

# RECORD

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Dusty Hill, Frank Beard and Billy Gibbons: pumping new meaning into the bizarre but ongoing saga of ZZ Top.

## Twilight Of The Gods

By Jonathan Gross

TORONTO—The theme is priorities; the name of the game, ambition. To illustrate: when once, in adolescence, life itself hinged on whether the New York Rangers could at long last win a Stanley Cup, it now doesn't so completely dominate the daily passions as much as that peculiar filigree of pain and pleasure known as "the girlfriend."

The Rangers are still close to the heart but at some indeterminate juncture were shuffled down a ways. This is a story about that kind of experience as it relates to an entity called the Police.

Once, not too long ago, it was extremely important to be the Police, *Continued on page 10*

## A New Boston Album In Our Lifetime?

BOSTON—We've heard it all before, but this time Boston bassist Fran Sheehan insists that the multi-platinum band's long-awaited album will finally be released "sometime later this summer, August or so." Tentatively titled *Third Stage*, the album is "definitely Boston" according to Sheehan. "The Stones always sound like the Stones, and the Who always sound like the Who," he says. "We have a signature sound ourselves, and it's on the new album. There are a lot of harmonies and harmony guitar work. It's got all those fat sounds and textures like the first two albums, and it's a rock production job, not like a Phil Spector production. There's a little more keyboards in it. They've really added a new dimension to the band."

The album was totally recorded in lead guitarist Tom Scholz's 24-track *Continued on page 9*



PHOTO: RON POWELL

Fran Sheehan:  
Promises, promises

## ZZ Top: Hot, Blue And Righteous

By J-C Costa

ATLANTA—Genial, bespectacled, with that smokey, basso-profundo Texas drawl, Billy Gibbons is always looking for an extra little twist to pump new meaning into the bizarre but ongoing saga of ZZ Top. A few months ago, during an interview at Warner Brothers' New York offices, he casually inquired about the cost of music videos, film versus videotape and what other bands were doing with the medium. Lo and behold, a few weeks later, Gibbons, Dusty Hill and Frank Beard are on MTV swaying through a video version of ZZ's new single, "Gimme All Your Loving," playing headless Fender guitars and generally enjoying a colorful local backdrop consisting of some dusty southwest gas station and the '33 Ford Coupe "Eliminator" which inspired their latest LP being driven by three out-of-state dollies with miles of nylon thigh showing.

"After we spoke in New York," Gibbons relates, "we all started talking about how much fun it might be. And now I'm broke. Those things are not cheap. We chose film to be transferred to video later. It's just a nicer medium to work with at this point and I thought what was pieced together was okay. Warner Brothers has a great video department and they can help you. This is great. The Eighties! The record company can help you!"

Gibbons is a wry old dog, and his response to a question about ZZ Top masking their neatly stereotyped Texas-fried identity on the new LP, *Eliminator*, in favor of a more commercial, mainstream approach is delivered with a light toasting of sarcasm: "We all talked about it. This record safely ushers us out of

what we felt was a dead end. I don't want to be victimized by the ashes of urban cowboy-ism. We had a lot to do with that whole thing, which is fine, but we can also go somewhere else. There's an edge of 'safety zone' to the *Eliminator* tracks. When you hear programmers say, 'Thanks, you've got a good pop record but it still sounds like ZZ Top,' I feel good about it. There isn't the esoteric weirdness of something like *El Loco*. It's definitely dead ahead but, hell, you never heard us playing 'Heaven, Hell or Houston' on stage anyway."

What all of this adds up to is that 13 years, eight albums and a whole bunch of nationwide tours down the line, ZZ's still full of surprises. *Eliminator* focuses on more general topics dear to all rock 'n' roll hearts such as Hot Rods (specifically, the aforementioned Ford "Eliminator" by Buffalo Motorcars of Paramount, California), Girls (specifically, "Legs"), Clothes, Sex, Surreal Patio Parties and TV Dinners with nary a whisper of mesquite, sagebrush, Longhorns or any of the other popular Texas icons they've steadfastly been associated with since busting out of Houston back in 1970. "Gimme All Your Loving," for example, is chock full of ricochet guitar hooks and smooth pop choruses clearly intended for mass consumption. The cavernous bass/drum sound of Dusty Hill and Frank Beard is still locked hard into the groove and guitarist/vocalist Gibbons' soupy, lunatic growl and pulverizing guitar are intact. But anyone unfamiliar with ZZ Top would be hard pressed to pinpoint them as "that little ol' band from Texas" based on *Eliminator*'s lyrics or the edgy, modern sound of a sequencer bubbling up through the

bottom of the mix on tracks like "Legs" and "Dirty Dog."

The dense, true grit sound churned out by this supernaturally tight, veteran three-piece unit, best expressed on their remarkable 1973 LP, *Tres Hombres*, sounds even bigger and rawer on both the *Eliminator* album and the current stage show. After extensive multitrack experimentation on the 1979 and '81 LPs *El Loco* and *Deguello*, ZZ has gone back to the flat-out, open-bore instrumental attack which helped carve them a signature sound in a decade filled with heavy rock ready-mades.

According to Gibbons, *Eliminator* "isn't a signature piece for ZZ Top," but does recall the *Tres Hombres* sound, a development that grows out of the recording process employed on the new LP. "For *Deguello* and *El Loco*," he explains, "we'd jumped from Robin Hood Bryant's studio in Tyler, Texas to Ardent in Memphis. We'd mixed there before and then we started recording there, too. We were thrust into Studio C, they put us into different rooms and made us do all of these recording techniques which were supposedly better. Lots of overdubbing, stuff like that. At one point, Dusty, Frank and I couldn't even see each other. We were in different rooms with just headphone communications. But the engineers always have a better way. I kind of liked some of the things on *Deguello*. *El Loco*, as weird as that got, was fun. But for this last one, we were looking at less time, the engineers were frantically scrambling around trying to get some new kind of process together and they finally said, 'Why don't you guys try this, we're gonna put you all in the same

room together.' Hey! Like we'd never seen each other before.

"We went back to the old studio," he continues. "We could talk to each other, we saw each other. Our equipment was back to the same old stuff. The amplifier was behind a padded divider that they'd originally wanted to throw away. And there was a great clamor behind the glass when it started happening—everybody's going, 'don't touch anything!'"

In keeping with their current back-to-basics strategy, ZZ Top's visual look onstage is also more streamlined and high-tech. Drummer Frank Beard, the only one in ZZ who doesn't have long, wispy facial hair and who also favors a dry, understated delivery, describes the stage setup as "real clean, two-levels with a drum riser, 'ego ramps' and the amplifiers tucked away on the first level shooting through the scrim." Beard's 12 x 12 drum riser dominates a sleek black set with nothing to remind us of ZZ's Texas origins except its wide open spaces. Gibbons and Hill are wireless, with the freedom to range far and wide across the stage or to launch into one of their famous choreographed "two-steps" that have become second nature to them after so many years on the road.

True to the puckish sense of humor that keeps the band interesting, ZZ has thrown in a few little asides to move things along. All of the roadies have stage outfits—white jumpsuits with nicknames like "Dr. Sprainbrain" ostentatiously stenciled on the back. For the encore, a huge hanging portrait of the *Eliminator* coupe, featuring three sets of angry red eyes behind the windshield and high-power headlights *Continued on page 29*

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ON THE EVE of his world tour, Rod Stewart chats with our London correspondent about, among other things, his new album, his standing with the press and a possible tour/film project with Elton John.



# TOP 100 ALBUMS

1 MICHAEL JACKSON	AFTER THE FIRE
2 FLASHDANCE	AFT (Epic)
3 DAVID BOWIE	Joe Jackson
4 MEN AT WORK	Night and Day (A&M)
5 DEF LEPPARD	Thomas Dolby
6 U2	Blinded By Science (Capitol)
7 AL JARREAU	VAN MORRISON
8 HALL & OATES	The Inarticulate Speech Of The Heart (Warner Bros.)
9 MEN AT WORK	GOLDEN EARRINGS
10 PRINCE	Cut (Polygram)
11 LIONEL RICHIE	RETURN OF THE JEDI
12 PINK FLOYD	Return Of The Jedi Soundtrack (RSO)
13 EDDY GRANT	STRAY CATS
14 JOURNEY	Built For Speed (EMI)
15 THOMAS DOLBY	PETE TOWNSHEND
16 THE B-52'S	Thompson Twins
17 BRYAN ADAMS	ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN
18 STYX	Porcupine (Sire)
19 THE KINKS	LOU REED
20 ELTON JOHN	Legendary Hearts (RCA)
21 DURAN DURAN	PHIL COLLINS
22 CULTURE CLUB	Hello, I Must Be Going! (Atlantic)
23 ZZ TOP	HUMAN LEAGUE
24 THE TUBES	Fascination (A&M)
25 R.E.M.	WALL OF VODOO
26 A FLOCK OF SEAGULLS	Call Of The West (IRS)
27 RICK SPRINGFIELD	ERIC CLAPTON
28 JOAN ARMATRADING	Money and Cigarettes (Warner Bros.)
29 SCANDAL	TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS
30 NAKED EYES	Long After Dark (Backstreet/MCA)
31 EARL KLUGH	MISSING PERSONS
32 DAVE EDMUND	Spring Session M (Capitol)
33 CARLOS SANTANA	TRIUMPH
34 INXS	Never Surrender (RCA)
35 IRON MAIDEN	PSYCHEDELIC FURS
36 MADNESS	Forever Now (Columbia)
37 BOB SEGER & THE SILVER BULLET BAND	THE RAMONES
38 BERLIN	Subterranean Jungle (Sire)
39 TOTO	RANDY NEWMAN
40 GREG KIHAN	Trouble In Paradise (Warner Bros.)
41 THE BLASTERS	HEAVEN 17
42 BANANARAMA	Heaven 17 (Arista)
43 DEXY'S MIDNIGHT RUNNERS	DIRE STRAITS
44 ROXY MUSIC	Twisting By The Pool (Warner Bros.)
45 TEARS FOR FEARS	MARVIN GAYE
46 ENGLISH BEAT	Midnight Love (Columbia)
47 FALCO	NICK LOWE
48 SIMPLE MINDS	Abominable Showman (Columbia)
49 MODERN ENGLISH	SQUEEZE
50 ULTRAVOX	Singles, 45's and Under (A&M)
51 EURYTHMICS	SUPERTRAMP
52 EARTH, WIND & FIRE	...famous last words... (A&M)
53 KAJAGOOGOO	SOFT CELL
	The Art of Falling Apart (Sire)
	LITTLE STEVEN & THE DISCIPLES OF SOUL
	Men Without Women (EMI)
	SAMMY HAGAR
	Three Lock Box (Geffen)
	PAT BENATAR
	Get Nervous (Chrysalis)
	MUSICAL YOUTH
	Youth of Today (MCA)
	THE CLASH
	Combat Rock (Epic)
	ADAM ANT
	Friend Or Foe (Epic)
	CHRISTOPHER CROSS
	Another Page (Warner Bros.)
	RIC OCASEK
	Beatitude (Geffen)
	ABC
	Lexicon Of Love (Polygram)
	DONALD FAGEN
	The Nightfly (Warner Bros.)
	SAGA
	Worlds Apart (Portrait)
	TODD RUNDGREN
	The Ever Popular Tortured Artist Effect (Bearsville)
	LUTHER VANDROSS
	Forever, For Always, For Love (Epic)
	J. GEILS BAND
	Showtime! (EMI)
	FOREIGNER
	Records (Atlantic)
	JONI MITCHELL
	Wild Things Run Fast (Geffen)
	BOB JONES & EARL KLUGH
	Two Of A Kind (Capitol)
	GROVER WASHINGTON, JR.
	The Best Is Yet To Come (Elektra)
	100 OZZY OSBOURNE
	Speak Of The Devil (Jet)

# LETTERS

## Marianne Faithfull

AS WOMEN IN ROCK SEEKS to be a big issue of interest in your Letters page, please let me thank Jim Farber for his June RECORD feature story on Marianne Faithfull ("I Got Here By The Skin Of My Teeth"). How refreshing it was to read an article which treated Faithfull as the credible artist and musician she has proven herself to be, instead of having to plow through yet another retelling of the details of her stormy personal life.

By treating Faithfull as such, you have done both your readers and the artist a service, and provided us with an interesting and enlightening bit of reading as well.

Thanks again for a job well done.  
LYNNE FRANCEK URIAN  
Media, PA.

come commercially acceptable, even if it means risking one's career (not one's life). If more musicians accepted this challenge, then maybe today's music wouldn't continue to bore us.

TIM WHEELER  
Manhattan Beach, CA.

IN REGARDS TO DAVE Marsh's American Grandstand column, "Of Lies And Great Artists," I applaud the author's open-minded view on learning to appreciate a wide spectrum of musical styles. Just as all music lovers have favorite artists and styles, we have a tendency to focus our interests towards that most palatable to our personal tastes, thereby stifling creative growth in our listening habits. The current debate over the content of MTV videos, in which executives offer an absurd "purist" definition of rock 'n' roll, is a striking example of such a near-sighted musical vision taken to extreme.

Though I like both songs quoted in the column (The Who's "My Generation" and Neil Young's "My, My, Hey, Hey" ("it's better to burn out than to fade away") for allegedly espousing a lifestyle of drug-induced violence and self-destruction similar to the conventional news media's depiction of the punk scene.

Marsh is in good company. In the recent past, Don Henley (believe it or not) also misinterpreted Young's message. I feel that the song's lyric does not embrace a lifestyle, but rather addresses rock 'n' roll as an art form. Perhaps those "rock stars" whose music has degenerated into middle of the road pop should take heed.

Young is simply telling us that it is better to take chances forging new musical styles than resting comfortably on the laurels of what has be-

come commercially acceptable, even if it means risking one's career (not one's life). If more musicians accepted this challenge, then maybe today's music wouldn't continue to bore us.

MICHAEL MUSTONEN  
Detroit, MI.

## U2

READING CHRISTOPHER Hill's review of U2's *War* (May RECORD) made me a bit upset. What he calls "a certain detached coolness," I choose to call U2's sound. You'll find the same sound—coolness, if you like—on their previous albums. And I see he misses a matching between the thoroughness of theme and music. Must it match? Do all his favorite bands have this matching? And "psychedelic angels"? What did we, the kids born in the '60s, ever learn about psychedelia? That it took those people a while to grow up?

And lastly, he as an American and I as a Norwegian, what do we know what it's like to live and grow up in Ireland? To witness all that trouble up close when you're a child? Let them tell us. Anyway, does he really think that the Clash, for instance, know the complete story of the Sandinistas and of the troubles in Nicaragua? They're not even living there! And as a citizen of one of the most strategically placed countries in Europe, I know how the words "atom bomb" scare people. You're pretty safe from the consequences of a new war in your country. We're not!

GRO KIVLE  
Norway

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PRESENTED  
BY MILLER  
HIGH LIFE  
BEER



## New Artist



Tears for Fears' Smith (left) and Orzabal: Primal pop for tomorrow people.

## Tears For Fears' Primal Pop

By Stuart Cohn

NEW YORK—"We never set out to make a very angst-ridden album," Curt Smith is saying. "The thing never to ignore about us is we're quite musical."

Smith, his tightly-wound braids falling to the nape of his neck, is one half of the creative core of the confoundingly musical Tears for Fears. Currently one of England's top pop groups, their debut album, *The Hurting* (Mercury), sits comfortably in the upper regions of the British charts and has just been released over here.

British critics and fans have made much of singer/songwriter/guitarist Orzabal's use of the primal theory of psychologist Arthur Janov as basis for his lyrics. But the reason songs like "Mad World," "Change," and "Pale Shelter" have sold about a million records among them has little to do with the primal scream (to borrow the title of Dr. Janov's most famous book). It has a lot more to do with the group's buoyant melodies, subtle and surprising arrangements, and *The Hurting's* stunning, neo-psychadelic production.

"There's two sides to us," explains Smith, the group's bassist and lead vocalist on all their hit singles. "We're confusing to a lot of people. People always accuse us of being a pessimistic group. But they probably don't listen to the record; I'm sure they just look at the lyric sheet. To me, we're the opposite of pessimistic. In fact, if those people were to listen and understand the things we put forward as wrong, maybe they'd go about trying to change them."

The stuff of Orzabal's lyrics is childhood neglect and lack of communication between people. While neither Smith or Orzabal have been in therapy, both are devoted readers of Janov's books.

Smith: "I don't want to preach about it. In fact, I find it hard to even talk about it. All it is is that I

read *The Primal Scream* and it opened my eyes to the way that I feel."

As practiced by Janov, primal therapy attempts to uncover those childhood (or Primal) experiences which rendered reality too painful to bear, and prompted a retreat into an unreal world of neurosis. By re-living the Primals, patients theoretically free themselves of much of their psychological pain and are able to cope with the real world.

Dr. Janov's most famous patient was John Lennon, who explored his primal experiences most dramatically on his first solo album, *Plastic Ono Band*, a record still regarded by many critics as the artist's finest hour as a musician.

*The Hurting*, though, is the flip side of *Plastic Ono Band*. Where the latter album is stark and relentless in its emotional attack, the Tears' LP is lush and sensual. Smith, Orzabal and producers Chris "Merrick" Hughs and Ross Cullum luxuriate in rich textures and unusual combinations of instruments. The overall effect is one of melodic ecstasy, despite the songs' subject matter.

Smith and Orzabal, both 21, have been friends for eight years. They grew up and still live in Bath, a city in southwestern England. Both came from broken homes and found solace and release in music.

"The good thing about music," says Smith, "is that it's an acceptable way of getting my feelings out. If I went out on the street and just talked about these things it wouldn't be accepted because you're not supposed to show your emotions and feelings. British people pride themselves on their stiff upper lip."

After stints in various bands, the duo got more serious about two years ago. They spent six months in an eight-track studio, where they learned to use a synthesizer and started writing and arranging their own songs.

"At that time," says Smith, "we were listening to Peter Gabriel,

Talking Heads, David Bowie, people like that and from them we learned that there's something more to a song than just singing and playing the guitar."

On the basis of a two-song tape from this woodshed period, Tears got a record deal and, about a year later, released *The Hurting*.

The LP's ten songs share soaring, hooky melodies and a unique emotional honesty—"What's left of me or anyone/When we've denied the hurting" may very well be Tears' credo. The precise, almost fastidious arrangements—the results of months of studio perfectionism—combine electronic and "natural" sounds. For instance, the marimba in "Change" and "Start of the Breakdown" is not a marimba at all, but a Prophet 5 synthesizer. The climax of "Pale Shelter" is a call-and-response exchange between huge, elongated acoustic guitar chords and a layer of staccato, synthesized handclaps.

Smith, however, feels Tears "placed too much importance on the lyrics," and is setting out to correct this oversight.

"Now we're starting to work with different backing tracks and rhythms, and creating songs on top of them. It's proved to make the unit of the song stronger. The music creates a mood you can write a song around."

The point being, ultimately, to establish Tears for Fears as a band noted less for its interest in primal therapy and hit tunes and more for its ability to communicate in a thoroughly modern mode.

Says Smith: "I consider modern music to be a combination of the newest in technology with the oldest in human feeling, a combination of digital synthesizers with an acoustic guitar, with things that are natural and earthy. The musicians I like are the ones who've made music that hasn't been made before."

Like the music of Tears for Fears.

## American Grandstand

By Dave Marsh

### Sold American

For the past two years, the bulk of my time and attention has been devoted to writing a book about the Who, which will be published this fall as *Before I Get Old*. In the course of research, I spent many weeks in England, immersed myself in British rock in ways I had hitherto avoided (and will again in the future), and observed and analyzed more closely than ever the development of the Anglo side of rock's equation. In retrospect, what's most fascinating from a personal perspective is that I emerged from the project with an even greater interest in and thirst for information about indigenous American music, even more firmly convinced that the idea of American music is fascinating and unlikely. I mean all of it: what it is, where it came from, why it wound up manifesting itself in such strange and glorious ways as rock 'n' roll, jazz, gospel quartets and bluegrass, and why those forms, disparate as they are, have something in common with one another that they share with nothing else.

Much of this preoccupation has been poured into the second edition of *The Rolling Stone Record Guide*, which is finally complete and will be published this fall, too. But throughout that massive task—which involved adding so much new material, much of it historical, that the jazz segment is being spun off as a separate volume—I wished there was some systematic overview of the development of our national musical culture. Naturally, it wasn't until my labors were nearly concluded that it appeared. For me, however, Charles Hamm's *Music in the New World* (W.W. Norton, 722 pages, \$25) has been an indispensable revelation.

Hamm is an academic, a musician and a historian; that means he can be maddeningly objective, is usually only gingerly critical and devotes what strikes me as a disproportionate amount of space to music created in the narrowly "composed" European sense. But those are predictable problems, and they are superseded by the scope of what Hamm has attempted, which is nothing less than an annotated and exhaustive description of all the various styles of music that have been performed in the United States since the early seventeenth century. Most refreshingly, Hamm is not a snob. He understands perfectly how both certain kinds of jazz and certain kinds of contemporary classical music have cooperated in their own demise as widely heard genres; he respects the development of modern forms out of the Twentieth Century clash between folk forms and commercial ones; and one of the central thrusts of the book is what happens in America as two or three or four different threads of heritage—say, Scotch-Irish, African and German—meet and merge into some new form of music.

Hamm misses a few tricks: he fails to see why American classical composers of the Reconstruction era supported Native American influence in music (because it was a wedge against Afro-American influence) and he avoids some of the most obvious conclusions about the relationships between classes in American music. For instance, it is illuminating to read that the witch-hunt against vulgar popular taste did not begin with ASCAP's anti-rock 'n' roll crusade in the '50s, but more than two hundred years earlier, when Puritan ministers (including Cotton Mather) took their parishioners to task for their barbaric voicings of psalms. This

**"(Hamm's) stress on the multiracial development of our music is especially important at a time when one can read assertions in publications such as the New York Times Sunday Magazine that American music has 'always' been segregated."**

would be a stronger volume if he pursued such themes more avidly, but then, this may be asking too much interdisciplinary latitude from a professor. What's important is that Hamm has constructed a readable, workable book, in which one can encounter lucid, concise discussions of, say, Edgard Varese that will clear up entire clouds of obfuscation by others. And his stress on the multiracial development of our music is especially important at a time when one can read assertions in publications such as *The New York Times Sunday Magazine* that American music has "always" been segregated.

Hamm's rather more sketchy about 20th century popular music here than he is in his 1979 book, *Yesterdays*. But the next time somebody like Joe Jackson calls for a return to the more "sophisticated" and cosmopolitan songwriting of the Cole Porter/Rodgers & Hart era, someone should point him in the direction of either of these tomes, which will convince anyone less bigoted than Sidney Zion that it was, in fact, the genii of Tin Pan Alley who were repressive and narrow in their attitude toward music that didn't emanate from the few small blocks of turf in Manhattan that they controlled.

I would not of course recommend Hamm's rock chapter as anyone's sole source on the genre; anyone who quotes Albert Goldman with a straight face obviously has severe limitations. But there are certain tasks that are fundamental to getting the job done—the job in this case being the education of more Americans to respect their own culture, along the way to being able to fit it into a more rational, less jingoistic worldview. In this struggle, Charles Hamm may not be a hero, but he certainly deserves more respect and attention than he is currently receiving. Despite what you may read elsewhere, *Music in the New World* is the most important book about American music that has been published in 1983.

# London Calling

By Chris Welch

## A Chat With The Tartan Terror

ROD STEWART BREEZED into London to hold court with his wife Alana Hamilton and impressed everyone with his new "adult" demeanor and lack of flash. He held a reception at the tiny Canteen club in Covent Garden to announce his 1983 "Body Wishes" tour of the world and took the chance to swipe back at critics and gossip mongers. Though Stewart is still simmering over his bust-up with manager Billy Gaff, he seemed happy enough (he did come away from the imbroglio with all the rights to his songs and performances) and said he was looking forward to the long tour ahead—"I wanna carry on touring. I actually enjoy it more now than I did ten years ago." He'll be taking with him the huge "Pink Lady" mascot on the giant touring stage and a special kinetic curtain, all of which cost him around \$200,000. "It's worth it because everybody expects me to have some sort of spectacle, apart from making a spectacle of myself," says Stewart. "I haven't decided what I'm gonna wear yet—maybe some of Elton John's old dresses."

After the tour which ends in Hawaii in December, Stewart will start work on a new album. He'll tour America next year with Elton John ("We'll have two stages. I'll play one for twenty minutes and then Elton comes on for his spot. It'll be like a battle. It will finish with us both taking our trousers off.") and the odd couple are also hoping to make a film together. "It'll be like one of the old Bob Hope-Bing Crosby 'Road' movies—a light comedy. We haven't decided on who will be the leading lady. My wife knows the answer to that one."

What does Rod think of *Body Wishes*? "It's the best I can do," he replies. "It's got a lot of fast songs and I've not gone overboard on synthesizers like everybody else. I've kept to the two guitar sound. Sure I listen to what's in the chart. Boy George is the best white soul singer—since me."

Asked if he's getting too old for rock 'n' roll, Stewart allows as to how



PHOTO: DAVE HOGAN/LGI

### Will Rod wear one of Elton's dresses?

some days he wakes up "feeling 60 and other days I feel like I'm 16." But, he adds quickly, "I don't get bored with rock music or I wouldn't still be touring. The only aspect I don't like is the lies that are written about me. I don't want my two children to read about me supposedly taking nude pictures of women on tour, because that's totally untrue. My wife was on tour with me all the way through America last time." Perhaps Rod took nude pictures of Alana instead? Neither of them looked in the mood for jokes. Said Alana: "A lot of people who used to work for Rod have generated a lot of hateful lies about us and we are helpless. All we can do is speak back and hope that people will listen. Basically we like a quiet life and we're not in the least outrageous."

Opines Rod: "Criticism is okay and a lot of it I deserved, particularly during 1976 when I believed in my own publicity. But it's the lies that hurt. I'm a terrible judge of character, but my wife has told me what she thinks about people that surround me. These people ought to take their claws out of me and get on with their own lives. They are like women scorned."

### Errata

THE CLASH HAVE found themselves a new drummer after so many months spent in trying to find a replacement for Terry Chimes (also known as Tory Crimes), who in turn was a temporary replacement for Topper Headon. The new boy is 23-year-old Peter Howard, formerly of Cold Fish . . . Jimmy Page was arrested at his Windsor home recently and driven to the town police station for several hours of questioning before being released on bail. The raid on his million pound Old Mill House, which Jimmy bought from actor Michael Caine, also involved customs officers. The police took away some unidentified substances for analysis . . . Blues guitarist Dumpy Dunnell of Dumpy's Rusty Nuts fame was electrocuted when he touched an underground microphone. It happened while the band was playing a benefit at the Harefield Heart Hospital, and Dumpy was thrown across the stage. He suffered burns and shock and had to cancel gigs, but is now recovering. Stone the Crows guitarist Les Harvey, brother of the late Alex, died after being electrocuted in 1972 while onstage, and singer Keith Relf of the Yardbirds and Armageddon also died while playing a badly-wired guitar in 1976.



Greg Hawkes: "Too much obscurity isn't healthy."

## Greg Hawkes on an Off Ramp; Cars' New Album in Progress

By Mark Mehler

NEW YORK—Ric Ocasek has a hungry heart (RECORD, April 1983). Greg Hawkes has a wife who thinks he goes into the studio to screw around with his friends.

"Every time Elaine would call the studio," says the Cars' keyboardist, "all she could hear in the background were the sounds of video games and The 3 Stooges. She thought it was all a ploy to get out of the house and fool around."

Thus Hawkes' debut instrumental solo LP, *Niagara Falls*, became the perfect vehicle for setting his wife straight. "I brought her in to lay down a few background flute parts. She's an amateur flutist, but she's quite good. We sometimes do little classical duets at home just for ourselves. Anyway, I think she knows now that recording is a very arduous process."

Though the inspiration for *Niagara Falls* was somewhat more profound than mere spousal appeasement, it is safe to say that unlike his colleague Ocasek, Hawkes had no guilt to assuage, no great statement to make, no fires to douse.

"As usual, Ric was the driving force," admits Hawkes, a youthful, shy, but sprightly type.

"The Cars had gotten to the point where we'd been together so much, Ric said it was time for a change, he wanted to work with other people. He's mild-mannered, it wasn't him saying, 'I'm off, you guys do what you want.' But the point was made."

Given this opportunity, Hawkes snapped at the bait, indulging a long-time dream to make a record all by himself, hooking up assorted drum machines, vocoders and other electronic hardware in a one-man-band ensemble. Other than Elaine Hawkes' appearance on "Voyage Into Space," the LP is all Greg.

"What I most enjoy is synching up a lot of drum machines with a sequencer and triggering it all in the control room. I set up almost nothing in the studio. I brought all the keyboards into the control room, plugged them into the board and sent it all through various effect devices. A lot of it was composed on tape. I'd listen for awhile, see what kind of sounds I had. If I heard something funny, I'd get an idea for a repeat pattern, or sometimes a melody might trigger a hunt for the right sound to play it in . . ."

Hawkes sees *Niagara Falls* as nothing more than a "lot of little patterns interlocking." As a commercial property, he sees little potential. "It's instrumental, first of all, and it doesn't have the heavy human backbeat of Ric's record. It's really a more personal record, but not in the sense of meaningful lyrics. What little lyrics there are are disposable. I'm happiest when the ideas in my head come out pure. But I don't think too many radio stations are going to be clamoring to play it. It isn't Cars material."

Still, *Niagara Falls* does offer an obliquely romantic posture and Hawkes' playful signature keyboard sound, two key elements of the Cars. Opening with a series of gentle mood pieces, the album glides into a dense King Crimson-like swirl of melody and polyrhythm. Indeed, Hawkes says his overall intent is to build on simple pop structures, not strip them down Eno-style. The upshot of making the solo LP has quickened the keyboardist's desire to play in a reunited Cars.

"These last 18 months apart have been a period of uncertainty for all of us. We all understood why it had to be, but after that length of time, it's natural to ask, 'What's going on here?' Anything can happen in a

year and a half."

So for Hawkes, it was particularly heartening to get everybody together the first week of June in the Cars-owned Synchro Sound studios in Boston's Back Bay.

"There was real excitement among everybody. We laid down four things in various stages of composition. It's down on tape but we call it pre-production. One cut is called 'Shooting For You,' it's a rocker, and there's a ballad 'Who's Gonna Drive You Home.' It's Ric's material, and it's good. Right now it's 50-50 whether we use an outside producer or do the album ourselves."

Release of the Cars' fifth LP is expected by late summer, after which a world tour is planned. Hawkes hopes the public will receive the coming album in the intended spirit.

"I thought *Shake It Up* (the fourth LP) was the lightest, the funniest, but the people seemed to take it as more cold and mechanical music. It's difficult to escape a calculating image."

Hawkes says he rejoins the Cars having learned a great deal about studio technology and pop song forms, noting he's happy to once again be under the "broad umbrella" of Ric Ocasek's vision. (At press time Ocasek was in Syncro Sound producing an EP for Iggy Pop.)

"I'm not the outgoing type, I don't go to clubs, I stay home. I'm an introverted person. So I'll just be contributing what I always do, trying to find nice little harmony parts on background vocals, or a nice keyboard line somewhere."

Yet, in the Cars, even in his non-leadership role, Hawkes finds a certain ego gratification—in record sales and airplay. "I'll make another solo record," he says, "but not for awhile. Too much obscurity isn't healthy."

## Baby Sister June Pointer Leaves the Fold for Solo LP

NEW YORK—Don't tell June Pointer that her solo debut on RCA, *Baby Sister*, sounds like a Pointer Sisters album. You might observe that Richard Perry, the Sisters' producer, is behind the board here as well (except on the sizzling opening track, "Ready For Action," which was co-produced with Perry by ex-Motown staff producer Norman Whitfield) and gives the youngest Pointer the same sort of taut, glossy, high-energy production sheen characteristic of the siblings' albums. You might also note with some interest that two tracks, sprightly remakes of the Marvelettes' "Don't Mess With Bill" and Martha and the Vandellas' "Ready For Love," feature June's sisters singing background vocals—making them sound like, well, the Pointer Sisters.

Pointer begs to differ. "I think my album has more soulful tunes than you'll find on a Pointer Sisters record," she offers. "And I was just learning how to use different parts of my voice. To me, the whole sound of the album is different from a Pointer Sisters album."

That said, Pointer goes on to reveal that *Baby Sister* "was harder than any of the Pointer Sisters albums" for her, because she often found herself in the studio alone, without the TLC (tender loving care, for the uninitiated) that Anita and Ruth often provide. "I was ner-

vous. Then when Norman Whitfield came in, there were two producers, two heavies, and one had this arm, and the other had this arm. But it was very educational, and I learned to try things that I would have blown if just one of them had been there."

*Baby Sister* was conceived, if you will, five years ago, shortly after Bonnie Pointer left the group to go solo. It was another three years before June cut any tracks on her own. The LP was delayed further, at June's insistence, while the Pointers got their career in gear with the *Black and White* and *So Excited* albums. The result, she says, was worth the wait. "I like what I hear. You get a good almost 45 minutes of music, and it's not like there's four cuts and one side's all instrumental. And there's a lot of variety in the material."

