have been rejected by commercial and cable TV (such as Duran Duran's "Girls On Film") as too racy or too conceptual will find their way onto the retail market.

Bob Hart, director of video development for EMI Music, Duran Duran's video label, feels MTV play will no more hurt retail videocassette sales than radio airplay hurts retail sales of vinyl 45s.

According to Hart, a $20 price for a 10-minute rock video is well within reason. "How much is a video game you plug into a TV, $26 or $28?" he asks. "Who do you think is buying those? It isn't school teachers and computer programmers, it's kids. If you can give them something special in the way of music, they can afford $20 for it."

But aren't rock music buyers already balking at LP prices of $8.98? "No," states Hart. "The notion that records are overpriced is bullshit. The reason people aren't buying as many records today is that most of them are boring as hell."

Hart says the potential for vid-singles extends beyond pop and rock music, to country, black and jazz.

"We're really excited about Sony's approach," Hart says. "At this point we're willing to support almost anything that's a little new and adventurous, because just about everything else coming out of this business is boring and old."

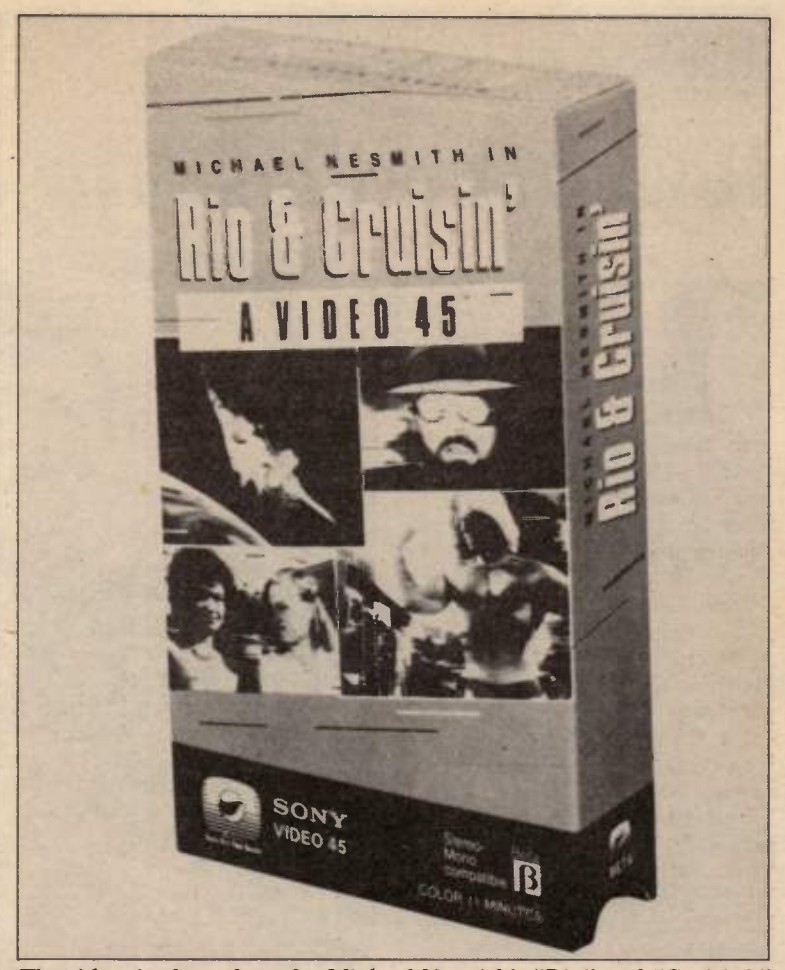
Meanwhile, out on Long Island, a local "soft rock" band called The Wizard has produced and marketed its own two-song video single, "The Good You Find In Man" b/w "Never Done Before." Singer Chris Wilson reports 1,000 units at $15 a piece have been sold on Long Island alone, and projects sales of 5,000 copies nationally.

"I think it can work," says Wilson, earnestly. "But it's got to avoid the kind of performance videos seen on TV. They're designed by record companies to sell albums, not as art in themselves. What we did is create a complete narrative story. 'The Good You Find In Man' is about a motorcycle driver moving across mid-America while all around him good things are happening. Finally, at the end he ends up doing a good deed himself, so it's a what-goes-around-comes-around story. It's based on a musical idea, but it's more."

As for the establishment view of The Wizard's effort, Hart says he "couldn't disagree more" with Wilson's approach. "Anything with a narrative line is not going to be watched more than once," Hart argues. "It doesn't repeat." That is, unless a character in a song is as lovable as E.T.

Sony is reluctant to discuss the production costs involved bringing the new vid-singles to market, although Chris Wilson suggests expenses may run as high as $100,000 per release. Schwarzbaum says he foresees hit vid-singles moving up to 100,000 units. "We had the singles on display at the consumer show in Las Vegas. I'm telling you we could have moved our complete inventory right on the floor. Distributors, retailers, end-users, they couldn't get enough. And the record companies love it. It gives them a way to recoup some of their costs of promo videos.

"Every collector," he concludes, "will want them for his library." ○



The video single package for Michael Nesmith's "Rio" and "Cruisin'."

Sound Signature

Roger Hawkins: The Real Feel

By Robyn Flans

Take the traditional gospel music of the Staple Singers' "Respect Yourself" and the more raucous R&B of Bob Seger's "Old Time Rock 'n' Roll" and Delbert McClinton's "Giving It Up for Your Love;" throw in the uptempo country-pop of Dr. Hook's "When You're in Love With a Beautiful Woman" and Rod Stewart's melodic "Sailing" and you have a glimpse at the range and expertise of Roger Hawkins, the drummer from Muscle Shoals, Alabama.

Since the early '60s—starting with Percy Sledge's "When A Man Loves a Woman," Wilson Pickett's "Land of 1,000 Dances" and "Mustang Sally," among others—Hawkins' fat, forceful backbeat, laid-back simplicity, concise chops and unerring instinct for discerning the correct part have made him one of the most in-demand drummers in the country and helped make his home town of Muscle Shoals the center of the thriving creative empire, of which Hawkins is a pivotal member.

Rhythm and blues became the focus of Hawkins' musical interest during childhood visits to Indiana during summer vacations. His relatives there were heavily involved in the music-oriented Pentecostal Church. "That had an influence on me without my really knowing it," he recalls. "The feel of the musicians and the songs they did was R&B, although it was white gospel. When I started listening to some R&B records like Bobby Blue Bland and Al Jackson, it was the same kind of feel.

Roger Hawkins: Technique minus feeling equals bad news.

I've always been a lover of the Stax grooves." At home, his prime influences came from his guitarist father, who played and sang country and gospel. When Dave Brubeck's "Take Five" became a hit, jazz became Hawkins' passion and Joe Morello, Buddy Rich and Gene Krupa his models. He regrets that he was never proficient enough in that style to play with a big band.

Hawkins is essentially self-taught; he is one of the few session players today who does not know how to read music. "If you start a musician out going by nothing but sheet music, he can play what is written dead letter perfect, which is a major accomplishment—but there may not be any feeling behind it. What I really appreciate about a drummer, which is very rare, is someone who has gone through the technique and knows how to read, yet still retains the feel and knows how to incorporate it into the music. Steve Gadd does it perfectly because he has all his technical abilities and his feel, too."

The lack of technical knowledge as such as never gotten in Hawkins' way. Perhaps, as in Charlie Watts' case, this lack of training accounts for his distinctive sound. There is always a hint of his trademark groove (which can be heard on Eddie Rabbitt's "Suspicions), but it is Hawkins' chameleon-like adaptibility that make him a successful session drummer. "Through the years of becoming a drummer, your whole approach is geared toward the playing of the instrument," he observes. "You have to learn to *apply* that knowledge and play what fits. You don't just go in and play the hell out of your drums—you find out what the [producer and artist] want in their music. It may be something that makes you uncomfortable or that you're not quite sure of, but that goes with the territory. I have walked away from sessions knowing that I could have played better, but the producer and the artist said it was exactly what they wanted."

Following the obligatory apprenticeship in Top 40 bands, Hawkins set his sights on the booming studio scene in Muscle Shoals, finally becoming a member of the house band at Fame Studios along with guitarist Jimmy Johnson, bassist David Hood and keyboardist Barry Beckett. It wasn't long before Hawkins and Johnson purchased their own studio and asked the other two to join their house band. Over the years the four have become equal partners in a business that has flourished because artists come from all over the world to utilize their talents as individual players and as a studio band. The Muscle Shoals Sound Corporation now encompasses two recording studios, a publishing company and their own Capitol-distributed label, MSS Records.

Spending every spare moment in the control room has given Hawkins an all-around studio awareness and better perspective on his own sound. "Studio drummers should check their intensity from time to time. Sometimes you'll be wearing headphones that completely cover up the outside sound, and that can fool you. It's good to take those phones off for 20 minutes and hit the drums as hard as you do with the phones on," he notes. "And a lot of times, you can get bigger drums sounds by playing softer."

Hawkins' kit consists of a 20" bass, 5 ½" chrome snare, and long-shelled rack toms of 8", 10", 12" and 14"—the last taking the place of a floor tom (all the drums are Pearls). "In the studio, the floor tom is the hardest to get a good sound with. Overtones can be nasty, and all you can do is keep tuning it until it is as clean as it can be," he says. He also points out that the drummer-engineer relationship is crucial: "If the engineer is really good, he'll come out and listen to what you're playing right there in the booth instead of just relying on the console."

Drums and technique aside, Hawkins feels that 50 percent of playing is attitude. "When you get stuck in a situation where you're just going in and playing and it doesn't mean anything any more, your career isn't over—you're just out of balance." A 1972 tour with Traffic afforded Hawkins the luxury of live experimentation, which revitalized him and gave him a fresh perspective on the routine of session playing. He is now on the road backing Eric Clapton, an assignment which he accepted with mixed emotions. "It's a little frightening to go on tour after eleven years," he admits. "But if you're a little frightened, then that's the time to go. You've got to strike a balance, and this will help me strike mine." ○

Kootch: The Standup Rocker

By Dave Zimmer

I *hate* folk music, I always have," snaps Danny Kortchmar. Such a revelation is surprising, in view of the fact that Kortchmar (aka "Kootch") has created countless textural guitar passages that grace albums by the likes of James Taylor, Carole King and Linda Ronstadt.

