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PHOTO RANDY BACHMAN

Duran Duran: "Nothing will ever replace the excitement of being a few feet away from your audience."

Duran Duran: The Road From 'Rio'

By Jonathan Gross

NEW YORK—"Seven months later, can you believe it? I've always loved the record, but after awhile you have to start thinking, you know?" The Capitol Records publicist wouldn't go so far as to say the company had just about given up on Duran Duran's *Rio* when it suddenly arose late last year from a comatose position on the lower extremities of the charts to trample its way into the top 20. This *after* the Birmingham, England quintet had trudged through two unprofitable national tours last summer; *after* achieving superstar status all over Europe and the Britist Commonwealth and selling in excess of five million albums worldwide; and eight months after first releasing "Hungry Like The Wolf," the hit single currently prodding the album up the charts (actually, to set the facts straight, this version of "Hungry" is a new, beefier mix of the original version found on *Rio*, released as a single after the title track bombed).

If this tale has a pronounced industry slant, it's only because the selling of Duran Duran in America is equally as fascinating as the band and its music. Delayed reactions of this magnitude just don't happen every day: the last one that comes to mind is Blondie's *Parallel Lines*, which exploded long after its release, thanks to a monster disco smash called "Heart of Glass." Duran's saga has a thicker plot, one involving club play, the MTV factor, the not-coincidental facelift of album-oriented rock radio, loyal support from the top ranks on down at Capitol, and the band's own tenacious interfacing of rock, disco and top 40 formats with the soul of a bar band. Not to mention a ton of resolve on all fronts.

"There was a lot of hard work," agrees a jaunty Nick Rhodes, Duran Duran's keyboard whiz and media relations expert who is now, at the untender age of 21, becoming wise in the ways of the record business. And staying busy, too. This interview was conducted between sessions for Rhodes' current pet project, co-producing with Colin Thurston (Duran's producer) the debut album of a pop-reggae band called KajaGooGoo, yet another U.K. adolescent phenomenon with a hit single on its hands in the form of the Rhodes-Thurston-produced "Too Shy."

"Sure, MTV played our video," Rhodes continues, "but I think the touring and the airplay we got early from college stations did build us a cult following in the U.S. that eventually grew up and out."

In their native land, Duran Duran was never really a cult item. The press there, with its savage appetite for new blood, seldom lets anything go unnoticed, especially when it comes with a calling card that reads Duran Duran, a moniker copped from a character in director Roger Vadim's 1968 sci-fi psychedelic spoof, *Barbarella*, Jane Fonda's final screen fling as an unwitting sex object.

It was in 1978 that Rhodes, then 16, dropped out of school and fell into a deejay booth at The Rum Runner club in Birmingham, allegedly the only worthwhile place in town. There he met bassist John Taylor, who had flunked his A-level exams (kind of like senior finals) and was building a name for himself in art school. As Duran Duran, Rhodes and Taylor started messing up local pogoheads with an obtuse, minimalist sound produced by a bass, a clarinet and a rhythm box. Drummer Roger Taylor was then recruited from a local punk outfit called the Sex Organs. Guitarist Andy Taylor joined after answering an ad the band placed in *Melody Maker* (amazingly, none of the Taylors are related). At that time the quartet convinced Rum Runner club owners Paul and Michael Berrow to manage them; while Duran was busy maintaining the club to earn their keep, vocalist Simon Le Bon was attending Birmingham U. and dating, aha, a barmaid at the Rum Runner. From there, kismet didn't have to work too much overtime.

In late 1980, Duran Duran landed a support slot on Hazel O'Connor's (of *Breaking Glass* fame, or infamy) U.K. tour. EMI picked up the scent, offered a contract, and got immediate return-on-investment. Duran's debut single, "Planet

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Marvin Gaye Comes Home

By Gavin Martin

LOS ANGELES—Carlo's and Charlie's is a club on Sunset Boulevard, and it's here that CBS Records has chosen to celebrate Marvin Gaye's return to L.A. after a four-year exile in Europe and the success of his latest single, "Sexual Healing," and his debut LP for the label, *Midnight Love*.

At about eight o'clock, Gaye enters through the back door of the club, flashing warm, personable smiles and offering good buddy backslaps for the guys and little pecks on the cheeks for the ladies. After making the rounds, Gaye listens as a lady representing the L.A. city fathers reads a citation from the Mayor enumerating Gaye's successes over the years, and lauding him

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Jett's New Album Due In May

TORONTO—What makes Joan run? Conversely, how does one get Joan Jett to put on the brakes?

"I didn't know what to do," laments Jett's manager/producer/mentor Kenny Laguna. "Four days

PHOTO: KEES TABAK/RETNA LTD.

Joan Jett

after our last concert in Honolulu last December, when we were supposed to get our first break in literally years, she was going snakey for more dates."

You'd think that Jett would gear down after a grueling schedule that last year included the first shows played by an American rock artist in East Germany, a tough back- and

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PHOTO: LAURA LEVINE

LETTERS

Rock Racism

THE RECENT CONCERN OVER racism in rock is long overdue and I commend any publication or writer who chooses to tackle the issue. However, I take exception to publications like RECORD which possess a few blind spots of their own. For instance, from the looks of your February issue, it would appear that women, as well as blacks, are being completely shut out of our popular culture. With only one minor exception, the entire issue was devoted to the coverage of male (mostly white) performers. Now we all know that women are making vital music these days, but if your magazine was all we had to go on, who would know it? Go ahead and point to the Go-Go's, but for every one of them there are a hundred (God forbid) Van Halens who get much more coverage, not to mention airplay. The women who do make it seem to have to contend with the pressure to be anything but themselves—they either get dressed up as bikers or birds of paradise.

As a white male, I am sick and tired of the racist, sexist, anti-humanist flavor of our popular culture. Diversity is out and the entire human herd runs together in tune with the latest trend. Those who are unwilling to expose themselves to something different get fed a steady diet of heartless, soulless, mindless noise. If I hear one more anthem about cars, women as objects or the all-important virtue of "boogieing," I might just go beserk.

I guess it would be foolish of me to expect RECORD to be truly sensitive to all of this since it is fueled by the same hype and lust for money that propels rock 'n' roll. Nevertheless, the next time you feel the need to climb up on a soapbox, remember that he who screams the loudest may have the most to feel guilty about. CARY S. TOLAND
Eugene, Oregon

The managing editor replies: RECORD shares Mr. Toland's concern over the increasingly racist and sexist turn our society is taking. Narrowing the discussion down, though, one wonders how closely he's read this publication, particularly the February issue. His claim that the entire issue, "with one minor exception," is devoted to coverage of mostly white male performers is inaccurate. On page 3 is a feature on Sweet Pea Atkinson; the Q&A interview of the month is with Luther Vandross; the lead record review is of Michael Jackson's Thriller; *in that same issue, we also review new albums by Prince and Chic, and reissues of recordings by Muddy Waters and Billy Stewart.*

As for covering female artists, RECORD may not go to the head of the class, but in our 18-issue history we've done cover stories on Chrissie Hynde, Stevie Nicks, Heart, Fleetwood Mac and Pat Benatar; features on Rosanne Cash, the Motels, Missing Persons, Aretha Franklin, Yaz, the Go-Go's, Lou Ann Barton, Laurie Anderson, Karla Bonoff, The Roches, X and Quarterflash; as well as any number of short news items, records-in-progress, concert and record reviews centering on female artists or bands in which a female artist is prominently featured.

In short, decisions as to what RECORD will cover in a given issue are made independent of an artist's race or sex. I'm sorry if Mr. Toland finds our efforts lacking.

Hall & Oates

I'D LIKE TO CONGRATULATE Mr. Hall and Mr. Oates for withstanding the barrage of banality they have been forced to deal with in their recent publicity.

The *Daryl Hall and John Oates* album cover they are so harshly judged by seems to be an attempt to express the dual aspects in all of us. It would appear to need no further justification.

In their musical relationship they have succeeded in doing what groups have always had a difficult time pulling off—growing up in their music. CINDEE SEGAL
Austin, Texas

We Stand Corrected

A LITTLE ADVICE FOR MARK Mehler. Rule number one: when reviewing a concert, pay attention so you'll know what you're talking about. Linda Ronstadt did not perform George Jones' "Sometimes You Just Can't Win" at Radio City or anywhere else. The country ballad was written by Smokey Stover, not George Jones. Had the critic set aside his obsession with the singer's clothes, he might have heard her *dedicate* the song to Jones and Tammy Wynette, as she's done throughout the tour.

It's quite obvious that Mr. Mehler should review fashion shows, where listening is not so important. DON NARY
Salem, Mass.

I WAS SURPRISED THAT YOUR article on Steve Cropper ("12 Bars, Please," February RECORD) failed to mention the fact that Cropper produced John "I'm an idiot" Cougar's *Nothin' Matters And What If It Did*, the 1980 pop-rock masterpiece which preceded *American Fool*. MARSHALL R. WILCOXEN
Midland Park, N.J.

TOP 100 ALBUMS

1	MEN AT WORK	*Business As Usual* (Columbia)
2	MICHAEL JACKSON	*Thriller* (Epic)
3	STRAY CATS	*Built for Speed* (EMI)
4	BOB SEGER & THE SILVER BULLET BAND	*The Distance* (Capitol)
5	HALL & OATES	*H_2O* (RCA)
6	LIONEL RICHIE	*Lionel Richie* (Motown)
7	PHIL COLLINS	*Hello, I Must Be Going!* (Atlantic)
8	DURAN DURAN	*Rio* (Capitol)
9	NEIL YOUNG	*Trans* (Geffen)
10	BILLY JOEL	*The Nylon Curtain* (Columbia)
11	JOE JACKSON	*Night and Day* (A&M)
12	PAT BENATAR	*Get Nervous* (Chrysalis)
13	THE CLASH	*Combat Rock* (Epic)
14	MISSING PERSONS	*Spring Session M* (Capitol)
15	TOTO	*IV* (Columbia)
16	CULTURE CLUB	*Kissing to Be Clever* (Virgin/Epic)
17	MARVIN GAYE	*Midnight Love* (Columbia)
18	MUSICAL YOUTH	*Youth of Today* (MCA)
19	TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS	*Long After Dark* (Backstreet/MCA)
20	ADAM ANT	*Friend or Foe* (Epic)
21	DEF LEPPARD	*Pyromania* (Mercury)
22	ABC	*Lexicon of Love* (Polygram)
23	RIC OCASEK	*Beatitude* (Geffen)
24	JOURNEY	*Frontiers* (Columbia)
25	DONALD FAGEN	*The Nightfly* (Warner Bros.)
26	DIRE STRAITS	*Love Over Gold* (Warner Bros.)
27	TRIUMPH	*Never Surrender* (RCA)
28	SUPERTRAMP	*"...famous last words..."* (A&M)
29	PRINCE	*1999* (Warner Bros.)
30	RANDY NEWMAN	*Trouble in Paradise* (Warner Bros.)
31	BLACK SABBATH	*Live Evil* (Warner Bros.)
32	ENGLISH BEAT	*Special Beat Service* (IRS)
33	JONI MITCHELL	*Wild Things Run Fast* (Geffen)
34	GOLDEN EARRING	*Cut* (21 Records/Polygram)
35	ERIC CLAPTON	*Money & Cigarettes* (Duck/Warner Bros.)
36	SAMMY HAGAR	*Three Lock Box* (Geffen)
37	THE J. GEILS BAND	*Showtime* (EMI)
38	OZZY OSBOURNE	*Speak of the Devil* (Jet)
39	SAGA	*World Apart* (Portrait)
40	CROSBY, STILLS & NASH	*Daylight Again* (Atlantic)
41	THE WHO	*It's Hard* (Warner Bros.)
42	TODD RUNDGREN	*The Ever Popular Tortured Artist Effect* (Bearsville)
43	BILLY SQUIER	*Emotions in Motion* (Capitol)
44	FOREIGNER	*Records* (Atlantic)
45	PETER GABRIEL	*Security* (Geffen)
46	A FLOCK OF SEAGULLS	*A Flock of Seagulls* (Jive/Arista)
47	SQUEEZE	*Singles, 45's and Under* (A&M)
48	LITTLE STEVEN & THE DISCIPLES OF SOUL	*Men Without Women* (EMI)
49	LED ZEPPELIN	*Coda* (Swan Song)
50	JOHN COUGAR	*American Fool* (Riva)
51	CHRISTOPHER CROSS	*Another Page* (Warner Bros.)
52	DAN FOGELBERG	*Greatest Hits* (Full Moon/Epic)
53	PSYCHEDELIC FURS	*Forever Now* (Columbia)
54	DON HENLEY	*I Can't Stand Still* (Asylum)
55	GARLAND JEFFREYS	*Guts for Love*
56	KENNY LOGGINS	*High Adventure* (Columbia)
57	TONI BASIL	*Word of Mouth* (Chrysalis)
58	GRACE JONES	*Living My Life* (Island)
59	GROVER WASHINGTON JR.	*The Best Is Yet to Come* (Elektra)
60	JUDAS PRIEST	*Screaming for Vengeance* (Columbia)
61	DEVO	*Oh, No! It's Devo* (Warner Bros.)
62	LUTHER VANDROSS	*Forever, For Always, For Love* (Epic)
63	BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN	*Nebraska* (Columbia)
64	FLEETWOOD MAC	*Mirage* (Warner Bros.)
65	JEFFERSON STARSHIP	*Winds of Change* (Grunt/RCA)
66	BOB JAMES & EARL KLUGH	*Two Of A Kind* (Capitol)
67	CHAKA KHAN	*Chaka Khan* (Warner Bros.)
68	YOKO ONO	*It's Alright* (Polygram)
69	ALAN PARSONS PROJECT	*Eye in the Sky* (Arista)
70	SPYRO GYRA	*Incognito* (MCA)
71	RUSH	*Signals* (Mercury)
72	DIONNE WARWICK	*Heartbreaker* (Arista)
73	JOHN LENNON	*The John Lennon Collection* (Geffen)
74	LINDA RONSTADT	*Get Closer* (Asylum)
75	KOOL & THE GANG	*As One* (De-Lite)
76	ROD STEWART	*Absolutely Live* (Warner Bros.)
77	OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN	*Greatest Hits Vol II* (MCA)
78	DIANA ROSS	*Silk Electric* (RCA)
79	NEIL DIAMOND	*Heartlight* (Columbia)
80	EVELYN KING	*Get Loose* (RCA)
81	PARTY PARTY	*Soundtrack* (A&M)
82	EDDIE MONEY	*No Control* (Columbia)
83	STEVE WINWOOD	*Talking Back to the Night* (Island)
84	THE TIME	*What Time Is It?* (Warner Bros.)
85	PAUL CARRACK	*Suburban Voodoo* (Epic)
86	ARETHA FRANKLIN	*Jump To It* (Arista)
87	WILLIE NELSON	*Always on My Mind* (Columbia)
88	MICHAEL MCDONALD	*If That's What It Takes* (Warner Bros.)
89	ANDY SUMMERS & ROBERT FRIPP	*I Advance Masked* (A&M)
90	STEVE MILLER BAND	*Abracadabra* (Capitol)
91	THE BLASTERS	*Over There* (Warner Bros./Slash)
92	CHICAGO	*16* (Full Moon/Warner Bros.)
93	GLENN FREY	*No Fun Aloud* (Asylum)
94	SANTANA	*Shango* (Columbia)
95	THE ROCHES	*Keep on Doing* (Warner Bros.)
96	PETE TOWNSHEND	*All the Best Cowboys Have Chinese Eyes* (Atco)
97	ELVIS COSTELLO & THE ATTRACTIONS	*Imperial Bedroom* (Columbia)
98	UTOPIA	*Utopia* (Network)
99	ROBERT PLANT	*Pictures at Eleven* (Swan Song)
100	ASIA	*Asia* (Geffen)

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New Artist

PHOTO LAURA LEVINE

Dream Syndicate: Reviving the lost "art" of jamming.

To Dare, Perchance To Dream

By Michael Goldberg

SAN FRANCISCO—The members of the Dream Syndicate don't do things the way other rock bands do them. They rarely rehearse. They never play the same set, and the songs themselves change from night to night. Often they'll get up on stage and jam on one song for a half hour, just like hippie bands used to do in the '60s. "We like to respond to the audience, express how we're feeling right at the moment," says Dream Syndicate leader Steve Wynn. "So that leads to a lot of jamming."

Such atypical behavior sets this band apart from most new wave groups—from Men at Work to X—who go in for three minute songs performed exactly as they appear on record. "I got tired of seeing bands put on the same little show," says 22-year-old Wynn, an intense kid with the sneer of a young, punk Elvis. "That's one of the reasons I wanted to have a band."

The Dream Syndicate—lead guitarist Karl Precoda, bassist Kendra Smith, drummer Dennis Duck and Wynn on rhythm guitar and vocals—make a raw, hypnotic, droning rock 'n' roll that might be what you'd get if you threw Bob Dylan, Velvet Underground and Neil Young records into a blender and set the thing on grind. A key factor in the band's appeal is the contrast between the wall-of-feedback guitar noise of Precoda and the tender, confessional vocals of Wynn. "Someone said it's kind of like Karl's the bad guy and I'm the good guy and you watch the whole time to see what's going to happen between the bad guy and the good guy," says Wynn. "Karl's playing these surreal, dark, murky, shrieking tones and I'm singing these very sentimental, emotional, wispy things and you see it head to head. It's not like we sat down and said, 'Well we're going to show the dichotomy between beauty and ugliness.' It's never gotten to that kind of self-consciousness. At the same time, there are a lot of things in our music that are pretty and ugly at the same time. I like that."

Based in L.A. where they formed a little over a year ago, the Dream Syndicate has been making waves right from the start. A critic from the *Los Angeles Times* ranked them as one of the best new bands in L.A., while *Herald Examiner* critic Mikal Gilmore wrote, "The knack of making a risky venture out of the consistent reinvention of one's sound is what ultimately sets the Dream Syndicate apart."

Such praise has surprised Wynn. "I used to think we were self-indulgent. Now I don't. I think that was just a copout: 'We're going to be hated, we're going to be absolutely self-indulgent and people won't like us and they're going to walk out on us. At best it will be popular to hate us.' We were being martyrs before we even had to. But after three weeks of performing we were getting all this good press and lots of fans. The more I thought about it, the whole thing I thought people would hate us for, I think there are people who missed that in rock 'n' roll. The idea of music that changes each time. And the harshness of Karl's feedback. That's pain. He can do a lot of lead lines that cut right through your skull. And I think a lot of people want to feel that."

The seeds of the Dream Syndicate were planted in 1978 when Wynn was a student at the University of California in Davis. It was there that he noticed a classmate named Kendra Smith. "I heard her say the words 'The Jam' during one of the classes and I said, 'Well, how about that.' See, there weren't too many people who liked the punk stuff that was happening then." They became good friends and played in several Davis bands together—the Suspects and the Icons, among them. When Wynn moved to L.A. and Smith to San Diego, they kept in touch by mail. "We started sending letters back and forth listing dozens of songs we were going to cover in a band that we were going to form."

> "...a lot of things in our music are pretty and ugly at the same time."

In L.A., Wynn played in a bunch of groups, but none of them clicked for him. He had given up on rock 'n' roll when he met Karl Precoda. "I had just come off six bands in about a year in L.A., including backing this six-and-a-half foot transsexual who ate men for a living, and it was to the point where I was sick of being in bands. I had no intention of doing this anymore. Karl and I lived near each other and we just started getting together to play guitars. And that's how it started."

Soon they were jamming with Kendra Smith on bass and another drummer. When that drummer left, they enlisted Dennis Duck, former skin pounder for a respected L.A. combo called Human Hands. Duck suggested the name Dream Syndicate, which had previously been used by John Cale and Lamonte Young for a long disbanded, early '60s minimalist group.

A four-song EP was recorded in one hour at a cost of one hundred dollars and was released on the Syndicate's own Down There label. It caught the attention of critics and hipper DJs at college stations, as well as L.A.'s Ruby Records. The Dream Syndicate's first full fledged LP, *The Days of Wine and Roses*, is a stunning debut that ended up on quite a few year-end Top Ten lists for 1982. The record shows Wynn to be a first class songwriter who has learned a few lessons from Bob Dylan, and Precoda to be one of the most impressive guitarists to emerge from the new wave.