As for the future, it's back to work on another Pointer Sisters album, followed by a tour which June hopes will incorporate some of her solo material. And if, like the cowardly lion, she can find some courage, she may even try a few dates on



PHOTO: LYNN MCAFEE/JGI

her own. But, she advises, "I still get nervous when I go onstage with the Pointer Sisters. I may need a barf bag someplace close before I go out there by myself."

—David McGee

## Songs Of Romantic Conflict Fuel Jules Shear's Comeback

NEW YORK—Returning to action after three years in a contractually-imposed limbo, Jules Shear asserts: "I'm not sure I've ever been in sync with anything, and I've never done anything because it happened to be popular." Fitting in is the least of the man's concerns; he feels fortunate just to have a new record (*Watch Dog*, produced by Todd Rundgren) out.

When two critically-lauded albums for Columbia made with his former outfit, the Polar Bears, didn't sell beans, Shear and band fell victim to some label in-fighting. After finishing some tracks that were rejected, and jettisoning the other Bears (except for long-time cohort Stephen Hague), Shear says Columbia finally saw how "absurd" the situation had become and let him go. He hooked up with Rundgren, and hunkered down to do some real work, finally.

Rundgren made the song selections (the prolific Shear had quite a backlog since last reaching vinyl), and let Shear choose the musicians: pal Hague on keyboards, Tony Levin and Car Elliot Easton (whom

Shear has co-written with for an upcoming solo record) on guitars and noted session drummer Rick Marotta. And the results are impressive: *Watch Dog* resounds with controlled power and rolls with fluid dynamics, and successfully evokes many moods and feelings. From the third-party involvement tensely confessed to in the love triangle story of "Whispering Your Name," through the hopeful pleas of "Love Will Come Again," romantic conflict is at the heart of Shear's songs. "Conflict is always more interesting to write about, and a lot of the songs focus on the spaces between people. But I think the record has optimism in the face of that." Maintaining and expressing such optimism is, after all the business-related problems that dragged him down, what keeps Shear going. "You never have to say, after listening to a song, That made me feel good because —; you never have to name those things. When you put on a record, it should make a noise that will inspire you, will make you feel good. That's the beauty of music."

—Wayne King

## Naked Eyes: Old Song, New Hit

LOS ANGELES—"Always Something There To Remind Me." Old song, new hit.

Naked Eyes plugged the voltage into this Burt Bacharach/Hal David chestnut and gave it a bizarre, synthesized grandeur. They did something else that Sandie Shaw in 1964, Dionne Warwick in 1968 and R.B. Greaves in 1970 didn't: they turned it into a top ten hit.

"There have been five versions of that song in America," Rob Fisher says with some shy grinning. "A lot of people say it should've been the original."

Fisher and singer/lyricist Pete Byrne have been paired as Naked Eyes for some three-and-a-half years now. The former's lonesome voice is the honey glaze on his partner's Linn drums and keyboards ensemble, and Byrne's discovery that he could "sing a bit" saved him from a career in photography. When the two met, Fisher was an electronics student at the University of Bath and was grateful when in 1980 their first music publishing deal committed his sentence at British Aerospace, where he'd spent six months as a design engineer. They signed with EMI/UK, hitched up with producer Tony Mansfield of New Musik and soon found themselves recording their debut album at Abbey Road.

It was there, during a lull in working on their co-written tracks, that recording "Always Something" suddenly seemed like a fun thing to do.

"We were looking for something by somebody else, just to get a bit of relief from our own stuff," recalls Byrne. "We did it from memory. I had to ring up a friend and get the lyrics because he had the record."

For now, Naked Eyes isn't planning a similar assault with other covers. Nor are they looking to add personnel beyond the guitarist, drummer, bassist and second keyboard player needed for their U.S. tour in October. Both say they've spent enough time in bands to get sick of working and arguing with other people.

Pete Byrne shoots a smile at the other half of Naked Eyes. "It's easier with just us two," he says. "Much easier."

—Susanne Whatley

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## Starship Prepares for New LP; Three Solo Flights in Works

**SAN FRANCISCO**—While the Jefferson Starship enters "writing mode" in preparation for a late-summer tour of outdoor venues across America followed by sessions for a new studio album, band members Paul Kantner, Grace Slick and Mickey Thomas are all pursuing individual projects.

Kantner's second solo album, *Planet Earth Rock and Roll Orchestra*, is finished and set for late-summer release. Kantner characterizes it as "a soundtrack, almost," for his recently-completed science fiction adventure novel of the same name. "The music on this record is what the band in the book plays."

Musically, Kantner says, the album is more or less a continuation of the ideas he set forth on *Blows*

*Against the Empire*, his 1970 solo album. "It's that piano- and guitar-based folk music, but with a little more propulsion this time," the drive being provided by former Starship drummer Aynsley Dunbar and ex-Airplane bassist Jack Casady. Ron Nagle and Scott Matthews, who co-produced the album with Kantner, added synthesizer overdubs and coined the name "folk-rocket" to describe the sound; Starship guitarist Craig Chaquico played lead on most of the songs, with Ronnie Montrose stepping in on "(She Is a) Telepath." Kantner, Slick and LA session legends Howard Kaylan and Mark Volman (aka Flo and Eddie) sang backgrounds.

Meanwhile, Grace Slick is at work in the Record Plant in Sausalito, laying down tracks for a new solo album being produced by Ron Neivison, who helmed the Starship's *Modern Times* and Slick's *Dreams*. Sessions should be completed by mid-July, but no release date has been set. Most of the songs consist of Slick's lyrics set to music by Australian keyboardist Peter Wolf, formerly of Group 87. Wolf has also programmed a Linn Drum Computer to take the place of a live drummer. Other humans playing on the project include bassist Bret Bloomfield and guitarist Peter Maunu, another Group 87 alumnus.

Mickey Thomas has been playing Northern California clubs with a group he calls Little Gadget and the Soulful Twilites. Personnel include bassist Bloomfield, Starship drummer Don Baldwin and other local players. Although the response to the Gadget gigs has been enthusiastic, Starship spokespeople say they have no plans to record or tour.

—David Gans



Mark Volman, Grace Slick and Howard Kaylan join Paul Kantner in the studio.

## Hurt By The Stones, Peter Tosh Finds Solace In Africa

**NEW YORK**—Standing on the pile carpet of EMI-America Records, Peter Tosh says he can still feel the African sand in his shoes.

"Just to walk on the earth, to inhale the air, you feel a different thing comin' out of you," says Tosh, describing his first trip to Africa last year in language common to all who have made a pilgrimage to a spiritual homeland.

Nevertheless, for Tosh, whose three-week visit to Nigeria is vividly and hauntingly recalled on his latest LP, *Mama Africa*, the experience proved to be especially profound.

"My passport," he explains, "is marked 'Alien.' Only Africa is home to me, not Jamaica, not United States, not those who do not want me. Only Africa have meaning . . . it is my inspiration, yes, man, everywhere I go it is in back of my thoughts."

Tosh says Africa, which "yearns for the music so bad," is a place where reggae "get respected, not like here where they not respect the music." He reserves a few choicer words for the Rolling Stones, who took him under their wing some years ago, and, according to Tosh, abandoned him and his music to commercial anonymity.

"I'm angry," he confesses. "Plenty more could be done. The Stones never appreciate reggae. They set me back ten years. Now the Police and everybody play and everybody sell, but fundamental reggae get no credit. You know the reggae work on formulas. Now they mix the formulas, and it has no standard reggae-ability. Radio not respect the difference."

Despite a continuing commitment to roots reggae, however, Tosh

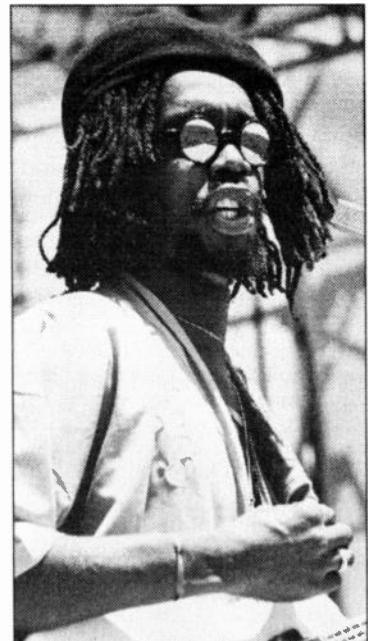


PHOTO PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO REFERENCE

Peter Tosh: A passport stamped "Alien."

was persuaded to include a cover of Chuck Berry's "Johnny B. Goode" on the new album. He was reluctant, noting "I don't like the lyrics, but I do it to be commercial." What emerged is an innovative melding of reggae power and Berry's timeless ode to rock 'n' roll. Even on such an American classic, Tosh insists his inspiration was Africa.

"The music is theirs, it was taken away . . . someday I go back and play. I was always afraid because so many crooks and pirates busy working the streets, take you around and leave you stranded. This time I go secret and private, and that's the best way to see everything happen. I get my country back again."

—Mark Mehler

## Shriekback's Wildlife Park: Draw Your Own Conclusions

**BOSTON**—The idea at first was not to play out; Shriekback, like the first edition of Public Image, Ltd., would simply be a studio group. Dave Allen, Shriekback bassist, had had it with life on the road, leaving Gang of Four in the midst of an American tour. For Allen, it was too much of everything: too much drugs, too much drink, too much pressure.

Allen, who cheerfully says he is "on the wagon—permanently," considered gigs dehumanizing: "We said gigs are awful and they can't work." This was in early '81. A year and a half later, they played their first gig. "It was gonna be hard work. It was a matter of transferring all this [studio] stuff to the stage," notes Allen, talking about the decision to make it live. "It was a matter of fucking blind fear too," chips in keyboardist Barry Andrews.

So Shriekback—which in addition to Allen and Andrews includes

guitarist/singer Carl Marsh and touring percussionists Pedro Ortiz and Martin Barker—now has it both ways: they released their debut EP, *Tench*, on Y Records last year, have a new LP, *Care*, out on Warner Bros., and they're enthusiastic about roadwork. What makes these gigs work?

"A willingness to communicate," says Allen. "Tonight, for instance, was a good example of accepting that the audience wants to join in. A lot of gigs I've been to you're left out. The other night in New York I went to Simple Minds and there was no attempt whatsoever to get me to join in."

"There's some sort of interaction between us and the people," adds Andrews. "It's surprising how few bands do that."

Shriekback is not the most obvious lot, not the latest happy-time English white funk dance band.

Songs are written around a drum track. Allen adds the bass lines and the songs grow from there. Vocals—"anti-vocals" Marsh calls them—are often mixed into the middle, not over the top. "There is a rule of thumb that all lead vocals have to be treated in a certain way because they're vocals," says Marsh wryly. "Not like a little wanky percussion part that you can do what you want with. Voices have to be treated with some respect."

"Lined Up" is Shriekback's catchiest tune (from melodic standpoint), but like New Order's "Temptation," it's involved as much with mood as it is with hooks. The rest of *Care* is even more moody. Shriekback favors sharp, heavy bass lines, chantlike vocals, the occasional textural synth or guitar swirl. Restrained, but tense; spacious. Shadowplay you can dance to.

"I'd kind of like it to be like a wildlife park," offers Marsh. "You wander around and there are all these things there that are diverse and beautiful and grotesque sometimes. You can draw the conclusions you like." —Jim Sullivan



(From left) Shriekback's Allen, Ortiz, Andrews, Marsh.

## How Good Is Chris DeBurgh? Ask Poland, Or Africa, Or . . .

**NEW YORK**—The bus driver trying to smuggle a stack of Chris DeBurgh records into Poland last year was met by a rotund female customs agent who studied the lyric sheet with a practiced eye. Searching for

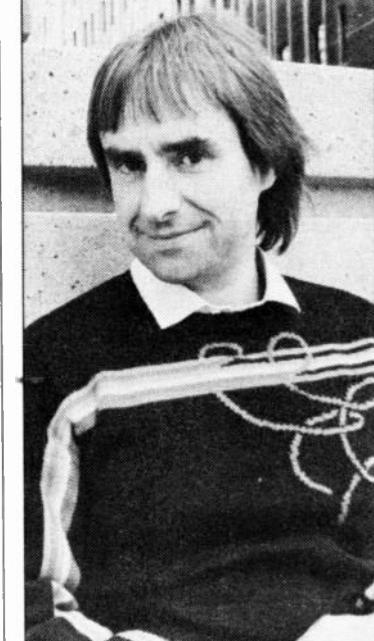


PHOTO PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO REFERENCE

Chris DeBurgh: Why is this man smiling?

Meanwhile, from other points of the globe comes further news of DeBurgh's progress. In Beirut, members of the Irish Embassy staff slip into the basement to listen to *The Getaway* during the Israeli bombing missions. In Africa, where the artist played a benefit to preserve the elephant population, six baby elephants named Chris DeBurgh roam the countryside. And, in America, where stardom continues to elude the singer/songwriter, there is finally a glint of commercial hope. The single, "Don't Pay The Ferryman," is in the Top 50, as is the LP.

DeBurgh sees some measure of poetic justice in this. "Originally I was going to make the record with Gus Dudgeon, which was the 'smart record,' the one you know what it's going to sound like. I wanted a success here, but I also know you don't just go out and tailor an album for the American market."

Instead, DeBurgh and producer Rupert Hine anchored the record with gentle, searching narrative ballads, bringing up the tempo and the bass drum on "Ferryman" for AOR radio. If DeBurgh is to go through life compared with Julio Iglesias, he would at least like to be a Julio Iglesias with some chops.

DeBurgh says *The Getaway*, an album about trying to escape one's destiny, follows a fallow period of some 18 months, "when I didn't think I had anything to say . . . I was like Bjorn Borg, a good player who'd lost his will." Eventually he found the purpose again, and he does not intend to lose it.

"We're not going to sap our energy by doing what we did last time here," he vows. "We headlined a show for 38,000 in Canada, crossed over to Portland, Oregon and played a seedy bar for about 40 people and went back to Vancouver the next day and played for 60,000. People may hate me, but they'll see the show with all the drama intact or they won't see it at all."

—Mark Mehler

# US Festival '83: No More In '84



at Unuson squander a single opportunity to coax The Fans Out There to buy an official program or T-shirt bearing the slogan "Today. Tomorrow. Together," or the logo of particular brand of beer.

Having been appalled by Van Halen's David Lee Roth, Ellis claimed that Unuson would henceforth have nothing more to do with heavy metal—but only until his Outstanding Young Man of the Year political instincts kicked in. Whereupon he rhapsodized about what Terrific Entertainers Judas Priest, Triumph, and Motley Crue (they of the dimestore Satanism) had all proved, and lauded Eddie Van Halen's Great Contributions to the music business. Of which business he'd



**The Thin Bronzed Duke**

only milliseconds before professed total ignorance.

Listening to festival creator Steve Wozniak, it was difficult to imagine him getting his own running shoes tied, let alone having invented a machine (the Apple microcomputer) that changed the world. "The mail I got from the kids who came to last year's festival was so incredibly positive," he gee-whizzed in his breathless, rapid-fire way during his first visit to Press Island, where the media were treated to free pretzels and dollar beers as a sort of bribe to make themselves scarce. "that I just had to give them that enjoyment again, like another *Star Wars* movie."

A faraway look appeared in his eyes. "They come from every state in the Union," he marveled. "They park their cars and vans and campers and RVs in the parking lot, and they stay up all night listening to the biggest, loudest radios . . ." Here his voice trailed off, as though to embellish so sublime a vision might be somehow to diminish it.

To their credit, The Clash weren't buying a syllable of Unuson's utopian rhetoric. Fully a week before the festival was to begin, they took to agonizing in public over the question of should they stay or should they go. By and by, they decided that they'd escape the taint of the extraordinarily huge amount of filthy lucre—\$500,000—they'd been offered only if Unuson and their fellow performers made donations to charity. Two hours before they were due on stage, it was later alleged, they'd phoned Unuson's attorney and told him that, unless The Corporation acceded to their latest demands, they'd be on a flight east at the time they were meant to take the stage, and wholesale mayhem would inexorably ensue.

Once on stage, the first thing Joe Strummer did was insult his audience, in a way that demonstrated that his mastery of geography is just about equivalent to his sociopolitical acumen. "We're here," he croaked biliously, "in the capital of the decadent U.S. of A." This must have been exciting news for Devore, California.

Between the conclusion of their performance proper and what might have been their encore, Kosmo Vinyl, the loudmouth The Clash keep on their payroll to rile things up when their own energies flag, reportedly blindsided the festival's insufferable master of ceremonies for seeming to impugn the boys' motives. A punch-up between the band and Unuson stage workers purportedly ensued. Unfortunately, no one was hurt.

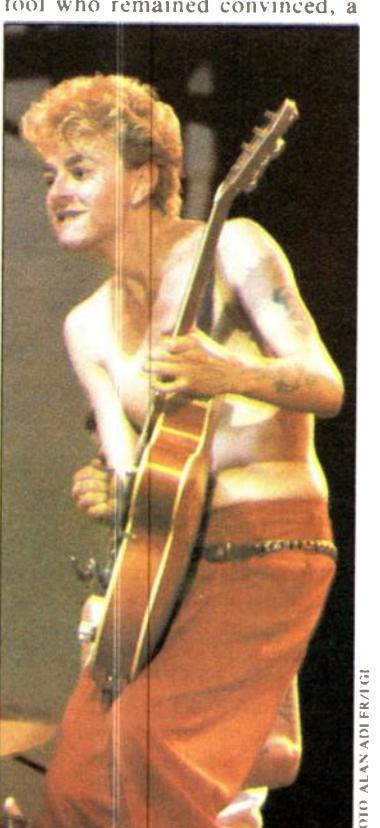
The deep irony of Heavy Metal Sunday's predominantly young male audience—by far the festival's largest—was that, even while it exuded we-don't-take-no-shit-from-nobody *machismo*, it was also supremely acquiescent. No matter how many times vainglorious asshole lead singers dared to shriek, "I can't hear you," after the crowd had roared assent to the rhetorical question, "Are you having a good time?" the long-haired tens of thousands never refused to roar back more loudly yet.

And when, at the conclusion of the long, hot day, Van Halen kept them waiting two hours in the dampness, did they storm the stage and pull the boys limb from limb? No. While their heroes—who'd needed no less than 22 limousines to transport the 130 bodyguards, technicians, and sycophants they'd brought with them—readied themselves to party hearty, the long-haired tens of thousands huddled patiently near bonfires and emitted the only genuinely communal vibes of the whole festival.

And when the group finally did arrive on stage, and David Lee Roth was seen to have partied so hard already that he couldn't sing even as well as he usually does, nor remember lyrics, nor even remain upright in the early going, did they storm the stage *then*? No. Instead they roared their approval so as to make all of Devore quake, and raised their fists high in tribute to their heroes. And showed the world that as much as was dished out, they would take, and more.

There turned out to be lots more to take. A third of the shuttle buses that were supposed to carry the audience from the concert back to their cars in the vast unmarked parking lot didn't show up at show's end, and tens of thousands remained stranded on the site at 5:30 a.m. Two of them were later found to have been killed in car crashes after falling asleep at the wheel. And a 12-year-old girl was run over while dozing in a sleeping bag on the edge of the parking lot.

For them, and for one doddering old fool who remembered being able to see the performers on stage without Diamond Vision from where he sat—yes, sat, comfortably—in the third row from the back at Monterey in 1967; for one doddering old fool who remained convinced, a

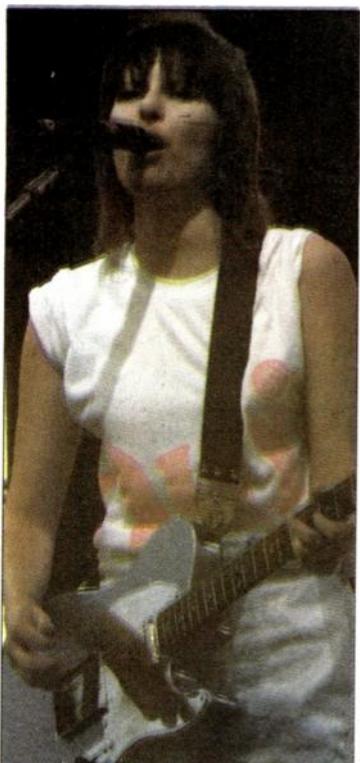


**Cool Cat Brian Setzer**  
young heavy metal fan's lifetime later, that masochism and a love of live rock and roll aren't inextricably linked, there will be no more in 1984.

**By John Mendelssohn**

**A**fter punk, audiences weren't supposed to pay large amounts of money anymore for the privilege of watching superstars from the length of a football field away, shouting "Yeah!" whenever those exalted beings deigned to demand, "Everybody having a good time?"

Over the Memorial Day weekend, between 375,000 and 700,000 rock fans attended the 1983 US Festival



**Sublime Chrissie Hynde**

in Devore, California. Each of them paid Unuson, the purportedly non-profit corporation that staged the festival, at least \$20 a day to endure scorching heat and dangerous levels of air pollution by day, dampness and cold by night, to get done dirt at the concession stands, and to try to make their heroes out on Diamond Vision. Behold again the extent to which punk failed.

The US Festival's 400,000-watt sound system was excellent. However high the ozone sulfate level, no one was asphyxiated. Wall of Voodoo, Men at Work, Stray Cats, Ozzy Osbourne, U2 and The Pretenders all performed fine to sublime sets. Stevie Nicks and the Thin Bronzed Duke both looked supremely video-genic on the gigantic monitors that flanked the stage. And the little Hitlers of The Clash and Unuson fighting it out until neither did the other's will proved fab soap opera.

But for every good thing that might be said about the 1983 US Festival, at least 75,000 bad ones flock to mind, especially if one had attended on a magazine's behalf.

They'd seen fit to give everything from *Newsweek* to *The B'nai B'rith Biannual Bugle* equal credence. So whenever a writer bemoaned his lack of access to an area from which

he might watch the festival's musical performances live, rather than on Diamond Vision, without having to claw his way through 25,000 sweating, squirt-bottle-wielding, ozone-sulfate-stupefied rock fans, the good folks of Unuson were able to gasp with incredulity and sputter, "Let 1200 members of the press up on stage? No way!"

Once having achieved admission to the bleachers on either side of the stage, one was so loathe to quit them that he vented his bladder in empty soft drink or beer cups. Early in the evening of Heavy Metal Sunday, when the inhabitants of the bleachers ran out of empty cups, a group of photographers waiting below to be led to the demilitarized zone in front of the stage found themselves doused with golden fluids from on high.

But no indignity to which the media were subjected compared to being placed in the care of Sid Silver. "If dis [a good turnout] continues," this (relentlessly) self-described "former member of the working press" announced with what he unmistakably fancied to be vast wit and infinite portentousness at least half a dozen times during the afternoon of the first day, "dere will be more in '84."

By about noon on Heavy Metal Sunday, Sid had grown weary of being snarled at about the press's lack of backstage access. He removed his red, white, and blue polyester cap and looked grave. With what he unmistakably imagined would be perceived as Great Candor, he cautioned that he was about to speak not as the voice of Unuson, but as plain Sid Silver, Former Member of the Working Press. "You made dese groups," he indignantly intoned, his voice all a-tremble. "It's up to you to tell your readers how dey treat you."

Knowing no better, the correspondent for the *B'nai B'rith Biannual Bugle* applauded. Whereupon, Sid took to snatching his cap off and delivering the same valiant oration approximately every hour on the hour, until everyone got sick to death of it and not even the *B'nai B'rith Biannual Bugle* applauded anymore.

But it wasn't until Memorial Day that Sid *really* hit his stride. Introducing the local fuzz at one of the last of the press's periodic crime updates, he noted, "We were just having a rap, not about law enforcement, but just a gentle rap . . . and I think the people of San Bernardino did a wonderful thing electing Floyd Tidwell sheriff."

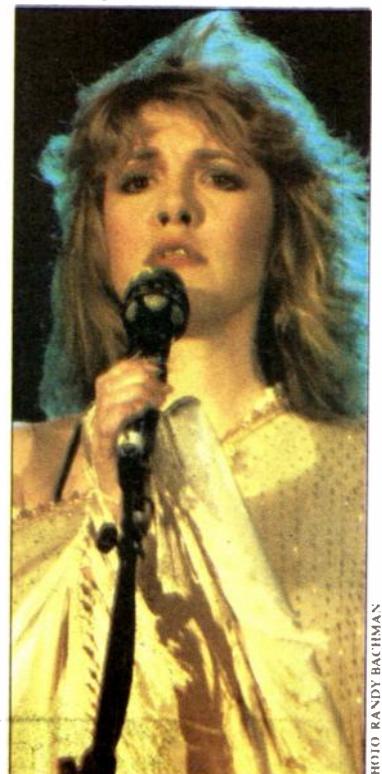
(They should be relieved that they didn't elect him to teach their children the alphabet. "There's lots of acid out there," Tidwell kept assuring the press. In fact, what there was lots of Out There wasn't LSD, but PCP, in sufficient abundance to keep the security gorillas at the edge of the stage very busy indeed. In his

determination to join Judas Priest in their finest hour, one obvious young user got himself punched unconscious and hurled back into the crowd no fewer than three times, only to reappear minutes later, spitting out his own features and shrieking in a language he alone could understand.)

Resembling the patron of one of those *Urban Cowboy*-inspired singles bars jammed with accountants in Stetsons and moustaches, Unuson president Dr. Peter Ellis proved even more mealy-mouthedly disingenuous than the ludicrous Sid. "I really respect the way the press doesn't let bullshit slide," he said with one-time Sunnyvale (Silicon Valley, California) Jaycees' "Outstanding Young Man of the Year" earnestness when the press asked him why Unuson was treating it so woefully.

This, apparently, was one hunk of bullshit he hoped the press would make an exception for, since he said no more on the subject until pressed, and pressed hard. "You're not the easiest guys in the world to deal with," he finally chuckled nervously. "And of course the number one person we want to serve are the fans out there."

Behold some of the ways in which Unuson served The Fans Out There. If one wanted to eat at the US Festival, one ate what a Unuson-licensed concession stand sold him. No food could be brought in—that is, *no* food. Guards were seen confiscating even the milk a young mother had brought in to feed her infant child. The staff of a first-aid station was overheard advising a frighteningly scarlet young woman where she could buy the sunburn ointment she'd come to the station imagining she'd be given. Nor did their friends



**Videogenic Stevie Nicks**

# Mitch Ryder's Rolling Again With Help From John Cougar

By Wayne King

NEW YORK—Two years ago, Bruce Springsteen and Steve Van Zandt rescued (albeit briefly) Gary U.S. Bonds from the throes of obscurity; also in 1981, Tom Petty unsuccessfully attempted to salvage the faded career of Del Shannon. 1983's version of Modern Star Produces '60s Rocker is brought to us by John Cougar, that American Fool with one of 1982's biggest LPs to his credit, and Mitch Ryder, best known for his R&B shouters with the Detroit Wheels. Such pigeonholing is neat, sweet and probably even precise, but don't expect Ryder to sit still for it.

"I can see why people would make that comparison (with Bonds and Shannon), but I think it's irrelevant. Polygram is presenting me as a new artist. I am a rock and roll performing artist—I've been making records, selling records, whereas I don't think those other two gentlemen have." True enough, although American audiences may not have heard Ryder's voice since *Detroit* in 1971. He has released five albums since 1977; the first two, *How I Spent My Vacation* and *Naked But Not Dead*, actually were released in the U.S., but on the obscure Seeds and Stems label, after being rejected by the major record companies. After that, Ryder didn't even try to sell his work here. Until one John Mellencamp entered the picture.

"John was playing at Pine Knob (a theatre outside Detroit), opening for Heart, and he went down to WLLZ to do some on air promoting, and he saw one of my concert posters on the wall, and he seized on it as a subject, and I guess did a little raving about me. The disc jockey, Jerry Lubin, asked if he could give me John's number, so I could thank him for the comments, and John said, go right ahead." When Ryder gave Cougar a call, the latter inquired as to his present plans; when Ryder mentioned his intention to make another record for Europe,

John offered some songs to the project. "I called back to tell him what I thought of the tunes, and he proposed that we do the album together. And he got me the contract; I'd like to emphasize that. He got me the contract."

The result of their collaboration, *Never Kick a Sleeping Dog*, trumpets its arrival in no uncertain terms. The word "understated" will not appear in print anywhere in connection with *Dog*, but no one's ever accused John Cougar of being a subtle fellow. And Mitch Ryder, like so many other Detroit performers, loves what fellow Motor City rocker Bob Seger dubbed "heavy music."

Ryder credits Cougar for every decision made on *Never Kick A Sleeping Dog*. "Everything happened on this album because John wanted it to. It was John's decision to use Marianne Faithfull on 'A Thrill's A Thrill' (the Long John Baldry number that finds the two veterans blending their strained voices together). He found a line of consistency with the production; for

instance, the Keith Sykes tune, 'B.I.G.T.I.M.E.' is like nothing I've ever done, the Baldry tune the same thing. And yet, when you play the record, you'll find they all have something in common. John's a very good producer; I think he has a career in it, if he wants to pursue it."

As for Ryder, all he ever wanted was another chance. "I could hear the contemporary audience in America," he says, "but I couldn't reach them." Thanks to Cougar, he's got a new shot at the brass ring, and he's anxious to grab it, but not at the cost of losing a perspective on the music business that he's spent half of his life acquiring. The most precious cornerstones of that outlook are his family life and retaining his real name, Billy LeVise. "If John Mellencamp ever starts believing he's John Cougar, he's in trouble. The same for me: I've never wanted to change my name legally, it's the last thing I have that music hasn't taken away. I've given it everything else, I've sacrificed everything I've had for music, because I love it." □

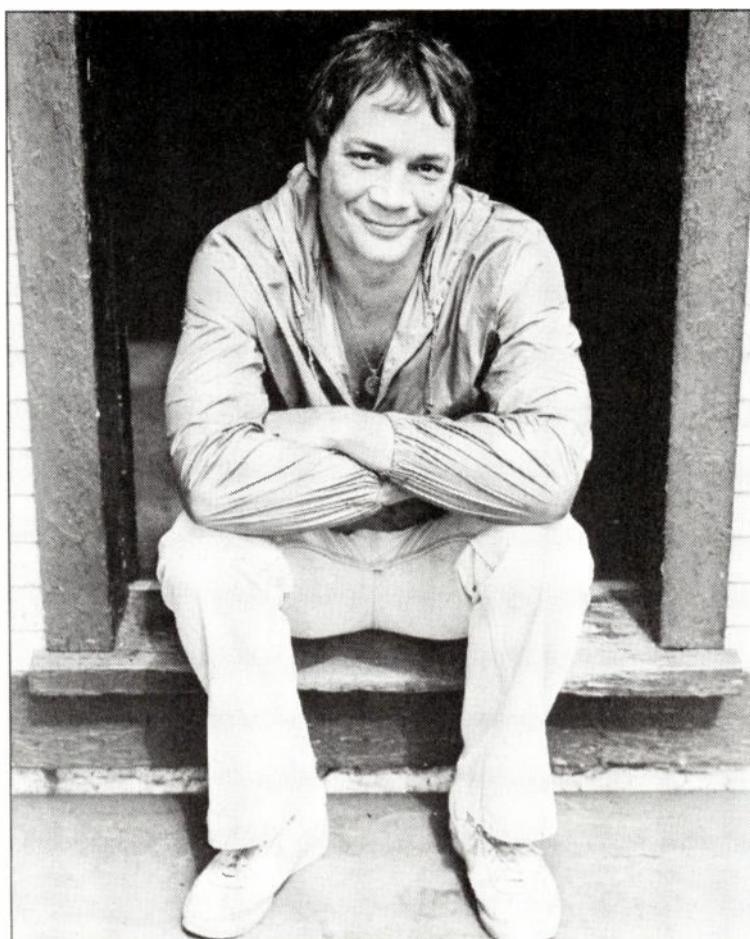
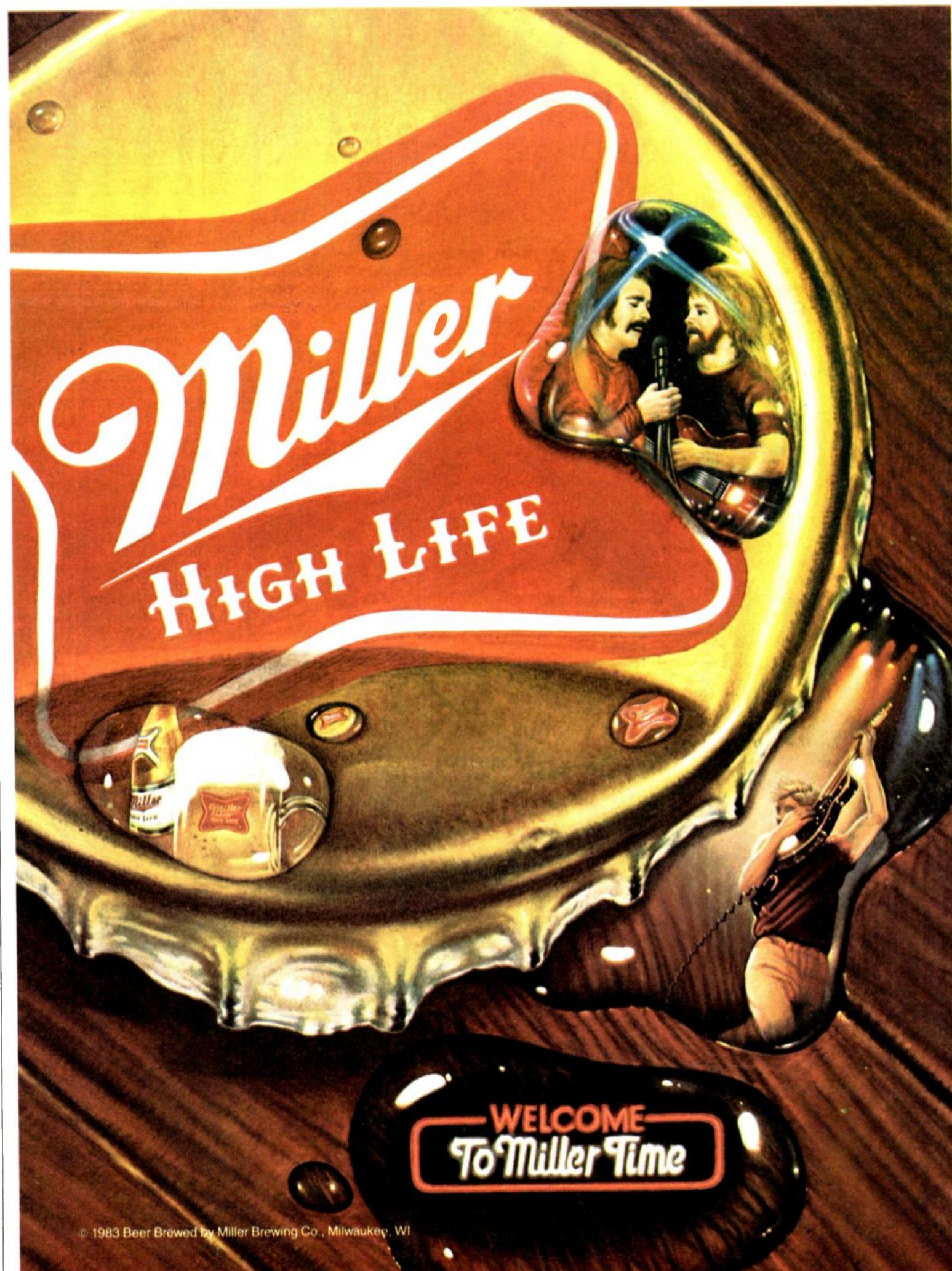


PHOTO: DARRYL PITTS/RETNA LTD

Mitch Ryder: Love that "heavy music."



