RECORD™

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(From left) Musical youths Dennis Seaton, Patrick Waite, Junior Waite; (top) Michael Grant, Kelvin Grant: "Treat everyone like enemies for best results."

Musical Youth Eyeballs The Enemy

By Bill Flanagan

NEW YORK—Two-and-a-half years ago in Birmingham, England, a Jamaican immigrant singer-songwriter named Freddie Waite, who in his native land had sung on thirteen number one songs with a group called the Techniques, convinced a family friend to buy a keyboard for his (the friend's) 11-year-old son, Michael Grant. Freddie began teaching Michael how to play the instrument, and they were soon joined in their sessions by Michael's nine-year-old brother, Kelvin, who played guitar. Freddie then urged his two sons, Junior (a drummer, then 13 years old) and Patrick (a bass player, then 12) to join in and complete the band. Freddie himself sang lead vocals because, as Michael puts it, "he's a small man." The quintet called itself the Cultural Music Workshop Youth and practiced in a community arts center in their neighborhood. The band cut a single on its own called "Political/Generals" that was aired on disc jockey John Peel's Radio One "alternative" program (Peel is legendary for his almost-obsessive devotion to exposing new bands), and caught the attention of Charlie Ayre, now the director of A&R for MCA Records in London, but at the time an A&R rep for A&M Records.

It was Ayre who offered the diplomatic suggestion that Musical Youth, as the band was now calling itself, employ a lead singer of the kids' own generation—better marketing hook, you understand. Enter the boys' 14-year-old friend, vocalist Dennis Seaton. Ayre moved to MCA, signed the group and put them in a rehearsal studio for six solid months with orders to sharpen their writing and playing. Producer Peter Collins was signed to work with Musical Youth, and their first project was an update of an old reggae hit, "Full Up," which had been re-recorded by the Mighty Diamonds as "Pass The Kutchie" (kutchie being a ganja pot). Concerned about the song's explicit drug references, Collins and band changed "Kutchie" to "Dutchie" (a stewpot used by Rastafarians at dinner). Peel aired the record, other British stations picked up on it, and the public quickly turned it into "Youthmania": during one week it sold 100,000 copies, the highest weekly tally for a single since Wings' "Mull of Kintyre" in 1977; in two weeks the song was number one on the British charts.

But stop: long before "Youthmania," there occurred a scene in which Freddie Waite bowed out of Musical Youth and, in doing so, placed his oldest son Junior in charge of the band. To Junior, Freddie imparted one vital bit of wisdon: "Treat everyone like enemies for best results." It's not a philosophy of paranoia, though—it's a no-nonsense discipline for forging a musical direction and then (pardon the expression) staying the course.

Example, courtesy Patrick Waite: "A reporter today asked Michael if he had any girlfriends. Michael said, 'No comment.' The man said, 'Why?' and Michael said, 'Cause it's none of your business.' "

"I knew why Michael said that," the bassist goes on. "It *was* really none of his business. He came to interview us about the group, not about our personal lives."

Recognizing that a 13-year-old takes his privacy just as seriously as an adult is an important first step toward understanding Musical Youth. The members of the first reggae group to dent the American top 10 do not strain to be cute or regard themselves as any sort of novelty act. Their age may be a natural selling point for publicists (and the press has responded more zealously than it might for, say, Peter Tosh), but "Pass the Dutchie" has enjoyed such unprecedented success because it's a good record. Musical Youth has already had a couple of follow-up hits in England, and one senses—as they begin the whole cycle again in America—a reluctance on the fellows' parts to trade too heavily on accidents of birth.

"I'm not looking for no fame just because I'm 15," stresses Junior. "Hey, I'm 15-years-old and I'm in a group! Look at me! Look at me!" The drummer shakes his head. "I'm not like that at all. People do grow. You can't help it if you're growing up."

Well, that's true and we all have to do it—physically, at least—but in Musical Youth's case, growing up creates some special problems. Thirteen-year-old Michael, for instance, wanders into the rear bedroom of a hotel suite overlooking Central Park and flops across the nearest bed.

"If it wasn't for Musical Youth," he announces in his British accent, "we probably never would have been to Holland, Germany, France, Switzerland, Italy. We probably wouldn't be here right now."

Michael lets that observation sink in before adding the punch line: "We'd probably be in *school*."

Horrible thought, that. What other up and coming pop stars have to contend with the spectre of primary education looming at the end of the concert trail? Falling behind in their studies is only one of the peculiar obstacles facing a band whose average age is 14.

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David Bowie: Enter Dancing

By J. D. Considine

NEW YORK—Upon hearing that David Bowie has returned to rock and roll, the average fan's first impulse might well be to ask, "Which one?" After a career built upon a series of rock roles and then temporarily sidelined by a second career in film and theater, it's hard not to assume that if David Bowie has a new album out, he also has a new persona to go with it.

Bowie's first big hit, "Space Oddity," provided the first disconnection with the story of an astronaut who literally drifts off into space; from there, Bowie latched onto the notion of distance as an artistic effect and pushed it further than anyone had imagined possible. When he burst onto the American scene in 1972, it was as Ziggy Stardust, the archetypal glam-rocker and chief harbinger

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Slow Going For Dead On New LP

OAKLAND, Ca.—Although work on their next record has barely begun and is expected to go on for months, as is usually the case with this band, the Grateful Dead have been far from idle. They've introduced some new material into their live show already and at this writing are developing "more than an album worth of songs," according to bassist Phil Lesh. In addition, the various band members have several irons in several fires.

Guitarist Bob Weir is "on the verge" of signing a new record deal with an unnamed label for his band, Bobby and the Midnites (whose bassist, Alfonso Johnson, was recently replaced by ex-Little Feat member Kenny Gradney). Dead keyboardist Brent Mydland's solo album, recorded at the Dead's Marin County warehouse/studio is stalled a little short of completion for reasons having to do with the Dead's calendar.

The busiest of the Dead members has been percussionist Micky Hart, with several projects in the works. Yamantaka, a collaboration with Tibetan bell virtuosi Henry Wolfe and Nancy Henning, is due out shortly on the ECM distributed Celestial Harmony label. Recorded in the studio at Hart's northern Marin County ranch, the album features the sound of many ancient instruments as well as several one-of-a-kind devices created by Hart and his associates. Despite occasional resemblances to electronic music, Hart notes that Yamantaka is virtually all acoustic.

Hart recently participated in an audiophile recording with the Rhythm Devils, an ever-changing group of musicians which this time included percussionist Airto and vo-

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TWO OF THE band members used to sell sea monkeys by mail; one was a gardener; another joined up "fresh from an experimental drug program." Today Wall of Voodoo, as they are known collectively, has cracked the top 50. What a great life it must be.


PHOTO: LYNN GOLDSMITH

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RANDY NEWMAN TURNS his discerning eye once more on the American condition and comes away with the shakes. The details of the artist's creative processes are recorded herein. And it isn't a pretty picture.

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LIFE WITHOUT FORMER guru Malcolm McLaren has been lovely, thank you, for Bow Wow Wow, who feel they've finally made a statement of their own as a band.

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LETTERS

Stray Cats

I DO HOPE THIS LETTER finds the *RECORD* staff in the best of health and happiness. As you may have heard recently, the old Blue Caps, Gene Vincent's band, got together for the first time in 23 years and recorded a new album that was released in England in January. We have a tour planned overseas for July, and are scheduled to appear on television in Switzerland and in England—not bad for a bunch of old guys. In their interview ("Misfits Make Good," February *RECORD*), the Stray Cats said they were heavily influenced by Gene Vincent and the Blue Caps. Recently I had a chance to meet them after a show, and talk about the old days. They're a good bunch of fellows and I think they've got a great future. Seeing their show brought back a lot of memories, too. Thank you for your time and consideration, and keep up the good work. DICK HARRELL
Portsmouth, Va.

Dick Harrell was the drummer for Gene Vincent's Blue Caps.

The Letter

FEBRUARY '83 WAS THE first issue of *RECORD* I ever bought and I must say I was very impressed—Luther Vandross, Sting, Hall and Oates, the Stray Cats and a favorable review of Michael Jackson's *Thriller,* all for the price of one dollar?!

My only letdown was the letters section in which an ignorant, narrow-minded ass let us all know what he (?) thought of MTV.

Considering black people's contributions to rock, being a rock fan and a bigot is a bit like biting the hand the feeds you, don't you think? But this moron obviously didn't put much stock into what he wrote, or else he would've signed his name.

Too bad—he would've made a great emcee for my soul/funk/reggae/Motown party. By the way, I watch MTV a lot, and while they do have some black artist videos, they're aired so infrequently that you're lucky if you see them twice in the same month.
SHARON L. AUSTIN
Trenton, New Jersey

THANK YOU FOR PRINTing Unsigned's letter. He or she may be an extreme example, but that is the type of mentality MTV, and for that matter all forms of media, caters to when they refuse to program material from black artists. I hope it (the letter) woke a few people up. BEVERLY L. MIRE
San Francisco, Ca.

Rough Trade

I FOUND YOUR ARTICLE ON Rough Trade ("Rough Trade Comes Stateside," March *RECORD)* to be quite disturbing. After seeing this band in concert, I and a group of my friends felt that the music, lyrics and obscene performance were a total insult to the intelligence of humanity. We felt especially sorry for women, who for years have been fighting for equality and asking not to be exploited. Well, there on stage Carole Pope masturbated and gyrated in a manner that totally demeans and exploits all women. We were amazed that their fans appeared to be getting turned on by this lewd and demeaning act. We overheard a group of youngsters saying that the band's music "stinks," but that they liked the lyrics because (Rough Trade) really knows how to promote S&M and punk! We questioned how someone like Carole Pope, who is extremely unattractive (we thought she was a transvestite), a pro-Nazi and totally lacking in talent, can get up on stage thinking she is wonderful and beautiful. The fans replied by saying they don't come for the music but for the "sickie" lyrics and raw sex show. Well, fellow Americans (I moved here from New York City two years ago), read the lyrics and save your money! PETER ELLIS
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

THE EMERGENCE OF A group like Rough Trade just may give Wendy O. Williams some competition: their money-making scheme is on the same plateau. It's an insult to Canadians that a group which promotes and condones sexual perversions (S&M), violence, anarchy, pro-Nazism and child pornography would even be classified as Canadian talent.

Here is a band which has survived not on talent (lacking vocally, and *what* music?) but by exploiting impressionable youngsters and homosexuals with such stage antics as simulated masturbation and performing fellatio on a microphone. Carole Pope at best can be described as a misogynist.

How would Rough Trade feel if some young, impressionable kid took their lyrics literally and the outcome was an act of violence? It's doubtful that they would feel any remorse for their irresponsibility. Being Canadian, it's an embarrassment to be represented in another country by a group which thrives on exploiting all people. We hope that American audiences will not get sucked in by this sensationalism, for Rough Trade's "attitude" at best is an insult to our intelligence.
K. LOWE AND G. RICHARDS
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

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TOP 100 ALBUMS

1 **MEN AT WORK** *Business As Usual* (Columbia)
2 **MICHAEL JACKSON** *Thriller* (Epic)
3 **JOURNEY** *Frontiers* (Columbia)
4 **HALL & OATES** *H20* (RCA)
5 **DURAN DURAN** *Rio* (Capitol)
6 **STRAY CATS** *Built for Speed* (EMI)
7 **STYX** *Kilroy Was Here* (A&M)
8 **TOTO** *IV* (Columbia)
9 **LIONEL RICHIE** *Lionel Richie* (Motown)
10 **BOB SEGER & THE SILVER BULLET BAND** *The Distance* (Capitol)
11 **CULTURE CLUB** *Kissing to Be Clever* (Virgin/Epic)
12 **ERIC CLAPTON** *Money and Cigarettes* (Warner Bros.)
13 **EARTH, WIND & FIRE** *Powerlight* (Columbia)
14 **CHRISTOPHER CROSS** *Another Page* (Warner Bros.)
15 **DEF LEPPARD** *Pyromania* (Mercury)
16 **JOE JACKSON** *Night and Day* (A&M)
17 **PHIL COLLINS** *Hello, I Must Be Going!* (Atlantic)
18 **MISSING PERSONS** *Spring Session M* (Capitol)
19 **THOMAS DOLBY** *Blinded By Science* (Capitol)
20 **PAT BENATAR** *Get Nervous* (Chrysalis)
21 **BERLIN** *Pleasure Victim* (Geffen)
22 **PRINCE** *1999* (Warner Bros.)
23 **DIRE STRAITS** *Twisting by the Pool* (Warner Bros.)
24 **NEIL YOUNG** *Trans* (Geffen)
25 **DEXYS MIDNIGHT RUNNERS** *Too-Rye-Ay* (Mercury)
26 **BILLY JOEL** *The Nylon Curtain* (Columbia)
27 **MUSICAL YOUTH** *Youth of Today* (MCA)
28 **MARVIN GAYE** *Midnight Love* (Columbia)
29 **TRIUMPH** *Never Surrender* (RCA)
30 **RANDY NEWMAN** *Trouble in Paradise* (Warner Bros.)
31 **THE CLASH** *Combat Rock* (Epic)
32 **SIMPLE MINDS** *New Gold Dreams* (A&M)
33 **TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS** *Long After Dark* (Backstreet/MCA)
34 **SAMMY HAGAR** *Three Lock Box* (Geffen)
35 **GREG KIHN** *Kihnspiracy* (Beserkley)
36 **ABC** *Lexicon of Love* (Polygram)
37 **ULTRAVOX** *Quartet* (Chrysalis)
38 **U2** *War* (Island)
39 **ADAM ANT** *Friend or Foe* (Epic)
40 **RIC OCASEK** *Beatitude* (Geffen)
41 **GOLDEN EARRING** *Cut* (Polygram)
42 **FOREIGNER** *Records* (Atlantic)
43 **SOFT CELL** *The Art of Falling Apart* (Sire)
44 **PSYCHEDELIC FURS** *Forever Now* (Columbia)
45 **THOMPSON TWINS** *Side Kicks* (Arista)
46 **SUPERTRAMP** *"... famous last words..."* (A&M)
47 **ENGLISH BEAT** *Special Beat Service* (IRS)
48 **DONALD FAGEN** *The Nightfly* (Warner Bros.)
49 **OZZY OSBOURNE** *Speak of the Devil* (Jet)
50 **DIRE STRAITS** *Love Over Gold* (Warner Bros.)
51 **TODD RUNDGREN** *The Ever Popular Tortured Artist Effect* (Bearsville)
52 **SAGA** *Worlds Apart* (Portrait)
53 **LITTLE STEVEN & THE DISCIPLES OF SOUL** *Men Without Women* (EMI)
54 **BLACK SABBATH** *Live Evil* (Warner Bros.)
55 **SCANDAL** *Scandal* (Columbia)
56 **THE J. GEILS BAND** *Showtime!* (EMI)
57 **JUDAS PRIEST** *Screaming for Vengeance* (Columbia)
58 **JONI MITCHELL** *Wild Things Run Fast* (Geffen)
59 **SQUEEZE** *Singles, 45's and Under* (A&M)
60 **GROVER WASHINGTON JR.** *The Best Is Yet to Come* (Elektra)
61 **LUTHER VANDROSS** *Forever, For Always, For Love* (Epic)
62 **BILLY SQUIER** *Emotions in Motion* (Capitol)
63 **KENNY LOGGINS** *High Adventure* (Columbia)
64 **JOHN COUGAR** *American Fool* (Riva)
65 **JEFFERSON STARSHIP** *Winds of Change* (Grunt/RCA)
66 **HEAVEN 17** *Heaven 17* (Arista)
67 **BOB JAMES & EARL KLUGH** *Two of a Kind* (Capitol)
68 **THE WHO** *It's Hard* (Warner Bros.)
69 **DAN FOGELBERG** *Greatest Hits* (Full Moon/Epic)
70 **PETER GABRIEL** *Security* (Geffen)
71 **CHAKA KHAN** *Chaka Khan* (Warner Bros.)
72 **LED ZEPPELIN** *Coda* (Swan Song)
73 **A FLOCK OF SEAGULLS** *A Flock of Seagulls* (Jive/Arista)
74 **GRACE JONES** *Living My Life* (Island)
75 **DEVO** *Oh, No! It's Devo* (Warner Bros.)
76 **TONI BASIL** *Word of Mouth* (Chrysalis)
77 **GARLAND JEFFREYS** *Guts for Love* (Epic)
78 **FLEETWOOD MAC** *Mirage* (Warner Bros.)
79 **CROSBY, STILLS & NASH** *Daylight Again* (Atlantic)
80 **ALAN PARSONS PROJECT** *Eye in the Sky* (Arista)
81 **WILLIE NELSON** *Always on My Mind* (Columbia)
82 **RUSH** *Signals* (Mercury)
83 **JOHN LENNON** *The John Lennon Collection* (Geffen)
84 **DIONNE WARWICK** *Heartbreaker* (Arista)
85 **DON HENLEY** *I Can't Stand Still* (Asylum)
86 **EVELYN KING** *Get Loose* (RCA)
87 **BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN** *Nebraska* (Columbia)
88 **SPYRO GYRA** *Incognito* (MCA)
89 **YOKO ONO** *It's Alright* (Polygram)
90 **OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN** *Greatest Hits Vol. II* (MCA)
91 **PARTY PARTY** *Soundtrack* (A&M)
92 **ROD STEWART** *Absolutely Live* (Warner Bros.)
93 **KOOL & THE GANG** *As One* (De-Lite)
94 **STEVE WINWOOD** *Talking Back to the Night* (Island)
95 **LINDA RONSTADT** *Get Closer* (Asylum)
96 **MICHAEL MCDONALD** *If That's What It Takes* (Warner Bros.)
97 **NEIL DIAMOND** *Heartlight* (Columbia)
98 **PAUL CARRACK** *Suburban Voodoo* (Epic)
99 **DIANA ROSS** *Silk Electric* (RCA)
100 **GLENN FREY** *No Fun Aloud* (Asylum)

New Artist

PHOTO: MICHAEL ROMANOS

(From left) Derek Blevins, Jon Butcher, Chris Martin: "We owe nothing to Jimi Hendrix at this point."

Jon Butcher Axis: Jimi Who?

By Dean Johnson

BOSTON—He is an exotic-looking black man with a flamboyant stage presence. He fronts a trio and plays a Fender Stratocaster. His first album was recorded at Electric Ladyland Studios, and it has been suggested that he copped his band's name from the title of Jimi Hendrix's second album.

Yet Electric Ladyland was chosen for its facilities, not for its historical resonance, and the band's name was dreamed up by a long-gone former manager. Nonetheless, Jon Butcher seems destined to be bedeviled by the "new Hendrix" tag (previously misapplied to James "Blood" Ulmer) as his band, Jon Butcher Axis, gets set to push its debut album on Polydor. However, Butcher feels the LP will clarify the group's image.

"Cosmetically there's a certain similarity between us and Hendrix," Butcher admits. "But once you get through that quarter-inch of cosmetics, nothing is the same, and if anything will convince people, it's our album.

"I cannot deny being influenced by Jimi Hendrix," he continues. "Damn right I was. But so were you, so was everybody. Maybe if it was '73 instead of '83, people would say it's a drag. But man, it's 1983 and we owe nothing to Jimi Hendrix at this point. So it's no stumbling block."

Butcher is a gregarious type, a natural showman. There's an easy, upbeat energy about him in conversation that suggests he always knows just a little more than he's telling you. He started playing guitar at age 12 (he won't reveal his age, but the guess here is mid-30s) after seeing Gene Autry handle one on a television show. Butcher is half-Aleutian, half-black. His father moved to central Alaska from Philadelphia to work on an early-warning missile system for RCA. The family moved to the Philly area when Butcher was in his mid-teens, and the budding musician began listening to the Beatles, Sly Stone, the Stones and Hendrix—"the normal stuff; I wasn't into anything weird."

While attending Graham Junior College in Boston, Butcher began participating in jam sessions in the school's cafeteria, and out of those grew his first band, Johanna Wild, in 1976, numbering among its members a ferocious but deft drummer named Derek Blevins. Blevins was an Army brat who'd left high school in New Jersey (he later finished) and moved close to friends attending Boston's Berklee School of Music. As Butcher's confidence grew, he began to envision a different sort of band than Johanna Wild had become. He placed an ad in a local paper for a bass player and Chris Martin, then studying filmmaking at Harvard, answered.

Martin, Blevins and Butcher went out as Jon Butcher Axis, and began playing some of the toughest bars in New England, primarily because they didn't fit into Beantown's new wave community ("The Boston rock press wouldn't piss on us if we were on fire in Kenmore Square," says Martin). In the spring of 1981, the trio was featured in concert on a Boston independent television station. J. Geils vocalist Peter Wolf happened to tune in that night, and was impressed enough by what he saw to ask Jon Butcher Axis to open for Geils on its traditional Christmas tour through New England. Eventually, JBA joined the Geils Band on 43 dates across the country.

In June, '82, the group again performed live on a local pay-TV channel (the concert was simulcast in stereo by one of the city's FM rock stations), and the upshot of that performance was a multi-album deal with Polydor.

But why all the fuss over a power trio, one of the most musically-limited groupings imaginable in rock? For one, as Butcher likes to point out, "this isn't a power trio. This is a bunch of musicians playing ensemble, and it makes all the difference in the world. First of all, it makes for songs. It makes for melody, and melody is the number one criteria for every song we use.

"Look, I can play as fast as anybody," he says matter-of-factly. "I can play loud. But it's all been done before. There's not a lick I can whip on you that you haven't heard elsewhere. So the other direction is colors, man, textures. If I make my mark, it's gonna be as a textural guitar player."

Those textures are evident in the expansive sound of the album, which features ten songs, each clocking in under four minutes and covering a wide range of styles. There's the techno-dance groove of "New Man," the Van Halen-ish guitar lines in the instrumental "The Sentinel," the grindo riffs of "Ocean In Motion" (described by Martin as "Michael Jackson meets Joe Perry"). But there is also the moody "Life Takes A Life," the crackling dynamics of "We Will Be As One," the soft but incessant cadences of "Fairlight," and the Byrds-style guitar break in "Can't Be The Only Fool."

"There's definitely not one track on the album that says it all," Butcher observes. "No way. They all represent parts of my personality and the band's personality. There are elements of everything in it."