The songwriter says that several of his songs are based on the writings of British philosopher Thomas Carlyle. "His whole thing was that you should work and not think. The work ethic. Not have emotions, not show passion, just work and that's the greatest nobility you can have. And I thought, love is one of the things that keeps you from that. I don't believe that myself. I don't sit around in a room 24 hours a day under a hot lamp trying to write songs. But it's a thought."

Because Wynn sings somewhat like Lou Reed, and because of the droning guitar lines that bring to mind "Sister Ray," the band has often been compared to the Velvet Underground. "When somebody told me that, I used to flip and say, 'If they say we sound like the Velvets, then they obviously haven't listened to the Velvets that much.' But somebody recently told me that one thing that the Velvets would do was take romantic, emotional lyrics and put them against very harsh sounds. Maybe they were the first band to do that. And that is one thing we do. So maybe that's it."

How come the band doesn't rehearse?

"If you rehearse to get the sound down, then go on stage and recreate it, you're not expressing any real emotion. There's going to be a barrier between you and the audience. It's like going and looking at a painting. It's just going to be there, a boring little art statement. Whereas if you're up there and you're saying, 'We've got these songs and we're not even sure how they're going to sound tonight,' it's a lot more real. I think that's something that reaches an audience. Something beyond just paying your six dollars and seeing a show. I don't have much use for that." ○

American Grandstand

By Dave Marsh

Put Up Or Shut Up

Much of the response to my recent column about MTV was encouraging, believe it or not. Most of the printed letters were negative, but the positive response (as always) was addressed to the author, not the editor. And my criticism (among others) has helped MTV open up its programming racially. It is now no more segregated than, say, Mississippi in 1967. I'm not done with the music channel yet, but that will have to wait for another day.

There were two sorts of interesting negative responses to the earlier column. I would like to thank all of the bigots who wrote in, for confirming my charges about the damage MTV's policies really cause. The more worthwhile negative responses asked why I complained that MTV is ahistorical. After all, they seem to reason, isn't pop the Music of the Moment? What does History have to do with it?

My stock response to this question is simple: Musical History is Fun. You simply get more out of "Crimson and Clover" if you know the Tommy James version as well as the Joan Jett. Pop only seems to be about brief, random events. In truth, it's a lingering, continuous series of interlocking moments and it's the relationship between these moments that makes the music interesting and meaningful. Maybe you can understand Eddie Van Halen without knowing about Jimi Hendrix or Les Paul, but you certainly can't understand him as well or as completely.

There is another side to the question, exemplified by a recent incident involving the famous Radical Rock Theoretician and Consumer Fraud Expert Malcolm McLaren. In the Feb. 5 issue of *Billboard*, McLaren gives an interview in which he hypes his current single, "Buffalo Gals."

In this interview, McLaren describes how he found the song in "Galax, W. Va., near the Tennessee border," according to the reporter. According to the Consumer Fraud Expert, in Galax, the people (he refrains—barely—from calling them hillbillies) "were still square dancing and they were very European. In fact, they spoke in a sort of old Middle English . . . They had no electricity and no toilets either. They live in huts. They raise a few pigs." According to McLaren, the leader of this merry band of American peasants was The Main Hill Topper, a deaf 75-year-old fiddle player ("He played by feel."). It was the Main Hill Topper who taught the song to the Consumer Fraud Expert. "It retained for me the spirit of the old pagan love rituals," said the Radical Rock Theoretician, in a statement that fully reflects the ideology he shares with such other cultural luminaries as Leni Riefenstahl.

There are a number of things wrong with this story. The most glaring, of course, is McLaren's utter ignorance of American folk culture. During the late Fifties and Sixties, square dancing was a part of every public school's physical education program. "Buffalo Gals" was one of the most common songs played in those classes. According to Greil Marcus, the tune dates to at least 1890.

Secondly, there is no such place as Galax, W. Va. and if there were, it would not be on the Tennessee border, because West Virginia and Tennessee don't share a border. There is a Galax, Virginia, though, and it is an interesting place indeed.

Galax, Va. has 6,000 furniture and textile workers, who labor for companies controlled by the Vaughan family, which also runs all of the town's newspapers, its radio stations, the school board, the Chamber of Commerce and the local government. These workers make $3.50 to $4.00 an hour, with paid holidays on Labor Day and Thanksgiving, forced overtime and the kind of working conditions seen in the film *Norma Rae*: i.e., dangerous and hostile. They do not live in huts. For the past several years, there has been an extensive struggle to unionize the town, with typical union-busting tactics in use.

Galax is notable for its music, too. It lies in the Blue Ridge Mountains, the region of western Virginia where country music's Carter Family and many of its greatest early musicians came from. "Pop" Stoneman, one of the finest country singers of the Twenties, was from Galax, and as a result of his influence, Galax has hosted a Fiddlers Convention each year since 1934. Pop Stoneman founded the Stoneman Family, who still make bluegrass records. The current Stonemans, Pop's grandchildren, are the eighth generation of their family to live in America. They do not speak Middle English—but then, Europeans were not aware of the Western Hemisphere when Middle English was spoken.

Much of this information comes from *The Encyclopedia of Folk, Country and Western Music*, a wonderful (if overexpensive, at $50) book just published in a revised edition. Some of the rest is from *Round the Heart of Old Galax* (County 533), a fine collection of 78 RPM recordings transferred to LP. Track three on side two of this album is "Buffalo Gals," by Kahle Brewer, Bolen Frost and Pop Stoneman.

The point isn't that I have a bigger record collection, better reference library and more common sense than *Billboard*. The point isn't even that you ought to be interested in where Malcolm McLaren (whose record, if fortunate, you'll never hear) cribs his ideas. The point is that if you are not interested in your own cultural heritage (or worse, if like too many Americans, you aren't even aware that you have one) then someone will steal it from you and sell it back, often omitting essential information, or simply lying about it. Because Americans have so little cultural self-respect, they are subject to all sorts of intimidation from overseas, especially from the English, who have been profiteering on off-shore culture since the Norman Conquest. The result is a tremendously distorted picture of our own national identity—exemplified by the fact that *Billboard*, like most other publications, casually prints insulting comments about Southerners as it never would about blacks, Italians, gays, Poles or women.

Malcolm McLaren's comments are meant to convey the idea that the people of Galax (and by extension, the entire South) are not just poor but primitive, despicable and degenerate, capable of being redeemed only by "higher" civilization, such as English record hustlers and the Vaughan family. What he says is dangerous because since McLaren's involvement with the Sex Pistols (he was a shopkeeper before that), the music press has lapped up his every asinine, reactionary fairy tale.

Well, Malcolm's time has come. I hereby issue a challenge. He shall produce in New York City, on or before May 1, 1983, the Main Hill Topper or documentary evidence of his existence, plus documentary evidence of Galax living conditions, or he shall forfeit any future proceeds of "Buffalo Gals" to the Galax workers movement. Failing either of these, Malcolm, shut up and if you can, lose your passport.

London Calling

By Chris Welch

Haircut 100 Bumps Nick Heyward

NICKY HEYWARD, THE kid with the big smile and bare knees, refused to record the vocals for the new Haircut 100 album and was shunted out of the group, to be replaced by Mark Fox. There have been rows about whether the group would finish the album Nick abandoned or just

PHOTO ADRIAN BOOT/LGI

Haircut 100

record a new one. Haircut 100 feels much time and money has been wasted already and wants to rush to America to tour. Nicky's plans? He now hopes to buy a pair of long trousers.

R.I.P.: Billy Fury, Thin Lizzy

BRITISH ROCK FANS have been mourning the death of Billy Fury, one of the best-loved pioneers of the local rock 'n' roll scene. Billy was a contemporary of Cliff Richard and Marty Wilde, and enjoyed many hits, including "Half Way To Paradise" and his first, "Maybe Tomorrow," in 1959. One of his albums, *The Sound Of Fury*, was hailed as a rock classic. A Liverpool lad, his name was changed from Ronald Wycherly by manager Larry Parnes, who controlled all the notable pre-Beatles idols. Fury, 41 years old, died in his London home after suffering a heart attack. He had been retired from the pop scene for some years, but was in the process of planning a comeback.

Thin Lizzy aroused suspicion when they announced they were breaking up just before a big British tour. Some suggested that they had been disappointed by poor ticket sales and made the announcement to perk up the tour, but this was denied by the band, who say they have just come to the end of the road. They are making the tour with new guitarist John Sykes who replaced Snowy White, together with Scott Gorham (guitar), Phil Lynott (vocals, bass) and Daren Wharton (keyboards). Their album, *Thunder And Lightning*, just released, will be the last by a band that started out in Ireland ten years ago. Said Lynott: "I feel sick about it, but there comes a time when we must all move onto other things."

Night of the Living Dead

IRONY OF IRONIES . . . . . a progressive rock revival threatens to be the first clear trend of 1983. Though critics have referred to the genre in a jocular and derisive manner—calling it "pomp rock" and "techno-flash," a new wave of progressive rock bands is emerging whose musical styles can be traced back to the likes of ELP, Genesis and Yes. It will bring comfort to those fans who never gave up on "musician's rock" and still think King Crimson are the greatest. How the new bands will shape up remains to be seen, but there is no doubt the record industry urgently needs groups whose styles don't date after six weeks and who can stick together long enough to build up a solid following, and some back catalogue. After all the super groups have been decimated by the winds of change and old age, and even seemingly sturdy "newcomers" like The Jam have a nasty tendency to tap out on a moment's notice.

This "New Wave of Progressive Rock" has sent a shudder of horror through critics (including many on *Record*'s staff) who thought they had nailed the coffin shut, but the bands have already played at The Venue, The Marquee and other important gigs. Among the best of the bunch are Pendrago, Twelfth Night, Tamarisk, The Daga Band and Marillion. The latter have already enjoyed stunning success since their debut last summer, when they went down well, if not exactly a riot, at Reading Festival. They sound remarkably like Genesis circa 1973 and come complete with a lead singer, Fish, who paints his face and sings weird tales. They use a Mellotron backing sound that brings back eerie memories of "Supper's Ready." But the band doesn't want to be typecast as mere Genesis-soundalikes, and is already branching out musically. They even come from Aylesbury where Genesis began, and many disaffected Genesis fans are flocking to the Marillion banner.

Hailing from Aylesbury, where Genesis began, Marillion's lineup includes Fish (vocals), Mark Kelley (keyboards), Mick Pointer (drums), Steve Rotheray (lead guitar) and Peter Trewavas (bass guitar). Although Charisma Records were anxious to sign the band at the behest of label boss Tony Stratton-Smith (who discovered Genesis), Marillion finally signed to EMI (UK) and have just released their first album, *Script For A Jesters Tear*, and second single, "He Knows, You Know," just in time for a massive tour that reached London at the end of April.

Of the other new progressives, The Daga Band is recalling the past glories of bands like The Nice. Now, of course, London is filled with rumors of a reunion by the original Nice. David O'List, Nice's lead guitarist, is excited by the idea, but Keith Emerson is currently working on plans for a new band, having moved back to England after years abroad.

PHOTO LAURA LEVINE

Holly Beth Vincent: "I've had a glimpse of the abyss."

'Live Fast, Die Young' Is Bunk: Holly Beth Vincent Survives

By Mark Mehler

NEW YORK—One morning about a year ago, Holly Beth Vincent awoke to perhaps the worst feeling a human being can have—none at all.

"I felt I was in a void," she says matter-of-factly, not unlike one of those "real people" on television describing the onset of a migraine headache.

"I had no control over my body, I didn't know who or where I was."

In her panic, she instinctively reached across the nighttable for paper and pencil and began scribbling song lyrics, because "it was the only thing in the world I could remember how to do."

The song she wrote, born of a long morning's journey into sanity, appears on Vincent's second album, *Holly and the Italians*, released late last year. Titled "Dangerously" ("Just like the wild one tamed/ Somebody calls my name/And I look/Today I start to go/Into a place they know as madness"), it's one of several tunes on the album dealing explicitly with the thin line between sanity and insanity; with remembrance; with violence and loss. But these subjects are handled with poignancy, melodic grace and occasional humor. Because her label, Virgin/Epic, has dropped her from its roster, copies of *Holly and the Italians* are currently somewhat scarce, but Holly suggests that favorable press and good word of mouth have generated some interest in the LP.

Still, she admits, some may find the subject matter too depressing, as did her former manager, Gary Kurfirst (who also manages the Ramones, Talking Heads, B-52's, among others), whom Holly claims dismissed the LP as "suicide music," thus precipitating the end of their business association. In fact, as must be made clear, *Holly and the Italians* is anything but "suicide music": it's survival music of the strongest kind.

Says Vincent: "As I was writing the words to 'Dangerously,' suddenly I realized, 'Hey, I'm doing something, I must be all right.' And soon it all began to come back. I started getting control of my anger. The art was what I needed."

Holly Beth Vincent, 27 years old, late of Chicago, Lake Tahoe, Los Angeles, Texas and the United Kingdom, has lived for the past five months in a tiny room at the Collingwood Hotel in midtown Manhattan. From this location, she is recasting her band, her career and her life. In starting fresh, she has left most of herself behind. In her room, with its spotted carpet, peeling white walls and obligatory painting of a Parisian street scene hanging behind the bed, only two echoes of a past remain: a 25-year-old snapshot of Holly in a crib, flanked by two little brothers; and a more recent photo of Holly, half-nude and painted red, wearing the bottom half of an American flag bikini, with a Union Jack waving not-so-proudly from a rod sticking out of her bikini bottom. The latter is, apparently, the kind of self-promotional gimmick that characterized a particularly rocky period in her professional life. Distressed by what she felt was a lack of interest in her work by Virgin after the 1981 release of her first album, *The Right To Be Italian*, Holly and band went the do-it-yourself route: "We took it upon ourselves to promote our own shows. Body paint, flags, bondage cuffs around my ankles; it was all pretty much first-grade symbolism, no?"

Like the rock 'n' roll tough girl pose, the snapshots on the walls are only clues to an identity. As there are few visitors to her hotel room ("this is only where I sleep; New York City is my living room"), one wonders who the clues are for. "I'm still trying to figure out who I am," says Holly, by way of explanation. "Maybe I'll find out here."

Born in Chicago to musician parents, Vincent says she was drumming on placemats at age three. At seven, the family moved to Nevada, and three years later relocated to California, where Holly began hating the west coast almost immediately. She went to school out there and shortly after her 18th birthday, dropped out of college and moved to England. "That's the time I see my life beginning," she states. "But if anything of California seeps into my music today, it's an accident. I've been trying not to think about it for years."

Vincent lived in London about a year and a half, playing drums ("badly") and scraping by financially. By now a commited Anglophile, she returned to America, lived on the coast for a while, toured in a series of midwestern bar bands, played with the renowned North Texas

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Early May Release Expected For Crenshaw's Second LP

NEW YORK—Critics' favorite Marshall Crenshaw is currently at the Power Station here putting the finishing touches on the followup to his acclaimed debut LP. The as-yet-untitled album is scheduled for release in early May.

Between sessions one evening, the artist allowed as to how he's confident of avoiding the "sophomore slump" that's afflicted many a promising young recording artist. "We've had a lot of time to prepare for this, mentally, at least," Crenshaw states, "and I think it's going to be a real good album."

For this LP, Crenshaw and his band (Chris Donato on bass, brother Robert on drums) have switched producers, with Steve Lillywhite (U2, Peter Gabriel, Ultravox) replacing Richard Gottehrer behind the board. Regarding this rather odd pairing, Crenshaw explains: "I thought his thing and our thing would contrast each other in an effective way, and my general impression was that he didn't have one set way of working, and that appealed."

Starting out with more than thirty rough ideas for tunes, Crenshaw quickly pared them down to around a dozen before recording began in late January. Because the group has been together "quite a while now," the tracks will emphasize the trio's playing more than the debut LP did: "I wanted this record to be a good reflection of our sound onstage, which I'm real happy with." Besides a cover version of the Jive Five's 1962 hit, "What Time Is It," some of the originals expected to make it onto vinyl include "Our Town," "Whenever You Are On My Mind" and "My Nuts Are Sore" ("except I don't think we'll keep that as the title," Crenshaw says apologetically).

Although he wouldn't speculate as to how the songs might turn out, Crenshaw asserts that "my tastes haven't changed; we'll be shooting for much the same thing. I do think the songs are better than the ones on the first record; I think I can promise that."

As for getting back on the road, Crenshaw says "there are no concrete plans for any tour right now, other than the fact that we will be touring." Manager Richard Sarbin does foresee a two-week dash to England just prior to the album's release. And that's fine by Crenshaw: "We went to London and Stockholm last year and all I can say is, more, please. We want to go all over the world." —Wayne King

PHOTO GARY GREEN

Marshall Crenshaw

Santana Tangled Up In Blues On Forthcoming Solo Album

SAN FRANCISCO—Having dropped Devadip (the name given to him by guru Sri Chinmoy) in favor of plain old Carlos, San Francisco's most vital rocker from the '60s has been getting back to his blues roots of late—jamming with the Fabulous Thunderbirds of Austin, Texas ("T-Birds Go On A Tear; Carlos Helps," March RECORD) and looking more and more like the unknown guitarist who had heads spinning at Woodstock. Ironically, Santana's only LP appearance playing straight-ahead blues was on *The Live Adventures Of Mike Bloomfield And Al Kooper*, but that situation will soon be rectified with the release of Carlos' upcoming Columbia solo album, produced by Jerry Wexler and Barry Beckett at the Automatt.

Wexler and Beckett previously teamed up to produce Bob Dylan's Grammy-winning *Slow Train Coming*. Wexler first heard about the Santana project only three days before flying in from New York to begin work. Shortly after arriving in California he called in Beckett to coproduce.

In addition to the Fabulous Thunderbirds, Carlos has assembled a mini who's who of contemporary R&B players, including organist Booker T. Jones (playing alongside Beckett's piano for the first time ever), Muscle Shoals bassist David Hood, and the Tower Of Power horn section. Santana's battery of Afro-Cuban percussionists are also present in full force. Vocals are handled by Jones, Thunderbird harp man Kim Wilson, Mike Finnigan, and former Santana member Gregg Walker.

Tracks already completed for possible inclusion on the as-yet-untitled LP are "Daughter Of The Night," "Mexico," Chuck Berry's "Havana Moon," Bo Diddley's "Who Do You Love," and Robert ("Barefootin' ") Parker's "Watch Your Step," which features Walker's bluesy shouting over a riff Wexler describes as " 'What'd I Say' on its side," propelled by congas and timbales. In Hood's words, "When I first heard what Carlos wanted to do, I didn't think it would work, but it really came together. It sounds really bluesy but has that Santana connection." —Dan Forte

R.E.M. Cutting First Album

NEW YORK—"Albums are boring," proclaims Michael Stipe, lead vocalist of R.E.M., the Athens, Georgia band whose 1982 EP, *Chronic Town*, garnered a host of critical hosannas. "From what I can hear, most albums consist of ten songs all sounding pretty much the same. It's taking me a long time to come to terms with the fact that we're actually in the middle of recording one ourselves."

PHOTO LAURA LEVINE

Michael Stipe of R.E.M.

Due in April on the I.R.S. label, R.E.M.'s debut LP, produced by Mitch Easter, is tentatively titled *7,000 Gifts*. "I wouldn't go so far as to say it's a good record," Stipe says with considerable modesty, "but at least we're trying to keep it moving, mixing the slow and fast songs. Now that the basic tracks and overdubs are behind me, I can say it was really quite easy."

Cuts of particular interest, according to Stipe, include two "swing" tunes, "Pilgrimage" and "Shaking Through," a rocker called "West of the Fields," and "Radio Free Europe," originally released as a single two years ago.

Following the release of the album, R.E.M. expect to tour, although Stipe is hoping the itinerary will be a limited one. "I don't like to drive the van," he explains. "Driving from Philadelphia to Madison, Wisconsin in the middle of the night is no fun. But I can't claim to be a martyr to rock 'n' roll; it's the life I chose." —Mark Mehler

The Word On The Pretenders: All's Well That Doesn't End

By Susanne Whatley

LOS ANGELES—There are three new Pretenders now . . . if you count leader Chrissie Hynde's new baby girl.