## Boston

Continued from page 1  
basement studio. "There are still two songs left to finish," Sheehan says from his home on Massachusetts' North Shore. "But everything else is already done and mixed. Even the art work is done. Seventy-five percent of the album is completed."

For five years the band has been releasing semi-annual announcements, it seems, promising the impending release of the mythical third album. It's been delayed for a variety of reasons, according to Sheehan. He admits that Scholz' meticulous nature in the studio is one of them and is a cause of constant frustration to the others.

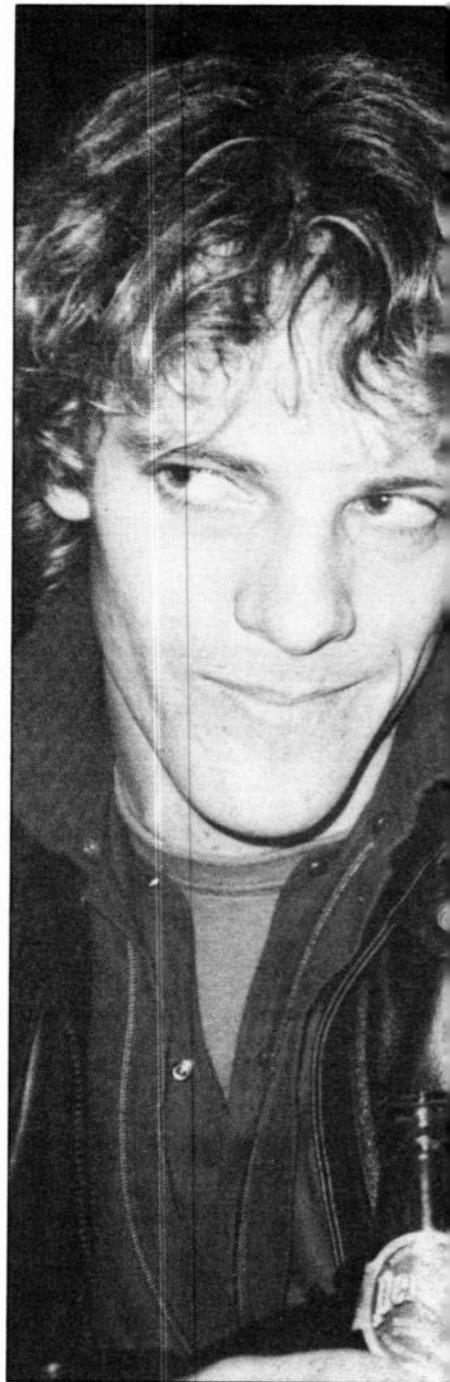
There were also some legal entanglements. Though Sheehan refuses to delve into specifics, some involved management, "contracts among ourselves, restructuring within the band, all kinds of stuff." The band also needed time to write new songs. "We never like to whip albums out," Sheehan adds in what may rank as one of the greatest understatements of the decade.

But all is tranquil now in the Boston camp, and if the album comes out as predicted look for the band to do an abbreviated tour of major markets and make their first-ever appearance on network television, probably in a late-night one-hour program.

"The record should be out this fall," Sheehan states with a certain amount of conviction. "It really should. I can't see anything holding up the songs that still have to be done." In less than an hour's time, the release date has been pushed back another season. Uh-oh. Here we go again . . . —Dean Johnson

# TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

Being an account of how three musicians and two entrepreneurs turned the music business upside down, and an inquiry into why the Police won't give up the ghost.



*Continued from page 1*  
 to be the Police On Tour, to be the Police On Record, just as it was important to document their activities, just as it was important to see, hear and read about the Police. And that might still hold true, especially when considering the alternatives.

No, we're not going to give up Sting, Stew and Andy for, say, the charisma of Steve Wozniak. Or Nina Blackwood. But the band can only be as pressing to the world as it is to itself. And when Stewart Copeland whines, a little more than half-seriously, that this current North American tour is dragging him away from the meat of the English polo season, or when manager Miles Copeland can produce no suitable explanation for such distasteful, mercenary, unimaginative moves as a Shea Stadium date, or when Sting's general level of enthusiasm evokes images of some of the great contractual holdouts in baseball history, you gotta start thinking.

Oh, and that was polo we were talking about back there. Stew has been playing the sport of landed gentry and Town & Country trust fund twerps and Jerzy Kosinski since he was in school.

"It's an addiction, especially if you can afford the ponies," says Copeland Stew from his home in Bledlowridge. "I can't believe I'm being dragged out to tour, right in the middle of the season."

But add to his ponies the impending birth of Copeland's first child by his wife Sonya Kristina and his recent adoption of her teenaged son, his work on two films (Francis Ford Coppola's *Rumblefish* and his own 16 mm punk epic titled *So What!*), and rock's most well-regarded drummer can be excused. His priorities are changing.

Sting was caught in Mexico City, fulfilling yet another villainous obligation on Dino De Laurentiis' \$50 million epic production of Frank

Herbert's *Dune*. At that point, two weeks prior to rehearsals, he had no real idea what the band would be doing on stage other than a substantial block of new material from *Synchronicity*, the album hailed as the greatest interim work of all time. Sting (aka Gordon Sumner), recently separated from his wife, British actress Frances Tommelty, was spending a lot of time in L.A. and had dabbled in some serious jet setting. He too was playing a new set of cards.

Guitarist Andy Summers was incommunicado in Japan and unavailable even for a proxy. But his outlets are opening up too, from last year's *Advance Masked* collaboration with Robert Fripp to his burgeoning career as a photographer.

There's also manager Miles, the oldest of the Copeland triumvirate that also includes Ian, the head of the powerful FBI (Frontier Booking International) agency. When he's not talking TV and movie deals, he's saying "No" to offers for the Police.

He is the stopper, perhaps, for this whole argument.

"How many times do I have to say it? Sting goes out and does a movie and everybody thinks the band is breaking up. Sting did more movies when the Police were nothing (the eponymous roles in *Quadrophenia* and *Radio On*). Myself, I was running four labels, not just one, when the Police started. Now, when we're able to go out and do other things, we can bring those new ideas back into the Police."

But what do they keep for themselves? Copeland, 38 and possibly the most dynamic figure in the business, talks fast and to the point. Details blur, respect and fear tremble simultaneously before his barrage.

"Five years ago nobody gave a shit about their arguments. But now, somebody says something and everybody goes crazy because a million people depend on it. The band

doesn't get along any better or any worse than they ever did. At their first date at CBGB five years ago Sting was at Stewart's throat. I thought I was going to have to tear them apart."

**TO FOLLOW MILES, THERE IS** little doubt their priorities have changed for better or worse, both as individuals, as musicians, and collectively. Yet the Police from Day One offered us an alternative set of formulas. Back in 1978 they moved in decidedly strange ways compared to the fat, dying dinosaurs of album-rock. They were a band built out of convenience, not out of necessity.

You know the genesis: Stewart Copeland, college dropout and drummer, moved to England in 1975 and joined the last gasp of Curved Air, then managed by Miles. Early in 1977 he heard the now-clipped raw, seething sound of punk in London—that he *heard* something rather than *felt* it is crucial to the story. He liked the lean, low-rent ambience and formed a band with a guitarist named Henry Padovani and Sting, found playing in a Newcastle jazz outfit.

Dates followed while Miles divested himself of paleozoic tortoises like Curved Air and Wishbone Ash to get into "New Wave" and coined a few nickle and dime basement labels. He started making low-budget money instantly. The Police released a cheapie punko imitator titled "Fallout" that sold a few copies on Miles' Illegal Records label, but that whole "aggro" thing had no long-range potential. Copeland, the well-travelled son of an original CIA operative, was far too middle-class to compete with the borstal boys. Padovani, the Pete Best of the Police, was soon turfed for the more capable Summers, who had met Sting and Copeland at a Gong festival jam in Paris, and had played in

the Animals, Soft Machine and with Kevin Coyne.

And then, the future Fab Three came through with the two strokes that altered their course in an upward direction forevermore; specifically, the famous peroxide employed for a chewing gum commercial, and a song called *Roxanne*, to which radio finally gave in after much soul-searching. (To this day Sting still lives to play their signature reggae-rock ode to a Parisian hooker: "I love that song, I never tire of it. Of hearing it, either.")

Then, late in 1978, came *that tour*. Enter Ian Copeland, then working at the Paragon Agency in Macon, Georgia, booking southern boogie acts. "He was working with Jack Daniels, or was that Charlie Daniels," chuckles Stew. Get a picture of the times: Bob Seger was breaking big, people were still paying to see things called Boston and Starcastle, bellbottoms were wide, limos were long, Armageddon was on its way.

The Pistols had been out on their death march. Blondie was still playing clubs, mainly on the east coast. The Police, therefore, had to build their own circuit with the now legendary station wagon and a few tickets on Laker Airways (before the airline went bust last year, the band offered to help financially).

According to Stewart, Miles booked the dates by calling record stores in cities and finding out who owned the "most anti-social club in town." The aesthetic was sweat, the ethic was work. Incredible as it seems, this was all very new to a business that dictated one didn't tour without a hit record and/or vast sums in record company support advances.

New priorities again. Action over words. Do what you can whenever you can.

"When we first released our record it was necessary to be as visible as possible which meant doing as

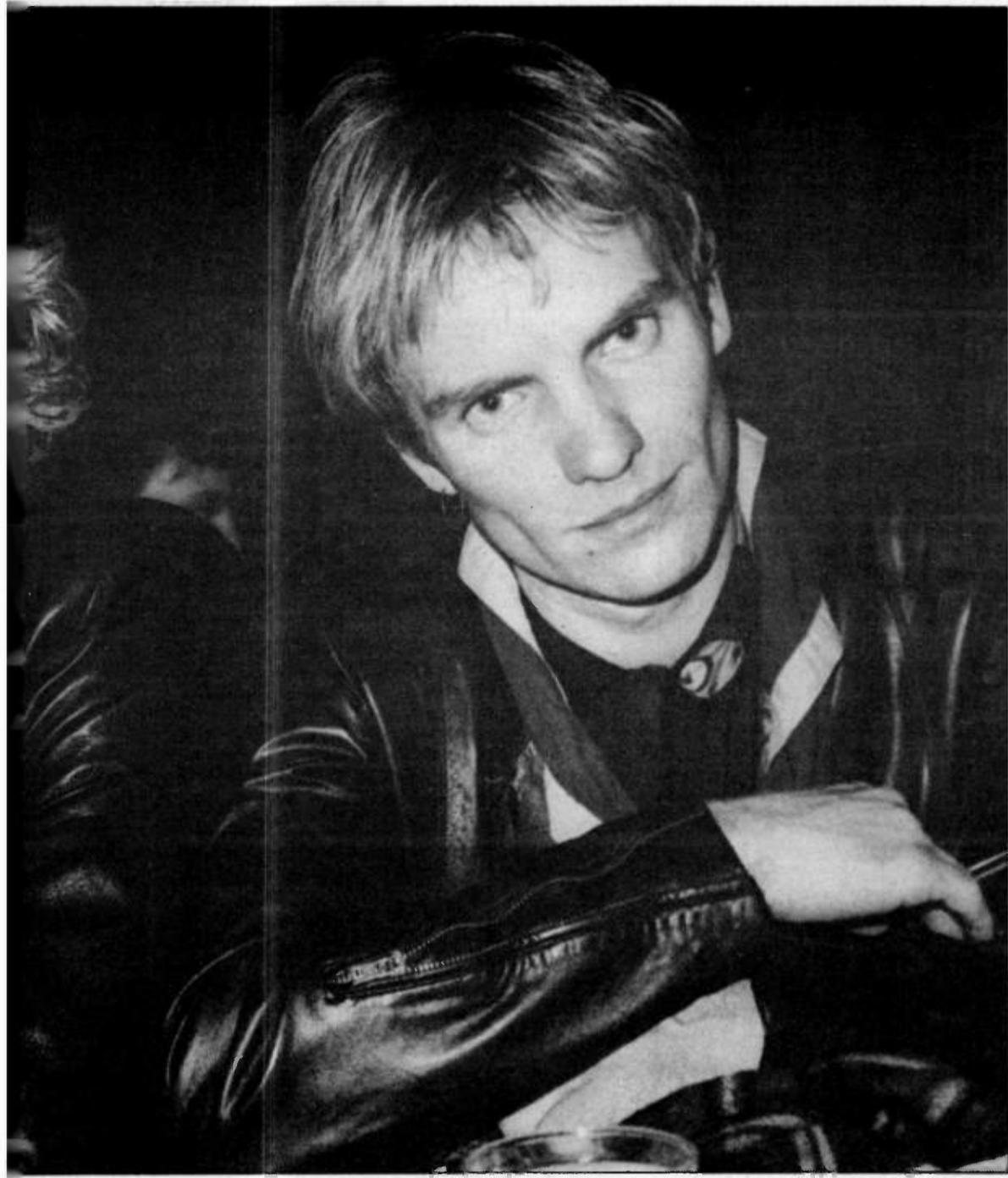


PHOTO LYNN GOLDSMITH/LGI

## STEWART COPELAND AND STING: CHANGING PRIORITIES, MAKING COMPROMISES, RETAINING THE MYSTERY.

many interviews as we could and as many appearances as we could," says Sting. "Without visibility there could be no sales, no credibility."

Although credit should go to Squeeze, which was the real Lewis & Clark on the route charted by Ian, then just starting FBI, the Police carved a trail that would eventually be followed by XTC, Ultravox, Joan Jett and others. The newness of it all was part of the excitement for everybody involved. Thus, when measuring the impact of the Police on America, one must take into account the achievements of most of the bands on the FBI roster, all of which live by the same creed. At FBI, founded on \$13,000 the Police earned for Ian on their second North American tour, bands sometimes get off the plane at JFK, are handed a roadmap, a set of keys to a van—with or without license plates—and told to make a living.

Third, consider the strength of IRS (International Record Syndicate), a label headed by Miles Copeland. Thank their royalties for groups like the Go-Go's, Wall Of Voodoo and R.E.M.

"Once you had a success like the Police, you automatically opened ears to other projects," states Miles. "Success is contagious."

A story that best symbolizes the hunger of the Copelands and the period goes back to the winter of 1979 when Miles found himself on the road with the underclass punk band Chelsea. Pulling into Toronto in the wee hours of the morning prior to a gig at The Edge, Copeland got out the van and immediately headed for the club's bathroom to thaw with hot water a frozen bucket of paste so he could plaster the city with posters. The Clash were playing in town the same night and Copeland wanted to steal some of their thunder.

If Copeland would slug it out for Chelsea, imagine the lengths he went to for the Police. To this day

Copeland is all-work, little play and anti-drug—a lifestyle that, if not completely willed on his charges, has at least trickled down. Sting's regimen, by his own estimation, is a "fairly frugal one."

With that kind of no-nonsense discipline, it's no wonder the Police rose to the top like a heat-seeking missile. Albums were cut in weeks; videos, prior to the relatively lavish production for "Every Breath You Take," were shot in mere minutes. Though they're resigned to certain inevitable compromises attendant to stardom, a reasonably healthy attitude remains and pretension is kept pretty much in check. The band's continual disregard for flashy staging and lighting as befits their lofty position has become a trademark as charming as the fraying elbows on your dad's favorite tweed jacket.

And they remain accessible, although sometimes their patience unravels. I remember a day in Winnipeg watching Andy Summers hold a phone receiver at arm's length because some farmer/rock critic was boring him to tears.

"I don't really like doing interviews, but I think they're a necessary evil," offers Sting. "There are a lot of things over which I have no control. But I'm not ashamed of selling my time or body for something I believe in."

In that instance, Sting was referring to the film *Brimstone & Treacle*, or, as he puts it, "my first film role." But later, from the *Dune* set, Sting seems tired of the whole mess, and more concerned with reasserting an element of privacy in a life that had come under too much public scrutiny and for all the wrong reasons. "The Face," his face, was getting in the way.

"I enjoy playing bad guys much more," he says of his various roles. "I find it much more challenging and more interesting. It's a good foil for that boyishness and innocence

with which I somehow have been associated . . . but I don't want to be an actor. It's like being a coat hanger. What I'm trying to do is learn a craft so maybe I can use it in another field."

"The Face" has things to answer for too, like that much ballyhooed party earlier this year thrown by Saudi Arabian arms dealer Adnan Kashoggi. Sting was flown there on Kashoggi's jet. That's uncharacteristically decadent turf for a guy who writes such impassioned pleas like "Driven To Tears" and "Invisible Sun."

"I didn't know who the man was," pleads the ersatz Aryan pop god. "It was an awful party. I'm rich, but never have I seen a scene like that. But I have no regrets about going. I enjoy being what I am. People can think what they like. It has nothing to do with my life. It was really an education and I'd go again."

The realization quickly dawns that this kind of shit is not high on Sting's priorities and to pursue this line of questioning would ensure that Sting will vanish, which is something of an ambition for him.

We get back into the Police. The point about the stadiums is made—that when the Police first hit North America, the "attitude" eschewed that kind of overtly obvious "payday."

But that was then and this is now. Today, compromises are made because, Sting points out, "the more popular you get the more people want to see you. Of course it's better to play Massey Hall (the 2700 seater in Toronto where the Police will tape their TV special) than CNE Stadium (a ballpark). But how many nights do you have to play Massey Hall to reach the same number of people? And when people are outside scalping tickets for \$300 that kind of abuse is the direct result of playing places that are too small.

"Anyways, I think part of my job is creating the illusion of intimacy of a club atmosphere in some place that's massive. Working against the atmosphere is a challenge. Sometimes it can't work. Our secret is that we can entertain a lot of people without lowering ourselves to a common denominator that everybody can understand. I think we can be informative and fun at the same time."

For years, however, the Police show has been automatic, too often a given. However great they may be as a trio, the hits sometimes rolled down in jukebox fashion. This time out they've added *Synchronicity* as a whole section of their show and Sting has programmed some synthetic backing.

"Yeah, it was automatic," Sting retorts, "but if I have 24 hours in my day it's the only joy in my life, the 90 minutes I'm on stage. Automatic or not, it's my only release, my only happiness. The rest of it is awful, pure loathing."

Eventually, you'd like to get down to the music and the various heavinesses and profundities that the critical press have attached to Sting's ditties. Just what was gnawing at the band when they put together *Synchronicity*? Jung? Existential philosophy? Atavistic art direction? Broach Miles with the subject and you get berated. Again: "Uh, the album is uh . . . Look, we don't really analyze these things. The process is a lot more natural than you guys (the press) think it is."

Stewart says the motive for the change away from the overt reggae and funk influences was that a "whole generation of bands had decided to do what we were doing. We had to move just to stay ahead. It's not important to make hit records anymore."

Sting disagrees: "Hit records are everything. I love making hit records. They're what drive the band. But making this album was a pretty painful process because we knew we had a real challenge on our hands, to change the way we play and our attitude. For in order for a band to stay vital you have to change, which is very hard."

For Sting, this meant spending the past year deliberately avoiding radio, records and MTV in order to cut out outside influence and refocus his art. Back to himself: "All my songs are about me. You are all you can write about really. It's all you can know."

Knowing this, one can only shrug at Stewart's suggestion that the Police are still his band or even the qualifying remark that "if you ask Andy, he'd say it was his band too." And that feeds speculation on changing priorities because Sting's control over the band—Summers' contribution to *Synchronicity*, "Mother," is unlistenable, and Copeland's "Miss Gradenko" is almost as silly—is such that the guitarist and drummer are not maturing within the boundaries of the Police precinct.

"Ideas do come out in the sessions, but ultimately there isn't enough space in the sessions to use them," says Copeland. "There were a few things I started to work with during the *Synchronicity* sessions that I developed more fully for the *Rumblefish* soundtrack."

The enthusiasm in Stewart's voice jumps noticeably when *Rumblefish* is mentioned. Perhaps this film, this project over which he has control, is that "whole new reason for struggling" he said he was looking for a couple of years ago. Not that there's anything wrong with any of this. Stewart Copeland, like everybody else in the band, would like the world to know that looking at his work in the Police represents only a fraction of the source of his pride.

So it's ironic that when you talk about the Police, and what keeps the band going, you're talking about Sting, who, of the three, seems to be

divesting himself of responsibility. "The mechanics of how the group works are really our business and what's important is that the mystery remains, not for my ego but for the sake of the mystery itself," he says, defensively. "It's a struggle for me, but I love the struggle."

The album prepares you for the death of the band, for death itself, for possible extinction of the entire race with "Walking In Your Footsteps" and "Synchronicity II."

"I take it absolutely seriously," asserts Sting. "Extinction is around the corner. Dinosaurs thought they were immortal too, probably. The songs are primal as hell, but it's a realization that we all have to come to. It's a very real threat. No sense in beating around the bush."

"But it shouldn't stop you. I'm not cowed by the idea. I think people should be aware of it although they tend to put it in the back of their minds. All generations have been threatened by it. Through tax we are paying for our own destruction. The human condition, therefore, is one of paradox."

Though he agrees that this album is perhaps more political than *Ghost In The Machine*, but in broader, more ecological strokes, Sting professes to be apolitical on the whole.

"I have no faith whatever in politics, revolutionary or reactionary. I loathe people who get up on boxes and say 'Vote for me.' Political parties are solely for the marshalling of stupidity and fear. I will vote for no one."

"Call it existential alienation but I can't understand bands like the Clash with their constant posing with the red flag and glorifying historical revolutionary figures like the Red Brigades. Why do they associate themselves with this crap? It's basically little boys playing with guns . . . looks childish to me . . . the whole business."

A lesson in common sense from a former schoolteacher. Sting also agrees with the opinion that "Every Breath You Take" is the antithesis of "Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic" from *Ghost In The Machine*.

"It's about transference, about projecting your ideas onto another person," he states. "That's what love is all about. Nine times out of ten you're disappointed because you can't transfer your ideals about life onto another person. That's why we have love and that's why we have breakups. It's both natural and vital."

Lord, Sting can be so worldly, his thoughts so quotable, so linear. There's never the obligation in an interview to keep the focus on the Police. If I had been up on my Gurdjieff we could have engaged in some witty geophilosophical repartee. As a matter of fact Sting, somewhat tired of being under the microscope, would probably have preferred it to another vivisection of the De-Do-Do-Da. Prognosticating about what lies ahead for the Police is simply not in the cards anymore.

"Really, it's not up to us to decide whether rock has a future," Sting says in his best verbal shrug. "Fourteen-year-olds have to decide that. For them, I'm sure I have a future."

But as a rock star? Who knows? You can pick out his conflicts just by mixing and matching his contributions to this story. There's a giant tug of war within him, a push that will not be denied, stemming from the beckoning, easy narcissism of stardom: "When someone waves a million dollars in front of your face to do something you consider fun, what do you say? You say 'yeah.'

"The pull is the attraction of the unknown, that nagging ambition for some kind of pure productive peace away from Sunset Boulevard and the running lackeys of the publicity mills. I don't want to be an idol. I don't want to be famous. It's a means to an end, I hope."

What end? "I change my mind about it every day."

# Cruisin' With Smokey

In an exclusive interview, the master of the romantic vignette-in-song gets into some nuts-and-bolts talk about the creative process and gets down with some vintage tales from a career spanning nearly three decades of popular music.

**By Dave Marsh**

**T**HE FIRST THING you notice about Smokey Robinson is how little he has changed. His hair is worn in wet look curls, rather than the bushier style he has preferred for the past few years, but at 43, he remains as slim and dapper in sweater, shirt and slacks as he was a decade ago.

Robinson was in New York promoting the Motown 25th Anniversary television special when I caught up with him. However, he'd agreed to speak on a broader range of subjects for this interview. In fact, even though he was on a tightly booked schedule of interviews that week in early May, he was relaxed and more loquacious than ever as we spoke.

What's most striking about listening to Robinson, in the long run, is the musicality of his speech. He elongates syllables, snaps words short, stretches lines, uses silence in a way that is beyond reproduction on the page. He mixes this with an absolute delicacy of diction and phrasing that is punctuated just often enough with street locutions, profanity and almost sing-song reiterations of phrases ("that thing like that" is the best of these, because it harkens to so many Robinson lyrics over the years). In short, even though he claims here not to think of himself as one, William "Smokey" Robinson certainly talks like a singer.

But then, when the interview was

over, and I had a chance to check out his idea of himself against his work, he seemed half correct, at least. For 26 years, from "Got a Job" and "Bad Girl" to "Being with You" and "Touch the Sky," Smokey Robinson has been a feeler and a singer, both. As the following conversation shows, he has also been an active, thoughtful pop music artist, working not only as writer, producer and performer, but also as an executive. To these ears, he sounds like a man who will continue to be around for some time to come.

In the '60s, when almost nobody else wrote or produced their own material, you did almost all of yours. Then there was a time when everybody else started to, and you stopped. Now you've come back to that.

There have been like two times in my solo career when I haven't done that. One time when I was involved in making the one film that I have produced, *Big Time*. I got so busy that I could not fulfill my commitment to do my albums with Motown, so Berry had a lot of the guys who were producing for us at that time do an album on me, which was *Deep In My Soul*.

Then, after the *Warm Thoughts* album, I happened to be driving in my car one day, when I first heard "More Love" by Kim Carnes. I contacted George Tobin, who had produced her album, and I told him I had some songs I wanted him to hear for Kim's next album project. And I went over and I played the piano and sang the songs for him and one of the tunes was "Being With You." When I played that song, he just flipped out. He said, "You

should sing that song, I love the way you sing that." So I said, "No, George, I wrote this song for Kim and it was very inspired by what you did with her on 'More Love.'" And he said, "Wow, I think you're making a mistake, I think you should sing that song." So we went back and forth on that for about an hour, I guess. Finally he said, "Hey, I've got my own studio downstairs and I'd like for you to come over tonight. We'll just make a demo for Kim but we'll do it in your key." And when I heard what he had done with the song production-wise, I absolutely loved it. It blew me away. So I said, "Well, hey, yeah, we'll just put this out." That's how my relationship with George Tobin kinda like began, and he produced my next two albums, which were *Being With You* and *Yes, It's You Lady*. I only wrote about four songs on those albums.

On this album, *Touch The Sky*, I just had these songs, some of them I'd had around for a long time. And I felt a certain way about them, and I wanted to do my own production on them. So I got together with Sonny Burke, who is my pianist anyway—he's like my band conductor when I'm on the road; he's a very talented man. He had been talking to me for a couple of years about us doing an album together, and I felt like this was the proper time. So we did.

Did you see the review of *Touch The Sky* in the *Village Voice*? It says, "At the end, Smokey's singing 'touch it, touch it,' and I wonder if he just means the sky."

(Laughs) Well, touch it has a double connotation as far as I'm concerned.

I know when Berry (Gordy Jr., Motown chairman) heard the song when I was working on it, he said, "Well, what do you mean by 'touch it, touch it'?"

It means touch the sky, but actually "touch the sky" doesn't literally mean "touch the sky"; it means, if you come with me, and we *love*, and you and I are together there we're gonna *love*, and we're gonna be so high on this *love* until we're touchin' the sky, not with our fingers but with ourselves. So that's what that means.

But there used to be a commercial on television where the chicks would say, "C'mon, touch it, touch it." And they were talking about, whatever it was—shaving cream. But it's a very sexy thing. "C'mon, touch it."

So when I was in the studio singing that song, that just happened automatically: "touch it, touch it, touch it." And then I thought about it, you know, that's a kinda sexy connotation there. So I left it in, because it is like a kinda sexy thing, and I think that a lotta people would interpret it as such, especially girls—so I want them to touch it.

Really, the whole series of hits you've had since "Cruisin'" work on those two levels. You could even say that all the hits you've had work on both those levels.

Well, I try to write like that, exactly. It leaves food for thought for the listener. They can do whatever they want to do with it. I just had a conversation with some people the other day, about what did "Cruisin'" mean. "Cruisin'" means whatever you want it to. Whatever it means to

you, that's what it means. "I love it when we're cruisin' together." Now what does that mean to you? It means so-and-so. OK, that's what it means.

So you're aware it that has one meaning to people in cars, and another connotation to gay people and a whole other thing to people who hang out in singles bars.

Yes, and also the fact that when you're making love to someone you want to make love with you're cruisin'. And you're on the same beam.

Did you go through a period where you felt your thing, which is a little softer than most of what's written right now, fell out of favor?

My idea when I started out as a solo artist was, I was starting all over again. I had never existed. There was no Smokey Robinson before that time. I didn't want to think that it was just gonna start right from where it had left off at. When I left the Miracles, we were on top. We had done every single, solitary thing that a black group, at least, could do. We had done it at least twice. We were at the pinnacle. We were riding on "Tears of a Clown," the biggest single in the group's history: two million copies sold here and a million copies overseas. So I wanted to go out like that. I didn't want to go out on the decline, and that thing like that.

Therefore, I looked at it like I was gonna start all over, like I was an infant in the record business. No one knew me. And I was very, very concerned and worried about whether people were gonna accept me like that.

**Was it from observing other artists going through the same process that you knew that was what could happen?**

No, because, in fact, I would think that if I had gone by what I observed was happening with other people, I would have thought exactly the opposite. Because most of the other people I had known who had done that had come right back with a smash record as a single artist.

See, my idea of leaving was not that I was gonna leave and be a solo artist. I was gonna leave and be cool. I was gonna leave and do my job as a vice-president, manage some people, produce some other acts, write for them and just be in the background. However, when it evolved like it did, and I became aware that that was my first love, as far as my business life goes, then it was like a trip for me. I was paranoid. I didn't know that people would accept me or anything. So I fixed in my mind that I was starting all over again, from scratch.

I've had many peaks and valleys in my life and in my career. My career has not been one on top. I've got ten number one albums and ten

number one records in a row and this and that. I've had one or two in the top ten and I'll go and not get a record in the top ten for five records.

**Why is that? It doesn't seem to have anything to do with the quality of the records.**

I don't know why that is. It's just that some things are accepted and some things aren't. It's good grooming, as far as I'm concerned. It's good therapy for any artist to experience that. Because once all of an artist's stuff is accepted readily—top ten for ten records in a row—if they have one or two that does not do that, then psychologically they're trippin'. You know, people use the term "superstar." That's usually short-lived. I've been around 26 years; I'd rather have that. I didn't expect to be number one right away. Like I said, I always hope to be and I always strive to be but if I'm not, I'm used to being beat up in this business and it doesn't frighten me. I just get back up and start punchin'.

**What do you mean, "beat up?"**

I mean in every aspect of it. Espe-

cially in the earlier years, when we started Motown, I was like the whipping boy. Because Berry was fixed—he was in Detroit and he was the head of everything that was happening there. But I was his best friend and I was his first artist. And all the guys, the disc jockeys, the promoters and all those people like that, they knew that, you dig? They couldn't get to him, so they used me.