"I don't want it to sound like I'm making disparaging remarks about these people," Kortchmar continues, plopping down on a couch in his home overlooking Hollywood Lake. "But one of the functions I've always performed is to make sounds that are a little more outrageous than the other players. Give songs an *edge*. But still, you know, neither James or Carole are rock and roll at all. So it's always been challenging for me to play with them. I've had to hold back quite a bit."

This wasn't the case when Kootch hooked up with a couple of other singer-songwriters, David Crosby and Graham Nash.

"Hey," Danny says, "when I was with 'em, Crosby and Nash had a rock 'n' roll band. We had a ball recording *Wind on the Water* (in 1975), and those tours cooked, man. That was the first band I was in where I was actually encouraged to turn up. I remember being onstage and Crosby walked over to me and said, 'Play louder!' No one had ever told me that before. I loved it."

Kortchmar enjoyed the same kind of freedom while working on former Eagle Don Henley's solo album, *I Can't Stand Still*. According to Danny, "Don never tried to calm me down. He wanted me to do crazy things. He wanted a tougher, raunchier sound than the Eagles." So Kootch gave Henley plenty of raunch. Most of the album's more adventurous elements spring from Danny's metallic guitar swipes and haunting Farfisa organ pumps.

The majority of *I Can't Stand Still* was demoed at home on Kortchmar's Teac Portastudio and, he admits, "during the actual recording sessions, we tried to duplicate the rawness that was on those tapes. We really dug in. It's like we were playing a concert the way it's supposed to be.

"A lot of people sit down at sessions," Danny continues. "For years, I did the same thing. It never occurred to me to stand up and move like singers do. Then one day I thought, 'Well fuck, why should they have all the fun?' So now I stand and I can hear the difference. Now I can really rock."

Kootch is hard pressed to describe what his most identifiable sound is. "It keeps changin'," he says. "Right now I'm working on Jackson Browne's new album and playing 'monka, monka' rhythm. That's what me and Jackson call it . . . real hard whacks. You see, I'm more of a part player than a soloist. I usually play 'the song.' I'm in the band, in the rhythm section. My roots are Chuck Berry, Steve Cropper, Keith Richards—great rhythm players. *Anybody* can play lead guitar. But the part I play, if you turned it off, there would be no record."

For his rhythm guitar maneuvers, Kortchmar alternates between an old orange Gretsch Chet Atkins ("Great blues tones"), a Stratocaster ("I love the Strat wang bar—you can hear one example of how I use it on Linda Ronstadt's 'Hurt So Bad' "), an old Telecaster ("It has that thin, edgy Fender sound"), and an old Gold Top Les Paul ("A big, fat sound"). Rather than using a standard amp set-up, Kootch has lately been running his guitars into a remote unit called "The Rockman" (a new invention by Boston's Tom Scholz) with a line-out right into the mixing board. "It's all there," Danny insists. "Good echo, stereo chorus, great distortion . . . what more do I need?"

Kortchmar first took up the guitar over twenty years ago. But why the guitar instead of, say, piano? "Coolness," he answers, grinning. "I wanted to be cool. I used to stand in front a mirror with a tennis racquet to get 'the look.' Then when I was ten, my mom got me a guitar—a Harmony, I think. I liked the tennis racquet better. It was easier to play."

At 14, Kortchmar met up with James Taylor on Martha's Vineyard. "A couple of years later," Danny recalls, "James showed up with an acoustic guitar and a harmonica. We started playing Lightnin' Hopkins stuff, blues and R&B songs. Then we formed the Flying Machine, recorded some things and had some great R&B shows at the Night Owl in New York."

This exposure led Kortchmar into Greenwich Village jams with Jimi Hendrix, a stint with The Fugs, then The City (fronted by Carole King). Clear Light ("A psychedelic acid band with drummer Dallas Taylor") was Kootch's ticket to Los Angeles in 1968. He recalls, "We came out here and I lived in Laurel Canyon. But I didn't go down to the Troubadour every night like everybody else. I wasn't comfortable there. I didn't have a Martin D-28, wasn't into folk and I couldn't relate to everyone sharpening their egos on each other. Too intense." So Kootch exited from Clear Light and formed a short-lived bar band, Jo Mama, before old friends James Taylor and Carole King asked him to play on their records. "Then," he says, "I ended up working with all of their clones." In so doing, Kortchmar aligned himself closely with bassist Lee Sklar and drummer Russ Kunkel. Keyboardist Craig Doerge joined them later, and the quartet became The Section.

By '78, though, Danny says, "Everyone in this town was gettin' fat and lazy. And when the critics called us on it, I had to agree with 'em. Things had to change."

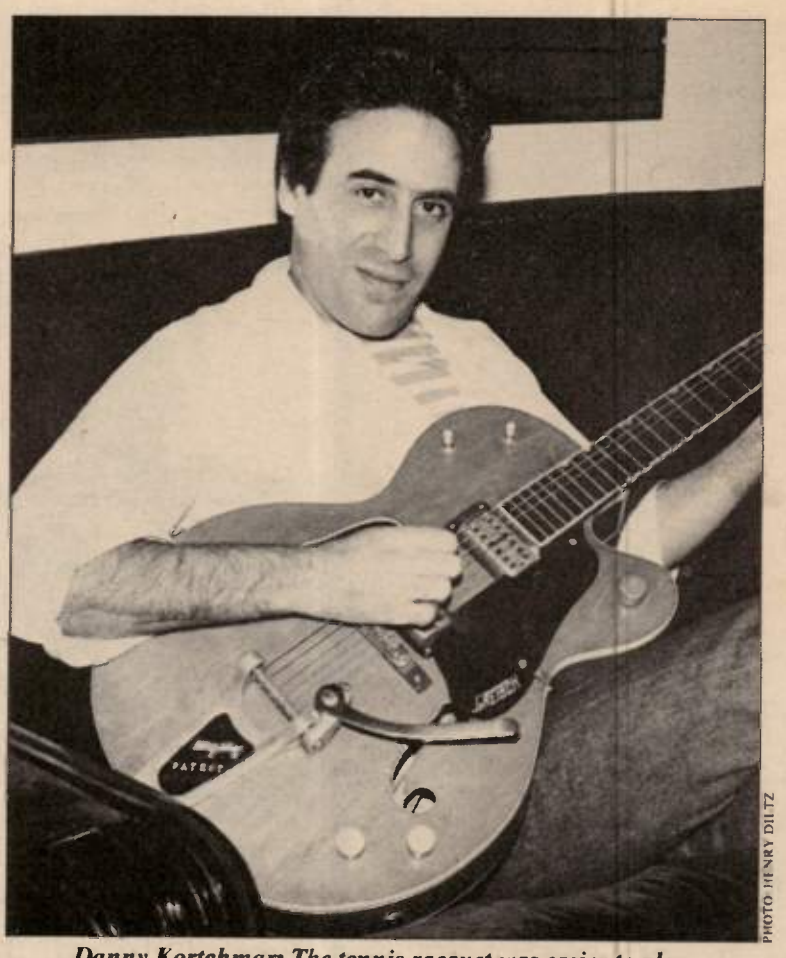


PHOTO: HENRY DILTZ

Danny Kortchmar: The tennis racquet was easier to play.

Change came knockin' on Danny's door when Carole King's daughter, Louise Goffin, asked him to produce her '79 LP, *Kid Blue*. "She really excited me," Kootch says. "She got me back into Led Zeppelin and The Who. I mean, I was hip to them, but I'd stopped listening."

This renewed interest in metal rock caused Kortchmar to pass up some turn-of-the-decade soft rock gigs and, he admits, "One reason I was never that successful a session guy is because I'd just refuse to do certain things. Like, I stopped bringing an acoustic guitar to sessions. Because if I brought it somebody was bound to make me play it. So, I've never considered myself a true session player. I'm more of a project player."

And though Kootch recorded a hard rock filled solo album, *Innuendo*, for Elektra a couple of years ago, he feels no strong desire to blaze his own trail as a solo artist. "I prefer to play with my bro's," he says. "I can write better songs with Don (Henley) than I can alone. I can express myself. I can do what I want without cutting myself off from my friends. All of the people I've worked with in the past year- . . . Henley, Linda Ronstadt, Billy Payne, Waddy Wachtel, Russ Kunkel . . . I'm going to give that up so I can play by myself in some sleazy bar for fifteen bucks? No way." ○

Sound Signature

Sax In All The Smart Places

By Yale Williams & Dan Forte

Had Steve Douglas decided early on that the life of a rock 'n' roll session man was not for him and traded in his saxophone for a desk job in 1962 or '63, his place in rock history would still be secure. His baritone sax break on the Crystals' "He's A Rebel," cut in 1962, would be enough to make him immortal, not to mention his raunchy but lyrical sax solos on "Forty Miles Of Bad Road" and "Peter Gunn" by Duane Eddy.

Fortunately, Douglas continued to create one brilliant solo after another on sessions with the elite of rock history, many of whom he produced or even signed to recording contracts. And at 43, Steve is far from retirement. His *Hot Sax* album on the Fantasy label was one of the most interesting and impressive instrumental LPs of 1982, and he is currently on the road as part of Ry Cooder's new band, opening for Eric Clapton.

Although he didn't take up sax until age fifteen, Douglas quickly developed a knack for making his solos statements, separate hooked-filled entities rather than filler, as evidenced by his early work with Duane Eddy. He was soon in demand in Los Angeles' burgeoning rock recording scene, playing on sessions with B.B. King, Sandy Nelson, and all of the groups produced by fellow Fairfax High alumnus Phil Spector. The "Wall Of Sound" approach Spector created revolutionized the recording world and was a major influence on Brian Wilson, who called on Douglas to play on all of the Beach Boys' albums from *Surfin' U.S.A.* through *Pet Sounds,* utilizing the same basic studio band that Douglas contracted for the Spector dates.

