RECORD™

Vol. 2 No. 11 September 1983

PHOTO SIMON FOWLER

Human League (from left: Phil Oakey, Adrian Wright, Joanne Catherall, Susanne Sulley, Ian Burden, Jo Callis)

Human League: Et Tu, Phil Oakey?

By Jonathan Gross

TORONTO—The troubled odyssey culminating in this story started with a speculative schlep to London last December in hopes that the Human League would grant an interview. "No" came the reply from an operative ensconced in the deceptively squalid digs of Virgin Records off Portobello Road; the band was cloistered in the studio anguishing over an album for the new year and could not be disturbed. Besides, Christmas—when U.K. bands usually cut off the press Scrooges—was closing in.

Come January, however, there was no album, only a single in the form of the Motown derivative "Mirror Man," a troubled seven-incher of dubious inspiration that had the net effect of forcing League commissioner Phil Oakey out of hibernation and, reluctantly, back into the glare of publicity in an effort to explain the band's *modus operandi*. Our encounter proved a false start, the interview nagging at a larger malaise plaguing the League. Oakey was as chilly as that wintry morning, lashing out with a mixture of slagging invective—"Yazoo is ripping us off. Blancmange is ripping us off. It's only a matter of time until they add some girls. Wham? Don't mention that name."—to distressing self-deprecation—"I don't want to sing any more. I think the girls do a better job anyway."

Anyone familiar with Oakey would agree that those remarks were inconsistent with his "normal" behavior pattern. Oakey had been an unspoiled spirited idealist prior to and during the American breakthrough of the League's first American release, *Dare*, in 1982. At 27, he was not ready to betray with bitterness his own dreams and it was difficult to understand how the long overdue success the League had experienced could put him so out of sorts, even temporarily.

But by February and on into the spring it became clear that Oakey's verbal tirade was a complication of creative constipation. The band had been in the studio on and off for nearly six months with producer Martin Rushent only to produce the one single followed by a burnt offering of a mini-album, *Fascination*, released in May, with only two new tracks, including the unspectacular "Fascination."

It was revealed then that *Dare* mentor Rushent, the man who would be Phil Spector, was gone and ace rocker Chris Thomas (Pretenders, Sex Pistols) was in. If there was no immediate cure to what was ailing the League, Thomas brought hope. And Oakey, lured out in the sunlight again for part three, had gotten a partial grip on himself and could at least contain whatever his disenchantment was with rock, the press and, in some ways, the League and his own persona.

Rushent had inadvertently set up the final installment of the travelogue with a few background remarks on the situation. He had been with Oakey and the League since late in 1980 when Virgin Records president Simon Draper was seeking help for the band, then a shaky partnership disenfranchised from the mainstream. Oakey and visual director Adrian Wright were piecing together the remains of a messy smashup that saw original members Craig Ian Marsh and Martyn Ware leave to form the British Electric Foundation and its subsidiary venture, Heaven 17. Rough demos for "Love Action" and "Hard Times" were kicking around the office and Rushent was impressed enough with what he called "good ideas" to take them into his Genetic Studios where, in those dark prehistoric days before Synclaviers and Fairlights, his MCA programmable studio and Roland system were state of the art. They produced a single, "Sound Of The Crowd," and quickly segued into the *Dare* sessions. The relationship between the League and Rushent was a variable itself. Key band members bassist Ian Burden and keyboard wiz Joe Callis, along with Oakey, would bring in rudimentary sketches from which Rushent and his programs would flesh out byte-sized songs. The most famous one was "Don't You Want Me," which he built from one riff and a vocal line. Post-*Dare*, though, the riffs stopped coming.

"It got boring," says Rushent, who also works with Pete Shelley and has worked with Altered Images. "I didn't enjoy waiting three months for the lyrics to *Fascination*. You don't make records just for the money; you have to keep the creative sensibilities intact. There was technique missing. We're still great friends, Phil and I, but I had to move on."

Oakey corroborates Rushent's testimony: "Things weren't getting finished for some reason. It's very difficult to say who's responsibility that was. Everyone had decided that it was them who had caused it all to be wonderful and there was no one prepared to back down in any way.

"We'd all become very arrogant," he concludes.

They had reason to be arrogant. Both *Dare* and "Don't You Want Me" had not only topped the *Billboard* and U.K. charts last year but also heralded the invasion of dance- and synth-oriented U.K. bands like Duran Duran and the Thompson Twins. Though incorrectly perceived as a fashion band, the Human League was regarded as the symbol

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Robert Plant: Into The Light

By John Hutchinson

In late 1968 Led Zeppelin released its first album, and contained in the grooves were early signs of the unease that was beginning to undermine a generation's idealism. From the very outset the band blended over-the-top blues dramatics with songs of quiet sensitivity; their music ran through a gamut of pace changes and dynamics. What's more, the nervous bravado of Jimmy Page's guitar coupled to Robert Plant's intense, high-pitched singing seemed to have a visceral effect on many people who had been too young to be part of the hippie movement, but who shared the counterculture's aims and aspirations. Even if their elder brothers and sisters were growing weary and disillusioned, 16- and 17-year-olds were determined to have some more fun. Led Zeppelin was their band. Combining dreams with foreboding, bombast with reflection, and, above all, projecting their feelings with delirious fervor, Jimmy Page, Robert Plant, John Paul Jones, and John Bonham constituted what was the world's most popular rock act.

On December 4th, 1980, two months after John "Bonzo" Bon-

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To Our Readers

This issue marks the last of RECORD's quarterfold format; next month we will come to you as an 8½"x11" glossy stock publication. For readers this means more pages, more color, more information regarding the news and trends of the day. As to the last point, RECORD plans to consolidate in a single section reports on audio, musical instruments, and consumer electronics; and in order to cover the latest revolution in popular music, we'll introduce a first-of-its-kind MusicVideo section. In addition to sales and club charts, reviews and product tests, MusicVideo will examine music-related issues developing in its field and will also offer service features discussing the practical home application of the new video technologies. Add to this our continuing broad-based coverage of both new and established artists, a wide-ranging and authoritative record review section, Dave Marsh's hard-hitting American Grandstand observations, plus a Letters page that's developed into an important, unique readers' forum—all in all, a magazine you can rely on for comprehensive, detailed, definitive coverage of the contemporary music scene. The new format will offer us even greater opportunities to ensure that our readers remain the best informed of any music publications'. As always, if it's music and if it's news, you'll read about it here. In the meantime, enjoy this month's issue; we're proud of it, too.

DAVID McGEE
Managing Editor

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LETTERS

Make Mine Rare

TELL MARK MEHLER TO GET ready to eat his review of the film *Flashdance* ("Much Dance, Little Flash," July RECORD) as promised. I was a stunning, fiercely independent young girl who worked as a security guard in a factory, read *Vogue* and *Variety* on my lunch hour, lived in a musty old apartment with my trusty dog Mikie, yearned desperately to be an actress-singer, was a sexual dynamo, had a heart of gold, worked weekends with a rock 'n' roll band, *and* attended the American Academy of Dramatic Art.

I would also say that when I gave up my dream, I did die. A spiritual death can be worse than a physical one. You can feel the decay.

Care for some catsup with that, Mark?

JULIANNE LEE
Plantation, FLA.

Obviously Our Mistake

I AM WRITING WHILE PONdering a question: if music is not newly-released, is it considered out of touch and not worth mentioning? I am referring to Uriah Heep. Don't laugh. You have to give Mick Box credit. Remember "Salisbury"? Their album *Abominog* got no mention from you at all. I don't understand. People still mention Brahms, Bach and Beethoven, and they are *long* gone. There must be a problem with modern music. If a band is ten years old, they just *can't* be any good. Do you follow me? Why do we forget quality and meaningful music, and then at the same time ponder shit like Prince and Michael Jackson, just because they're "current"?

KEITH A. YORDY
Marietta, PA.

Remembering Muddy

IF THE SUN STILL RISES A hundred years from now people who stop to look back at the phenomenon of rock 'n' roll will indeed name Muddy Waters as a leading influence. I'm proud to have lived during his lifetime. Dave Marsh's piece on Muddy (American Grandstand, July RECORD) was a warm and heartfelt tribute but I must correct him on one minor point. He called Muddy Waters the last of the great Delta bluesmen. John Lee Hooker, who recently completed a tour of England, is only two years Muddy's junior and made his way up that same Highway 61 from Mississippi to points north in the 1940s. Although Hooker hasn't accumulated the incredible list of accomplishments Muddy had, his contribution to early electric Delta blues and its role in the conception of rock 'n' roll certainly mark him as a great.