Though Butcher's style may in fact be many styles (he says Jeff Beck has been the biggest influence on him as a guitarist, with nods towards Bill Nelson and, for his acoustic touch, James Taylor; vocally, Butcher cites Paul Rodgers, Sam Cooke and Michael McDonald as singers he greatly admires. There is also something about his quivering tenor that is often reminiscent of Arthur Lee, Love's madcap leader), the lyrics certainly help define the man. "Life Takes A Life," for example, was inspired by the shooting death of an unarmed black teenager, Levi Hart, by a Boston policeman. "I think politics and music are the same thing," Butcher says. "We are not a political band in the general sense. But it's also not, 'Baby, I want to love you all night long.' We're not Prince; there's more to it than that.

"You see," he says, concluding on a philosophical note, "I'm a lucky SOB because I was able to do what I wanted to do and it went over. I was able to present my music in a forum that was acceptable to me and to the public. If politics is having a viewpoint, something to say, then I am a real political mother. If it's claiming to have the answers, then I am not. Listen to 'We Will Be As One' and 'Life Takes A Life.' That's politics, my friend, but *my* politics." ○

American Grandstand

By Dave Marsh

Of Lies And Great Artists

Elvis Presley wasn't the only singer of the 1950s who saw American vocal music, from gospel and Tin Pan Alley to blues and country, as a single spectrum, something one man might aspire to participate in continuously. There was also Ray Charles, whose ambition and accomplishments were no less sweeping. Like Elvis, Brother Ray intended to "sing all kinds." And he did.

Consider the pop hits Elvis and Ray Charles had during the early Sixties. Elvis sang a variety of pop ballads, many of them taken from the Tin Pan Alley publishers whose hegemony over American pop he'd helped destroy, while Charles had a string of country hits written by crackers who presumably despised him for his complexion. Presley's "Are You Lonesome Tonight" has long been despised for its corniness, while it is only recently that critics have appreciated how bold Charles' adaptation of country standards such as "I Can't Stop Loving You" really was. Even now, it's unfashionable to treat this music as seriously as the hard rocking Fifties sides that Presley and Charles recorded.

Yet actually listening to the best of such material makes it obvious that the performances are simply different, not inferior. That's not to say that anything Ray Charles cut for ABC-Paramount was as glorious as "Hallelujah I Love Her So" or "Lonely Avenue"—but loving those records does not excuse dismissing the magnificent "Crying Time," either. Similarly, even though Elvis reached an absolute pinnacle at Sun with "Good Rocking Tonight" and "Mystery Train," one would have to be foolish indeed to dismiss "Can't Help Falling in Love With You."

Ray Charles and Elvis Presley were fully conscious of these differences, and they didn't make their changes without good reason. To deny that they made outstanding music is to retreat into a perfectionism that is suffocating. One listens to great artists differently than others—it can't be helped. And while it would be foolish to praise *Self Portrait,* for instance, it would be equally insipid to condemn *Blood on the Tracks* because it is not *Blonde on Blonde* (as I once did). If human beings are artists, there will be rewards in every period of their work, even if some chaff is inevitably created along the way.

I'm moved to these ruminations by the release of *Wish You Were Here Tonight,* the first country hit Ray Charles has ever had and to my mind, one of the finest albums he has released in the past decade. Charles is ostensibly "returning" to country, but that's a tricky matter, because the two *Modern Sounds in Country & Western Music* albums he made in the early Sixties had songs with country backgrounds but urban, big band arrangements. The new record is straight country, albeit in a contemporary vein, sweetened with muted strings and brass. Even so, *Wish You Were Here Tonight* is more country than anything Dolly Parton or Conway Twitty has cut in several years.

> "The two stupidest great lines in the history of rock 'n' roll are 'Hope I die before I get old' and 'It's better to burn out than to fade away.' Those are lies, and they lead us to consider anyone who lasts with suspicion . . ."

Charles has been very well received critically this time, which puzzles me. Everyone agrees that his singing is superb but the song selection has been chastised. Yet "¾ Time," "Ain't Your Memory Got No Pride At All" and "I Wish You Were Here Tonight" are as well-crafted as any contemporary country-pop around. And no matter what one might wish, Ray Charles remains a pop singer, not anybody's rebel. He is no more likely to go outlaw than Joe Jackson (although I'd be willing to argue that there is more country, and more soul, in this album than in the last four or five Willie Nelson LPs, if Willie hadn't just tried to sneak a slice of reality past his audience with *Tougher than Leather).*

The real issue is what Charles does with these songs. To my ears his singing is flawless and, occasionally, as moving as ever: "Born to Love Me," one of the slighter numbers here, radiates non-generic soul, while "Let Your Love Flow" is so salacious, it almost becomes a hymn to the G spot. Certainly, Charles remains an extraordinarily commanding singer.

There's a logical temptation to compare the Ray Charles of today with the one who sang twenty or thirty years ago. I'm not certain there is any vocalist still living who would come off very well in that comparison—Stevie Wonder, perhaps. Frankly, we are not living in an age of great voices. Aside from John Anderson and Ricky Skaggs, it's hard to think of anyone who has impressed me purely as a singer recently, and the recent crop of English imports is as pallid as Boy George, who happens to be the best of them. Just as I prefer old Smokey Robinson but marvel at his ability to sing beautifully into his forties, I continue to wonder at Ray Charles, a more knowing singer now, even if not such a rambunctiously untamable one. Since I don't plan to check out before my time, I am always pleased to see anyone age gracefully. The two stupidest great lines in the history of rock 'n' roll are "Hope I die before I get old" and "It's better to burn out than to fade away." Those are lies, and they lead us to consider anyone who lasts with suspicion, anyone who reaches out beyond trendies and teens (who violates the dictum of "semi-popularity") as a fraud or a mediocrity. But if we can't learn to listen with pleasure to voices that have ambitions we don't share—if we can't hear the pure aching experience of a singer like Ray Charles, and learn from it—then maybe we deserve those lies, and nothing more or better. I don't think so, however, which is why I'll be back next issue.

London Calling

By Chris Welch

Punch In, Punch Out

SPRINGTIME IS PUNCH-UP time on the London music scene, and there's been no shortage of seasonal violence this year. First up: Soft Cell's Marc Almond. Outraged by some recent marketing moves by Phonogram, Almond,along with his manager, Stevo, trashed the company's offices.

The instigation for this behavior was Phonogram's decision to release the single, "Numbers," from the album *The Art of Falling Apart*, together with a free 12-inch version of "Tainted Love." The decision was made without consulting either manager or artist; Stevo, who runs the Some Bizarre label, learned of it when he saw the package on sale in a record shop. "I was enraged," said Stevo, adding that he felt it let down Soft Cell fans. So, Marc and Stevo stormed the offices and later claimed they had smashed gold discs, pulled plants out of pots and hosed down a recalcitrant lawyer with a fire extinguisher. A company spokesman played down the incident, claiming only one gold record was smashed and a stereo damaged. Said Marc: "I went berserk."

Soft Cell: David Bell, Marc Almond

Eric Burdon witnessed a different kind of violence when an over-enthusiastic fan tried to jump on stage during Burdon's performance at the Canteen Club, and wound up exchanging blows with a bouncer. Burdon, making his first London appearance in years, carried on singing, oblivious to both the pugilists doing battle only inches from his nose, and to the sound of breaking glass. The old rebel rouser can still excite mayhem and his new band, with Zoot Money on keyboards, was a gas.

Finally, there was more violence when the Stranglers played at the Odeon Hammersmith and crowds ripped up the seats. As nobody ever sits on seats during concerts anymore, perhaps they were saving the management a removal job.

In Through The Out Door

WHILE IT SEEMS that an old established famous brand name in rock closes down and goes out of business each week, there is no shortage of newer names and burgeoning stars to replace them, eager to snuff out their young lives and meager talents with the hard grind of tours, hits and the pitiless glare of publicity. First, the bands on their way out.

Thin Lizzy announced a tour earlier in the year, and when ticket sales were slow, hurriedly claimed it would be their last after twelve years together, much to the chagrin of magazines which had just run long interviews with Phil Lynott saying how the future looked bright for the band. The promotion ploy worked and the tour sold out. And when they played the Hammersmith Odeon the ovation was so overwhelming it made you wonder where all the Lizzy fans were in the first place. Said Lynott: "Thank you for supporting us for all these years." Watch out for the comeback tour.

UFO, another long-established heavy metal band, are breaking up after their current British tour. Lead singer Phil Mogg collapsed in front of 5000 strong in Athens, Greece, and wanted to quit right there and then. But the shows must go on, at least for a couple more months.

Nick Heyward In Mufti

AS MOST U.K. male singers now look like girls and vice versa, it doesn't really matter how you prefer yours. Nick Heyward, on the other hand, who won a lot of gay votes for his appearances in shorts in Haircut 100 (and let's not forget that beaming, shit-eating grin of his), has now affected a more butch look with James Dean-style turned-up collar and filter tip cigarette pasted to his lower lip. All this coincides with the launch of his new band and first solo single, titled "Whistle Down The Wind." Nick was the Adam Ant of '82 and then quit to restore his sanity while the rest of Haircut 100 tried to sue him. He now denies ever being an escapist wimp and refuses to bare his knees. (The suit brought by his former group was settled out of court.) . . . among the white hopes of the mid-'80s there's The The, which is really songwriter Matt Johnson, who played at the Marquee, where he was joined by old chum Marc Almond. Then there's Kajagoogoo, the prettiest new stars of EMI, whose "Too Shy" (produced by Nick Rhodes and Colin Thurston of Duran Duran fame) helped get their pictures pinned to the bedroom walls of the nation. They're now embarking on their debut tour, wearing more plaits than Boy George. The name means nothing, but the sound is pure dance pop (the trendsetter in this field is Orange Juice, currently hitting with "Rip It Up") . . . the Moody Blues are one bunch of veterans who won't give up. The Moodys will release their tenth album, *Moody Blues X*, sometime in May to coincide with the start of a world tour that will bring them to the States later this year.

PHOTO SUSANNE WHATLEY

(From left) Wall of Voodoo's Ridgeway, Nanini, Gray, Noland, Moreland: Music unto itself.

Is It Wall Of Voodoo Or Just Five Skeeks With Dirty Hands?

By Susanne Whatley

LOS ANGELES—"Wall of Voodoo—A Short History" is so rich in serendipity and instances of wrong turns onto the right road that you *have* to believe it. Let's look at a few examples:

Lead singer/ringleader Stan Ridgeway and percussionist Oliver "Joe" Nanini become acquainted while selling industrial tarpaulin by telephone in a Mojave Desert town. Keyboardist and bass player Chas Gray comes into the band "fresh from an experimental drug program," and Bill Noland, the newest member (late of Human Hands, who also supplied drummer Dennis Duck to Dream Syndicate), from a part-time gardening job.

A record company executive hears "ten seconds of a cheap demo tape" and signs them to a contract. Guitarist Marc Moreland gets heavily into collecting rubber dinosaurs, and when "Mexican Radio" is released as a 12-inch single from the band's second album, *Call of the West*, it becomes "hot as a matador's skull cap" on Los Angeles radio stations.

In Ridgeway's self-penned biography of "five skeeks who can't keep their hands clean," all this you *can* believe. But most significant of all, neither Los Angeles radio nor any other radio station gave Wall of Voodoo the exposure that just one solitary video did. "Mexican Radio," a macabre south-of-the-border frolic, found its way into heavy rotation recently on MTV, and the door opened.

"We had just been in Texas a couple of months before the video got a lot of airplay," Gray recounts. "There wouldn't be many people at all at the shows. Maybe a couple hundred. But this last time we'd have 600 at a show. We were kind of surprised it would take off like that. But the result of MTV was that it got a lot of radio stations playing the record. They had always avoided Wall of Voodoo a bit. I don't think they liked our name."

Is it too absurd to suggest that if the men in Wall of Voodoo weren't making records they might be selling sea monkeys by mail or writing scores for 16-millimeter underground films? As a matter of fact, that's what Ridgeway and Moreland were doing in 1977, after they had been introduced at a local punk club. Gray entered the operation as bookkeeper, but claims it was "a disaster from the start."

They were flooded with mail orders, and dumped their dehydrated brine shrimp enterprise, with the remaining sacks of letters designated "return to sender." Success in the film-scoring business proved elusive as well.

Ridgeway and Moreland debuted as Wall of Voodoo at Hollywood's Immaculate Heart Girls School, where they played some of their rejected soundtracks. Five months later they were sharing the bill with punk bands at decidedly offbeat venues like the Masque II. Then came Nanini, bringing with him assorted percussive refuse such as pots, pans, brake drums and anvils to add further non-sequitur to the Wall of Voodoo sound.

> Ridgeway: "My idea was to get together a band that could distill a lot of influences, pack them in so deeply you don't see the seams."

They pooled their funds to turn out a demo, a copy of which found its way to IRS Records head Miles Copeland, who, as mentioned earlier, listened for ten seconds and signed the group. A four-song EP, *Wall of Voodoo,* was followed, in 1981, by an album, *Dark Continent;* a single off the LP, "Can't Make Love," received only limited airplay. Pressing on, Voodoo toured Britain and the U.S., the band members collecting rubber dinosaurs and bolero ties at truck stops along the way. *Call of the West* was released last August, and now, these many months later, "Mexican Radio" has made Voodoo a staple of new music playlists. A coast-to-coast tour is currently concluding with some dates in Canada, and there's been talk of another video from *Call of the West,* possibly the title track. The story of a fortune-seeker coming west, the song stands as a bitter analysis of the American dream. In fact, apart from the snappy "Mexican Radio," the songs on *Call of the West* dwell on dark, serious subjects, all exploring the unpretty poetry of ordinary people's lives—a factory worker numbed by routine, a faded couple's laconic lament over another lost weekend in Vegas. One particularly eerie song, "They Don't Want Me," is a non-stop wail of loneliness.

Synthesizer effects create bizarre ambient sound to accompany what Gray calls "soundtracks to the vast urban barbecue." In "Factory," for instance, the chilling clank and whirr of machinery sets the stage for the worker's grim tale. On other songs, the synthesized rhythm sets a pace like automatic weapon fire on which the other instruments build a maelstrom of frightening sounds.

Often the music and the lyrics are at emotional odds, or the wall of sound so formidable it overpowers the more subtle lyrical images. But the twin themes of isolation and the quirkiness of everyman's life saga are present throughout, unsettling as a hot desert wind.

Wall of Voodoo packs the mix with loping country-and-western guitar riffs, bluesy bass lines, and a kaleidoscope of eccentric percussive effects, while managing to twirl pop hooks like lariats through the arrangements. Gray explains that when Moreland and Ridgeway were trying to match up the music with an evocative band name, "they knew it didn't exactly sound like a 'wall of sound.' It was weirder, more creepy than that. 'Wall of Voodoo' seemed far more appropriate."

Says Ridgeway: "My idea was to get together a band that could distill a lot of influences, pack them in so deeply that you don't see the seams. It becomes music unto itself."

Though the band is finally edging into the new music mainstream, it's been a tough climb. Music critics in Los Angeles haven't been inclined to nurture Wall of Voodoo's rise as they have other local groups like X, the Motels and the Go-Go's.

"We've been around too long for someone to discover us and champion our cause," states Ridgeway, who delivers lyrics with a ripsaw snarl but in conversation speaks in an evenhanded, matter-of-fact tone of voice. Whatever the critics think doesn't seem to bother him much. "I don't like the idea of elitist-style music. This is our version of popular music, our idea of what we'd like to hear on our radio, on our TV sets.

"We've cut our own area for it. We've been out there for four years with machetes hacking away at the punk underbrush, saying, 'C'mon, let's go this way.' Every year there's another band coming out and changing peoples' idea of what music is. This happens to be our reality." ○

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Simple Minds Hope U.S. Tour Will Put 'Dream' In Focus

NEWPORT BEACH, Ca.—Having been together for almost six years, and with six albums to their credit, Scotland's (Glasgow, to be specific) Simple Minds are making a bid for American acceptance with their first U.S. album, *New Gold Dream (81-82-83-84),* recently released by A&M Records (Stiff Records had put out a compilation, *Themes For Great Cities,* here in 1981).

Simple Minds' music is a sparkling mixture of the band's early progressive rock influences such as Roxy Music and Genesis, combined with the technology usually associated with the British synthesizer pop movement. But the band doesn't want to be categorized with the current influx of synth acts. "There was a period," explains guitarist Charlie Burchill, "when we were classed very heavily in amongst Kraftwerk, Depeche Mode, Soft Cell and Human League, and we were getting accepted by their kind of audience because they had this preconception that we were similar. But on the other hand, we were getting a lot of rock fans because we're still using conventional instruments. But it's a happy medium. It gives us a whole scope."

PHOTO: PAUL CANTY/RETINA LTD.

Simple Minds

Burchill, along with vocalist/lyricist Jim Kerr, keyboardist Mick MacNeil, bassist Derek Forbes and drummer Mel Gaynor are enthusiastic about *New Gold Dream (81-82-83-84),* and they're eager to get on with touring. "We're at our happiest when we're on the road" explains Burchill. "We want to communicate in a strong way with our live performances, and that I think will put a focus on the album."

Although the band has played a few dates in the U.S. before, this will be their first extensive tour. The two singles from the album—"Promised You a Miracle" and "Glittering Prize"—have already been dance club successes, and both tunes are finding their way onto American radio playlists. Having been both a critical and commercial success in Europe, *New Gold Dream (81-82-83-84)* should easily find favor with American listeners with its tastefully melodic approach and its intelligent use of electronics. "Considering it's the first official album of ours released in America," Burchill says, "it'll be interesting to see what kind of reaction it picks up. I think everyone will understand it."

—Nick Burton

Ray Manzarek's Rocking Orff On 'Carmina Burana' Project

NEW YORK—Ray Manzarek had recorded a rock 'n' roll version of the early 20th century symphony "Carmina Burana," and thought it was time to put his work to the ultimate test. So he invited a teenaged Doors fan from Long Island to listen to a rough mix.

"I don't know," the kid warned before the tape started rolling. "I don't much like classical music."

"He ended up staying the whole day," recalls Manzarek. "When it was over, he said, 'My friends on the Island are going to love this record.' I knew we were on the right track."

Manzarek's *Carmina Burana* is the work of Carl Orff, who fashioned the symphony from the chants of 13th century renegade monks. Originally, Manzarek and his producer, the noted electronic composer Philip Glass, intended to cut part of Orff's symphony as well as compositions by Erik Satie and original material by Manzarek (November RECORD); but once into Orff, producer and artist built up a full head of steam—as well as enthusiasm—and shelved everything else.

Manzarek says in place of the "implied pulse" of Orff's composition, he's inserted electric bass, drums and keyboards. He's also made a few chord changes, "goosed the tempo" a bit in spots, and done some minor editing (the LP eliminates about one-fourth of Orff's original composition). However, Manzarek's version is remarkably faithful to Orff's in terms of notes and time signatures.

"I hope it turns more young people to serious music," Manzarek says. "In that respect it's sort of a crusade. But in the end, it's four-on-the-floor."

—Mark Mehler

PHOTO: ROBERT MATHEU

Ray Manzarek: A four-on-the-floor crusade

Self-Made Lene Lovich Plans To 'Make Something Happen'

NEW YORK—It's one thing for an artist to finance a record, but when an artist lays out thousands of dollars for a world tour of sorts, that, as the expression has it, is a whole 'nother smoke.

Yet Lene Lovich is opening up her own purse to pay for a four-month jaunt through North America, Australia, Japan, Thailand and India.

"I've always been attracted to self-made people," Lovich says by way of explaining her strategy. "I'm self-made myself. You know my record label (Stiff) has no more offices here, so I'm totally independent, and it's up to me to take care of things. Right now, I'm here because I want to play in America, I want to thrill myself with music. There's no other reason to be in this business is there?"

Lovich, who hasn't appeared in the States in some eighteen months, is, by economic necessity, keeping her shows simple.

"We don't do videos, slides, special effects," she explains. "It's a very direct, personal show. I want the audience to know me, and I want to see their faces."

Her current band—guitarist Les Chappell (her writing partner), bassist Ron Francois, drummer Steve Goulding (from the Rumour) and keyboardists Ben Barson and Lindon Connah—is strongly rhythm-oriented, while Lovich's vocals continue, in the artist's words, to "pick out certain frequencies and bear down on them."

She seems reasonably happy with the response to her recent LP, *No Man's Land,* and expects the tour to revive interest in the record, but the best she is hoping for "is not to lose money.

"What's important," Lovich says, "is that I plan to stay around, and at this point I've never felt more ambitious about the future, never felt more on top of things. I remember as a child growing up in a non-artistic family and being told I couldn't sing. But I kept at it. It's important for all of us to make something happen, to make our mark on the world."

—Mark Mehler

PHOTO: LAURA LEVINE

Lene Lovich: "I want to thrill myself with music."

Caution: This Hazard Could Be Dangerous

NEW YORK—The Philadelphia story has always been an integral part of rock's, but it has been a while since W.C. Fields' favorite city came up with a musician with national potential. Enter Robert Hazard, whose self-described "folk songs" are delivered with a powerful backing that nearly matches the mainstream attack of Tom Petty's Heartbreakers or Bob Seger's Silver Bullet Band.

"The important part of our sound is the blend between the guitars and keyboards—it's really thick," the angular Hazard explains in a conference room in RCA's Manhattan offices. "But I still write on an acoustic guitar, so basically the songs are still folk songs." No wonder: his initial interest in music centered on Bob Dylan and Eric Andersen. After years spent playing in garage bands, singing country music and gigging with a reggae band called Pride, Hazard finally settled on the approach that gained him airplay on Philly and New York radio stations and raves from critics. When shopping for labels got him nowhere, Hazard pressed up his own record, which began "selling like hotcakes" to a sizable local following. RCA eventually took interest, re-mixed three tracks and released the disc as part of its mini-album campaign.

Hazard's writing speaks of frustration; "Out of the Blue" cautions "you want to win, you got to play their game," but "Escalator of Life" commands "you can have your cake and eat it, baby." Says Hazard: "A lot of the songs are messages to release people from cages." He also likens his music to U2's in that "there's a lot of things about growing up, those kinds of conflicts." And if the words don't tell the tale, the aggressive, surging sounds do. Now seeking out a producer (candidates including Steve Lillywhite and Colin Thurston) for a full-fledged LP, Hazard is anxious to move ahead, on the theory that time is of the essence. "We want to get the record out by summer because we think the new stuff is really hot. We think people should be hearing this as soon as possible."