Douglas soon became an integral element of nearly every surf and hot rod record that came out in the early Sixties. The Astronauts, the Routers, the Marketts, Jan & Dean, Dick Dale, the Ventures, the Catalinas—Douglas was a "member" of all of these groups, as were studio heavyweights such as Tommy Tedesco, Leon Russell, Carol Kaye, Hal Blaine, and Glen Campbell. "For me, the surf thing grew thin real fast," Steve sighs. "All of a sudden, I'm doing all these dates where everything is in the key of E or A. There was only one style of sax—that I guess I helped create," he laughs. "We must have done six or seven albums with Richard Delvy & the Challengers. And there was one day when I was working with them, after doing about three weeks of surfing albums, and I just started to leave my body—I couldn't concentrate on what was happening. I remember hearing Dick talking in my ear, saying, 'Play the same thing you did on the last take,' and I was just thinking, I've got to stop this."

He eventually did get out of the studio and into the control booth, when he left a $48,000 a year income as a session player (which he points out was "big money in 1964") to become a staff producer for Capitol Records. He produced numerous charted singles during his tenure with Capitol—including "Universal Soldier" by Glen Campbell, "Theme From 'A Summer Place'" by the Lettermen, and "Danke Schoen" by Wayne Newton—before leaving the company over an artistic/financial dispute. "Back then staff producers did not make royalties," he points out. "I left because of that, and because I wanted to sign Aretha Franklin and Capitol didn't. The only time I ever saw musicians stand up and applaud after a take on a record date—I'm talking about string players, who don't give a shit about anything—was with Aretha Franklin. I played on her last couple of Columbia albums. Capitol didn't want to sign her because of Nancy Wilson. They already had one 'black female vocalist,' and they weren't going to do anything to piss her off or make her jealous. She probably doesn't even know about any of this, but that's what they were afraid of."

Douglas then went to Mercury Records, who paid their staff producers royalties, and signed his old session-mate Leon Russell to his first solo contract. He also had a hand in signing the San Francisco-based power trio Blue Cheer. "They sold a lot of goddamn records," he points out. "I went to listen to them record, and they were *so* loud that it didn't matter which pot you turned up—you got the same roar in each channel."

In 1968, when he was only 29, Douglas suffered a heart attack. Such cataclysmic events often prove to be sobering experiences, and this one was no different. In the early Seventies, Douglas moved to Vancouver to, as he puts it, "woodshed and become a well-rounded musician. That's where I learned to play the flute—learned it real fast, too. To find someone who plays both sax and flute really well is a rarity. I think I've finally gained a certain mastery over the sax in the last year or two."

For most of the past decade Douglas has confined his sideman sessions to a select few. In 1976, he went to Egypt where he recorded *The Music Of Cheops,* featuring solo flute and recorders, inside the Great Pyramid of Giza, in Cairo. "I can really get around on the bass recorder," he says; "I love it. If I devoted myself to it for six months I'd be King Kong."

In 1978, Steve went on tour for the first time since his stint with Duane Eddy, this time backing Bob Dylan on the Japanese tour leading to his *Live At Budokan* album. He was also reunited with Phil Spector and Spector arranger Jack Nitzsche, on a Ramones album (produced by the former) and the soundtrack to

Continued on page 21

Steve Douglas: One brilliant sax solo after another . . .

RECORDS

Bob Seger Recaptures The Spirit Of Rock

The Distance
Bob Seger and the Silver Bullet Band
Capitol

By J.D. Considine

These days, it's hard to believe that the Ford Thunderbird was ever a sports car, much less *the* American sports car. With its flabby styling, fluffy handling and casual acceleration, it's unfortunately an example of what's wrong with Detroit right now, and as good an argument for owning an RX-7 or Celica Supra as anything on the highway. That's probably why Bob Seger couched "Makin' Thunderbirds," his song about life on and off the production line in industrial America, in terms of the decline of a once-great car. "They were long and low and sleek and fast/ They were all you've ever heard," he sings; "Back in '55/ We were makin' Thunderbirds." It was the American industrial dream, to be busy on the production line of a successful, quality product. Then suddenly, Seger jumps into the present, when "the big line moves, but you're lucky if you work." He doesn't waste time filling in the history; he doesn't have to. It's right out there on the highways.

The Distance is not the sort of album to do much in the way of explaining, nor is it the kind that really needs to, because Seger's frame of reference is an America we all live in. You don't have to be from Detroit to understand the frustration of an assembly-line worker whose living is tied to a product grown pointless, any more than you have to be a midwesterner relocated to the sunbelt to appreciate the sense of rootlessness described in "Boomtown Blues." It isn't that Seger's lyrics are all that obvious; in fact, "Love's the Last to Know" is built upon syntax so twisted it would confound the most astute grammarian. What drives these songs home is the ease with which we grasp their essence. It is in this respect that Seger's lean, almost reportorial narratives succeed so impressively—because Seger draws these situations so clearly, we don't need a tacked-on moral to get the point (Gang of Four, take note).

Seger's lyrics don't do it all by themselves, however, for the tenor of the album is clearly set by the music. The rockers are tough and aggressive, driven by semi-metal guitar riffs and overdriven piano boogie; the ballads are smooth but feisty, with lazy country overtones muted by bluesy harmony. In short, very mainstream, but with a strong sense of history and rock tradition. And that's where Seger really shows his stuff, because by setting realistic stories to such readily accessible music, he's managed the difficult trick of singing the common man's song the way the common man himself would like it to be sung. This isn't the sort of populism that relies on false grandeur or eager simplification; it's simply that Seger understands that these basic devices constitute pop music's *lingua franca*, and that by building an album about everyday life out of them he is able to give his observations the feel of basic reality.

That takes craft, of course, and Seger has plenty of it. "House Behind a House" conveys the underlying tensions of tenuous marriages by setting cool, sustained vocal harmonies over a relentless, galloping guitar figure, a trick of mood and musical juxtaposition as sharp as any of David Byrne's constructions. Similarly, "Makin' Thunderbirds" sets up an echo for the refrain "Back in '55/ We were makin' Thunderbirds" by backing it with a rollicking Jerry Lee Lewis stomp, which at the same time underscores the song's basic point by contrasting the decline of one '50s powerhouse with the continuing vitality of another.

In short, a lot of what Seger is saying boils down to the simple observation that rock endures, and so do we; how well is all a matter of adjustment. Because Seger touches firmly upon both rock's musical verities and its audience's real life problems, he seems more likely than most to lessen the distance this album describes. Whether or not that'll make next year's Thunderbird any more fun to drive is doubtful, but it does at least leave us with a reason to turn on its radio.

PHOTO ROSS MARINO

The Youth of Today
Musical Youth
MCA

By Vince Aletti

When Musical Youth's first single, "Pass the Dutchie," went to the top of the English pop charts late last year, it created no little sensation. Here were five Jamaican boys from Birmingham, aged 11, 13, 14, 15, and 16, with the most vivacious and instantly ingratiating single of the year, making good their boast at the beginning of "Dutchie" that "This generation rules the nation with version." (The "version" in this case being not just a reggae dub mix but, more literally, a reworking of the Mighty Diamonds' "Pass the Kutchie," with "kutchie," or ganga pipe, switched to "dutchie," or cooking pot, without changing the suggestive content of the song for non-Jamaicans.) The surprise is not that Musical Youth became immediate celebrities, jumping and prancing across the nightly news when "Dutchie" hit number one, but that they've followed up this sudden success with a great—yes, I said great—debut album.

The Youth of Today is pop at its best—entertaining, savvy, brash, expansive—and reggae at its most accessible (even if the thick accents and choppy diction take some getting used to). Like rap's beat boys, Musical Youth starts with a solid foundation of street smarts and energy. Caught in that restless, edgy place between innocence and sophistication, they've learned to wield a bright blade of wit and keen observation with jaunty assurance. Their music overflows with that combination of charm, urgency, and audacity adolescents take for granted; it's equally earnest and playful, a heady mix of seriousness and fun which places them closer to Grandmaster Flash & the Furious Five than the Jackson Five. Though the words may not sink in immediately, right in the middle of the light and lively "Pass the Dutchie" Musical Youth keeps asking, "How does it feel when you've got no food?" If the high spirits of the rest of the song ultimately overwhelm this nagging question, they don't keep it from lingering in the mind and giving the song an unexpected subliminal aftershock.

The group may be taking on more than they can handle finally by assuming the titles of "Youth of Today" and "Young Generation," but they carry the weight pretty effortlessly here. Despite their doomy references to armageddon and "judgment time," Musical Youth is cheery, full of irrepressible optimism. They are stern brothers to their peers (asking the budding young criminal in "Blind Boy," "Don't you see you're committing yourself on the street?"), concerned children in the adult world (worried about the uncertain future in "Children of Zion" and "Mirror Mirror," the inflationary present in "Youth

of Today"), but hard times and disillusion don't keep them from having the usual teenage fun, fun, fun. Fleshing out the album are a number of delightfully flimsy love songs—"School Girl," "Never Gonna Give You Up," "Heartbreaker"—given vivid substance by their churning, stop-and-go arrangements and yearning, unaffected delivery. If these songs place them firmly in pop pubescent heaven, the adolescent artlessness is spiced up a bit in "Rockers," when Kelvin, the youngest member, claims "All of the girls dem are mad over me," and in "Rub 'n' Dub," available only on the import version of this LP, where he sings, "When I was five I just a kiss it in a shed/But now me turn eleven me just a do it in a bed." (Which might explain why this, the album's spaciest, most intriguing production, was dropped from the American release along with a wonderfully dreamy instrumental called "Gone Straight." The English import is worth searching out if only for "Rub 'n' Dub," as are the longer 12-inch versions of "Dutchie" and "Youth of Today," both essential for getting into the deep dub potential of these songs.)