STEVEN WOROWSKI
Middlesex, NJ

Video Clichés

ALAN HECHT'S STORY ON rock video clichés in the August RECORD was well-taken, well-observed and well-written. But there's one big rock video cliché he missed—and, as one might guess, it's a Russell Mulcahey Rock Video Cliché: those incessant slow-motion shots of splashing water. It might be a woman diving into water (like in the Motels' "Take The 'L' Out Of Lover" video) or a liquid-filled glass being tipped over in slow-mo onto a woman or a woman dropping an olive into a martini in super-slo-mo, or anything like that—water and women are all Russell needs. And Mulcahey's video of Billy Joel's "Pressure" is simply the hysterical apotheosis of his water, water everywhere fixation. And as far as influential source material for this kind of aquatic imagery goes, I posit Australian director Peter Weir's film *The Last Wave*. I wonder how many times Russell Mulcahey's seen it?

MICHAEL SHORE
New York City

Low Blow

I WAS SUPRISED AND IRRItated by Kenny Laguna's remark in your Joan Jett article ("The Road Goes On Forever," June RECORD) where, in reference to the possibility of Joan playing large arenas, he says he's "not sure you can lead a band on that level without a penis." Surely a man in Mr. L's position must be aware that Janis Joplin, Grace Slick, Tina Turner, Ann and Nancy Wilson and Pat Benatar have all given highly successful shows in large arenas. To the best of my knowledge, none of these ladies has a penis. It seems strange that the person who is supposed to be the guiding force behind Joan Jett's career should be the one to have such a senseless and outdated attitude towards her.

JUDY MOODY
Paterson, NJ

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TOP 100 ALBUMS

1	THE POLICE	*Synchronicity* (A&M)
2	MICHAEL JACKSON	*Thriller* (Epic)
3	DAVID BOWIE	*Let's Dance* (EMI)
4	FLASHDANCE	*Soundtrack* (Casablanca)
5	STEVIE NICKS	*The Wild Heart* (Modern)
6	MEN AT WORK	*Cargo* (Columbia)
7	DEF LEPPARD	*Pyromania* (Mercury)
8	LOVERBOY	*Keep It Up* (Columbia)
9	TALKING HEADS	*Speaking in Tongues* (Sire)
10	THE KINKS	*State of Confusion* (Arista)
11	U2	*War* (Island)
12	RICKIE LEE JONES	*Girl At Her Volcano* (Warner Bros.)
13	PRINCE	*1999* (Warner Bros.)
14	GEORGE BENSON	*In Your Eyes* (Warner Bros.)
15	HALL & OATES	*H2O* (RCA)
16	THE FIXX	*Reach The Beach* (MCA)
17	EDDY GRANT	*Killer On The Rampage* (Portrait/CBS)
18	IRON MAIDEN	*Piece of Mind* (Capitol)
19	PETER GABRIEL	*Plays Live* (Geffen)
20	DURAN DURAN	*Duran Duran* (Capitol)
21	MARSHALL CRENSHAW	*Field Day* (Warner Bros.)
22	BRYAN ADAMS	*Cuts Like A Knife* (A&M)
23	MEN AT WORK	*Business As Usual* (Columbia)
24	ZZ TOP	*Eliminator* (Warner Bros.)
25	CULTURE CLUB	*Kissing To Be Clever* (Virgin/Epic)
26	THE TUBES	*Outside Inside* (Capitol)
27	JOURNEY	*Frontiers* (Columbia)
28	A FLOCK OF SEAGULLS	*Listen* (Jive/Arista)
29	JOAN JETT & THE BLACKHEARTS	*Album* (MCA)
30	ELTON JOHN	*Too Low For Zero* (Geffen)
31	JOAN ARMATRADING	*The Key* (A&M)
32	ROD STEWART	*Body Wishes* (Warner Bros.)
33	THE B-52's	*Whammy* (Warner Bros.)
34	THOMAS DOLBY	*The Golden Age of Wireless* (Capitol)
35	EURYTHMICS	*Sweet Dreams Are Made of This* (RCA)
36	LIONEL RICHIE	*Lionel Richie* (Motown)
37	R.E.M.	*Murmur* (IRS)
38	MADNESS	*Madness* (Geffen)
39	AL JARREAU	*Jarreau* (Warner Bros.)
40	CROSBY, STILLS & NASH	*Allies* (Atlantic)
41	STYX	*Kilroy Was Here* (A&M)
42	PINK FLOYD	*The Final Cut* (Columbia)
43	QUARTERFLASH	*Take Me To Heart* (Geffen)
44	DONNA SUMMER	*She Works Hard For The Money* (Mercury)
45	HUMAN LEAGUE	*Fascination!* (A&M)
46	DAVE EDMUNDS	*Information* (Columbia)
47	JOE WALSH	*You Bought It, You Name it* (Full Moon)
48	KAJAGOOGOO	*White Feathers* (EMI)
49	SCANDAL	*Scandal* (Columbia)
50	BERLIN	*Pleasure Victim* (Geffen)
51	EARL KLUGH	*Low Ride* (Capitol)
52	E.L.O.	*Secret Messages* (Jet/CBS)
53	RICK SPRINGFIELD	*Living In Oz* (RCA)
54	PAT METHENY GROUP	*Travel* (ECM)
55	RETURN OF THE JEDI	*Soundtrack* (RSO)
56	TEARS FOR FEARS	*The Hurting* (Mercury)
57	NAKED EYES	*Naked Eyes* (EMI)
58	INXS	*Shabooh Shoobah* (Atco)
59	DURAN DURAN	*Rio* (Capitol)
60	GREG KIHN	*Kihnspiracy* (Beserkley)
61	ROXY MUSIC	*The High Road* (Warner Bros./E.G.)
62	ENGLISH BEAT	*Special Beat Service* (IRS)
63	BANANARAMA	*Deep Sea Skiving* (Polygram)
64	SIMPLE MINDS	*New Gold Dreams* (A&M)
65	CARLOS SANTANA	*Havana Moon* (Columbia)
66	BOB SEGER & THE SILVER BULLET BAND	*The Distance* (Capitol)
67	MODERN ENGLISH	*After The Snow* (Sire)
68	THE BLASTERS	*Non Fiction* (Warner Bros.)
69	VAN MORRISON	*The Inarticulate Speech of the Heart* (Warner Bros.)
70	AFTER THE FIRE	*ATF* (Epic)
71	FALCO	*Einzelhaft* (A&M)
72	ULTRAVOX	*Quartet* (Chrysalis)
73	JOE JACKSON	*Night & Day* (A&M)
74	LOU REED	*Legendary Hearts* (RCA)
75	PETE TOWNSHEND	*Scoop* (Atco)
76	STRAY CATS	*Built For Speed* (EMI)
77	TRIUMPH	*Never Surrender* (RCA)
78	GOLDEN EARRING	*Cut* (Polygram)
79	TOTO	*IV* (Columbia)
80	WALL OF VOODOO	*Call Of The West* (IRS)
81	DEXYS MIDNIGHT RUNNERS	*Too-Rye-Ay* (Mercury)
82	TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS	*Love After Dark* (Backstreet/MCA)
83	ERIC CLAPTON	*Money And Cigarettes* (Warner Bros.)
84	THE RAMONES	*Subterranean Jungle* (Sire)
85	THOMPSON TWINS	*Side Kicks* (Arista)
86	PHIL COLLINS	*Hello, I Must Be Going!* (Atlantic)
87	EARTH, WIND & FIRE	*Powerlight* (Columbia)
88	ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN	*Porcupine* (Sire)
89	MISSING PERSONS	*Spring Session M* (Capitol)
90	PSYCHEDELIC FURS	*Forever Now* (Columbia)
91	MARVIN GAYE	*Midnight Love* (Columbia)
92	NICK LOWE	*Abominable Showman* (Columbia)
93	SOFT CELL	*The Art of Falling Apart* (Sire)
94	DIRE STRAITS	*Twisting By The Pool* (Warner Bros.)
95	HEAVEN 17	*Heaven 17* (Arista)
96	SUPERTRAMP	*". . . famous last words . . ."* (A&M)
97	RANDY NEWMAN	*Trouble In Paradise* (Warner Bros.)
98	LITTLE STEVEN & THE DISCIPLES OF SOUL	*Men Without Women* (EMI)
99	SQUEEZE	*Singles, 45's And Under* (A&M)
100	MUSICAL YOUTH	*Youth of Today* (MCA)

RECORD

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Cover Photo: DAVID MONTGOMERY

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The Record is a special interest publication of Straight Arrow Publishers, Inc.: **Chairman:** JANN S. WENNER **Sr. Vice President:** KENT BROWNRIDGE

The Record is published monthly at the subscription price of $12.00 for one year by Straight Arrow Publishers, Inc., 745 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10151. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to Record, P.O. Box 2985, Boulder, Colorado 80322. This edition published July 28 for newsstand sales from August 23 through September 20.