If they had a bone to pick, they wouldn't pay me. You understand? They were bugged at Berry, they wouldn't play my record. Things like that, you know? So I'm used to that. It's just made me a fighter; it's made me a sustainer.

**Did you see *Dreamgirls*?**

Umhmm. Yes.

**Are you in it?**

I don't know if I'm in it or not. I don't know if the guy who has the group at first and is one of the girls' brother and is writing the songs for them, I don't know if he's supposed to be me or not.

When I look at *Dreamgirls*, none of us are in it. The idea is definitely from Motown—there's no question about that. The main theme or the

main stream of the thing is definitely from the Supremes; there's no doubt about that—to me. But none of us are really in it.

**I thought one of the really exceptional things about it was that for once someone tried to understand the thinking of the kind of person who would start something like Motown. Rather than the other kind of myth-making about Motown.**

I know what you're saying. And there's one other thing about Motown, man, that has been untrue for any other record company. And the special that we did was a great depiction of that. The fact that Motown acts have lasted for ever and ever, you know? That's because we had artist development, which was the greatest thing for all of us.

**Do you think that was resented and looked upon suspiciously, because it looked like too much control from the record company?**

It may have been resented by a few narrow-minded people. But I think other than that, people were in awe of it. It was Berry's idea to have that so that his acts could be the best in the business and be polished. And

when you saw the Motortown Revue, you were entertained. You didn't just go see a bunch of people playing and singing, you were entertained and that was the greatest thing about it, that we did have artist development.

**Berry Gordy is a very mysterious figure. Really, no one on our side of the radio knows anything about him, even though he probably is the only record executive except Ahmet Ertegun who did very much creatively. When you went back to being a performer, you went one way; he went the other way. Do you think he misses that?**

Well, like you said, you don't know him and you don't know anything about him. Most people don't. He's in there all the time. Creativity is his first love. When a Motown act is doing a live show, Berry is there and he's taking notes. The crowd could have eaten you up and thought you were the greatest thing in the world, but after the show's over he comes back and he's got twenty notes. "Hey, you should have done so-and-so and such-and-such and I want you to take this out and put this in its place. And I want you to say so-

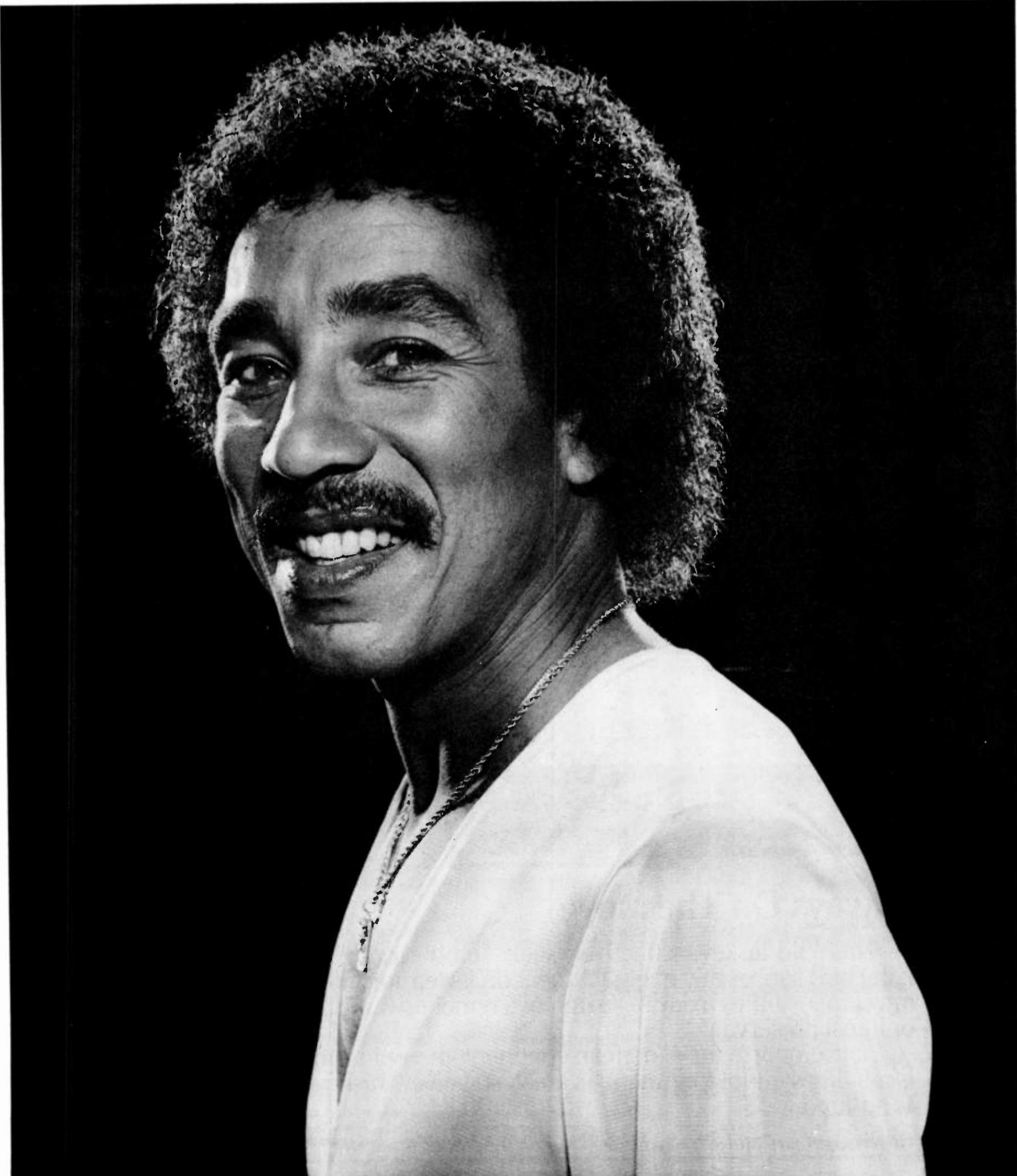


PHOTO: DAVID R. ALEXANDER, INC.

## Smokey

and-so rather than this-and-that." And he does that, and you make those changes and you go out and do it, and then the crowd *really* eats you up.

**How consistent a group of musicians have you worked with lately?**

Oh, I basically have been working with the same people since I've been recording as a solo artist. In Detroit, it was a different group of people.

**So when you moved to Los Angeles—or when the company moved—it was really a radical change in that experience. Which records did you make with the Miracles in L.A.?**

We made a few, which goes to show you. See, that's another thing about the myth of the Motown sound. People say that the Motown sound is, uh . . . a lotta bottom with the bass thumpin' and so on and so forth. I've always interpreted the Motown sound as spiritual, as something that was formulated in the souls and the spirits of the people who worked at Motown.

When we started out, people were coming from Africa, from Europe, from England, from all over the United States, from everywhere to

record in Detroit because they thought they were gonna get the Motown sound and have a hit.

It was like they thought it was in the *air!* Like if they came to Detroit and recorded on the freeway, that they would get the Motown sound, you know what I'm sayin'? Not realizing that at the same time, we were recording our acts in Chicago, in Los Angeles, in Nashville, in Detroit—everywhere. I went to Las Vegas one time and recorded the Supremes; we recorded our acts every

I'm not sure about that. I'm sure we all had the same idols growing up. I know Jackie Wilson was one of . . . I think he's even Levi Stubbs' cousin. He was very influential on Levi, and Stevie loved him, and I loved him. He was one of my idols. Also Sam Cooke and Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers, and that thing.

**Did you sing in church?**

I've never sang spirituals. I was in the choir in school. When I was in grammar school, they didn't call it

times in my life, I've felt very guilty about that because I was the cause of her coming off the road. I stopped her from coming on the road because it was killing her. As it does most chicks who are involved in it.

If you'll notice, most chicks who have been on the road for a long time are either real, real, real thin or real, real, real fat. Show business becomes their man and everything and they usually have very difficult times keeping men. It's a rough, rough life for a girl, more so than for

**"I don't consider myself a singer. I don't think I have an outstanding voice. I just feel what I'm singing and I think that projects through to the listener."**

where and we still got the Motown sound.

**What do you think it was then?**

The spirit and the soul of the people who made Motown happen. Our producers, our writers, our artists our gut feeling for each other. That's what made it happen.

**But it was all different influences: your inspirations must have been very different than Stevie Wonder's or Levi Stubbs'.**

choir, they called it glee club. I was in the glee club throughout grammar school, from the time I was in second grade until I graduated from grammar school, in the eighth grade, and then I went to high school and I was in the choir all through high school. But I never sang in church. My wife was the only one of us who sang in church.

**Does she miss singing much?**

She misses it a great deal. And a few

a guy.

My wife, when we got married in 1959, she weighed 118 pounds and had one of the greatest bodies in the world. Around 1963 we were on this tour and I caught the Asian flu. I was one of the first recorded cases in the United States of America; I was either first or second. It was the first time in my life that I ever thought I was gonna die, because my temperature was up to like 106 degrees—daily. At the start of the tour we did

two one-nighters and then we opened at the Howard Theatre in Washington, D.C. I made two days of that and I contracted this flu bug.

We stayed in rooming houses across the street from the theatre; we didn't stay in hotels. For the rest of that week, I was over there and the doctor was with me *constantly*. And every single solitary night, after the show was over, he and my wife would take me to the hospital and they would lay me in this big, open thing and pour ice all over my body, to bring the temperature down. They would get it down to 99 degrees or 100 degrees and then I'd have to go back to the rooming house, because for some reason, whatever hospital it was I was going to, they couldn't keep me because I could pay. I never understood that, I never really got that straight in my mind, but it was the closest hospital and I couldn't stay there because I could pay.

Two days after that show, we were supposed to open in South Carolina, so my wife took me home. My oldest niece came and stayed with me while my wife went back on the road.

At this time my wife was pregnant, but we didn't know it. She was living with Mary Wells on the road, because I was home sick. They had been on the road for a couple of months—this was a *long* tour—and Mary called me up one day—she and James Jamerson, who was playing bass on the show, because we took our musicians from Motown. They said, "Hey, you gotta make your wife come home."

They said she had been bleeding for a month. She was pregnant, but she wasn't gonna come home because it was getting on toward Christmas-time and she wanted everybody to have money for Christmas. So she was just gonna stay there.

I found out about the pregnancy when Mary called me up one night and said, "You gotta make Claudette come home. She's been hemorrhaging almost every day." So I told her, I said "Look, I want you to come home tomorrow. I don't want you to do another date." So she came home and when she got off the plane, I didn't even know her. She was down to 89 pounds.

We finally got her to the doctor there in Detroit and he assured us that the baby was gonna be all right. However, she miscarried. And after that was over, she got better and went back on the road. Then she got pregnant again and miscarried. She got well again, went back out on the road, got pregnant again and miscarried again. After that I said, "Shit, you gotta come off the road."

I know that at times I've felt guilty about that because she really loves performing. And she's a very good singer. So when she gets a chance to do something like the special, it just lights her up. It makes me very happy, too.

**You had a little musical study. What about your sense of language? Nobody uses words the way Smokey Robinson uses words, right?**

Well, if that's true, then that's God's work again. I don't have any interpretation for it. Because there's no new subjects. There's no new words, there's no new chords, there's no new notes, there's no new anything as far as music goes. So I like to try to take a different approach to talking about the same old things.

**I'm thinking of the sense you have of how words sound together, and how they clash and how to stretch 'em. That's all gift, no studying?**

No studying, no. I think it's all a gift. And I try to teach that to my writers. I try to teach them that. What I always tell them is, that, see, a lot of people *skate-write*. And what I call *skate-writing* is like, say that for instance you have a verse and it ends up with the word "come." And at the end of the next verse, which is rhyming with that, you have the word "done." OK, "done" and "come" sound alike to a certain extent. But there's a word that actually rhymes with "come" and will say the same thing that you said by using "done." And that's

*Continued on page 30*

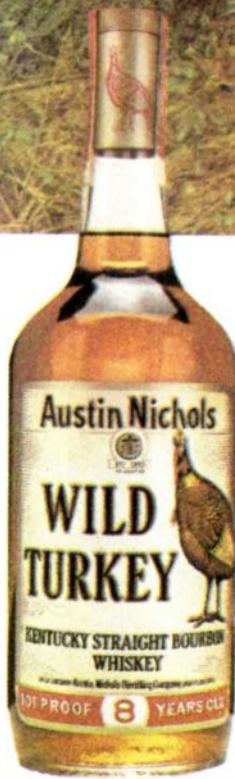


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# Divinyls: As Big As Vegemite

By Deborah Frost

NEW YORK—In their native Australia, where their first album (*Desperate*) has gone platinum and their notoriety landed them a part in the film *Monkey Grip*, the Divinyls are almost as big as Vegemite. In the United States, where the quintet's been touring in support of *Desperate*, they're as big as... well, Vegemite.

Not only does no one know who the Divinyls are, radio programmers (to whom such things matter) can't figure out what they are. Punk? Pop? Heavy metal? No wonder. At New York's Ritz, as on their album, the Divinyls were all of the above. And lead singer Christina Amphlett, with at least five different pitch-perfect voices to match the

band's moodswings from AC/DC guitar overload ("Boys In Town") to Merseybeat jingles ("Only Lonely," "Science Fiction") is one of the most devastating and original presences in any genre. And one of the oddest. Two English musicians who'd been around the band on the road were recently asked to describe Amphlett and could do no better



PHOTO: ALAN ADLER/LGI

"I like to make people feel uncomfortable," says the Divinyls' Christina Amphlett. "Some things are not always pretty, y'know?"

than to reply, "She's a weird girl."

There's some evidence to support this opinion. Onstage she sports dead rat jewelry and schoolgirl uniforms, shreds her stockings and rips into the opening cut on *Desperate* with its incredible, indelible image: "I am just a red brassiere to all the boys in town." She whispers-to-a-scream, dumps water over her head, smears lipstick over her body and fiddles with her uniform as if it gave her a bad case of cooties.

But while she skitters about the stage, arms at crazed angles, looking like the Bride of Frankenstein (or the bride of Angus Young), she also gives unexpected twists to lyrics that honestly and intelligently explore female ("Boys In Town," "Only Lonely") and human ("Elsie") conditions in ways most female/male/human rockers haven't even started thinking about.

The daughter of a nurse and a retired typewriter salesman, Amphlett never learned to type ("I refused to") but always wanted to sing. As a child, she accompanied musical comedy records, later joined choirs ("I was an alto singing soprano to develop the top end of my register") and discovered gospel and soul ("I liked the passion.") She's vague about what she was doing before forming the Divinyls with guitarist Mark McEntee, but admits to spending a few years in Europe, singing on street corners. The people she admires aren't necessarily singers, but women aviatrices, like Amelia Earhart.

"You listen to somebody and you think I could never be like that or I could never live up to those standards, so you've got to throw it away and find your own potential. If you're always living up to somebody, you never discover your own thing, and that's very important to me. I like when somebody sings a song I really believe in."

With McEntee (also a flying enthusiast who builds and pilots his own planes) she began writing songs people could believe in. "He was wanting to do something and I was wanting to do something and it began to be an ongoing thing. Then we got Richard, the drummer, who Mark had known about six years." Second guitarist Bjarne Ohlin and bassist Rick Grossman were "pinched," as Amphlett puts it, from other bands.

Although the costume was the same in the Divinyls' early days, the

act wasn't. "I'd just stand there and the boys would say, 'Why don't you do something?' I think when you're performing your own songs and singing your own words, you feel a little naked. Then you become accustomed to it and you can externalize the performance."

When a fan left her purse on the front of the stage one night, Amphlett rummaged through it, put on the lipstick she found and initiated a ritual. At subsequent shows, girls began lining the stage with their make-up, offering it to the singer as an unusual sacrifice. In America, where audiences are unaware of the gesture's precedents, Amphlett's been using her own Max Factor, but the moment she paints herself is still the eerie climax of the band's show.

"It's not something to be stuck on," she explains, "but something to build on. And I don't always pour water on my head. I like things that are unpredictable. Sometimes I do it, sometimes I don't. I usually use the water in 'Siren Song.' Bjarne wrote that song. One night, his mike went out and he came over to me. I got such a fright—him coming over with saliva spitting out of his mouth. I pushed him away, and he got really upset. Later he said, 'Christina, it's supposed to be a love song.' And I said, 'I know, Bjarne, but love's not always so lovey-dovey.'"

What interests Amphlett is the darker side of love—and life.

"I like to make people feel uncomfortable. Some things are not always pretty, y'know? I get really pissed off when people are up there going, 'Isn't life wonderful?' Sure, I like things that are bright and happy. But I find it necessary to be able to put across different sorts of emotions, and things that are as real as possible."

As for a recent spate of good fortune (MTV is airing the "Boys In Town" video, and U.S. audiences have, by and large, loved the band), Amphlett can't make sense out of what most people say about her. What does it mean when the *Village Voice* says she "has the look that far too many have gotten to know better"? And when she hears herself described in the *Boston Phoenix* as a "witch on trial," whose last ticket out of the outback is held by the Devil, she can only cluck, "Oh, dear, oh dear."

Is she really so weird?

"I don't know," she laughs. "I'm just me."

## Los Illegals Ain't Smiling

By John Mendelsohn

LOS ANGELES—Willie Herron doesn't smile. He doesn't smile as he and the rest of Los Illegals, the group for which he sings lead and plays keyboards, take the stage of Madame Wong's to the accompaniment of the taped roar of police helicopters. He doesn't smile when the audience feverishly applauds the group's unrelentingly irate songs. And he doesn't smile when he and the rest of his group come to meet the press in a neighborhood in which bass guitarist Jesus Velo's grandmother used to scrub hospital floors.

In America in 1983, Willie Herron and his comrades believe, Chicanos have nothing to smile about, and perform an original repertoire in which, aside from one very desultory song of unrequited love, they pause from decrying the experience of the modern Mexican-American only long enough to declare their hatred of shopping malls.

They perceive it as their moral imperative to tell the world about the indignities and worse that the Mexican-American is routinely subjected to in 1983. "There are East L.A.'s all over the world," Herron observes, "but aside from some reggae bands, we're the only ones who are telling people about them."

"This feeling we have, of being foreigners in our own country," Herron explains, "is always there inside. How can it not be when you live in a place where you can get stabbed while you wash your car in your own driveway or accidentally shot to death looking through your living room window? How can it not be when even now we get stopped and asked for our green cards, like (guitarist) Tony (Valdez) did just two weeks ago?"

(Nor is undocumented Mexicans all they're mistaken for—at the height of anti-Ayatollah Khomeini fervor, they were banished from a party in Orange County for looking like... Iranians.)

While acknowledging that it's made it possible for Mexican culture to survive intact north of the border, they feel that the barrio's insulation retards its inhabitants' integration into the social mainstream. "What other immigrant group got put in a place where, even after two or three generations, everybody still speaks their native language because even the streets names are in the language?" Herron demands. "To the people in the barrio, it doesn't seem like there's any reason to move out into the larger society."

"But as long as we stay in there, we're invisible. For example, when Julio Iglesias came to town and sold out the Greek Theatre, the Anglo media couldn't believe it. Well, Julio Iglesias has been a huge star among Hispanics for years."

They blame the notion that Mexicans steal jobs for much of the Anglo animosity with which they must contend. "And it's a myth," Herron snaps. "The jobs undocumented Mexicans have taken have been those that nobody else wanted, like dishwashing. It's the undocumented workers who come into this country over the other border who take the good jobs away. But Canadians blend in too easily for most people to realize that."

Once, before they became the first of L.A.'s several excellent new wave Chicano groups (including The Brat and The Plugz) to sign with a major label, their repertoire included such playful fare as "Double Shot of My Baby's Love" and great hits of such Chicano stars of yesteryear as Sam the Sham and Cannibal and The Headhunters. But it includes them no more. "That stuff," bass guitarist Velo snarls softly, "was too cute, just like Cannibal playing The Lingerie (Hollywood's hippest nightclub) every month lately is too cute. We could make a lot of money playing those songs, but we refuse to be Taco Tios (that is, the Chicano equivalent of Uncle Toms)."

(There can be no exaggerating

how softly Velo snarls. The relentless indignation of their music notwithstanding, Los Illegals are surely among the softest-spoken and most charming group in rock 'n' roll.)

A reluctant bureaucrat for the Department of Housing and Urban Development by day, Velo matter-of-factly responds to the observation of the utter joylessness of Los Illegals' music by noting, "So? Aside from an occasional birth or baptism, there's no joy in my life. The only thing that keeps me alive is that I don't have the courage to kill myself."

In view of their fierce ethnic pride, it's surprising how seldom Los Illegals' music betrays the influence of other Hispanic musicians.

But "that's exactly what we intended," Herron affirms, almost smiling.

"We don't want to reach only people who are into 'Latin rock.' We also want kids in Montana who might not know that there is such a thing to listen to our music." It was with this objective, in fact, that the group hired the quintessentially unlikely Mick Ronson, best known as the heartthrob lead guitarist of Ziggy Stardust's Spiders from Mars, to produce their first A&M

album, *Internal Exile*.

"Santana isn't the only thing you hear in the barrio, you know," Velo points out. "You can be walking down the street at night and hear The Buzzcocks through an open window too, or Kraftwerk."

"Joy for me," Velo relates, unsmilingly, "is being up on stage at one of our gigs and seeing Molly Hatchet headbangers standing right beside B-52 fans from Otis Art Institute."



Los Illegals (from left) Bill Reyes, Jesus Velo, Willie Herron, Tony Valdez, Manuel Valdez: And this is when they're happy.

# NEW ORLEANS JAZZ & HERITAGE FESTIVAL: A Movable Feast

The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival  
April 30 through May 8, 1983

By Dan Forte

**A**muffuletta is an enormous sandwich consisting of lunch-meat slices of salami and ham, melted provolone cheese, and olive salad dressing (finely chopped green olives, oil, and herbs) on a round loaf of Sicilian bread. It was "invented" at the Central Grocery Store on Decatur Street at the bottom of New Orleans' French Quarter.

What's a sandwich got to do with a review of a music festival, you ask? Everything.

You see, not only was the muffuletta created in the Crescent City, it's virtually the only place where you can get one—at least a good

game plan seems to have paid off, because this year's NOJ&H fest was probably the richest musical and cultural event I've ever experienced.

The festival takes place on two weekends (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday the first week; Saturday and Sunday the next) in the infield of the city's expansive horse-race track. There are four big stages, each going simultaneously, spotted at opposite corners of the fairgrounds, plus two small stages (featuring more "ethnic" groups) and three tents (one with modern jazz, one featuring dixieland, and the "gospel tent," a non-stop revival meeting with some of the greatest music the South has to offer). An average day presents from 40 to 50 acts, starting at eleven in the morning and winding up at seven in the evening.

On the weeknights the festival circumscribes, the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation (which puts on the festival) stages several addi-

sented has some thread connecting it to the New Orleans' melting-pot character—whether it's a rockabilly set by Roy Orbison, an all-gospel show by Al Green, or the reggae of Burning Spear (which New Orleans rhythm 'n' blues helped influence).

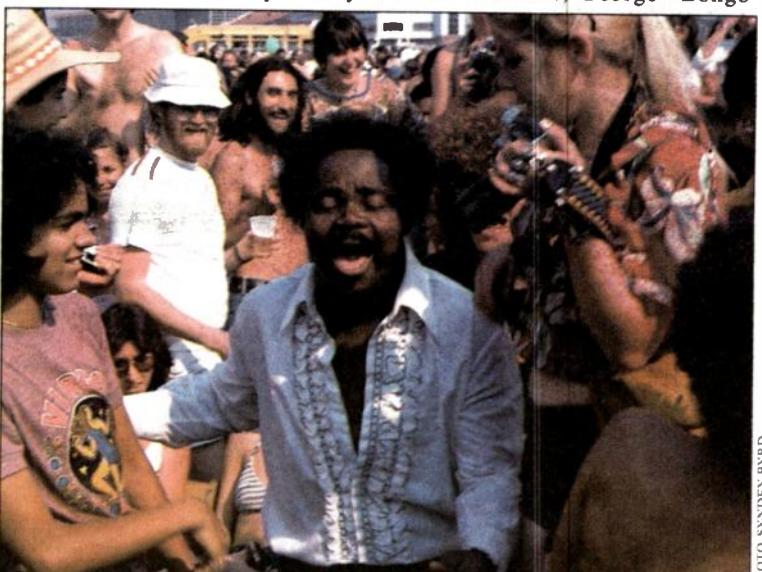
After attempting to master the fine art of bi-location and admitting defeat my first day at the fairgrounds—juggling an iced tea and hot boudin sausage, racing from Stage 4 at the end of Bobby Mitchell's set to Stage 1 in time for Lee "Ya Ya" Dorsey's, while completely missing some guy called "Professor Gizmo" at the Gazebo—I decided that the sanest plan of attack was to grab a po-boy and mosey from one stage to the next, pausing for anything that looked or sounded interesting. On one such stroll, for example, Vassar Clements' fiddle hoedown faded out as Marcia Ball came within earshot, singing Etta James' "I'd Rather Go Blind." As that drifted further away, Lonnie "Guitar Junior" Brooks' blues band took over, with a funkified arrangement of B.B. King's "Don't Answer The Door"—which in turn mixed with and eventually gave way to the halting rhythms of Burning Spear. Like turning the dial on a radio. (And if you can find me a radio that plays all of that, I'll give you a year's salary for it.)

Of course, several acts were worth sitting for, or even going back to see again later in the week. Up near the top of the list was accordionist Rockin' Dopsie & his Cajun Twisters. Like Clifton Chenier, Dopsie is from Lafayette, Louisiana, and plays zydeco (a blend of R&B, uptempo Cajun two-steps, and waltzes), the prevailing music of that town. Dopsie's style is a little more raw-boned than Clifton's, his band a bit grittier (featuring two alumni from Chenier's group, guitarist Paul Senegal and saxophonist John Hart). Clifton and his Red Hot Louisiana Band, meanwhile, played the best of several cruises put on by the festival on the Riverboat President. Billed as a Cajun "Fais Do-Do," the Wednesday night party was, for my money, the high point of the week. Following a danceable set of rural Cajun fiddle and accordion by Dewey Balfa and Mark Savoy, Clifton & Co. swung into action with some powerful R&B and high-spirited zydeco. To close the evening, fiddler Doug Kershaw showed why he is known as "The Ragin' Cajun." (A few years ago, a review of

his show was aptly headlined "Wildman Goes Berserk.") Stalking, strutting, and darting across the stage, Kershaw demolished one fiddle bow after another as he sang tunes he has made Cajun standards, such as "Diggy Diggy Lo," "Cajun Stripper" (featuring Doug on accordion), and his most famous composition, "Louisiana Man."

Several other fine Cajun bands were featured at the fest, two of the most interesting being Bourré, a young white band dedicated to preserving this spicy Louisiana gumbo, and Marcel Dugas, an accordian player fronting a group of middle-aged blacks from Lafayette who rock out on '60s soul ("Mustang Sally," "Midnight Hour," etc.). Somehow they sound completely appropriate.

The name Ernie K-Doe may stir a vague memory of a 45 called "Mother-In-Law" now collecting dust in some closet, but in New Orleans the man is an institution. This is partly because K-Doe is a formidable R&B shouter, but primarily



Al Green: a study in stage dynamics.

because of his dynamic stage presence and outrageous personality, which can be heard Thursday evenings on his own radio show over listener-sponsored WWOZ. K-Doe interrupts virtually every R&B cut he plays over the air to hype gigs with his "Naugahyde Band" and scream his slogan, "Burn, K-Doe, burn!" Example: "Go 'head, K-Doe, just go 'head! You know you the baddest jock in this town. Don't care who don't like you, who don't love you, but they got to put up with you, 'cos you're good. I am the greatest that ever come out of New Orleans, without no question. I am New Orleans, onstage or offstage—I walk it, I talk it. That's K-dash-D-O-E. Burn, K-Doe, burn!" The Muhammad Ali of New Orleans radio. Funny thing is, he really is the greatest—best disc-jockey I've ever heard. During the show I caught, he even received a phone request from the New Orleans Fire Department. Burn, K-Doe, burn!

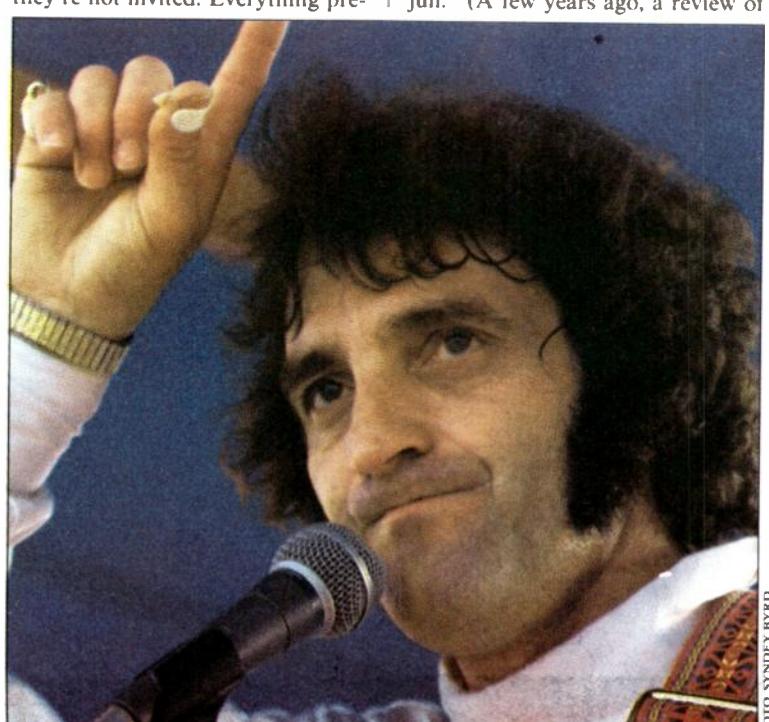
Possibly New Orleans' best kept secret is the versatile song stylist Johnny Adams. After closing soul guitarist Walter "Wolfman" Washington's set with a hand-clapping version of the spiritual "I Shall Not Be Moved," Adams made his way to a different stage, where he joined jazz singer Bobby McFerrin's trio, exhibiting his chops on "Misty," "What A Difference A Day Makes," and a very uptown arrangement of "Everyday I Have The Blues." He even held his own scatting "trumpet" riffs alongside McFerrin's "flute." The only recordings of Adams currently ob-

tainable are on New Orleans' tiny Hep Me label (including a Christmas LP and his latest, a set of country songs) and a Charly import reissue of early singles.

The skinny at the fairgrounds is that whenever there's a pause in the action, head for the gospel tent, where things are always jumping. Judging by the groups I saw there—notably the Emmet Powell Gospel Elites, Brother James Chapman, and the Macedonia Baptist Church Youth Choir (who changed Stevie Wonder's secular lyrics to sacred, with a gospel rearrangement of "I Wish")—this proved a good rule of thumb. The fact that these local church choirs featured singers every bit as soulful and talented as, say, Aretha Franklin or Wilson Pickett, wasn't as surprising as the superior chops displayed by the back-up pianists, organists, drummers, and bassists—easily among the best musicians at the entire festival. Unfortunately, Al Green's gospel set—which drew well over 50,000—couldn't be contained in the gospel tent, but the energy level at Stage 1 was no less intense, as Green worked the crowd as expertly as the tent's best preachers—a study in stage dynamics.

Unfortunately, space doesn't permit details on the festival's numerous other highlights, just as time didn't permit me to see all that I would've liked to have seen. There was Doctor John's solo piano gig at Tipitina's, the stinging blues guitar of Lonnie Brooks, Taj Mahal's fantastic set aboard the "Blues Cruise," the distinctive Turtle Band of Belize (comprised of an electric guitar and several percussion instruments fashioned from turtle shells), and the Jazz & Heritage Festival's folk artist-in-residence, George "Bongo

PHOTO: SYNDY BYRD



Doug Kershaw: the Ragin' Cajun was on the one.

Joe" Coleman, beating his 50-gallon day-glow painted oil drums while ad-libbing a blues or whistling "When The Saints Go Marching In."

New Orleans audiences and musicians alike are bent on keeping their tradition alive without watering down their regional flavor. Whereas most fledgling American musicians ape what they hear on the radio or see on MTV, New Orleans' younger players aspire to follow in the footsteps of their local heroes. The most vivid example of this regional pride is the Dirty Dozen Brass Band, who have the utmost respect for the artists who put New Orleans on the map, but who at the same time are evolving a completely new form of music. With instrumentation borrowed from the traditional walking jazz bands—two saxes, two trumpets, trombone, tuba, and two drummers (one on snare, one on bass drum)—the Dirty Dozen redefine such disparate tunes as "St. James Infirmary," "Sweet Georgia Brown," "Night Train," "Caravan," Miles Davis' "All Blues," and even Herbie Hancock's "Chameleon." So far they've only released a couple of singles, but their killer May 1 set at the fairgrounds was recorded and may be released as a live album.

None of the other so-called festivals scheduled for this summer are likely to approach New Orleans' in the quality or variety of music offered. Still, some may be content to eat dust and hot dogs while listening to Men at Work. Well, I suppose variety is the spice of life.