Producer Peter Collins has cast the group's own material (some of it written in collaboration with Freddie Waite, the performing father of two of the boys) in an angular, minimal mode, bouncy but edged with tension. This brilliantly restrained postmodern style is perfect for all aspects of Musical Youth—the cute and the cutting—and allows their frisky vocals to dominate, which is precisely why the album is hard to resist. "Youth of today has got lots to say," they tell us. Listen up.

It's Alright
Yoko Ono
Polydor

By J.D. Considine

The hardest thing to figure out about Yoko Ono's music is when to take it at face value. Although her songs are fiercely honest and frequently confessional, they are at the same time elaborately conceived presentations. Therein lies the crux of the problem—how much of what we hear is meant to be taken literally, and how much is merely representational? Or, more to the point, how much does it matter when our responses are manipulated, when what we react to is set up?

To understand just how much comes into play with these questions you need look no further than the title track from *It's Alright*. Like much of the album, it intersperses "family life" tapes—odd statements and random dialogue between Yoko and son Sean—with the musical content of the song. In this case, we get an early morning scene at the Dakota, with Sean getting his mother up in the morning. We hear the bedroom door creak and Sean urging, "Mommy . . . Mommy? Mommy, you *hafta* wake up!" and Yoko's weary response, "Yes, yes, I know." This bit of *audio verite* continues as the synthesizers and electronic percussion start up, subsiding only when Yoko sings.

Using this slice-of-life sequence as a sort of subtext to the song is a brilliant move, not only because it immediately grabs the listener's attention but also because adding such a powerful piece of reality to the song gives greater credibility to its "things aren't as bad as you think" message. Except that the relationship between what's happening in the studio and what's happening in Yoko's bedroom is a little *too* neat. After the studio Yoko sings, "Sometimes it's such a drag," we hear Sean ask his mother, "Don't you feel well?" "I don't feel like getting up in the morning," comes the studio answer, after which Sean, with a note of exasperation, says, "How do you think I am in school?"

As devastating as this juxtaposition can be, it also leads to a certain amount of suspicion. Granted, it's entirely possible that Yoko wrote each phrase of the song specifically to fit the spaces between Sean's questions, but even so, you have to ask yourself what kind of person routinely tapes herself getting up in the morning? Not to mention how the tape recorder happened to be on before Sean came in to wake his mother up. On the other hand, though, Sean's comments and tone are so natural that it's equally hard to believe that he's faking, or even acting his part. Did Yoko fabricate the whole thing? Did she set Sean up, arranging a situation to capture his reaction? Or is this really life without John Lennon?

That last question is the important one, because ultimately it predicates all the others. If *Season of Glass* was an album built around John Lennon's death, *It's Alright* is most pointedly an album about Sean and Yoko's life after that death. Although it's never referred to directly, John's death lurks behind each song as an unspoken assumption; listening to the album is at times like sitting at a wake where the conversation determinedly avoids any mention of what precipitated the gathering.

In this case, it works because we all know what happened, and for the most part share their sense of loss. But because of that, it's much more important that we get an honest presentation of Yoko and Sean struggling against that loss. Sung by anybody else, it wouldn't matter if the wake up scene in "It's Alright" was genuine because staged or not it makes a good point. The cast on *It's Alright* is too real to make even the suspicion of fiction bearable.

Ironically, this is largely because *It's Alright* is so successful at picking up the legacy of *Double Fantasy*. Yoko's pop sensibility has developed to the point where she can single-handedly provide a mix of engaging melodies and disconcerting techniques similar to *Double Fantasy*'s blend of Ono experiments and Lennon hits. Even John's fondness for '50s rock is echoed in the girl-group overtones of "My Man" and "Tomorrow May Never Come." But the most important continuity comes in the way *It's Alright* emerges as a family album, examining Yoko's feelings about her life, her son and her husband's death in much the same way that *Double Fantasy* explored John and Yoko's marriage and family life.

It's the music that finally provides the key to what Yoko is up to. Most of these songs are conventional enough on the basic level of melody, harmony and rhythm; in fact, Yoko's songs have such a charming girlishness to them that it's easy to miss how sophisticated their harmonic construction is. But rather than dress these pleasant pop tunes in glib commerciality, Yoko rings each hook with unexpected sounds and production techniques, ranging from the eerie super-reverb that swallows the ending of "Never Say Goodbye" to the haunting tuba moan that appears throughout "Loneliness." The cumulative effect of these odd aural effects is a sense of being kept at a distance, as if Yoko wants us to like these songs, but not too much. And that's the answer to the question of how we should take this album. Yoko Ono is incredibly aware of her status as a "keeper of the wishing well," to use her own phrase—and how could she not be? Yet the point of what happened to her husband cannot have been lost on her, and consequently her honesty and openness is understandably constrained. So we get messages and status reports set up as bits of *audio verite*, in order that the ideals of *Double Fantasy* may grow undiminished.

The amazing thing is that it works so well. Yoko's craftswomanship and ability to resolve confrontations through the formalism of art is no substitute for uncalculating honesty, yet the courage and resource of her music makes it hard to feel shortchanged. It's obviously going to be difficult for Yoko to address the problems of her life and legacy, in terms of pop music, but then again, it would be naive to expect her to live with them under any other circumstances. *It's Alright* isn't just a report from the front; it's a part of the struggle. And it seems safe to say that things are going to be getting better.

Holly Beth Vincent
Holly and the Italians
Virgin

By Christopher Hill

Holly Beth Vincent. Votary of the lunar face of the California Dream. Risen out of the generation of children of all the men who came steaming back from the war on Pacific night foam—from Honalu via the orient—to settle in the great sunbleached suburbs. Jim Morrison was another such. Had the Crystals gone all the way with him on the moonlight drive, under the sea, and come back to sing of what they saw, it would sound like this.

Holly Beth Vincent, her second album, is a plunge into ecstatic, shimmering murk, with a sound more dense yet volatile than we've heard in a decade full of neo-Spectors. It's almost decadently rich in odd tidbits and crannies of sound—moonstruck, angular Latin brass; strange percussions; sobbing, baroque strings; Holly's vocals, caressing and menacing. "Honalu" rises majestic out of the dark tide—a heartbreakingly poignant melody, rolling on chords like the Byrds heard through thunderclouds; vibes, piano, strings, brass all packed down the song's deep well; and yet the whole crests with irresistible grace and streamlined power. "We Danced"—of all the odd twists on this perverse and sultry bad girl's album—celebrates romantic innocence true and lofty, accompanied by MC5-like airborne assaults of noise, propelled from verse to verse by the ingenious and breathtakingly sexy vocal hook. "Just Like Me" evokes those darkly arch Stones ballads from '65—slow, martial drums; creaking violins half maddening, half exciting; visions of long rainy afternoons of tea and passion.

Holly Beth Vincent is already a star; a twenty-third degree initiate of the mysteries of the beat. Now just let her shine that cool blue light on you.

Beatitude
Ric Ocasek
Geffen

By J-C Costa

Ink will be devoted to the readily apparent differences between Ric Ocasek's initial solo offering, *Beatitude*, and his work as composer/guitarist/vocalist and stylistic impetus behind the Cars. And certain distinctions are worth noting: a heightened sense of nuance and interplay in the manipulation of synthesized music textures; a more "engaged" narrative voice in the lyrics which no longer sidesteps the open declaration of love while speaking more forthrightly to the subject of the song ("jimmy jimmy") or the listener ("Time Bomb"); and a singleness of purpose in terms of concept and execution that automatically validates this "solo" album's need to exist.

But other things *don't* change: the basic chord sequence running under the generational crosstalk of "jimmy jimmy" recalls Cars songs like "Shake It Up" and the edgy power of "Something to Grab For" is fuel-injected by a guitar burst not unlike early Elliot Easton (prior to his current obsession with the Immaculate Guitar Solo.) The fact that Ocasek has built the electronic density of *Beatitude* on his own instrumental talents and those of unknown new musicians (with the exception of Cars' keyboardist Greg Hawkes) is important mainly because here he is free to write, arrange, play, produce and mix the song as a total idea. No longer does he have to compensate for four other personalities and/or idiosyncracies in what is now a fairly well-defined marketing entity. This allows him to stretch just enough without losing the gift for the mesmerizing hook to keep the general listener involved.

"Prove" speaks of the woman we've all known and been rejected by with a precise funk underpinning that pays homage to David Bowie's "Fame," then breaks into a "pretty" shimmering chorus in the spirit of the lyric. "Connect Up To Me" brings electronic music into a state of grace by building a complex weave of synthesizer parts over a propulsive backbeat. A dark and moody two-chord dirge lends extra intensity to the cynical drug commentary of "Out of Control." "Time Bomb" relates the modern world in terse and unsparing linguistic blips in keeping with the video age subtext of *Beatitude*. Capping off the album with the proverbial "bang," this track explodes into a brilliant heavy metal parody with Grand Canyon drum sound and a perfectly appropriate stratospheric guitar solo that leaves us properly suspended in electronic hyperspace.

Screaming Blue Murder
Girlschool
Mercury

By Christopher Hill

To listen to the women of Girlschool shout about "screamin' blooo muh-da-a-a-h" on the title track of their latest LP is to hear Englishness as characteristic as the Public Bar of a Birmingham local—an Englishness that's often disbarred from the more serious schools of British rock. The achievement of Girlschool is to give this working-class rock a style and wit it hasn't had since the great days of Slade.

On almost every cut, *Screamin' Blue Murder* comes through with some diverting little bonus, just a bit more than what you'd expect to make the whole effect enjoyable. The bristly, cascading chords are a gift from punk, the velocity is from Motorhead, and the combination is exhilarating. The singing is tough without Joan Jett theatricality, feminine without being shrill. The writing flavors metal with a touch of pop—no revelation, but it adds greatly to the pleasure of a song like "Don't Call It Love." Denise Dufort's drumming is economical and inventive—she even manages to pound an exciting pulse into the dreary ZZ Top riffer, "Tush." Interestingly, the best song isn't heavy metal at all. "Turn Your Head Around" is pure, joyous yelp—something Alex Chilton might have written for the Pistols. It provides as heady a rush as any '82 vintage rock 'n' roll.