New Artist

PHOTO: GARY GREEN

The Alarm (from left: Peters, Sharp, Twist, MacDonald): Never mind fashion, get on with the music.

The Alarm Rings For Freedom

By Wayne King

NEW YORK—It is a steaming July Fourth weekend in New York. The dance floor at the Ritz, one of the city's bigger dance/video clubs, is packed with sweating bodies celebrating the long weekend marking the anniversary of their country's independence. But tonight has not drawn just the usual notoriously jaded crowd of clubgoers. Tonight, people are staring transfixed at the sight and deafening sound coming from the stage. For there, four young men are delivering ringing proclamations of freedom, and singing of the power that comes from people joining together, and of the foolishness of conflict.

And now, one of these men has taken a guitar and lifted it over his head, and is holding it aloft while a martial drum beat plays behind him. The precise meaning of his gesture is not apparent, but there can be no denying its symbolic force. And as the lights fade and the drums stand silent, the singer puts down his guitar, reaches for his mike stand, and pounds out the beat for the band's next number. "Come on down and meet your maker," they cry in unison, "come on down and make the stand."

That is the sound of the Alarm, and theirs is a calling out that should not go unanswered.

"We can't expect things to change overnight with one song, so we've all got to keep writing songs and lending our voice." Mike Peters, the front man for the Alarm, sits backwards on a chair in his hotel room, virtually confronting hisinterviewer with an earnest, good-natured faith in the order of things. The Alarm, who hail from Wales, are finishing up their first month in America opening shows for U2, but noticeable exhaustion doesn't slow the loquacious Peters from speaking up. "There is hope around the corner, and there always will be, because there's always someone out there with the ability to make something happen, to make things happen in their own sphere, in their chosen way of life, and that's what we want to do, to encourage people to make things better for themselves."

The concept of self-help is something the quartet knows by way of constant practice. Peters and guitarist Eddie MacDonald knew each other from childhood, as did lead guitarist Dave Sharp and drummer Nigel Twist; they eventually joined forces through the usual musical chairs process of falling in and out of neighborhood groups in their native Rhyl. After a self-run club for teens bit the dust, the four decided the time was right to make a go of it. Peters, who had written a song that gave the outfit its name, says the idea was "to go back to find what first inspired us to pick up a guitar, the unlimited possibilities." Retaining the do-it-yourself feeling, the band pressed up a 45 which sold out its modest pressing, and convinced them to try their luck in London.

They made their mark in Britain's capital by knocking on doors, always carrying acoustic guitars to give promoters a first hand listen at what they could do. One of those most impressed was U2's agent (and current Alarm manager) Ian Wilson, who took Bono and company to see the Alarm. The two bands hit it off tremendously, an important connection for the Welshmen. By the fall of '82, the Alarm had signed with IRS and released the anthemic "Marching On." Earlier this year, they came out with "The Stand," their third and finest single to date. Plans were made to join U2 at the tail end of the *War* tour in America, and IRS released a five-song EP, made up from their two records for the label plus one live track.

The Alarm's modus operandi, being masterminded by Wilson, naturally follows the U2 ethos of hard work, and avoiding the here today-gone tomorrow feel exuded by so many current singles bands. Peters reasons, "We wanted to build up the group in the way that traditional groups were built up—by working in sweaty clubs, in front of people, in live performances. We knew we were going to be a real group, with real values and real faith with our fans."

The faith is founded on the idea of one to one contact, centered on an instrument virtually extinct from today's international pop scene: the acoustic guitar. The majority of their songs, presented live, feature two guitars. When asked about the origins of such an odd (for 1983) lineup, the assertive Dave Sharp declares: "We got a tremendous feeling from the songs we wrote on acoustic guitars, but when we took them into rehearsals and tried them out on a traditional electric setup they lost their original feeling. We thought, why don't we take the guitar and find a way to make it sound bigger? Acoustic guitars are intimate instruments, and what we wanted to do was to create an intimate situation with them—not just one to one, but one to a thousand, or however many."

The stance of bands like U2 and the Alarm is one of firm and clear-eyed optimism. It's true that, as Steve Pond of *Rolling Stone* noted in his review of the EP, "this is the kind of record that could only come from a young band." But such hope should never be the exclusive province of the young, or even the foolish and the naive. If rock is now, after thirty years, approaching middle age, it still needs these bands' call for unity.

Smiling, Peters concludes, "I think young people are coming together more and more, and all of the fashion possibilities of the last few years have been exhausted. Now, people are getting into it as: it's music, let's get on with it, let's forget the clothes. I think young people are realizing that to love one another is alright; if you walk down the street and see a guy with his hair different from you, he's still on the same side, part of the same race, the human race—let's just go up and shake his hand. I think people want to feel that way; I don't think people want to feel alienated."

Heed this Alarm. ○

American Grandstand

By Dave Marsh

The Electryfying Mojo

I have resources you lack: a couple thousand records and a desk right next to 'em where I spend my days. So I listen to the radio only in the summertime, when I'm not home much. The rest of the year, of course, I hear radio in snatches, in shops and offices and from the front seat of taxis. But unless I am in an automobile, I don't listen to it. Until summer, when it's back behind the wheel, with one hand on the dial.

At first, this always seems like a blessed return. A few records, compressed as they are, make more sense over the air than they do on the turntable or tape deck. Even suffering from Loverboy to Kajagoogoo, punching buttons to find something decent, has its virtues. The sufferer feels connected to his fellow listeners in an immediate way that only broadcasting can provide.

Soon enough, the bloom wears off. As a mere tourist in radioland, I seem to become frustrated more easily than most, disagreeing with the taste of the programmers, the deadness of the jocks. As a visitor, rather than a resident, the hypocrisy of the system—format—is too easily evident. I get restless and start tossing the tape deck and gear in the passenger seat, and feel like hotrodding again, freed from the tyranny of punchcard deejays with their sombre tones and self-important blather.

'Twas not always thus, despite what the liars who run the airwaves try to say. Anyone over 30 can remember a time in this country when disc jockeys had true personalities, when a major fraction of life centered on them and the records they played, when the radio was a web connecting every rocker in town. And the fact that you have to be over 30 to know what I'm talking about isn't a symptom of what an old fogey I am—it measures how you've been cheated all your life.

Those disc jockeys were not on the FM dial. They played hit singles—sometimes, they *made* hits—and they did not speak as though they were about to proclaim a funeral or cut a solemn fart. They screamed, shouted and harangued, thumped and pounded, were one with the beat. In Detroit, Martha Jean offered up the number just after 5 each afternoon; in Philly, Jerry Blavat shrieked yon teens into smooth cruising speed; in Nashville, John R. and Hoss Allen preached on into the night, trying to sell you every record they played (and most were worth buying); in Tulsa, Scooter Seagraves and Jim Peters were the best sort of teachers, coupling reverence for the past to infectious enthusiasm for the present. And whether you were driving aimlessly or hiding in beds with the covers over your head, you were *in touch*.

With the arrival of Boss Radio, the personalities began to die: they could no longer pick their own records, they were discouraged from speaking too much or doing any of the other things that made them stand out. When FM arrived, it was determined that shouting was not cool, and as the scene transformed from Little Richard to CSNY, the deejays also began to slow down and croon. I got bored, bought a bunch of records and hid out among them. Most fans weren't that lucky. And as the solemnity grew, the community withered, and was fragmented, and it gave the liars room to maneuver, hardening their format and spreading their fictions: that white people didn't want to hear black performers, that blacks didn't want to hear white ones, that separate-but-equal is an acceptable doctrine, that radio existed as a medium of entertainment and profit alone, not at all as a force in the world. Beaten and bored, the audience acquiesced. Those who knew better sometimes complained bitterly, but it served no particular purpose. Now the liars have moved into television, too.

Every once in a while, something happens to make us see the lies for what they are, however. A few months ago, I began hearing about a disc jockey on WJLB-FM, in Detroit. He was called the Electryfying Mojo and though JLB is an "urban contemporary" station, he played J. Geils and the Rollin' Stones (as he puts it) right alongside Prince and the Whispers. Mojo picked his own music, they told me, and he picked it for beat and movement. And he was a *success*. In a market where a rating of 4 would be impressive, Mojo's number in the spring ARB book was *17.9*.