—Wayne King

Robert Hazard

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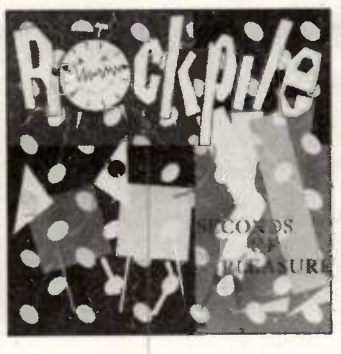

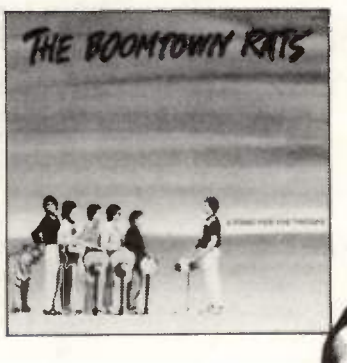

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WHAT? ME WORRY?

Randy Newman in the Real World — by David Gans

"I know

I'm a good songwriter," Randy Newman concedes, "but I don't have all the confidence you'd guess someone who is relatively successful would have. After I write a song that I consider completed, I'm all right—but between songs, I wonder about writing another song."

Newman doesn't make it easy on himself. "There's a vast area of songwriting that I eliminate before I start," he explains. "I don't see myself doing boy-girl stuff. Whether it's unrequited love or requited love, it doesn't interest me. And it's hard coming up with 12 ideas that aren't love songs—really hard.

"But please don't print any of the stuff I say about how hard my life is," Newman requests. "I don't want to hear myself complaining—there are people who actually have to work for a living."

Well, if what Randy Newman does ain't work, then Ozzy Osbourne is my Congressman. Newman has set a standard of quality for himself that, along with very few of his contemporaries, defines the pinnacle of the pop song form. His songs are literate, humane, germane, rich in musical sophistication, wickedly funny, and absolutely unique in their point of view.

On this last point, let's note up front that Newman's subject matter includes bigotry, self-delusion, loneliness and all the forms of mindlessness that make our society hum—all delivered in a voice as homely and constricted as his skills as a melodist and orchestrator are broad. Unfortunately, this concatenation of talents hasn't allowed the artist to line his walls with platinum: 300,000 is an average sale for a Randy Newman album, only one of which (there are eight, including his newest release, Trouble In Paradise*) has ever cracked the top 10, thanks to a number one single in the infamous "Short People." Yet Newman is highly regarded by his peers, several of whom assisted in the making of* Trouble. *"People like Bob Seger, Paul Simon, Lindsey Buckingham and Don Henley want to know what Randy's up to, and they want to be part of it," says Lenny Waronker, Newman's producer and best friend (and, since last October, the president of his label, Warner Bros.). "Artists like Randy affect other artists and help set standards for the music industry."*

Faced with declining fortunes in the record business, Newman has decided to abandon what he jokingly refers to as a stance of "hipness" and actively promote Trouble In Paradise. *To that end he has made a video of "I Love L.A.," the album's second single, and embarked on a solo tour of Europe and the States. Prior to hitting the road, Newman offered a few typically warm-but-bent insights into his relationship with his muse, the marketplace and the real world.*

PHOTO: DAVID GANS

You were recently quoted as saying, "What I like best is to make people laugh." But it seems to me that you're not satisfied just to be funny. There's a lot of truth to tell.

If there's just a joke, there's not enough. I've written songs that were just jokes, and I've liked them less well than things that say a little something.

It can be argued that your best work is that kind of black comedy. It makes you laugh, but with a sting at the end.

Pretty much. I would hate to think that I can't write a serious song, as I often have. But I've had albums where I didn't do it.

So we get black comedy like, but not too much like, Kurt Vonnegut and Joseph Heller. Are those writers you admire?

No, not very much. I didn't like Joseph Heller's book about the Nixon stuff (*Good as Gold*). Too mad—hated Kissinger too much and it affected the book. I've liked some books by Vonnegut very much—*Breakfast of Champions* and *Sirens of Titan*—but most of his stuff is a little too cute for me. I didn't like his intrusion in *Slaughterhouse Five* as narrator.

I don't like a lot of books people think I'm going to like. Like *The World According to Garp.* It got too apocalyptic . . . too much big stuff. And too much writing you could *see.* I can't think of a comedy sort of book that I thought was funny.

It sounds as though your objections are more technical—

No, I just didn't like them. I didn't think they were funny. I thought *Catch-22* was funny, by Heller; I thought *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* was really funny; Berlioz' *Memoires* are really funny—he was crazy. And the biography of Cellini was really funny to me.

I found myself referring to novelists in looking for ways to explain you—not that you necessarily need explaining—

I could use it.

I look for the same latitude a short story writer has. Writing about other people in the third person.

You seem totally willing to take responsibility for singing in the first person—for jumping into the skin of the asshole you're parodying.

That's what I do. It interests me more to do it. I don't know why more people don't do it. It gives you so much more latitude, doesn't it? I've heard Van Morrison do it, and Springsteen did it on his last record. He wasn't always Springsteen.

The audience is more intelligent than the people in my songs for the most part. I don't know if I could write in this form about very intelligent people.

Is it safe to assume that you're not overly conscious of what's going to sell?

It would be nice (to make money), but I can't change what I do too much. I've got to do what the songs call for when I write them, and they're not affected by what sells—I don't think. Maybe subconsciously my tendency is to write a whole bunch of songs like "I'm Different" or "Christmas In Capetown" which have no chance of getting played on the radio in this country. Maybe I want to write standards or ballads, like the '40s. I don't know.

On your earlier albums there were songs that were eminently coverable.

Not any more—they're too weird.

Now your songs are your own. When did you make that change?

I didn't consciously do it. The business changed. "Davy The Fat Boy," which I wrote a very long time ago, was without a doubt one of the best songs I ever wrote. It hasn't earned four cents in its life—unlike "I'll Be Home," which is of virtually no interest to me. It's made thousands and thousands of dollars all over the world from other people doing it. To me, the best of my songs are not the ones that are going to get recorded the most.

No conscious decision to move into your own thing?

I never make any conscious decisions about writing. I just go in there and whatever comes out comes out. It sure isn't coverable. A lot of people aren't going to want to get into these bad guy suits. I hear Linda Ronstadt talking about doing "Texas Girl" or "Emotional Girl," but it's rare.

There's some stuff that just plain wouldn't work, that nobody else could do. Like "My Life is Good."

That would be impossible. No one else will ever do that. Someone could do "L.A." or "Miami."

I wonder how much one has to understand the context you've created in order to understand your work?

I would hope not too much, because that's hard on people. If you come in on the second volume of a trilogy and you don't know where you are, it's not so good.

I think with the last album (*Born Again*) that may have been the case; you had to know who I was not to be pissed off. It's not a bad record. Musicians think it's a great record. It's a very rough record. No one understood "Mr. Sheep." It's that horrible, whining Robert Plant-voiced guy that's the asshole. No one understood it: they thought I was picking on some businessman. I would never do anything that easy.

It's like a style of songwriting from ten or fifteen years ago—

That's right (laughing)—like "Pleasant Valley Sunday." Picking these easy targets. And it was good, but I knew I hadn't done it well enough because not enough people got it.

Is there any point to be proved by all the tunes on your new album, and the theme—*Trouble in Paradise?*

Maybe it's stupid to entertain that thought. If you have any sense of history, why should you think that things should turn out all right? But they should. You ever see pictures of Capetown? It's beautiful there—lots of room, too.

You know, you meet so many young people who really think the

world is a shithole. There are lots of writers who do, and for me their work is virtually invalidated by it. I'm almost afraid to say it, because maybe things will turn on me and maybe I'll get hit by a car or something, but the world *is* a beautiful place.

I just can't understand why life isn't better. It's a lot more complicated than I ever thought it would be. When I went to Hamburg . . . things were getting a little rougher there, but they've sorta got better stuff, you know? People look more prosperous. They don't look *happier* out there in northern Germany, but . . . I don't know. I don't like to think about other people making products better than we do. Remember how we used to laugh at stuff "Made in Japan"? It wasn't that long ago. The music business may be in the old shitter, but cars and stuff—big, important stuff—it's unbelievable that that's happened. It's hard to imagine it. It wasn't foreseen that you'd look back with real suspicion at American products. And you do. Who's gonna buy an American portable radio? Are there good ones? Why shouldn't there be? I have this Grundig radio that's really great—it's an amazing little radio. Why can't they do it here?

It's awful messy. The most freedom and access to . . . luxury, for want of a better word, is probably past. The airlines are on restricted schedules—that's what in my isolated world I notice. It's not as easy to get around as it was. There may be things that my wife and I have done, or that were easy for us to do, that the kids won't be able to do. I just sort of notice that.

I have a confession to make. In a story about Greg Copeland I wrote that he "is more openly angry than (Randy Newman), who lacks the nerve to speak so plainly and can't adequately circumscribe such ideas in his black comedy songs."

I don't think I lack nerve in the stuff I do at all. Irrespective of the quality of it, there's no lack of nerve. There aren't many other people out there on the same edge, really.

But you do circumscribe ideas rather than assail them directly.

It doesn't interest me to assail racism directly. What am I going to say? "Racism is bad"? How often does it work? "Universal Soldier," that worked. I maintain that I'm brave in my writing. I've done things that sound pissed-off to me, but I don't say "Hey, I hate you, motherfucker," because that's not the way to do it. It doesn't work.

Maybe the problem is that subtlety doesn't sell these days. What are you going to do—hire a three-chord rock band to back you?

Yeah, it wouldn't be real. What am I going to do, make it sound like it came out of a tin can?

Your main themes are cruelty and insensitivity. Individual cruelty, as in "Davy the Fat Boy," which had its own brand of warm love, of course; then it moves on to a larger scale—institutional cruelty in *Good Old Boys.* And cultural as in "Short People."

"Short People" was just a throwaway. You're sort of right, but it wasn't done consciously. It's just ridiculous. I wrote a song called "Debutante's Ball" once that Harper's Bizarre did. What I liked about it was how mad the guy was about debutantes. Who cares? It's the same thing with "Short People": the guy is obsessed with something that's not important. Why bother?

It didn't seem like a big thing to me. I always said, "Yeah, it's about prejudice." TV people gave me that answer. I had to talk to a lot of them, and they had to have it on a basic, 30-second level. "The song's about prejudice, right?" "Yeah, the song's about prejudice," but it's not very important or anything. I mean, what is?

Then why did they cause such a big stink about it?

(Laughs) I was wrong. People are really sensitive about their height. I genuinely didn't know.

***Trouble in Paradise* concerns itself less with people as individuals and more with society as a whole. L.A., Miami and Capetown are seen as places that could have been paradises but didn't quite work out right.**

That's right. I'm always surprised that things exist in human nature. I don't know how it turns out so badly over and over—ugly buildings, wars, the poor not being taken care of—inexplicable sorts of insanity. I know it's simplistic and stupid, but I'm surprised by things like the Falkland Islands war.

I used to think it was nice that I could produce a bad guy character that people could recognize as being bad and maybe they would say, "I'm laughing at this guy's callousness," but I gave that up after Woodstock. I'd given up thinking that any of this is going to do any good; I just like the idea of an audience being able to laugh together at a kind of meanness they can free from. Who isn't better than the guy in "Davy the Fat Boy"? And the guy in "I'm Different"—definitely subnormal. There are braggarts like that, but that kind of expansive conceit is rare.

Are these characters completely developed when you go into the studio or do you learn more about them as you record?

They're always done. "Emotional Girl" moved around on me a bit. I had it, "she comes real quick, it's like a hurricane," but I didn't want to hear that over and over. So I sanitized it. It sounds better, it's more literate.

I wanted to get rid of the line, "Bobby get the rope" in "There's a Party At My House." It reminded me of the Hillside Stranger or the Costa Mesa Trash Bag Murderer. And all I meant was that this girl was getting too excited. I was going to change it to "goat," which sounded good to me on paper, but when I sang it, it was so much worse. The picture of it was awful, like one of those made-for-television Devil movies, so I dropped it. Chris Cross, he liked it. He was in the studio at the same time. He sort of convinced me. Why should he worry? He doesn't have stuff like that in his songs, and he sells millions of records. But he liked it and the song didn't work without it. I couldn't do better. It's like that goddamned seagull in "Baltimore" (Little Criminals)—I couldn't fix him. I hated that—"beat-up little seagull."

If you're like any other creative person, you'll wake up in the middle of the night ten years from now with the perfect line.

No, that doesn't happen to me. I never get an idea when I'm not sitting down to work. Never. I'm so doctrinaire about it that I probably exclude them. I don't like thinking about it when I'm not working. When I do work, it's from about nine o'clock in the morning until one o'clock, tops, period. I try not to think about it the rest of the day; it doesn't do me any good. I think that's why so many writers and composers are drunks—to turn it off.

Is writing that hard for you?

Yeah . . . not as bad this last time, though. I'm getting a little better. I didn't do any worse in the writing, and I managed to stay saner—more liveable. I was able to do other stuff, like go to dinner. I just get a little remote when things aren't going so well. I don't feel so good.

Are those the times when you write 24 hours a day?

No, I never write 24 hours a day. I can't do that.

So you spend your four or five hours in front of the piano, and you're in a funk the rest of the day?

Yes. Aptly put. I'm just not interested in anything—I'm waiting to go in again.

And yet nothing happens in the other 20 hours. That's either really amazing or really lame.

It's really lame. ○

"Please don't print any of the stuff I say about how hard my work is. I don't want to hear myself complaining. There are people who actually have to work for a living."

Night Ranger's 'Metal Pop' Scores Big First Time Around

OAKLAND—"We formed this band not because we wanted to get into music, but because we wanted to meet girls," says Jack Blades, quickly adding, "just kidding." His flippancy is forgiveable, though: Night Ranger, the northern California-based band of which Blades is bassist, co-lead vocalist and principal songwriter, has shot from nowhere straight into the thick of the rock action in a matter of weeks. "Don't Tell Me You Love Me," the first single from the band's debut album, *Dawn Patrol*, is popping up on Top 40 and AOR playlists from coast to coast, and MTV has placed the "Don't Tell Me" video in "heavy rotation."

Night Ranger's metal-rooted sound presents a few expansions on that somewhat narrow style, most notably in some sophisticated vocal arrangements featuring Blades and drummer/songwriter Kelly Keagy and background vocals from guitarist Brad Gillis and keyboardist Alan "Fitz" Fitzgerald. Gillis suggests "metal pop" as a fitting category: "What we're going for in our music is *commercial* balls." Guitarist Jeff Watson rounds out the lineup, giving the band a pair of six-stringers with complementary varieties of fire at their fingertips.

Blades, Gillis and Keagy first played together in Rubicon, a Bay Area band with funk leanings and a couple of regionally successful albums. After Rubicon broke up, the three men decided to stay together. Fitz, who was Blades' roommate at the time, left his post as bassist with Gamma to play keyboards with the new band, and he brought in Watson, who'd fronted a band of his own in the Sacramento area.

Their demo found receptive ears at Boardwalk Records, and the rest, someday, might be history. Night Ranger is currently winding up a tour with Sammy Hagar, and at the rate the Super Bullets keep showing up next to their titles on the charts, this band with "commercial balls"—ho, ho, har, har—might be around awhile. **—David Gans**

PHOTO: RON WOLFSON/LGI

Night Ranger

Commodores Find Strength In Numbers After Richie's Exit

NEW YORK—Since Lionel Richie departed as lead singer of the Commodores to pursue a solo career, there has been an intense, albeit friendly, competition within the group to take his place in the hearts and minds of the female following.

"The other night we played a gig in New York," says bassist Ron LaPread, "and when I got ready to sing, I looked up and there's Thomas McClary (lead guitarist) singing into my mike. It's competitive up there . . . you know, the women are looking for someone to focus on now that Lionel's gone, and all the fellas are trying hard to be the one."

Aside from this sort of good-natured jockeying, however, LaPread insists Richie's exit has had a minimal effect on the band's internal dynamics. The Commodores' next album is scheduled to be released in May, and LaPread says those who saw the group as simply Lionel Richie & Co. are in for a big surprise.

PHOTO: GUIDO HARARI/LGI

Commodores (Ron LaPread, top center)

"Those people are going to realize, 'Hey, the talent was there all the time, we never noticed.' Everybody in this group is a writer. Sure, Lionel wrote beautiful, melodic ballads and was a stylist who could take whatever singing ability he had and win people over. But Walter Orange is technically a great singer, and guys like William King write terrific ballads, too."

At press time, the Commodores were still sifting through several dozen songs, including eight or ten LaPread compositions. One particular favorite of the 33-year-old bassist is "So Nice," a reggae tune that typifies the sort of unusual material the group is considering. LaPread says the album will be the Commodores' most stylistically diverse and the strongest in terms of song narrative.

Following the completion of the LP, the Commodores embark on a tour of Asia, Australia and New Zealand, to be followed this fall by a U.S. tour.

Regarding the exit of Richie, LaPread says the group is entirely sympathetic. "When you get up into the 30s, you think, What have I done? Can I do it by myself? Our attitude is, if anyone needs to go outside to accomplish something, go and do it, and if you want, bring it back. As long as I live and breathe and play music, Lionel can come back to this group."

Speaking personally, however, LaPread says he does not share Richie's desire to make it on his own. "The Commodores energize me," he stresses. "There's a lot of strength in numbers."

—Mark Mehler

Grateful Dead

Continued from page 1

calist/percussionist Flora Purim, bassist Bobby Vega, and the Batucaje dance/percussion troupe.

But the most interesting of Hart's recent endeavors may never be released publicly. Shortly before the birth of his son, Taro (Japanese for "first-born son") last December, Hart hooked a tape recorder up to a fetal monitor in a nearby hospital. Then he and bassist Vega improvised over the tape of the compelling 151-beats-per-minute sound of Taro's heart, with additional music added by a violinist and a female vocalist. Hart played the tape back in the delivery room during the birth of the child. "It was an intense, wonderful experience," says Hart.

—David Gans

In A Spiritually-Poor World, The Call Remain Optimistic

NEW YORK—Michael Been of The Call has a lot to say; so much so, in fact, that he's phoned back from California to expand upon some remarks made in an interview concluded moments earlier. "Our songs reflect anger, sadness and joy because we want to communicate; we don't want to ignore the emotional spectrum of human beings. My lyrical concerns got more reflective as the world changed; they became more focused because the times seem to demand it. The problems today are not so much as from being economically poor, but from being spiritually poor."

Strong stuff, yes, but Been's outlook is one that The Call intend to fight for. The group, recently made a quintet with the addition of keyboardist Steve Huddleston, consists of Been, guitarist, songwriter and vocalist, drummer Scott Musick, guitarist Tom Ferrier and bassist Greg Freeman. Musick and Been went west from their native Oklahoma ten years ago, landed in southern California before heading in the direction of San Francisco—"it's a lot more open to original music"—and forming The Call in 1979. Finding a label took some time, but the process yielded one beautiful friendship and a powerful recommendation for the band's art. "Capitol Records were once interested, and a representative, knowing our regard for the Band, sent a tape to Garth Hudson, and Garth called us the next day and said he was real interested. He hadn't been involved in rock 'n' roll much since the Band broke up—he didn't like the direction it was going in—but he ended up playing on some demos and both albums. It's an honor to play with him."

After being signed by Polygram, their tapes were sent to various producers, and Britisher Hugh Padgham became interested, and so the group recorded their self-titled debut album in London. The experience proved one thing: "Our group is such a tight, self-sufficient unit, that to have an extra person come in and dominate kind of inhibited our freedom a bit in the studio." So for their newest effort, *Modern Romans*, the Call produced themselves. *Romans* features a much snappier sound, and a number like "Turn A Blind Eye" fairly sizzles. From the album's title and cover to rants against "false gods" through numbers such as "The Walls Came Down," mythical allusions and virtually Biblical, prophetic fury dominate the imagery, not too surprising for a man who cites Dylan as his main influence.

Been's touch can be heavy-handed, though; consequently the band has sometimes been taken to task for wearing its heart and pretentions on its sleeve. Been's response: "The risk of being labelled 'pretentious' is worth it; our music comes from a sincere feeling of hope. We don't want to be too preachy, but there's enough bands making music for entertainment's sake. I'm much more interested in using music as a non-violent weapon for change and communication.

"There is such a vacuum today, a loss of rock's original motives. We feel a responsibility to do something, rather than be an escapist entertainment band, making electro-techno bubblegum music. Rock 'n' roll filled my life, it kept me alive. A lot of music today doesn't fill your life—it fulfills certain fantasies or physical pleasures. I'm more concerned with concrete, universal emotions that have been with mankind since the beginning. And I think rock 'n' roll can still respond to those." —Wayne King

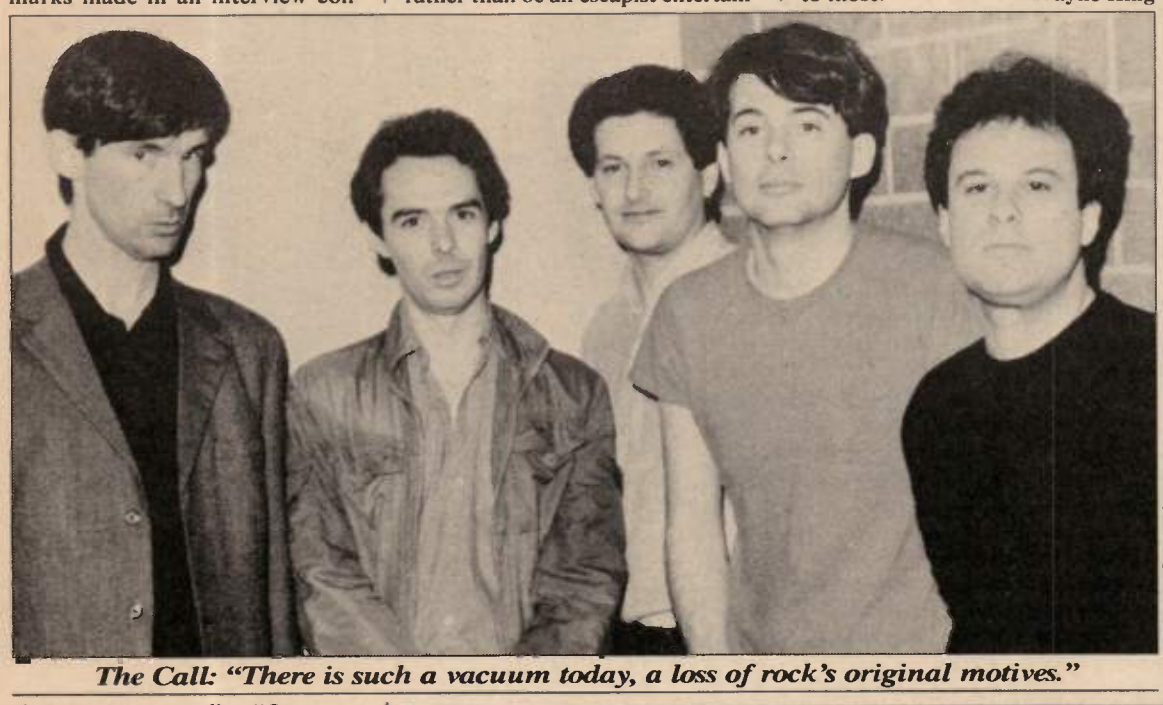

PHOTO: RANDY BACHMAN

The Call: "There is such a vacuum today, a loss of rock's original motives."