Is this great rock 'n' roll? Nah. But when the preening aesthetes in London have just about kicked free of rock's grubby roots, it's nice to know that the Barmy Army marches on out in Morton-on-Lugg, where Girlschool fans know all-too-well that pints and power chords go together as well as bangers and mash.

Harambe
Rita Marley
Shanachie

By Ken Braun

The facts of Rita Marley's life are the stuff of legend. A native of Trenchtown, Jamaica, she married Bob Marley soon after cutting her first solo record in 1965, and she maintained her career alongside her husband's (co-writing some of his best songs) through the years of obscurity, the international stardom, the assassination attempt (she took a bullet in the head) and his losing fight against cancer. Since his death in 1981, she has endured his canonization with dignity; taken up his public causes; expanded his record company; released a single "One Draw", that is now the best-selling reggae 45 in history; and been a devoted mother to her five children.

Yet her life remains more inspiring than her music. Like her late husband, her avowed purpose is to reach out and move people; but while Bob Marley was able to move people because his songs could express pain, anger, loneliness, desire and deviltry as well as love and "upfulness," Rita shies away from anything unsavory, failing to recognize that we are touched most deeply by those who share our curses along with our blessings. The unrelieved optimism of "The Beauty of God's Plan," "There'll Always Be Music," "Who Can Be Against Us" and "My Kind of War" soon skips into hollow sloganeering: lines like "Wouldn't it be nice to have a war with no bombs" are about as encouraging as "I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony." Marley's voice is strong and clear, but its dauntless good cheer wears a body down instead of lifting it up. We want to hear some heated emotion, even suffering, just to assure ourselves that the singer is human. Compare the present rendition of "Fussing and Fighting" with Bob Marley's original: Bob sang it like an outlaw fleeing for his life; Rita sounds like nothing so much as a schoolteacher (the role she took in "One Draw") reprimanding her unruly wards.

Sometimes, though, Marley wins our support in spite of our suspicions, and it is through her own compositions that she does so. (Most of the album's songwriting credits go to members of her band or to obscure names.) We can't help but feel rallied by the title song, with its anthemic flutes and victory-parade rhythms, and though "Love Iyah" repeats familiar platitudes about universal love, its hushed, lilting *burra* drums and gospel-choir singing bring to it the kind of ingenuous spirituality of Bob Marley's "Rastaman Chant" and "Time Will Tell." It is when Rita Marley sings her own songs that she sings most effectively; if she would draw on the whole of her remarkable experience, she would be a most remarkable artist.

". . . famous last words . . ."
Supertramp
A&M

By Nick Burton

Supertramp's first studio album since 1979's *Breakfast In America* is a mixed blessing. While it's good to hear the band sounding as musically sharp as ever (with Roger Hodgson's plaintive vocals and John Helliwell's breezy woodwind work in top form), the songwriting by Hodgson and keyboardist/vocalist Rick Davies is notably weak.

On *". . . famous last words . . ."* Hodgson and Davies play it safe and adhere to the pop-rock formula they introduced on the classic *Crime of the Century*. After an almost four-year hiatus from recording, Supertramp might have been expected to alter that formula, but almost every track here is a re-hash. "Crazy," for example, sounds like any number of earlier Supertramp tunes ("Sister Moonshine" from *Crisis? What Crisis?* quickly comes to mind), and the mock doo-wop of "My Kind of Lady" is similar to another *Crisis* track, "Ain't Nobody But Me." And even though the wistfully melodic "C'est Le Bon" and the shamelessly commercial "It's Raining Again" are executed with the quintet's usual flair for punchy pop, neither song sounds particularly new or original.

But even sub-par Supertramp has certain merits. The production by the band and Peter Henderson is intelligent and, at times (on "Don't Leave Me Now" for instance), striking, especially in its uses of textured instrumentation. If only the quality of the writing matched the musicians' skill and the high standard of production values . . . what a band this would be.

Singles–45's and Under
Squeeze
A&M

By Steve Futterman

Contained within this collection of singles from Squeeze's ill-fated career is ample evidence of Glenn Tilbrook and Chris Difford's mastery of the art of saying a great deal in the limited space of a seven-inch disc, as well as a condensed lesson in creative production. Though the Tilbrook-Difford team displayed a gift for melodies and lyrics second to none among their contemporaries, Squeeze's records were also notable for the bits of business in the background—the proto synth-pop use of keyboards and drum machines on "Take Me I'm Yours" and "Goodbye Girl," the arhythmic middle eight of "Cool For Cats," the cunning use of slide guitar on "If I Didn't Love You"—that helped turn clever songs into memorable rock moments.

With the 1980 release of "Another Nail In My Heart" and "Pulling Mussels (From The Shell)," Difford and Tilbrook's writing had become tauter, their world view more incisive. With its kicking rhythm section bolstering the vocals with white-hot intensity, Squeeze stepped up and away from the common horde of late-'70s pop bands. Culminating in the exquisite "Tempted" (from the heralded *East Side Story* LP) and last year's singles releases, "Black Coffee In Bed" and "Annie Get Your Gun," *Singles—45's and Under* is a case study in how to approach sophisticated pop with a rock sensibility and do justice to the spirit of each style. This band will be missed.

Something's Going On
Frida
Atlantic

By Christopher Hill

Phil Collins, British art-rocker with a taste for funk, is perhaps the ideal producer to give ABBA component Anni-Frid Lyngstad (or Frida)—the husky-voiced brunette half of the ABBA show—a fully-fleshed musical persona. The woman that emerges on *Frida,* while no artiste, is at least a versatile and highly polished entertainer.

Soundwise, Collins is influenced to a degree by ABBA's pop-wizardry. At times he even out-artifices Bjorn and Benny in deliberately emphasizing the produced, non-natural quality of the sound. The ambience on a song like "Something" is so bright and brittle, the studio effects so artfully obvious as to feel almost claustrophobic. Where Collins parts company with ABBA is in his care for texture; the jagged, staggered drumming of "Tell Me That It's Over," the ringing guitar fill in "Something," the mandolins of "Threnody" — all would have disturbed the chromium sheen of an ABBA album.

As a singer, Frida is indeed shown to be more interesting than in her ABBA work—but not a lot more. The eclectic material—from Brian Ferry to Russ Ballard—is finely calculated to stretch her talent without revealing its breaking point. On "Threnody," with lyrics from Dorothy Parker, she captures a bittersweet Northern poignancy; "Something" develops the sultry quality that gave ABBA its only darker colors. But a song like "I See Red" shows clearly her weakness as an interpreter. She runs right through this wry reflection on success with nary an ironic inflection. It's the old ABBA habit of giving herself wholly to a song without any sensitivity to its meaning.

Something's Going On offers intelligently and skillfully crafted pop. No more, and no less.

Music For A New Society
John Cale
Ze/Passport

By Barry Alfonso

It would be pleasing to report that former Velvet Undergrounder John Cale's latest effort will prove to be his breakthrough LP. But after releasing superbly-executed but esoteric albums for over a decade, the veteran avant-rocker has headed in an even less commercial direction. Still, *Music For A New Society* is Cale's best effort in quite some time.

In '81, Cale seemed to be positioning himself for a stab at mass appreciation. *Honi Soit* found him using an outside producer and slicking up his sound a bit, downplaying the neurotic edge and deliberately unsettling musical textures that were trademarks of Cale's style. *New Society* finds all the distinctive qualities of his music back in place, with Cale's worldly primitivism enhanced by sparse arrangements and a claustrophobic mix. Cale uses his instruments to throw streaks of color on top of his somber piano work. The effect of the synthesizer flutters and drum tappings is eerie, like ghosts revealing themselves and vanishing.

New Society is both Cale's saddest and, apparently, most personal song collection to date. A common thread of thought runs through tracks like "Taking Your Life In Your Hands," "Santies" and "Broken Bird": loss, remorse, self-hatred and violence. An unnamed female character wanders through a wasteland of emotional cripples and spiritual shocks, described in near-impenetrable imagery. Several songs appear to sum up Cale's dark outlook the best, especially "Damn Life." Over a melody from Beethoven's Ninth, the artist cries, "Nothing can break this heart of mine!" Career disappointments, thankfully, haven't broken Cale's spirit, or weakened his special voice.

Lord, You've Been Mighty Good to Me
Marion Williams
John Hammond

By Dave Marsh

The hipsters currently hyping the Roche sisters' "Hallelujah Chorus" probably don't know that Marion Williams already recorded a devastating version of the piece for Vee Jay some twenty years ago. Marion's "Hallelujah" is probably the most well-crafted and impassioned confluence of European classical and American pop/folk tradition ever recorded. It's something that everyone interested in such synthesis might learn from, because in it, Marion Williams is able to match Handel talent for talent, belief for belief, soul for soul.

That performance, on an album modestly entitled *God and Me*, wasn't even in the top three finest things on the set it appeared in. Unfortunately, all of Marion Williams' greatest music, recorded between the time she left the Clara Ward Singers in the late Fifties, through her decade as leader of her own Stars of God, is long out of print. This is a shameful situation, not only because Williams is such a gorgeous singer, but because her music helped determine the styles of such important rhythm and blues performers as the Isley Bros. and Little Richard.

Williams is quite clearly the greatest living gospel singer, and maybe just the greatest living vocalist, period. Of her pop peers, only Ray Charles and perhaps Aretha Franklin can compare for vocal range and the ability to sing blues. But comparisons are irrelevant: Marion Williams sings with passion, confidence, bold technique and almost limitless invention, and she does this today as she has been doing it for the better part of forty years.

On *Lord, You've Been Mighty Good to Me*, she is nearly perfect on about half the album: the exuberant "Revive Us Again," the pyrotechnic "The Moan That Keeps Homes Together," the darkly impassioned "It's Getting Late in the Evening," the sombre "Somebody Saved Me" and the stately "This Evening Our Heavenly Father." On these songs, producer Tony Heilbut (the most noted historian of gospel music) lets Marion sing with a minimum of accompaniment, and she sounds natural and at ease on even the most difficult passages. Unfortunately, too many of the other tracks are cluttered by an obtrusive rhythm section, with loud drums and guitar creating obstacles for her to sing around. There's even pedal steel and fiddle on a couple of tracks (apparently at the singer's request—she wrote one of them), and the result is a hodge-podge, perhaps an attempt to make Williams accessible to the same audience that reveres Andrae Crouch, today's biggest gospel star. Marion Williams can sing rings around Crouch, and even her weakest songs here are worth hearing.