After a plague of misfortune, the Pretenders are finishing a new album, due at summer's end. And "Back on the Chain Gang," recorded with guest musicians last September after the death of guitarist James Honeyman-Scott and the departure of bassist Pete Farndon, has soared up the singles charts to proclaim the Pretenders alive and well despite a year of stunning setbacks.

"There really was never a moment when Chrissie and I thought 'well, that's it,' " says drummer Martin Chambers, settling back into an overstuffed chair at the band's Venice Beach office to talk about tour plans and the two new band members. "We always thought to get on with the next thing."

Troubles began on the 1981 U.S. tour when Chambers put his hand through a hotel room window trying to force it open. Fifty stitches were needed to repair the torn tendon and severed arteries, and the remainder of the tour was cancelled. The vicious gash across his right hand had not even fully healed before he had another run-in with broken glass and found himself pleading to have a half-severed finger stitched up *tight* so he wouldn't miss an upcoming performance in Dublin.

The doctor insisted his drumming would rip out the stitches. The show ended that night with Chambers' drum kit soaked with blood.

Then the most devastating news arrived. On June 16, 1982, Honeyman-Scott was found dead. "Heart failure due to cocaine," Chambers says solemnly. "So there you are. Silly, huh. The kid was in his mid-twenties, very talented. And it killed him."

"It's synonymous with rock 'n' roll, this drug business. Everybody has their moments but it really is a dead end street. And people think, 'it's okay, it's just coke.' But it killed Jim."

Only days before the guitarist died, Farndon had parted company with the band. The fate of the Pretenders was the subject of gloomy speculation, but after a period of mourning, its two remaining members pushed on.

"When you have a person close to you who dies, after the initial shock and mourning takes place, it's best to go on with some work," says Chambers. "You combat it."

The original foursome had rehearsed "Chain Gang," and Chambers and Hynde decided to record and release it as a single with the help of bass player Tony Butler and Rockpile guitarist Billy Bremner as the search for permanent replacements began.

Ironically, it was Honeyman-Scott who had introduced his eventual successor to the band back when they considered adding another player for live shows. Guitarist/keyboardist Robbie McIntosh, a veteran of English pub bands who had recorded with the Foster Brothers, was invited to audition first.

"Chrissie and I were well prepared to take our time—it might've taken a year or more to find the right people," Chambers recalls. "After a week of trying about twenty people a day it was obvious Robbie was far better than anybody else." McIntosh recommended one of the Fosters, bassist Malcolm, and the Pretenders were born anew.

By November they were recording new Chrissie Hynde compositions in their London studio with producer Chris Thomas. Hynde was eight months pregnant by the time they had finished six songs ("she's always been very fit," assures Chambers). On January 22 she gave birth to a seven-pound girl—still unnamed as this goes to press—and returned to the London flat she shares with new dad Ray Davies of the Kinks.

Chambers says he's anxious to get back on the road. The Pretenders may do a few sneak shows in Britain before coming to the U.S. for a tour of at least six weeks. All that, of course, after the album is finished. They haven't titled it yet, says Chambers, "but it won't be *Pretenders III*."

PHOTO: ROBERT MATHEU

Martin Chambers: "After the initial shock and mourning, it's best to go on with some work."

Jett's New Album Due In May

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wallet-breaking tour of the U.K. plus tours of Japan and Australia. Not to mention excursions to every nook and cranny in North America, as the 23-year-old ironwoman racked up combined sales of three million on her LPs *I Love Rock 'N' Roll* and the enduring *Bad Reputation.*

"I call it 'road fever,' " says the mercurial Ms. Jett. "But since we weren't going to go back out on the road, I decided to transfer all that energy to writing new material and recording the new album."

Save for a few quiet live workouts at colleges near her Long Island home, Jett and the Blackhearts band have spent the winter stowing away songs for a record that was due last September. According to Jett, the as-yet-untitled disc, scheduled for May, and recorded in Syosset, New York, will most likely consist entirely of her own compositions, in answer to critics and fans who felt the four or five covers on each of her albums were perhaps an easy way out.

Though she's exercised a certain amount of control over all her work, this record will be the first in which Jett shares production credit with Laguna and Richie Cordell. Laguna describes the new material as having a very raw, "early '60s" sound while retaining the no-frills edge that has become Jett's calling card. Jett says, "We're gonna be basic and hard. Nothing too slick, though. We want to get this done and go right back out on the road."

As for her video career, Jett will continue to make her own clips, but advises that her days as a bikini-flashing beach bunny (see "Do You Wanna Touch Me") are over.

— Jonathan Gross

On Stage

Doo-Wopp: Looking for an Echo

The Royal New York Doo-Wopp Show, Vol. X
Radio City Music Hall
January 29, 1983

By David McGee

Doo-wopp aficionados get misty when you mention the word echo, because that's what it's all about—looking for an echo. That is, a melody, a refrain, a satin-smooth background chorus, an impassioned turn of phrase, whatever it takes to summon the remembrance of things past. In what has become a bi-annual search for said echo, the Royal N.Y. Doo-Wopp Show presented six of the best-known acts in the field and came up with one of the finest concerts in its 10-volume history, before a sellout audience of 6100 mostly adoring fans ranging in age from toddlers to grandparents.

Death and fraud having exacted a heavy toll from this genre, the Royal N.Y. Doo-Wopp Show's producers (L.C. Productions) demonstrate admirable integrity in presenting the original group lineups intact, insofar as this is possible; at any rate, there's no fake Jesters or fake Paragons to be found here. Vol. X was highlighted by the appearance of three of the legendary singers in doo-wopp history in Vito Piccone of the Elegants, Eugene Pitt of the Jive Five and Willie Winfield of the Harptones. But on a night when vocal fireworks were expected from these three, unheralded Larry Chance of the Earls very nearly stole the show.

Chance's voice—a limited baritone that's gone sandpapery around the edges—retains a full measure of the requisite teenage *angst* so vital to street corner harmony. However, in an appearance here some two years ago, Chance displayed little passion for his music—he threw his set away, to put it bluntly. At Radio City, though, he came on and breathed not merely life but fire into the band's biggest hits, "Remember Then" and "Never," pacing nervously back and forth across the stage, bending over at times with one fist clenched, biting off the lyrics. The most honest and heartfelt moment of the night belonged to him when, after paying tribute to two deceased Earls, he offered a deliberate, controlled reading of the hymn of faith, "I Believe." It earned him the show's only standing ovation, and deservedly so.

Not that Piccone and Winfield didn't do their best. Piccone, the most personable of performers, offered a note-perfect rendition of "Little Boy Blue" and then soared through a triumphant rendering of "Little Star," a guaranteed crowd-pleaser which Piccone uses as an object lesson in the power of doo-wopp's nonsense words. Winfield, the preeminent ballad singer of his time, offered just that in the Harptones' set. The genre's Sinatra, Winfield's careful diction—sometimes slightly ahead of or just behind the beat, but usually right on it—has been highly influential (as the Winfield-style performances of nearly every singer on this bill proved) from the time of the group's first hit, "Sunday Kind of Love," in 1953. The Harptones' low-key turn gave Winfield ample apportunity to display his soothing style on a generous sampling of songs ranging from "Sunday Kind of Love" to "It's You," the latter from the group's 1982 LP, *Love Needs*, on the now-in-limbo (having been dropped by CBS) Ambient Sound label.

The Jive Five's set was the night's most puzzling. It was plenty good—there are few singers who can dominate a stage, both physically and vocally, as can Eugene Pitt—but something in the way of a personal edge was missing. Pitt certainly found the echo on "My True Story" (in which his marvelously understated reading of the lyric "she's a wonderful girl" conveys a universe of emotions—everything from pride to heartbreak—in a way that's common only to very gifted singers), "I'm A Happy Man" and "What Time Is It"; yet, one was left with the nagging feeling that Pitt was trying too hard to be just another member of the Jive Five, instead of asserting himself as the group's mealticket. When your singing is as powerful as Pitt's, maybe that, in and of itself, counts as rapport with the audience; nevertheless, on balance it seemed that by limiting himself to cursory introductions of the songs, Pitt—like Muhammad Ali playing rope-a-dope—diminished the impact of his performance.

Of Jimmy Beaumont and the Skyliners there is little to say. Beaumont still has a fine, strong tenor and sings "Since I Don't Have You" as well as ever, but there's a decided lack of soul in his performance; it's good supper club stuff now, and that's about it. Of the Teenagers it should be noted that Frankie Lymon is very dead, as is bass singer Sherman Garnes, and with them went the sound. Original members Herman Santiago (co-writer of "Why Do Fools Fall In Love?") and Jimmy Merchant try hard. So does vocalist Rosalynn Moorehead, who sings Lymon's parts but looks and moves like Chaka Khan. The Teenagers, in other words, are making a mockery of their history.

Still, the memory one took away from this show was that of an artist—Larry Chance—finding something of himself that perhaps even he didn't know existed anymore. It matters not that the Earls are unlikely to ever have a hit record again; what's important is that a human being recaptured his soul. This is the strange sort of thing that can happen when you go looking for an echo. ○

PHOTO: TONY DELAURO

Eugene Pitt of the Jive Five: Still the champ, but . . .

MARVIN GAYE COMES HOME

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for his achievement with *Midnight Love.* After it's read, there are calls for Marvin to speak, but someone else collects the scroll on his behalf.

But the presentations aren't over. CBS has some tokens of esteem of their own to unload—an impressive neon plaque, a couple of gold discs and a platinum one.

The latter is unexpected, and Gaye jumps onstage to join Larkin Arnold, the head of CBS' black music division who went to Belgium to sign Gaye. During Arnold's speech, Gaye stands shuffling and grinning; before he comes forward to accept the awards, he indiscreetly sticks his chewing gum behind the neon plaque. Gazing at the gold disc for "Sexual Healing," he makes reference to a question I'd asked him in our interview the day before.

"I was talking yesterday . . . as I guess I do every day . . . trying to help someone . . . *understand.* And they asked about my belief in God and all this sex business. I'll answer now as I did then, that perhaps in the past my consciousness was not all it should have been. But during the recording of this record I felt very close to my Maker and I see this as a means towards an end . . . towards serving Him.

"Now, before I start to make everybody cry . . . I haven't sung since the LP, so I don't know what shape God has kept my voice in . . . I'm going to sing 'The Lord's Prayer' a cappella as a way of saying thank you."

And standing there alone in this flashy L.A. nightclub, he lets out all the old fire and fervor. It's marvelous, sincere, soul-wrenching emotion transcending the setting and the mumbo-jumbo.

"PERHAPS IN THE PAST MY CONSCIOUSNESS WAS NOT ALL IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN."

PHOTO DARRYL PITT/RETNA LTD

Anna Gordy—Marvin's first wife and Motown boss Berry's sister—is one of several Gordys on the guest list. Their marriage ended in divorce and massive alimony payments, and provided the backdrop for Gaye's last three heart-rending albums on Motown. Their relationship is inextricably linked to sour memories and emotional hardships, but tonight Anna is an old friend, mother to his son and, along with a few others on hand, an old flame.

It's an odd scene, Marvin, Anna and Marvin Jr. having a family snapshot taken on the dance floor while *Midnight Lady* is cranked up to full volume. But then, we're talking about a guy who entered his own party through the back door.

MARVIN

Gaye was born in 1939 in Washington, D.C. and moved to Detroit in the early '60s. Through his friend Harvey Fuqua (of the Moonglows—he's also Gaye's brother-in-law and co-producer of *Midnight Love*), Gaye found employment at an independent label set up by an ambitious local entrepreneur named Berry Gordy.

Originally a session drummer, Gaye quickly became known as the Prince of Motown for the cool, confident style he exhibited on a run of hit singles throughout that decade. More than any other artist, his records reflected the progress of Motown: from the sparse R&B debut, "A Stubborn Kind of Fella," in 1962, to the haunting, sophisticated "I Heard It Through The Grapevine" in 1968.

In 1971, Gaye delivered his epochal LP, *What's Going On.* A song cycle of social and political import, it had an eerie, almost damned sound, and, though tempered with compassion and humility, it was a cry of despair over a land that had seemingly lost its way.

After *What's Going On,* he made the definitive album on sex, *Let's Get It On.* Subsequent albums for Motown concentrated on personal relationships, particularly those caused by the difficulties and traumas he was going through in his married life. And although he won't comment at length on the subject (adamantly insisting that Berry Gordy, Jr. is a lifelong friend and "a great man"), the '70s were also fraught with disputes between the artist and his label.

At the end of the decade, Gaye exiled himself to Europe. Estranged from wives and lovers, without a record company and bankrupt, he hit rock bottom. Eventually he extricated himself from Motown, and signed with CBS when the label agreed to solve his alimony and bankruptcy problems. He in turn promised to cut an LP that would satisfy both the company and the public. Hence, *Midnight Love.*

I met up with Gaye at the apartment of his manager, Marilyn Freeman (a middle-aged lady who'll tell you matter-of-factly how in her former job with Los Angeles school security she helped the police department solve nine murder cases). In a room lit only by flickering light from a television set, Gaye talked for 90 minutes about sex, soul, spirituality, the Motown years and *Midnight Love.* Relaxed and thoughtful, he sounded at times like a deity, but some of his cosmic wind-ups were obviously tongue-in-cheek. He was also intelligent and humorous, carefully selecting his words and punctuating many of his answers with a broad grin or a hearty laugh. He may or may not have been stoned; I don't think it would have made much difference.

Only one topic was off-limits. I was warned beforehand not to mention Tammi Terrell, with whom Gaye virtually invented the modern soul duet form in the late '60s. Terrell collapsed in Gaye's arms onstage in 1967, and died three years later of brain damage. Rumors—none accusing Gaye—persist that Terrell's condition resulted from repeated blows to the head. "Marvin's on a high at the moment," I was advised, "and that sort of talk brings him down."

Why did you record *Midnight Love* in Belgium? Was it to get away from the L.A. environment?

I had no pre-plans to record in Belgium; I just happened to go there in the course of finding myself again. Of course as an artist I must have gotten great input from European music and I'm sure my album reflects that influence.

On the album, you make ample and imaginative use of synthesizers. Going in, though, did you have an instinctive mistrust of the coldness of the new technology?

No, I take chances. I like synthesizers; I've been fooling with them for years, and I've finally cut a synthesized album. I get bored. If my last album was successful, should I come out with another just like it? If I do that I'm a slave to the industry, and I refuse to be that.

But it's a very commercial record; much more so than your last three LPs.

Well, frankly at this point in time it looks like it's more commercial than my last *five* LPs, which haven't exactly been blockbusters.

I'm very happy to be with CBS and they helped me through a difficult period; I like to make people happy who have been nice to me.

Y'see I'm not an artist who can't do; I'm an artist who can do and will do according to his circumstance. As far as being commercial and knowing what being commercial is about, that is not necessarily my interest. I feel I don't mind making a highly commercial record as my debut for CBS, and that's what I hope this record is.

It must be tremendously satisfying achievement, since you not only wrote most of the songs, but also played almost all of the instruments yourself.

In a way it is, but I'm still not extremely happy with my musicianship. Hopefully this LP will provide a base and I'll be able to improve on it from there. My musicianship is something I hold very dear and I rarely display it onstage because I don't always want to share it with thousands of people. I love my music and I have to keep a grip on it. I

"I'M EXPRESSING ALL SIDES OF LIFE. I SHOULD DUCK SEX? I'M AN ARTIST, MAN, I'M NOT DUCKING SEX."

PHOTO ANDY FREIBERG/RETNA LTD

don't use it as an integral part of my act because I'm interested in getting to the emotions of the people, and I don't think my musicianship is profound enough to do that. So I'd much rather use my other talents to that end.

There's a dedication to Judge Mednick on the back sleeve of the LP. Did he help free you from Motown?

No. From bankruptcy.

How did you become bankrupt?

Well, I'm sure much richer men than me have gone bankrupt. The reasons are many and all quite different—emotional and financial reasons . . . it's not a simple thing to understand. I've been bankrupt before and if I'm bankrupt again I'll deal with it again. It's not really about money with me.

How did you waste your money? Was it mostly women and drugs?

That was a tall part of it.

Did you gamble much?

Yes, I've been a habitual gambler in my time, about ten or twelve years ago.

Was it part of your lifestyle or was it done out of depression?

(Laughs) No, I don't think it was done out of depression. I think anything I do is done out of my lust for life, my curiosity and my dedication as an artist. I should live to the depths of depravity and I shall rise to the heights of spirituality. There is no other way I could become a fine artist, my friend.

The position you're in now must be a lot different from when you were part of the Motown machine, particularly in the '60s. There must have been tremendous pressure to churn out hit after hit after hit.

It was a tremendous pressure because the business is tremendously competitive—especially on the chitlin' circuit, which is what we're now talking about, if you don't mind me saying so, because blacks were not permitted to evolve to popdom.

So as a chitlin' circuit artist it's most essential that you continue to churn out hit after hit or you don't work. You're only as good as your last record. There is very little chance of acquiring any major security as a performer. On the chitlin' circuit you must have a broad cross-section of fans or you don't survive.

Did that make you bitter, being at the top of your profession but still working under that sort of pressure?

Let's say that not having a full understanding of my business at an early age when Motown was still young, it didn't really matter. I would have paid *them* to let me perform. Although I look back on it with a certain degree of bitterness because I see how seriously I've been screwed, it's okay. It's all a means towards an end as I understand my purpose at this point.

You never sound vindictive.

Vindictive? It doesn't get one a lot back, you know. But certainly I've felt vindictive and I still feel vindictively and I certainly wish that those who have stepped on me will be punished. But a great measure of my satisfaction is that I have overcome many obstacles at this point and I have emerged rather victorious today. So I feel I have enough control to feel vindictive and turn the other cheek.

When you recorded "What's Going On" it was very relevant to the times. In the wake of Reagan and Thatcher it seems even more relevant now. Would you ever think of returning to that sort of record again?

One has to be very careful in dealing with politics and other highly controversial topics, when one tends to do something creative and conceptual. I don't have any plans to do anything of a highly political nature in the near future. I shall do something of a social nature without politics involved—in the sense of a prophet, or a messenger perhaps. That way people can believe or take out of it what they want.

I don't intend to get involved with a whole bunch of crazy people who feel that I'm threatening them and their wealth and their greed and so on. I'd just as soon leave them alone and go for those that can be saved. I'm not really interested in politics or governments or the way this world is constructed. I think it's an abomination.

I'm even more appalled now than when I recorded "What's Going On"; things have gotten worse and they'll continue to get worse. If one isn't careful one can become a bit apathetic when one knows the truth.

Which of your records gives you the most pleasure?

I don't make records for pleasure. I did when I was a younger artist, but I don't today. I record so that I can feed people what they need, what they feel. Hopefully, I record so that I can help someone overcome a bad time or so they can sense that I care through my lyrics or through my music. That's what is important.

I read once that you felt out of place in the early days compared to the likes of James Brown and Jackie Wilson who had very dynamic stage acts.

The reason I made that statement was because when I started on the chitlin' circuit it was paramount that you were very animated if you were going to become a big star. I've never been a very good dancer, in spite of popular belief. The thing is, I'm not especially an entertainer—I'm an artist *and* an entertainer, but the two are completely different. With one I'm extremely happy and joyful and at peace, and with the other I'm frankly out of my element. Although I do it okay, I do it nicely and everything, it's not where I get my biggest kick.

How do you reconcile the two?

Well, I try to be a creative artist and a creative person. For instance, I try to be creative in my personal appearance. One has to separate the two so that when he's onstage he gives the audience the feeling that he's not simply a mercenary entertainer but that he has some depth, some profundity. All the things you need to be a legitimate artist, and that legitimacy is paramount with me.

After being schooled in Motown's corporate approach to recording and touring, was it hard to step out and establish your individuality with "What's Going On"?

If I answer that definitively I run the risk of becoming facetious. In fact, I'm not responsible; that is my attitude. I know nothing about this business, my friend, I am just an artist and I don't plan, although I have a very good understanding of the business. After 25 years one should have. I'm not going to take any credit for any superior genius or any great talent and all that kind of nonsense. There's so much that goes along with being successful—destiny, fate, prophecy or whatever you might call it. I do not take credit for being incredible or anything. I'm led. I feel. And I'm honest.