My friend Frank Joyce recently interviewed Mojo for WBCN in Boston. He was kind enough to send me a tape of their conversation and it is probably the most impressive statement on radio and its potential power I have heard in my lifetime. "Personally, I think radio has not lost the power to be a mental/theatrical agent—it's just abandoned that particular power," Mojo said. And he makes it very clear that he means to reclaim that power: "I get people asking me, 'Why do you play white music?' Then I get people asking me, 'Why do you play black music?' But there's nothing wrong with people being curious. Nothing wrong with being curious at all. Because radio is serious to me. And I want people- . . . When you look at my numbers, what you see is a combination of people." Of course, the combination Mojo describes is what the liars can't afford, because their power, as manipulators of bullshit demographics and other methods of fragmentation, are based upon *dividing*, separating, segregating, not combining, integrating, bringing us together.

Mojo's show is beyond format. As a result, there are nights when he is not very good. But then, I have tapes of Alan Freed on nights when *he* wasn't very good, either. The point is that the show comes from somewhere. As he told Joyce, "I put a lotta work into livin'. My show is probably a classic statement about my lifestyle, what I believe in, how I feel about things, what I think, what I've experienced, what I've seen on the news, schools I've spoken at, kids I've seen, the bagmen and bagwomen I've seen walking down the streets at four o'clock in the morning with nowhere to go. It's a combination of all those things."

That, in a nutshell, is the definition of great broadcasting. The Electryfying Mojo can afford some bad nights because his show is as alive as he is. He can afford to break the rules because he is a human being, and all of those have their bad days. If I lived in Detroit again, there's no way I would sell all my LPs and tapes and singles. But I know whose voice would be the last I heard every night before I switched off the light. And I know that when I rolled over and tried to sleep, I would feel that connection. And rest would come much easier, for sure.

London Calling

By Chris Welch

Yes. No.

Yes are reforming. The shock news came after months of speculation about Cinema, a group being put together by bassist Chris Squire. At one stage it was rumored Jimmy Page would be part of the band. Now it seems Trevor Rabin will be on guitar with ex-Yes men Jon Anderson (vocals), Alan White (drums), and Rick Wakeman (curry, beer and organ). Word has it that Anderson would agree to join Cinema only if they changed their name to Yes, on the theory that the Yes name would help recoup the huge expense of recording their album, which is being produced by the last Yes singer, Trevor Horn. Reaction to the plan from the remaining ex-Yes men has been a mixture of amusement and anger. Said their one-time manager, Brian Lane, who now handles the ultra-successful Asia: "It's like Joe Bugner trying to make a comeback." Steve Howe, still managed by Lane and now ensconsed in Asia was more forthright: "I knew all about this ages ago. I think they are jumping back into the frying pan. This isn't a thoroughbred Yes project. They just looked up in their phone books for a lead singer and thought, 'Oh yes, Jon Anderson.' I think their coming back is one big 'ugh.' It started out as Cinema and then got into deep water for six months they went no further. They didn't have a singer so when they asked Jon he said he'd only do it if they

PHOTO: ERIC ROBERTS

Holdout Steve Howe: "This isn't a thoroughbred Yes project."

called the band Yes. Now everybody is rubbing their hands thinking they'll make a million dollars. But they've not checked it out. Why should I have to worry about Yes anymore? It was a big chunk of my life and now can it come back, when it was called Cinema only a few weeks ago? Yes was from a certain time in history and those first three LPs I did with them were the real golden days of Yes. That was the creative time for Yes when everybody was pulling together. That's what's good about Asia now. I'm not doing Asia for the money—it's because I want to play in a good band."

Cable Music Comes To England

Now the 24-hour music cable revolution is coming to Britain since the House of Commons gave the go ahead for cable licenses. Among the contenders to supply music are Thorn-EMI and Virgin Video. Says Richard Littleton of EMI: "This could be the most significant advance for rock music in this country." Already EMI has been enjoying its biggest records success since 1964 and the days of the Beatles with the help of Duran Duran and their powerful videos. And cable is changing the way British artists are presented. Culture Club and the dreadful Haysi Fantayzee are among those non-touring type artists who have achieved fame through video. Actually, Haysi Fantayzee have decided to risk public appearances by touring the UK to promote their new single "Sister Friction." But they'll only be singing over backing tracks, and if this goes well they'll put together "a real band." Remember those? UK cable TV is due to start in November and a pilot scheme has already started in Swindon, believed to be a small town due west of London . . . David Bowie, charting high with "China Girl" and fresh from his exciting London concerts, is now confronted by tales of his past. His former manager, Kenneth Pitt, has published a book called *David Bowie: The Pitt Report*, which chronicles the years 1966 to 1970. Pitt was very hurt when Bowie moved on but, until now, has kept his peace and silence. Published by Design, the book tells of Bowie's early goals and the artist's frequent walks on the wild side.

Errata

The Yardbirds reunion at the Marquee was a great success, even though neither Clapton, Beck nor Page turned up. Original members Chris Dreja, Paul Samwell-Smith and Jim McCarty had fun blasting their way through "Over Under Sideways Down," "Still I'm Sad" and "For Your Love" while reviving the odd R&B classic, including "Smokestack Lightning." With John Knightsbridge on guitar and Mark Feltham on harp, the band sounded better than they did the first time around, even if Samwell-Smith was a fat, elderly gent and no longer the fresh faced schoolboy of yesteryear . . . Often as I go about my daily duties, people stop me in the street and demand to know, "What's gonna be the next big thing?" Usually I haven't a clue. But now I speak out freely without fear about a Scottish group called Topango Afterglow. I saw them in Edinburgh and they are amazing—a Tartan punk-a-billy group, frantic, romantic and riddled with riffs. You will probably never hear of them again, so I cast their names into the void and wonder what will become of them.

PHOTO: LYNN GOLDSMITH

The B-52's (front row: Cindy Wilson, Kate Pierson, Fred Schneider; back row: Keith Strickland, Ricky Wilson): having fun is serious business.

Silliness With A Cutting Edge: The B-52's Regain Their Stride

By Derk Richardson

SAN FRANCISCO—The B-52's do best when no one takes them too seriously. That includes the bandmembers themselves. By their own admission, their new, fourth LP, *Whammy!*, is perkier, brighter and funnier than their previous outing, the six-song mini-LP, *Mesopotamia*. Some may view *Whammy!* as a return to the danceable silliness which made their first two albums, *The B-52's* and *Wild Planet*, so loveable in a disposable sort of way. For the band, it's been a change to have more fun.

"We did hit a crisis point," says singer Kate Pierson, sipping a bowl of miso soup in the coffee shop of a San Francisco hotel, "where we became pretty self-conscious, I guess when we did *Mesopotamia*."

"I think right before doing *Mesopotamia*," explains Keith Strickland, "we felt a little tension. We were having to write all new material because everything else had all been recorded. We were sort of starting all over so we felt a little self-conscious about becoming a parody of ourselves."

Whether because of its denser instrumentation, moodier tempos and more subdued humor or because fans and critics saw the collaboration with Talking Heads' Byrne as a compromise with artfulness, *Mesopotamia* didn't, in vocalist Fred Schneider's words, "catch on."

"I guess the album was a reaction to what we read about ourselves," Schneider elaborates. "We felt like we're viewed as being, oh, just too silly, and this and that. Now we just don't care. We know our fans want us to entertain them. So we feel more comfortable; we don't try to put on any sort of *act*, we just do whatever we can to have a good time going. Granted, we look funny, but that's what people want."

The B's have been dealing with what people want for the past five years, ever since they moved from Athens, Georgia, the hub of the new wave South, to New York City. In Athens, home of the University of Georgia, the five band members, including Ricky Wilson and Cindy Wilson, were able to fall together in a most casual way. "Probably whoever'd been there at the restaurant the night before we became a band would have been in the band if they'd stayed with it," Schneider muses in a soft voice. "It just happened that the five of us went to dinner with a friend of Kate's and he stayed upstairs and did homework and we went downstairs and jammed around."

Hardly aiming to become a commercial success, the group incubated in the party atmosphere of Athens. Recalls Schneider: "We started playing to friends in their living rooms. It gives you a way of communicating on a one-to one level rather than 'We're the entertainers, you're the audience, you stay there and we'll stay up here.' "

But their quirky adaptations of R&B and funk rhythms, in contrast to the dominant Southern boogie of the '70s, and their camp take on American pop culture, soon had record company representatives flying down to Athens to woo this strange group sporting outlandish clothes and beehive hairdos. "We'd think, 'Oh great! A free meal,' " Schneider remembers. And Pierson adds, "We'd just think 'What restaurant can they take us to?' It was a good thing we didn't take it too seriously; it was just too unreal, the thought that these record companies were courting us, so we just looked at it like *The Dating Game.*"

New York City, however, was a different story. Playing before the ultra-sophisticated new wave crowds at CBGB's, the band was put in a position where it *had* to produce. Schneider says that after moving to New York, "everything just changed to a situation where you had to be more creative in a shorter period of time. In Athens we had time on our side. We paid 25 dollars to rent a studio and paid a couple of bucks for electricity that we got from a restaurant, so we didn't feel any pressure to create. Now there's a little more pressure, but we try to keep it loose."