For me, Williams comes closest to her classic material on "Revive Us Again," where she cuts loose with sheer power and joy, and on "It's Getting Late . . . " when she simply commands every ounce of your attention with the focused spirituality of her delivery. In such moments, Marion Williams reveals greatness born not only of talent but from the heart, and for these qualities, she is unmatched. Whatever its flaws, there is great beauty in this album and I'm thankful that Williams has made it.

No Man's-Land
Lene Lovich
Epic

By Jim Farber

Lene Lovich's *No Man's-Land* finds her perilously close to a musical wasteland—quite a disappointing distance from her pioneering debut four years ago. When Lovich released *Stateless* in early 1979 she not only helped establish dance-rock as an alternative to disco with such early club faves as "Home" and "Lucky Number," she also anticipated the whole New Romantic movement with her fantasy Transylvanian princess get-up; similarly, her hiccuping bird call vocals became the vanguard of wacked-out female new wave (along with the B-52's, taking off from vague antecedent Yoko Ono). Lovich's vocal and visual camp magnified the witty sophistication of her off-beat feminist lyrics, and her music had hooks to burn.

Almost at once, though, her music and her stance started to wilt. The second LP was interesting (wryly toying with a supernatural interpretation of her persona) but it was spotty musically. Last year she released an EP, *New Toy*, instead of a full record; and though it had two of her best songs opening each side, the rest was mediocre. Sad to say, her new LP has even less top-notch material than did the EP. The pieces range from merely serviceable to dull dance-rock synth chants. Two songs from *New Toy* needlessly reappear, as well. New songs "Sister Video" and "Blue Hotel" try hard behind some odd hooks, but remain unremarkable. Even the melodic ballad, "Walking Low" (with acoustic guitar accompaniment similar to that in the Beatles' "And I Love Her"), is ultimately slight. The only first-rate piece here is "It's Only You," which includes a smart snip of the theme from *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly*.

Lovich's new lyrics lack the depth and wit of her debut. She's ignored the rich potentials of her persona and thereby reduced herself to a novelty sideshow—exactly the image she subverted in her early work and the few noteworthy songs since. In the future, if Lene Lovich is going to be more than a gimmick, she had better regain some of the musical umph and lyrical trickiness that distinguished her from every other new toy in the bin.

Special Beat Service
English Beat
I.R.S.

By Ken Braun

As notices of its recent American tour revealed, the English Beat is still considered in many quarters a "ska revival" group. Such classification ignores most of what the Beat really is, for the ska influence has never been more than one aspect of its complex and unique identity.

I Just Can't Stop It, the Beat's first album, contained marvelous covers of tunes by Smokey Robinson and Pomus & Shuman as well as Prince Buster, plus original songs (equal credit to each member of the group), which moshed up Jamaican rhythms and patois toasting with pop hooks and harmonies, and punk rock urgency. 1981's *Wha'ppen* found the group demonstrating a sure, distinctive songwriting style and a collective craft which were imbued with African and Caribbean sounds but never seemed foreign or mannered.

With *Special Beat Service,* one stops trying to identify exotic influences: calypso, reggae, highlife and other tropical dances are integral to the Beat's musical character, but in a natural, almost unconscious way that coheres inextricably with its English pop aspects and its sense of fun. What distinguishes this group is not its eclecticism, but its animated musicality. Dave Wakeling's soaring vocals on "I Confess"; Ranking Roger's toast over banjo on "Spar With Me" (and interjections and harmonies on "She's Going"); the sad, lovely melody to "End of the Party"; the inviting festivity of "Ackee 123"; the excellent ensemble playing throughout—this many fresh, winsome moments on a third album attest not to a nostalgic revival but to a vital, compelling band that deserves to be considered on its own merits.

Forever Now
Psychedelic Furs
Columbia

By Nick Burton

While the Psychedelic Furs' first two vinyl outings relied on an untempered, visceral attack, *Forever Now* is a much more mature and (dare I say it?) accessible work that eschews many of the heavy-handed pretensions which clouded their earlier efforts. The Furs' wall-of-sound approach has never worked better, and much of the credit must go to producer Todd Rundgren, who gives the band an uncharacteristically clean, restrained sound, bringing out the quality of the individual instruments rather than muddling them all together. "Love My Way," "Goodbye" and (particularly) "Danger" are refreshingly melodic, with Richard Butler's vocals (a cross between the Bowie croon and the Lydon snarl) domi-

nating, as usual. On the more adventurous side, "Sleep Comes Down" and "Yes I Do" are excellent excursions into moody romanticism, aided by John Ashton's brittle guitar work and Ann Sheldon's thick "I Am The Walrus"-like cello lines.

Forever Now hints that Butler is pulling away a bit from his own (slightly phony) "dead serious" image; the singer's baleful presence has always dominated the Furs music, and clearly he needs the control and catalytic input of a Rundgren to produce something special. If he could match his singing and imagery to the growing lyrical dimension apparent on *Forever Now*, Butler and the Furs might yet come up with the great rock statement they so dearly wish to make.

Live at the Plugged Nickel
Miles Davis
Columbia

By Steve Futterman

Between 1960 and 1965, Miles Davis released five "in concert" albums, all basically containing the same tried and true material (*viz.*, "Walking," "Round Midnight," and "So What"). Although these records contain a healthy share of remarkable playing, the period in question finds Davis, the insatiable innovator, treading water.

On the surface, *Plugged Nickel*, a previously unreleased 1965 date, seems like more of the same. Fortunately all similarities end with the material, for Davis had finally assembled a band that would enable him to split with his past. Having made the modal breakthrough, *Kind of Blue*, in 1959, Davis spent the next six years retreating to a more conservative late-bop haven. On *Plugged Nickel*, he's ready to take the leap again. By surrounding himself with young musicians who came of age in the post-bop '60s rather than in the previous two decades, Davis forced himself to change.

While *Plugged Nickel* still consists of the standard repertoire, the executions are changing radically. The musicians' approach to time signatures is not just flexible, it's downright loose. Tempos shift and sway; rather than filling space, solos move freely within it; chord progressions are less rigidly adhered to. The biting aggressiveness and fervor this new-found freedom engenders is particularly evident in Davis' own playing. Instead of caressing melodies, he often attacks each phrase with a flurry of hard, crisp notes. Eschewing the fragile "cool" tone with which he made his reputation, Davis revels in the sheer brassiness of his horn, and is matched by the explosiveness of Tony Williams' drums. No longer a mere time-keeper, Williams assumes a front line position, carrying on a constant conversation with the soloists. As earlier rhythmic and harmonic restrictions break down, bassist Ron Carter and pianist Herbie Hancock are forced to respond with seemingly telepathic alertness. Their razor-sharp reflexes set up an underlying tension that runs throughout the entire double album.

Yet this very rhythm section had been with Davis since 1963. In searching for explanations as to the nature of this momentous change in attitude, one's attention focusses on Davis' second horn, tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter. Shorter's explosively personal approach, combining the tonal experiments of Coltrane with his own sparse note conception, seems to encourage Davis to take greater risks. Thus *Plugged Nickel* finds Miles not merely leading a band, but listening and responding to it as well.

A Broken Frame
Depeche Mode
Sire

By Nick Burton

Depeche Mode's debut LP, *Speak & Spell*, was a mildly-amusing collection of lightweight electronic pop built around an appealing, sparse synthesizer sound. Chief songwriter/synthesist Vince Clarke has since departed to form Yaz, and the revamped Depeche Mode (a trio) now features Martin Gore as its principal songwriter. While his work here reflects a wider universe of influences than Clarke's—"A Photograph of You" is pure Merseybeat, "Satellite" is reggae, and the excellent "Leave In Silence" has some jazz phrasing in the lead synthesizer lines—the arrangements of same suffer from technological overkill. The current incarnation of Depeche Mode thus has more in common with the electronic excess of Tangerine Dream than it does with a band such as Human League, where machines are part of a well-delineated, rock-based musical vocabulary.

To be fair, it's best to consider this LP as a new band's exercise in style (or in trying to find a style). And as with most such efforts, it has its moments. The larger question, though, concerns the trio's ability to harness its technological prowess in some coherent, compelling fashion. *A Broken Frame* indicates that that battle is a long ways from being won.

On The Run
The Heptones
Shanachie

By Ken Braun

When a group loses a presence as dominating as Leroy Sibbles was in the Heptones (for whom he sang lead vocals and wrote much of the material), decline inevitably follows. Yet this outstanding Jamaican vocal trio (which had its first hit in 1966 and since then has given Jamaican pop some of its enduring classics) found a formidable replacement in Naggo Morris; thus, their first American-released LP in six years is a welcome one in that it upholds the Heptones' tradition of excellence.

Like Sibbles', Morris' voice is a strong, graceful tenor which he uses modestly, with understated effect; it blends nicely, too, with those of Earl Morgan and Barry Llewellyn, as if these three vocalists have been singing together all along. As a writer, Morris is not quite in Sibbles' league, although his "Work And No Play" has the simple, convincing eloquence of the sort of common man's blues Sibbles specialized in. On an equally heartening note, "Love Been Good" and "Scandal" rank as Llewellyn's finest contributions to the Heptones' repertoire.

On the technical side, the Heptones' production style—spare, with all accompaniment save drums kept well behind the voices—shows the influence of the legendary Lee "Scratch" Perry; instrumentally, the work of Sly Dunbar, Robbie Shakespeare, Ansel Collins, Uzziah Thompson and Bobby Ellis combines the best elements of several eras.