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WRH

# Blackfoot: Can't Hurry Love

By Mark Mehler

NEW YORK—Peter Pan's got nothing on Rick Medlocke.

For the past 15 years—since he co-founded Blackfoot in 1968 (originally called Fresh Garbage, Blackfoot split up in 1970 when Medlocke became Lynyrd Skynyrd's first drummer, but reunited in 1972)—the 33-year-old guitarist has steadfastly declined to grow up, saying many times that his life re-

volves happily around a collection of three dozen guitars, a stage and a million one-on-one relationships with teenage Blackfoot fans. Though he insists he wouldn't trade his life for any other, he's also aware that few of his generation would be willing to pay the price. It is no coincidence that none of the five members of Blackfoot is married or even contemplating such an arrangement (new member Ken

Hensley is divorced).

"Sometimes," muses Medlocke, "I imagine playing onstage and looking off to the side and seeing a wife holding a kid. I don't think you can be up there onstage acting naturally in that situation. You have to command someone like Eddie Van Halen, who's reinventing the six-string and trying to keep a marriage together. But I don't see how you can call yourself a rocker and be an

adult at the same time."

Well, okay. So Blackfoot, a crazy bunch of "kids" from Florida, continues to grind it out, seemingly unconcerned about the lack of gold bands adorning the third fingers of their left hands. The group's new album, *Siogo*, featuring Hensley on keyboards and vocals, was released last spring, and Medlocke has plans to re-enter the studio in October and cut another LP by January. Meanwhile, the current tour t-shirt reads "1983-1988," suggesting that if the market will bear it, Blackfoot will sandwich recording sessions between tour dates for at least five more years, which would bring Medlocke and his cohorts (co-writer/drummer Jackson Spires, guitarist Charlie Hargrett, bassist Gregg T. Walker and Hensley) near middle age. Had Hensley not joined up, however, it might have been the end of the trail for the band.

"We needed new blood," Medlocke admits, pointing out that Blackfoot has never varied its two guitar/bass/drum configuration. "At first we weren't sure what it was that was missing after all this time—another guitar, a horn maybe. Finally, we decided on keyboards because we figured it would open up more space for melodic vocals, which are becoming a more important feature of the band. Once we decided on that, we knew we wanted Ken. He's always played the type of rock keyboards we like—the Hammond B-3 with the growl."

According to Medlocke, Hensley, who came on shortly before the band started recording *Siogo* last fall, "basically helped change our entire approach. The guitars still have a main role, but on a much more tasty level. And Kenny gives us one more voice, which is always handy."

For a band that has long de-emphasized its boogie roots—Blackfoot came out of the same Jacksonville scene that produced Lynyrd Skynyrd and Molly Hatchet, among others—in favor of a rawer-edged British blues sound, *Siogo* marks yet another departure from standard Southern fare. Hensley's "Send Me An Angel," for example,

is a rich, hook-laden Bad Company-like rocker, while "Heart's Grown Cold" is as close to pure pop as Blackfoot will ever get. Even "White Man's Land" ("I am a savage, always on the run/four wheels my animal, this guitar is my gun") stops well north of the Mason-Dixon line.

"Ken's keyboards freed us up to try a lot of experimental things," Medlocke explains. "But we know enough at this point not to go out of the range of what's sellable. And we still keep the vocals simple. The words have to lay it on the line. Nobody ought to have to dig too deep to figure it out."

Medlocke also insists that, after 14 years, Blackfoot was strong enough internally to withstand a major jolt to its dynamic, as Hensley was thoroughly unaccustomed to taking a back seat in a rock band. "A long time ago it was decided among all of us that this was the way we're gonna do it: I deal with the band, management deals with me. It eliminates confusion. Ken is perfectly satisfied with that. He knew the other thing had come down to the end of the road, the guys were bickering at one another, it was over. I think he's ready to try something different."

But while Blackfoot's music has earned critical praise, and its live shows remain among the most volatile in rock, the band's recorded efforts haven't exactly broken the bank. Medlocke, though, is both patient and optimistic. The wisdom of the ages has made him so, especially that passed on to him by his late grandfather, the noted bluegrass musician Shorty Medlocke. Says Rick: "Shorty taught me the only way to survive is once you get a foot in the door, you keep kicking. We've been banging at that door all along, everybody in the band, because we're not only responsible for each other, but for ourselves. And we finally got to the point where we figure there'll always be Blackfoot fans out there who are with us even if we try something new, and that's a damn good feeling. Maybe we don't stay in Hyatts yet, but we're up to custom coaches."

sort of guy who, when he has to cough on stage, makes sure he erupts into the microphone. NRBQ, who never use a set list, is the kind of band that will, on the spur of the moment, cover Rosemary Clooney or Cab Calloway or Sam the Sham or pull out a hat, solicit written requests from the audience and play whatever is drawn out of the hat. Naturally, this zany musical stew approach—which extends to the albums—has baffled many radio programmers to the point of non-airplay. Stupid gits. Rock 'n' roll is about passion and feeling and the feeling Dave Edmunds was talking about is what matters—that

sloppy-but-tight blend the Stones, for instance, have always excelled at: it feels real, gritty and earned, not affected and cheap.

Over the years NRBQ has been remarkably consistent with their stylistic jumble. Stampinato considers their musical evolution as "gradual. It's the way your face changes over the years. We've been with it a long time so it doesn't change too much for us."

They're sincere ("How Can I Make You Love Me?", "My Girlfriend's Pretty") and they're irreverent ("Who Put the Garlic in the Glue?", "Howard Johnson's Got His Ho-Jo Workin'"). "There's a lot of songs we can't record 'cause of Mom and Dad," confides Adams. "We keep the records pretty clean. We do a lot of wild songs that never make it."

"As soon as all our parents pass away, we'll get pretty wild," promises Stampinato.

*Grooves In Orbit* is their most hard-driving album yet, as close to live as they've come—from cool bopping junk ("Hit at the Drive In"), to um, 12 bar blues ("12 Bar Blues"). They've yet another crack at hitting the charts, breaking through the radio barrier. But one way or the other, million seller or cutout, it's not going to change their lives.

"We don't really think of records as auditions for success," says Adams. "We don't believe that you should put out a record and hope your life will change. It has nothing to do with that. If you're doing that, the music has lost its meaning."

"That means if you don't have a successful record, you break up," adds Stampinato, who, later, when the "what-is-success" question rears its head, pulls out a chestnut from William Ernest Henley's *Invictus*. "Success is being the captain of your own soul." And whatever else comes around is bonuses. The only goal is to keep going. Everybody has a good time."



Blackfoot (from left: Medlocke, Walker, Hargrett): "Once you get a foot in the door, you keep kicking."

## The Hermetic World of NRBQ

By Jim Sullivan

BOSTON—There are these quotes that keep getting dropped. "I'd much rather any day go and see NRBQ playing than I would the most illustrious of our punk bands in England." That was last year's biggie and that was Elvis Costello.

"...that feel of rock 'n' roll where you get it just right. There aren't many people who can do it, but when you see certain bands, like, say, NRBQ, you think, no, it's still there." That would be Dave Edmunds.

Then there are years of numerous and rapturous accolades from the rock press, the topper being the late *Soho News*' "Yeah, the Rolling Stones are okay, but this is the Greatest Rock 'n' Roll Band in the World. Really."

Gosh. Is this success? Well, maybe. NRBQ, as unpretentious and unfriendly an outfit as can be found on the rock road, is at the very least getting attention these days. Together in this present configuration for 10 years, NRBQ seems to be developing, at least in my East Coast neck of the USA, a growing and increasing fanatical audience. Is there a reason for all this?

Terry Adams, blond shaggy-haired madcap ivory banger and singer-songwriter, and Joey Stampinato, black shaggy-haired bassist and singer-songwriter, trade empty expressions as they sit backstage prior to a Boston gig at the Metro club.

"I don't know," says Adams, after a bit of thought.

"We don't think about that too much," adds Stampinato.

"We don't really notice that much of a difference to tell you the truth," says Adams.

"I don't know," says Stampinato. "We've gotten fired some places and some places like us. We like to get fired every once in a while."

Welcome to NRBQ's world and a story that might best be called Boys in a Bubble. Remember "Me and the Boys"? Bonnie Raitt got a hit out of it—and her version, neat gender-play and all, was terrific—but it was a Terry Adams composition, and NRBQ's rendition revels in a rollicking clannish attitude. "Don't raise questions 'bout how it's done," sings Adams. "We're just messin'

'round, havin' fun, me and the boys." Well, that's pretty close to the NRBQ core philosophy. And this train's kept a-rolling through more fads and trends than you can shake a stick at. These guys—in addition to Adams and Stampinato, drummer Tom Ardolino, guitarist Al Anderson and the Whole Wheat Horns, Donn Adams and Keith Spring—are one tight unit, a trifle wary of everything and everyone on the outside.

"The music business is full of

squares and norms and queers, it

seems to me," opines Adams, "so we

stay to ourselves. It seems a lot of

people in the music business are under

a lot of pressure."

You're not? (There is a new album, *Grooves In Orbit*, on Bearsville, which is NRBQ's first major label shot in the '80s.)

"I don't know," Adams answers.

"I never had any other job."

"Never had a job," concurs Stam-

pinato, who clearly does not consider NRBQ a job. "Tom's the only one who ever worked anywhere else. It lasted one day. It was in a K-Mart."

The eclectic NRBQ train hurtles ahead—a crazy mix of rip snorting standard Southern fare. Hensley's "Send Me An Angel," for example, rockabilly and what-have-you (at the show following this interview they played "Michael Row the Boat Ashore," and twisted the refrain into "Michael tried on a brand new shirt, Hallelujah!")—as it has night after night, year after year since 1967. Although this is obviously a long-term project, this is not the kind of band to consider the long-term.

Stampinato talks about the future: "I saw on a piece of paper where I was gonna play the next couple of days. From there, I don't follow too close."

Stampinato talks about the past: "We came to a concert and we walked in this one room and there was this spread of food and stuff and we said, 'Oh, this is nice,' and they said, 'No, this is so-and-so's dressing room,' and put us in the next room with a six pack of hot Diet Rite, a loaf of Wonder Bread and a pack of American cheese. And that was it. That kind of thing keeps you going."

The "where might you be in 10

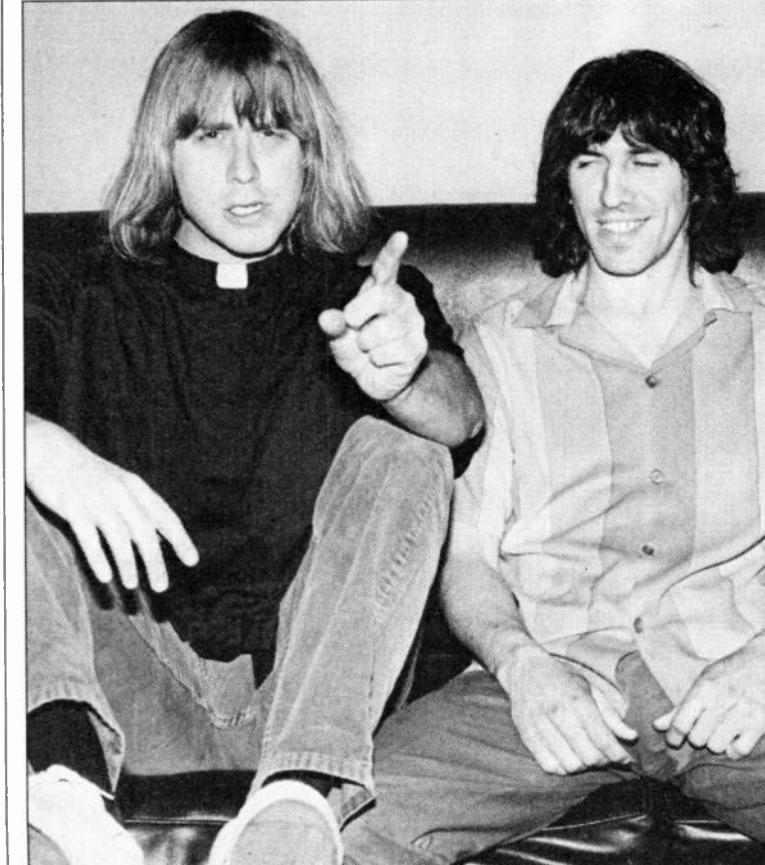
years?" question is a profound puzzler. "Maybe we'll all buy an island," says Adams after Stampinato says he didn't think he'd be where he is now ten years ago.

The idea is to maintain the aesthetic of still crazy after all these years. "We left home and went crazy," says Adams. Home was Louisville, Kentucky and became Miami, Florida. "First thing you do when you leave home is everything you can't do. It's been a weekend ever since."

Ms. Raitt affectionately calls them "the original weird people on this planet. They make Little Feat look like the Beach Boys."

NRBQ responds: "Well, we never heard Little Feat," says Adams (yeah, sure), "so I don't know what that comparison is. As for being weird... I think it's the other people that's weird. I think we're all pretty normal."

Some kinda normal. Adams is the



NRBQ's Adams (left) and Stampinato: Maintaining the aesthetic of still crazy after all these years.

PHOTO: SUSAN WILSON

## Musical Instruments

# Fender Amps On The Upswing: New Models Are The Best Yet

By Chris Doering

Sound signatures come in all shapes and sizes, especially when they're expressed with an amplified instrument like an electric guitar or bass. Defining a personal sound, and assembling the right tools to make it happen, is a major part of every musician's development. Charlie Christian's seminal jazz style would have been impossible without his Gibson guitar and amp, just as Carlos Santana and Larry Carlton would never have achieved their distinctive tonalities without the Mesa Boogie. In assembling the components of your sound, remember that a good amp will make a listenable sound with almost any guitar, but an amp that sounds lousy can spoil the tone of even the most expensive instrument.

In fact, for electric guitarists and bassists, the amp is an instrument, and the mark of any good amp is that it does what you want it to do. Until they took a nosedive in the '70s (Leo Fender sold the company to CBS in 1965), Fender amps did what just about everybody wanted them to do; but the past decade saw familiar workhorses like the Twin Reverb and the Dual Showman losing ground both to individual innovators such as Randall Smith and high-volume, low-price manufacturers such as Hartley Peavey.

Well, the news is that Fender is back, and better than ever. A couple of years ago CBS Musical Instruments made the smartest move of its corporate life, hiring Paul Rivera to design a new line of Fender amplifiers. Rivera's been repairing and modifying Fender, Marshalls and SVTs for over 15 years, ever since he put reverb and a 70-watt power amp into his own Vibro-Champ. Many of his custom modified Fenders, like the Deluxe he built for Steve Lukather of Toto, are still in use on the L.A. studio scene, and his solid state designs for Pignose (the Crossmix) and Yamaha (the G-100) are among the most successful transistor amps.

For Fender, Rivera drew on his years of experimentation and consultation with manufacturers and players to rework the line from top to bottom. One measure of his success is that the Super Champ, an all tube, 18 watt 1" x 10" little monster with reverb and footswitchable sustain, is getting as many raves as the 200-watt solid state Dual Showman. Nominally a practice amp, the Super Champ may be the ultimate studio amp, with a surprisingly full clean sound as well as one of the best distortion and sustain sounds I've ever heard. It's about the size and weight of an attache case, and fits perfectly the studio environment's emphasis on instrumental isolation.

The 20-watt Princeton Reverb II is only a little larger than the Super Champ, and offers the same tonal versatility, with a slightly sweeter sound from its 12" speaker. The Deluxe Reverb II offers true channel switching, which means separate equalization for clean and sustain sounds, with reverb on both. Like the Princeton, it's a very compact 20-watter with a 12" speaker. Any of these amps would be great in a studio or low-volume stage situation. The foot switches, and the pull switches for EQ functions such as bright and mid-boost, aren't just bells and whistles, but useful features which allow you to tailor the sound of the amp to your own personal conception.

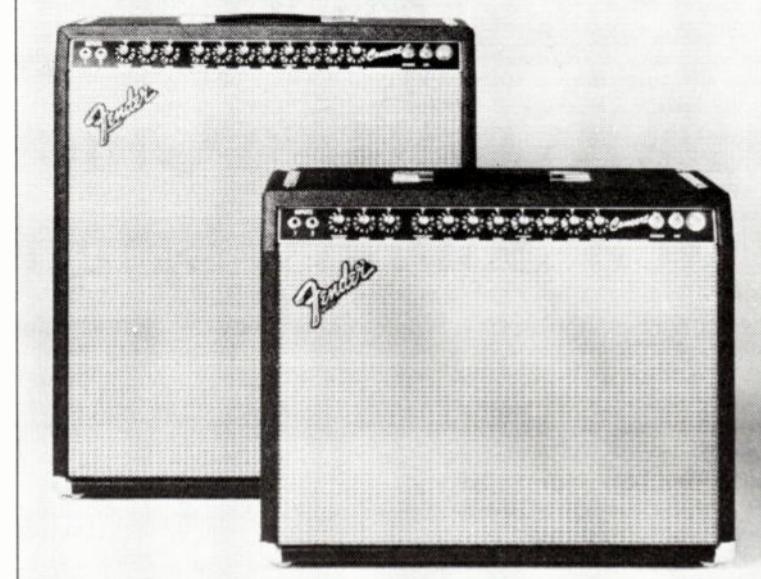
For the average club or (with miking) concert situation, the Concert series is the bottom of the tube side of the Fender line, but what a bottom! I used the Concert 1" x 12" with the optional Electro-Voice EVM12F speaker on my Top-40 lounge gig, and was absolutely knocked out by the sound and flexi-

bility of this 60-watt package. The rhythm channel produces a sparkling, fully-rounded tone that doesn't break up even at very high volume levels, thanks in part to the beefed-up power supply which Paul Rivera designed into the amp. The lead channel is very flexible, with three volume controls and four bands of EQ, plus a mid-boost pull switch. It doesn't have as much gain as some other screamers but it gives plenty of sustain, and a more centered note than most of the overdrive circuits I've heard.

The speaker EV makes for Fender strikes a balance between the warmth and power that made the EVM12L famous and the crisp top end and tight lower mid-range that characterize the classic Fender sound. The effects loop is a very thoughtfully designed feature of the Concert. With 30 dB of gain in the

Return section, you can set the Send level low enough to eliminate distortion and noise from your effects without losing any overall volume.

Rivera has also designed a complete solid state line for players who prefer the tighter rhythm sound and lighter weight of transistor amps. From the Harvard Reverb II, basically a solid state Super Champ, to the 200-watt Dual Showman, the new solid state amps offer more bang for the buck than their tube counterparts, not only in terms of higher power, but in extra features that add flexibility and give you more control over your sound. The 100-watt Montreux, for example, has two pull switches (mid-boost and bright) on the clean channel, and four bands of EQ on the lead channel, plus a pull bright switch. The effects loop is footswitchable and assignable to either or both

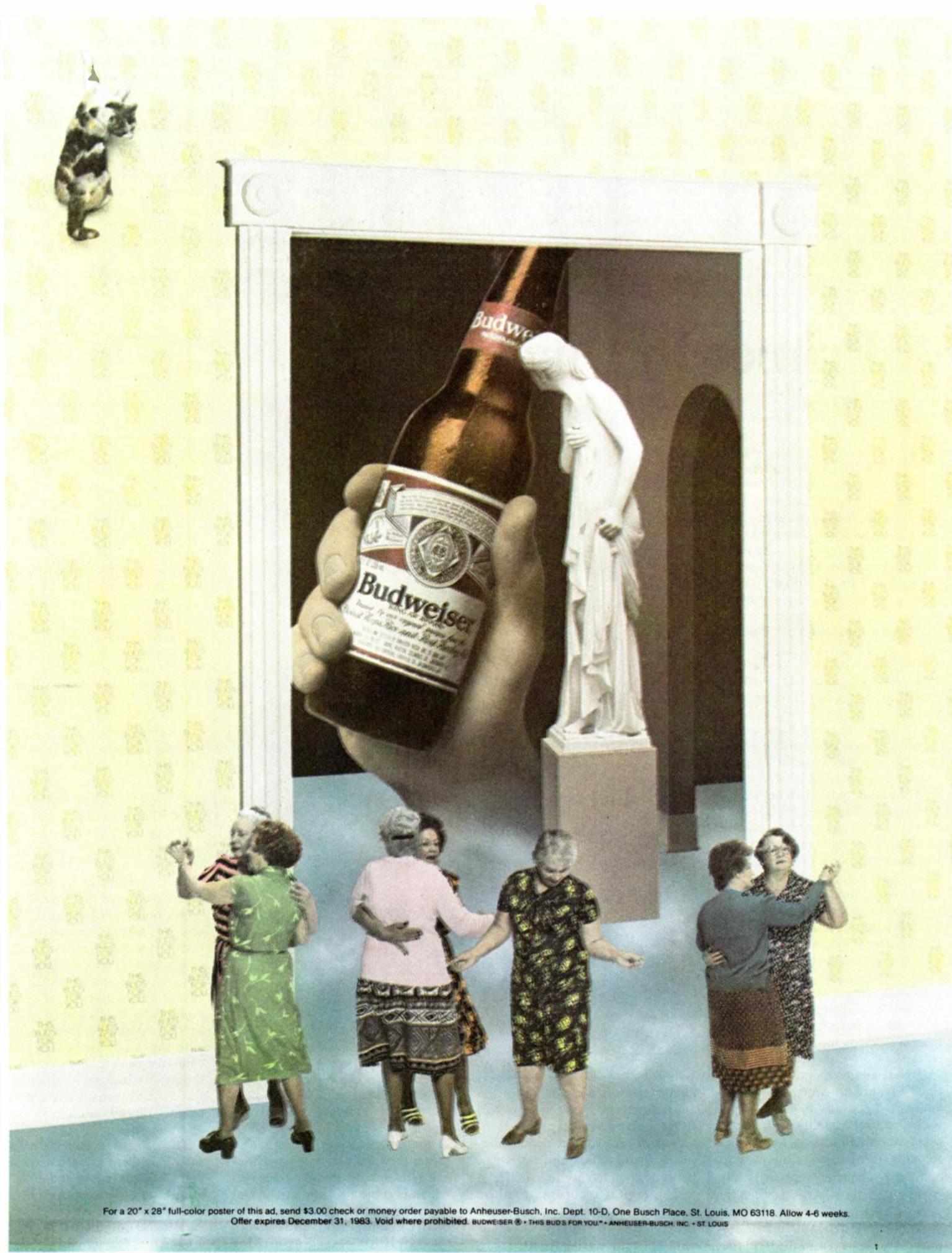


Fender's Concert Series tube amps

channels, so you won't have to do a tap dance when it's time to take a solo. The London Reverb adds a footswitchable and channel-assignable graphic equalizer to the Montreux's features, while the Dual Showman includes all of the above along with 200 watts of power in a package that weighs about the same as the 60-watt Concert.

There really has been a renaissance of American-made musical instru-

ments in the past couple of years, but what Paul Rivera has done for Fender goes beyond "we're making 'em like we used to" rhetoric. The new Fenders have taken a quantum leap in quality of both design and production, and as far as I'm concerned the vintage nuts can take all those tweed classics and stick them in a vault. The amps coming off the line right now are, for my money, the best Fender has ever made.



## Musical Electronics

# EMG's Active Guitar Pickups: New Sounds, Brighter Tones

By Craig Anderton

**G**uitarists are hardcore experimenters: they're always trying out new effects devices, structural materials, and perhaps most importantly, pickups. After all, pickups translate the vibrations of a string into the electrical impulses required to feed an amplifier, so it follows that they are one of the most important factors in determining a guitar's characteristic "sound."

A few years ago, there was quite a boom in replacement pickups for guitars. Sometimes these add-on pickups were designed to beef up older instruments for a more powerful, contemporary sound; and sometimes they were intended to re-create the sounds of "vintage" pickups, but using present day technology and manufacturing techniques. Still, these new pickups followed the same basic design rules laid down when the first pickups were invented.

Eventually, the replacement pickup market waned, forcing some companies out of business and causing others to re-group. However, the Overland pickup company has not only survived, but is expanding despite a soft market. Perhaps this is due to Overland's fundamentally different approach towards pickup construction. (Players who use instruments with EMG pickups include Toto's Steve Lukather, Kansas' Kerry Livgren, Colin Hay

from Men at Work, Rick Springfield, the Dregs' Andy West, and many others. Currently, Overland's line of "EMG" pickups are available for Les Paul, Strat, P-Bass, and Jazz Bass body styles, and as original equipment on Spector basses as well as Steinberger basses and guitars.)

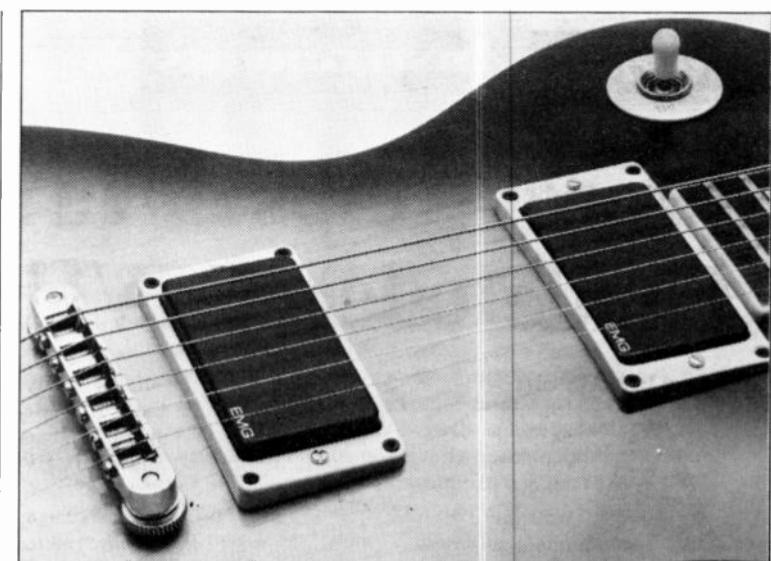
Unlike most pickups, which increase output by changing the type of magnet or number of wire turns used in the pickup coil, EMG pickups use a battery-powered electronic circuit (built into the pickup itself and referred to as "active electronics") to compensate for deficiencies and compromises inherent in pickup design. For example, most players know that a stronger magnet gives a stronger sound. However, there is a point of diminishing returns in that if the magnet is too strong, it will actually start to pull on the strings and cause detuning effects. More wire turns will also give more output; however, too many turns will decrease high frequency response and may cause other problems.

By using active electronics to specify the pickup's output rather than relying on altering the materials used in the pickup, active pickups can use a somewhat less powerful magnet that does not cause detuning. Also, the number of coil wire turns can be chosen on the basis of tonal quality rather than output. Another advantage of active circuitry is that it buffers the pickup from the effects of cables. Many players

do not realize that the guitar cord, guitar electronics, and type of amp used greatly influence the ultimate sound of a guitar (this is one reason why two guitarists using identical guitars and amps can still sound different). Buffering the pickup from the cord and amp input circuitry eliminates these variables. A major advantage of building the electronics into the pickup is that the circuitry can be totally shielded, and is therefore less susceptible to hum and radio frequency interference.

Another important characteristic of a pickup is its frequency response. Guitar pickups have anything but a flat response—in fact, it is the peaks in a pickup's response that account for much of the distinctive sonic differences between various pickups. Many pickup manufacturers have laboriously analyzed vintage pickups, and wound their pickups to create response peaks which match the response peaks of these highly popular pickups. Overland, however, does not feel that their market is replication of vintage pickups. So, they've taken advantage of the active circuitry to shape the pickup response for not one, but two resonant peaks. These dual peaks contribute an elusive kind of "character" to the sound which is different from single peak pickups.

The price you pay for active circuitry is the need to use a battery (although it will typically last for a year when powering two EMG pickups), and of course, the addition of any kind of active electronics gen-



EMG pickups: dual peaks for "character" sound

erates a small amount of hiss. However, by paying careful attention to the electronic design of the active circuitry, hiss can be minimized to the point where it is negligible compared to the hiss contributed by effects or amps.

It's interesting that 60 percent of EMG's business is export, in large part to Japan and Europe. I asked Rob Turner, who with his brother Bill founded Overland, why the Japanese have not taken over the pickup industry (as they have much of the rest of the music business). He mentioned two main considerations, one being the materials used. According to Turner, Japanese industry does not have standards for magnet wire or magnets, and American magnetic material is far more suited for pickup manufacturing. But there's also the matter of pickup design, which is still largely a subjective art. You can't design a pickup by computer: you have to experiment until, through trial-and-error, you find "the" tone. The somewhat older generation of people running the larger Japanese companies do not have American ears, but Japanese guitar players—mostly concentrat-

ed in the 13-to 19-year-old age group—want American sounds. It's not illogical that it takes Americans to come up with those distinctly "American" sounds.

And what kind of sounds are most guitarists looking for these days? "A meatier midrange and more highs," Turner replies. "Contemporary guitarists are mostly concerned with having a well-defined sound that won't be overwhelmed by the other instruments in a band. Also, older players like more highs because while they may think they still hear okay, their hearing is losing highs." Interestingly, the Steinberger bass and guitar—both of which use a space-age plastic body material to create a bright, resonant sound—use EMG pickups to accurately reproduce their unusually "present" sound.

Clearly, there is still room for innovation in pickup design. Active pickups offer an alternative to the traditional pickup; while one will not render the other obsolete, EMG's success shows that, as always, guitarists remain eager—and willing—to experiment with new sounds and tone colors.  $\square$

## Audio

# A Primer In Digital Audio

By David Gans

**I**t's not here just yet, but there is a genuine audio revolution in the offing. American consumers are just beginning to see the first digital Compact Disc players and a limited but ever-growing catalogue of programming. Reports from Europe—and the early returns from the American music trade—indicate that digital audio stands a very good chance of living up to its promise of superior sound quality and unheard-of convenience.

The Compact Disc is 12 centimeters (4 3/4") in diameter—small enough to be used in portable players and car stereos as well as home units, meaning that high-grade sound will soon be available everywhere from a single source. The disc can hold up to an hour of uninterrupted sound, more than both sides of a conventional record. The format includes information on the number of selections and their lengths; many of the first-generation CD players can be programmed by time, index number and/or selection number to play tracks in any desired sequence and repeat one or more portions indefinitely. There is sufficient space in the information block of the CD that eventually the titles of the album and current selection will be displayed, and there is even talk of including video information—one picture per cut, say—on the CD.

Digital audio offers several distinct advantages over analog, because its accuracy is completely unrelated to the quality of the storage medium. In analog recording, sound is stored as a continuous and constantly changing representation of the audio signal. Accuracy can be affected by several factors, such as the tendency of vinyl to lose its shape after several assaults from the



The Digital Audio compact disc

phonostylus. In addition, distortion and noise caused by the various electronic and mechanical processes involved in recording and manufacturing analog discs and tapes can never be completely eliminated.

The digital recording method used for CDs involves taking many thousands of "snapshots" of the analog signal each second and assign-

ing a numerical value to each, then storing the numbers. The advantage is that binary code consists of vast numbers of ones and zeroes, so rather than maintaining a continuous reference to the analog signal which is subject to limitations and degradation, the digital storage medium need only distinguish between "1" and "0"—several million

times per second.

To visualize the complexity of the digital encoding process, imagine a wavy line running horizontally across a grid to represent the audio signal. The number of times the wave changes direction is the frequency—bass tones having fewer waves per second and treble having more. The height of the wave represents amplitude (volume). Music is a complex series of wave oscillations of varying frequencies and amplitudes.

In order to track accurately, it has been determined that the analog signal must be sampled at slightly more than twice the maximum frequency to be quantized. Since human hearing ranges up to 20,000 cycles per second, a sampling rate of 44,100 per second has been adopted for CDs. The 16-bit (Binary digit) format of CD digitization divides amplitude into 65,536 increments from quietest to loudest. For comparison, note that a TV screen contains only a few hundred horizontal lines and provides a reasonable level of sharpness. Audio requires much greater accuracy in order to eliminate noise and distortion, but with 44,100 vertical lines and 65,536 horizontal lines it's possible to draw a very accurate picture of that wavy line.

Multiply 44,100 samples per second by 3600 (60 seconds times 60 minutes) and you get over 158 million numbers per hour. Double that (one set of samples for each of the two stereo channels, remember), multiply by 16 bits and factor in the extra information that's encoded with the music so the CD player's computer can automatically correct the errors which are inevitable when storing this much data, and the total reaches literally billions of bits of information.

The density of data on a CD is such that there are about 60 spiral tracks in the same space as one groove on an analog disc. Each of the "pits" in the metal plate that carries the information is less than 1.6 microns (thousandths of a milli-

meter) wide. If the playback process involved physical contact between the disc and the player, those pits wouldn't last too long—so instead, the "stylus" of the CD player is a laser beam. The pits are well below the surface of the CD's clear plastic coating (and since the laser is focused on the pits, most scratches and fingerprints do not affect it).

The net result of all this wizardry is playback which is virtually distortion-free; flutter and wow, those variations in speed that plague analog devices, are absent; and the hiss that accompanies taped sound—and the rumbles, clicks, pops and scratches that ruin records—are eliminated in CDs. The signal-to-noise ratio—the available amplitude between background noise and the maximum level the medium can handle—is better than 90 dB, as opposed to 50-60 dB on most tapes and even less on vinyl.