If *Mesopotamia* was a critical period in their development and self-assessment, the B's worked through it by returning to their party-up roots. They started by changing producers. The band members agree that working with Byrne "changed the mood of the music" (Stricklands's words) and lent an un-B52's-like seriousness to the music. New producer Steven Stanley, notes Pierson, "brought us out a lot. We can't help but scream and yell and dance when we're around him. We'd be singing and we'd see his head just flying back and forth."

Yet the B-52's are not just laughs. In conversation they are soft spoken and thoughtful, not at all as wiggy as their onstage personas. Moreover, they approach humor from several directions. "Some of our songs have more serious overtones," Schneider argues. " 'Whammy Kiss' isn't downright silly or funny and a lot of our other songs have a sincere meaning behind them even though it comes out funny."

"A lot of people equate humor with meaning nothing," Pierson opines. " 'It's just drivel, it's funny, it's meaningless.' I think the best humor comes out of serious situations that you look at in a certain way and see the humor in, too."

So with their comic perceptions derived from the rural South, their funky rhythms borrowed from James Brown and their ecccentric vocals owing to Yma Sumac and Yoko Ono, where do the B-52's place themselves in the scheme of contemporary music? "It keeps changing every time I look in the record bins," Schneider answers. Pierson suggests filing the group's records "under 'D' for 'dance'," while Schneider explains that " 'D' stands for 'dance' and 'depth'."

Depth? Are they taking themselves too seriously again? Naw. "Just last night (in Denver)," says Schneider, "there was a radio station contest and the prize was to meet us and we were wondering, 'What kind of prize is that?' We thought they ought to at least get T-shirts or something!" ○

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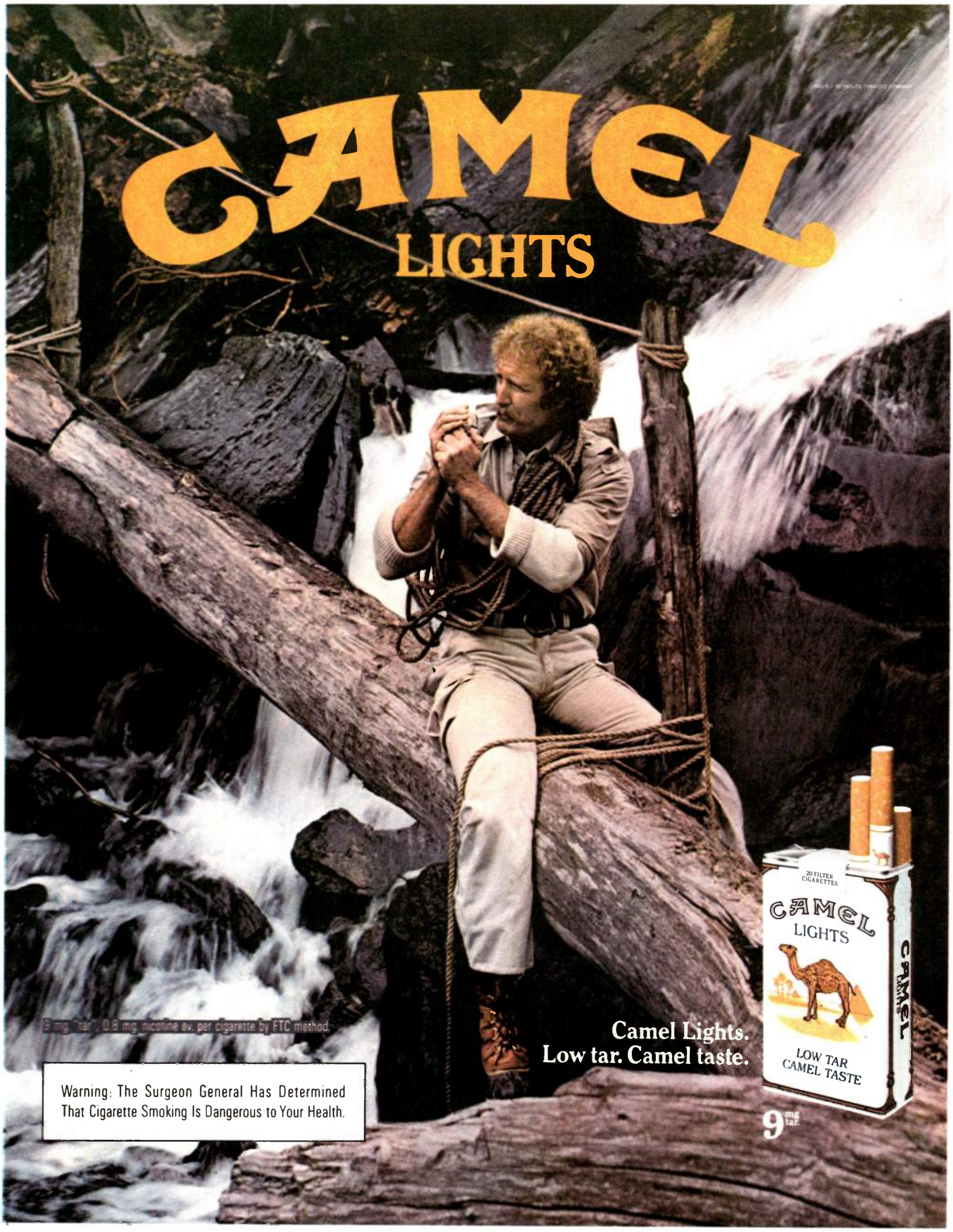
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The Red Rockers' Democracy: Change Is The Only Constant

NEW YORK—"We're a very politically oriented band, always have been, but we're not Communists," says Red Rockers bassist Darren Hill, in answer to a question regarding his band's name. "We just wanted something that would catch people's attention."

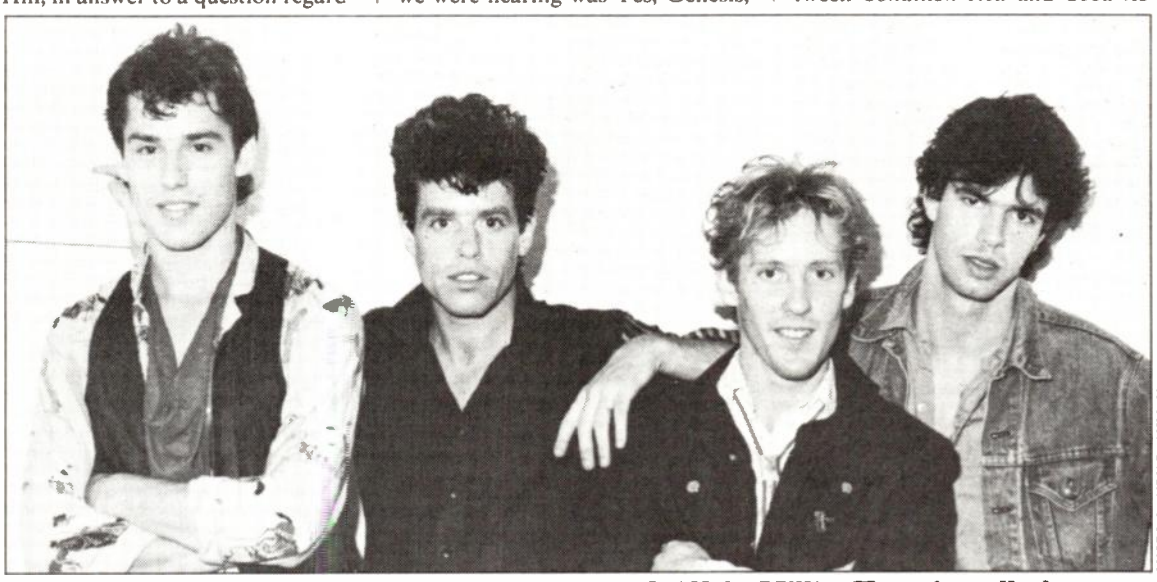


PHOTO: RANDY BACHMAN

Red Rockers (from left: Singletary, Reilly, Griffith, Hill): Changing all along.