Honesty is one of my greatest and most horrible virtues. Most of my troubles have been due to my honesty, but I've no reason not to be honest. Besides, I have a certain degree of humility, which is a rarity in this business. I'm intense, but I'm fairly humble; I'm egotistical, but I need it to be what I am. Hopefully I don't use it in a dangerous or derogatory way.

What can I tell you? I'm guided; I feel very spiritual, blessed sometimes. The records I've recorded I feel are leading towards something that will probably be my purpose for being.

You seem to move around quite a bit.

I'm a gypsy. It's my job. Why should I just stay here? I'm concerned with humanity and my heart is big enough, and my empathy is big enough, to know it is not my job to stay in one place. It is my job to go everywhere and to pick up and sense and report it through my music. I have no home. The Earth is my home, at this time. I don't want to be here. I'll live here until I'm not here anymore, until I don't have to be here, however many times I must incarnate. But I still don't feel good here.

You've been here before?

Of course. I don't know as what, but that's a whole other topic. If we were to talk about it in depth I could probably give you a good indication as to what as—I know through my fears and my feelings of *deja vu.*

On the one hand you sing about God and the end of the world; on the other you sing about sex and drugs. Is there a dichotomy in your work, or are the two somehow compatible?

I think the word you're looking for is *hypocrisy.* I shall explain that to you. No, I'm not a hypocrite. What I'm actually saying is that I'm as far from being a hypocrite as I can possibly be. I'm being extremely honest; I'm expressing all sides of life, be it spiritual, emotional or material. I should duck sex? I'm an artist, man, I'm not ducking sex.

Are you a Christian?

The definition of a Christian is

Marvin Gaye

someone who believes in Jesus Christ; an even more accurate definition of a Christian is a person who is a follower of Christ, and that entails doing the things that Christ did. So I'd have to think, do I do the things that Christ did? And I'd come up pretty bad on that score. I'd make a fair score, but it wouldn't be too high. I still consider myself a Christian because I believe in and love Jesus Christ. I'm not a fully evolved Christian at this point, but we're working on it.

What sort of minister was your father?

My father was a Pentecostal-and-fire type. We're rootsy, our blackness and our spirituality is of a very real and nonpretentious type. I rather like that.

Does the religion of your childhood still hold sway over you?

If you're speaking of institutionalized religion, no. I find it a bore, hypocritical and a waste of time. My God is inside me, as is everyone's. I need only turn there to be with him. I don't go to a church with a lot of gold and diamonds in it that could be used to feed poor starving people all over the world. I don't have a lot of respect for institutionalized religion.

Do you have arguments with your God?

No. I have permission, *carte blanche,* because I'm an artist.

That's a proviso he has written into His heavenly contract, is it?

I'm pretty sure that's for anyone who is an artist. It's very difficult to recognize an artist; one must be rather intelligent to know an artist, a true artist.

In interviews you've done in the past you've talked a lot about spirituality and prophecy. But your new album doesn't deal with any of these topics. Was that a case of you thinking, if it's going to happen it will and there's nothing you can do about it?

Not at all, my friend. I spend a lot of my spare time investigating the meaning of life and it's something all human beings should spend a lot of their spare time investigating. It has to be the most troublesome question in the mind of human beings; to duck it is serious.

Do you have a recurring dream?

Not now, but when I was younger I used to dream I was singing before millions of people, a sea of people, and through my performing there came a proclamation and it proclaimed me to be the greatest singer in the world.

I don't know what that means; it certainly doesn't sound very humble or anything. Sorry, but I'm just telling you the truth.

Are you disillusioned with the way black music progressed through the second half of the '70s?

Disillusioned? I'm rarely disillusioned. I spent periods of disillusionment during my last three years in Europe. I don't imagine that I'll have to deal with that for another few years, but I'm preparing for it because eventually it will probably happen to me again.

But in the '60s performers like James Brown and Otis Redding offered strength and spiritual inspiration, whereas today the trend—with Rick James and George Clinton—is to revel in decadence. Is that a bad thing?

No, I don't think it's a bad thing at all; it's simply prophecy. All you have to do is study Revelations or talk with a few psychics and you can see—even the change between the '60s and now—that it's the way the world is going, and you can certainly sense that we're heading towards something rather horrible. It's simply a reflection of the times, my friend. And things will get worse, you'll hear things on records and see things on the tube that you never thought you'd see. It's inevitable; it's prophecy, and it shall come to pass. It's supposed to be.

You once said that music was God, but much of your music seems to celebrate the joy, togetherness and release of sex. Is that God's greatest gift?

No, not especially. Sex is . . . mmmm . . . sex. I'd prefer to say the act of creation was the greatest gift that God gave us; sex is a continuation of that, a continuation that wasn't meant to be.

I think if you listen closer you'll find a spiritual connotation in all of my songs, even the ones that appear to be highly sexual. There's nothing wrong with sex, but nowadays one has to be very careful with herpes and all that. And there's reasons for that.

God is very interesting. He and mother nature have it together, and they know how to cut down on all this madness down here: simply send the little herpes bug. (Laughs)

Sex is okay as long as certain morals, honor and principles are adhered to. It's how one gauges it, not the act itself, that is the problem.

Do you listen to much music?

I never have. I do today, but I never used to. I was so egotistical as a young performer that I didn't want to feel that I had been influenced by other people. I'm listening to music nowadays, because it's important that I get the feel of what people want to hear because I want to be commercial.

How big a setback would it have been if *Midnight Love* were unsuccessful?

I'd probably have retired. I would have felt my run was over. I'm a timing specialist and I would have seen that as an indication that I was through. But with its success I've been given a great indication that I've still got it and it gives me more energy and desire to strive for greatness—wherever or whatever that greatness might be.

"Sexual Healing" is number one in many places and I know there would have been a time when that fact would have made me overjoyed from an egotistical point of view. But that's not enough anymore. I'm overjoyed because I see the record and the album as a means towards an end. It's a means of getting proper exposure and with proper exposure I can deliver my proper message.

So you don't actually think your new work is the business?

Oh, I worked very hard. I love it. It's my all. But when it's gone I can't keep it anymore. It belongs to the world now. It's not mine; it's only mine before I release it. And once it's gone, like a mother bird who pushes her baby out of the nest, I give it up.

Are you a happy man?

No.

Sad?

Yes.

Even on this new LP where the songs seem so joyful?

I have my own inimitable style, and in that respect I try to do good music; music that has feeling, hope and meaning—all the things people are looking for. It pleases me that my music receives different kinds of connotations, that people feel differently about it because of their intelligence, their evolvement or their spirituality.

I'm sad because I'm schizophrenic, torn between many passions, desires and lovers. I'm sad because I know the bottom line, I know what is going to happen to this world. It saddens me that I have to condescend in order to be heard. ○

> **"...anything I do is done out of my lust for life, my curiosity and my dedication as an artist. I should live to the depths of depravity and I shall rise to the heights of spirituality. There is no other way I could become a fine artist..."**

Duran Duran

Continued from page 1

Earth," spent two weeks in the *New Musical Express* Top 30, reaching as high as Number 12 before sales tapered off. It defined a sound that had Giorgio Moroder influences, but recalled numerous others, including Japan's seminal rock disco single, "Life In Tokyo," Bowie, Chic, the Yellow Magic Orchestra, George Benson and more Bowie. But none were so, or are so, prominent as to obscure the band's infectious filigree, distinctive for its *menage a trois* of full contact guitar, throbbing electro-beat and well-structured dynamics. Lyrically, Duran Duran are perfect dream merchants, mixing media and metaphysics for amusing, hook-laden results.

"Within the band there are really only two unanimous influences and those are Roxy Music and The Beatles," contends Rhodes. "The former because of their sophisticated approach and the latter because they wrote great pop melodies." But whatever it sounded like, "Planet Earth" 's "ba-ba-baba" chorus ("Happy Together" anyone?) earned Duran Duran a number twelve spot on the tough *New Musical Express* chart in mid-1981, multi-platinum sales for their self-titled debut album, instant stardom (they've been hailed as the "Fab Five" by British papers, and have legions of screaming young female fans dogging their every move) and, despite their protests, a drafting into the front ranks of the New Romantic army.

In retrospect, it was a small annoyance and a relatively insignificant bit of miscasting. Duran Duran has long outshone and outlived that party's caked makeup and draped capes. "We wear clothes that we like to wear," declares Rhodes. "I'm fashionable, but Andy wears denims and Simon doesn't care for anything that doesn't feel right. Back then, it was a label that was naturally applied to people who made dance music and dressed well." The mistake made by the press in that episode was wrongly diagnosing Duran Duran as victims of fashion rather than doctors of style constantly checking their aesthetic pulse against that of the great unwashed.

On these shores, however, Duran's breakthrough was considerably more difficult. "Without getting into specific figures, let's say the first album sold moderately well and more than enough to convince us the band had potential," says Capitol's vice-president of marketing, Walter Lee. Enough to keep "working the record" when "Hungry Like The Wolf" barely dented the charts upon release last June and *Rio* was hunkered down in the 140-150 range on the Album Chart right through Thanksgiving, when it started to show signs of life.

The answer, though, was not radio, not even a booster EP, *Carnival* (containing remixed versions of "Hungry Like The Wolf," "Girls On Film," "Hold Back The Rain" and "My Own Way") released last fall in hopes of rekindling interest in *Rio*. The answer was television, particularly MTV, with its link to an estimated eight million homes in the United States, and its unquenchable thirst for video product from anyone and everyone. "We never looked at video purely as a promotional device," states Rhodes. "To us it's a complex expression and our videos are no less valid a presentation of Duran Duran than the accompanying music. Of course they're good for exposure, especially on MTV and British TV shows which can't get the real thing."

Yet the video ploy almost backfired—at least as a business venture—when a video released to accompany the single "Girls On Film," from Duran's first album, was promptly banned from U.K. TV for its soft-core exploitation of women. (MTV, too, has refused to program "Girls On Film.") High fashion models, shot in various stages of undress, were seen mud wrestling, among other activities; one was shown having an ice cube applied to the nipple of a breast. Titillation or trash, the video was an understandably hot item in the clubs and established a, uh, firm reputation for Duran Duran. Though the video for "Hungry Like The Wolf" also includes a mud wrestling scene (quips Rhodes: "I think the five of us and nobody else make for fairly boring viewing"), it was made safe for TV, and MTV was onto it long before radio woke up to the music.

> **"In England there are very few bands which are known or recognized to the man. But everybody knows all of Duran Duran. We have five individual looks. We all get stopped on the street. We're proud of that."**

Shot on exotic but not, according to Rhodes, "excrutiatingly expensive" Sri Lanka; directed by Russell Mulcahy in glorious 35 mm; and staged as a high adventure a la *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, "Hungry" makes the competition look like etch-a-sketch. Capitol's Lee is now calling Duran Duran and the Stray Cats the first bands to "break" via video.

Radio's retrieval of Duran Duran last winter was more reaction than action on the part of programmers. The band got a little lucky, too, when Capitol took the Berrow brothers' advice and released a revised "Hungry," which had been remixed by producer David Kershenbaum to play harder for AOR, at a time when radio was beginning to make something approaching a commitment to new music, and heavy metal-oriented rockers were re-thinking their strategies after suffering losses in the fall ratings.

A subtle image change didn't hurt either. Tagged early in their career as New Romantics, a death sentence the quintet eventually talked its way out of, these kings of the U.K. teenybopper scene were felt by Capitol execs to be "too young" in appearance for the U.S. market. Again, on the advice of the Berrows, new, more casually posed band photos were shot in hopes of appealing to the more machismo AOR programmers.

And when *Rio* moved 120 spots in five weeks and the single was superbulleting in the teens, Capitol's commitment seemed well-placed. Still, it's been a costly go. But *Rio*'s logged, as of this writing, 40 weeks on the charts and is approaching the million mark in sales. There is a light at the end of the financial tunnel, albeit a faint one. Which of course is a bottom line the band professes little interest in. "So what if we lose money?" shrugs Rhodes. "Sure it's nice to have at the end of the day, but as a group, we really enjoy playing. We enjoy the reaction. Nothing will ever replace the excitement of being a few feet away from your audience. They need it as much as we do. It reinforces a relationship. It reinforces our image. You go to England and there are very few bands which are known or recognized to the man. There are too many fads, too many one-hit bands that can't get past their glossies, especially in groups that come out of London. But everybody knows all of Duran Duran. We have five individual looks. We all get stopped on the street. We're proud of that."

As for the future, the would-be Fab Five has already recorded a new single, "Is There Something I Should Know," with newcomer Ian Little behind the board in place of Colin Thurston. Rhodes calls the single "the best thing we've ever done," naturally, and adds that the musicians might try out a couple more producers before committing to one for their third album. The music, however, will remain "simple and solid.

"That's the way we think," Rhodes explains. "I just can't go out and get into a trendy influence, like that Indian percussion, just because it's the rage this week. So many bands have, in the wake of synthetic sound, lost sight of writing a proper song. Bands like Yazoo or whatever are too riff-oriented. We're still very into using guitars and standard instrumentation.

"When it clicks," he concludes, "there's a mutual, instant gratification for everybody involved."

Well, maybe not so instant. ○

RIC OCASEK'S HUNGRY HEART

BY DAVID GANS

OAKLAND, CA.

FROM the first sounds heard on his first solo album *Beatitude*—machines calling the name of his keynote protagonist, "Jimmy Jimmy"—Ric Ocasek's fear of/for the human race in these dehumanizing times is established as a major theme of his work and the driving force behind this uneasy man's uneasy musical quest. The men and machines sing together throughout *Beatitude,* from the subtly inserted descant "America" in "Jimmy Jimmy" to the drunk-with-anticipation boys and vocoders in the majestically horny "I Can't Wait."

The slightly mysterious guitarist/vocalist, co-founder and sole songwriter of the Cars, is tall and entirely too gaunt and wraithlike to be very appealing to the eye from a distance. He sports a head of thick black hair which rises like a rather ill-fitting helmet above his narrow face and sweeps back behind a sizable pair of ears. He's all elbows and Adam's apple but up close his hard appearance is warmed by kindly eyes, a generous smile and an exceedingly soft-spoken manner.

It's tempting to presume that since Ocasek is a shy and awkward looking man, his alienated and hungry-hearted songs come straight from his own life. But what songs are about is one question and what they're *for* is another. When dealing with an inquisitive musical intellect such as Ocasek's, you can never be entirely sure that his lyrics aren't aimed at the concerns of the audience he intends to reach rather than some internal demons of his own. Or maybe they're just convenient syllables to stretch across the musical constructions which are the real object of his explorations.

Still, even if the lyrics are casually tossed off, what one chooses to write about—disavowals of personal intent notwithstanding—is often a valid window on the author's subconscious. Neil Young explains that good art, honestly conceived and presented, will yield different meanings to each person who examines it. Each of us forms a picture of the artist out of what we see in his creations—not in his own context, though, but through our own knowledge and emotions. Therefore, though it's easy to draw conclusions about Ric Ocasek from the words and music on *Beatitude,* it's also a little unfair.

"These are bio questions," Ocasek chides gently when I attempt to fill in a little about his personal history. Yes, they are, but Ocasek's Geffen Records bio tells nothing about his background. He has been married since 1972 and has two children, but "I don't really like to print anything about them, because my kids have to go to school here. I try to keep my family separate, so I don't say much about it." Ocasek never raises his voice—he may be the most imperturbable man in rock—but he keeps his private truths to himself and at the same time lets you know that they're going to stay private.

"Mid-30s" is about as specific as anyone will get about Ocasek's age, but I suspect that he's in the upper 30s, at least. He's old enough to remember a Beat-era poetry pamphlet called *Beatitude* from which he took the name of his album. "Without knowing what the word meant, I thought it meant the attitude of the Beat poet," Ocasek recalls. "Beat attitude." But he went to Catholic schools; didn't he learn about the beatitudes there? "Well, that's funny, 'cause the Catholic religion doesn't go by the Bible. They seldom follow it and they never talk about it. In the first grade you learn about the Ten Commandments and then you live in fear from that day on."

Ocasek is a loner from way back. Photography was his escape for a few of his teenage years, and then when he was 16, after his family moved to Cleveland from his native Baltimore he immersed himself in the exquisitely logical world of electronics. He built a powerful transmitter and earned a first-class broadcast license, allowing him to remain invisible while talking with other invisible people. During an aborted college career he rediscovered music (he'd played guitar for awhile at a very early age). It would be facile to say that Ocasek's electronic bent accounts for the mechanical flavor which gives rise to frequent accusations that the Cars' music is soulless and artificial. "Aah, they just say that 'cause we're tight," Ocasek snaps. Then he chuckles briefly. But electronics is really not a bad metaphor for a creative process such as songwriting. Careful calculation and attention to detail are all in service of a net effect: a circuit is designed to turn on a particular light in a certain place or to send your voice to Paris while you remain safe in your basement. Painstaking attention to components and sub-systems reflects a consciousness of the interlocking nature of whole systems such as radios, pop songs and civilizations.

Ocasek's music is sonically and rhythmically exploratory, lyrically expressive, darkly humorous at times (but always dark) and ruefully and ironically romantic. Many of his songs have tandem rhythmic pulses, like the Earth turning many times within the grander sweep of its orbit around the sun. This clockwork aspect gives Ocasek's singing a heightened humanity, as though he pictures himself in a landscape of mechanical things, searching for that "other soul who sees into (his) own," to borrow a phrase from Jackson Browne.

There's a conceptual counterpoint in Ocasek's music. It's evident in "Sneak Attack," in which he sings buoyantly, about the new brand of high-tech warfare that is soon to afflict our planet. " 'Sneak Attack' is just a parody of the computer world and satellites," he explains. "It's about when both countries put satellites up in the ionosphere and use them for triggering their missile things. The USA sends up a code, and then Russia tries to scramble the code by sending up a different one. It's a war on this little ball out in space—a cold, computer war that's constantly being updated and changed. That rinky-dink melody makes it sound almost like a happy song."

Once he explains it, the song's irony is clear. Barring that, though, isn't it likely that the humorous intent of Ocasek's song might bypass the listener, even one with an ear tuned to the speaker, or an eye to the lyric sheet? "A lot of people tell me that," he laughs. "But jeez, you know, that's okay. People are always trying to make whatever you write fit into their reality." Again, the Cheshire giraffe fades away leaving only a helmet of black hair suspended in space where the artist once was sitting: "Lyrics are a personal thing. It's a lot harder to make something accessible to a lot of people than it is to a few guys with stilettoes on the corner."

"I live in a world of night screams and rainbows," he sings again and again at the end of "Time Bomb," a phrase that pretty well describes the infra, the ultra, and all that lies between, saying what a perfect paradox life is. His litany of irreconcilable coexistences—"Lonely hearts and dispassionate pigs," "wasted envy and beatitudes"—is punctuated here and there by the phrase, "and I'm sitting on a time bomb." What isn't clear is whether the bomb is the planet itself or this one tortured narrator who sees the desperation in a situation others take for granted.

On *Beatitude,* Ocasek sometimes seems so terrified of his own perceptions, so protective of his frightful urges, that in order to sing, he has to pull the words out of himself in bursts of menacingly mild vocalizations that sound like a cross between Norman Bates and the Elephant Man. There's no lack of soul here; it's just trapped in a cold, hard context.

"Jimmy Jimmy" is a portrait of a youth who sees nothing in his future and can't be bothered to stimulate his own mind to save it from entropy. The boy lacks the imagination to look beyond the video screen and outside his basement room. "It's an attitude I had when I was a teenager," Ocasek says, "and it's an attitude that a lot of people who aren't even teenagers have right now.

"I see people getting less and less motivated to want to do anything, because they're so afraid of . . . I don't know what they're afraid of—technology, maybe, or advancement." To borrow the title of one of his own songs, maybe these people don't have "Something To Grab For." "That's what I think—that hardly anybody does. Maybe I'm in a privileged position, but the fact is that I made up my mind to do a particular thing, and even though it wasn't always successful, it was successful to me personally because I was doing what I wanted."