The same might be said of the Heptones, whose close, street-corner harmonies (modeled after the Temptations, the Miracles and the Four Tops) have never sounded dated. Clearly, the trio's not only retrenched but resurged since Sibbles' departure; *On The Run* bodes well for the future of this archetypal rock steady group.

Oh, No! It's Devo
Devo
Warner Bros.

By Nick Burton

Put simply, *Oh, No! It's Devo* is a dull, lifeless record. Devo's mechanical synthesizer pop has been effective in the past, but the music here is so listless that even the most ardent of followers is bound to be dismayed. Instead of offering anything different this time around, Devo is re-hashing its own musical concepts rather than making an effort to improve upon them.

These fellows are certainly clever technicians, but all the instrumental expertise in the world cannot compensate for the limp songwriting of Mark Mothersbaugh and Gerry Casale. The tunes here even lack the dynamic punch of the weaker tracks from last year's *New Traditionalists*, and the band's usually imaginative quirkiness is conspicuously absent. The only lasting impression one takes away from songs such as "Out of Sync," "Big Mess" and "That's Good" is one of aimless plodding.

Lyrically, Mothersbaugh and Casale have retained the snide cynicism of *New Traditionalists*: "I Desire," for example, is a John Hinckley love letter to Jodie Foster set to music (Hinckley is even given songwriting credit). Clever idea for a song, huh? Gimme a break. Devo can be a fine band at times, but what's presented here is nonsense.

Days of Innocence
Moving Pictures
Network

By Jonathan Gregg

Who's to blame for this Australian sax and guitar bar band's excesses? Hint: song titles like "The Angel and The Madman" and "Joni and Romeo" point an accusing finger towards someone associated with Asbury Park. But then Alex Smith uncorks the kind of raspy yell that Steven Tyler helped forever banish from the halls of good taste, and it becomes clear that these guys are as indiscriminate as they are unabashed about their disingenuous thievery.

What they gleaned from their betters is form without content. They get all the symbols right—girls in tight pants, cars with the motors running, et al.—but their tawdry, blue-collar romances are merely dry humps: nothing is delivered (what do you expect from lyrics on the order of "every guy's a clumsy poet/ and every girl is a beauty queen"?). The melodies are mediocre at best, and are often interrupted by aimless instrumental breaks. In short, we've got plenty of this stuff to draw from right here in the U.S. of A. without importing it from Down Under.

Tour de Force–Live
Al DiMeola
Columbia

By Steve Futterman

In keeping with the Biblical prophecy that the sins of the fathers shall be visited on the sons, fleet-fingered guitarist Al DiMeola, along with his all-too-willing combatant, keyboardist Jan Hammer, live and die by the Word on *Tour de Force—Live*. And the word says practitioners of fusion music—that most unpleasantly egocentric of genres—will forever engage in a constant battle to determine who can play louder and faster, at the expense, naturally, of good taste and/or common sense.

While DiMeola and Hammer earn points for their obvious technical facility, these attributes are completely nullified by aggressive, insensitive arrangements. After a frantically stated theme, each tune quickly degenerates into a round of "catch-me-if-you-can" solos which find the guitarist trying to make his instrument sound like a synthesizer, while the keyboardist tries to make the synthesizer sound like a six-string. By the end of side one, the duo has long since worn out its welcome.

Let's face it: DiMeola may play with a lot of flash and fire, but he hasn't extended the *art* of playing electric guitar beyond John McLaughlin's innovations of ten years ago. And by shunning acoustic guitar totally on this outing, he ditches the only ace he had; the full, rich tones of the hollow-body at least lent some variety and desperately needed feeling to his emotionally barren compositions.

Producers DiMeola and Dennis MacKay have done a remarkable job of taming the live tapes, and they've been honest enough to indicate on the cover that additional keyboards and percussion were added in the studio. But in an effort to corral the frenzy of the performances here, the producers have overlaid a glossy sheen which mitigates the entire project's firepower. For all its pretenses to something grander, *Tour de Force—Live* is little more than heavy metal music in search of some lyrics.

The Cage
Tygers of Pan Tang
MCA

By Jonathan Gregg

At the bottom left-hand corner on the back cover of the Tygers of Pan Tang's U.S. debut album a small cassette-and-crossbones logo lies beneath the warning: "Home taping is killing music." No danger of that here. This music has been dead for years, and anyone who likes this album probably can't operate a tape recorder anyway. What is killing music is the continued promotion of crapola like this—not only is this quintet not the future of rock 'n' roll, it's not even the past. Journey is foremost among a plethora of bands which purvey this sort of heavy-duty AOR rock in a manner that at least suggests some affinity for the genre—and we're not exactly talking about the Golden Age of Innovation here, are we? The Tygers draw from a lexicon of hackneyed rock riffs and poses, then add insult to injury by bludgeoning Leiber-Stoller's "Love Potion #9" into a bloody pulp of its former humorous self. Songwriting is a major problem here, and from the looks of it an insurmountable one—the only moderately catchy tune, "Paris By Air," comes courtesy of one Steve Thompson, who's not in the band. *The Cage* is an inauspicious beginning by a band that deserves no better.

Culture Club

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transient teenybopper base that supports Haircut One Hundred's Brideshead look, Kevin Rowland and Dexys Midnight Runners' industrial depression chic and, before that, the New Romanticism of Adam Ant and Spandau Ballet. Though *Kissing To Be Clever* is an immensely successful set (it recently took a 70-point jump on Billboard's Album Chart, moving up to 70 from 114), and "Do You Really Want To Hurt Me" shows massive crossover potential, George's shaved temples, tie-dyed smocks and scarves and rabbinical hats could be regarded by skeptics as nothing more than this week's "look."

"I don't see us as a passing fad because all the Ants have gone to the Culture Club," contends George. "We're not offering people full solutions. We're not telling them to be warriors and paint stripes on their noses."

Moss in turn defends Culture Club's following, giving them credit for not being as blindly loyal or as susceptible to hype as earlier generations. Save for those who encourage it, like Sting, the pop star is no longer a god and "people are hip to what's going on," quips Moss.

"I can walk down the street and people will come up and say they like our music and, perhaps, say, 'Look, it's Boy George! '" adds George. "People come up and ask for autographs, but when I was 14, if I'd have seen Marc Bolan or Glary Glitter I'd have (gasps for breath) . . .

"I think the whole illusion of pop stars had died down a bit now," he continues. "People are much more aware of what we're *doing*."

"Yet," adds Moss, "in America they really nurture the star system. I was over there and a guy asked me if I wanted to go to a particular supermarket because Olivia Newton-John goes there. I said, 'So what?'

"I can't imagine anyone saying, 'That's where Boy George goes to buy his cigarettes!' " ○

Steve Douglas

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One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest (scored by the latter). After Nitzsche produced Mink DeVille with Douglas on sax, Steve produced the group's critically acclaimed album, *Le Chat Bleu*.

The saxophonist's own *Hot Sax* LP was also met with rave reviews. Recorded live-to-digital, the album features Steve's meaty sax backed by an orchestral wash (provided by the Durocs) and trap drums (John Kincheloe). All of the tunes are original instrumentals with leanings towards gospel ("Harlem Melody"), funk ("Funk Foray"), mid-eastern ("Anaconda"), and pop ("Strictly Confidential"). The only nod to Douglas' past is also the album's highpoint, a ballsy rendition of "Peter Gunn," which he first recorded with Duane Eddy in 1959.

Steve's main instruments are his King Super 20 tenor, Selmer Mark VI baritone, Mark VI alto, Buffet soprano, and a 1910 Hanes flute. "It's ebony with two head joints," he details "a wooden one and a metal one, so it's the best of both worlds. Live, I play the saxes through a mike hooked up to a delay unit, and on the flute and bass recorder I use a Sony ECM-150 contact mike, but I think that limits the dynamic range of the instrument."

Besides touring with Cooder, Douglas has been playing around the Bay Area lately with Grateful Dead drummer Mickey Hart and vocalist Kathi McDonald. And when Spector vocalist Darlene Love recently made her first live appearance in years at San Francisco's Boarding House, Douglas was on the bandstand recreating his classic solos on "He's A Rebel," "Da Doo Ron Ron," and "Today I Met The Boy I'm Gonna Marry." "I wouldn't miss this for the world," he says, grinning from ear to ear. ○

On Stage

Bow Wow Wow's Got The Beat

Bow Wow Wow
The Living Room
Providence, R.I.
January 6, 1983

By Bill Flanagan

Those puritans of the 1950s who warned that all this rock 'n' roll business would lead youth back to the jungle knew what they were talking about.

Bow Wow Wow's records are well crafted pop, with African tribal drumming as instantly recognizable as the signature rhythms of Gary Glitter (who was surely an influence on them) and Johnny Cash (who was probably not). The quartet recently split with Malcom McLaren, their Svengali-like manager. 17-year-old singer Annabella Lwin told the Providence *Newpaper* that she feels McLaren exploited her youth (she was 14 when the band started), sex (she was convinced to pose nude for several record jackets) and naiveté. Upon arriving at the Living Room for a sound check the singer tore from the wall copies of *RockBill* magazine with her half-nude photo on the cover.

Lwin's new seriousness was confirmed in performance. The gasps and squeals of her recording of the teenage rape fantasy "Louis Quatorze" were abandoned in favor of an impatient reading that made the singer sound, if not liberated, at least like a woman weary of her lover's childishness. Similary, the "I don't like you" opening of "Go Wild in the Country" was transformed from Waitresses-like snottiness to a more sympathetic world-weariness. Growing up, Lwin is finding ways to wring different nuances from her material.

But in concert, Lwin was not the center of Bow Wow Wow's sound. Drummer Dave Barbarossa was the focus and everything else was subverted to his percussion. When he came blasting in one was reminded of Keith Moon's rolling, open-ended roller coaster patterns. Barbarossa is more disciplined than Moon was, and has the coordination to play his whipping and rolling fills against the steady tribal beats.

The band assigned Barbarossa's traps the central role usually taken by melody. The song's bridges–the middle sections–often maintained the same melody as the verses while breaking from the drum pattern for eight bars. When that pattern burst back in, a great tension was released.