Certainly, this New Orleans band is doing just that, with a debut album, *Good As Gold*, bulleting up the charts and a single, "China," following suit. One could be forgiven, though, for presuming Marxist origins for the Rockers; in their previous incarnation, they were a hardcore outfit spewing out charged political polemics against a backdrop of amps draped with hammer-and-sickle banners. How did life in the Crescent City lead them to emulate the British punk viewpoint, c. 1977?

"Boredom," Hill responds matter-of-factly. "We were looking for a way out; we didn't want to fit into the 9 to 5 schedule our parents lived. And the radio was boring; all we were hearing was Yes, Genesis, Led Zeppelin." But seeing punk godheads the Sex Pistols ("it was like a religious experience") and the Ramones was all the inspiration they needed, and they eventually left the suffocating confines of Louisiana for the promised land: California.

Not overnight successes ("we had a year of sleeping on floors"), their youthful dreams of making some noise were set back by losing Greenberg—"he got chicken"—and replacement Patrick Jones—"he got married." A steadying hand, in music and general know-how, came in the form of ex-Stiff Little Fingers drummer Jim Reilly, and the band—after 1981's *Condition Red* for 415 Records, done with Jones still behind the kit—was ready to forge ahead. With 415 signing a distribution deal with Columbia, the Rockers saw a chance to spread their message further, and so streamlined their sound to open up the airwaves.

Despite the great differences between *Condition Red* and *Good As Gold*, Hill insists there was no overt calculation involved in the changeover. "The difference between the records is that (producer) David Kahne only heard us three days before we recorded the first one, while for *Gold* we had a solid month of rehearsals beforehand." Besides, there is one dialectic these angry young men do adhere to, and that's the idea of constant change. "I think some people will say we're selling out, but we're not. We stopped playing most of the songs from *Condition Red* a while ago; we've been changing all along. That's our goal: to always aim for something new."

—Wayne King

Explosives: A Retro Image, A Current Sound, A Future

BERKELEY, Ca.—The horn-rimmed glasses favored by Explosives bassist Waller Collie would have suited Buddy Holly to a T. But this is 1983, and when you connect today's music with Collie's appearance, you find yourself wondering if you're in for nothing more than a little retro-rock. Not to worry. As their album, *Restless Natives* (on Ready Go Records, P.O. Box 9405, Berkeley, Ca., 94709), shows, the Explosives' music is a punchy, tuneful amalgam of three decades of rock music, including rockabilly, British Invasion pop, the hard-edged country-rock of the early Poco, Byrds-ish harmonies and melodies, a taste of the heavier guitars of the '70s—all presented in that "modern" production style that's really a throwback to the openness of the first rock 'n' roll records.

PHOTO: DAVID GANS

Explosives Collie, Fischer, King: Fusing the finest elements of rock 'n' roll styles.

"Being from Texas gives us a lot of freedom," explains Collie, noting that the state that produced Janis Joplin, Willie Nelson, Bob Wills, Buddy Holly and Boz Scaggs might come up with anything."

The Explosives—Collie, guitarist Cam King and drummer Donnie Ray Fischer (who replaced group founder "Ready" Freddie Krc early this year)—are veterans of the "progressive country blowup" that put Austin on the map a decade ago, and have, in Collie's words, "done our share of backup work with Jerry Jeff Walker, B.W. Stevenson, and a lot of people nobody outside of Texas ever heard of." When the Explosives were formed in 1979, "punk was happening and new wave was real new. It gave us an environment in which we could try a lot of different things."

The interest generated by *Restless Natives* has attracted the attention of several major labels, and in between gigs they've been in a Richmond (California) studio with Cook recording additional material. "What *Restless Natives* is is a real fancy demo," Collie asserts. "We're ready to move up now."

—David Gans

Motivated By Abject Failure, The Plimsouls Find A Sound

ANGELS CAMP, Ca.—If you buy Peter Case's claim that the Plimsouls never once considered disbanding after being dropped by Planet Records shortly after the release of their debut LP in 1981—and his assertion that they wrote their best material during that period—then you'll see the truth behind the vocalist/guitarist's characteristic flippancy when he states that "failure was the best thing that ever happened to us."

Signed in the post-Knack flurry that swept up Los Angeles' most popular bands at the end of the '70s, the Plimsouls made an album which was, in Case's assessment, an immature work. "The influences were coming through in lumps," he says, instead of blending the band's '60s rock, R&B and folk styles into something of their own. *The Plimsouls* didn't make Planet any happier than it made the band, and it wasn't long before the two outfits parted company.

"We'd always had a really strong live thing to lay back on, so we lived off that," says Case from behind cigarette, shades and endearingly curled lip. "We moved into this rehearsal space behind a strip joint—a really sleazy place, with guys living in boxes out front. It was the winter after the first album came out, and we were without a record deal.

"We played there all day, and every weekend we'd go out and play some strange place." When bassist "David-O" Pahoa broke his hand, Jeff Eyrich filled in—and stayed on as producer when Pahoa was reactivated.

"Jeff just leapt in and took over," Case enthuses. "He'd been a fan of the band, and he contributed a lot to our sound." Working in the wee hours after paying sessions were over, the Plimsouls cadged enough studio time to complete "A Million Miles Away" and "I'll Get Lucky," which they released on their own Shaky City label. "It was the first time we'd gotten anything on tape that really sounded like what we wanted."

The 12" single "sold more copies than any of our stuff on Planet did," says Case, and "got that sort of immediate response you get from things when they're happening." Geffen Records' people proved the most persuasive, so "we pulled the plug on Shaky City and left our executive roles behind."

Everywhere At Once, produced by Eyrich, includes the two Shaky City sides. It resounds with the soul, British Invasion and folk-rock influences that brought Case, Pahoa, drummer Lou Ramirez and lead guitarist Eddie Munoz together, but it's got a point of view all its own—along with a fearless power and a fiery instrumental sound behind Case's impassioned lead vocals.

So Case wasn't kidding about the opportunities presented by the Plimsouls' early "failure," and the band's determination not to lose energy: "Under the pressure of being *nouveau* washed-up, we pulled our whole sound together."

—David Gans

PHOTO: CRAIG DIETZ

The Plimsouls: Failure was a great motivator.

Echo & The Bunnymen: Harsh Words And High Standards

BOSTON—If you want to have a little fun, ask Echo & the Bunnymen lead vocalist Ian McCulloch what he thinks of U2. "They became hits in this country by doing it the American way," he protests, "getting the audience to sing along, waving a flag, glossy showmanship, and all that embarrassing stuff. I saw them and they were really powerful and tight and impressive, except they were crap. It was like watching Lynyrd Skynyrd or something."

Yet the night before U2's third album had gone gold in the U.S. while Echo & the Bunnymen's third release, *Porcupine*, remained a cult item. "If we get the right record out there," McCulloch muses, "and it gets played then maybe we will be in a position to show that the reason we're not playing that game is because the game's a ball of crap. The people might listen to us then, but at the level we're at now no one will."

That right record, McCulloch feels, is not *Porcupine*: "The album's difficult to listen to, especially side two. It's real heavy and there's not enough space in it."

Ever since Echo & the Bunnymen formed in 1978 featuring McCulloch, Will Sergeant on lead guitar, and Les Pattinson on bass, the Liverpool band has made music as uncompromising as its members' opinions. Dubbed "post-psychedelic" by some critics, Echo & the Bunnymen's sound (the name was made up by a friend and Echo was a drum machine that was replaced by Pete de Freitas in 1979) features dense, atmospheric arrangements, urgent vocals, and Sergeant's buzzsaw lead guitar slicing through the din. It's heady stuff that is exhilarating at times and downright dreary at others.

PHOTO: LAURA LEVINE

Ian McCulloch

"Because we do not come across as stupid," McCulloch continues, "people think that everything I sing about has got to be depressing just because it's serious. We have that brittle, jangly Telecaster sound. But our music has a lighter side to it. It's about some intelligent life in rock."

Though the group is a strong act in Britain, it has not yet made a concerted effort to establish a following on these shores. Their recent tour here consisted of two New York dates and a Boston show, period. Sergeant explains the band is in no hurry to make a name in the U.S. "We've got enough money to buy a crust at home, so why worry?"

Besides, McCulloch observes, "There are real hardcore people out there who just love us because we can make the spine shiver."

—Dean Johnson

Just A Man And His Machines: Joe Ely In The Modern World

By Jody Denberg

AUSTIN—Joe Ely is sweating. In a small, musty shack beside his ranch home just minutes from Austin, Ely has his T-shirt sleeves rolled up in the classic outcast style. He is hunched over his brand new custom-made guitar embellished with small pool ball replicas inlaid along the frets. Today, like every day for the past six months, Ely has spent his hours getting acquainted with the synthesizers, mixing board and computer he recently purchased in the do-it-yourself spirit of the '80s.