Ocasek suggests that people began to lose their inspiration when their jobs stopped meaning anything to them "and the only thing they really loved was their hobbies. Hobbies can be your life's work, you know, and your work can be your hobby. I don't know all that well that everybody wants one—it's always going to be that some people really don't want to do anything and just want to go along."

If Ocasek used to be Jimmy Jimmy, he certainly isn't now. His hobby is his work is his hobby. How can one fathom the depth of his attraction to this business of pulling music out of thin air by use of a spaceship's worth of knobs, dials and magnets? "I'm not too much on vacations, and I don't follow sports," he says. "All my waking hours I'm either reading or writing or putting stuff on tape." Most of *Beatitude* was recorded at home in his eight-track studio—much of it without the aid of human beings, only machines. Ocasek transferred some of his home recordings onto 24-track and overdubbed them at Syncro Sound, the Boston studio which the Cars bought and renovated for their own use and for the band members to work with other musicians.

Roy Thomas Baker, who produced all four Cars albums, will not be working on the next one. And while Ocasek's own production chops are well-honed, he says he will not produce the Cars' fifth. "I'd just have to be in the control room and the studio at the same time," he says. "I took a lot of responsibility on my own record, but I'm a lot looser with my stuff. Some of my favorite tapes are ones that I did at home. They have a certain feel to them that's hard to re-do, and that's why I used a lot of eight-track stuff on this record."

Using another producer on the Cars' next album will enable Ocasek to study methods different from his own. "I'd be interested to learn what other producers do with sound, what kind of tricks they use," he says. "I spend a lot of time in the studio, and I have my own way of doing things. It's always interesting to me on a technical level to see how somebody can make things sound a certain way—how they get a certain vocal sound, or how they use echo, which is very complex these days with all the digital echoes and everything. I could produce the Cars, but I'd just as soon learn from somebody else what's going on—and have that other ear there."

Ocasek doesn't trouble himself with music theory, a fact I discovered when I pointed out a similarity in the bass lines between "Jimmy Jimmy" and the Cars' "Shake It Up," referring to the chord roots by their numbers. "You can say, 'sixth, flat-seventh,' to me and I don't even know what the fuck you're talking about," he responds. "I don't have any musical background at all." Ocasek says that knowledge of musical fundamentals can be limiting. "I don't know where I'm going, so I have nothing to lose by going anywhere. I just go by what I feel sounds interesting."

Ocasek adds that "it's almost impossible for me to jam with people." He has no trouble communicating his musical ideas, though, because "I can usually play what I need to have people play, to a certain point. And sometimes things come from being a complete fool, putting down whatever I think should be, not knowing whether it's musically correct or not."

Greg Hawkes and Elliott Easton, respectively the Cars' keyboardist and guitarist, are both formally trained musicians. "Sometimes I see them get inhibited by it," says Ocasek. "For instance, Elliott will sometimes say, 'I shouldn't do this scale here.' But sometimes I think, 'Well, fuck that. What about this rhythm? What about this line? What about this alternative? Didn't you ever completely void that crap?' "

This seems like a good place to bring up the inevitable question, the one that follows the release of a solo album like Cap Weinberger follows Bechtel stock: Is Ric Ocasek leaving the band? Is he going to park the Cars and walk on alone?

No, he's not. And besides, it's an irrelevant question. At this point in

He keeps his pri

OR, WHAT KEY IS THIS CAR IN?)

truths to himself and lets you know that they're going to stay private.

PHOTO: NORMAN SEEFF

their multi-platinum careers, Cars can afford vacations—from the Cars, if not entirely from music. "Greg just finished a record of instrumentals," Ocasek points out, "and other people have been in the studio producing acts." When they return to their common pursuit, everyone will have some fresh perspectives to offer.

For Ocasek, "vacation" means being able to record his music without the compromises and constraints that a band entails. Instead of taking what Easton offers for a guitar line on a given song (not that the southpaw's range is narrow), he can give each song exactly what it demands even if it's no guitar at all. He can use a drum machine instead of David Robinson—which he did on several of *Beatitude*'s tracks—or he can try a different human drummer. In the Cars, Ocasek *has* to write for five pieces—and no matter how good they are it's still them, and their sensibilities must be taken into account. Working solo means Ocasek doesn't have to filter his ideas through any partners.

Besides, he says, "I really respect every member of the band for what they're able to do. I love Elliott's guitar playing and Greg's keyboard playing. The lines that they come up with, their sense of humor, and their general outlook on music." And anyway, Ocasek still gets plenty of *auteur* jollies within and without the Cars. "I write all the songs (except a few he co-authors with Hawkes). It's not like I'm always adamant about using a line that I heard exactly or whatever—it's usually just a directional thing. If I've already done a song on tape and the part sounds good, they may just want to do it technically better."

Still, "The Cars will always sound like the Cars, no matter what kind of songs they do—one-chord babbling things or heavily-constructed pop songs. The sound of the Cars is personalities and styles of the people involved." So there will always be material that Ocasek will want to do himself, and that has nothing to do with his feelings about being a Car.

When Ocasek isn't making music for himself or the Cars, he brouses in "alternative" record stores and goes to clubs in search of interesting bands—and brings some of them into Syncro Sound to record. *Never Say Never,* the EP Ocasek produced for San Francisco-based Romeo Void is one of his more successful projects: it led to the band's signing with Columbia Records, but that certainly wasn't Ocasek's objective. He isn't like some kind of new wave godfather bestowing largesse on commercially promising acts in hopes of profiting down the line. "I do it because I love music, and for the advancement of it. I don't want to turn on the radio and hear the same old crap any more than you do.

"No established producer would want to touch a lot of the bands I work with because they're not being paid for by a record company and they're not like the big push of the month," he asserts. "I guess since I don't have to worry about making my living on production I just do it because it's inspirational."

And educational. Ocasek asked some of the musicians he'd heard around Boston and New York to contribute to *Beatitude.* Some of them had previous recording experience, and some didn't, he says. "They were just people that I knew about and thought were real good. Oftentimes I would bring people in and just play them the basic track and let them put on what they felt was right for it. Then I would bring in somebody else and do the same thing, and I decided at the end which parts I wanted to use." It was never a question of telling anybody what to play. "If I did that then I would already know what it's going to sound like and I could use anybody.

"For instance, I use Roger Greenawalt (of the Dark, a Boston band whose EP, *Darkworld,* Ocasek produced) because he's not only a great guitar player, but most of the sounds he got were made with effects that were broken. He had one setup with a broken cord and some sort of broken effect box so that when he played his guitar he could just hold a note and use his tone control to make the pitch change. The stuff he did on 'Sneak Attack' doesn't really sound like a guitar to me—it sounds like some other instrument. And then there were other people who had certain other things—maybe a style of playing that they had settled with and were good at."

It's an interesting dichotomy: Ocasek is the ultimate egalitarian in that he gave each of several musicians the identical rough mix of a song and allowed each to develop his own approach to the part—but then, the ultimate controller, *he* chose what to keep and what to discard. This is Neil Young *cum* Steely Dan, extremes of control and chaos. And whether it's by design or not, Ocasek's experimentation and constant search for new approaches has helped to bring new technologies and off-the-wall attitudes into the main stream. That's the advantage of having achieved overground success without losing touch with the underground.

Ocasek recently finished projects with Suicide's kinky vocalist Alan Vega and the Washington band Bad Brains (from whom he borrowed bassist Darryl Jenifer for five of *Beatitude*'s ten cuts), both of which will be released by national record companies but were taken on by Ocasek for other than commercial reasons—and neither of which has much in common with the civilized sound of the Cars. Vega has "no concern whatsoever for any kind of mass appeal," says Ocasek. "There's no way the American public is ever going to get it. It's really not for their taste—it's too good."

Ocasek's attitude towards the public is a bit more complex—and far less elitist—than his remarks indicate. Though the beneficiary of considerable good will in the marketplace, Ocasek neither embraces mass popular taste nor really understands it.

"Baudelaire said that the public are like dogs," Ocasek notes. "You can walk up to a dog and offer him a smell of some exotic perfume, and he'll jerk his head away, but if you walk up to him with a pile of shit he'll not only smell it, but he'll probably eat it."

When he says Alan Vega "just does whatever he feels like doing," there's admiration in his tone of voice, as well as respect. But hasn't Ocasek learned simply to follow his muse, all else be damned?

"It's not that I don't do whatever I feel like doing," is his answer. "It just so happens that what I do is more accepted on a mass level.

"And you know," he adds thoughtfully, "that's not really the way I predicted it would be." ○

Audio

Digital Delays: Just The Facts

By Craig Anderton

The repeating echoes on the guitar solo in Blue Oyster Cult's "Veteran of the Psychic Wars"; the slapback echo, a crucial component of the rockabilly sound, that's heard throughout Marshall Crenshaw's debut album; Andy Summers' chorused guitar on the Police hit, "De Do Do Do, De Da Da Da"; and the guitar in the opening bars of the Cars' "Panorama." All are prominent examples of digital time delays, the music industry's hottest special effect, at work. These versatile devices can delay an audio signal anywhere from approximately $^1/_{1000}$ of a second (a *millisecond*, or *ms* for short) up to several seconds. Thanks to advances in digital computer technology—on which digital delays depend—prices have dropped, performance has improved, and new devices are being introduced seemingly on a weekly basis. In fact, there are so many delays available that trying to decide which one is right for a given studio or stage setup can be most confusing. While your ears and budget will be the final judge, the following background information will come in very handy when you begin your shopping.

Delay Time

Different delay times create different effects. From 1 ms to about 15 ms, combining delayed and straight sounds produces *flanging* (a jet-airplane like sound which imparts a feeling of motion). Stretch that out to 20 or 25 ms and the sound becomes thicker, almost as if you had a chorus of instruments rather than a single instrument (this effect is called *chorusing*). Delays from 30 to 100 ms give *slapback* echo, a tight repeat which is a staple effect on most rockabilly records. Past 100 ms you'll hear longer echoes which resemble the sounds you'd expect from a traditional echo unit. Delays exceeding a second or two are useful for special effects and "Frippertronic" music.

Generally, the longer the maximum delay, the higher the cost of the device. For flanging, chorusing, and tight echo effects, several products deliver reasonably long delays yet list for under $500. Longer delays require more bucks, but if your budget is tight, look for a unit with a memory expansion option. This lets you extend the maximum available delay time at a later date (you send the unit back to the factory, where they plug in more memory chips).

Bandwidth

The better the high frequency response (bandwidth), the brighter the sound. A unit with a 15 kHz or greater bandwidth will give excellent sound quality with virtually any signal source, including instruments with lots of treble (cymbals, maracas, etc.). Unfortunately, attaining good high frequency response is costly, and the response of a budget delay often poops out around 8 to 10 kHz. However, since instruments such as guitar and voice have little high frequency energy anyway, the sound quality will still be more than acceptable with many instruments.

The Korg SDD-3000 Programmable Digital Delay offers a wide range of effects including chorus, flanging, doubling, reverb, doppler effects, infinite repeat and others. $1495.00.

Sweep Range

Flanging and chorusing require a swept (also called *modulated*) delay time, rather than a single static delay; ideally, a flanger would sweep over at least a 10:1 range (say, from 1 ms to 10 ms), while chorusing effects require a less drastic sweep (1.2:1 or so is fine). Digital delays typically sweep in the 2:1 to 4:1 range. If you're into flanging, select a unit with a wide sweep range.

Noise

Some delays have a constant, low-level background hiss. Other delays may initially appear to be dead quiet, but when you start playing through them, the noise comes up in level along with your signal. If you're playing an instrument with a harmonically complex sound, the high frequencies will tend to mask this noise. Thus, when testing out delays I usually play some bass, since low-frequency notes will more easily expose any noise which rides along with the signal.

Signal Levels

Less expensive delays are mostly intended for onstage use, which assumes that you'll plug an instrument into the input and plug the output into an amp. These units may not be able to accommodate the stronger signal levels encountered in recording studios. Higher ticket devices generally include provisions for matching any type of signal, from the weak output of a guitar pickup to the strong signal coming from a multitrack tape recorder. In any event, the delay should have some kind of sensitivity control or switch, along with an LED overload indicator or LED meter. These help you feed the highest level signal through the delay line, thereby giving the best signal-to-noise ratio.

Programmability

Since delay lines include several controls, and provide numerous effects, finding the right control settings—especially on stage—can be time-consuming. With a programmable delay, once you've found a particularly sweet control setting you can store that sound in the unit's memory for later recall. The more extensive the programming capabilities, the higher the cost of the delay. While this feature may not be vital for studios (you can always stop the tape when you need to change control settings), for onstage situations programmability is a real convenience. Naturally, programmable units cost more than non-programmable equivalents.

Other Features

Delay units also include a feedback control (sometimes called regeneration) which lets you send some of the output signal back to the input. With flanging and chorusing, this gives a more intense sound; at longer delays, feedback creates multiple echoes. Better units have a filter (or jacks on the back which let you insert an external filter) in the feedback path to let you alter the feedback's frequency response. This is handy when you don't want the feedback sound to compete with the main delay sound.

If you're a synthesizer player, check for a control voltage input on the back. This will let you sweep the delay time with control voltage outputs from your synthesizer, yielding effects which range from pleasing to bizarre.

Another feature is *infinite hold*, which freezes and continuously repeats whatever sound is currently in the delay's memory. This is the equivalent of a "solid-state tape loop," and opens up many rhythmic possibilities.

We could go on, but the above points are the most important ones. Whichever delay you choose, choose carefully . . . because once you get used to working with a good digital delay, you'll use it a lot. ○

Audio

Upgrading Prerecorded Tapes

By David Gans

"Home taping is killing music," shouts the cassette-and-crossbones logo on the jackets of an increasing number of records. That statement is part of a heated argument among record companies, retailers, radio and the public, seeking to place blame for the steep decline in sales of recorded music in recent years. The cassette has become a popular listening medium since the advent of personal portables and ultra-hi-fi car stereos, but sales of prerecorded cassettes haven't risen accordingly—while the blank-tape market burgeons, to the chagrin of the record companies.

"There is a public perception that prerecorded cassettes are not as good as the ones that people can make themselves," observes Jim Lewis, vice president of marketing at Polygram, who admits that it's not an entirely unwarranted sentiment. Most major labels have mounted campaigns to improve the quality of their product and to make consumers aware of the change. There isn't much of a consensus on the exact nature of either the problem or the solution, but the war is being waged on several fronts.

The common complaint among consumers is that prerecorded cassettes are flimsy and noisy and don't sound as good as their vinyl counterparts. There's some irony in the latter complaint, says Adam Somers, Warner Bros. Records' vice president of creative services, because when prerecorded cassettes were first introduced, "separate master tapes were made in order to take full advantage of the dynamic range and frequency response of magnetic tape." It was possible to make the cassettes sound *better* than discs, "but people wanted their tapes to sound the same as the LPs, so the labels started duplicating cassettes from the same tapes they used to master the records."

Record companies are again using special duplication masters to take full advantage of the cassette medium. Capitol Records, whose XDR program encompasses improvements in all phases of cassette manufacture, now uses inch-wide master tapes copied directly from the original tape, as opposed to the more common half- or quarter-inch formats. The result is improved dynamic range (the loud parts are a little louder than before, whereas on discs the dynamics have to be reduced for technical reasons) and fewer dropouts (momentary loss or reduction in signal level caused by irregularities in the tape coating or dust particles getting in between tape and head). Other labels are following Capitol's lead in reinstituting the cassette master tape, although the formats vary from company to company.

Cassette shells must be made of quality materials and manufactured to exact dimensions to keep the tape in constant contact with the heads. Each track on a cassette tape is so narrow that the minutest deviation from the true path can cause audible diminution of sound level and frequency response. Capitol and CBS, both of whom manufacture tapes for other record companies in addition to their own, have made improvements in both materials and manufacturing processes to make cassettes more durable and less susceptible to jamming, warpage and disintegration.

One factor that is beyond the control of tape manufacturers is head alignment, or azimuth. The heads of the cassette player should always be at 90 degrees relative to the path of tape travel—and often aren't. "If the consumer's cassette deck is off azimuth, his tapes will be recorded and played back at the same angle and everything will sound fine to him," explains Ralph Cousino, Capitol's vice president for engineering. "But the prerecorded product, which was recorded exactly on azimuth, won't sound right." High frequencies are lost on playback when the head angle is incorrect.

Though azimuth adjustment is part of the standard professional alignment routine, it is not widely understood by consumers, who only know that the tapes they make themselves often sound better than the ones they buy in stores. Warners' Somers thinks it's time people started paying attention to the alignment of their tape recorders. "People don't think it's bullshit to isolate their turntables from vibration and keep their records clean," he complains, "so why shouldn't they keep their tape decks aligned?" Somers predicts that "soon, tape decks will be able to adjust azimuth automatically at a reasonable price" and so it will cease to be a major problem.

On the question of tape formulation, the jury is still out. A&M Records recently released Supertramp's "*. . . famous last words . . .* on BASF chromium-dioxide tape, packaged with an insert containing all of the printed information found on the LP, which is often left off the cassette version.

"Prerecorded ferric-oxide cassettes are generally perceived as inferior," says A&M's vice president of marketing services, Bob Reitman. "What consumers are saying is, 'Give me better cassettes for the same money and I'll buy them.' It cost A&M a bit of money, it cost BASF a bit of money, and it cost Supertramp a bit of money, and we're going to try and find out whether people *will* buy more cassettes." Reitman says that the typical ratio of cassette sales to discs is currently around 40 to 60, with the highest being around 50-50. That's a good indication of the growth in cassettes' share of the market, notes Warners' Somers, since not too many years ago cassette sales averaged around 20 percent of the total market.

"Supertramp hasn't quite approached 50-50," says Reitman, adding that it's a little too soon to tell whether consumer response will warrant spending the extra money on chrome tape.

Somers doesn't think that tape formulation is as critical a factor as most people think it is. Because the level of sound coming off the tape (maximum output level, or MOL) is higher with chromium dioxide, people *think* the fidelity is better. It is, Somers admits, but not sufficiently better to warrant the additional cost. "If chrome tape was the answer, we could solve all our cassette problems immediately by switching to it and just putting on a big advertising campaign," he says.

(Next month: two ways in which homemade tapes are inferior to prerecorded.) ○

"Most major labels have mounted campaigns to improve the quality of their prerecorded tape product and to make consumers aware of the change. There isn't much of a consensus on the exact nature of either the problem or the solution, but the war is being waged on several fronts."

Audio

The Winter NAMM Convention In A Nutshell: Tiny Is Tasty

By David Gans

Twice each year, the people who operate musical-instrument stores gather—much like any other trade association—to discuss matters of mutual concern, compare notes, have fun, and take a look at the merchandise being offered by their suppliers. The National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) held its Winter convention and trade show January 21-23 at the Anaheim Convention Center, just down the street from Disneyland.

PHOTO DAVID GANS

Rick Marotta and Jackson Browne hobnob at NAMM: It's better than working

Membership in NAMM ranges from mom-and-pop operations dealing in band instruments and supplies, pianos and accordions as well as electric and electronic instruments to high-volume, trendy emporia aimed at the youthful rock market, to more elite merchants whose inventories are geared toward the exacting needs of professionals. The manufacturers and distributors, too, range in scope from one-man shops to international corporations—so the three large showrooms included elaborate traveling exhibits (some with soundproof rooms specially constructed to enable full-blast product demonstrations) as well as forlorn little booths where suppliers of less fashionable gear waited for their markets to find them.

There's nothing like a NAMM show if you're looking to keep up with the state of the musician's art. For the press it's an opportunity to see what's new and to chat it up with their peers as well as the makers and sellers, not to mention the working professionals—stars and studio laborers alike—who show up either to demonstrate the products they endorse or just to cruise the floor and see what's new.

Several manufacturers brought famous players to the NAMM show to demonstrate the instruments they endorse (and in some cases designed or consulted on). Knots of people would gather in the aisles to watch these performances and ask questions, and once in a while a cheer would rise from one or another corner of the hall when something particularly inspired took place. A couple of larger equipment makers set up entire stages and sound systems in smaller rooms in the Convention Center where whole ensembles put the instruments through their paces in several scheduled performances each day.