Carl Wilson Cuts Loose And Takes Charge on New Solo LP

NEW YORK—"For a guy whose job in the Beach Boys is keeping things together, making sure everybody's on time for rehearsal, Carl was incredibly shy with his own band," says manager Jerry Schilling of his major client, Carl Wilson.

"It seemed like during the rehearsals after the first solo album, Carl was tiptoeing around, he wasn't showing them who was boss. He wasn't the same guy I know."

Wilson, seated across the conference table, grudgingly agrees. "The guys in the band needed direction and they didn't get it from me. This time, though, I took over. What we did in four days with this new band took a few weeks with the last band. I feel it's finally my group and I'm ready to roll."

Wilson, whose second solo LP, *Young Blood*, was released this spring, suggests that in addition to being a better bandleader, he's working harder, singing better and putting more emotion into the music.

"I wanted *Young Blood* to be a singing album; I wanted to express sides of myself that I could never do in the Beach Boys, more hard rock, R&B-type stuff. I wanted to get myself to sing freer, with a greater dynamic range, and I wanted a more personal album, which I think I got. But Jeff (Baxter, the producer) had to torture it out of me. Man, I never worked harder in my life. It seemed like every track took days."

With his new band—featuring drummer Alan Krigger, bassist Michael Vila, guitarist Eric Turner and keyboardist Billy Hinsche (a longtime Beach Boys accompanist who first rose to fame as one-third of Dino, Desi and Billy)—Wilson expects to tour on-and-off throughout the year. As for the Beach Boys, their fate remains unchanged. "We're already beyond hassles, beyond it all. Yeah, it'll probably end some day, but we're still gonna be doing it. Right now, Michael's (vocalist Mike Love) got something going on the outside, and positive things are happening with Brian, and that's all making the group stronger. But the bottom line is we're people who love being in a room together."

—Mark Mehler

DAVID BOWIE

THE RECORD INTERVIEW

Continued from page 1

of glitter. While assuming a role as part of a rock performance was nothing new—Mac Rebennack's appearances as Dr. John the Night Tripper were in some ways an even more elaborate predecessor—Bowie's twist was that he toured as a rock star *portraying* a rock star, giving him several tiers of unreality to arrange onstage, and a whole range of interrelated images for his audiences to grab onto.

Proceeding apace, Bowie spent much of the Seventies giving new depth to the concept of superficiality. From Ziggy Stardust to the Thin White Duke, from blaring guitars to cool synthesizers, Bowie presented image after image, style after style, until it seemed almost as if he could only be defined by the poses he assumed. It wasn't as if he was receding into the shadows—surely the plethora of Bowie imitators, from Gary Numan and David Sylvian to ABC and Bauhaus are proof enough of his impact—so much as if his facility for constructing new roles and working out different formats had usurped his own identity. By the time he had finished his Berlin trilogy with Brian Eno (the albums *Low, Heroes* and *Lodger*) and his last rock album, *Scary Monsters,* David Bowie had become a victim of his own highly developed craftsmanship.

To that extent, his new album, *Let's Dance,* comes as much as a relief as it does a surprise. Not only has Bowie stripped himself of additional personnae, he has also done away with much of the distancing that marked his previous work. From the brisk pulse of the opening track, "Modern Love," to the final fade of "Shake It," *Let's Dance* comes straight on at the listener. There are no exotic locales, no overwhelming waves of angst, and aside from the jokey guitar riff to "China Girl," no efforts to infuse Asian or African effects into the music. Instead, the reference points are Sixties' rock and roll, classic R&B and everyday life, and the overall direction of the album is away from archetypes and characterizations and toward empathy and genuine feeling. It sounds very much like David Bowie without the mask.

Of course, Bowie has had plenty of opportunity to assume other identities recently; in addition to his acclaimed performance on Broadway in "The Elephant Man," he has spent his time away from rock performing onscreen. British audiences saw him last year in a television production of Bertolt Brecht's play "Baal," and American audiences will be seeing him soon in Tony Scott's film *The Hunger* (assuming UA/MGM find a way around its current X-rating) and a Nagisa Oshima war film called *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence.* Nor will Bowie fans have to content themselves with cinematic images alone, for Bowie will embark on his first concert tour in five years this summer.

Bowie gave this interview by phone from his home in Britain, rather graciously considering he had only just gotten in from Australia a few hours before. In addition to explaining the motives behind his new album, *Let's Dance,* Bowie also talked about why he has moved away from the distanced perspective of his old albums, what drove him away from touring, how he has come back to both record-making and roadwork with renewed enthusiasm, and where he currently stands musically and emotionally.

Since *Scary Monsters,* your last record, you've done the show on Broadway, you've done two movies, you've done *Baal* for the BBC. Why did you stop making records for awhile and what brought you back to doing this one?

The acting thing seemed to come thick and fast just during the time of *Scary Monsters.* Everything seemed to follow in a row, and I think it gave me a good time to settle back and think about how I wanted to record in the future and what I wanted to do in the future as regards recording. I felt I was becoming a little static with the kind of synthesizer-techno stuff I'd been doing; I wanted to break away from that. And what happened was I started going back into my very expansive and old record collection and hitting a lot of rhythm and blues things that used to be very much part of my life when I was a teenager. I think that kind of influence has crept into what I'm currently doing—only to a lesser degree. Not that it would sort of ostensibly hit you on the head with Elmore James riffs or anything. A plethora of old rhythm and blues techniques used on the new album.

I did notice certain things with very Sixties-ish touches, like the sort of pyramid vocal harmonies that are on "Let's Dance," and—

Absolutely, yeah. Also, one of the bands I was listening to that used to bring me a lot of enjoyment was the old Alan Freed rock 'n' roll band. And as I used to play tenor saxophone, that got me back into wanting to do horn arrangements and stuff like that as opposed to synthesizer treatment.

Another thing I found curious is that all the synth treatments on the new album seemed to try very hard not to sound like synthesizers.

Yeah, you're right. They're used far more in a keyboard capacity. The only real touch of synthesizers is string sounds. That's just about it. Everything else is very much geared to organic instruments.

In using all that—you mentioned you had been listening to old records—were you in fact trying to touch on roots?

Oh, very much so. There's always a vacillation in my mind between trying to experiment with new sounds but also to find the original earthy enjoyment that I felt for music when I started playing it. This time around I just really wanted to capture the same kind of enthusiasm instead of getting into another formal exercise.

There's a lot of guitar on your new album. But unlike the guitarists you've used in the past—Mick Ronson, Earl Slick, Robert Fripp, Adrian Belew—who are all very British rock guitar players, you've got two very American guitar players in Nile Rodgers and Stevie Vaughan. How did you come to that choice, which seems an unlikely pairing in the first place, and were you trying to get something specific out of them?

Yeah, two-part question, two-part answer. It ties in very much with the general direction I wanted to go in, which was to find a far more rhythm and blues underlying feeling to what I'm doing. So I had intended to work with a guitarist who could play in that capacity. What drove me to choosing Stevie was that I saw him playing in a jazz festival about a year and a half ago in Montreux. He really bowled me over with his playing; I thought he was one of the most exciting new blues guitarists I'd seen in years. I tried all out to get him to work with me on the album, which fortunately he did, and I'm glad to say he's also coming on the tour with me.

What about Nile Rodgers?

Nile, of course, he's got his own tour to do; as far as the album, it's just one of those things that happened. I really wanted to make a new start with musicians who I hadn't worked with and who were unfamiliar with my ways so they wouldn't try automatically to get into what one would now term a "new wave" style, or whatever—people who played straight in their own ideas. That's why I surrounded myself with brand new musicians. Sometimes you'll get too much familiarity with the musicians you're working with, and in musical terms ideas can become rigid because you read each others' minds too easily. It can become predictable. Not that it's happened so far with the other guys that I worked with, but I didn't want that to get in the way of what I wanted to do on the new album. Nile seemed like a great choice to work with because we both like very much the same kind of music. We were talking one night in a club about the possibility of working together, and it just seemed to come together for this album.

Could you name a couple of the influences you had in common?

Things like the Red Prysock big band, Stan Kenton, Albert King—the list goes on forever.

How much of an influence was the group Chic? I notice that "Shake It" and "Let's Dance," and to a lesser degree, "Without You," all have that Chic groove.

That's definitely going to happen when you get Nile working on rhythm patterns; that's part and parcel of his playing technique.

Had you yourself actually planned that out?

In the actual rhythm content? No, but there again, if you listen to the three cuts you just cited, they're not that far removed from stuff I was doing on *Young Americans.*

It's funny you should mention *Young Americans,* because I noticed you said "rhythm and blues underlying," and to that extent it seems like this is almost more genuine R&B, where in *Young Americans* it was trying to be more overt.

That would be because I was still pretty new to America and intoxicated by places like Philadelphia and Detroit and Chicago and all that, and so one maybe goes over the top a bit; but when you sort of mellow out a bit—over the years I've come to know America pretty well—then I think the whole reaction to American music matures into something . . . it just mellows out I guess.

How would you rate yourself as an R&B or soul singer?

Good Lord! (laughs) I think the great thing that's appealed to me about music—and my contribution, whatever it might be—is a continuing fusion between European and American styles. I think that the Europeans have a specific thematic mastery in terms of motif and melody which is distinctly European. When that's set against American musicianship it produces a very interesting hybrid.

Is that why there's so much in the way of rhythmic overlaying on the new album?

I think so. That's quite obviously the American influence coming through for me. But most of the melody lines still retain a very British or European feel. I mean, in American R&B songs you wouldn't have a middle break like you have on "Let's Dance." The melodic break is a distinctly British-type thing.

You also wouldn't have the incredible amounts of delay used on the vocal and the horns and that sort of thing. That gave the song a less obvious dance texture. Were you trying to put a little distance between that song and what people expect of dance music?

That has a lot to do with working with Bob Clearmountain. His mixing technique is just absolute dynamite; I could sit there and watch him play around for hours. He's got such an extraordinary natural feel for the New York sound. It's just great and exciting working with him. So there's a lot of Clearmountain in those things.

In terms of your dialogue between your British and European influences and your American R&B influences, how did that affect things lyrically? On *Scary Monsters* and the Berlin trilogy there's a lot of very specific references to Europe and Asia and a very strong sense of place in that respect. But this album seems to have, aside from an occasional mention of New York, less obvious sense of location.

I think if it has any location at all it's somewhere in an emotional content; it's in terms of humanism. I think I play around with just the fabric of what you can do within the context of a love song, how potent you can make it.

How so?

In terms of . . . well, the chord structure against, for instance, using "Let's Dance" as that's the most available thing at the moment. There's a certain *angst* in the song; it's ostensibly a dance song, but there's a particular type of desperation and poignancy about it, for me, anyway. That comes from devising a lyric that's going for an altruistic love feeling, and it just has a slightly evasive quality of desperation about it.

As in the lyrics "Let's dance for fear your grace should fall/Let's dance for fear tonight is all"?

Yeah, you kind of put key lines in like that and they grab you and make you wince a bit.

Wince in what respect?

Just keeps it out of sentimentality and more into a real-life situation, I think.

You said keeping it out of sentimentality: "Without You" is really the first overt, plainly romantic love song that you've written since . . . I don't remember when.

I quite surprised myself with that one.

What prompted it?

Funnily enough, that was the first track I wrote for this album. I guess when I was kind of playing around with that idea of finding my new location somewhere in a feeling area rather than being quite so dispassionate; taking myself out of the observer stance.

Was that an exercise or something genuinely related to your life?

I think it directly has bearing on my life; it also has direct bearing on what I would want and like to do with my music in the future, which is . . . I'm fairly certain I'll always want to play around with concepts, but I think more and more I'd like to feel that the music I made had a more positive, cohesively positive quality about it. Well, the times they are a-changing, so I think I should try to be a little less cold about my participation in music if I'm to continue in it. I'd like to do something more helpful.

Helpful in an ethical way, an emotional way . . . ?

In a more stabilized and positive fashion. I think it's probably a little easy to . . . I found it was easy to drift into a nihilistic state in my approach to writing, but I think I'm at the stage now where I can pull out of that. I feel my life, my own personal life, more positively, and in a nutshell I think that will be reflected in my music.

You once said "I consider myself responsible for a whole new school of pretensions." Obviously that school is going strong right now in Britain—Gary Numan may be on the decline, but Ultravox, ABC, Japan and God knows who else are coming on strong. How do you feel about these Bowie clones? Do you feel responsible?

Oh, yes, yes. I take a lot of credit for that, but it seems like a long time ago to me now. What I do with music is the most important thing to me, and as far as I'm concerned I've got into maybe a new school. I don't know how it'll turn out, but for me it's just as rewarding as that ever was. It's far more down to Earth and less flighty fashion, I guess, and maybe I'm not so worried about myself and my relation to the world, and therefore I can treat things as more than just merely an exercise or a lesson in formalism or construction or whatever. When one feels more positive about oneself I think you put more of the qualities of the heart into your work, rather than the colder aspect.

I can't help but find that terrifically ironic in the sense that a lot of the so-called clones took the stances you put up almost with an act of detachment and grabbed them with a real passion and belief, as if this were a way to live.

Yeah, but as with any art form the active participation of the audience or whatever . . . Duchamps said "The painting ends with the painter." How it's received by the viewer is something else again, and I think that applies to music too. My intention could be quite different from the way it's received, I guess, but that's half the magic of art.

Have you felt misinterpreted on any of your projects so far?

No. Over-interpreted maybe, but not particularly misinterpreted. So much of my earlier stuff came from areas of cutups or, when I was working with Brian (Eno), with various systems, interweaving of systems. A lot of it didn't come from any particularly logical place, so it's hard to see exactly where a misinterpretation could be, it's from such a surreal place anyway.

You mention a surreal place in working with Brian Eno. It also struck me as odd that you started working with him around 1977 when the bulk of energies in rock were towards infusing more passion, more raw feeling into the music, and you moved in exactly the opposite direction.

I didn't exactly perceive it that way at the time, but looking back on it, yes, that does seem to have been the case. I don't know, it always seems to happen that way for me (laughs). I seem to have moved out of somewhere when somebody else is getting into it. I'm not sure whether that's a hindrance or a positive thing. It's just a question of being in the wrong place at the right time, I suppose (laughs).

You said from your perspective you can't really control the way people are going to perceive what you do. But obviously you can give them a sort of suggestion in the way you present your work. Were you trying to present anything specific then?

I guess the time, the '77 period, was an overbearing feeling of anguish about what was happening with Europe, feeling the particular Zeitgeist of the waves of fear and desperation that were sweeping over Europe, and in fact are now sort of engulfing the entire world, I guess. A painter or musician is always open to that if he's kind of sensitive; a lot of what I do is strictly feel, believe it or not, in the older, detached things. It stems from just a feeling of what's happening around me; nothing I can actually put my finger on. But often when I look back, the period in which I was writing is captured in what I was writing at the time. Like a good short story writer or painter, I guess, it feels right at the time.

Weren't you going through a certain amount of personal anguish during that period, as well?

Yeah, I was just starting to leave it behind at the period when I met up with Eno again—I had met Eno a long time before, in the early '70s, but we never worked together. But that whole period was auto-destructive for me up to about '76; that's when I got out and started to take charge of my life again.

What about that period? That's when you were winding down the Ziggy Stardust role and the big glamorous presentations you were doing. How interrelated was that to your turnaround?

I allowed myself to be carried very much into a rock 'n' roll kind of lifestyle and started to get engulfed by it, briefly. I was able to get out of it and haven't got back into since.

You have a very big tour coming up, and it seems likely to be on the scale of the last Stones tour and the last Who tour. Those tours had as much to do with the celebrity of the performers—being able to see Mick

Continued on page 30

Six Good Sons Of The South Seek Some Of The Old Gusto

By Jim Sullivan

BOSTON—The last time it happened the band was still riding high and the situation smacked of scandal. It was the summer of 1976 and the Allman Brothers Band, which most exemplified the tight playing and brotherhood endemic to many Southern rock groups, broke up in a maelstrom of anger and controversy. The charges and countercharges were pasted across the pages of the national press: drug abuse, alcohol abuse, boredom, bickering and—the big headline grabber—Gregg Allman's testimony against former road manager Scooter Herring on charges of cocaine possession.

The Allmans reformed two years later. Wounds were mended and the playing—if not the recorded work—was sparkling. "There's a spontaneity that we had lost," an exuberant Butch Trucks said at the time. "It feels good to be communicating again like we were 10 years ago."

Now, five years later, the Allman Brothers Band is once again on the rocks. This time they've gone with, well, a whimper. "You could say that," agrees drummer Trucks. "Most things that start like (we did) end with a whimper."

Has the Allman Brothers Band actually broken up?

"On the shelf," says Trucks, who pauses, then bites down on the next word—"indefinitely." (Later, Trucks confirms that the band and its label, Arista, have had problems. To wit, "They wanted to turn us into Journey or Foreigner.")

"Well," interjects guitarist Dickey Betts, "we're just kind of tired of playing with each other," noting that Gregg Allman has formed his own band and is playing dates.

"I wouldn't say there will never be another Allman Brothers, and I'll say the same thing about Sea Level," says keyboardist Chuck Leavell, a founding member of the latter group. "I will say that both of those bands at this point are more or less suspended. This project is number one."

"This project" is a band without a name, but with a lot of *names*. Dickey Betts' name generally leads the bill, but, as Leavell explains after a recent gig in Boston, if there's room on the marquee, they'll list all six musicians. In addition to the three aforementioned players, Jimmy Hall, solo artist and former frontman for Wet Willie, plays saxophone and handles most lead vocals; David Goldflies, ex- of the Allmans, plays bass; and Dan Parks, discovered by Betts playing in a Chicago-based country-swing band, is on violin and guitar.

Times and trends have a way of changing, and this group, together three months and planning to record in March, is on the road, caught between past fame and hope for the future, offering no apologies for its blues-steeped, southern rock—"southern rock 'n' roll music is a legitimate form of music," says Betts, "and the essence of it is still as valid as it ever was"—but changing the emphasis somewhat. Leads—guitar, keyboards, violin and sax—shift often and blend more. Unlike the latter incarnation of the Brothers, Betts and Parks eschew guitar duels.

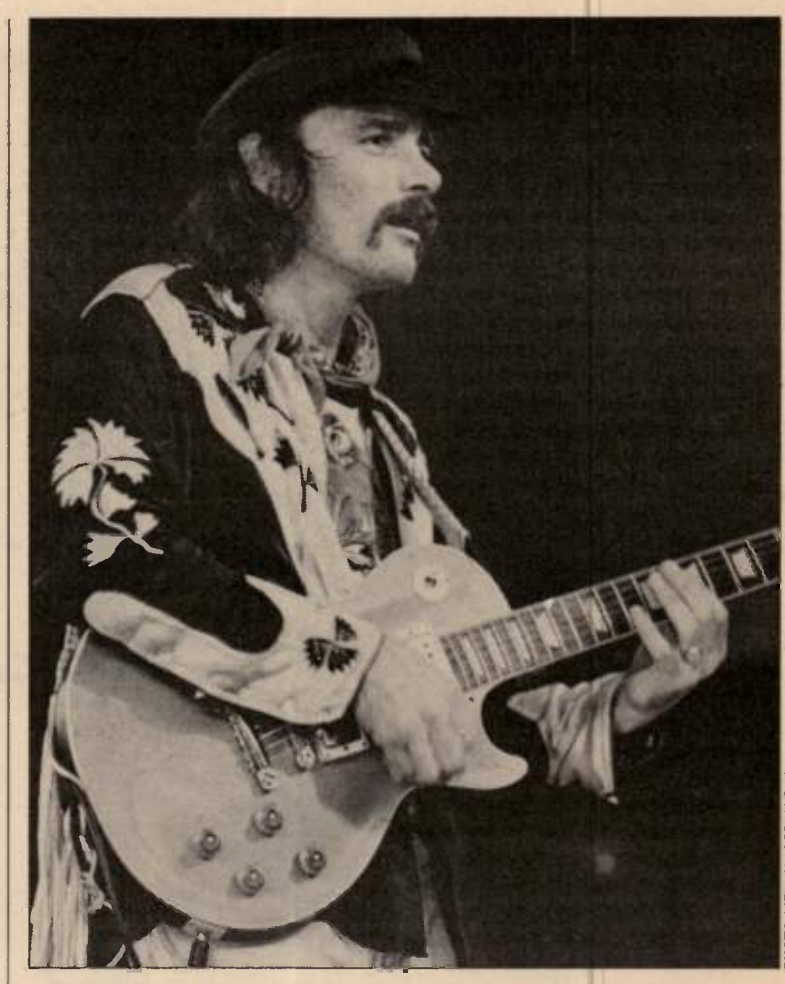

PHOTO MERRY ALPERN/LGI

Dickey Betts: "Southern rock is a legitimate form of music."

"That was a nice experience with Danny Toler," Betts says of his former foil in the Allmans. "And of course Duane Allman—I mean, we won't even have him in the same conversation, we both know where that's at. I worked for a long time without a second guitar player after Duane was killed and so it was good at that time to get back with two guitars. But the competition thing seems to get out of hand. You get to the point where you're trying to outplay each other too much."