But above all, digital sounds great—assuming that the original recording is of sufficient quality. It will be some time before the recording industry makes all its product digital from top to bottom, even though many artists and producers are already working with the new technology. Neil Young, for example, recently completed an album recorded on the new Sony 24-track digital system, mixed to digital stereo and mastered specifically for CD. (A complete report on the Neil Young sessions will be featured in an upcoming issue of RECORD.)

Existing music will benefit from CD technology, too. If you're one of the thousands who wear out a copy of *Dark Side of the Moon* every couple of years, for instance, the CD edition will be a one-time-only investment (provided you take reasonable care of the disc)—and there'll be none of the gradual decay of sound quality that occurs on vinyl as the stylus wears into the groove and dust, scratches and fingerprints accrue.

(Additional material supplied by David Haynes.)

## Video

# From Art Form To Formula: A Guide To Rock Video Clichés

By Alan Hecht

**A**lthough musicvideo as we now know it is only six years old, cliché has already become a too frequent substitute for creativity. British Surrealism and American Vaudvideo have spawned a circus of Russell Mulcahy clones who seem more concerned with copying images than with finding original visual metaphors. Like AOR music, the whole process of making a rock video is quickly being reduced to formula.

The most abused shot in rock videos is a guitar smashing through glass. Immortalized in the Ramones' "Rock 'N' Roll Radio" clip, everyone from Rick Springfield to the legendary rock video cliché himself, Sammy Hagar, has employed this "image," if you will. But there's more, much more. If after about 10 minutes with MTV you find yourself asking, "Didn't I just see this?" you can be sure you've been victimized by one too many video clichés. What follows here is less a comprehensive survey than a Hall of Fame of stock shots that will live on in both memory and infamy.

## The Femme Fatale

In Ultravox's 1979 "Vienna" video, director Russell Mulcahy cast a mysterious lady as a central figure in a tale of suspense. Enter the femme fatale. '83 finds these female roles radically re-defined. Now the fair sex wanders through rock videos like refugees from a L'Eggs commercial rather than as meaningful characters. They usually exist only to flash some flesh—mere sides of beef in a supermarket. A splendid example of the music industry's heightened consciousness of the role of women in our society.

Journey's "Separate Ways" sports femme fatales as product shots, which translates to low-angle views of bare ankles and sassy, windblown hair along with titillating slow-motion turns. Credit the TV advertising background of director Tom Buckholtz for the inspirational idea of using women in music videos in the same manner they're used in Orange Crush commercials—directed by Tom Buckholtz.

Huey Lewis and the News prefer the passive sort of female ornament. In "Do You Believe In Love," the band sings to a woman sleeping on satin sheets. Eventually she gets up and makes coffee. What a role. Single Bullet Theory subscribes to the woman-as-jewelry mentality in "Hang On To Your Heart." This one incorporates scenes of the band's ugly singer on stage, a woman in black lingerie on a heart-shaped bed, the ugly singer with a woman on each arm and a blonde tagging behind them for good measure. You can imagine the director dreaming up this concept while pondering the philosophical implications of the three gold chains hanging around his neck.

## Smoke & Blue Look

Desperate to find a way to hype production values in low-budget video shoots, British directors in the late '70s would bleed in smoke effects and flood scenes with huge HMI lights (usually employed for outdoor shoots). The result was an eerie blue look effect which seemed to enhance the unnatural glow of video instead of hiding its lack of clarity. While directing the U.K. pop series *Supersonic*, Mike Mansfield (Adam Ant's director) primed the technique to the point where he often had bands playing in so much smoke and light that they couldn't

see their instruments. Mulcahy perfected it in Kim Carnes' "Bette Davis Eyes," and thought he'd laid it to rest by dousing the entire "Tubes Video" with the effect.

But like dry ice at a rock concert, smoke and blue look have entered the realm of obligatory effects. Even flashy Clio Award-winning commercial director Bob Giraldi felt compelled to use it in Bonnie Tyler's "Total Eclipse of the Heart." In this lame, repetitive video, Tyler is back lit with the blue look as she walks down the hall of a boy's boarding school in a pseudo-seductive gown. Curtains blow out of each light-flooded doorway. Ninja characters surround Tyler and brandish swords (never mind that Ninja don't use swords, my friends—if it looks good, logic is damned). More light. More smoke. If only this were a total eclipse!

Another smokey stunner is After

the Fire's "Dancing In The Street." It's so murky we can barely see the female dancers with records spinning on their necks. Yes, records spinning on their necks, and another cliché is born. You read it here first.

## Roses

This shot harkens back to Camay commercials and has become a quick-fix visual for expressing sensitivity. Asia tattooed a bouquet of roses across the screen in "Heat Of The Moment," and it so impressed Steel Breeze that they went really rosey in "You Don't Love Me Anymore." The lead singer throws down a thorny red one for his girl and, just to make the point, the action is repeated not once, but five consecutive times. Quelle symbolism!

Not to be outdone, a dozen roses

are dumped into Ronnie Milsap's "Any Day Now" video with all the subtlety of a flying mallet. Check out the maid in the VGB (visible garter belt) who saunters by Milsap four times with a box of roses in tow. Cleverly, director David Hogan magically removes them from the box and cuts to the roses in slow-motion free fall (three times). In case you missed the soft focus beauty of it all, he then cuts to the roses in repose on the floor (twice). Such conceptual genius is hard to deny.

## Overtuned Tables

A Russell Mulcahy trademark. In "Hungry Like The Wolf," Mulcahy has Duran Duran overturn a table (in slow-motion, of course—isn't slow-motion in and of itself a cliché?) in a Sri Lanka bar, spilling water and bits of broken glass all over the patrons assembled for the occasion. In "I'm So Excited," Mulcahy's choreographer-turned-director Kenny Ortega has the Pointer Sisters give a cocktail table the old slo-mo heave-ho. And finally, in the Motels' "Only The Lonely," Mul-

cahy has Martha Davis vent her spleen on a poor, defenseless table. Can't stand anything that's right side up, huh, Russell?

There are certainly other clichés (such as the Great Movie Scenes Ripoff—see Michael Jackson's "Beat It"), but the ones noted here are without doubt the major offenders. (Write in and tell us your favorites.) In some cases—"Beat It" being the most prominent—the artist's performance transcends such lapses in creativity. It's also interesting that one of the most exciting videos on the tube right now is one of the simplest. That would be Prince's "Little Red Corvette," which uses smoke nicely for effect but derives its power from the urgency of Prince's performances, and nothing more. But how many Princes and Michael Jacksons are there? So if you're a video director and you're stuck with Sammy Hagar, hey, you gotta make a buck. Ultimately, though, resorting to stock shots is like consistency—it's the hobgoblin of little minds. And the shots themselves are the distinguishing characteristics of "B" rock videos. "B," in this case, stands for bad. ○

For years you have been fed some pretty tall stories about cassette tape. Denon only makes one claim for DX-Series Cassettes. We don't say they will play on the moon; we don't say they will survive being baked in ovens. We hope that they won't tip over your chair or shatter your stemware. We only say that Denon DX-Series Cassette Tape will sound more like real music than any other brand on the market.

### "YOU DON'T LISTEN TO SPECIFICATIONS; YOU LISTEN TO MUSIC."

Most cassette tape advertising tries to impress you with specifications. The trouble is that specifications do not

necessarily equate to *musicality*.

Most manufacturers' specifications are based on static measurements, the tape's response to steady test tones. Denon DX-Series Cassette Tape goes one step further: it also minimizes Dynamic Distortion, the distortion created by actual musical signals.

### "DENON WILL BECOME 'THE AUDIOPHILES CASSETTE TAPE'"

True audiophiles realize the A-B testing is not the real gauge of sound quality. Only extended listening can tell you if a component—or a tape—is superior.

Perform this test for yourself. Make a recording on Denon DX-Cassette Tape first listening to the source. Then playback your DX-Tape recording and compare the two experiences.

The message is in the music.



**"YOU WILL DISCOVER A CASSETTE TAPE THAT SOUNDS LIKE REAL MUSIC."**

## Sound Signature

## David Grisman: A Dawg's Life

By Jon Sievert

You can't call it anything but "Dawg" music, because broad categories or hybrid neologisms like "jazzgrass" don't say enough. Dawg is informed by many musics, voiced in bluegrass instrumentation *sans* banjo but adding to the delicate percussiveness of that genre with the lilting swing rhythms and lyrical harmony of Django Reinhardt's Hot Club jazz and touches of classical, folk and Eastern music for a wholly unique synthesis.

The architect (and namesake) of Dawg music is David Grisman, a 38-year-old mandolinist and composer from Mill Valley, California. "There's something in this music for everybody," he explains. "People who like bluegrass will find that kind of rhythm and feel, while jazz fans should be able to relate to the swing and the improvisational nature of that music. Classical lovers will recognize certain classical devices—and, I hope, my whole approach to tonality. And I've found that rock fans are able to appreciate our energy levels even without Marshall stacks."

The Grisman band, currently a quartet, has been a proving ground for many well-known acoustic players, including guitar phenom Tony Rice, fiddler/mandolinist Darol Anger, multi-instrumentalists Mark O'Connor and Mike Marshall, and others. "I've tried always to play with gifted musicians who can get exceptional sounds out of exceptional-sounding instruments," says Grisman.

Although the standard instrumentation of the Grisman Quartet is mandolin, flattop guitar, fiddle and standup bass, Grisman's players have used all the other members of the mandolin and violin families as well as dobro, banjo, koto (a Japa-

nese stringed instrument), etc. Clearly no one has had as great an impact on the conceptual possibilities of acoustic string music since Bill Monroe invented bluegrass nearly 40 years ago.

Grisman's musical career has stretched over 20 years and encompassed a good part of the spectrum of recorded music. Born in Hackensack and raised in Passaic, New Jersey, he took up mandolin at age 16 during the '60s folk revival. His tastes quickly graduated from the Kingston Trio to the New Lost City Ramblers, Doc Watson and Bill Monroe. By the time he was 19, his skills as a mandolinist put him in front of The New York Ramblers, a band of urban teenagers who were named Best Bluegrass Band at the 1964 Union Grove (South Carolina) Folk Festival.

The Golden Age of Bluegrass had passed, though, by the time Grisman discovered the sound. At age 20 he had virtually mastered the idiom, but by 1967 it was clear that there was little room for a long-haired, dope-smoking mandolinist/composer to grow. So he electrified his mandolin and guitar-sized Gibson K-4 mandocello and teamed with another Monroe dropout named Peter Rowan to enlist in the rock 'n' roll revolution. Their group, Earth Opera, lasted three years and two albums (comprised mostly of Rowan's music); when it folded, Grisman moved to Marin County, California and became a session player.

During the early '70s Grisman was the mandolin player, commuting between the Los Angeles and San Francisco recording scenes. When such popular artists as James Taylor, Linda Ronstadt, Judy Collins, Maria Muldaur and even the Pointer Sisters wanted a taste on their records, Grisman got the call.

His association with the Grateful Dead's Jerry Garcia, which began in

1964, led him to a 1970 appearance on the Dead's *American Beauty*. A couple of years later the two teamed up to form Old and In the Way, a short-lived bluegrass band that featured Garcia on banjo, Rowan on guitar, fiddle great Vassar Clements, Grisman, and bassist John Kahn. Musically, O&ITW was a bit too loose for Grisman's taste; by the time it broke up he was ready to put his vision into a band of his own which would use the acoustic instruments of bluegrass (with the notable exception of the banjo) but encompass his many musical interests.

The Great American Music Band included Grisman, violinist Richard Greene, and a succession of musicians including Garcia on guitar and Taj Mahal on bass. The mix was never quite right, though, and it wasn't until 1975 that the first incarnation of the David Grisman Quintet was formed with two mandolins, guitar, bass and violin.

Unable to interest a major label, Grisman produced his own record for tiny Kaleidoscope Records and sold 50,000 copies. A&M signed Grisman to its Horizon label, where he realized a longtime dream of recording with Stephane Grappelli; when Horizon folded, Grisman moved to Warner Bros. His fourth effort for that label, *Dawg Grass/Dawg Jazz*, features a variety of approaches and includes guest performances by Earl Scruggs, Grappelli, the *Tonight Show* house big band, and others.

Grisman's principal instrument for the past 14 years has been a 1925 Gibson F-5 "Fern" model, which he praises for its balanced sound. "Every string sounds bright and clear, with good separation," he notes. "I believe that an instrument has to be played a lot to truly sing, and I've done a lot of pounding on it." He often records with his two 1920s Gibson Lloyd Loar Signature models, the so-called "Stradivarius of the



PHOTO: JON SIEVERT

David Grisman: There's a little Dawg in everyone.

mandolin."

He isn't particularly impressed by what he sees coming out of the factories these days, though he is delighted that mandolins are once again being produced. The instruments built by John Monteleone, Stephen Gilchrist and Mike Keminitz, Grisman says, "are the collector's items of the future"—although he deplores the notion of "collector's items" because of the tendency of such instruments to rise in price and end up in vaults instead of in the hands of players.

In the tradition of great bandleaders like Miles Davis and Duke Ellington, Grisman writes and arranges his music to suit the particular skills of the musicians working with him at any given time, keeping the music in a state of constant evolution. His devotion to the mandolin also leads him to produce records by

other players, including Jethro Burns and Tiny Moore, and publish *Mandolin World News*.

He's created four film scores, most recently 1979's *King of the Gypsies*. Last year Grisman took time out for a brief foray back to his bluegrass roots with *Here Today*, an album of standards. This versatility, Grisman maintains, is "how I've been able to expand as a musician. Maybe some guy calls me to do a commercial that requires something a little bit outside my experience. Instead of saying, 'I don't do that,' I'll just sort of keep my mouth shut and do it anyway." This sort of open-ended definition of limits has allowed Grisman to gain new experience and knowledge, and more importantly has ensured that "the mandolin gets heard in a lot more places, too." Somebody give that Dawg a bone.

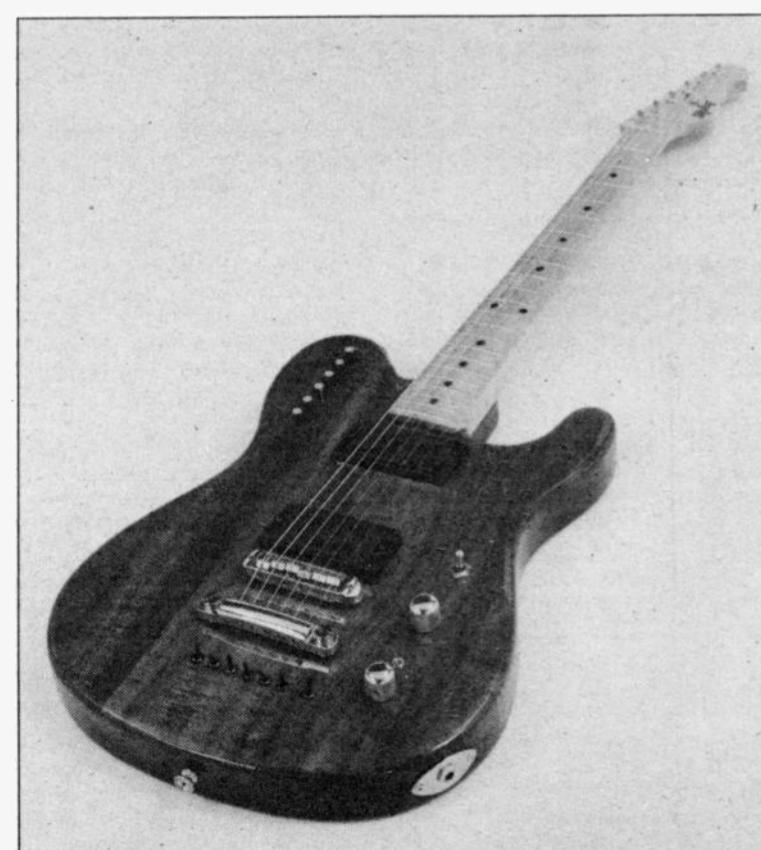
## New Products

## Steve Ripley's Stereo Guitar

By David Gans

Steve Ripley's stereo guitar made a quiet debut at the NAMM show last January. In a small, unadorned booth, the designer/builder set up a pair of amps a few feet apart, a couple of effects racks, and a chair. The guitar—somewhat similar in appearance and sound to a Telecaster—has a pair of extremely clean pickups, each with six separate outputs. Six little knobs enable panning of each string from full left to full right, and behind the bridge are six individual pickup selectors. The first thing I tried was splitting the registers down the middle—bass strings left, treble strings right—and fingerpicking a little ragtime figure. Then I alternated the strings, not quite full left and right, and tried a number of different playing styles. Strummed and arpeggiated chords sounded deep, wide and rich, with an unprecedented depth of stereo image; single-note runs bounded back and forth between the speakers according to interval and string played. The effect was exhilarating, the sound of the pickups (made for Ripley by Bill Bartolini) losing nothing in comparison to standard guitars. Ripley made a wise choice in opting for clean electronics (and you can switch out the stereo effect and just play it like a regular guitar with a tight, responsive action), since it's easier to distort the sound electronically than it is to clean it up. *Ripley Guitars, Inc., 616 So. Sunset Canyon Drive, Burbank CA 91501.*

There's a new generation of inexpensive, versatile and clean-sounding digital delays on the mar-



Steve Ripley's Stereo Guitar: clean electronics and rich sound.

ket this year, offering substantially more good sound than you can get out of most analog delays and costing far less than their digital predecessors. **Analog/Digital Associates (ADA)** has two such devices: the **D1280**, which has just been reduced in price by \$100 (to \$699.95), and its kid brother, the **D640**, weighing in at \$499.95.

Both units feature remote-switch-

able Infinite Repeat, which allows sounds to be "sampled" for a specific period of time and played back continuously; phase reversal for positive and negative flanging and hollow-tube effects; 90 dB dynamic range, more than enough for almost any musical application; treble cut in the regeneration circuit to enable tailoring of echo tone for more natural sounds; a single input jack that

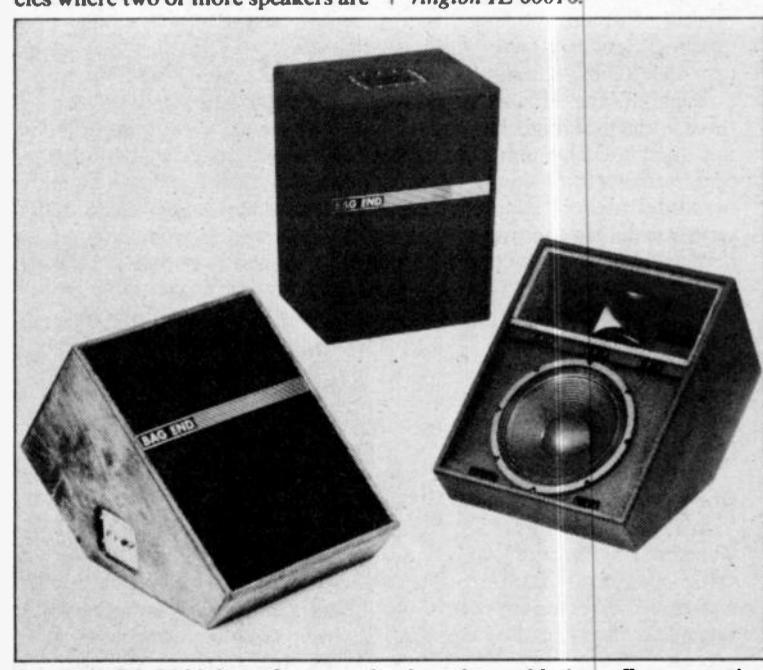
accepts either guitar- or line-level signal; and two output jacks—Direct and Effect/Dry Mix.

The D640's delay time is variable from 0.25 to 640 milliseconds (ms), and its modulation sweep ranges from 0 to 10:1—meaning that the effect can be varied from subtle to deep. The D1280's delay goes from 0.156 to 1280 ms (over 1 1/4 seconds), allowing tape-delay-like echoes and "tape loop" effects. *ADA Signal Processors, 2316 Fourth Street, Berkeley CA 94710.*

The latest frontier in speaker system design is "time alignment," also known as phase correction. Because sound dissipates at different rates depending on frequency, two- and three-way speaker systems often lose fidelity and efficiency, especially in the crossover region (frequencies where two or more speakers are

putting out energy). By precisely coordinating the action of speakers in a system, audible and electrical performance are greatly improved.

**Bag End's TA-12 Time Align®** loudspeaker is a two-way system available in floor-monitor and rectangular cabinets, using sophisticated electronic circuitry to insure that the sound from both drivers reaches the listener's ear simultaneously. The TA-12 can handle up to 300 watts continuous program; its components are a constant directivity-type horn/tweeter and a Bag End 12" speaker with an 80-ounce rare-earth magnet. The horn/tweeter is protected by a "passive limiter," which dissipates excess energy to prevent failure without having to switch the unit off. *Modular Sound Systems, Inc., P.O. Box 488, Barrington IL 60010.*



Bag End's TA-12 high-performance loudspeakers with time offset correction

## Records

# Life On A High Wire



**Hand of Kindness**  
Richard Thompson  
Hannibal

By Christopher Hill

The truth is, there never really was a Merrie England—at least, not the technicolor land of nimble, jesting outlaws and brawny, bibulous friars. One reading of *The Canterbury Tales* is enough to show that, then as now, the “merriment” of England is a spiritual muscle developed to cope with the gray, threadbare, rocky, grimy facts of life in that ancient land. Robin Goodfellow is no winged Disney sprite—he lives in the cold stones and wet, black trees; but he dances all the same. And Richard Thompson does seem to be wearing a distinctly Robin Goodfellow-ish expression on the cover of *Hand of Kindness*, his new album; the lift of the eyebrows as a wry aside to the cosmic audience to show that he’s not taking this dull drama perfectly seriously. The music and the lyrics on this album flesh out the implied message of that expression with the fullest exposition yet of Thompson’s contention that the dumb, thudding pains of life are only endured by viewing them as pieces of some Divine Slapstick Comedy.

The bleaker Thompson’s thought, the more jaunty his music and his boneyard humor become. One could never call the music light, though; rather, a song like “Tear-Stained Letter” suggests an image straight from Thompson’s beloved carnival milieu—the dancing bear. A little clumsy, a little surly, but once goaded into motion it’s a creature to stand well clear of. Thompson’s version of “rock ‘n’ roll,” as exemplified on this cut, doesn’t suggest either Britain’s rock or folk music traditions so much as it does the “skiffle” style that spawned the Beatles—a grab bag of basic American rock and country-blues conventions, some dusty folk themes, and a bit of jolly music hall business just for fun. The wonderfully mismatched duo of R&B-flavored sax and street-busker accordion race raggedly through the song, setting up a bracing contrast with the theme (a technique Thompson uses throughout the album). “It was three in the morning when she took me apart . . .” he matter-of-factly begins this tale of complete emotional destruction, adding nice observations along the way like, “my head . . . was writing checks that my body couldn’t cash.” Such painfully real detail, as well as the obsessive bleakness that blankets this album, inevitably suggest Thompson’s recent divorce from wife and musical partner Linda, though no specifics are offered here.

But bleakness is never the whole story with Richard Thompson. In “Hand of Kindness,” we’re in Thompson’s goofily picaresque Olde England. Some doomed wretch describes the sequence of disasters that has been his life—shipwrecks, hangings—while an ominously gliding two-chord figure keeps pushing the singer ever fur-



PHOTO: EBET ROBERTS

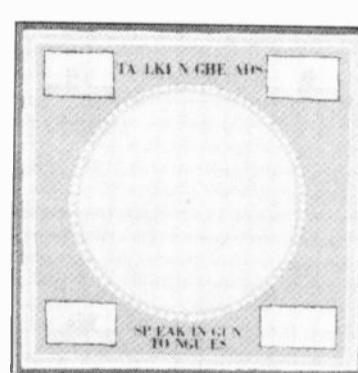
ther down the path to oblivion. And yet, the soulfully sung chorus almost rises to a suggestion of hope—“Maybe just the hand of kindness . . .”. No conclusion, no promises, just . . . maybe.

Only “Devon Side” is without humor or hope, but it’s the album’s strongest cut. Drawing upon the ancient ballads he once re-created with Fairport Convention, Thompson creates a timeless, stately mood with a tapestry of bright, quiet notes that seem to speak of a sadness beyond immediate emotionality. In a simple, folktale style, Thompson recounts the story of a frail young man’s fatal enthrallment to a not-quite-earthly lady. Midway, the somber processional pace is broken by a heartbreaking violin solo that rises out of the body of the song and lifts it to the level of an anthem.

As with all of Thompson’s work, it’s the odd little traces left by this singular personality that continue to delight on repeated listenings. To hear him hysterically protest to his lover that “you treat me like a creep” in “A Poisoned Heart and a Twisted Memory” is to understand a little better the whole clownish human predicament. When he tells us how his crewmates “called me a Jonah” in the title cut, the sound of resigned, ancient suffering is chillingly convincing. And what sounds like some wordless Celtic noises of lamentation at the end of “How I Wanted To” bespeak inconsolable heartbreak better than any finely honed imagery could.

*Hand of Kindness* is not the tour-de-force that Richard and Linda’s last record together, the enormously acclaimed *Shoot Out the Lights*, was. Linda’s absence does not make this a weaker album, but it does make it a different one. This is very much the music of a man alone—introspective, brooding, moody

(the inimitable guitar work quietly playing a supporting role, never leaping out of the song structures). Even the rambunctious numbers have the rough and tumble feeling of a night out with the boys. But because of this record’s inward gaze, the unique flavor of Thompson’s sensibility is felt as strongly as it has ever been. And experiencing Richard Thompson’s quirky but quintessential Englishness is always one of the major pleasures of contemporary rock.



**Speaking In Tongues**  
Talking Heads  
Sire

By Ken Braun

It’s been almost three years since Talking Heads released an album of new songs (1980’s *Remain In Light*), and a lot has happened with the group in the interim: it expanded from four to as many as 10 members, toured America and overseas to growing recognition as one of this era’s best pop groups, parted ways with longtime producer Brian Eno, released *The Name of this Band Is Talking Heads*, a two-record album which traces the group’s evolution with live recordings made between 1977 and 1981, and disbanded temporarily while each of the four “permanent” members—David Byrne,

Tina Weymouth, Chris Frantz, and Jerry Harrison—made albums independently of Talking Heads, prompting speculation about the future of the group.

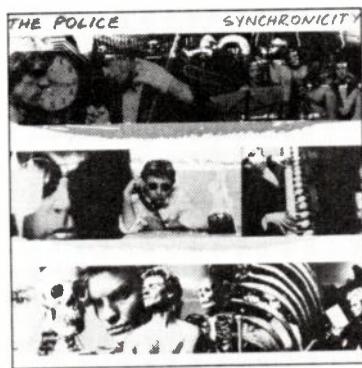
Though guest musicians play on most tracks, *Speaking In Tongues* underscores the strength of the basic quartet working together: whereas Byrne was always the songwriter, collaborating occasionally with Eno, here Byrne, Frantz, Harrison and Weymouth share all music credits equally, and Talking Heads have produced the album themselves. Instead of picking up where *Remain In Light* left off, *Speaking In Tongues* picks up where the solo and duo albums of the past three years left off, consolidating the developments those albums brought about, balancing the thick, ornamented weave of guitar and keyboard lines in Harrison’s *The Red and the Black* with the simple, unpretentious dance funk of Frantz and Weymouth’s *The Tom Tom Club*, reining in the rampant adventurism of Byrne and Eno’s *My Life In the Bush of Ghosts* with the discipline and purposefulness of Byrne’s *The Catherine Wheel*. *Speaking In Tongues* is, for the most part, better articulated than *Remain In Light* and the earlier *Fear Of Music*: the music is not so dense and cluttered; despite the problems of collaborative composing, the songs are more succinct, better crafted, and if they seem less ambitious it’s because they’re fashioned on the conclusions of previous experiments; the performances are more assured; the production is more economical. Rather than defining new stylistic parameters, the result improves on established territory. *Speaking In Tongues* boasts not a new sound, but a scintillating refinement of a signature sound.

Exotic sources continue to provide inspiration for the band: L.

Shankar’s electric violin and a synthesizer’s monkey-chant exclamations give “Making Flippy-Floppy” an Oriental sound; the interplay of drums, bass and rhythm guitar and the use of echo in “I Get Wild/Wild Gravity” show the influence of dub-wise reggae bands like Sly & Robbie’s; with its snake-oil guitar and Byrne’s growled rantings, “Swamp” sounds like a Howlin’ Wolf hoodoo blues; the exchange between Byrne and guest vocalists Nona Hendryx and Dolette McDonald in “Slippery People” recalls African call-and-response singing; the percussion break in “Pull Up the Roots” could be mixed into a salsa record without missing a beat. But none of these obscure the true roots of Talking Heads’ music—modern American melting-pot pop, from the Jackson Five and the 1910 Fruitgum Co. to the Parliafunkadelic Thang. Talking Heads have always made dance music; with *Speaking In Tongues* they have made an album that is both glorious dance music from beginning to end, and—not incidentally—their most light-hearted effort to date. Of course, bright wit and high spirits have characterized Talking Heads’ songs all along—the music as well as Byrne’s wry but incisive lyrics—even when they seemed pervaded by irony or a sense of doom; never before, however, have they been characterized by so much romance. Byrne has referred to “This Must Be the Place” as “naïve,” which may be his way of confessing that he’s written a pretty song, but there’s no mistaking it: it is an unabashed love song.

*Hi yo, I got plenty of time  
Hi yo, you got light in your eyes  
And you’re standing here beside me  
I love the passing of time.*

The mood is untroubled, blithe, charmed, and it colors the whole album. It bodes well for the future of this vital group.



**Synchronicity**  
**The Police**

A&M

By Dan Hedges

The most widely-chronicled side effect that's accompanied the rise of the Police has been Sting's reaction to the onslaught of fortune and fame. In between lunching with Saudi arms dealers and punching out paparazzi, he's been blowing hot and cold over the band's future for quite awhile now, pledging undying allegiance one minute, then doing a total spinaround the next, resolving to kiss this kiddie entertainment racket goodbye and turn to more respectable pursuits while he's ahead. That's why *Ghost in the Machine* came as such a remarkable surprise. With Sting pondering the exit sign

over the studio door, the trio still succeeded in marshalling their energies into one enormous, united push of power and focus. The purists bitched that the new music was too cluttered, lamenting that the band's effective (but by then overworked) white reggae schtick had been all but turned out to pasture after *Zenyatta Mondatta*, but the fourth album was a picture of the Police at their most omnipotent peak. On *Ghost in the Machine*, with few exceptions, every little thing they did was magic.

*Synchronicity* isn't going to be serving hard time in the cut-out bins for quite awhile either. On the contrary, it could turn out to be their biggest seller to date, partially due to the momentum reached via the previous four. Mostly because, at first glance anyway, it's the most sophisticated project of their career.

But while the expected move would have been to expand on the dense-pack sonic approach of *Ghost*, they've done just the opposite here, paring things back down to the bone—albeit not in the stark, echoing minimalism of their earlier days. This time, the Police have gone primitive, even exotic, cloaked in an air of mystery formerly reserved for *National Geographic* specials and color spreads in *Italian Vogue*.

Does it work? To a point. A

hushed, talking drum effect lends a steamy, primeval atmosphere to "Walking In Your Footsteps," as Sting sings words of love to the late, great dinosaurs. For "Tea in the Sahara," the band wax mystical in a dreamlike desert fable that has all the shifting impermanence of a North African mirage, while "Wrapped Around Your Finger" (a tale based, perhaps, on Sting's recent hobnobbing with Adnan Kassoggi?) is set to a languid, cosmopolitan dance tempo. The bleak, cloudy "King of Pain"—a darker companion piece to "Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic"—arguably weighs in as the album's most carefully crafted track, showcasing some of Sting's best word imagery to date ("There's a black hat caught in a high tree top/That's my soul up there").

On the other hand, the summer-y "Every Breath You Take" isn't the Police at all. It's Fleetwood Mac at their dreamiest—right down to the ethereal background voices and Lindsey Buckingham-esque, tribute-to-the-fifties guitar—except that the underlying message here is psychotically sinister: his gal's left him, he's sad and he's mad, but he'll always be watching. Probably from a car parked directly across the street.

While Stewart Copeland's "Miss

Gradenko" is merely snappy filler, Andy Summers' "Mother" breaks up the album's solemn mood with a frazzled burst of comic relief ('...every girl that I go out with becomes my mother in the end...'): i.e. Norman "Psycho" Bates meets Wild Man Fischer, set against a dizzy Moroccan street bazaar arrangement that careens wildly out of control. Both tracks illustrate just how distant and low-key most of Sting's own tunes really are. While he shakes his fist at the heavens in the R&B-flavored "O My God," it's only on the twin title tracks that things really bust loose. "Synchronicity I," a paean to the "connecting principle" that binds all, sees the debut of the most recklessly tribal Police yet, with driving bass, drums and pyramidal vocals slapped over a percussive, trance-like Steve Reichian/gamelan wall of sound. To balance things out, the darker side of the same coin holds sway in the rocketing, if not-so-Pleasant Valley Monday of its companion piece, "Synchronicity II," an exercise in desperation, with its harried suburban daddy inching toward the end of his rope.