A couple of keynote performance events were fouled up by the unexpectedly heavy weather. *Musician* Magazine, DOD Electronics and Sequential Circuits had arranged a concert featuring David Lindley and El Rayo-X, the Dregs and a southern California band called the Fents, but when rain flooded the outdoor arena Lindley was added to the indoor jam scheduled for the same evening by *BAM* Magazine. That event featured T-Bone Burnett and guitarist Albert Lee; Dregs guitarist Steve Morse, who played at another hotel with the Dregs (minus drummer Rod Morgenstein) and some drop-in jammers, popped up at the BAM Jam, too.

The bottom line of NAMM, though, is business. Recent years have been as economically unpromising for the musical-instruments industry as they have been for everyone else, but the January NAMM show seemed to provide a more optimistic picture. "I could go home right now and still have had a better NAMM than the last couple of years," said one manufacturer midway through the show, "and I've still got more than a day left to sell." This sentiment was echoed by others on the floor.

"Everyone's been reorganizing and cutting back for the last couple of years," observed Dennis Erokan, the publisher of *BAM* Magazine. "They've finished streamlining their operations, and now they're willing to listen to new ideas for promotion and advertising. The companies are leaner and they're ready to move more aggressively again."

The trends—if so varied an industry can be seen to produce any clear-cut trends—this year appear to be in the direction of using computer control to make instruments smaller and more versatile. Home recording systems and smarter, better-sounding electronic keyboards and rhythm machines are dovetailing nicely—it's possible to put together a system that fits on a closet shelf and produces fairly complete tapes.

The coming of age of the microchip has paid great dividends to the makers of musical instruments. The technology of sound production now encompasses digitally generated tones that have more of the richness of sounds produced the "old-fashioned way" than ever before—enough to make these instruments competitive with their more traditional counterparts in the fight for the professional market. For example, Yamaha demonstrated the **CE-25**, which retails for under $1500 and utilizes FM (frequency modulation) digital synthesis and emulates the random harmonic shifts found in "natural" sound. The touch-sensitive 49-key keyboard and 20 preset voices work together to give the player—professional or amateur—more tactile control over the instrument's musical expression. The CE-25 is rangy enough to be useful to recording and touring pros, and it's inexpensive enough to take the place of the old upright piano in a suburban living room.

Sequential Circuits' Prophet-600 is a six-voice instrument with 100-program memory and full editing capability, a polyphonic real-time sequencer, dual-mode arpeggiator, polyphonic glide, chord tracking, and other features. The Prophet T-8 features a 76-note wooden keyboard with full touch sensitivity (both velocity and pressure) and 128 presets, in a unit that weighs less than 60 pounds and packs many of the same features as the Prophet-600.

Korg's new **Poly-61** uses the flexibility of computer control to simplify the control panel. The many knobs and switches found on most synths are here replaced by a "Digital Access Control" system: an individual parameter is called up by number and its value displayed on an LED readout. A pair of pushbuttons marked "up" and "down" are used to change the value, then the revised program can be stored in the original location or assigned a new place in memory.

In addition to reducing the price of its Jupiter-8 by nearly 25 percent and introducing a new model called the JP-6, **Roland** has brought out a new monophonic instrument designed to give keyboard players the same freedom of movement onstage that guitarists have. The **SH-101** is battery-powered for remote operation and can be augmented with a modulator grip and shoulder strap.

Several manufacturers now market hardware and software packages that turn home computer systems such as the Apple II into powerful musical instruments. **Syntauri Corporation** and **Passport Designs**, both located near Silicon Valley, offer packages designed to aid composers, teach the principles of music and synthesis, print out scores, record up to 16 different musical passages and rearrange their voicings, keys, etc., and perform music in real time or from information programmed previously. **Roland's Compu Music** system is available with software configured for the Apple II or NEC PC-6000 or PC-8000 home computers. All these systems make it possible to compose and perform sophisticated music without any instrumental prowess.

This year also sees the implementation of an industry interface standard known as the Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI). Developed by five manufacturers in America and Japan, the MIDI enables different kinds of synthesizers and related devices to "talk to each other"—operate in tandem—via a single cable carrying digitally-encoded data. With the MIDI, a note played on the master keyboard will sound on "slave" units (which can be programmed with different sounds and don't require their own keyboards) at the same time. Sequential Circuits and Roland already have synths on the market with the MIDI built in, and other manufacturers are expected to follow suit. It is also hoped that rhythm machines and other musical instruments and associated devices will adopt the MIDI and thus further expand the possibilities.

The Effect Switcher, from J.L. Cooper Electronics, switches up to 14 different effects (from any manufacturer). The order of these effects in the signal chain can be set by pushing front-panel buttons in sequence, and then the "patch" is saved in the device's computer memory. Two inputs and two outputs are provided, enabling stereo operation. In addition to the order of effects, each of the Effect Switcher's 64 memory locations saves up to eight control voltages and three switch closures, which may be assigned to devices connected to it.

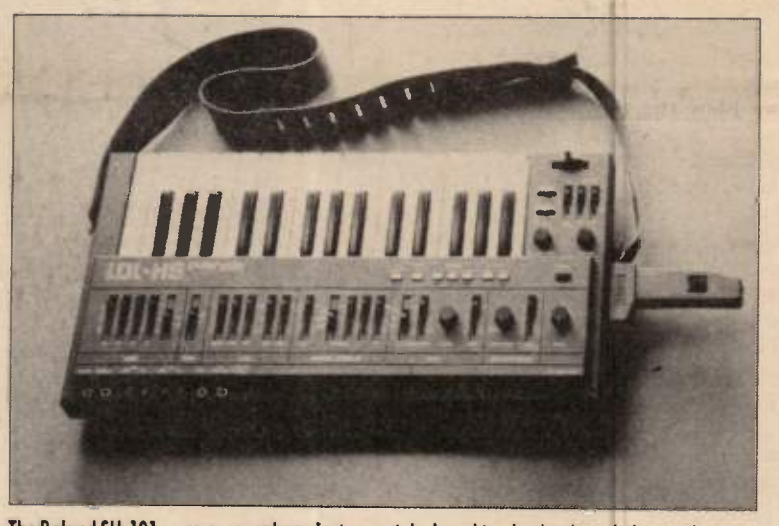
Casio, Korg, Suzuki, Yamaha, and a host of other companies offer full lines of portable keyboards, from handheld to full-sized and priced from under $100. Many of these devices have built-in rhythm machines, bass patterns and/or chording, and the sounds they produce get richer and more varied with each new generation. Some of them are inexpensive enough to be toys, but they sound good enough for avant garde composers and performance artists, new wave musicians and hobbyists to use them, too.

The most exciting of these portables is **Yamaha's MP-1 Mini-Printer**, a digital keyboard with a built-in music printer, ten different instrument voices, arpeggiation, ten rhythm patterns, a transposer with pitch control, an automatic bass chord feature, and a "duet" function that plays a note in harmony with the melody played on the keyboard. The MP-1 has a ballpoint pen stylus which draws staffs, time and key signatures (up to three sharps and flats), rhythm indication and chord names, on regular adding-machine roll paper.

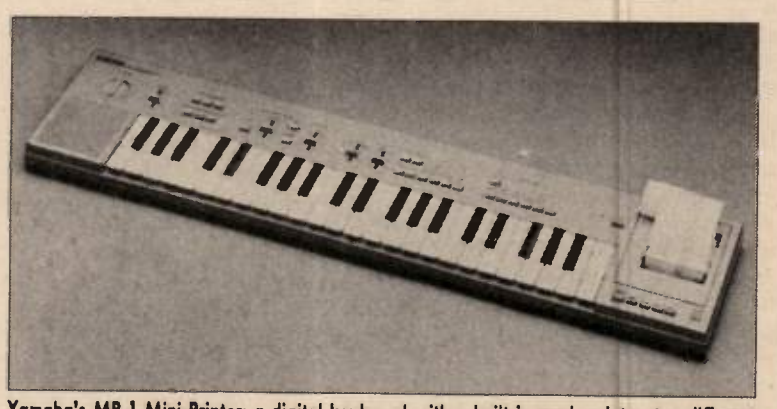
Mattel's Synsonics Drums may be played with sticks or fingers. Four pressure-sensitive pads trigger snare, tom tom, cymbal and floor tom sounds, and the instrument also has programmable hi-hat and bass features. A tempo control allows stored patterns to be played at any desired speed, and also drives the built-in metronome.

E-mu's Drumulator uses the digitally recorded sounds of real drums and a computer to construct complex patterns. Tempo changes, dynamics and individual accents for each voice can be programmed into a musical sequence, and sequences can be arranged for step-through in live performance situations.

Korg's KPR-77 Programmable Rhythmer stores up to 48 two-measure patterns and six 256-measure chains which can be combined to create three 512-measure chains. Voices may be programmed in real-time or beat by beat, with a seven-channel mixer and independently-controlled accents for control of dynamics. ○



The Roland SH-101: a new monophone instrument designed to give keyboard players the same freedom of movement onstage that guitarists have. Battery-powered for remote operation; can be augmented with a modular grip and shoulder strap. Suggested list price: $495.00.



Yamaha's MP-1 Mini-Printer: a digital keyboard with a built-in music printer, ten different instrument voices, arpeggiation, ten rhythm patterns, a transposer with pitch control, an automatic bass chord feature, and a "duet" function that plays a note in harmony with the melody played on the keyboard. Suggested list price: $795.00.

Korg's KPR-77 Programmable Rhythmer stores up to 48 two-measure patterns and six 256-measure chains which can be combined to create three 512-measure chains. Voices may be programmed in real-time or beat by beat, with a seven-channel mixer and independently-controlled accents for control of dynamics. Suggested list price: $695.00.

Holly Beth Vincent

Continued from page 4

State University jazz combo, and ended up in an L.A. rockabilly outfit called the Brothel Creepers. It was during this period, four years ago, that she began writing her own material and putting the Italians together. It was also a period in which she began generating grist for a British government dossier that would eventually be the basis for her banishment from that country as an undesirable alien.

"I did a lot of things to keep myself and the band together," she explains. "I was a waitress, and for two months I worked as a dominatrix to pay for rehearsals so we could make the first record." Now it's not everyday someone admits in print to being a dominatrix. It's *National Enquirer* stuff, if Holly could be drawn on it, but as it turns out, she speaks of her adventures in the skin trade as simply a convenient means of making money—you might just as well as be talking to someone who's served an apprenticeship in leathercraft.

In 1980 Holly grabbed the attention of the record industry, and the group signed with Virgin/Epic.

"Actually, I'd been signed to them for ages, but nobody had any plans to do an album," she recalls. "Everybody was so busy going around chuckling, 'God, this could be great,' but nobody ever bothered to do anything about it. I was their precious little thing, you understand. Anyway, eventually I met Shadow Morton (a producer legendary for his work on the Red Bird label with the Shangri-Las) over a couple of Bloody Mary's and we went into Electric Lady. But he kept disappearing in the middle of tracks to go out and talk to friends, or something. Shadow was great, but we blew the entire budget in a week."

Richard Gottehrer was brought in to finish the LP. "I didn't care who was producer as long the record got made," Holly says. "At that point, I figured I was lucky if the music stuck to the vinyl."

The Right To Be Italian, a full-blooded Spectoresque affair, turned out reasonably well, all things considered. "After all," Vincent notes, "we had three different drummers, people were quitting the band left and right, or getting fired, plus I had to go back to England when it was all over to remix the thing because it sounded shitty."

According to Vincent, Gottehrer's version, "muddy, drenched in reverb and loaded with the kitchen sink," simply didn't capture the essence of her "wall-of-filth guitar."

She was also hurt by comments from label officials to the effect that she should "do something" about her guitar sound. "I ask you, is that any way to talk to an artist, telling her her entire approach to music is shit? They never really understood my sound."

Gottehrer was, and is, an admirer of Vincent's, but has a much different recollection of the *Right To Be Italian* sessions.

"There was plenty of turmoil," he confirms from his office in New York. "She broke up with her drummer and there were other personality things, and when you have flareups in the band, the balance can get thrown off.

"Holly has a lot of potential and a terrific-sounding voice, but she has to leave it alone. In her own desire to get involved in every area of the recording, I think she might have spoiled the record. What does she know about mixing an LP? You've got to let people around you do what they do and just get on with it, and she wasn't able to do that."

Such hints of compulsive, irrational behavior would soon blossom into a full-bloom emotional trauma that would derail Vincent's career.

"I began acting very badly," she relates. "It was a number of things, really. I've always had problems dealing with companies, institutions, all kinds of authority. I know it's childish, but I'm not going to play the poor, oppressed artist. I brought it on myself. And then there were certain chemical things—I was withdrawing from drugs prescribed by a psychiatrist I was seeing at the time.

"You know the story of Frances Farmer (the actress—currently being immortalized by Jessica Lange in the film *Frances*—who was institutionalized and declared insane)? Well, it's a lot like what happened to me. No, I didn't have a lobotomy, but it was a psychotic time. During one of the worst periods, I did trash a dressing room at the BBC. Meanwhile, my manager was 3,000 miles away in New York and there was nobody in England to be a buffer between my actions and the record company. Anyway, Virgin dropped me, and from their point of view they were right."

In a sense, however, being cut from the label was a relief. "If I was there, I'd be paying them back for the rest of my life from the first album. I could never pay that debt. Around Virgin, there's a saying that my first album is the only one that cost more to make than the film of *Apocalypse Now*."

Last fall, after recording her second album in the UK, Holly returned to the states to help producer Mike Thorne with the mixing. Upon attempting to return to Great Britain in October, she was turned away at customs as an undesirable, a form of rejection that seemed to cut more deeply than all the other hurts.

"I may have not been a great human being," she says, "But I don't think what I did makes me a 'dangerous' person. Britain had all the facts on me on computer, the time as a dominatrix, all of it. Someday, maybe they'll let me back in."

Today, though lacking label affiliation, Holly is backed by a supportive manager in Steve Ralbovsky of Singermanagement. A former employee of Kurfirst's, Ralbovsky (who also manages Tom Verlaine) attributes much of his charge's problems to "wrong management, wrong booking agency" and to Holly's own temperament. "She's a perfectionist," Ralbovsky says, "a real artist. And she stuck to her guns. I'm here trying to pick up the pieces. My concern for her, first and foremost, is as a friend. I've done a budget for her, helped put together a band and tried to line up some gigs. As soon as word got out that she'd been dropped from Virgin, I started getting calls. There's four major labels interested in signing her. I think it will work out."

Holly admits she needs to "sell a little vinyl," not only because it's good business to do so, but because "I found out after a long time that I need other people's approval after all. You know, people look at me and the things I've done and don't see that it's simply a defense. They see a tough person. There's a bit of the same in Joan Jett. Neither one of us is really tough; we're sometimes frightened and emotional people."

In casting the latest of countless incarnations of the Italians, Vincent believes she's found people—such as producer Thorne—who are "tolerant of my eccentricities, who can move around me."

The new Italians also sport some impressive credentials: backing vocalist Dolette McDonald has worked with Talking Heads; bassist Fred Smith is a long-time associate of Tom Verlaine, first in Television, then during the latter's solo ventures; drummer Jay Dee Daugherty is a Patti Smith Group alum; guitarist Jimmy Ripp has worked with Kid Creole. Only singer Mary Davis comes without an illustrious pedigree. "They're as stable a group as I am as an artist," quips Holly. Once a new recording contract is signed, Vincent will start writing songs for her third album. These new songs, she adds, will be less emotionally exhausting, less introspective, less.

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> "People look at the things I've done and don't see that it's simply a defense. There's a bit of the same in Joan Jett: neither one of us is really tough; we're sometimes frightened and emotional people."

Records

Smokey Phone Home

Touch the Sky
Smokey Robinson
Tamla

By Vince Aletti

There was a time when I felt Smokey Robinson was singing directly to me. Not just Smokey, but Mary Wells, Martha Reeves, the Temptations, the Marvelettes—they were all full of advice, instruction, caution, concern, and I learned their lessons by heart. This was a romantic, foolish time and I was eager, receptive, grateful: when I was in love, Motown had a song for every step of the way (from "Heat Wave" to "You've Really Got a Hold on Me" to "I've Been Good to You" to "Come Get These Memories"); when I wasn't, Motown was the next best thing. Nearly twenty years later, "Motown" has lost its meaning but my romantic illusions remain somehow intact (I never learn). And Smokey Robinson is still singing songs of love—but not for me.

It's hard to say just when Smokey and I drifted apart, but, listening to his new album, *Touch the Sky,* I think I know one of the reasons why: he's matured and I haven't; he sings like a grown-up but I still long for that adolescent ache. Even at its purest, Smokey's high tenor/falsetto had a raw, fragile quality early on and his peaks were sweeter, astonishing, because they seemed so risky (it's possible, of course, that this trembling-on-the-brink may have been Robinson's ultimate artifice: the perfectly controlled illusion of risk). Smokey's voice remains incredibly sweet, only now it's fleshed out, softened, and it's not so vulnerable. It has more weight, more authority, but less edge. This is partly because Robinson hasn't had much material lately to hone any sort of cutting edge on. The George Tobin-produced albums of the last two years have been largely unexceptional, certainly unchallenging, but with Smokey back in charge on *Touch the Sky* (his co-producer is keyboard man Reginald "Sonny" Burke), not much has changed. All but two of the songs were written by Robinson and, as usual, they're models of care and restraint, set in the most delicately understated arrangements of Smokey's career: a string of polished, glowing gems. But, in the end, this is far more admirable than exciting—though these ballads are undeniably lovely, Smokey hardly ever breaks through their surface sheen to grab for something deeper, keener. The spectrum of emotion is so compressed here—both joy and sorrow are hushed, uninflected—that the overall effect approaches a bland monotone. If he keeps up like this, Smokey Robinson threatens to become the Perry Como of soul.

Having seen Robinson in performance recently, I know there's little likelihood of this actually happening. On stage, he's better than ever: assured, generous, passionate. On record, he muffles the passion—holding back, taking it light; he could do this in his sleep. Here's an album full of flawless ballads that might have been made any time in the last ten years and just barely touches down in the present. It's so timeless, it verges on the irrelevant. Smokey may be one of the geniuses of love, but I sense a real communication breakdown here. Maybe he needs a new hook-up—not a jolt from the street necessarily (Smokey smurfs!) but a gentle nudge into 1983 by a contemporary classicist like Luther Vandross or Motown modernist Leon Sylvers. Deep down I know Smokey Robinson still has a lot to tell me, but I get this nagging feeling we're on different wavelengths now. Come in, Smokey, come in!

PHOTO JOHN BELLISSIMO/RETNA LTD.

Trans
Neil Young
Geffen

By Stuart Cohn

Neil Young's much-vaunted experiment in electronic music is like one of those get-rich-quick schemes everyone comes up with now and then. It seems like a sure thing in the middle of the night as the drinks are flowing. But hungover in the cold light of dawn, you realize it wasn't such a great idea after all.

The basic outline of *Trans* is interesting: Young sings through a vocoder on six of the nine cuts accompanied by humming and beeping synthesizers; no Crazy Horse guitar heroics here. He uses the distance the technology gives his voice as a kind of screen to illustrate the breakdown of the world we know into empty mechanization. Subjects and characters are laid out in a schematic, almost Brechtian manner: "We control the data banks/We control the think tanks"; "We know you'll be satisfied when you energize/And see your unit come alive."

It's a neat concept when it works. Unfortunately, it doesn't on *Trans* and the listener is left like Dorothy in Oz, discovering there's no wizard behind the curtain.

The culprit is the music. *Trans* works in the head but not in the grooves, the songs burdened by leaden riffs and cliched transitions. Choppy fragments slow down "We R In Control" and an airy, aimless chord progression mitigates any tension in "Like an Inca." The album's tightest melody is a remake of Buffalo Springfield's "Mr. Soul," a song that is sixteen years old and a takeoff on "Satisfaction" to boot. The only melodic rush here is the bridge of "Computer Age," a quote from the Bee Gees' "Holiday." Is Young trying to be funny? Or is this trip back to 1967 just his way of telling us the future's in the past, time stands still?