There's other differences, too. Jimmy Hall, the group's chief focal point, is more of a showman than was any member of the Allmans. Songs are shorter, more poppy. Extended jams, the Allmans' trademark, are fewer, and grouped toward the end of the concert. The only long jams during the band's 15-song set here came during Hall's "Cadillac Tracks" and two Allmans' classics, "Jessica"—still a rippling river of syncopation and boundless joy—and "Southbound."

"The days of the long solo are over," Leavell opines. "Songs in the '80s are more concise and I think the public kind of wants it that way. That's not to say we're doing it all to please everybody. Those days when we did have long solos we said what we wanted to say; now we're saying it a little bit more to the point."

Leavell recently spent time with the Rolling Stones, touring Europe and recording on their upcoming LP, and Hall expects to do another solo album later this year. Yet Hall insists that this six-man band of southern rockers is an ongoing entity with plans to record together in the near future, label deal or no (Leavell and Betts say they're trying to get out of solo deals with Arista). "A lot of people ask this question: 'Are you guys gonna hang together? Are you guys serious about this?' There's not a weak link in this band. I want to see this thing gel. It's been so much fun, it just lifts me off the stage."

"I feel real fortunate to have some things going," adds Leavell. "The music biz has tapered off. There's all kinds of talk about it; people say it's not like it was back in '79. This ain't '79; this is '83 and you better wake up to it. You gotta go out there and scuffle. You gotta hustle; you gotta play and make things happen."

And as for working clubs instead of arenas . . .

"Yeah, do whatever it takes," Leavell says firmly. "It's just like they say to John Riggins: 'What are you gonna do to win this football game?' 'I'm gonna do whatever it takes.' What you gonna do to survive in the—I hate to say 'business'—the music community these days. By God, I'm gonna do what it takes. I'll play clubs and have a good time doing it." ○

Bow Wow Wow After Malcolm: Refusing To Go To The Dogs

By Stuart Cohn

NEW YORK—Most people shake your hand when they introduce themselves. Not Annabella Lwin. Bow Wow Wow's 17-year-old lead singer grabs your hand and pulls you halfway across the room. Definitely off-putting to the journalist looking for the polite, pro-forma interview.

Neither Annabella nor Dave Barbarossa, the band's 24-year-old drummer, play the interview game by the rules. They're not likely to answer questions directly or even appreciate your asking them, though their responses are humorous and often thoughtful.

But consider what they've been through. From 1980 to last year, Bow Wow Wow was the pet project of Malcolm McLaren, the svengali whose ethos—create an image, a style rather than a sound—guided the band's career from the very start, and who has been, uh, celebrated in these pages (by Dave Marsh, in his *American Grandstand* column) as a Radical Rock Theoretician and Consumer Fraud Expert.

When she was only 14, Lwin was the centerpiece of McLaren's back-to-nature fashion fantasy. Bow Wow Wow's albums featured *Dejeuner sur l'Herbe* cover photos, while the band members sported Mohican haircuts and sang anthems such as "See Jungle! See Jungle! Go Join Your Gang Yeah! City All Over Go Ape Crazy!" over a tribal Burundi beat (no bass drum) and minimal scrapheap guitar provided by Barbarossa, guitarist Mathew Ashman and bassist Leroy Gorman (all members of Adam's original Ants).

While McLaren still dabbles in the ethnic look and has recorded with Bronx rappers, Bow Wow Wow are now their own band. And, while they've learned McLaren's lessons well, and carry at least a sheen of controversy, they've paid a price for their schooling. But with a new manager and a new album, *When The Going Gets Tough, The Tough Get Going,* on RCA, Lwin and Barbarossa are free to reflect, albeit sardonically, on the past.

"You learn to live with being a puppet," states Barbarossa. "People think you aren't real, you don't really play the drums, you don't really write the songs, that somebody else does it for you. After a while you're just sick of telling people that you do. So you just laugh along with them, bide your time until you bring out your own record."

When The Going Gets Tough is the first record the band members feel belongs to them, primarily because it contains 12 original songs, none credited to McLaren. "This album is more from the soul than our other records," says Barbarossa. "Our goal was to really perfect the art of writing a really good song. And we tried to play it really well."

The album expands on the Burundi beat, with rockabilly, salsa and folk influences all prominent. Producer Mike Chapman gives the group a big, vivid sound and Lwin's singing takes on a more sophisticated, Deborah Harry-like edge.

If Lwin sounds more confident than ever, one might in fact look to McLaren's absence as the principal reason for her growth as an artist. At age 14, McLaren had Lwin posing semi-nude for photographers and tossing off such salacious tunes as "Sexy Eiffel Tower" and "Louis Quatorze."

"Malcolm always got me to sing these perverse sexual fantasies," Lwin says. While she didn't necessarily like what she sang, she didn't change the words either. "I couldn't be bothered. He told me to try to write some numbers. I showed them to him and he just laughed."

Today she writes her own lyrics and claims to be neither angry nor embarrassed about her past. When asked about "Louis Quatorze," for instance, she shrugs and says, "It's old. Those songs don't mean anything to me, to tell you the truth. It's just all these people telling me what they're about. Some bloke said to me, 'You know, you're singing about someone having sex.' I said, 'No, it's a very romantic story, actually, about a bloke *forcing* someone to have sex. It wasn't meant to be crude." She scowls. "People *are* crude."

Such straight-ahead (some may say risqué) numbers have given Bow Wow Wow a subversive image abroad. Even though the group has made its U.S. reputation with escapist pop such as "I Want Candy" and "Baby Oh No," Barbarossa says Bow Wow Wow is still out to rock a few boats.

"We think we're subversive, especially compared to other British groups like ABC who are more like Margaret Thatcher's family, all dressed up in their shirts and ties, playing their synthesizers, saying nothing to no one. We think we're the last bastion of the Roman Empire, the last group to keep rockin'."

After paying a huge settlement to get free of McLaren, the group is touring like crazy, trying to make up for lost time. The bitterness is there, but Bow Wow Wow has grown too, and the experience is starting to show in new songs such as "Love, Peace and Harmony," a plea for brotherhood from a band hardly noted for its humanitarian impulses. Explains Barbarossa: "The Falklands, Beirut, Belfast . . . somebody had to say something and this is our something. And when you can get 10,000 punk rockers beatin' the shit out of each other to it, you know you've arrived."

Though he sounds arrogant and aggressive, Barbarossa will, in a quieter moment, allow as to how he's "really very humble." Asked if anything good came from McLaren's manipulation, Barbarossa speaks subjectively, but might just as well be detailing the simple reason Bow Wow Wow's still around. "I come from a very poor part of London (East End), and if I wasn't in this group I'd be unemployed or in prison. All my mates are on the dole . . . I've just persevered." ○

PHOTO: LAURA LEVINE

Annabella Lwin: "People are crude."

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New WB President Optimistic About Industry's Prospects

By David Gans

OAKLAND, Ca.—The appointment of Lenny Waronker as president of Warner Bros. Records last October was a significant event in recent record industry history because Waronker came not from sales, promotion or business affairs—the usual source of top-level executive talent—but from the creative side: his previous title was senior vice president/director of artists and repertoire (A&R), and as such he brings to his new job a focus on the music in the grooves rather than on the numbers in the ledgers.

"Warner Bros. really became successful based on a few acts," says Waronker. "They weren't all the biggest sellers, but they certainly had a real effect on the image of the company. People like Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, Randy Newman and Ry Cooder added up to something really special, so when someone like Rickie Lee Jones decided she wanted to make a record, she knew that Warner Bros. would understand her." And when Mo Ostin, Warners' president and chairman of the board since 1975, decided it was time to bring someone in to share leadership of the company, it was appropriate that it be someone from the A&R department rather than a marketing or promotion man.

"Mo has always felt that he would love to see somebody from the creative end be part of the running of a record company," says Waronker. "That's why he has so many A&R vice presidents." Ostin, as chairman of the board, continues to run the company, while Waronker can "find out where I can affect it—how I can really help Mo. It's too big a company to be run by just one person; Mo is involved in so many things. I can center on certain areas."

Specific responsibilities have not been defined. "Mo and I actually sat down once and tried to decide what needed to be covered, but it was literally a one-minute meeting," Waronker laughs. "But there is a position there, and it's up to me to see what I can do. I'm going to try to learn as much as I can about areas that I haven't been as involved in—sales, promotion, things like that—and get a feel for them."

Waronker's practical education in the music business began in his youth, when his father, Si Waronker, founded Liberty Records. Lenny worked for producer Snuff Garrett while he was a student at USC, and after graduating he worked in management for Metric Music and then as a promotion man for Liberty. He joined the Warner Bros. A&R staff in 1966; his tenure there coincided with the California music explosion and the worldwide music boom of the late '60s and early '70s, and the LA hegemony that obtained through the industry's most successful period, which peaked in 1978 and has declined ever since. Those high years saw the price of talent escalate in much the same way that professional sports became a big-money arena, and when competing entertainment technology, narrowing radio playlists and other factors caused a drastic slump in record sales, the industry seemed to lose its long-term artistic perspective, turning instead to remedies that didn't exactly foster creativity on vinyl.

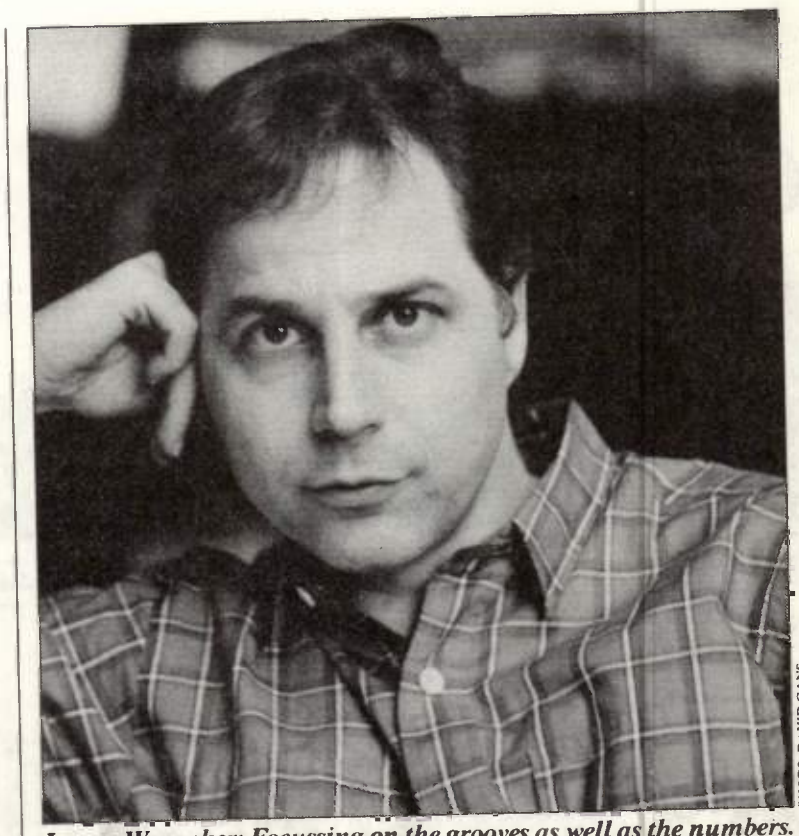


PHOTO: DAVID GANS

Lenny Waronker: Focussing on the grooves as well as the numbers.

"The music scene started to change in the late '70s," says Waronker. "Clubs started to allow bands without record deals to perform again—which was great. There were a lot of minor explosions, and some major ones—the Knack, for instance. As the New York and LA club scenes became more open, the record companies got caught up in following trends and signing bands based on a buzz—and sometimes the buzz was just a minor thing." When the industry's scattershot approach to talent acquisition failed to produce anything like the Next Big Thing and the bottom fell out of the national economy and the record market, the labels laid off staff members, closed branch offices and trimmed their artist rosters.

"When you're involved with the kind of enormous growth that the record industry experienced, there's no way of anticipating when it's going to stop," Waronker notes. "Things were selling so well that we got loose. That's human nature." The industry is now reorganizing and rethinking—undoing some of the excesses that resulted from those heady years. "We've made some mistakes," Waronker concedes, "but I think music is changing—and when that happens, everybody kind of stumbles for a while.

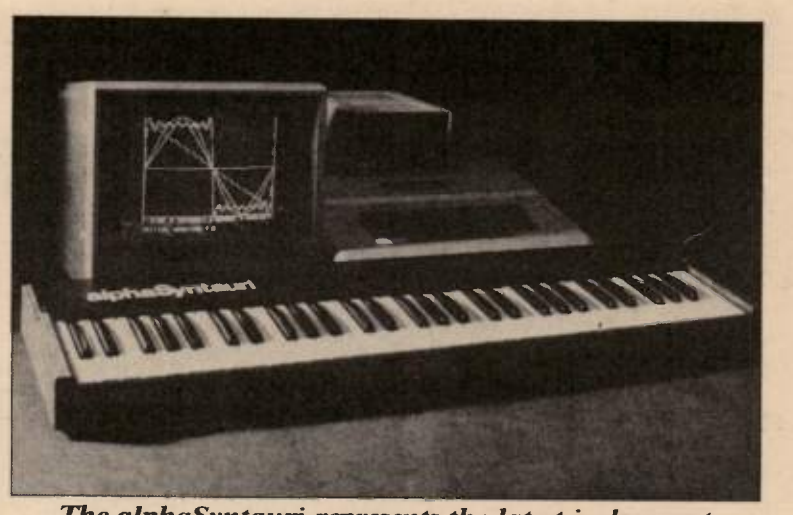
"Every industry goes through the ups and downs; we're in a down cycle, getting ourselves straightened out—but the fact is, we're selling records. It's a good business, and if we can get ourselves pared down we can be profitable. You can still sell a couple million albums if you make the right record." Waronker hasn't lost sight of the notion that instincts—and ears—are as important as short-term corporate considerations, that it's not only feasible but desirable to allow an artist to develop his craft over several albums rather than to panic and cut him loose if the first single doesn't click.

"I think that if you're going to sign an artist, it'd better be an artist that has longevity. We just have to find a way of signing acts that are talented but may not have it on their first record—but who can give us enough of a reason to make a second one," Waronker explains. Many labels, Warner Bros. included, have begun signing artists to limited contracts and releasing EPs at a lower price than full-length albums. "Some acts aren't ready to put out a ten-song album, but they might have five really good songs," Waronker notes. "With mini-LPs we have a chance to break even and find out whether there's something to build on. All acts don't have to have hits their first time out; if they do, we're in the wrong business.

"I think music is healthier right now than it's been in years—that's why I'm more optimistic about the record business than some other people. It seems to me that there's more interest in new music—young musicians taking risks, bending and changing—than ever before. The music is all that counts—if the music's good, we'll do okay." ○

Audio

Computer/Synthesizer Hybrids: The alphaSyntauri System



The alphaSyntauri represents the latest in low-cost computer technology.

By Craig Anderton

It's late at night, and you've got music on your mind—maybe an idea for a short orchestral piece. You walk into your 16-track studio, sit down at a deceptively standard-looking five-octave keyboard, and turn on your computer. You start off by scanning which sounds you want to use from an initial group of 100 instruments . . . hmmm . . . none of them seems quite right, so you select another group of 100 from a virtually unlimited library. Ah! There's that harpsituba sound you wanted. You then record your instrument sounds a track at a time, erasing, editing, altering the waveforms, varying tempos, changing levels, and generally sculpting the sound. But when it comes time to play it all back, there's no tape motion or rewind: your "16-track recorder" is actually the computer, and instead of recording sounds on tape, it has recorded the sounds you've just created into its memory.

Now you decide to add a drum part, so you hook up a commercially available drum machine. At this point, the computer generates timing signals which automatically synchronize the drum machine's rhythm to your composition.

To keep a printed record of what you've done, you can print out a score of the various instruments. The computer handles this task too; the entire lead sheet printing process takes only a few minutes, compared to the tedious hours you would normally have to spend transcribing music by hand. And that's not all: while you're "sleeping in" the next morning, your daughter is up bright and early, using the same equipment to study up on scales for her music composition class.

These are just some examples of what happens when you cross a computer with a musical instrument. While there are many computer/synthesizer hybrids—the Fairlight CMI used by Peter Gabriel, the New England Digital Synclavier used by Pat Metheny, and so on—the alphaSyntauri system by Syntauri was one of the first systems designed around a low-cost personal computer (either the Apple II or the recently introduced Apple IIe). While no one would mistake a $4000 alphaSyntauri for a $27,750 Fairlight, the alphaSyntauri's relatively low cost makes computer music technology affordable by those with a serious interest in music. And of course, if you already own an Apple II, then you can add on an alphaSyntauri system for much less—anywhere from $900 to $2200.

The alphaSyntauri system comprises three circuit boards that plug into the Apple II (these generate the actual sounds and interface the music hardware to the Apple), an organ-style keyboard (either four or five octaves), cables for hooking the various elements together, and software. Software is the key to using a computer, since computers have no "personality" by themselves. Just as loading in word processing software changes a computer into a word processor, loading in Syntauri's "music processing" software turns the computer into a music processor. You tell the computer what to do by playing notes on the alphaSyntauri's keyboard and entering commands on the Apple's typewriter-style keyboard. The Apple's color TV-like display confirms your commands, presents program options, and graphically displays such things as music notation and harmonic content of a sound.

Syntauri currently offers several music processing programs. *Alpha Plus* lets you define sounds and create sound effects and instrumental timbres and, among other talents, realistically emulates Hammond B-3 organ sounds. *Metatrak II*™ is a 16-track recorder program which stores the sounds you've created in memory. It also includes 100 preset sounds, sync-to-tape capabilities (this maintains synchronization when overdubbing tracks from the alphaSyntauri over to a conventional tape recorder), and syn-to-drum-synthesizers so that you can have rhythms playing along with your composition. *Composer's Assistant* provides polyphonic notes transcribing and score printing; when used with Metatrak, up to 16 tracks can be individually printed with 16th note resolution, triplets, key signatures, transposition, and even lyrics.

Music Master™ is a music teaching program. It not only uses the computer to quiz students on scales, notes intervals, and so on, but also keeps track of each student's progress. A teacher can access this information to find out how the various students are doing with their exercises (for security reasons, there's a password to keep students from getting hold of this information). *Dolphin Dialogue* is a "fun" program which lets you create dolphin sounds based on the actual parameters of dolphin communication.

In addition to the above programs, Syntauri is constantly working on new software to expand the alphaSyntauri's functions (just as buying a new cartridge for your video game lets you play new games).

So what are the limitations? For one thing, the digital sounds are different from conventional analog synthesizer sounds since they are based on additive synthesis (which combines many simple sounds to create complex timbres), rather than traditional subtractive synthesis (which filters and otherwise processes a complex sound to produce the desired result). Since filtering produces the fat brass-like sounds associated with analog synthesizers, these timbres are not available with the alphaSyntauri. Also, the present alphaSyntauri isn't too good at nuances; vibrato is either on or off—there's no "vibrato wheel" like you find on most synthesizers—and you can only bend pitch up, not down.

Still, limitations in a computer-based system will exist only until someone develops the hardware and software to overcome these limitations. When I mentioned the lack of nuance to Marvin Jones, a synthesizer expert who has worked on projects for Larry Fast, Roger Powell, and Herbie Hancock, he observed that the instrument could easily be made more expressive by adding some simple hardware (such as external filters or controllers), and writing some software to let this new hardware interface with the computer. That just underscores the beauty of a computer-based music system: it can grow. ○

Sound Signature

At Clapton's Side, Albert Lee

By Dan Forte

Eric Clapton and Albert Lee are each the best at what they do—at least according to the readers of *Guitar Player,* who voted them best blues and country guitarists, respectively, in the magazine's 1982 Readers' Poll. "After we received our awards, in San Francisco," Lee recounts, "I was talking to Eric in the dressing room, and I said, 'Look, we both got awards for blues and country—and we're both English guys!' He said, 'I hadn't thought of that.' They're American art forms! Like Eric said, 'I could go to Chicago and find a guy on the street corner who could play blues better than I can,' and it's the same with me—I know there are guys in Nashville who can do it better than me.

"But who are we to argue?" he laughs.

Albert Lee was born in London 38 years ago and learned to play guitar listening to country and rockabilly records imported from the States. He now finds himself in the unique position of teaching American guitarists how to play their own music—through his sessions backing Rodney Crowell, Rosanne Cash, Emmylou Harris, Jackson Browne, Jerry Lee Lewis, and even the reformed Crickets. He also appears on Clapton's three most recent LPs and has recorded two fine solo albums. His excellent self-titled Polydor LP, released earlier this year, is one of the few rockabilly recordings that sounds contemporary but remains true to its '50s roots.

Beginning piano lessons at age seven, Albert switched to guitar at fourteen when he began hearing American records by the Everly Brothers, Gene Vincent, and Jerry Lee Lewis. "I really liked a lot of the country-influenced rock 'n' roll, rockabilly," he explains. "I always liked music in that vein. My style has always been based around that. It would be country, but it would be the rock side of country, and the jazz side of country, too. The best country players I've heard have been very jazz influenced—like Jimmy Bryant, of course, who's my biggest influence, I suppose. In '73 I did a gig with him at the Palomino in L.A.; I was asked up to play piano with him. He was astounding. I think Bryant was into Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli a lot. I can hear it in his playing.

"I'd also try to copy the solos that were coming out on Everly Brothers records around '58 and '59. I met Phil Everly in England in '62, and I met his guitar player, Don Peak, who was really good. Actually, the best influence I had in those days was trying to copy the solos by Cliff Gallup on Gene Vincent records. He had listened to Les Paul and Chet Atkins and played an amalgam of those styles. It was a good exercise to learn his solos, because he used a lot of the guitar, as opposed to copying blues solos, which are often hanging around two or three notes and going for effect. It took me a while to get into James Burton at the time, because I wasn't using an unwound third string. So it was strange. After copying solos from Gallup and Scotty Moore, it was kind of alien to do that more bluesy approach of James'. I tried to assimilate some of James' bending along with the jazzy influences from Jimmy Bryant, and play a cross-section of all the styles and licks that I liked to hear from different idioms."