Miles from the nearest honky-tonk and removed from the pressures of recording in professional studios with his band, Ely is preparing to foist upon the public a stylistically-updated version of his aggressive mixture of rockabilly, country and Jerry Lee Lewis-styled rock and roll. The question is, will the public be ready, willing or able to accept it?

Two years ago, it looked like Ely, Texas' rockin' rebel, was riding high. His fourth studio collection, *Musta Notta Gotta Lotta*, was named one of the year's best albums by *Time* magazine, while his acclaimed *Live Shots* album, recorded in England during a tour with the Clash and initially available here only as an import, was finally released Stateside. Ely's combination of hard-driving music and hard-living lyrics had won him the respect of his peers, but his lack of sales and airplay reflected the inability of his record label (MCA) and radio programmers to pigeonhole his eclectic mix of rock's roots.

Then, two years ago, Ely disappeared. By his own account he had played every bar in North America, and was ready for a change. "I felt like I was spinnin' my wheels out there on the road," he quips metaphorically, "so I just laid everything aside and sat down to write an album or two. I had all this stuff rattlin' around in my head and I had to write it down."

Ely came off the road with stacks of tattered pages, each with unfinished songs that he didn't have the time to work on. After choosing the songs which merited immediate attention, it became apparent to Ely that his band—a dynamic assemblage of musicians who are the southern equivalent of the E Street Band—couldn't be involved in piecing together the compositions. "Everything just kind of snowballed and I heard something different in my head that I wanted to try—no matter what," relates Ely. "So I tried working out the rhythms myself with an imbecile drummer, then adding the bass part, guitar and harmonies, just building a song like that, trying to get it like I heard it." Ely's speech, like his songs, is punctuated by long, dark, reflective pauses and rhythmic outbursts of enlightenment, though sometimes the singer ruminates deeply before speaking, as if the emotions so clear in his head could never be transmitted by mere words.

Still, with his career building momentum, Ely's decision to slam on the brakes continues to puzzle—until you consider that he has been on the road for close to half of his 36 years.

Ely left his home town of Lubbock—where he attended the same junior high school as Buddy Holly and took guitar lessons from Holly's teacher—after deciding that high school wasn't helping him achieve his goals. From there his wanderlust led him to Dallas and Houston, stints with several bands and hard lessons in the rigors of the road. "I got literally run out of Houston at gunpoint by a club owner," he recalls with the sort of laugh one has only in retrospect. "I said 'give me to the count of three to hit the door and I'll be gone.' I didn't look back and I didn't get paid for anything I'd done."

From there Ely headed for California, commuting back and forth to Lubbock and playing with the Flatlanders—a bluegrass-tinged country band that included Jimmie Gilmore and Butch Hancock, formidable songwriters with a knack for detail and melody. Both now live in Austin and front their own bands, and Ely frequently records their compositions.

New York was the next stop, a time Ely remembers as "sweet romantic misery" spent singing on street corners and the Staten Island Ferry before he hooked up with a multi-media troupe and departed for Europe. It was in Munich, Germany that opera conductor Ebberhardt Schoner, who had the first moog synthesizer in Europe, exposed Ely to the new technology. The two composed a white noise piece for a museum of modern art, and Ely decided he'd heard enough synthesizers for a while—before most of us had even heard of the monsters.

With the songs he'd written overseas in tow, Ely headed back to Lubbock and, after forming the first Joe Ely band, recorded his self-titled debut and the masterful *Honky Tonk Masquerade*, which still stands as one of the his best works. The music was rooted in country, but featured a rock 'n' roll urgency made doubly potent by pedal steel player Lloyd Maines' tendency to wail instead of weep. The records were recorded in Nashville, but Ely never was able to crack the city's tightly knit musical establishment.

"I came in there with both guns blazing, feeling like I had songs that could be played on the radio, and I just found that Nashville is a whole different animal." A trace of disgust crosses his face, though there's no bitterness in his voice. "I didn't get discouraged, I just kept putting together things that I felt like putting together."

Maines departed in 1978, but with the addition of sax player Smokey Joe, accordion master Ponty Bone and rip-snortin' lead guitarist Jesse Taylor, the band

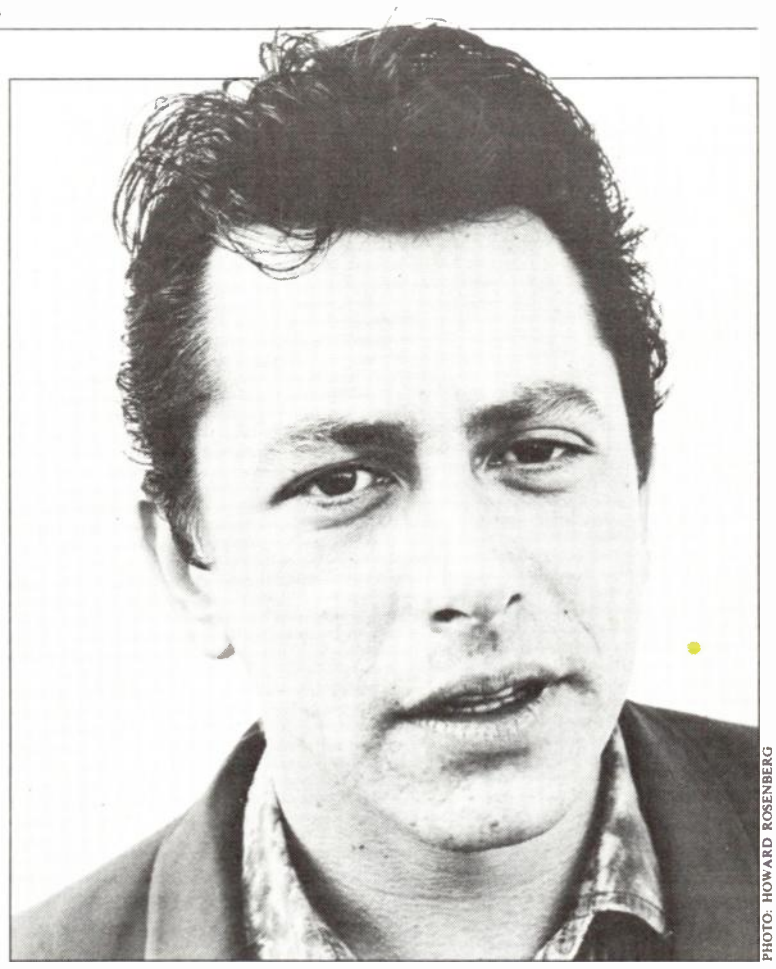


PHOTO: HOWARD ROSENBERG

Joe Ely: "I heard something different in my head that I wanted to try."

picked up more of a rock 'n' roll feel while maintaining the organic Tex-Mex underpinnings that made the Joe Ely band unique among its southern rocking peers. The band members splintered into numerous aggregations upon Ely's decision to go it alone for a while, though Ely plans to use them where he sees fit when he enters the studio to lay down the final tracks for his upcoming album, which he hopes will be released early this fall.

Though Ely's relationship with MCA has been strained, he is under contract for at least two more albums. His manager, Chet Hanson, says that new MCA president Irving Azoff's commitment to revamping the company's record division has given him "more reason to hope for success with MCA than ever before." Which is a good thing, because promoting Ely's new music will be a formidable task.

Even though his forthcoming album will feature synthesizers and drum machines, it would still be hard to categorize it as synth-pop. New tunes like "Cool Rockin' Loretta," with its Chuck Berry riffs and Ely's intense vocals set to handclaps and a drum machine, and "Locked In A Boxcar With The Queen of Spain," replete with imagery from the Jimmie Rodgers school of Americana, acoustic guitar and synthesizer, rock with the same abandon as Ely's older material; yet Ely's departure from his standard form is as startling as Neil Young's on *Trans* and Bruce Springsteen's on *Nebraska*.

"I'm sure it will shock a lot of people who'll say, 'what's this, digabilly or something?'," says Ely. "Basically I'm doing the same things, working in similar ways. (A synthesizer) is something that I should have had a few years ago, but it'd probably be in a hock shop in Detroit if I'd had it then. When I start doing sci-fi music, then hit the foxhole!" ○

The Romance of Queen Beehive

By Mark Mehler

NEW YORK—Remember how it used to be? He came gingerly to the door to pick her up, but first they shared a glass of wine with mum and dad. Then it was off to a movie and home before midnight, for a nightcap cup of tea and a tender kiss on the front porch. And when she went back in the house all aglow, there were mum and dad sitting arm-in-arm on the couch watching television. Mari Wilson remembers, because that's exactly how it happened last week.