If the muse has deserted Young and *Trans*, so has the method. The effects on the synthesized songs have been heard before, mostly from Kraftwerk and Devo, and he still turns to guitar to give the tunes their power. And, with all the sonic possibilities a vocoder opens up, Young uses it in a very limited fashion. He either exaggerates his upper register until he sounds like Alvin and the Chipmunks or else drops it into a Darth Vader growl. Worst of all, the effects make it hard to distinguish the words so the listener ends up reading the album on the lyric sheet.

Young has written more jarring words than these, too. Song after song runs down cute future-shock details, yet none of them ask any questions. What is this omnipotent computer bringing us? Is it dehumanizing society? Or is it making life easier to handle? Maybe it's doing nothing substantive at all. You'd never know it from these songs because Young has submerged his supple and expressive voice in a haze. It's the singing of a disembodied spirit.

The one clue we get to Young's point of view is on the album's closing number and apparent centerpiece, "Like An Inca." Young leaves the electronics behind to explore a territory he's been to time and again. But unlike his other trips to Indian times ("Cortez the Killer," "Pocohantas") which were cathartic and cleansing, this one is fraught with fascist overtones—"I wish I was an Inca/Or a runner in Peru/I'd build such beautiful buildings/To house the chosen few." And the longing for a time and place one has been is a pipe-dream solution to the issues he stabs at on the LP's other songs.

As on every LP since *Rust Never Sleeps*, Young's main theme here is that things fall apart. But his expres-

sion of it on "My My Hey Hey" from that 1979 album—"It's better to burn out than it is to fade away"—packs a deeper, more unsettling truth than "The gypsy told my fortune/She said that nothing showed," a line he repeats over and over in "Like An Inca." "My My Hey Hey" is better because it presents a way of life one can either embrace or discard. *Trans*, on the other hand, is just a closed circuit: no future, no options. Just a man and his toys, without the songs or ideas that can make the toys so much fun to play with.

Money and Cigarettes
Eric Clapton
Duck Records/Warner Bros.

Albert
Albert Lee
Polydor

By Dan Forte

"I've got a rock 'n' roll heart," Eric Clapton sings on his debut album on his own Duck Records. "I was born to be a rock 'n' roll man," sings Albert on his new LP, "playing guitar in a rock 'n' roll band." Difference is, Clapton's sentiments are juxtaposed against a flaccid, pseudo-Don Williams country track, while Lee's proclamation is buoyed along by a satisfying helping of rockabilly boogie. Not that either song qualifies as the next rock 'n' roll anthem, replacing Chuck Berry singing, "Hail, hail rock'n' roll," but Lee's seems a lot more believable.

Clapton and Lee, as dissimilar in terms of approach and sound as any two rock guitarists to come out of England in the '60s, both released albums on the eve of an American tour that finds Albert playing "second fiddle" in the Clapton band. Comparisons and arguments as to who is the hotter guitar hero are sure to abound, but its clear that Lee is the better record maker.

People have been claiming that E.C. has lost it ("it" referring to his guitar chops, his vision, his passion) ever since he spilled his guts on the monumental *Layla* album. This is, of course, ridiculous when one considers tunes like "Motherless Children," "Please Be With Me," "Double Trouble," "Cocaine," and his numerous live versions of "Further On Up The Road." Trouble is, he has yet to come up with a solid album's worth of winners with no weak spots. *Another Ticket*, which preceeded his aborted '81 tour, included some of his most stirring work of recent years, most notably on "Rita Mae" and "I Can't Stand It," but fell short as often as not.

Money and Cigarettes, produced by Tom Dowd (who also produced *Another Ticket, 461 Ocean Boulevard, Layla)*, is an up-and-down affair with no particular direction. Fortunately, the high points are very high, albeit too few. Clapton is backed here by possibly the best band he's ever worked with, Cream and the Dominoes not withstanding. In addition to Lee (on guitar and keyboards), slide guitar master Ry Cooder lends a hand, and the rhythm section—comprised of Muscle Shoals drummer Roger Hawkins and bassist Duck Dunn—is any blues guitarist's dream. E.C.'s slide treatment of Sleepy John Estes' "Everybody Oughta Make A Change" proves that he hasn't lost his feeling for the blues, but his note-for-note tribute to Albert King on "Crosscut Saw" sounds a bit sluggish. "Pretty Girl" ranks with "Wonderful Tonight" as one of his prettiest, least syrupy ballads (unlike "I've Got A Rock 'N' Roll Heart," which falls closer to the wimpiness of, say "Promises"). Rising above all of this is "Ain't Going Down," which shows Clapton and the all-stars to their best advantage. Propelled forward by Hawkins' freight train drumming, Eric lets loose with a reserved-but-rousing vocal and some biting guitar fills.

American guitar pickers know Albert Lee best for his work in Emmylou Harris' Hot Band, while in England he's been a cult legend for more than fifteen years through his work with Chris Farlowe and Head, Hands & Feet. One of the consummate country players on the scene, he reveals here on his second solo LP a real sense of what rock 'n' roll is all about—how to play it, how it should sound. He reaches back to his rockabilly school days and beats Dave Edmunds, the Blasters, and the Stray Cats at their own game primarily because Lee's country roots go deeper than any of the neo-rockabilly revivalists, and he doesn't sacrifice that foundation in an attempt to rock out.

Cut for cut, this album approaches the consistency of (dare I suggest?) the Beatles' middle period. The LP's strongest tracks are its ballads, Hank DeVito's "On The Boulevard" and Don Everly's "So Sad (To Watch Love Go Bad)." On the former, Lee's whispered vocal draws you into the song, where you can get lost for hours. On "So Sad," which features Lee on acoustic piano, the artist shows his reverence for the Everlys without falling into the trap of trying to sound like them. His versions of John Hiatt's "Pink Bedroom" and "Radio Girl" top those recorded by the composer, who too often resorts to self-parody. Both Lee and Hiatt are somewhat limited vocalists, but with Lee you hear the lyrics and melody, instead of theatrics.

What shines through all of Lee's vocal and guitar work is his feeling for the music. He is one of the few country pickers who can mix taste, technique and a generous helping of soul. The aggressive-but-uncluttered backup band—comprised of drummer Larry Londin, bassist Emory Gordy, rhythm guitarist Vince Gill, and keyboardists John Hobbs and Bill Payne—succeeds by staying out of Lee's way. Virtually every solo, which for the most part are short and sweet, are from Albert's Telecaster. Though this is not a working unit known as the Albert Lee Band, they sound as though they've been gigging together for years, thanks in large part to producer Rodney Crowell's gimmick-free production and the first-take ambience achieved by engineer Bradley Hartman.

The most surprising thing about Albert Lee is that he is still a sideman, his duties on the Clapton tour confined mainly to rhythm, harmonies and some piano. Here he shows Hot Band and Clapton fans that they ain't heard nuthin' yet. It must be a little frustrating for an artist as accomplished as Lee to play rhythm guitar all night, even if it is behind a bonafide guitar god, but not near as frustrating as it will be for those in the audience who pick up on this album.

Three Lock Box
Sammy Hagar
Geffen

By J-C Costa

Sammy Hagar is a singer/guitarist from the Bay Area. He functions within a genre loosely defined as "heavy metal with a hook" and, considering his stupefying lack of originality, has put out a surprising number of albums. He tends to favor the color red, moves gracelessly on stage or on video and manhandles his (red) custom Fender Strat-style guitars with a certain bluntness and sophomoric gusto. In fact, his playing has given birth to a new heavy metal sub species: the Slam Dunk school of guitar. His "singing" (such as it is) largely consists of hyper-attenuated growls which invariably slide up to enervated screeches. His "songs" (such as they are) are more than forgettable: they shriek by your ears like nightmare express trains, quickly fading into the deeper recesses of obliterated memory. His "music" (such as it is) lacks even the basic neanderthal passion of peers like Judas Priest, Def Leppard or Iron Maiden.

Besides two semi-propulsive guitar riffs and some reasonably adept keyboard work from Alan Pasqau, *Three Lock Box* has absolutely nothing to recommend it. Which can also be said for all his other woeful records. Yet Hagar hangs on like grim death, waiting for the rest of the world to catch up to his puerile and pathetically bloated self-image. Yours truly awaits, too, with bated breath, and razor blade pressed to wrist.

The Bangles
The Bangles
Faulty Products

By Wayne King

I don't know, lady—you tell me," goes the punch line to a joke so dirty I'm ashamed to think of it. What prompts such a raunchy recollection is the arrival of an EP by yet another all-girl group, the Bangles. Since initial live reports on the Los Angeles quartet are disheartening, the inevitable and possibly sexist spectre that haunts most all female acts is raised here; namely, did these women actually make the music contained on this record?

That question may be irrelevant, because *somebody* has come up with what they used to call a hot platter, one so tight and sharp that it threatens to singlehandedly resurrect that deservedly-dormant phrase, power pop. The five songs here show the Bangles' sound to be deeply rooted in mid-sixties American beat, subspecies garage. And the Bangles possess a greater appreciation for dynamics than do the Go-Go's, who specialize in the full ahead speed favored by the Ramones and surf bands.

Two things really set the Bangles apart from the pack. First is their intricate and endearingly rough harmonizing; the sustained chorus at the end of "I'm In Line" might be the genre's equivalent of the undulating vocals that reverberate endlessly at the climax of the Move's "Message From The Country" (then again, it might not). Secondly, the words go a bit past the standard boy/girl territory. In "The Real World," guitarist Susanna Hoffs sings, "When I was a little girl, I wanted everything ideal," then spits out the line, "And *I believe* our love is real, and it's the only thing I'm counting on," a determination is revealed that shows more grit than is usually evinced in such songs of romance. If the Bangles don't yet articulate the tough sexual politics of a Chrissie Hynde, they at least may be close to finding that voice. Until then, the music can do the talking for them.

Sundown
Rank and File
Slash

Rubber Rodeo
Rubber Rodeo
Eat

By Christopher Hill

Like a sibling who is intimately close, yet implacably alien, country music has attracted and provoked rock 'n' rollers from the '50s to the '80s. Rank and File and Rubber Rodeo, two bands from very different schools of the New Wave, offer yet more permutations of rock's funhouse vision of country & western—one a promising hybrid, the other a sterile aesthetic experiment.

On their debut album, *Sundown*, Rank and File show themselves to be a band in the tradition of Gram Parsons' original Flying Burrito Brothers; most importantly, they share an unsentimental grounding in rock 'n' roll that enables them to assume country conventions without the taint of phony pastoralism. But the punk roots of Rank and File's leaders, Tony and Chip Kinman, are of conceptual interest here only. They're felt, rather than heard, in elements like the tough, metallic "La Bamba"-style riff that rolls through "Amanda Ruth." At best, the band's fresh-faced enthusiasm is channelled via classic C&W forms into spare, gritty, down-home rock. As in the showstopping way the punchy chords announce the start of "The Conductor Wore Black" while Tony Kinman launches breathlessly into the story; or in the thrashing harp-and-guitar intro to "Coyote" (like a lost Lovin' Spoonful cut), and the way that song builds tension with its chopping rhythm guitar and clean, plaintive picking.

Rank and File's approach is most vulnerable when the shallowness of their actual familiarity with country and western music shows through. You can hear the places where pure invention (brave as it is) fails them; without a tradition to fill the gaps, they fall back on just the kind of ersatz country-rock clichés they mean to repudiate. The record is also seriously undercut by lack of simple sonic kick in production, playing and singing; it sounds as if they were all intimidated at the thought of setting foot in someone else's tradition. There's no reason for this sort of country-rock band not to roar a little—the music could only gain.

The music of Rubber Rodeo, on the other hand, masks an Albert Goldman-esque contempt for working-class culture under guileful New Wave colors. Assuredly, there is country music that can function as ready-made camp; but Dolly Parton's "Jolene" is not part of it. The plodding setting the song is given here—like Devo set a speed too slow—neither develops the original's sense of creepy Appalachian menace or takes it in any new direction. They're at their best on a patent piece of kitsch like "Tumblin' Tumbleweeds," where the mechanical bounce and exotic synthesizer fillips effectively suggest playground horses springing along the plains of a distant planet. This kind of arty condescension occasionally produces chuckles, but Rubber Rodeo scores only sporadically. 'Til they know their target better, they're not going to hit anything worth the hunt anyway.

Shake And Push
The Morells
Borrowed Records

By Cary Baker

The Morells are an indefatigable band from the Ozarks whose collective musical osmosis has never lagged in the 35 years between Red Foley and the Cramps. Though the same core of musicians has hung together for six years, recording in various configurations as the Skeletons and the Symptoms, their debut album as the Morells ties the foursome's roots together into a focused signature sound. The result may qualify as the first successful modern marriage of rock 'n' roll, country & western, R&B, surf, and—inevitably—rockabilly. Call it Interior American Music.

Though seemingly targeted at (and so far acclaimed by) a new music audience, the Morells are hardly the youngest practitioners of the form. Lead singer/bassist Lou Whitney, whose vocal textures range from Tennessee drawl to Satchmo scat, is 40; his wife, keyboardist/sometime-vocalist Maralie, is a 54-year-old piano bar veteran. Guitarist/singer D. Clinton Thompson and drummer Ron Gremp, their ages averaging at 30, practically close a musical generation gap. In fact it's Thompson, and not his elders, who brought the band its wealth of vintage jukebox nuggets like Roy Montrell's "That Mellow Saxophone" and the Maddox Brothers & Rose's "Ugly & Slouchy" with its unforgettable refrain: "That's the way I like 'em/At least I can be sure that they're lovin' no one else."

Although the obscurity of the cover songs makes them appear to be originals—and the Morells give each its custom fit—they are capable of turning out worthy songs of their own. Whitney, the raspier of the band's singers, fuses Roger Miller's suave truckstop inflections with Jerry Lee Lewis' urgency on the album's standout track, "Red's," a rockabilly tribute to the Springfield, Missouri hashhouse depicted on the album cover. Thompson harks back to the milieu of Sam Cooke in his leadoff original, "Gettin' In Shape," but not without a knowing reference to the Village People's "YMCA." Maralie, who generally opts for the role of a team player, packs a mean (well, *stern*) Wanda Jackson vocal punch on

"Go Ahead." Thompson, undoubtedly the Morells' star musician, is careful to ration his ample repertoire of guitar devices—swing licks, soul bridges, twangs and surf echoes—so that they surface at the most unpredictable of junctures.

The LP's 14 songs unfold with the concentrated enthusiasm of a meeting of fanatical rock and country historians spinning their favorite discs. Yet the Morells play as if they've never heard the word "history." They may be as close as we'll find to an unadulterated four-sets-a-night roadhouse band working its way between Abilene and Joplin with no particular hurry to get to the next town, or to the top of the heap. *Shake And Push* is one exciting, authentic document of that journey. I dare you to resist it.

Music Spoken Here
John McLaughlin
Warner Brothers

By Derk Richardson

On the cover of *Music Spoken Here,* John McLaughlin is pictured trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. On the vinyl, he nearly succeeds. As the follow-up to *Belo Horizonte,* last year's initial experiment of strictly acoustic guitar with electric band, *Music Spoken Here* more completely integrates McLaughlin's late-1970s interest in classically-based, Spanish and Eastern acoustic string music, with the bold electronic jazz-rock concepts he did so much to popularize with his Mahavishnu Orchestra in the early Seventies.

McLaughlin meets his geometrical/musical challenge with some neat aural manipulations. The keyboards of Katia Labeque and Francois Couturier create vast expanses of colors, textures and exotic harmonies into which McLaughlin injects crystalline guitar runs. The musicians, including drummer Tommy Campbell and acoustic bassist Jean-Paul Celea, benefiting from extensive touring, now interact like a band, generating stark contrasts in mood and maintaining an absorbing tension between the expansive, often orchestral "rhythm" section and the tight, frequently frenetic improvisations of McLaughlin.

As an interpreter of influences, McLaughlin reveals his debts to fellow guitarists Paco DeLucia and Christian Escoude and, in overall sound, to Weather Report and its maestro, Josef Zawinul. But as composer/arranger/producer, he transcends the obvious references. If "Aspan" recalls the flash of Al Dimeola, or "Blues for L.W." and "Negative Ions" the gathering storms, tempermental seas and straight-ahead jazz walks of Weather Report, or "Brise de Coeur" the romantic impressionism of Keith Jarrett, they are all driven by an inexorable logic that is McLaughlin's alone. And McLaughlin allows the players, especially the phenomenal Labeque and Campbell, enough room in the spacious mix to exert their own distinctive, forceful personalities.

Although he has turned the corner on 40, McLaughlin has not yielded an inch in the musical/spiritual quest that, over a decade ago, led him in into the volcanic worlds of *Devotion* and *Birds of Fire.* And he has assembled a stunning band that can kick him out of his reverent introspection and kick up some thunder. Perhaps the passion comes in gradual waves and discrete bursts now, rather than in ongoing explosions, but ten years ago McLaughlin would have *forced* that square peg into the hole. Now he talks the peg into it.

Wish You Were Here Tonight
Ray Charles
Columbia

By J.D. Considine

Twenty-one years ago, Ray Charles made his first country album, *Modern Sounds in Country and Western.* It was an unlikely move, but an inspired one, and provided Charles with one of his biggest hits ever, "I Can't Stop Loving You." *Wish You Were Here Tonight,* Charles' latest foray into C&W, is an equally unexpected move, but not as likely to be a commercial success.

The problem isn't a matter of performance. Charles has one of the most powerful, deeply expressive voices in pop music, and on that level, I'd even buy a record of his Maxwell House commercial. Nor is his vocal style a handicap; although his bluesy inflection and gutsy melismas seem positively baroque compared to Merle Haggard's relatively austere delivery, Charles' soulfulness gives the songs a different sort of resonance. Throughout the album, his performance is nothing short of stunning.

It's *what* he's performing that fouls things up. "3/4 Time," the Tony Joe White song that kicks off the album, is a typical example. It's a stock country tune, with an easy, sing-song gait that suits the country fiddle arrangement to a tee but doesn't offer Charles much to sink his voice into. Compounding its melodic limitations are the lyrics, which take a dumb idea and beat it into the ground. Like far too much of the album, it's a wasted effort.

Occasionally, Ray Charles hits a good song, like "I Don't Want No Stranger Sleepin' In My Bed," or simply rises above his material, as with "You've Got the Longest Leaving Act In Town." But when the peppiest number on the whole album turns out to be a Bellamy Brothers hit ("Let Your Love Flow"), it's clear that Charles is standing on shaky ground. *Wish You Were Here Tonight* is a nice idea, but one that will probably finish last.

My Fingers Do the Talkin'
Jerry Lee Lewis
MCA

By Christopher Hill

Conditioned as we are by his ecstatic '50s rock 'n' roll, by some of the better honky-tonk singing of the last fifteen years, and by the demoniac status rigged up for him by mystically inclined rock writers, we're liable to miss the, er, human side of Jerry Lee Lewis. The man just does not spit blue hellfire into most of his material. Still, to appreciate that is to appreciate the minor pleasures he can offer. Minor pleasures are what *My Fingers Do the Talkin'* is mostly about—plus a lot of dross.

The band comes at the rockers with a decidedly Holiday Inn approach—sedately paced drumming, a few polite "rock 'n' roll" riffs, a ubiquitous soul chorus. The title song is a perfunctory Jerry Lee runthrough, delivered without conviction or apparent pleasure. On the other hand, Mickey Newbury's classic "Why You Been Gone So Long?" fares better—the "pumping" piano is more sensually felt, Jerry Lee is obviously behind the lyrics, even the lead break has some sting. The handful of honky-tonk weepers are bogged down by a heavy handed string section and unillumined sentimental conventions. And yet a song like "She Sings Amazing Grace" leaps into three dimensions with the weird, arid reediness of his singing and a little deft fiddle-playing.

On two songs only do we hear an echo of the beast. "Better Not Look Down" is prime Jerry Lee strangeness, a rambling, boastful monologue on how the down and out survive. And "Honky Tonk Heaven"—the album closer—gives us a taste of the real medicine. From the spoken/wailed intro, to the extra punch in the playing, to the hint of lost plaintiveness in the melody and the wild, reverbed yodel at the end, you can hear a fading rumble from the hell-bound train. I suppose we should know by now that Jerry Lee will always have the last laugh.