Jazz fans would find little innovation in all this. The classic John Coltrane quartet of the mid '60s is only one example of an ensemble that often let a melodic instrument (McCoy Tyner's piano) hold the rhythm while the drummer (Elvin Jones) grabbed the spotlight and played counter patterns around the beat. The concept that is Bow Wow Wow's be-all and end-all is the point from which Coltrane's group started.

But Bow Wow Wow is a rock band that happens to have learned the great lesson of reggae: When you change rock's most basic component, its beat, everything else you do–no matter how clichéd–sounds fresh. Ashman's guitar melodies borrowed from rockabilly ("Do You Want to Hold Me") and even country ("Orangutan"), but one had to separate his lines from the arrangements to recognize it. Lwin's vocals owe much to the early '60s girl groups, from the passion of Ronnie Spector to (on "Lonesome Tonight") the pathos of Lesley Gore. But in Bow Wow Wow's fresh context those influences were not nearly as obvious as they are in, say, the Go Go's.

There was a cut-off point about half way into Bow Wow Wow's 22-song set when the onlookers either went completely into the heart of darkness or jumped off the boat. Some people frugged with abandon for the first dozen numbers and then loudly complained that it was all starting to sound alike. Others became more and more committed, passing so far into the beat that they seemed entranced. By the time the band surged into the funky near-instrumental "Prince of Darkness" random onlookers were bursting into tribal dance like evangelicals seized by the Holy Spirit at a tent meeting.

Does Bow Wow Wow's "Burundi Beat" constitute a mere trick to disguise familiar ideas? Only in the sense that any personal stamp (from Dylan's mannered vocals to the distinct chord styles of Dire Straits or Steely Dan) constitutes some sort of schtick. Finally, it doesn't matter. What matters is that it works. ○

PHOTO RAIN WORTHINGTON/LGI

Bow Wow Wow's Annabella Lwin: Exhibiting a new-found seriousness.

Neil Young: What Machine Age?

Neil Young
Palmer Auditorium
Austin, Texas
January 14, 1983

By Jody Denberg

Neil Young will be onstage in about five minutes," chirped Bob Clear, the generic newsman who hosted the Trans Tour TV channel. "Now, back to our regular programming." Blurred images ranging from Ronald Reagan to *I Love Lucy* beamed across a video screen set up onstage; the lights dimmed, and Neil Young strolled out—not with the all-star band that accompanied him on *Trans* and a subsequent European tour, but alone, as he would remain throughout the set. In fact, Young's ballyhooed transformation from a singer and a songwriter into a new-age pop technician was de-emphasized until the show's end.

An elegant crystal chandelier hung above a black baby grand piano at stage left and an older upright sat at stage right, but the intimate living room effect Young seemed to be striving for never fully took hold this night—at times he could just as easily have been singing from the TV screen that hung behind him. His between-songs chatter was so limited that a bold "thank you" after the fourth tune, a blistering "Revolution Blues," received extended applause. Later, when Young's harmonica fell from its holder during the opening bars of "Heart Of Gold," the crowd cheered, and Young seemed to be put at ease.

Sprinkled generously among letter-perfect versions of "Don't Let It Bring You Down" and "Don't Be Denied" were several unreleased songs that revealed Young hasn't only been writing hymns to computers lately. The guitar and harmonica combination on "Cowboy Song" alternately recalled "Out On The Weekend" and "Home On The Range," while the banjo-driven "My Boy," a heartfelt, wistful message from parental unit Neil to one of his sons, was rendered doubly effective by being juxtaposed with "Old Man."

After a brief intermission (that included Bob Clear interviewing a roadie and various fans backstage), Young returned with a haunting trio of songs from *Rust Never Sleeps*—"Powderfinger," "Pocahantas" and "Sail Away"—followed by "Ohio," complete with clips from the television dramatization of the Kent State killings slipping across the video screen. After a perfunctory reading of "After The Gold Rush," Young left his piano and walked to the area of the stage where a keyboard, syndrum, synthesizer and other bits of machinery lay in waiting.

After a few knob twists and setting adjustments, Young strapped on his black Les Paul, donned sunglasses and headset, and "Transformer Man" took off, its robot-like harmonies courtesy of Neil Young on videotape. Rather than seeming cold and calculated, the song was warm and pristine in light of the recent glut of spineless techno-pop. After a straightforward rendition of "My, My, Hey, Hey," Young offered the *Trans* version of "Mr. Soul," simultaneously evoking Buffalo Springfield and the Human League by layering expansive power chords and searing leads over a prefabricated backing. He clicked back into acoustic mode for encores of "Comes A Time" and "I Am A Child," only to go hi-tech again for "Computer Age." With his headset in place and the tune's hooky lead reverberating through the hall, Young trotted offstage 24 songs after he had started. Why he chose not to play more of his *Trans* material on the fourth night of his U.S. tour, or at least more of his electric songs with the inanimate backing, is a mystery. Because Neil Young proved once and for all that he doesn't need the Buffalo Springfield, Crosby, Stills and Nash, Crazy Horse or anyone else to make great music. He's a self-sufficient unit—for now. ○

Neil Young: A simple "thank you" received extended applause.

T-Birds Go On A Tear; Carlos Helps

The Fabulous Thunderbirds
The Catalyst
Santa Cruz, Ca.
December 10, 1982

By Dan Forte

What sets the Fabulous Thunderbirds apart from virtually every other white blues band in the country is an abundance of aggressive self-assurance and a complete lack of self-consciousness, as guitarist Jimmie Vaughan, lead singer Kim Wilson, bassist Keith Ferguson and drummer Fran Christina proved time and again during a near three-hour set.

Following one of Wilson's uptempo harp instrumentals, the band launched into "Can't Tear It Up Enuff" from their recent Chrysalis album, *T-Bird Rhythm*. All of Wilson's originals sit so comfortably beside obscure blues from Slim Harpo, Jerry McCain and Rockin' Sydney that it's hard to tell which is ancestor and which is descendant. On "My Babe," also from the new LP, the Dallas-born Vaughan proved he was equally conversant in rockabilly and Chuck Berry licks. The band closed its first set with "Rock With Me Baby," "You Ain't Nothing But Fine," and a pummeling version of Juke Boy Bonner's "Running Shoes," which is as close to a greatest hits medley as any T-Birds fan could ask for.

PHOTO MARK MANDER

The T-Birds' Jimmie Vaughan

Near the end of the second set, Carlos Santana plugged in and traded licks with Vaughan on "The Crawl." Apropos of the occasion, this was neither the Santana of "Stormy" fame nor the Devadip who collaborated with Mahavishnu. This was the Santana who grew up playing the blues in Tijuana. Dressed in a black suit with two-toned shoes, sporting a goatee and long, curly hair a la his Woodstock period, Carlos looked and sounded like the Fifth Thunderbird. Although his B.B. King-derived licks seemed out of place at times where Lightnin' Slim would be more fitting, Santana reminded those in attendance that he is not only one of the most distinctive guitarists in rock 'n' roll, but one of the most versatile as well. ○

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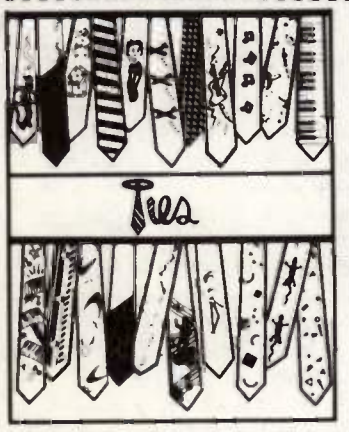

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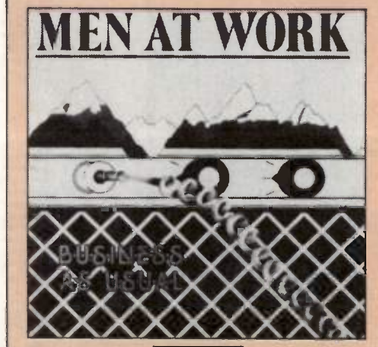

TOP OF THE CHART

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. ◆

TOP NEW ENTRY

FIGHTING OFF A BAD CASE of self-described "platinum paranoia," Bob Seger has, with *The Distance*, crafted a product as carefully, and as passionately, as the assembly-line protagonist in "Makin' Thunderbirds," his lament for the decline of a car and of a way of life.

Yet Seger isn't dishing out the sort of populism that relies on false grandeur or eager simplification, nor is *The Distance* the sort of album to do much in the way of explaining. The tenor of the record is clearly set by the music: the rockers tough and aggressive, driven by semi-metal guitar riffs; the ballads smooth but feisty. Very mainstream, with a strong sense of history and rock tradition.

In short, a lot of what Seger says here boils down to the simple observation that rock endures, and so do we; how well is all a matter of adjustment (it's a lesson one hopes the automobile industry won't take too long learning). On *The Distance*, Bob Seger has made his adjustment, and taken a strong stand by doing so. Come back, baby, rock 'n' roll never forgets. ◆

TOP DEBUT ALBUM

COMPRISED OF CUTS FROM their two British albums, *Stray Cats* and *Gonna Ball*, the Stray Cats' U.S. debut on EMI-America, *Built For Speed*, checks in this month as the top-charted album. While the Long Island trio's distinctive fashions set them apart from the crowd, it's their music that's sent them to the top. At root, the Cats purvey a modern form of rockabilly that heats up when one of the Cats strays from convention. Whether it's guitarist Brian Setzer sneaking in an unlikely chord progression; or stand-up drummer Slim Jim Phantom leaning into a rollicking backbeat where another would lay down a shuffle; or simply the fat, resonant tone of Lee Rocker's huge, acoustic bass, the typical Stray Cats song never sounds like a museum piece. "It's hard to describe how we go about updating things," says Setzer, "but it works. It has rockabilly roots, but it's also got something modern that you just wouldn't have heard. We definitely take it somewhere." And in a marvelous bit of understatement he adds: "It's caught on like wildfire." ◆

March 1983
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Bob Seger's Bold New Album

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