The problem is, it sounds like the Police are finally reaching the end of theirs, too. Something's missing here. A spark. A feel of cohesiveness. A driving, unified passion, if

you will. There's the sense that if these songs had been recorded several years back, they would have turned out better. At this stage in the band's history, however, nobody's *really* going out on a musical limb anymore. Andy Summers claims that although he has no connection with Sting on a personal level these days, their musical rapport remains intact. Somehow, that sounds overly kind. For all its potential, *Synchronicity* is the Police keeping each other at arm's length, going through the motions and doing it well, but coming up with something that's disappointingly empty and lifeless at its core. At times, you can almost hear them pause to check their watches, and though they'll probably turn around now and record a half dozen more albums just to prove the vultures and ambulance chasers wrong, there's the sneaking suspicion that Sting's ego-tinged predictions are finally coming true; that this really is the last time around.

Quitting while you're ahead is a concept that few rock artists seem to be able to grasp. But if the Police, with *Synchronicity*, are teetering on the brink of overstaying their welcome, at least they're doing it with style, even if that style has lost much of its sparkle. *Synchronicity* might not be the Police album to top them all, but there are still few bands around who could even come close to doing better. If this album proves to only be a brief lull, a break in the action, then so much the better. If it's the end of the line, then so be it.



**State of Confusion**  
**The Kinks**

Arista

By Stuart Cohn

Perhaps it's just the sentimentalist in me who cares, but this is the first Kinks album in about ten years that you can really call a Kinks album. I mean in the old sense, like *Something Else* (1967) or *Arthur* (1969) or *Muswell Hillbillies* (1971). That is, the songs are filled with details about people you think you are or people you think you know and they are sung by someone with intelligence and a heart to boot.

As a card-carrying Kinks cultist from the old days, the past few years have been enough to make me think that Ray Davies would never have anything interesting to say again. Few groups have worn their big arena success so shabbily. Since moving to Arista, Davies has been writing cliched vamps and shallow sing-alongs, rock 'n' roll riffs almost as tired as the inevitable chants of "Day-O" and "L-O-L-A" that have made recent Kinks concerts such a bore.

It's too bad the Kinks don't include more than four songs from *State of Confusion* in their current set because they're the most compassionate and vivid Davies has written in a long time. At last turning his attention away from his own self-pitying obsessions, Ray is writing and singing about the eccentricities and outcasts who've peopled his best songs.

The singer in "Property" is a divorced man splitting up the household possessions with his ex-wife: "The little gifts we thought we'd throw away/The useless souvenirs bought on our holiday/We put them on the shelf/Now they're collecting dust/We never needed them/Now they've outlasted us." The little details expressed in plain language are what make Davies such a great songwriter. In recent years, he's been leaving these vignettes to writers like Elvis Costello or Difford and

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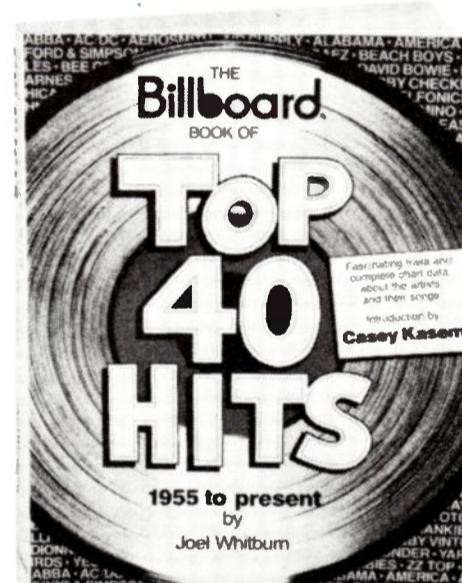
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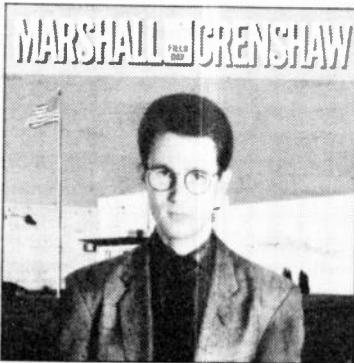
Tilbrook of Squeeze.

The nostalgic "Come Dancing" is filled with genuine sweetness, humor and familial love as the singer insists that his grown-up sister will have a lot more fun if she now and then goes out and does what she used to do when she was a girl: "Come dancing/Just like the Palais on a Saturday."

These two songs share a musical subtlety and freshness because of the care in the arrangements, from the lush, vocodered backup voice in "Property" to "Come Dancing's" broad, vaudevillian horn section. Davies needs this gentle, intimate setting to convey the often contradictory and ambiguous emotions of his songs.

But even the heavy rockers on *State of Confusion* are performed with the lithe drive of a newly-awakened band. The songs are filled with people falling apart and coming together again, the optimism perhaps deriving from Davies' recent marriage to Chrissie Hynde.

Whether *State of Confusion* heralds some sort of artistic rebirth or is simply a one-shot reprise of the good old days doesn't really matter. It's here and it's good. For now, at least, Ray Davies is back. It's about time.



**Field Day**  
**Marshall Crenshaw**  
Warner Brothers

By J.D. Considine

Marshall Crenshaw is a rock and roll conservative. That's not a political statement—I don't know what Crenshaw's politics are, and frankly, don't care—but a musical one, and an important distinction to make. For unlike traditionalists, who wed their aesthetic to a specific genre and period in pop culture, conservatives are more interested in maintaining standards of craft and integrity. An easy way to understand the difference would be to compare Robert Gordon's version of "Fire" with that of its author, Bruce Springsteen; in Springsteen's hands, the song retains its sense of roots without seeming dated by them. In much the same way, Marshall Crenshaw draws upon premises of classic '60s rock without ending up locked into their conclusions, and so manages to remain a contemporary artist.

There are many different kinds of contemporaneity, however, and one of the more unfortunate lessons of *Field Day* lies in just how much the sound of a record influences our reaction to it. The songs on the album are quite good; Crenshaw's sense of melody is as sharp as on his debut, while his talents for structuring a song and elaborating on harmonic ideas have matured impressively. Yet as represented by producer Steve Lillywhite's mix, these songs have a disastrous tendency to sound brittle and calculating.

As structured by Lillywhite, the two axes on which these songs turn are Marshall Crenshaw's lead vocals, and brother Robert's drums. All else is supporting architecture—the background vocals, which cushion or support the lead; Chris Donato's bass, which often as not is treated as a mere adjunct to Robert Crenshaw's bass drum; even the guitar tracks, whose ringing hooks are frequently given a secondary treatment on par with the cymbals in the mix. On a more obviously new wave album, this sort of reductionism would make sense, because it would emphasize the simplicity essential to that music. But Marshall Crenshaw's music isn't particularly simple; the operative word in his

aesthetic is *direct*, and that's where Lillywhite's production is most crippling, because for all its precision it has the net effect of blunting these songs.

Examples? Listen to "For One Day With You," and observe how quickly the opening rave-up sputters when the band hits the verse. It's particularly disappointing when compared to a similar start in *Marshall Crenshaw's* "She Can't Dance," and the reason the bottom drops out of "For One Day" becomes obvious after comparison. Both songs are propelled by a loping shuffle beat, but Steve Lillywhite's mix treats the drums as if Robert Crenshaw were playing disco. It's all snare and bass drum, with the hi-hat and tambourine—the syncopated eighth-note patterns that connect the percussion to the bass line—buried deep underneath the guitar. Without that essential rhythmic glue, the guitar lines behind the vocals seem like padding, when in fact they should (and, under better circumstances, would) modulate the song's energies. Consequently, a potentially sparkling tune goes flat fast.

It's the same story throughout. The tension in "For Her Love," set up by an imaginative use of shifting harmonies over a pedal-point bass line, is undercut by the obtrusive drum mix; the momentum of "Our

Town" is stunted because the balance favors the monolithic drumming instead of emphasizing the acceleration implicit in the shifting guitar and harmony vocal parts in the chorus; and on "Monday Morning Rock," Lillywhite's insistence on containing each instrument through heavy use of compression leaves gaping holes in the rhythm bed, giving the cut an embarrassing stop-start feel. At times, Crenshaw prevails in spite of it all—the classic melodicism and intuitive dynamics of "Whenever You're On My Mind" make it through the mix unsullied, the remake of the Jive Five's "What Time Is It?" proves too well suited to the band for anything to destroy, and the mournful undertone of "Try" is actually abetted by the production. But far too much of the album is likely to leave the listener mourning what might have been for these few gems to compensate.

Which points up how easily rock's essential verities—melodic integrity, structural ingenuity, passionate performance and rhythmic durability—can be eroded by such seeming trifles as a fashionable mix (and, conversely, how much "contemporary" music depends on technology over musical inspiration). It's not that this isn't a good time for rock and roll conservatives, as the ongoing success of Bruce Spring-

steen, Bob Seger and others obviously proves. It's simply a time when conservatives ought to be careful how they progress.



**The Belle Stars**  
**The Belle Stars**

Stiff/WB

By Derk Richardson

Take one part ska revival, add one part girl group revival and throw in a handful of corny cover versions and you have pop music that begs "Dismiss me, please!" Well, it's not quite that easy. The Belle Stars, Britain's Two-Tone answer to the Go-Go's, make retrograde rock, to be sure—puffed up like cotton candy but inflated with enough bounce to warrant another

go-round or two.

These seven young women, all but two musical novices, seem determined to press pop's silly quotient to the limit. Their fashion-plate garb falls cutely into the new wave bimbo syndrome, tempting hungry-like-the-wolf teens to howl bow-wow-wow. Add half a dozen feathery remakes of '60s R&B hits such as "Iko Iko," "Mockingbird" and "The Snake," and you're heading for a debut album of throwaways.

What isn't intrinsically lightweight to begin with—and most of the original tunes are—the Belle Stars put on a starvation diet with spare rhythm tracks and undistinctive vocals. The Belle Stars turn out to have less in common with the Beatles or the Ronettes than with the Fabians and Frankie Avalons who followed Elvis.

But fed enough catchy rhythms and infectious melodies even the most jaded pop ears have a high tolerance for silly derivatives. As the Belles sing on their one genuine and deserving hit, "Sign of the Times," "As I lie in my bed, thinking of you, I realize nothing is new." And if that admits a lack of originality, it also carries a certain fresh and unassuming allure. If you don't try to crack the surface, the Belle Stars might charm you until the next frivolous skirt swishes around the corner.



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**Whammy!**  
The B-52's  
Warner Bros.

**Chomp**  
Pylon  
DB Recs

**Middle of the Night**  
Bruce Baxter  
Cheap Producer Records

By Anthony DeCurtis

Perhaps the most interesting offshoot of the glitz and lifestyle flash of Atlanta's sunbelt boom is the boho ghetto it created in nearby Athens. Fleeing the homogeneity and suburbia *über alles* of white Atlanta's affluent sprawl, a subculture of genial sensitivists settled in Athens to shape an aesthetic of fun-as-art. Beginning with the B-52's and shaking through to R.E.M., these bands made a mark forging dance music for the mind and body.

Like most categories, "Athens" as a point of reference distorts and limits nearly as much as it reveals, and Athens bands have groused in print about stereotyping. But geography does provide a useful critical frame in which to consider these new records by the B-52's, Pylon and producer Bruce Baxter, who studio-crafted the indie releases that got these two and other hot Georgia combos rolling.

Like most things in the '80s, the key to enjoying the latter-day B-52's is revised (downward) expectations. If after nearly three years of so-so product you're still hoping for a reprise of the dance-brains and thriftshop revelation of *The B-52's, Whammy!* will wham those hopes senseless. But if weirdness, wigs, danceable tunes and good production values are enough for you, burn the lyric sheet, jack up the volume and bop this mess around. *Whammy!* will do you just fine.

The B's sound confident and up on this disc, particularly in contrast to their rather halting performance on last year's David Byrne-led sorry safari, *Mesopotamia*. For one thing, their new producer, Tom Tom Clubber Steven Stanley, has wisely given up the funk, concentrating instead on keeping the beat rocking and the tempos quick, toughening up Ricky Wilson's guitar rhythms, and sprinkling tasteful percussion and keyboard fills throughout for variety and aural spice.

Stanley's production is so persuasive and the band is so likable and energetic that stronger material would have made this record great. Instead, among nine cuts we have one throwaway instrumental ("Work That Skirt"); one Yoko Ono-penned pop psych mantra ("Don't Worry," the complete lyrics of which you've just read); and such frat party out-of-bounds faves as "Whammy Kiss," "Big Bird" and "Butterbean." If the occasional idea adds an edge to your fun, *Whammy!* will not be glued to your turntable.

Pylon succeeded the B-52's as art-band of choice on the mentalist sock hop circuit in Athens, and earned a national rep with the 1980 independent release of their remarkable debut LP, *Gyrate*. After nearly three years the band has finally followed up with a second album, *Chomp*. It was well worth the wait.

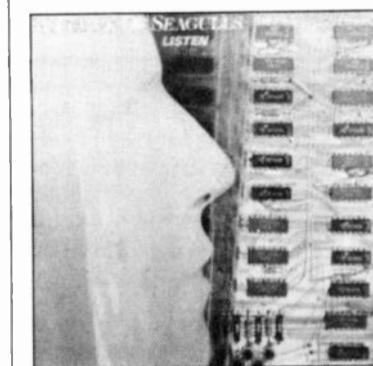
Like their buddies R.E.M. and other progressive bands with southeastern roots, Pylon pilgrimaged to Winston-Salem, North Carolina to record at Mitch Easter's Drive-In Studio. Chris Stamey and Gene Holder of the dB's handled production on *Chomp*, with the exception of one track, the Bruce Baxter-produced dance riot, "M-Train."

Stamey, Holder and Easter restructured Pylon's sound, maintain-

ing the supple and textured bottom of bassist Michael Lachowski and drummer Curtis Crowe, but lending new emphasis to the drone and sinuous leads of guitarist Randy Bewley, extending the range and subtlety of Vanessa Briscoe's vocals, and intelligently experimenting with a variety of instrumental effects. "K," "Yo-Yo," "Buzz" and "Gyrate" particularly reflect this airier, more evocative democracy of sounds, and provide the best testimony on *Chomp* of Pylon's impressive growth and development.

Anyone familiar with Bruce Baxter's work on records by the B-52's, Pylon, the Brains, Love Tractor and the Swimming Pool Q's will flip on first hearing his debut solo LP, *Middle Of The Night* (Cheap Producer Records, 475 Hardendorf, Atlanta, GA 30307). Freed from production chores for the weird, Baxter avoids the edginess of all these bands and hauls ass for the mainstream, fashioning a sound that recalls the Cars, Foreigner, the Police and a host of other arena-rock chart toppers.

What lends this record distinction and charm is Baxter's technical skill (apart from a couple of guest spots, he plays and sings everything except drums) and his startling ability to triumph over cliché through craft, conviction and enthusiasm. The most extreme instance of this occurs in "Wrong Is Right." By any objective measure, the song is a hopelessly hackneyed and naive anti-war "protest." Yet by the song's end, as Baxter chants "War is wrong" (I kid you not) over mournful keyboards and guitar, he somehow manages to make this observation seem, if not exactly penetrating, well, at least moving. Working against much less imposing odds on the rest of the record, Baxter puts across his middle-of-the-high-road rock with consistent vitality and unpretentiousness.



**Listen**  
A Flock of Seagulls  
Jive/Arista

By Dan Hedges

The two burning questions plaguing all this computerized techno-zombie stuff that's been clogging MTV to such a degree are simple ones: i.e., is any of this *really* necessary? And if so, where can we buy those clothes? After all, given a good producer and a few hundred grand's worth of preprogrammable synthesizers and drum machines, even the most minimally gifted musical cretin can capture that '80's silicon chip sound for himself—leaving plenty of time for more important things like practicing pose #237 and perfecting that fey, hairdresser's ambience that, for reasons unknown, seems to be the Height of Male Fashion these days.

Mike Score's silly, flight deck hair-do aside, *A Flock of Seagulls* showed more promise than most at their first time up at bat, if only due to the transcendent excellence of "A Space Age Love Song." It soared. It moved. It sported one of the niftiest three-tone guitar riffs (played on a *real* electric guitar!) to come down the pike in ages. While most of the tunes it appeared with on *A Flock of Seagulls* were marooned in the same hi-tech android wasteland as every other entrant in the Euro-rock sweepstakes, "... Love Song" hinted, under a cloak of danceability, that modernity and calculated boredom need not go hand-in-hand.

Unfortunately, the boys haven't taken this to heart with *Listen*. While the geometric, quasi-oriental flavor of "Wishing (If I Had a Photograph of You)" comes within shouting dis-

tance, potentially strong, melodic tracks like "Nightmares" and "Over the Border" suffer at the hands of the band's obsession with shoe-horning everything into the same old robotic, freeze-dried dance beat—one that merely paints them further into a machine and technology-cluttered corner. True, Paul Reynolds gets credited for guitar, Frank Maudsley for bass guitar, and Ali Score for drums. But all are put through such a merciless techno-wringer in the studio trickery department that, with few exceptions (such as the Chris Squire-like bass work on "What Am I Supposed to Do"), each part could have easily been played on Mike Score's keyboards—and often sound as if they probably were.

This can't be what Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds had in mind when they bought that noisy guitar for their Paul on his birthday. While the Seagulls' producer, Mike Howlett, is a funny guy who used to play bass with the semi-mythical Anglo-French psychedelic jazz-rock ensemble, Gong, he's brought none of that band's organic warmth and humor with him. The music here is cold. It's bland. Like so much of the stuff generated by today's nouveau wave, *A Flock of Seagulls*'s approach is, generally speaking, about as invigorating as a tour of a Chrysler assembly plant—though in their case, it could be that only the technology is getting in the way of something potentially more interesting. Fashion is fun. But all the clothes, vapid posing and crazy haircuts in the world won't change the unalterable fact that machines get kind of boring to listen to once the dancing stops. And the dancing always does.



**Greatest Hits**  
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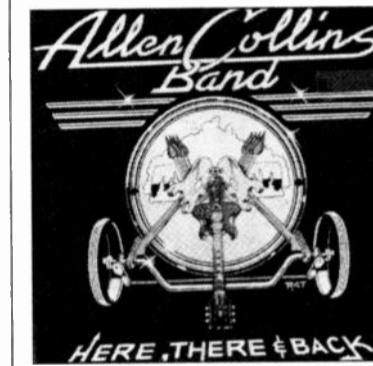
**Greatest Hits**  
Tyrone Davis  
Epic

By Greg Tate

One sure sign that you're ready to be carted off to the geriatric ward is when the music of your past begins to sound more meaningful than the music of your present. Nevertheless, I'll own up to fogeydom at 25 by saying that, without question, the soul music of my junior high days was more soulful than anything I'm hearing these days. And nothing convinces me of this more than the Tyrone Davis and Chi-Lites compilations Joe McEwen and Gregg Geller have produced for release on Epic. Because in my day, kiddies, when lachrymose bloods such as Eugene Record and his Chi-Lites invoked a line like "Oh, girl/pain will double if you leave me now/because I don't know where to look for love/I don't know," you not only felt for that sucker's aching heart, you got to imagining what your own pain would be like if your gal left you. All of which either says something about the soon-to-be-lost art of putting a ballad over or about the death of True Romance in our times. And while we're reading real love its last rites, I'll also add that, Marvin Gaye aside, there's damn near no modern counterparts to the way blues shouter and soul crooner Tyrone Davis shows how a woman can bring a strong man to his knees on songs like "Can I Change My Mind," "Turn Back The Hands of Time" and "Let Me Back In" (the latter of whose classic changes are very suggestive of "Sexual Healing," not surprising considering that if Marvin proved anything on the Motown TV special it's that he knows his roots).

Unfortunately, the boys haven't taken this to heart with *Listen*. While the geometric, quasi-oriental flavor of "Wishing (If I Had a Photograph of You)" comes within shouting dis-

Both the Chi-Lites and Davis emerged from the Chicago scene in the '60s; the latter earmarked by his Bobby "Blue" Bland influence, the former by their debt to the Temptations. In their early '70s stint as hitmakers, the Chi-Lites proved themselves masters of two kinds of tunes: crybaby ballads on the order of "Oh Girl" and "The Coldest Days Of My Life," and socially-relevant power-soul numbers exemplified by "For God's Sake (Give More Power To The People)," which gave Norman Whitfield and the Temptations a run for their money in the post-Sly black psychedelia sweepstakes. Oddly enough, though, one of the group's most affecting political songs, "I'm Ready If I Don't Get To Go," is a forceful commentary on busing that's every bit as emotionally wrenching as one of their handkerchief romances. As McEwen points out in his thoughtful liner notes for their compilation, the Chi-Lites' lead singer and principal songwriter, Eugene Record, was also an adept producer who knew how to effectively gimmick a record to milk you for every ounce of empathy—the stormy ambience and strings in "The Coldest Days Of My Life" still get to me, here in the cynical '80s, like nothing except the scene in *The Bride of Frankenstein* when the old man plays the violin for the monster. Am I kidding? No! These corny songs mean a lot to the kid, y'know? When Tyrone Davis sang "A Woman Needs To Be Loved" back in 1968, I had no way of knowing he was saying there's more to making love than being macho (if not too young to know much about making love, macho or otherwise), but you can bet that those lessons come in handy these days when you best be a sensitive but hardcore bluesman if you want to keep some loving around your house, you dig? And in the final analysis, if you want to know what soul is, it's on these two records, coming through loud and clear; and when you get down to it, soul ain't about nothing but having some heart, courage and vulnerability to express honest affection, pain and, dare I say it, love for another. These same old songs, they do bring back memories of days gone by.



**Greatest Hits**  
Tyrone Davis  
Epic

By Lee Ballinger

Ever since they covered "Free Bird" on their 1979 album, *Strikes*, Blackfoot has slowly but surely moved out from under the musical shadow cast over their native Jacksonville by Lynyrd Skynyrd. *Siogo* represents another small step away as new member Ken Hensley, formerly with Uriah Heep, adds fills and coloration on keyboards and the guitar sound is more refined and compressed than on previous outings.

This album presents ten flat-out rockers which are all fairly similar. Dense power chording gets each song moving and leader Rick Medlocke's voice, one of the strongest and most expressive in rock, takes it through to a logical conclusion. *Siogo* is like a fast train at full throttle and if you're inclined to stand on the station platform and discuss the intricacies of the diesel engine, it will leave you cold. But if you are willing to give yourself up and jump on board with no questions asked, it's a worthwhile trip.

Side one works from start to fin-

ish, culminating in the album's best track, "Teenage Idol." Based around one of the few real hooks on the record, the song tells a sappy story about a young kid saying goodbye to his family as he leaves to seek fame and fortune. Rick Medlocke makes it not only believable but exciting. With the exception of the semi-protest song, "White Man's Land," the ideas run a little thin on side two but momentum carries the day. It will carry you, too, if you let it.

On the other hand, *Here, There and Back* by the Allen Collins Band continues the saga of a group of Southern musicians who have never made any attempt to move away from their roots. ACB is in essence the Rossington-Collins Band with Randall Hall replacing Gary Rossington on guitar and Jimmy Dougherty replacing Dale Krantz as lead singer. All the familiar elements are still present: sinuous guitar lines, Billy Powell's wonderful piano comping, and the rolling, punchy drumming of Derek Hess. But no one steps forward to tie all these threads together as Dale Krantz did with her Joplin-esque vocals. Jimmy Dougherty has an adequate but expressionless voice. It doesn't hurt the good songs like "Just Trouble" or "One Known Soldier" too much but on weaker material he sounds positively wooden.

These musicians have never depended on instrumental flash but on good songwriting and well-executed ideas. There aren't many here. Dougherty's songwriting is even more insipid than his singing, and even guitarist Allen Collins, who helped write many Lynyrd Skynyrd classics, comes up empty. The bright spot is guitarist Barry Lee Harwood. He wrote or co-wrote the three best songs on the album and does a fine job of singing his own "This Ride's On Me." *Here, There and Back* is listenable, but these descendants of "Free Bird" are, for now, flying on holding pattern.



**The Jackie Wilson Story**  
Jackie Wilson  
Epic

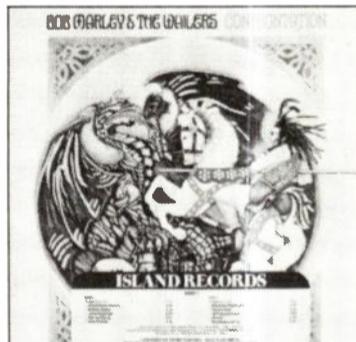
By Vince Aletti

On the evidence of the 24 songs collected here, Jackie Wilson had one of the richest voices in American pop music and one of the most misused. On cut after cut, Wilson's dark, creamy voice and muscular, vivacious delivery are set against backdrops of such stunning banality it's hard to believe they were recorded at the same time and place. Wilson leans into the material with warmth and rough grace—you can almost feel his body working behind his voice: the best songs sweat and strut with him—while a Perry Como track unreels in the background and a colorless chorus sings ooo-wee ooo-wee ooo-wee with zombie abandon. The result is as jarringly artificial as an action movie shot with painted scenery; Wilson is heroic, magnificent at times, but he's working in a stylistic vacuum. Of course much of the distance between singer and production here is a function of the period Wilson recorded in. The bulk of the material in *The Jackie Wilson Story* was produced between 1958 and 1962 when pop taste was making the transition from Connie Francis to Little Eva and even Elvis Presley was up to his curled lip in schmaltzy arrangements. Wilson's tracks weren't so laughably lame at the time, they were merely conventional and safe (and, because they were designed for pop audiences, determinedly raceless); they were the medium but Jackie was the message. It's not that

the singer always romps all over the song—mostly he submits to it, keeps his place, even sounds whipped here and there—but he's clearly so much bigger than his material that you wonder how such a fragile structure can hold him, and sensing Wilson's power in such delicate check is thrilling in itself. If Jackie had more than his share of Presley-style kitsch, like Elvis he prevailed through sheer force of personality, sweeping you along with the schmaltz ("Night," "To Be Loved," his absurdly overblown version of "Danny Boy") and the soul ("Baby Workout," "Lonely Teardrops," and "Am I the Man" sound best here).

Still, Wilson never quite caught up with the changing sound of his own time and during the '60s he quickly passed from the mainstream to the middle-of-the-road and right off the charts. One can only wonder what would have happened had he stuck with Berry Gordy Jr., who wrote most of Jackie's early hits before forming Motown; can you hear him singing duets with Tammi Terrell? Instead, Wilson sank into oldies limbo, emerging only long enough to hit big with "Your Love Keeps Lifting Me (Higher and Higher)," which sounds tamer today than it did first time around, and to make two minor gems, "Whispers (Gettin' Louder)" and "You Got Me Walking." He was still on the oldies circuit in 1975 when he collapsed on stage from a heart attack and lapsed into a coma from which he's never recovered.

*The Jackie Wilson Story*, prepared and carefully annotated by Gregg Geller and Joe McEwen, is wise and witty enough to embrace the singer at his purest and his most excessive, including lesser known album tracks and rarely heard delights (like the gospel-tinged "I Just Can't Help It") to round out the picture. Though this is an important and welcome set, it's hard not to be a little saddened by it. It's like hearing Aretha Franklin's recordings before she teamed up with Jerry Wexler: all that wonderful talent waiting to be channeled, fulfilled, ready to explode. Jackie Wilson gave us some fine fireworks but we missed the heavy explosives that might have been.



**Confrontation**  
Bob Marley & the Wailers  
Island

By Ken Braun

Were Bob Marley still alive, *Confrontation* would never have been released. Of the 10 tracks here, all recorded between 1978 and 1980, four have been issued previously as singles on Marley's own Jamaican label, Tuff Gong, and the others are outtakes from the 1980 *Uprising* sessions. While a few of them would have sounded good on *Uprising* or 1979's excellent *Survival*, most of the "new" tracks should have remained in the can.

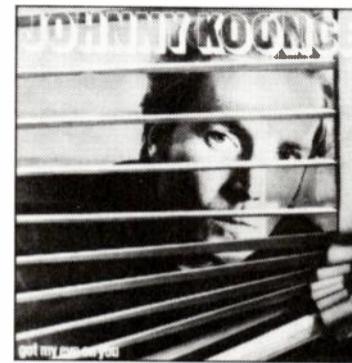
*Confrontation* begins with "Chant Down Babylon," a rousing call-to-arms in which Marley rallies his veteran band, the Wailers, and his vocal trio, the I-Threes, like Joshua before the walls of Jericho—"Come we go chant down Babylon one more time"—his voice sounding aged but strong with conviction. His faith in the power of music to resist the corruption of society is key to a major part of Marley's work, and while "Chant Down Babylon" expresses this sentiment neither as jubilantly as his old "Trenchtown Rock" nor as defiantly as "Rebel Music (Three O'Clock Roadblock)," it will stir the hearts of any Marley partisans, even those who find the sentiment naive.

But the excitement doesn't last. Regardless of the radio and disco play "Buffalo Soldiers" is getting, it is an unexceptional song with a plodding rhythm, a merely serviceable horn chart, and a "woe yoe yoe" refrain that Marley had already used too often when he wrote this one. "Jump Nyabinghi," far from being based on Nyabinghi ceremonial drumming (as "Rastaman Chant," "Time Will Tell," and others of Marley's "roots" songs were), is the sort of reggaified pop tune that Marley could toss off too easily in his late years. So is "Mix Up, Mix Up," a ping-pong ball of a song buffeted by Tyrone Downie's twittering synthesizer and the I-Threes' lush harmonies. The more accoutrements of American pop that Marley acquired in hopes of improving his accessibility to American audiences—flashy guitar solos, banks of backing vocals, synthesizer programs, sweetened mixes and glossy productions—the more he devitalized his work, for reggae, like rock 'n' roll, is essentially "roots" music. Even an inspired song such as "Give Thanks and Praises," whose psalm-like text Marley sings with humble emotion, is marred by a lavish arrangement that makes a spectacle of a moment that should have been intimate.

Side two is no more encouraging

than side one. "Blackman Redemption" was a fine Tuff Gong single in 1978, but its presence on this album is diminished somewhat by its similarity—"woe yoe yoe" refrain and all—to the lesser "Buffalo Soldier." "Trench Town" and "Stiff Necked Fools" would have served modestly well as minor tracks on major albums—they are fair songs—but they seem weighed down by the other selections here; they haven't enough pluck to redeem themselves. In no context, however, could there be redemption for "I Know." It may be the weakest song Marley ever wrote, its melody forced, its arrangement muddled, its lyrics a patchwork of clichés; not even the Wailers' vaunted rhythm section comes through—bassist Aston Barrett and drummer Carlton Barrett (who are great elsewhere on the album) sound distressingly automatic. Thank Jah, then, for "Rastaman Live Up!," which ends the album with a bang (oddly enough). A simple but dignified and heroic song of courage in the face of adversity, it summons the true powers of Bob Marley & the Wailers: Marley's riveting voice, his eloquence and his visionary faith, the band's deft craftsmanship and its own sort of eloquence, the I-Threes' unobtrusive support. However, this track and "Chant Down Babylon" point up an

inescapable fact: Bob Marley did make two or three second-rate albums in his lifetime, but never one on which the weak numbers dominated the strong ones. In the final assessment, *Confrontation* does a great artist an extreme disservice.



**Got My Eye On You**  
Johnny Koonce  
A&M

By Nick Burton

Johnny Koonce, an Oregon-based singer-songwriter who formerly fronted an interesting band known as Johnny and the Distractions, is a sort of hard-rock version of Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers. For his solo debut (J & the D released

one album, *Let It Rock*, on A&M early in '82), Koonce has toned down his harder rock side and gone soul/pop on us. It's bad news. The songs, arrangements and production (by Al Kooper) are lively and punchy in the right places, but Koonce's singing, so clear and expressive with the Distractions, has devolved into a throaty shout that sounds horribly out of place in these environs.

While Koonce can pull off pop-oriented material such as "Fear Is Gone" and "I'll Take You Home," his attempts at more soulful material—i.e., Van Morrison's heretofore unrecorded "I'm Not Working For You," the title track (penned by Dire Straits' Hal Lindes) and "Media Sensation" hardly do justice to the nature of the songs—his approach suggests he'd be more comfortable singing for a heavy metal band.

A top-flight lineup of musicians (including the Distractions' guitarist, Mark Spangler; ex-Zappa drummer Vinnie Colaiuta; the Tubes' Prairie Prince; guitarists Buzzy Feiten and Fred Tackett; session bassist Neil Stubenhaus, and keyboardist Peter Davis) has its moments, but Koonce himself simply lacks a strong enough presence to make *Got My Eye On You* worthwhile.

# MICHELOB

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**Blues 'n' Jazz**  
B.B. King  
MCA

**Age Ain't Nothin'  
But A Number**  
Little Milton  
MCA

**Don't Lose Your Cool**  
Albert Collins  
Alligator

By Derk Richardson

Few types of music are so deep in tradition and so apparently limited in form as the blues. And when something new comes along, its appeal inevitably lies less in some producer's idea of "contemporary blues" than in the grain of a singer's voice, the sting of a guitar lick and the bite and punch of rhythm and horn sections.