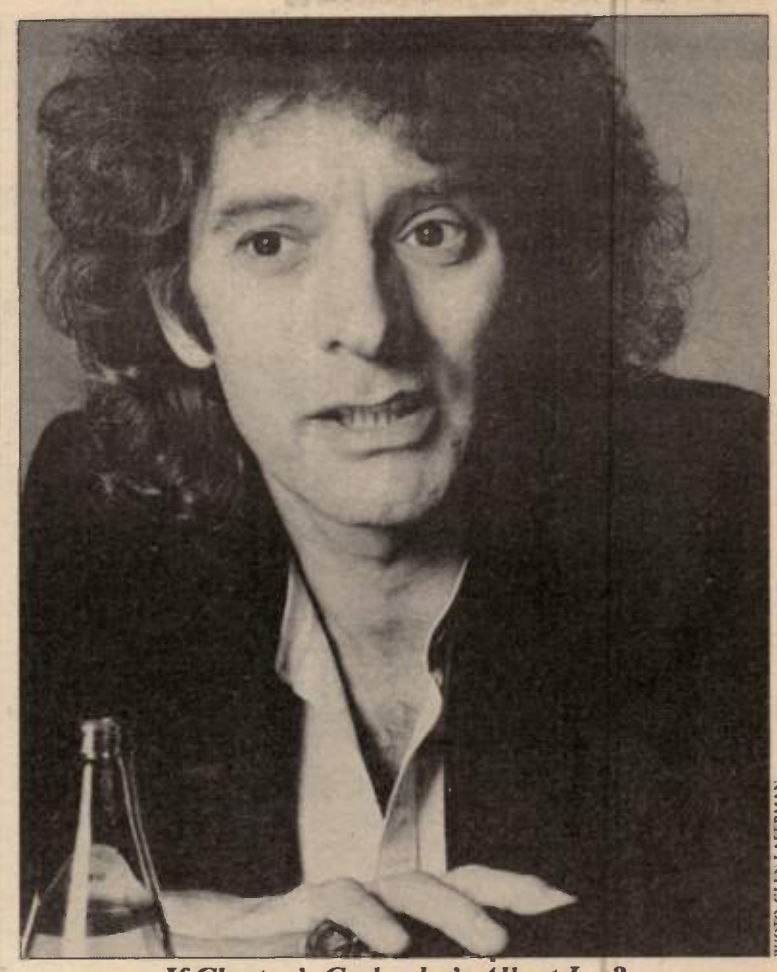


PHOTO GLEN LAFERMAN

If Clapton's God, who's Albert Lee?

The idea of an English kid immersing himself in country music seems weird enough, let alone mastering the idiom to the extent that Lee has. "You did feel frustrated because you thought there'd be so much more over here. It was hard to get hold of the right records. But it was a good place to be, really, because being away from the States, you could pick up stuff from *all over* America, as opposed to being in one city here and not hearing what was going on in another city. I think that's why the bands coming out of England in the early '60s were playing a lot of different types of music—like the Beatles. People ask me that a lot—'Living in England, how could you get into country?' It doesn't seem strange to me—I think it's more natural than anybody getting into blues in England. Country music is closer to the folk music of England than the blues is."

Albert's guitar collection currently numbers about thirty, although his trademark sound has always been made on the Fender Telecaster. "The ones I use on the road with Eric are both new Teles," he details. "One is a Phil Kubicki [Vintage Guitars] model from Santa Barbara, with Seymour Duncan pickups; the other is the new Fender Vintage series, which really comes close to the original. Phil's has a binding around the body, and he and Seymour put in a middle pickup, so it has a Stratocaster-type configuration. It's a black pickup, so you can't see it against the black pickguard—that was my idea. I've been playing a Telecaster since '63, and I've really developed a style on that guitar. I like the sound, even though it's harder work than with a Gibson."

Lee's two Music Man 130 amp heads are wired in stereo with two 2×12 cabinets, and his only effects device is a Lexicon Prime Time. "I like good sounds," he states, "but I hate having a lot of things between the guitar and the amp."

Though he managed to move from Emmylou Harris' Hot Band, which he joined in 1975 (replacing James Burton), to Eric Clapton's group seemingly with ease, Albert admits, "That's a big jump. Usually it doesn't really faze me, though, because I play more or less the same style, whoever I play with. I think that's why Eric likes me in the band—because we are so different. I don't think he'd like to have a carbon copy of himself up there." ○

Sound Signature

Checking In With Mister 335

By Chris Doering

If you've been on some other planet for the past decade you might not know who Larry Carlton is, but if you listen to the radio, go to the movies or watch TV, you've heard his guitar. The *Hill St. Blues* theme and Donald Fagen's "New Frontier" are only the two most recent in a long series of hit records to feature Carlton's melodic playing (the list also includes Crusaders classics like *Scratch* and *Free As the Wind*; *Gaucho*, *Aja* and *The Royal Scam* by Steely Dan; and Joni Mitchell's *Court and Spark*). Carlton's three solo albums on Warners, *Larry Carlton*, *Strikes Twice* and *Sleepwalk*, offer a concentrated dose of one of the most commercially successful and musically influential sounds ever created on an electric guitar.

Though Carlton's sound has its deepest roots in country music (in fact, the way Carlton bends strings recreates the tone of a pedal steel), jazz players like Joe Pass, Wes Montgomery, Barney Kessel and Johnny Smith were also major influences, as was John Coltrane. "Other than guitar players," Carlton says, "I've probably been influenced the most by Coltrane. I'm a real fan. It's a real learning experience to put on a Coltrane record and play. My two favorites are *Ballads* and *John Coltrane Plays The Blues*. *Ballads* is a real lesson in how to play a melody: he plays very few notes, very few solos—he just phrases the melody."

Another, unknown, sax player had a lasting effect on Carlton's playing when he showed the then-teenaged musician some jazz chord extensions on the piano. "Once I laid out the intervals of minor and major thirds on the piano," Larry recalls, "all I saw was a bunch of different chords sitting on top of the root. Pretty soon it becomes chromatic, but the first six are very pleasing to the ear, so I just applied it to the guitar. I see the shapes on the fingerboard and I can pick notes out of the shapes." The unusual notes and intervals he picks are one of the most often noticed aspects of Carlton's style, but he calls his approach "just a fluke. It just happened to be the way I visualized a very standard kind of extension."

The mechanical components of the Carlton sound were assembled through another series of flukes. Larry's main guitar for the past fifteen years has been a '68 Gibson ES-335 which he bought off the wall of a local music store. "When I first started getting calls for sessions," he says, "I didn't want to carry a lot of guitars around, so I thought I'd get a 335 because it has the treble sound and also the jazz sound. I didn't really know at the time that it was an exceptional instrument."

He bought his Mesa Boogie amp at a Crusaders sound check in 1974. "That was the first year that Randy Smith made them," Larry remembers. "I'd heard a little about them, but they were not available. Somebody from a local music store came to our sound check and asked me if I wanted to try one. I said 'Sure', plugged it in, bought it, and took it home with me. I have another one that I bought the next year, and a Mark II that Randy sent me to try, but they don't sound as good to me as the first one." Along with the Boogie, Carlton makes frequent use of a tweed Fender Deluxe—which he used for his most famous solo for Steely Dan, on *The Royal Scam's* "Kid Charlemagne."

Although he's known as "Mr. 335" for his main guitar, Larry has recently begun to use a Korg guitar synthesizer (heard in fills on *Hill St. Blues*) and a couple of Fender-style guitars custom made by Mike McGuire of Valley Arts Guitars. "They gave me a Strat in 1980," Carlton reports, "and it took a year of Mike and me messing with it to get it the way I really like it to feel. I pulled it out the night we cut 'Sleepwalk' and that became the sound for the record. I just fell in love with it. It's a quilted maple body and a Schecter neck with a rosewood fingerboard which we customized to the way I like it, with a flat fingerboard and big frets."

"Recently we built a custom Tele for me. It sounds great, cause we put the new Floyd Rose tremolo system on it, which has fine-tuning knobs on the back. Mike made this guitar very special. There's an extra inch where the neck joins the body so it's more rigid. It's just a great instrument."

Between writing, producing and playing on his solo albums, guest sessions for old friends, and outside productions like Robert Kraft's *Retro Active* and an upcoming album for Bill Withers, "Mr. 335" doesn't have much time left for practicing. In fact, he says, "the last thing I worked on technically, about 1972 or 73, was my left-hand vibrato. I wasn't pleased with it and I discussed it with (friend and fellow studio guitarist) Dean Parks, and he told me how to practice it. I went home and practiced bending half steps very slow, then increasing the speed to where I could do it at any speed. I think that really helped my sound, getting the vibrato together. It all comes from the wrist."

Carlton's fourth album, *Friends* (on Warner Bros, scheduled for May 11 release), finds him employing the same players he used on *Sleepwalk*, plus guest artists Joe Sample and Michael Brecker. There's one very special guest artist on hand, too. "B.B. King and I are doing two tunes as a duet," Carlton says. "It's beautiful for me to get to play music on one of my records with someone I've idolized for years." "Mr. 335" may have some surprises in store for his audience, but there are at least two things you can bet on: his music will be a near-perfect blend of rock energy and jazz sophistication, and guitar players will be lining up to buy it. ○

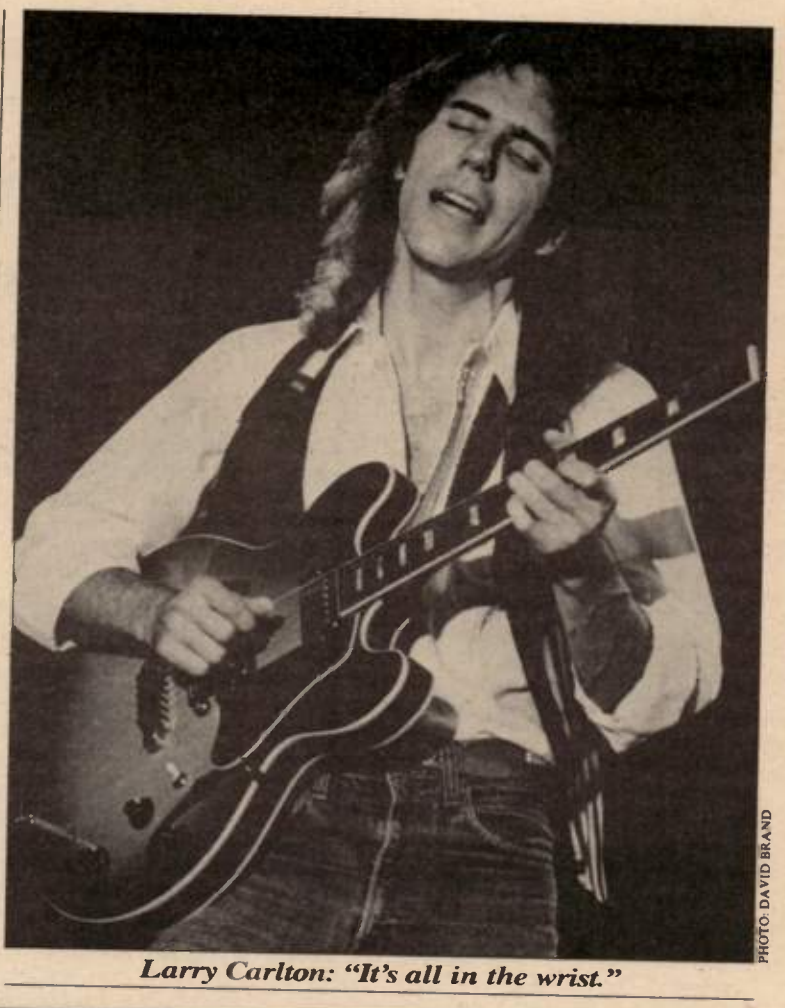


PHOTO: DAVID BRAND

Larry Carlton: "It's all in the wrist."

Audio

Prerecording Vs. Home Taping: The Realities Of Production

By David Gans

Faced with declining sales of both records and tapes, and aware of the increasing popularity of cassettes due to their portability, durability and convenience, the major record companies have undertaken to upgrade the quality (and the public image) of their prerecorded tapes.

Some labels have introduced "two-on-one" cassettes containing two albums by a given artist (one on each side of the tape), and many companies have upped the cassette's appeal to music lovers with special programming available only in that format. For example, Geffen Records put two extra songs ("Stand By Me" and "Happy Xmas (War Is Over)") on the cassette edition of *The John Lennon Collection,* and Arista's "Special Edition" cassette of Fashion's *Fabrique* includes the complete album on one side "plus a whole side of extended remixes." Furthermore, steps are being taken to "get the cassettes out from behind the counters and out of those little corners of the record stores," according to Hale Milgrim, Warner Bros. national director of merchandising, to make them more readily accessible to consumers (more on that next month).

But for those who maintain that their homemade tapes are better than the prerecorded ones available in the stores, here are a few points of information from the engineers responsible for tape and disc technology at the record companies:

"As you approach the inner diameters of the disc, the surface speed of the stylus in the groove gets slower," says Ralph Cousino, Capitol Records' vice president for engineering. Because the record spins at a constant 33-⅓ revolutions per minute, the diminishing circumference as the stylus moves toward the center reduces the speed, and "you're crowding the signal into a smaller space in the groove," says Cousino, and the same image is less accurate. "Therefore, distortion is more prominent as you get closer to the center of the record, and adjustments have to be made in the mastering process to deal with this problem." Some recording artists take this into account when recording their music and/or deciding on the sequence of songs on each side, either adjusting the high-frequency content of tracks closer to the center or rearranging things so the most critical cuts are on the outside of the record.

Cousino also notes that "the amount of playing time you can get on a side is dependent upon the level at which you cut the disc. The louder the signal, the less playing time you can get on a side." Modern disc cutting equipment has circuitry and logic to vary the cutting depth automatically to compensate for differences in the level and frequency content of the music, but there are limitations and optimum values which must be respected.

> Consumer tape decks must be generalized enough to work with many different tapes and are subject to all the inherent weaknesses of the cassette mechanism.

"The inner-diameter distortion potential and the level-versus-playing-time tradeoff are two fundamental features of the disc medium that are nonexistent on tape," Cousino notes. "You can record whatever length of program you want on tape, and the level of the recording is limited only by the capacity of the tape you're using."

The duplicating equipment used to mass-produce cassettes is much more sophisticated than most consumer decks. The interface between the cassette and the tape heads is extremely critical; cassette tape is about an eighth of an inch wide, and the actual magnetic traces even narrower, so the mechanisms that put tape and head together must fall within extremely tight tolerances. Even well-maintained tape decks and the most expensive cassettes are subject to small amounts of tape-path error (by which I mean mistracking of the tape as it moves past the head, as opposed to azimuth, which refers to the angle of the head in relation to the tape path). Cousino points out that prerecorded cassettes are dubbed on precision machines onto bulk tape which is loaded into cassette shells afterwards. The electronics and transports of these machines are designed to provide optimum performance— even at the high speeds used in mass duplication— and are calibrated precisely for the tape used; consumer decks must be generalized enough to work with many different tapes and are subject to all the inherent weaknesses of the cassette mechanism.

The process by which sound is transferred from a master tape to the vinyl disc you buy in the store is complex. Each step requires that the manufacturer balance considerations of quality against the cost of pressing the disc. The materials used to make the molds from which records are pressed—and the vinyl itself—are subject to fluctuations in quality, not to mention the variety of grades on the market; the amount of time and heat used in the stamping of each record are critical and can't always be applied consistently; and the number of discs pressed from each stamper affects their quality—records pressed near the end of a 2,000-to-4,000-disc run are liable to be noisier and/or less sharply defined than the earlier ones.

Then there's the problem of wear: the vinyl used in a typical American phonograph record begins to lose its shape—resulting in loss of high frequencies—the first time the record is played, with noticeable degradation after as few as five plays. Factor in the inevitable snap, crackle and pop of static and dust particles, plus the vagaries of the turn-table, cartridge, preamp, etc. used to play the record—and the inner-groove distortion, frequency-response and dynamic limitations of the vinyl disc-and what you're faced with is a rather delicate and short-lived object which is also subject to warpage, scratches and contamination from the oil in your fingertips. And the audible effects of all these troubles are transmitted to the cassette when you record albums at home.

If you want to program your own sequence of music and/or combine different artists on a tape, you'll have to record your own. But if you have two cassette machines, it's entirely possible that you'll get more satisfactory results dubbing from prerecorded cassettes—especially now that the industry is working to improve their quality and Dolby noise reduction is becoming a standard feature—than you can get from taping records. ○

(Next month: how the record companies are improving the packaging of cassettes and making them easier to find in stores.)

On Stage

It's A Small World, After All

Laurie Anderson
Brooklyn Academy of Music
Brooklyn, N.Y.
February 5-6, 1983

By Michael Roseman

While a number of New York's aggressively-elitist avant-garde performers have won international acclaim, it is Laurie Anderson—on the strength of her album, *Big Science,* and its acclaimed single, "O Superman"—whom many of the critics feel is the next big thing in this field. By playing a variety of modified violins, accompanying herself with tapes and exotic visual aids and conspiring with synthesizers and esoteric musicians such as Rufus Harley (a jazz bagpipe player), Anderson has put together a music that falls somewhere between commercial new wave and the disjointed but oddly sensible logic of a William Burroughs cut-and-paste job.

Her most ambitious work, *United States, Parts I-IV,* was premiered here over two days, three hours each day. Unfortunately, this stretched the material a little thin; one three-hour show would have better served the artist's purpose. Apparently struck by opening-night jitters and perhaps too determined to make sure the audience understood that *United States* is "serious" business, Anderson opened with a halting, uneven performance that lacked much of the whimsical, melancholy sense of humor that lends added resonance to her vision of the dangers looming ahead for our high-tech society. Minus her ingenuously droll intonation, songs such as "Let X = X" seemed pretentious. The crisp structure she had given her material on *Big Science* was discarded for an extended theme and reprise of her most memorable melodies with a synthesized version of her voice droning matter-of-fact recitations of mundane quotes and exotic snippets of Burroughs with taped overlays in German or French. Rarely did she give the audience the satisfaction that a completed song would have provided; moreover, in the absence of Anderson's charming innocence the low-rent visuals accompanying her music lost much of their evocative mystery and became . . . low-rent visuals.

On the second night, Anderson seemed to find herself. Clearly more relaxed, she was in control of the variations in the performance and able to respond to the mood of the audience, while smoothing out the seams in the show.

There is certainly a place for what Anderson calls her "difficult music." Because her sensibility has something in common with the demands of the market place, she might well be the one to popularize an art form that sits at the edge of our entertainment-oriented culture. If she follows the often-narrow path suggested by her B.A.M: show, however, she will probably remain just another cult artist residing in New York City. ○

PHOTO: RANDY BACHMAN

Laurie Anderson: Just another New York cult artist?

That Mouth! Those Legs!

Tina Turner
The Ritz
New York City
January 27, 1983

By Vince Aletti

When Ike and Tina Turner were performing as a team, too often it was hard to shake the feeling that Tina worried more about the approval of the steely-eyed man at her back than the response of the audience out front. So it's a relief to see Tina on her own now, not just to get her undivided attention—no more anxious glances over her shoulder—but because Tina Turner unbound is more magnificent than ever. No longer part of Ike's manic machine—legs pumping, grins flashing, false manes whipping the air: Tina and the Ikettes impossibly revved up—she has a new solidity and strength. She still pushes herself (though there's no MC to yell "The Hardest-Working Woman in Show Business!") and pumps those legs (those legs!) and she hasn't abandoned all the juicy trimmings from the past (mini skirts, lethal high heels, nasty girls), but Tina takes the stage on her own terms these days, radiant, relaxed, fiercely confident.

PHOTO: ANNE FISHBEIN / PHOTO RESERVE

Tina Turner: "I'm ready for you."

Continued on page 30

Records

Pete's Demos: No Easy Way To Be Free

Scoop
Pete Townshend
Atco

By Wayne King

Dynamic Tension can turn you into . . . a beast of a man." So goes the Charles Atlas ad that begins side two of *The Who Sell Out,* that glorious, half-forgotten tribute to pirate radio and the crucial role context plays in realizing our rock dreams. And no one should know the truth hidden behind that absurd advertising claim better than Pete Townshend, who has spent his entire artistic life struggling with contradictions that continue to haunt his work: the conflicts between personal and community concerns and aspirations; the difficulties of reconciling a misanthropic, aggressive spirit with a desire for wide-ranging, utopian panaceas; the striving for legitimate progress pitted against his audience's increasingly ironbound expectations and needs. And, given the state of his art for the last ten years, the matter most germane to any discussion of *Scoop:* his desire to communicate via the Who and his own obvious need for self-expression. That none of these issues central to his art, his vision of rock's purpose, is ever fully resolved is indicative of his questing, probing nature—Pete as "The Seeker"; it is also an indictment of his motives and methods for attaining a state of enlightenment, or even contentment.

But it should hardly come as news at this date that Pete Townshend could easily be nicknamed Jimmy, since the absence of any resolution to the questions raised by his artistry have resulted in a quadrophenic split in his creative identity. What is pertinent is the role the demo set *Scoop* plays in his eternal effort to regain the feeling of transcendent oneness he seems to have lost at birth, and has been searching for ever since.

A collection of demos has been Townshend's pet idea for at least six years (some have been made available before: on *Who Came First,* on three privately-issued Meher Baba albums, on a flexidisc contained in Richard Barnes' recent Who bio, and on assorted bootlegs). When he finally made a decision regarding the project, it was a typical one: he handed the job over to someone else. Enter Spike, a young woman, one-time publicist for Stiff Records and Madness with no direct connection to Townshend or the Who, charged with sifting through countless hours of tapes (Townshend has been banging out ideas onto tape recorders for two decades now). Having accomplished the near-impossible task of choosing material for just three records, Spike, at the request of Atco, knocked *Scoop* down to its present two-record form. Given the wealth of songs from which to choose, and considering that Spike is, as Townshend writes in the liner notes, "in no way a Who fanatic," the odds would seem to be against these two records occupying an important slot in the long-range perspective of Townshend's career. But *Scoop,* like much of the man's recent output, ends up a revealing work, whether the debate centers on what's been left out or simply the quality of the music itself.

PHOTO: MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA LTD

It is, of course, possible that *Scoop*'s impact should be measured solely on the forcefulness of numbers like "Melancholia," a psychedelic relic of phased/crazed foreshadowing; or by the beautiful acoustic rendition of "Behind Blue Eyes" which reveals that the erupting bass line propelling the electric portion of the Who's version is implicit in Townshend's original idea; or with tracks as slight and as compelling as the instrumental "Brrr" or the promising pop ditty, "Things Have Changed." And the temptation to do so becomes especially strong when confronted by something like "You Came Back," a strange, evocative story of reincarnation that surely ranks with the most heartfelt music of Townshend's life.