Love Over And Over
Kate & Anna McGarrigle
Polydor

By Barry Alfonso

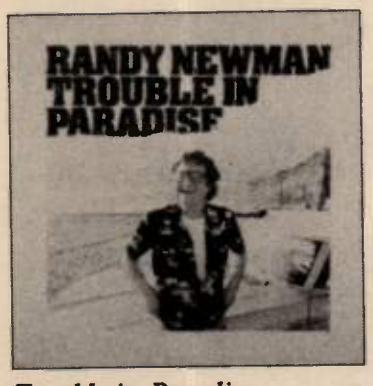
At present, Canada seems like the last refuge of the once-thriving folksinger/songwriter species. Unrepentant folkies such as Murray McLauchlan and Bruce Cockburn have continued to please large audiences with their music, even as their American counterparts have vanished from the scene. Perhaps the best of all these Canadian composer/performers, the McGarrigle sisters haven't had an English-language U.S. release in some four years. Their new *Love Over And Over* album picks up where their last such effort, *Pronto Monto,* left off, with little acknowledgement of the American musical trends that have occurred in the interim.

The sheltered quality of the McGarrigles' work, though, is a virtue. Despite their occasional clumsy moments as writers and their limitations as singers, the sisters' music has redoubtable strength, integrity and sincerity. It's folksy, but not unduly mellow; intimately sentimental but not precious. Some might call the McGarrigles feminist writers, but *humanist* is a much better label.

Love Over And Over, recorded in scattered locales over a number of years, is an impressive showcase for the McGarrigles' new-found assurance in handling upbeat, pop-oriented material. The best song of this type here, "Love Over And Over," features the guitar murmurs of Dire Strait's Mark Knopfler adding texture to Kate and Anna's buoyant melody. Other tracks, such as "Midnight Flight" and "Move Over Moon," emphasize a jazzy side of the sisters' harmonizing that was present, but subdued, on their previous recordings.

Fortunately, Kate and Anna's pop retrenchment hasn't diluted the power of their acute, idea-rich lyrics. Anna's "Sun, Son" is a charming narrative sung from a child's viewpoint. Kate's "The Work Song" is an ironic mini-history of American pop, with all the sordid details intact. Sometimes, the McGarrigles' language can be awkward and a bit antique, but the thoughts that lie behind the words are deep and perceptive.

In a time when songwriting, folkie or not, is in a slump, it's good to have the McGarrigles back on active duty. They're too valuable to remain a purely Canadian resource.



Trouble in Paradise
Randy Newman
Warner Brothers

By Geoffrey Himes

Certain gifted but idiosyncratic artists go for years until a guilt-ridden music industry finally decides to canonize them late in their careers. It happened to Woody Guthrie, Chuck Berry and Thelonious Monk. This could be the year it happens to Randy Newman. In recent interviews, Elvis Costello, Rickie Lee Jones and Squeeze have all cited Newman as a favorite songwriter, and Newman's new album boasts guest appearances by Linda Ronstadt, Bob Seger, Lindsey Buckingham, Paul Simon, Don Henley and others.

If Bob Dylan pioneered the use of lyrical and surrealist poetry devices in pop lyrics, Newman pioneered the use of short story techniques. Newman rarely sings confessionally; he either describes a character in the third person or assumes a character role and sings as somebody else. Born into a family of Oscar-winning soundtrack composers, Newman perverted this show music tradition to his own devices—setting sweet melodies against savage lyrics, much like a one man Brecht-Weill team. He introduced more innovations to rock songwriting than anyone else in the '70s, and certainly deserves any belated attention that might come his way.

Trouble in Paradise is as good an excuse as any. Though several weak numbers undermine the album, the best songs are as strong as any Newman has written. Like *Good Old Boys* and *Little Criminals, Trouble in Paradise* is loosely organized around a central concept. As Newman puts it in his press kit: "It sort of hangs together. There are three cities sung about—L.A., Miami and Capetown—all possible paradises, none of which turned out that way."

Newman, of course, doesn't attack these corrupted utopias directly, as if he were a protest singer or something. Rather, he assumes the perspective of these cities' advocates, and through their impassioned defense, he betrays the towns' contradictions. In "Miami," for instance, he plays the role of a loud-mouthed tourist in a loud Hawaiian shirt who loves the town, but not for reasons the Chamber of Commerce would boast of. This character loves Miami for its very sleaziness: its cheap dope, loose women, Latin gangsters and sidewalk freaks.

A similar character is riding in a convertible "down the Imperial Highway with a big, nasty redhead" in "I Love L.A." Newman's vocal has the perfect pushy, show-offy tone of those young L.A. execs who think a big car, a flashing woman and a mountain backdrop constitute paradise on earth. This same character shows up again in the album's funniest song, "My Life Is Good." This guy doesn't want to hear any criticism of his life, because he's got his own Mexican maid, man; his son goes to a private school with the kids of famous people, you see; he's got better cocaine than they got in New York, and, listen to this, he even knows Mr. Bruce Springsteen.

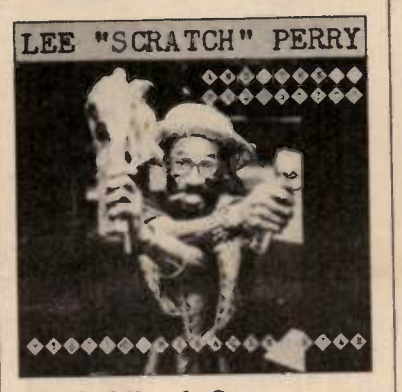
The record's most frightening song is "Christmas in Capetown." As he proved on "Sail Away" and "Rednecks," Newman knows that racial tension is the sorest spot on the American psyche, and he loves to get in there and pick at the scab. This time he sings as a South African old-timer drinking beer and talking about the race problem. He defends apartheid, but a certain desperation creeps into his discussion. Even the beer doesn't get him high anymore, as he feels the angry yellow eyes of the black miners nearby. Everything is mixed up; it's summer in December; it's tense arguments during the holidays; it's Christmas in Capetown.

Most critics focus on Newman's lyrics, but his rich, inventive music is just as important to the songs. "Christmas in Capetown" shifts back and forth deceptively between the reverie of a holiday organ tune and the nervous tension of staccato piano. As the backing rock bands joins in with the 88s, you can feel the tension growing and pressing on the South African singer. The pushy, overbearing rock cliches reinforce the satire of "I Love L.A." and "My Life Is Good."

Sometimes the music itself is the point of the joke. "The Blues," a duet with Paul Simon released as a single, describes a young middle class musician who's trying to establish his blues credentials by telling lies about how bad his life has been. The music provides a telling commentary on the lyrics—the bright, sweet pop tune has nothing to do with authentic blues. "Mikey's" deftly skewers any old rock fan who ever complained about new wave. The lyrics are a monologue by an aging doo-wop fan in a bar complaining about "this ugly music playing all the time. Where are we, on the moon?" The new wave synthesizer track behind him builds compellingly and finally brushes aside his complaints.

A few times Newman lapses into heavy-handed irony, especially on "Same Girl" (a sweet love ballad about an addicted prostitute), "Song for the Dead" (a mock solemn tribute to the Vietnam dead), and "There's a Party at My House" (a weak rewrite of "Mama Told Me Not to Come"). Much better is the subtlety of "Real Emotional Girl," an enchantingly understated ballad with a chillingly accurate portrait of a woman who lives and dies by her emotions.

On top of everything else, *Trouble in Paradise* is Newman's most listenable album. Before one ever catches the satire, the car-cruising feel of "I Love L.A." catches one up in its momentum. Whether or not the public gets the joke, "The Blues" could be a hit single just on the strength of its sharpened melodic hook. Working with L.A.'s meticulous, malleable session musicians Newman has given his Gershwinesque chord progressions a rock 'n' roll punch. If Mark Twain had been born in Los Angeles in 1943 (as Newman was), he also might have boiled down his misanthropic short stories to three minute pop songs backed by electric guitar and synthesizer.

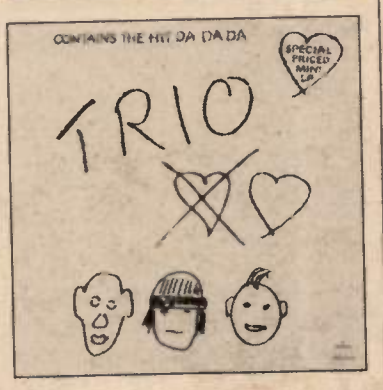


Mystic Miracle Star
Lee "Scratch" Perry
Heartbeat

By Ken Braun

Lee "Scratch" Perry has been making some of the farthest-out music on this planet for over twenty years. Unlike the usual weirdo musician, though, Perry has been absolutely essential to the development of an important genre—reggae—and his influence has extended from the fringe right to the mainstream and into other genres. Beginning his career in the 1950s as a studio engineer and disc jockey, he went on to write such reggae standards as "Kaya," "Police and Thieves" and "War Ina Babylon"; to form one of Jamaica's greatest bands, the Upsetters; to produce the classic Wailers tracks of 1969 and '70 and some of the best work of Gregory Isaacs, the Heptones, U Roy, Justin Hines, Max Romeo, Big Youth and the Clash; and to record—himself—such landmarks of reggae as "People Funny Boy" (probably the first Jamaican hit with a true reggae rhythm), "Return of Django" (a British Top Five single in 1969) and *Super Ape* (one of the first dub albums). Perry's a pioneer, a maverick and an eccentric; without him, reggae would be almost bland.

Perry's latest solo release, *Mystic Miracle Star,* breaks no new ground, and contains no songs in the class of "Small Axe" or "Duppy Conqueror"; but it shows Perry to be as idiosyncratic as ever and still the master of that almost sinisterly hypnotic sound which makes his music at once forbidding and irresistible. Representative of the album is "Pussy I Cocky I Water." After a guitar fanfare, the rhythm section shifts into a narcotic-slow, one-chord skank, and singers take up the chant of strange words over which Perry, with his beautifully parched voice, preaches like a shaman possessed by spirits. Sonorities swirl vertiginously and bells and harmonica float eerily in and out of hearing; voodoo funk saturates the atmosphere like thick smoke. This keeps up (as does every cut on the record) for over five minutes; but where it would grow tedious—or nauseating—coming from a musician lacking the force of Perry's personality, instead it lures and entrances. *Mystic Miracle Star* may not be the essential Lee Perry work, but its best moments are worthy of any reggae aficionado's interest.



Trio
Trio
Mercury

By Eric Hedegaard

If there are some out there who suspect the Teutonic race of being icy and unfeeling, then the debut EP from Germany's Trio just might be confirmation. After all, how much can you expect from a Casiotone rhythm machine, a stand-up drum, a smidgen of guitar work and a lead singer with the vocal range of Henry Kissinger? Surprisingly enough, the six songs here suggest you get quite a lot. It's not the kind of stuff worth pondering, but it is good goofy junk rock, minimalist in the extreme, and all in fun.

So far the album has produced two certifiable hits: the wonderfully somnambulistic "Da Da Da I Don't Love You You Don't Love Me Aha Aha Aha" (with its neat "La Bamba" hook) and "Anna—Let Me In Let Me Out." Both get to the heart of the irony of ennui: they're so kicked-back, so flat musically, vocally and lyrically, as to seem filled with a furious kind of energy. It's quality speedball music. But for the money, the album's best cut is "Broken Hearts for You and Me." Sure, it's relatively cluttered, what with both a guitar and harmonies in evidence; still, there's no resisting such oddly-inflected lines as "Don't you cry-aye-aye-aye/Just kiss me goodbye-aye-aye-aye." Producer and ex-Plastic Ono Band bassist Klaus Voorman has come up with a winner in Trio. Let's just hope the band doesn't turn its stripped-to-the-bone sound into just another novelty item.

New Gold Dreams (81-82-83-84)
Simple Minds
A&M

By Nick Burton

On *New Gold Dreams (81-82-83-84),* Scotland's Simple Minds eschews much of its Roxy Music fixation (demonstrated on albums such as *Sons & Fascination* and *Sister Feelings*) in favor of a New Romantic style synth-pop sound. It's a healthy change for the band, and when Simple Minds refrain from the Spandau Ballet-like excesses that mar, say, "Promised You a Miracle," the musicians do their job quite well.

The Roxy Music influence is present only on two tracks—"Deep Sleep" and "Hunter And The Hunted"—while the rest of the tunes have a lighter, more pop-flavored sound. Among the better cuts, the title track and "Glittering Prize" (the band's most satisfying single to date) best exemplify Simple Minds' ability to tastefully fuse electronics with a strong sense of melodic invention and some snappy instrumental support.

Unlike most bands in the current synthesizer/pop movement, Simple Minds have learned the fine art of being serious without being too heavy handed. Now if only the rest of the world learned about this band.

Art In America
Pavillion/CBS

By Bob Love

Art in America is a trio of siblings—brothers Dan and Chris Flynn and their sister, Shishonee—from Detroit (via Lakewood, Ohio) whose debut album is a tepid exploration of the most tiresome conventions of progressive art-rock. From the surreal cover art to the mock-majestic tempos and heavy guitar-bass-synth mix—even to the signatureless guitar solos, Art in America remains lashed to a form that has been abandoned or improved upon by most of its early exponents.

Some novelty is provided by Shishonee Flynn's string harp, which adds a delicate music box embroidery to the ballad "Undercover Lover." Unfortunately the harp gets thrown in on every song, even on rockers like "The Line" and "If I Could Fly," where it can do nothing but poke feebly through the dense thicket of sound.

The lyrical pretense that characterized the worst art rock of the Seventies is also here. In the title cut singer/songwriter Chris Flynn moans "I need art," before chiding those "shipwrecked fools who dare to sell their souls to the chart." Flynn is a crafty melodicist to be sure, and some of the tunes are catchy, but when it comes to words, he should limit his subsequent writing to help-wanted ads.

Veteran producer Eddie Offord, who has worked with pioneer progressives like Yes, Todd Rundgren, and Emerson, Lake and Palmer, offers spotless studio direction, but can do little else to upgrade what is essentially uninspired material.

Though the album is shot through with a "serious artist" stance and contempt for filthy lucre, the ultimate irony is that *Art in America* is nothing if not a safe commercial venture. In all fairness to the consumer, the cover should contain the following disclaimer: Any reference to art on this album—and there are quite a few—is to be disregarded.

Holly Beth Vincent

Continued from page 17

soul-baring—"I could not handle the psychological impact of putting myself through that again"—reflecting her new lease on life.

Thus, Holly Beth Vincent survives, a worthy artist waiting for her time to come. And as she waits, she counts up the small victories—the glowing reviews, the rousing applause after a set, the daily progress reports from Ralbovsky—and learns to appreciate the ephemeral moments in her life, the fleeting ones that seem insignificant only to outsiders. "Last night was great," she says enthusiastically. "We played at the Busta Jones Megastar Review, and I got to do 'I Wanna Be Sedated' with Joey Ramone."

Not so long ago, you see, such a moment would have had a different, ominous meaning. There would be no celebration.

"I've learned you have to take care of yourself, you have a responsibility to yourself. I've had a glimpse of the abyss; so have a lot of people. What could be more utter bullshit than a 'live fast, die young' myth, to have kids reading how much fun it is to destroy yourself."

"I hope," she adds softly, "I never have to hear that shit again." ○

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GOLDEN OLDIES, THOUSANDS OF 45 records, oldies cassettes, rock & roll t-shirts. Send $2 for catalog. Stewart Estep Records, Box 10243, Alexandria, VA 22310.

LEAD VOCALIST LOOKING FOR band. Call Daniel (617) 927-2070 after 6 PM.

KEYBOARDIST/LEAD VOCALS NEEDED for original AOR act with management. Send demo tape & cover letter to American Talent Syndicate, Box 48162, Seattle, WA 98166.

Songwriters

SONGWRITERS RESOURCES AND SERvices is a non-profit organization dedicated to the education and protection of songwriters. For free information, write or call: SRS, 6772 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, CA 90028. (213) 463-7178.

Wanted

Wanted: Rock Interviews

FOR ROLLING STONE MAGAZINE'S "*Continuous History of Rock & Roll*" radio program. Original material *only*. Must be air quality. Payment upon acceptance. *Not* responsible for unsolicited tapes! Call or write John McGhan at ROLLING STONE, 745 Fifth Ave., New York NY 10151. 212-758-3800.

April 1983
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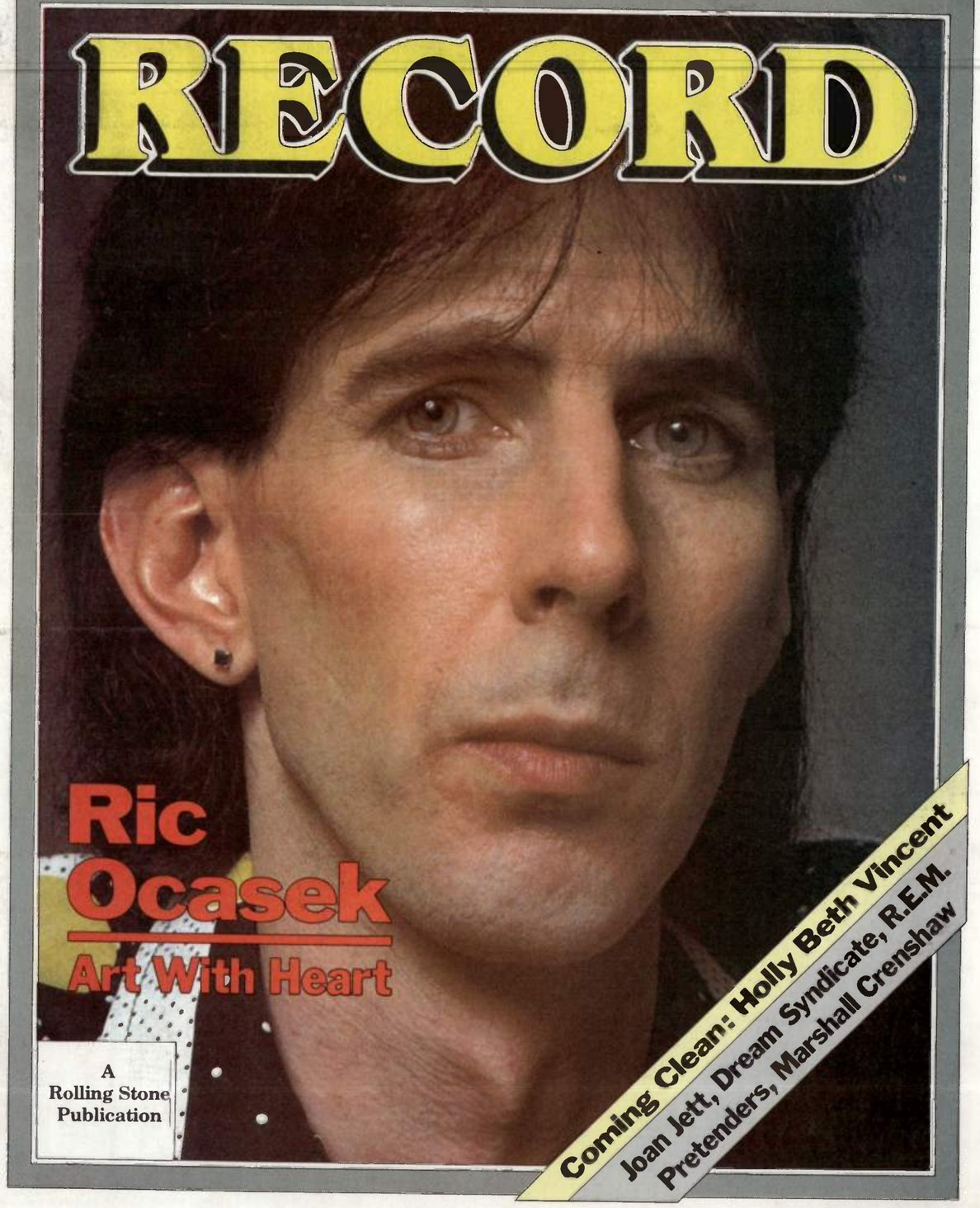
Coming On: Duran Duran / Coming Home: Marvel Gaye

RECORD



Ric Ocasek

Art With Heart

A Rolling Stone Publication

Coming Clean: Holly Beth Vincent
Joan Jett, Dream Syndicate, R.E.M.
Pretenders, Marshall Crenshaw