Ask B.B. King about the double bind of the purists' demand for authenticity and the pop audiences' taste for a slick "modern" sound. During the 1970s he recorded over a dozen albums, many leaning towards pap and away from grits, which earned him status as an icon in black pop music and a home in Las Vegas but which raised more than a few critical questions about blues and roots.

With *Blues 'n' Jazz*, however, King continues his reconciliation with his pre-'70s past which he began two years ago with his Grammy-winning LP, *There Must Be A Better World Somewhere*. Whereas last year's *Love Me Tender* was a direct and mostly successful attempt to fuse B.B.'s blues with country, America's current middle-aged, middle-of-the-road pop, *Blues 'n' Jazz* casts King in the context of the jump blues of the late 1940s and early 1950s. And despite the title, this is not a fusion album but a robust and swinging blues record on which King's inimitable guitar and gospeltinged voice are pushed upward by big, surging horn charts.

Tearing into his solos and chomping into lyrics, King sounds as if he's truly enjoying himself, a pleasure he's earned after 35 years and 41 albums. Given the expensive suits and the diamond rings, the credibility of B.B. singing Louis Jordan's 1947 "Inflation Blues" is a bit strained as is his voice when he oversings it to open the album. But the arrangement drives the song home. Throughout the rest of the record, everything falls into place—B.B. varies his vocals to fit the mood of each song, shares solo space with a crack band of jazz players (including tenor saxophonist Arnett Cobb and trumpeter Woody Shaw) and moves easily from the humor of "Sell My Monkey" through the bitter wail of "Heed My Warning" to the nonchalant lament of "Teardrops From My Eyes." That he can still make such a straightforward, good-time record shows that B.B. can still feel his roots, mess around a little and not take himself too seriously.

Little Milton Campbell never achieved the crossover to white audiences which contributed to B.B. King's fame and success. Nine years King's junior and, like King, born in Mississippi, Little Milton could reproduce King's style but not his broad appeal. His career was built instead upon a synthesis of soul and blues which in the late '60s produced the hits "Feel So Bad" and "Grits Ain't Groceries." His debut album for MCA, *Age Ain't Nothin' But A Number*, pushes his soul-blues ever further from the delta and a lot closer to Motown.

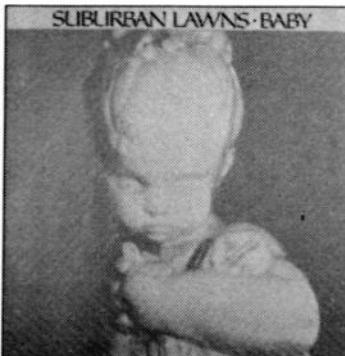
Only on the original "Why Are You So Hard To Please" does Milton let his terse lead guitar break

away from the lush horn, string and vocal arrangements framing his vocals. It's not that he can't wield his axe but this record was produced to showcase the large, soulful voice that's reminiscent of both Albert King and Levi Stubbs of the Four Tops. It was a wise decision: Milton possesses a genuinely gripping vocal style and his alternately smooth and gruff baritone is able to transcend the unremarkable arrangements. Indeed, it soars above the quality of the material as a whole, pulling a set of ordinary '60s-derived soul tunes up into the realm of stylish personal interpretation. This LP won't win Little Milton any new blues fans (his pared-down live show can do that), and it breaks no new ground in soul, but succeeds in what Little Milton has been after for years—establishing a unique and powerful voice.

The most potent sound in blues today is the guitar of Albert Collins. It's gleaming ice-pick thrust pierces shuffles, boogies and slow blues with equal vehemence. And *Don't Lose Your Cool*, his fourth LP in five years for Chicago's Alligator Records, confirms Collins as the reigning giant of post-King (Albert, B.B.) blues guitar.

In Collins, and fellow Texans Gatemouth Brown and Johnny Copeland, we may be hearing the last generation of authentic bluesmen. Raised in Houston, influenced by T-Bone Walker and Gatemouth, Collins stabs his guitar into meaty sextet arrangements beefed up by A.C. Reed's tenor sax, Chris Foreman's organ and Casey Jones' drums. It's West (Texas) meets mid-West (Chicago) and the resulting sound is incendiary.

On the opening cut, Big Walter Price's "Get To Gettin'," Collins nearly bends the strings off the guitar neck, racing ahead of the shuffle beat. But he just as easily settles down into the laconic cry of Percy Mayfield's "My Mind Is Tryin To Leave Me" or the blockbuster "When A Guitar Plays The Blues." His vocals are dry, wry and a bit thin, but that guitar is the blues.



**Sweet Dreams  
(Are Made of This)**  
Eurythmics  
RCA

**Baby**  
Suburban Lawns  
I.R.S.

By Crispin Sartwell

New wave has produced a megachanteuse or two in its time—D. Harry and C. Hynde, of course, spring gracefully to mind—and we're approaching an election to determine the next one. Vote with cash, check, or credit card at your local record store. Two more or less viable candidates, respectively, are Annie Lennox of Eurythmics and Su Tissue of Suburban Lawns.

The Tourists, with whom Lennox formerly performed, were an unaccountably underrated band. In the late '70s, these Brits made pure '60s style pop to which they added a certain punk edginess. *Luminous Basement*, their second American release, remains a cult classic. The Tourists are scattered around the globe, but, with Eurythmics, Lennox pursues and expands their approach. Though *Sweet Dreams* retains a tincture of the '60s—Lennox's singing suggests early Grace Slick—it is completely contemporary: virtually all the instrumentation comes out of D.A. Stewart's nasty synths. The duo creates a uniquely intimate interplay of human being and machine; Lennox is a marvelous singer who always seems

to put her finger on the emotion at the center of a melody, and Stewart drapes her in layers of synthetic chiffon. This is, I think, the year's best new wave album.

There are some great songs on *Sweet Dreams*, including three or four potential monsters. "Wrap It Up," the Hayes/Porter chestnut via Sam and Dave, packs all the punch that's so conspicuously absent from bleached versions of '60s hits as recorded by Phil Collins ("You Can't Hurry Love") and Naked Eyes ("Always Something There To Remind Me"). Stewart's keyboard track sounds flaccid compared to the horny original, but Lennox's vocal is steeped in soul.

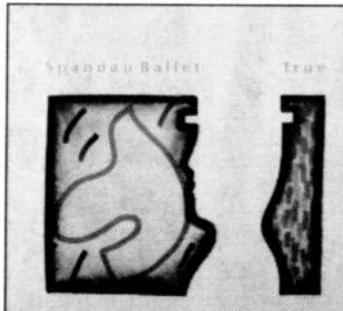
Stewart puts it all together, though, on several songs, including the title cut. "Sweet Dreams" is tremendously propulsive, always pushing toward consummation. The album's best song is "The Walk," which is, simply, a rock classic. Here, the synths are supplemented by a 100 percent natural horn section. The whole thing purrs quietly along on the verses, and then explodes on the chorus, where the sound is mixed so high it distorts completely. Lennox applies multi-tracked decoration to Stewart's menacing stride riff. If "The Walk" hasn't shown up on your AOR station by the time you read this, seek redress; there's been a heinous miscarriage of justice.

Where Eurythmics makes pure pop for now people, Suburban Lawns tries to do the same, and fails. Admittedly, this L.A. band is more eccentric than Lennox and Stewart, with far more new wave quirkiness. But the quirks, in the final analysis, dissolve into mere affectations.

"Flavor Crystals" features William Ranson's simple, funky bass line and a palatable melody. Su Tissue's declamatory vocal creates a fine complement to the bass, but her weird, jazzy piano interrupts the flow. As a multi-instrumentalist, Tissue has the advantage of flexibility over most of her rival candidates for mega-chanteuse, but she loses points for turning in vocal and instrumental performances that are, in general, anything but compelling. Baby's other interesting song is the title cut, where again what's worth listening to is Ranson's bass. "Baby" is a dense, surreal rocker which is odd enough, if nothing else, to seize the attention.

The rest of the EP is obnoxious in the purest sense of the term. You'd expect a band with a drummer named Chuck Roast and a guitarist named Frankie Ennui to display a rudimentary sense of humor, but if there are laughs to be had on Baby, I can't detect them. Mostly, the music here is tuneless and serious. "Cowboy," for example, has Tissue crooning the word "bolero" through a variety of echo chambers to no discernible purpose.

Therefore, voters, I urge you to cast your ballot for Ms. Lennox.



**True**  
Spandau Ballet  
Chrysalis

By John Ned Mendelsohn

Having perceived them as bearing roughly the same relationship to other products of England's post-romantic uptown soul craze as Grand Funk Railroad bore to Cream and Jimi Hendrix, one is far less surprised by how feeble the first side of this third Spandau Ballet album is than by how good some of the other side is.

When your songwriter has as little melodic flair as Spandau's Gary Kemp, you'd better hope to have as

thrilling an instrumentalist as Haircut 100's saxophonist, or as deft a rhythm section as Roxy Music's, or a singer as good as Boy George.

These guys, then, would seem to have three strikes against them going in. Steve Norman's a desultory saxophonist, although he hints at great beauty occasionally; John Keeble's one of the least swinging drummers you'll hear in the '80s, and Tony Hadley's singing is both peculiarly unmusical and devoid of the great wit that enables other peculiarly unmusical singers like Martin Fry to delight us anyway.

But just when you think it's safe to disdain them without reservation, you turn the album over and find yourself really enjoying the warm falsettos and pleasant groove of "Lifeline," and then marveling unashamedly at Kemp's virtual *tour de force* of uptown R&B rhythm guitar playing in "Heaven Is a Secret."

You realize that "Foundation" is neither much of a song nor a performance of particular note, but don't care because, unlike the stuff on the first side, it's propulsively urgent-tempoed and hard to resist shaking your groove thing to. You're all set to start carrying a photograph of the group around in your wallet when the title track comes on and gets you off the hook, as Hadley fails to do its wistfully melodic parts anything resembling justice.

You sigh and commit "Lifeline" and "Heaven Is a Secret" to tape, and, appreciating more fully than ever that there ain't nothin' like the real thing, trade this in on a Chic album you lack.

pid notes are a pleasure to hear; but he's almost deliberately shunning the spotlight, sacrificing his instinctive grace and incisiveness to provide background atmospherics. It's as if their talents become disjointed without the conviction demanded by the expression of direct experience.

But then, as if to confirm that the first person is their forte, "Long White Cadillac" reaches off this record to grab you by the throat with a dying man's last tormented song. Against a driving blizzard of icy rockabilly licks, a man recounts his life with a terrible (though not unheroic) resignation; it could be Hank Williams from the back of his death car—the lyrics echo his bleakest imagery; but it could be anyone dying from the failure of some overheated American dream. Phil Alvin tosses off the steel-etched, haiku-like visions of winter hills and black highway as if they were caught in the headlights at 90 miles per hour. And Dave's guitar has for once broken quite free—listen to the joy in the stomach-clutching "down-shift" as he moves from chorus to verse.

"Leaving" is the Blasters' alternative to the despair of "Cadillac." In this achingly moving song, built on a figure from "Can't Help Falling In Love With You," a man sits up late, smoking, listening to night noises, slowly deciding to give the rest of his life to a woman. Phil Alvin's clenched, emotional vocal beautifully captures the sense in which a commitment can have the gravity and sadness of a farewell.

These are good and serious men who comprise this band. And because they've shown that they can give us a better party than just about anyone around these days, one is willing to give them room to experiment. While their efforts on *Non Fiction* are marred by self-consciousness and a vagueness of purpose, there's still abundant reason to believe that the Blasters will yet find a way to combine their love of tradition, their moral earnestness, and the juke-joint rush that makes it all worthwhile.



**Non Fiction**  
The Blasters  
Slash/WB

By Christopher Hill

If the only self-conscious lyric on the Blasters first album was, "It's a howl from the desert, it's a scream from the slums/The Mississippi rolling to the beat of the drums," it's partly because realizing that one has a history can be a dangerous thing. The state of mind of the respectful student is a far cry from the kind of fringe experience that fueled the creation of the various outlaw musics that comprise our native tradition. Eventually the reverent backward glance becomes frozen; the hellbound train lovingly restored and stationary in some well-lighted museum. You could catch a rumble from that train on almost every cut of the Blasters' inspired first album. On *Non Fiction*, their second, it leaps alive and awful off its landmark plaque just once—but then with so much desperate fire as to almost carry the rest of the album with it.

The purpose of the consciously serious *Non Fiction* is to thoughtfully explore the sources and implications of their music. Their method, though, results in a certain detachment from the material. They are no longer participants, but commentators on the scenes they describe. The "Jubilee Train," for instance, is a thoroughly self-conscious symbol. There's nothing inherently wrong with that, but it makes all the men in those mythic Hoovervilles just a bit less real than the deserted young mother in "Border Radio." *Non Fiction* is full of this technique—the long view; the objective, third person voice; the gritty *Grapes of Wrath* panoramas. Songs like "Bus Station," "Boom Town," "Jubilee Train" and "It Must Be Love" are clouds of working class vignettes swirling around an unresolved sensibility. Dave Alvin's marvelous guitar playing seems similarly unresolved here. His spare, tough, lim-



**Mary Jane Girls**  
Mary Jane Girls  
Gordy

By Greg Tate

The Mary Jane Girls are Rick James' obvious answer to Prince's Vanity Six sextop fantasies. On a scale running from artificial sexiness to fake orgasm, neither girl group turns me on, okay? But one asset the Mary Janes possess that the Vanity girls don't is that besides baring flesh and body, they can really sing, especially lead singer Jojo, whose silken and elasticating phrasing soars emotively through all her numbers, even the dumbest of the ballads ("Musical Love," egomaniac Slick Rick's self-penned praise-song to himself wherein the girls are forced to croon, "We dedicate this song to you/from the four of us/Tell us what more we can do/to show our love for you.")

But while Slick Rick's lyrics may leave something to be desired as far as conveying a female sense of what love, desire and romantic sarcasm are all about, his funked up stomp rock on "The Party Side"—particularly "Boys," a song as cheesy as anything Rick has given himself to put over and just as pneumatically bodydrilling on the dance floor—certainly outfunks anything on his last record. All of which is to say that while Slick Rick and Prince may come off juvenile and puerile in these sexist fantasies of theirs, Rick at least gives up more of the funk as a form of redemption.

# ZZ Top

*Continued from page 1*  
 beaming across the arena, comes roaring to life complete with the sound of grinding gears. At the end of the show, smoke billows up from the floor and a piece of the lighting truss falls to the ground. And if that isn't enough to distract the spectator, ZZ caps off the gag by dropping a surprisingly realistic dummy onto the stage, just missing Hill and Gibbons as they prepare to exit the stage.

Of course, the stage at the Omni is just a tad *too* clean due to the fact that an entire truck full of laser and lighting gear, instruments and stage amplifiers had been unceremoniously stripped clean on the second day of the tour. Pushing forward in the true spirit of rock 'n' roll survivors, ZZ pulled the basics back together in a few days thanks to the herculean efforts of the crew. When asked whether this incident made them feel like they were playing back in the "old days" in Texas, ZZ's compact and feisty bassist Dusty Hill exploded: "Kind of like the *old days*! It was more like, 'Uh listen, do you mind if I borrow your guitar? I'll give it right back, *really*.' They didn't take *everything*. But they knew just what to take to really hurt us."

Following another hyperthyroid set by opening act "Slammin'" Sammy Hagar, who once again manages to literally strangle an audience into submission, ZZ hits the stage undaunted, attired in their new Italian designer jumpsuits, cranking it out hot, blue and righteous for the young crowd filling out every nook and cranny of this concrete mausoleum. The show may lack that extra fizz of electronic visuals, and the Gibbons/Hill guitar selection has been narrowed to some custom Dean and Erlewine electrics in lavish colors, but make no mistake: this band is *on*.

Screaming into the set on all cylinders, ZZ burns the skies with newer songs like "Under Pressure," featuring a characteristically bilious vocal attack by Gibbons, "Gimme All Your Loving" and "Sharp Dressed Man." We're barely into it and the Atlanta crowd, a surprisingly equitable mix of young males and females, is already nuts. Besides the obvious cheers for the single (MTV Recognition Factor), the loudest roar comes for the dramatic transition from "Sharp Dressed Man" into "Waiting For The Bus/Jesus Just Left Chicago," one of the many tight and concisely etched songs on *Tres Hombres*.

In fact, if ZZ Top has a "signature" album, it's *Hombres*, oozing pure Texas out of every groove. A deep, punchy bass/drum sound looming over the sonic landscape like black thunderheads and those dry, parched vocals weaving around Gibbons' larger-than-life archetypal electric blues guitar sounds: the bell-chime Fender Stratocaster ('59 pink with tremolo bar, a backstage gift from Jimi Hendrix in 1968) of "Jesus . . ." nudging up to the obese, scalpel-sharp sustain of his truly surreal '59 "flame top" Gibson Les Paul Standard, the incomparable "Pearly Gates," on the boogie grunge classic for all times, "La Grange."

That the band matured so fast between its first and third albums is, says Gibbons, "a direct result of being able to function in the studio almost as if we were on stage. We were all in the room together, recording in Robin Hood Bryant's sixteen-track 'studio,' which was in part of his mother's house in this sleepy little residential section of Tyler, Texas. We were playing loud and the only thing between us were those old-timey padded studio dividers. Dusty and I were using our custom-made 'Rio Grande' amp heads, which were Marshall/Hiwatt hybrids with that great tube distortion sound with 4x10 cabinets and Celestion speakers. All of that, plus having really jelled as a touring unit, added up to that 'up front' sound."

And that up front sound was amplified tenfold on ZZ's 1975 platinum outing, *Fandango*—one side recorded live at New Orleans'

Warehouse and one side producing the cryptic hit single, "Tush"—and 1976's *Tejas*, containing the classic "Arrested For Driving While Blind," culminating in the mythic year-long World Texas Tour replete with living Texas tableaux containing livestock, snakes and authentic sagebrush.

Contractual problems with their label, London Records, and a manageable case of arena burnout led to

*Loco* LPs. The revived impact of *Eliminator*, ZZ's eighth LP counting a *Best Of* compilation, amply demonstrates that their idiosyncratic version of the three man band still has some stretch built into it.

And speaking of *stretch*, Gibbons is still going strong after a two-hour show, over an hour backstage in the dressing room greeting a horde of well-wishers and professional camp followers and a mini-interview up-

pet project, a band's-eye view of America's finer eating establishments with original photography by B.G. himself.

After all, any man who can write a hit tune about a legendary Texas cathouse, is on the board of Houston's Contemporary Arts museum and who's worked with an avant-garde group called *Artiste Contemporaine* in Paris creating ambient music for Xerox and Polaroid art is

monster Rod and Custom show in Las Vegas. Wrapping up a long and sinuous tale of how he followed a beautiful French woman from Paris to Tangiers and on to Nepal for the unveiling of some ancient stringed instruments ("Great photos, but the instruments sounded *terrible*") in a Himalayan monastery, Gibbons, about to be herded out of the bar, juggles a rush of conversational topics ranging from the latest electro-pop bands to how an artist's work should capture the charisma of his lifestyle. Speaking of Art Bands causes him to chuckle: "I'd love some critic to call ZZ Top an 'art band.' We'd get shot."

Looking forward to the rest of the tour with real, if somewhat mellowed, enthusiasm, he underscores ZZ's basic world view before heading up to his room: "Lord . . . you've got to have fun with it. We've always kept it real loose and open, spontaneous. Playing 'La Grange' for all of these years would be torture if we had to play the same version all the time! And playing live makes it easier. These techno-pop bands dig playing live just like we dig it. It's a whole lot more fun than sitting around in a studio, creating rhythm tracks, pieces of music. That's been the secret for us: It's *Fun*. Like, 'Take it Dusty . . . naww, I don't want to take it . . .' □

**"'Eliminator' safely ushers us out of what we felt was a dead end," says Billy Gibbons.**  
**"I don't want to be victimized by the ashes of urban cowboy-ism. We had a lot to do with that whole thing, which is fine, but we can also go somewhere else."**

the inevitable: everybody went their own way for several years. Gibbons traveled worldwide, ranging from Paris to the Himalayas. Beard laid low in Texas and Dusty Hill disappeared to one of the small Mexican villages he often loses himself in when things tend to get heavy.

Signing with Warner Brothers in 1978, ZZ Top bounced back with the fair-to-excellent *Deguello* and *El*

date in his hotel room upstairs. Local blue laws are causing the lights to blink nervously while waiters rush around taking "last call" orders. Holding forth over his nightly "cocktail," Gibbons graciously fends off the drooling commentary of an overtaxed male fan surrounded by a cloud of alcohol and some dubious-looking local talent while waxing enthusiastic over his latest

nothing if not *eclectic*. When Gibbons checked into this Atlanta hotel and found out that there was a convention of taxidermists staying there, he immediately set off to find out if there were any stuffed creatures on display nearby.

Now he's planning to hook up with the "Eliminator" (none of the band has had the chance to drive it yet) later this summer during a

## Four leading drummers, four different styles. Four more reasons for playing Yamaha System Drums.

Steve Gadd



Because I've always been very concerned with the quality of sound in a drum, I use the Recording Custom Series drums, with these beautiful all-birch shells and a black piano finish. They give me a very controlled resonance with a lot of tone. They let me relax with the music, so I can adjust my touch to any volume requirements. Yamaha drums are very sensitive, and there's always a reserve of sound.

I've always tended to go for simple equipment like the Tour Series snare drum with eight lugs, because it's easier for me to get the sound. Same thing goes for my hardware, which is why I like the 7 Series hardware. I don't require really heavy leg bracing so the lightweight stands are just fine; very quiet, too.

Rocky White



With some drums, there isn't too much you can do to alter the sound. Some will give you a real deep thud, and others are real bright. With Yamaha, I can get both sounds, they're just very versatile. Mostly I like a deep round sound with tight definition, since my concept is that a drum is a melodic instrument like anything else. I can hear drum pitches, and Yamaha lets me achieve that without a lot of constant re-tuning.

As far as their hardware, the snare drum stand and boom stands are very well thought-out. They feel like they were designed by a drummer, and they're not limited at all. The 9 Series snare drum stand's ball tilt-er is fantastic; you can get the perfect angle for your playing posture. And the boom stand tilt-er can double as two stands because it doesn't have a long handle. So the boom slides right inside the rest of the stand if you don't need it. All in all, Yamaha is the perfect set of drums for tone quality, sound, and ease of set-up.

Cozy Powell



I'd been playing the same set of drums for ten years when I met up with the Yamaha people during a tour of Japan with Rainbow. I told them that if they could come up with a kit that was stronger, louder and more playable than what I had, I'd play it. So they came up with this incredible heavy rock kit with eight ply birch shells, heavy-duty machined hoops and a pair of 26" bass drums that are like bloody cannons. And since I'm a very heavy player who needs a lot of volume, Yamahas are perfect for me. And the sound just takes off—the projection is fantastic so I can get a lot of volume without straining.

There isn't an electric guitarist in the world who can intimidate me, and I've played with the loudest. Yamaha drums just cut through better, like a good stiletto. They have the fastest, warmest, most powerful sound of any kit I've played and they can really take it. For my style, Yamaha is the perfect all-around rock kit.

Peter Erskine



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 YAMAHA

## Smokey

Continued from page 14

what I believe and I always search for those things. And when I'm writing songs, if I can't find 'em, then I'll change the whole line, or the whole something, until I can get something that does flow or fit like that.

I'm very conscious of it. It may just be an idiosyncracy—it may be something that doesn't really matter, but I think that it does.

Obviously, it does. It's one of the reasons that there are so many songs that you've written that almost everyone in America knows the major lyrics of: "I Second That Emotion," "You've Really Got A Hold On Me," "The Tracks Of My Tears," all those. But what's more interesting is that, at first, you said it was all a gift. But now you're saying something that makes more sense: that you have a gift but that you've really consciously crafted it.

I see what you're saying—that there's a formula.

No, not a formula, but a process—an artistic process by which you do your work. If that stuff just flowed out of you on the first draft, I would be very amazed.

Well, sometimes it does. But sometimes it doesn't. "Cruisin'" is the prime example of that. "Cruisin'" took—let's see (tries to figure it out)—six years to finish. My guitar player, Marv Tarplin, had this music that he brought to me just before I left the Miracles. We were thinking about signing this girl group to Motown, and I wrote a song to the music of "Cruisin'", and it was called "Easy Rider." It was about a dude who came into town, swooped up all the girls' hearts, and then like

song, but nothing came.

I was out there by myself at that time; my wife had to go back and forth to try to complete the sale of our property in Michigan. So anyway, I would play it by the bedside at night. And one night I was there and I was just playin' it, and all of a sudden I came to the part that eventually was the chorus and I said, "You're gonna fly away and I'm glad you're going my way." Rather than saying, "you're gonna fly away, you're gonna fly away from

So I had the chorus.

I wanted to get something with a double meaning there for the entire song—something that would be sexy but subtle at the same time. I started to work on it, man, and this was, wow! after starting with the music in '71, doing something else, this had to be '75. I'd had the chorus since the beginning of '75 maybe, and this was the end of '75. Finally, I thought, well, maybe if I have the music it will inspire me more. So Sonny and I got together and he did

sound right. It just didn't sound different enough. And one day I was in my car, and I was driving along, man, and "Just My Imagination Running Away With Me" came on the radio, by the Temptations. And on that particular song, Norman (Whitfield) had the bottom based with tympani drums. It had that very subtle, open bottom sound.

I said, "That's it." I forgot where I was going, but I stopped, went to the studio, called the tympani drum player and put the tympani drums on "Cruisin'." And that was it—that was what it needed. Then it finally came out.

It's hard to imagine that in the years when you were releasing three or four—what to me were great—records a year, that you were working that far behind yourself.

Well, some songs don't do that, man. "Shop Around" took five minutes. In five minutes, "Shop Around" was written and done. I was doing it for Barrett Strong, and when I played it for Berry, we were at the piano and he said, "No, I think that we oughta do this to the chorus." The part that says "Try to get yourself a bargain son/don't be sold . . ." and I had some other chords there. He said, "No, we oughta put these chords in there and then, at the end, 'try to find the one who's gonna give you true lovin', " he said, "we oughta break that in there, you know, so that can stand out."

So we were all excited about the song and after we got through workin' on it, he said, "You gotta sing this song." Same thing as George Tobin did with "Being With You." I said, "Man, I'm doing the album on Barrett." He said, "I don't care. You got to cut this song. I love the way you sing it."

So I recorded it and the record came out and it had been out for about two weeks when Berry calls me—three o'clock in the morning. He says, "Hey man, what you doin'?" I said, "It's three o'clock in the mornin', what do you think I'm doin'? I'm asleep." He said, "I want you and Claudette to get up and come over here and I want you to call the other guys and tell 'em to come to the studio right now." I said, "Why, man?" He said, "Because, man, I can't sleep; I haven't slept in three or four days. 'Shop Around' keeps going through my mind. You didn't cut it right. I gotta re-cut it; I gotta change the beat." He said, "And then it's going to Number One."

I said, "Well, OK, all right," you know. And I woke up Claudette and said, "Let's get up, we gotta go to the studio." And I called the other guys and they said, "Man, are you crazy?" I said, "No, Berry wants us over there right now." So I got over there, and Berry had called all the musicians and everybody showed up but the piano player, so Berry played the piano himself on the session. And he recut it and it went to number one just like he said, smash.

The singing comes more naturally to you then. Is it because of the voice?

I don't know, because I don't consider myself a singer.

What?

I really don't. I consider myself a feeler. Now, Barbra Streisand's a singer. Pavarotti's a singer. I consider myself a feeler. I don't think I have an outstanding voice, or anything like that, you know. I just feel what I'm singing and I think that projects through to the listener. That's how I look at myself. I just love to sing, though. I mean, I've been singing all my life. My sister kids me about how they always used to tell me to shut up. I was always singing.

Maybe that's what comes across to people, that joy in singing.

Yeah, because that's my greatest joy in life. Basically I'm kinda like a shy person. If I had to come in this room right now and you guys said, "OK, Smoke, sing a song," there is no way I could do it.

But you give me a stage and 4000 people and boy, it's another guy up there. It's schizoid or something.

**"I've always interpreted the Motown sound as spiritual, as something that was formulated in the souls and spirits of the people who worked at Motown."**

rode away. It was easy for him to get them, you know, so the girls called him "Easy Rider."

The deal with the girl group fell through, but I still had the song, and I also had the tape of (Tarplin's) music. When I moved to L.A., I listened to his tapes all the time. One day after I started to record again, I was playing this tape, because I was looking for some stuff. And here comes this music for "Cruisin'." I started trying to write a

me," it was "you're gonna fly away and I'm glad you're goin' my way."

Then I started to think, "Why am I glad you're goin' my way?" Maybe a week later, I'm trying to think, because I really liked that. I didn't want to say anything common like "We're going together." One night I'm just there and "I love it when we're cruisin' together" came out of my mouth. And I said, "That's it!" And I did like I always do, I ran and wrote it down right quick.

an arrangement, and we went into the studio and recorded it.

I'd listen to the track all the time and I started to get a few words and I'd put those on the track and listen to them; but to make a long story short, not until 1977 was that song complete to me. And I said, "Boy, I really think this is gonna be a good record."

Then I started to listen to it and the track wasn't right. But I could not figure out what didn't make it

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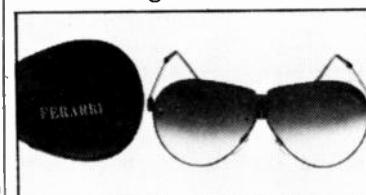
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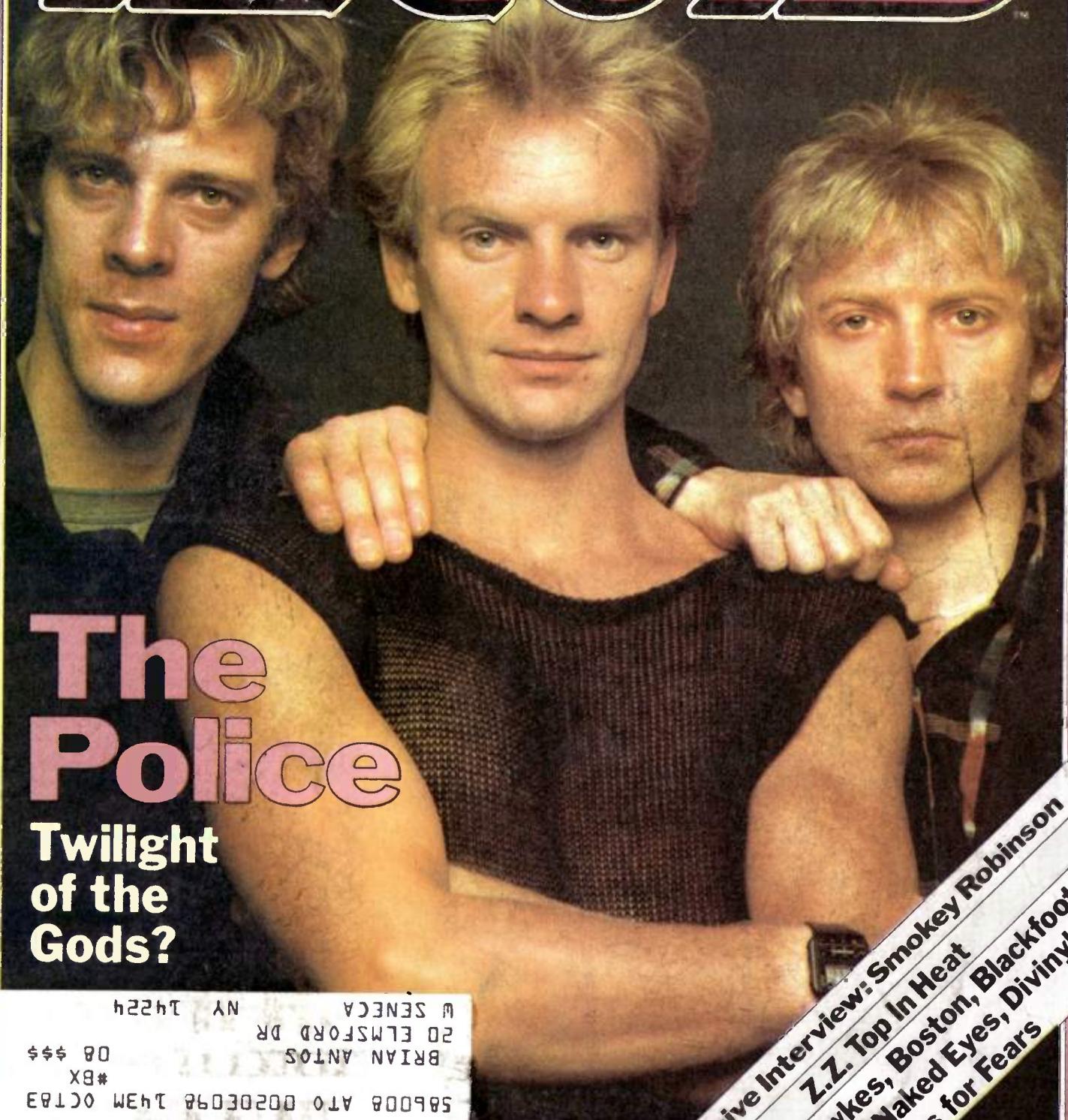
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