The conclusion that must be drawn by any concerned observer of Townshend and the Who is that *Scoop* represents a personal *Odds And Sods,* a sketchy picture of roads not taken but at some point certainly set foot upon. In their infinite variety, these tracks paint a portrait of Townshend as Grand Eclectic. Cynics can be excused from assuming that this suggests a new form of mythologizing for Townshend to replace the Who legend that's been drained of so much meaning for him. The only problem with taking the old "won't get fooled again" attitude is that on the evidence given here, Townshend really is a grand eclectic, i.e., no mere dabbler or pop chameleon but a musician with enormous scope and voracious capabilities.

That Townshend makes no concerted effort towards stating his case more emphatically can be seen either as a gesture of modesty or as an example of continued conceptual confusion. It remains unlikely that we'll ever get a cohesive statement from the man again until he gets the Who monkey off his back, but what's simultaneously promising and sad (one of those contradictions I feel when listening to Pete these days) is that—as always—the possibility of his escape and salvation is contained right there in the grooves. *Scoop* ends with the demo for "Love, Reign o'er Me," laid down in early 1972 after a successful year of touring behind *Who's Next* had eased some of the pain resulting from the collapse of his follow-up to *Tommy,* the multimedia sci-fi audience participatory spiritual fantasy, Lifehouse. The almost soppy invocation of his God's power to wash away all worries by way of cooling rain is imbued with a passion that's absent from Roger Daltrey's version at the end of *Quadrophenia;* it's easy enough to see why "Love" was dubbed "Pete's Theme" on that troubled work. And it's also easy enough—not very, very hard at all—to argue that when Townshend's individual concerns and desires so dominated his artistic vision for the Who, it was time to stop using them as his mouthpiece and come out as his own man. He almost did, too; *Who Came First* was put out in '72 and certainly exposed a previously-hidden side of Townshend. But that inner tug-of-war (mockingly referred to in *First*'s title) for his art and his heart has been raging on since, with no clear-cut victory in sight. It's still not too late, and one can only hope that Pete Townshend will finally find his own voice and confront the problems that not owning up have caused him over the last decade. If he can, that's one scoop that oughta make the front pages.

Too-Rye-Ay
Kevin Rowland & Dexy's Midnight Runners
Mercury

By J.D. Considine

These are strange times in the music business. After having to adjust our ears to such unlikely hybrids as country-punk (Rank & File), computer funk (Soul Sonic Force) and tribal new wave (Bow Wow Wow), Kevin Rowland decides to fuse Irish traditional and Philly Soul (O'Gamble and McHuff?). While hardly an unqualified success, Rowland manages to find far more common ground between the two than might have been expected, and even pulls out a surefire hit in the process.

The unevenness of Rowland's efforts stems from the fact that he goes about his task in two different ways. The first is his "Celtic Soul Brothers" approach, in which Rowland supplements the blue-eyed soul of the first Dexy's album with Irish touches like fiddle and accordion. Unfortunately, this shift in instrumental flavoring cannot conceal Rowland's inability to sing soul music, or his band's inability to play it. Seb Shelton's drumming is a plodding thump throughout, which waylays the pulse of potential scorchers like "Let's Make This Precious" and "Liars A to E," and while the horns make some pungent comments in those songs and others, they are equally likely to slip in a lame Chicago-style line as on "I'll Show You" or toss in some fake jazz as with "Until I Believe In My Soul." Most telling, though, is Rowland's remake of Van Morrison's "Jackie Wilson Said (I'm In Heaven When You Smile)," which is both awkwardly sung and ineptly played.

For all that, his melodic sense consistently shines through, which makes it all the more regrettable that Rowland didn't devote more space to his alternate version of Irish soul. As best represented by the irrepressible "Come On Eileen," this particular tack finds Rowland ignoring the rhythmic end of his soul connection and instead applying a Philly-style arrangement to Irish traditional melodic material. It's an inspired move, one that gives additional lift to the songs while making the most of the talent on hand. Let's hope that next time Rowland believes more in his roots than in his soul.

Twisting By The Pool
Dire Straits
Warner Bros.

By Jean-Charles Costa

Lest we forget, life with Mark Knopfler and Dire Straits is not

entirely encapsulated within the dark and ominous extended rambles on the latest "official" LP, *Love Over Gold.* You knew all along that these Dire Guys were down-with-it rock 'n' rollers with some dry, throwaway British humor and they're itchin' to prove it on their new Extended Dance EP *Twisting By the Pool.*

The title track, already accompanied by an aqua-video studded with liquid lovelies, sets up the more obvious ground rules: "loose" ensemble jamming with the subtle, implied discipline Straits is known for; inane or at least straightforward lyrical themes tossed off deadpan by Knopfler, both attempts geared at getting Dire Straits to play dance music just for the sheer fun/meaninglessness of it. And even though "Twistin . . . " has got the right "twist" feel and sarcastic lyrics about contemporaneity like "The Eurobeat," the conviviality of this track seems forced.

"Badges, Posters, Stickers, T Shirts," on the other hand, is a gem: a perfect synthesis of Knopfler's dead-eye accurate take on the embarassed backstage mutterings of the typical young, British and greasy stage doorstop fan over lush minor (suspended, diminished etc.) chord vamps and a percolating swingtime rhythm track highlighted by the delicate brush work of the gone-but-not-forgotten Pick Withers. Knopfler squeezes his sparkling Stratocaster into new regions of melodic improvisation, all floating on a cushion of Les Paul echo, and the guitars, boogie-woogie piano figures and fluid bass line all dovetail with breathtaking symmetry.

"Two Young Lovers" is a pleasant enough barrelhouse rocker "story" song shoved along by Mel Collins' rolling sax. "If I Had You" glides along on bittersweet melody line while Knopfler veers too close to a Robert Zimmerman parody on the vocal delivery. Capsule summation: it's got a good beat, you can dance to it, but it coulda been more fun than it is.

"Yes We Can Can"
The Treacherous Three
Sugarhill

"Games People Play"
Sweet G
Fever

"Looking For The Perfect Beat"
Afrika Bambaataa and the Soul Sonic Force
Tommy Boy

"Last Night a D.J. Saved My Life"
Indeep
Sound of New York

"Baby Doll"
Girls Can't Help It
Sire

By Vince Aletti

At street level, where the music struts and shouts (Hey you—listen up!), the 12-inch single is the vinyl of choice. Formerly known as the disco disc, the 12-inch has outlasted the boom that created it to become the standard (in some cases, the only) format for dance music of all persuasions, but nowhere is it more dominant than in the variously flourishing fields of urban funk. Rap and synthesizer-based arcade music (prime example: "Planet Rock"), once easily dismissed as pop throwaways, have proven to be the hardiest and most elastic of these street-smart funk upstarts, insinuating themselves everywhere. Both these forms are minimalist compared to disco, reflecting a new mood, a harsher economy. The romantic ecstasy and orchestral lushness that typified disco are replaced by a more elemental energy, a beat stripped of violins, pretty vocals, and illusions. The new street music is cool and cocky, calling out around the world in the language of man and machine: golden voices and wheels of steel. This alliance has little to do with Kraftwerk's idealized man/machine union; for the turntable DJs and synth wizards, the goal is mastery, not merger. Many of the resulting records are triumphs of technique, whether it be turntable manipulation (scratching, jump cutting, repetitive build-up), studio mixing (echoing, layering, dubbing) or synthesizer synphonics. Frequently, it's all three at once, turning the records into intricate sound collages, jagged and halting, full of metallic whip cracks (the sharp steel that has replaced handclaps), bubbling electronics, vocoded voices and startling sound effects.

The basic elements of rap—chanted, declaimed vocals over a stark, steady beat, sometimes one appropriated from another record—and arcade—processed vocals, synth track, nervous video game accents—have been modified and shuffled around, sent across the Atlantic and back (listen to Ian Dury, Yaz, Funkapolitan, Culture Club, and Malcolm McLaren for English twists; Falco's "Der Komissar" for German rap, now Anglicized and pop charted by After the Fire; and Fab 5 Freddy's syncopated French babble on "Change the Beat"). The pure forms, if they ever existed, may have been left behind, but the vitality and influence remain. The brief survey of current releases that follows is intended to suggest the range of this influence, the strength of this vitality. Typically, all the records below are 12-inch discs, most from small labels specializing in dance music. The format usually includes vocal and instrumental versions back-to-back, each running six to nine minutes, often with dub mixes, "bonus beats" (short percussion tracks), or a cappella segments added as separate cuts for home mixers.

The Treacherous Three's "Yes We Can Can" is rap with a social conscience—not the chilling vision of "The Message," but a more encouraging stance set to Allen Toussaint's chugging beat. The original Pointer Sisters lyrics are all but gone, replaced by clear-eyed, sharp-tongued observations on street life, brotherhood, and the struggle to succeed. The Three's voices are intercut for maximum effect—tough and compelling even under the occasional shower of zinging electronics.

Sweet G takes rap formula in another direction with "Games People Play," including rather mournful singing (even a female chorus) to frame his aggressive chant ranking winners and losers. Opening up with a roll of dice, "Games" is about gambling, metaphorical and otherwise, livened up by verité segments of shouting players at cards and craps. Producer Kurtis Blow clinches things with his choice of graceful piano and guitar tracks to offset the electric percussion playing against type (piano on a rap record?) but playing to win. The label has an edge: it was started by the legendary Bronx club, Fever, home base for many of New York's hottest rappers and spinners.

There's none hotter than Afrika Bambaataa, whose Soul Sonic Force rocked the charts last year with "Planet Rock," a record nearly as irritating as it was influential. Their new release, "Looking for the Perfect Beat," is infinitely more sophisticated (not just because it quotes Shakespeare) and satisfying—a complex, multi-layered production that weaves synthesizers and vocals into a richly luminescent fabric of sound. "I possess the perfect beat," Bambaataa announces at the outset, and his arrogance is nearly justified by the riveting mix that follows, even if it is jived up with every effect on the board. "Beat this!" they challenge again and again, confident that producer musicians Arthur Baker and John Robie have set them comfortably on top of the heap again. Still, for another approach to the art, listen to "Grandmixer Cuts It Up" by Grandmixer D. St. and Infinity, a creative piece of vinyl manipulation that could put up a strong battle here.

Indeep sidesteps this confrontation with "Last Night a D.J. Saved My Life," a tribute to turntable expertise couched in a more familiar r&b mode but full of surprises. The premise is simple—a girl with romantic problems turns to her "local DJ" for solace—but once the man takes over, assuring her "There's not a problem that I can't fix/ Cause I can do it in the mix," the record shoots off into left field. The mixer piles up quick-cut phrases, doubles back into the song, and turns time around to impress his girl, throwing in a number of crazy sound effects along the way (several thoughtfully isolated on the second side: telephone ringing, screeching tires, flushing toilet). What could be merely cute is, finally, terrifically ingratiating.

"Baby Doll" by Girls Can't Help It takes us even farther off from hardcore street music since it picks up its rap style secondhand from Blondie's "Rapture." But the English-made confection, all whip-creamy and seductive on the surface, is subversive at the core so it's perversely true to rap's spirit. Spreading themselves over a luscious track like willing girls on black satin sheets, this breathy trio sings and raps submissive fantasies one after another: "I don't want to sip your orange juice/I won't use your razor blade/I won't push you into nothing you can't handle/I want to be your baby doll." At once sensational and hilarious, "Baby Doll" is gorgeous sleaze—move over, Vanity 6—as challenging in its own way as Soul Sonic Force. Beat this!

War
U2
Island

By Christopher Hill

On their first two albums, Dublin's U2 showed themselves to be a quintessentially Irish band. Like so many of that country's saintly victims, their preference has been for the grand romantic gesture rather than objective results—such as really communicating with their audience. While the band's undeniably compelling sound alternated majestic power with otherworldly poignancy, there was also a certain detached coolness that comes of living in that glowing mist where human faces aren't as real as the outlines of vision. *War*, U2's newest album, is an attempt to connect with the earth, with all the world's battlegrounds—political, spiritual, emotional. But the new toughness of theme and music is not matched by toughness of thought, making for an album that falls short just where its ambitions are highest.

"Sunday, Bloody Sunday" introduces the LP's theme of conflict as it signals a new approach to sound. Producer Steve Lillywhite has chucked the windchimes, echoes and romantic storms of guitar for a grittily basic feel. The mix is tinny and distorted, the rhythms spasmodic and abrupt. The Edge's heaving guitar noises effectively evoke newsreel images of tanks rolling through mud. Half buried in it all, Bono Vox rails despairingly against the world, blaming the "trenches dug within our hearts" for the desolation of the Belfast streets which he describes. It adds up to a tough, moving lament for the world's victims.

Yet U2's good intentions fail them along the way as they lapse into their own singular frame of reference. "As the Seconds Go By" layers a chorus of psychedelic angels over a "Shaft"-like groove, to pleasing effect. But just what is it that simultaneously drives Bono into a state of gasping desperation? There are oblique references to atomic bombs; but in his insistence on universalizing all particulars, Bono subsumes this specific issue into his cryptic Biblicality, creating compelling apocalyptic images—"Lightning flashes across the sky/East and west, do or die/Like a thief in the night/See the world by candlelight"—that in their bigness lose all particular point of reference. "Refugee" features exciting, African-flavored polyrhythms and a welcome new toughness in the singing. And yet the band refuses to commit themselves to meaning, leaving out the key which would allow the song's cryptic images of emigration and desertion to interact with the music and so take on life. Only on "Two Hearts Beat As One" does U2 connect at gut-level. Over a seductive rhythm and trebly bursts of noise from guitarist the Edge, Bono pants, "Can't stop the dance/Baby, this is my last chance," as if his life were at stake. You almost shiver at the sudden nakedness of emotion, and you wonder why you can't have more of it.

In the end, it's hubris—overweening ambition—to which *War* succumbs. To plumb the source of human conflict is a task that's daunted the greatest artists. In rock music, a band like the Clash wanders into the morass simply trying to comprehend the political face of it. To encompass romantic heartbreak *and* nuclear war, a profoundly religious vision is called for, and this band's simple, self-referential Christian mysticism isn't up to it. Though *War* is U2's most controlled and concise set of songs yet, they still give the strange impression of people wrestling desperately, passionately, with something we can't see or feel.

Modern Romans
The Call
Mercury/Phonogram

By Jody Denberg

Though they share the Gang of Four's penchant for heady intellectualism and the Clash's habit of pointing out problems without suggesting solutions, the Call's approach to socially-conscious rock remains unique. Guided by singer/songwriter/guitarist Michael Been's dark vision, this California quartet supply nine tightly arranged musical scenarios on their second album, *Modern Romans*, that examine man's indulgent passion and inhumanity—traits which, according to Been, inevitably lead to violence, war and total destruction. The depressing blackness of Been's visions would be unbearable if a little light didn't occasionally shine through—as on "Face To Face" when Been sings "to the hope that lifts me higher," and on the danceable "The Walls Came Down," where the "ya ya ya" backing vocals add a lighthearted touch to a prophecy of doom.

Though at times Been's ranting seems self-aggrandizing and his raving vague, the supporting music is more economical. No ego-boosting solos are dealt out, only tasty synthesizer fills by hired hands Steve Huddleston and Garth Hudson (!) along with subdued guitar work by Tom Ferrier and Been that simultaneously embraces Mark Knopfler's lyricism and Andy Gill's dissonance. When instruments do step out in front of the mix (dominated by bassist Greg Freeman and drummer Scott Musick) they remain an integral part of the song instead of an addendum.

The most revealing moment on *Modern Romans* comes during the closing track, "All About You." Here Been defines himself in terms of his emotions for another, revealing that underneath all his rhetoric lies a true romantic. So if Been's throaty sermons from the mount sometimes seem too high-minded, it is only because he has fallen prey to the same passions and temptations that he finds in us all.

Quartet
Ultravox
Chrysalis

By Christopher Hill

Somewhere along the way the European artist's dread of the technological future turned into an embrace of its icy aesthetic. Bands like Ultravox are the delayed pop echo of this—making conventional art-hero sentiments sound newly significant through ominously dehumanized readings and a mechanized sound. It's pure pose, of course, but such posing has pleasures if enough wit is brought to bear. Unfortunately, *Quartet* finds Ultravox's pose become simple reflex. They're pros at it, naturally, and that makes for bits of enjoyably manipulative pop. But a lack of verve is letting the thinness of their concept show through.

The production is an immediate problem. George Martin's remorselessly clear sound leaves none of the murky corners necessary for Ultravox to make their *entre deux guerres* romanticism work. At best it forces a new and disarming straightforwardness from them—"Reap the Wild Wind" features an expansive vocal hook, keyboard-rich instrumentals and a heartfelt love lyric that give it the feel of a natural hit. Then the weight of the pose pulls things down like a millstone. "Visions in Blue" wants to evoke Europe's spiritual ennui, but sounds more like a modern day Maurice Chevalier on downers—truly corny, synthesizer arabesques and all. "Hymn," featuring an annoyingly mannered vocal from Midge Ure, recycles Romantic anti-religious polemics without much conviction. And all the while those herky-jerky synthesizer "dance" riffs go on and on and on.

That Ultravox never really had any really interesting ideas is perhaps no revelation. But they've generally had producers happy to fill the imaginative void. The light of George Martin's nowhere-to-hide production shines right through Ultravox's inky cloak, and reveals much of their music as simply ordinary—a bad fate for Bohemians.

The Chanting Dread Inna Fine Style
Big Youth
Heartbeat

By Ken Braun

This is the second Big Youth compilation Heartbeat has issued in a year. The first, *Some Great Big Youth,* focused on the Jamaican singer's recent work, which has been devoted mostly to paeans to Bob Marley and mushy "lovers' rock" that is closer to Lionel Richie than to Gregory Isaacs. *The Chanting Dread Inna Fine Style,* however, culls selections from Big Youth's work in the 1970s, and bears better witness to his talent. It is not a "greatest hits" collection; none of the album's cuts have been issued previously in the United States, and most have not been issued even in Jamaica. So, in a sense, it is new material; in another sense, it is better than new material, because it returns the listener to the period when Big Youth was making exciting records.

Unlike most of the prominent toasters of the early '70s, Big Youth (neé Manley Buchanan) could really sing; such was his vocal skill that he could mimic, quite convincingly, many of Jamaica's best singers—not to mention other toasters. There's virtually no reggae style that Big Youth has not adopted successfully; his nickname—"The Gleaner"—is apt.

Listening to *The Chanting Dread Inna Fine Style* is like listening to a reggae show featuring all one's favorite singers and musicians, with Big Youth as host. The Heptones join Youth in "My Time," a Buchanan original that is the sort of song, with its "rock-steady" rhythm and American soul-styled vocal harmonies, that the Heptones would write and record on their own. Dennis Brown trades lines with Youth in "Streets In Africa," a rewrite of War's "The World Is A Ghetto." Youth plays the harmonica lead in "Salvation Light," yet it is producer Augustus Pablo who imbues this instrumental with his peculiarly ominous sound. Only Chinna Smith could play the bottleneck guitar, and Carlton Barrett the Wailers-like drums, in "Jah Jah Golden Jubilee." One doesn't actually hear U Roy toasting in "My Buddy," "Dread Inna Babylon" and "Who Laughed Last," but those are U Roy's signature exclamations Big Youth appropriates when he interjects "As I would say," and "Hyuh!" One recognizes Burning Spear's oracular delivery in "All Nations Bow" and King Tubby's dubbing technique in "Who Laughed Last."

So Big Youth is not an innovator. Neither is he limited to one style. (A more appropriate title for this album might be *The Chanting Dread Inna Dozen Fine Styles.*) The salient point is that, although he is transparently indebted to older reggae masters, he's a good student. He commands a remarkably versatile voice and has a keen ear for subtlety. His imitations are not parodies, yet only when he sets his sights on Marley (never on this album) are they worshipful. He deserves his masters' blessings—which he must have, or they wouldn't make music with him.

The Paris Concert
Bill Evans
Elektra Musician

By J.D. Considine

Bill Evans was one of those rare musicians who was able to use jazz improvisation to get to the heart of a song and extrapolate the relationships between melody and harmony, phrasing and rhythm. His death in 1981 left a gap that will not easily be filled, and as a result the unexpected appearance of new material, such as this first of two volumes recorded in Paris in 1979, will be of automatic interest to most jazz fans. Especially when it turns out to be as outstanding as this album.

Although recorded with a trio, the best moments here are performed by Evans solo. This is not meant to disparage the rhythm section—drummer Joe LaBarbera plays with admirable fluency and discretion, while bassist Marc Johnson offers as solid a blend of technical finesse and melodic sensitivity as Evans' long-time cohort Eddie Gomez—but simply to make the point that Evans' sharpest playing comes when he is free to wander or linger as he sees fit.

An excellent example of this can be heard on "I Loves You Porgy," where Evans generates a wonderful harmonic counterline by expanding upon the sequential intervals of the opening phrase. Evans never really deviates from the melody; instead, he opens up its possibilities, then refits them into the same emotional context. Similarly, he does a wonderful job of mimicking the crowded phrasing of Paul Simon while rethinking the melody to "I Do It For Your Love."

If there's any room for complaints with the music, the worst that can be said is that "My Romance" drags on far too long. A better gripe would be with the packaging, though—if there are to be two volumes of this, why not bring them out in one package instead of making the consumer wait for the rest (not to mention pay more, as well)? Does Elektra need the money *that* badly? I guess so.

On My Own Two Feet
Paul Barrère
Mirage

By Jonathan Gregg

A guitarist and songwriter whose influence in Little Feat grew as Lowell George withdrew more and more into the mixing booth, Paul Barrère seems to have been better cast as a contributing sideman than he is as a bandleader now. His first solo effort suffers from the over-exposure that such projects can invite, and much of the album sounds like second-rate Little Feat outtakes. With a vocal delivery that is laid back to the point of prostration, Barrère simply lacks the depth or aggressiveness needed to ride over his own barroom swamp rock, whose pedestrian lyrics are more akin to the stomping of stoned out lumberjacks at Mardi Gras than the lyrical patter of Little Feat.

Vocals aside, several songs do have snappy, muscular instrumental tracks and some spirited guitar work from Barrère, more high-octane rock-oriented than in the past, and unabashedly indebted to Jimi Hendrix (especially on "Along This Lane"). Other points of relative interest include "She Lays Down the Beat," wherein Barrère's unfortunate penchant for blue-movie scenarios is at least offset by a good, skanking groove, and the pleasantly surprising "Love Sweet Love," whose restrained traditional mood recalls Ry Cooder.

The longest shadow, though, is clearly cast by Lowell George, whose influence on Barrère has never been more noticeable. Barrère's singing and songwriting seem never to have recovered from the impact of George's "Juliette" and "Spanish Moon," but more regrettably, on this album he has not managed to match even his own best efforts of the past, such as "All That You Dream" on *The Last Record Album.* A worthy participant in one of the '70's best American bands, Paul Barrère still has a ways to go before making a mark on his own, and *On My Own Two Feet* suggests it may take a while yet.

For the First Time Anywhere
Buddy Holly
MCA

By J.D. Considine

Rock history is a funny thing. Unlike real history, where the desire to know and the need to publish frequently combine in the dissemination of valuable information, rock history's desire to know must always rely upon windfalls from the record industry's need for profit. (Imagine if the British Museum only offered access to its treasures when it felt there was sufficient market interest.) It could be argued that such an arrangement is only just, that if rock is indeed a popular art form then there is no reason to make an effort on behalf of marginal curios. But such an attitude makes sense only if rock and roll is seen as a totally disposable art form, and the steady sales of back catalog and reissue items should speak clearly to even the most crassly commercial minds.

Still, the profit motive remains the single biggest factor in clearing the mists away from rock's past, and as a result the re-issue game has been a maddening one. With few exceptions, the record industry's notion of rock's legacy seems to be restricted to two formats: Anthologies, which range from the superficial to the downright capricious, and seldom go any farther than Greatest Hits with Hindsight; and Complete Collections, massive, nearly indigestible things which either lump an artist's entire output into an undifferentiated mass or simply stick all the albums in that artist's catalogue in a box. Tools for research they're not.

So far, Buddy Holly has been lucky enough to get both treatments. For most of the Seventies, Buddy Holly's American catalog consisted of a 22-song collection with no liner notes or credits; when it looked like the film "The Buddy Holly Story" might become a hit, MCA put out another anthology that collected 20 of those 22 on a single disc instead of two. Then, in 1981, MCA decided to make up for its dereliction of duty by unleashing a boxed set compiled a year or two earlier by a foreign subsidiary. *The Complete Buddy Holly*, a six-album extravaganza, featured extensive notes, discographic material, and *everything* Holly ever recorded.

"Everything?" you ask. "Then what's this new album doing with a title like *For the First Time Anywhere*?" Talking out of both sides of its mouth, I'm afraid, because while none of these performances have ever been available as presented here, they weren't quite totally unavailable before, either.

If that doesn't make sense, don't blame me—blame Norman Petty. Petty, who was Holly's producer for much of his short career, earned the enmity of Holly fanatics by stripping the vocal off a handful of early Holly performances and dubbing on new instrumental tracks with a group called the Fireballs. (Alan Douglas pulled the same trick on Jimi Hendrix, as did Alice Coltrane on husband John.) What *For the First Time* offers are the original, unsullied versions of these songs.

Whether or not that counts as a major event depends upon how you view Holly's relationship with the Crickets, and what you think of his reputation as a rockabilly singer. Calling these performances rough would be putting it mildly—catching Holly as he was only just working out his own style, they offer a sort of late Fifties garage band sound that's far more favorable to Holly's singing than to the Crickets' playing. Some interesting indicators do emerge through the din, such as the debt to the Coasters as evinced in the vocal arrangement to "Maybe Baby," or how heavily Holly was influenced by Elvis Presley, from his crooning dips into baritone register to the Crickets' spare grooves. But since when have those points been news?

Ultimately, there's little here that couldn't have been discerned in Petty's adulterated versions beyond the fact that, in 1957, the Crickets were too raw while, in the sixties, Petty was too slick. More to the point, much of what is offered here is pure marginalia. Tracing the development of Holly's ideas through the two versions of "Maybe Baby" (the first offered here, the second being the hit) is an interesting exercise, but the importance of knowing that Holly simplified the changes to "Bo Diddley" or that Jerry Allison's notion of a backbeat on "Brown-Eyed Handsome Man" amounts to little more than an excited clop is negligible. As are, for that matter, Holly's early attempts at writing pro forma rockabilly and R&B ("Rock-A-Bye Rock" and "I'm Gonna Set My Foot Down," respectively). Finally, there's the question of whether ten songs—a mere 21:07 playing time—are worth all this hoopla. It would be one thing if these performances were of historical significance, but as I said, rock history is a funny thing.

Killer on the Rampage
Eddy Grant
Portrait

By Carol Cooper

Don't let the dreadlocks fool you. Eddy Grant is no impoverished, pipe-dreaming theologist. To paraphrase one of the singles Grant sent up the British charts in the '60s with the multi-racial Equals, this Guyanese Englishman is a "black-skinned blue-eyed" pop visionary, who pulls important musical statements from his bi-partisan roots. *Killer on the Rampage* marks Grant's second effort for a CBS-distributed label: Epic released his *Walking on Sunshine* LP in 1979 to much-deserved critical praise but little in the way of sales (although two cuts, the title track and "Living on the Front Line," were dance club hits).

Grant's sound is not easily defined. An organic blend of Lennon-McCartney one-worldism and richly ethnic funk, his albums purposely skirt categories. *Killer on the Rampage* (recorded at his own studio in Barbados) shuttles from love song to rebel anthem with greater ease than is usually associated with post-reggae popsters. Singles like "Electric Avenue" and "I Don't Wanna Dance" have been translated into lucid videos that counterpoint angry urban disillusion with wistful tropical nostalgia. The bucolic reggae lilt in "I Don't Wanna Dance" is inflected with the flattened 7ths of a hip rolling urban blues, while the mid-tempo rocker "Electric Avenue" refers to the recent British riots and features Grant's gritty, nasal tenor riding a contentious groove that forcibly syncopates meter and melody. Of the many instruments Grant has mastered, his voice is the most idiosyncratic, pervading songs like "Latin Love Affair," "Too Young To Fall" and "Another Revolutionary" with a haunting incongruency. Never has an ex-colonial expressed the emotional failures of overdevelopment with so much style and authenticity. In *Killer on the Rampage* a native watches the sun set on the Western empire with no guarantee it will rise again in the east. Like that other prominent bunch of outsiders, Men At Work, Grant makes great pop because his musical observations belong neither to the oppressors nor truly to the oppressed.

Powerlight
Earth, Wind & Fire
Columbia

By Crispin Sartwell

Earth, Wind and Fire have always been just a bit too slick for their own good. Through the Seventies, they poured out high-gloss hits; in doing so, they obscured soul's un-

derlying textures. *Powerlight,* the band's twelfth album, remains true to form.

Don't get me wrong; I've always found certain of their songs (e.g. "Getaway") convincing, but I object to saccharine lyrics and production values that bury decent ideas under banks of brass instruments and human voices. "Fantasy," "September," and "Shining Star" were songs without guts or spirit. "Miracles," from *Powerlight,* is a summary of what's wrong with their approach: it is as obese and inert as a beached whale.

Luckily, the album as a whole fails to sustain that level of banality. In fact, EWF makes the right moves and mouths the right words to make great funk. But greatness never materializes, because every trace of bravado and eccentricity has been forcibly removed. This album fails utterly to seize or hold the listener's attention.

1982 was a banner year for pop funk, and last year's best black pop was remarkable for its simplicity and the richness of its individual expression. Zapp, Trouble Funk, Soul Sonic Force et al. make funk that's fun as well as life-affirming. And that's precisely why I'd prefer to think of EWF, despite their halfhearted attempt to hop on the bandwagon, as an anachronism.

This is not meant to question EWF's talent, nor the fact that they have always done precisely what they intended to do and done it extremely well. Leader Maurice White, a fine drummer who has maintained a long-term association with pianist Ramsey Lewis, has successfully introduced jazz elements into soul, disco, and now funk. The band's use of brass and harmony, and its studio sophistication, were innovative and have long been emulated.

But the result is music of no particular import or intrigue. Everything is said rather than shown; it comes pre-interpreted and presents little or no challenge. And while *Powerlight* has them working in a medium that demands somewhat more elegance than EWF's previously delivered, the album seems all the more insincere in light of their past and present self-indulgence.

By my count, this album features 66 musicians in addition to the eight band members. Not that there's anything wrong with employing musicians in these recessive days, but there's simply too much information on any given segment of vinyl. Despite some acceptable exceptions, like "Freedom of Choice," which, aside from the fact that it deploys the aesthetics of a fast-food jingle, is a sweet soul update, *Powerlight* can be summarized as funk without grit or sworn testimony.

Kilroy Was Here
Styx
A&M

Frontiers
Journey
CBS

By Crispin Sartwell

For years, critics have recoiled in horror and revulsion from the excesses committed by Styx and Journey, and with good reason. Both bands have a disconcerting habit of running their fingernails over a blackboard and presenting the result with an extravagance usually reserved for romantic opera. However, their latest albums are perhaps the least loathesome of their long, loathesome careers.

Styx' *Kilroy Was Here* is governed by a paltry sci-fi concept, and my copy came with a label that assured me that "by order of the Majority for Musical Morality, this album contains secret backward messages." Personally, I didn't bother to spin the record backwards, but I'm confident that it is even now exercising an insidious control over what's left of my mind.

The band's recorded output is, in general, so grumpy and pretentious that the first two songs on *Kilroy,* "Mr. Roboto" and "Cold War," are positively refreshing. The former takes a political position that Roget, referring to his excellent thesaurus, might term block-headed, addle-brained, feeble-minded, halfwitted, and gormless (slang). But once you get past what's apparently a guest appearance by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir in the intro, it's solid rock with a new wave inflection. "Cold War," which, like "Mr. Roboto," is built around a pumping organ riff, is also, for Styx, shockingly simple and propulsive.

After that promising start, however, the album loses its direction and degenerates into grotesque exaggeration. The latter is, of course, the most visible characteristic of arena rock, of which both Styx and Journey are practitioners. While all of the arena bands (REO, Loverboy etc.) straddle the bombastic border between heavy metal and art rock, each has its own immediately discernible sound. They aren't faceless, just extraordinarily mediocre.

There's no mistaking Journey for any of the other arena acts; Steve Perry's singing—which some have whimsically compared to amplified mosquito torture—sees to that. Despite Perry's sometimes painful presence, *Frontiers* is superior to 1981's platinum *Escape,* in that it displays more of a feel for rock traditions.

"Back Talk," built around a raw Bo Diddley guitar lick, is mixed for rough edges. "Chain Reaction" and "Edge of the Blade" are inoffensive metal raveups; Perry's voice is far more merciful when he screams than when he croons.

By and large, though, *Frontiers* is flaccid and obnoxious. "Separate Ways (Worlds Apart)" and "Faithfully" achieve a stasis that's usually associated with tar pits and roach motels. What melody there is is driven into the ground by Neal Schon's heavy-handed guitars and Jonathan Cain's equally bloated keyboard work.

Having just spent three days listening to these albums, I strongly suggest that the world's medical researchers abandon their work on cancer and MS and feverishly seek a cure for chronic pomposity.

The Ever Popular Tortured Artist Effect
Todd Rundgren
Bearsville

By Nick Burton

When he's not exploring pseudo-cosmic ground with Utopia or on solo projects such as *Initiation* and *Healing,* Todd Rundgren occasionally comes up with a gem of a pop album. Both *Faithful* and *Hermit of Mink Hollow* rank among Rundren's better excursions in this realm, but he's never really matched the brilliantly eccentric pop-rock of 1972's *Something/Anything.* Until now.

The Ever Popular Tortured Artist Effect is not only closer in style and spirit to *Something/Anything* than the rest of his solo outings, it's also one of Rundgren's most satisfying and fully realized efforts. The album positively bursts with the kind of pop eclecticism that distinguishes the artist's best work. The songs have deep roots in '60s pop, but boast thoroughly modern arrangements featuring synthesizers, quirky guitar rhythms, and multi-tracked vocals.

Several tracks illustrate Rundgren's versatility as a songwriter. "Hideaway" is a punchy pop tune with a marvelous hook; "There Goes Your Baybay" and "Don't Hurt Yourself" are rife with soul influences; and "Drive" is slow-paced rock track with a soaring pop chorus. On the fanciful side, there's a literal remake of The Small Faces' "Tin Soldier" (Todd even manages to come up with a good Steve Marriot impression while he covers, like he did on *Faithful,* yet another vintage 1967 tune), a poke at Gilbert and Sullivan called "Emperor Of The Highway," and a good-natured ska tune, "Bang The Drum All Day."

As with *Something/Anything* and *The Ballad of Todd Rundgren,* the music here is treated with Rundgren's offbeat sense of humor. And while it may appear to some that Todd is merely amusing himself, the genuine affection he shows for the material stands for something more substantial than mere cleverness.

Musical Youth

Continued from page 1

Britain's child labor laws are another hassle. Because Kelvin Grant has not yet reached his teens, Musical Youth are allowed to play fewer than 35 concerts in any calendar year. This was especially tough in mid-February when both "Pass The Dutchie" and MY's first album, *Youth of Today*, vaulted into the U.S. top 20. Performing in America at that point would have helped the records, but would also have meant forfeiting dates best held until later in 1983, when the band may have other records to promote.

So it was decided that Musical Youth would fly into New York for a couple of days of interviews in February, return for *Saturday Night Live* and at least one concert in April and hold the rest of their precious dates in reserve until the need for other shows could be measured.

"We can't get time to practice now 'cause of all this business with the number one," sighs Junior. "Like going to foreign countries to promote this record. We'd like to just break off from that altogether and get back in the practice room and draw sweat."

Junior shrugs and studies the tape recorder. "That's what I'd like to do, anyway.

Perhaps because he assumes responsibility for the group's music, Junior seems especially sensitive to the personal sacrifices Musical Youth demands. Asked if the band's career has interfered with their schoolwork, the drummer nods his head. "It did," he says softly. "With the last exams we suffered. We didn't know half the questions that were put in front of us. We just had to leave them. We had to sit and watch other people working away. It kind of hurts."

His voice trails off before he catches himself and says firmly, "But that's how it was meant to be. We don't really make no fuss about it. We just try to catch up with the work. But if we *can't* get into it we won't push ourselves."

PHOTO: MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA LTD.

Musical Youth: the spectre of primary education looms at the end of the concert trail.

Bad attitude? Perhaps. But the explanation for it goes beyond the demands of a full-time career.

"Some of the teachers are understanding," Junior continues. "But some teachers give you the impression, 'Well, you've made your life now. If you don't want to work, you don't have to.' As if we're not supposed to know what they're really trying to prove. I see through that. So I don't bother, you see? So many teachers are jealous of us. And you can feel it. When they talk to you, they don't really want to talk to you. So you just don't bother with them. That's how it is."

Junior, you see, pins his whole future on music. He dreams of opening a recording studio with him and his brother as house rhythm section. He also admits that his mother's talked to him about pursuing his studies in case he decides, somewhere along the line, to change careers. But, he adds quickly, "I've proved to her that it's strictly music I want to do. No doctor business. None of that kind of thing. Just music for me."

Most of Musical Youth's original material is written by Junior, who composes songs on the keyboard (he also plays guitar and bass) and teaches them to Michael. While Michael teaches his brother Kelvin the top side, Junior shows Patrick the bottom. Only when everything else is together does Junior finally get behind his kit and work out the drum parts.

A devotee of Jamaican master Sly Dunbar, Junior speaks of his instrument with an almost-mystical reverence. "What I'm learning to do now," he explains, "is play my drums and take breaths at the same time. Like, if I was to roll and hit the cymbal"—he takes a short, sharp breath—"the cymbal would sound tight. But if I go . . . "—he slowly lets out a deep breath and brings his arm forward in a graceful arc—"You see? It's more relaxed. You lick the drum with strength but you play with feel. It's important!"

It's important too, to Junior and the rest of Musical Youth, that their music remain true to form. Even reggae's greatest artists came to it from other musical styles; this band represents the first generation to grow up on reggae. It is the music of their fathers and they take it seriously.

"At first I was kind of worried," Junior says. "I thought MCA would want us to play commercial, light reggae. But it's not like that at all. It probably sounds commercial at first but . . . "

"If you turn up the bass," brother Patrick interjects, "and turn down the treble you hear it."

"That's when you hear the roots," Junior nods. "The bass and drum don't really sound commercial at all. It sounds heavy. That's how we like it. But the top section *is* kind of commercial. The top really highlights everything.

"Me and Patrick are the roots of the band—to keep the music strong. Michael and Kelvin hold the top as we hold the bottom."

"And Dennis," Patrick adds, "is in between with the singing."

The brothers physically reflect their musical identities. The Waites look older than their years (a cynic might wonder if the publicity value of being kids has caused the group's publicists to skip a birthday here and there) and speak in the deepening voices of young men. The Grants, on the other hand, could pass as *younger* than 11 and 13. Only 16-year-old Dennis Seaton really looks his age.

If the kid business has helped Musical Youth avoid barriers that have stifled the stardom of other reggae performers in this country, their talent still merits attention when the novelty wears off. Freddie Waite knew this, hence his parting wisdom to Junior.

"This is what he said," Junior recalls. " 'I'm leaving it with you now. I'm going to go away. And if things ain't as they should be when I come back, it's you I'm going to turn to.' And I was like . . . " Junior mimics terror. Then he adds, "But I handled it. And it's keeping up now. I think he was quite surprised, 'cause he was testing me to see if I did know music."

Michael confirms Junior's sure hand on Musical Youth's destiny. "When Junior tells us what to do," Michael says, "he doesn't say, 'Michael, could you *please* do this?' in a soft voice. He says, 'Either *do* this or don't do it!' He has a tough voice. He kind of scares us and we have no choice. Junior has to be rough. If he weren't, everybody would take advantage of him.

"Now with his brother some people would probably think he'd say, 'Patrick, please do this.' But it's not like that. Junior treats everybody same—like an enemy. That's how we get our best results." ○

Bowie

Continued from page 13

Jagger, being able to see Pete Townshend—as it did with the music. How do you plan on dealing with that, particularly when you'll have people out there screaming for Ziggy Stardust, the Thin White Duke or whatever their favorite moment of your career was?

I think in all fairness to myself and to the audience I'll be giving a pretty huge collage of just about everything I've done. I can't elaborate much more on it because we haven't got into rehearsals yet. I think it will resemble the simplistic feel of something like *Station to Station*, which was just a batch of lights. I really dropped the idea of using huge sets in '74.

You've taken a five-year hiatus from touring. What got you off the road?

It just had absolutely no appeal to me anymore. The last tour was emotionally and physically a bad time for me, and it's taken this amount of time to get myself excited and emotionally wound-up again to want to go and play in front of people again.

You mentioned that you will have Stevie Ray Vaughan in the band and you won't have Nile Rodgers. Who else will you have with you?

I will have Carlos Alomar, Stevie Ray Vaughan, a bass player named Carmine Rojas who played on the *Let's Dance* album; Terry Thompson from Chic; the Simms brothers on vocals; and a horn lineup.

No keyboards?

I'm debating that at the moment.

To switch over to your acting career for a moment, when you did *Man Who Fell To Earth* you were an alien; when you did *Elephant Man* you were a famous Victorian freak; when you did *The Hunger* you were a 300-year-old zombie—are you afraid of being typecast?

(Laughs) The trouble is I always look for parts with an emotional or physical limp, and I always seem to get them. I kind of like characters with some kind of impediment. It's just an interesting thing to play around with, and I've never gone overboard with the idea of myself as any kind of romantic lead.

You came kind of close in *Baal*.

(Laughs) That's kind of a twisted perspective you have there.

What is it specifically about these parts that appeals to you?

I guess I've just had lots of dealing with fragmented characters in my life that I kind of find them easy to relate *to*, not necessarily sympathize *with*.

You started taking on a lot of these roles at about the same time—how much of this is residual from the Ziggy Stardust days?

I have to choose characters that are of some interest to me personally because I really don't want to do films for the sake of doing films. In fact what I really want to do—what I am starting to do—is direct films.

What projects are you considering or working on?

Actively, one has to count the amount of video work I've done and I've just completed two now with my co-director, David Mallett. Those are little tiny four-minute works and it's just the most exciting thing to do in rock 'n' roll—you can go away and make a little film. I'm very happy with the way those things are turning out, and I'd like to try my hand at something a little more adventurous. ○

Tina Turner

Continued from page 23

"I'm *ready* for you," she told the Ritz crowd early on, but that was obvious from the start, when a spotlight found TT seated straddling a chair in the center of a dark stage as she bit into a smouldering version of David Bowie's *Cat People* theme, "Putting Out Fire." Tina sitting down, that energy in check and waiting to be unleashed (legs spread, tensed), sent the audience into a frenzy of anticipation which she never allowed to dissipate. Nearly stripped of patter and filler, her show jumped non-stop without seeming forced or frantic. Turner *worked* (especially when two dancing girls came out to pace her through the steamier numbers) and the small band was relentlessly sharp, but the manic edge of the old shows was gone, replaced by a wonderful, easy charm and drive. Tina's voice is still a brassy rasp at times, but it's more in control than ever and often more touching, perhaps because for the first time all her material seems to bring out her best moves. Picking from her own past repertoire and a wide range of rock, Turner's set is supremely savvy, including "Get Back," "River Deep, Mountain High," "Nutbush City Limits," a crackling version of Don Henley's "Dirty Laundry," Bob Seger's "Hollywood Nights" for a rave-up encore, and a slow, emotional reading of the Beatles' "Help" that was a revelation. Even "Proud Mary" sounded fresh this time out, with a measured, teasing intro and a gradual build into high-speed insanity. But then maybe nothing was really new here except Tina's mood: she actually seemed to be enjoying this take-it-to-the-limit show-biz workout and that made all the difference. "People ask me when I'm gonna slow down," she said toward the end, breaking into a big smile (that mouth!). "I'm just getting started!" Catch her on the upswing. ○

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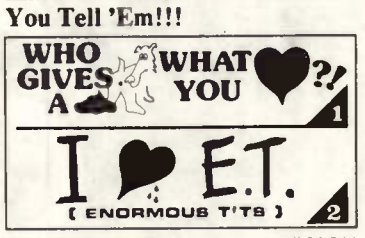

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