"Romance is what I'm all about," says she of the foot-high beehive hairdo. "My date did kiss me at the door, and it was lovely. I think the '80s can be pretty crude. There isn't anything wrong with reviving some of the good things of the '50s."

Which is, in part, what the British Mari (pronounced Mary) Wilson is doing with her unusual hairdo, '60s-style pop vocals and campy stage show, featuring the 11-piece Wilsations, who sport monikers like Hank B Hive, Wilbur Force, Kurt L'Amour and Cinderella. Wilson's debut LP, *Show People*, has recently been released by London in the U.S. and for her and her combo to continue on their merry way through the contemporary pop world, record buyers here will have to not only share the fantasy, but buy it as well. Luv & kisses won't keep an 11-piece band in champagne and chocolates forever.

"We'd still rather do it this way than make money," says Wilson of her big-band approach, which she describes as a combination of James Brown, Bette Midler and the Waltons.

"We want to dispel forever the notion of 'cabaret.' It sounds like cheap bar mitzvah, wedding things. There's a rock club in England, Dingwalls, where the audience never claps because that would be uncool. We wanted to play there, despite the risks. So on I come in my sequined gown—you know we're a bit tongue-in-cheek—and they're wondering, 'Who the hell is this?' But after awhile they figured out they didn't have to stand there and be hip anymore, they could enjoy themselves. We're finally going to eliminate the idea that if something isn't serious, it must be trivial."

PAUL COX/REINA LTD

Mari Wilson: "The '80s can be pretty crude."

Keeping the group together for a year without big record sales, however, has necessitated such adjustments as sleeping five to a room, doing their own packing and crating, and appropriating promoters' wine for in-transit parties. The only apparent luxury item is Peter Cannon, a hulking hairdresser who travels full-time with the band to keep Wilson's beehive straight and strong.

Wilson herself, at age 26, continues to live in her parents' home, both to save money and to "keep me down to earth. I still have to do my own washing up; my parents don't treat me like a star. I also enjoy my own company, and my mum and dad respect that."

In her native land, where as Queen Beehive she has become something of a cult figure, if not a recording star, Wilson has been walking a fine line between the frigid strictures of camp—"I preach Tupperware"—and the genuine desire to be recognized as a first-rate pop singer. In her private life there is a similar dichotomy: maintaining the glib persona to support the hairdo, while living as a responsible adult.

"I'm really a neat, tidy, well-brought-up girl," she claims, adding that her strong practical streak stems largely from a diabetic condition that precludes the potential for much excess. Professionally, too, the diabetes causes Wilson to walk the straight and narrow, for fear of the consequences should she be at all lax in treating the disease. "I'm not a prima donna," she explains, "but sometimes, because of the diabetes, I get tired easily, and in England, if you throw one minor tantrum in front of the wrong people, that's it. I have to always get enough sleep and be sensible. This is the wrong business for a diabetic."

Born in London, Wilson grew up listening to pop standards (" 'You Made Me Love You' will be around when I'm 60") and later moved from Sinatra to Dusty Springfield and the vintage '60s girl groups. When she visited the U.S. in the early '70s, she became enamored of the Philadelphia and Motown sounds.

Returning to England, she worked as a sales coordinator for Global Van Lines, handling myriad clerical tasks with aplomb, and moonlighting as a background singer in the evenings. A single she recorded with Tot Taylor (now Teddy Johns, who wrote all but two of the tracks on Wilson's LP), "Dance Card," got some notice and shortly thereafter she hit on the idea of the Wilsations, a "wild and wacky group" whose minions include a Woody Allen-lookalike, a "boy with nice teeth" and assorted other jesters and cutups. The Wilsations have since toured incessantly across the European continent and hope to do the same here if the LP catches on. Wilson says the group will tackle any venue. "This is a live show. The bad reviews we've had are people who've never seen us perform."

Meanwhile, the singer is collaborating with trumpeter Chris Smith on her first songwriting, and has just completed demos for another LP, described as "a little more soul and uptempo dance music. I don't want too many ballads. When I'm 35 I can be Peggy Lee, not now."

"You know there's so much talk about glamour, about my hairdo, but, when you come right to the point, the song is what's important. How do you bring a song across to people? Certainly we have a gimmick, but I think there's something backing it up." ○

Soul Survivor William Bell Gets Ready For The Future

ATLANTA—As soul veteran William Bell tells it, twenty-one years in the music business don't quite convey the full meaning behind the title of his new Kat Family LP, *Survivor*. "I walked in on a robbery in my office," he explains, gesturing to show that we're sitting in the very room he's talking about, "and I survived *that*. I was just beginning to work on the album and we had not come up with a total concept for it. . . . I said, jeez, this title could have far-reaching implications. It pertains to love, to life, to career, to everything.'

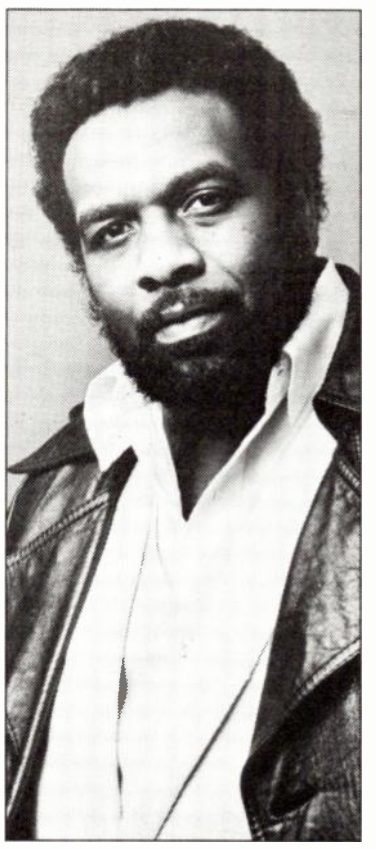
The man who wrote "Born Under a Bad Sign" and the Otis Redding memorial, "A Tribute to a King," obviously understands survival well. With his album, a new single ("Playing Hard to Get"), and plans to launch his own record label (Wilbe Records) in the fall, Bell has good reason to want to be around when the future rolls in.

Not that his past exactly lacked thrills. During the '60s halcyon days of Memphis-based Stax Records, Bell scored hits with "Everybody Loves a Winner," "You Don't Miss Your Water," and, in a spirited duet with Judy Clay, "Private Number" ("a beach music classic," he points out smiling, rerecorded on *Survivor* with Margie Alexander). Bell also went gold in 1976 with the Mercury release, "Trying to Love Two."

His Stax days singing, composing and producing with the likes of Otis Redding, Booker T. Jones, and Isaac Hayes were a high point for Bell both personally and professionally: "Everybody was family. . . . All of the artists that had writing capability, if we knew another artist was coming in for a session, especially if they needed a hit record, God, we'd stay up all night writing a song for them because we wanted everybody to have a hit. We wanted everybody to be on the charts."

Leading the line-up on Bell's new label will be fellow Stax stalwart Eddie Floyd ("Knock On Wood," "Raise Your Hand"). Also planned is a "Hooked on Booker T.-type" tribute to keyboardist Booker T. Jones by the Atlanta musicians who back Bell on *Survivor*.

Tour plans and writing and production chores for both his own records and Wilbe's artist roster leave Bell with no shortage of projects to keep him occupied. "I'm always reaching for a little higher plane,"



William Bell

he says philosophically, striking just the attitude you might expect from an artist determined to be a soul survivor. **—Anthony DeCurtis**

Stix' Exit Puts Damper On Crusaders' 30th Anniversary

NEW YORK—This was supposed to be a year of celebration—the 30th anniversary of the Crusaders, pioneers of jazz/R&B fusion. It turned out more like a wake.

"I don't know why it happened," says Joe Sample, still registering a mild form of shock. "I'm confused. I just never dreamed that Stix Hooper would leave the band."

Hooper, a founding member, went off earlier this year to pursue an acting career, leaving the Crusaders as a duo—Sample on keyboards and Wilton Felder on sax. Though the two will retain the Crusaders name for joint projects, the spirit of the genuine article is gone.

Sample, who has recently released a solo LP, *The Hunter* (Felder also has a new solo LP, *Gentle Fire),* says the Crusaders "have been fighting since we were 12 years old. That wasn't it. I can only talk for myself. Everything I've done or ever wanted to do is music-related. I never wanted to be an actor or a baseball player or anything else. It's my whole life."

Thus, Sample and Felder plan to keep busy with various solo and Crusader recording projects, tours, soundtracks and the like. Among the upcoming events: a Sample-penned score for an ABC-TV movie highlighting the antics of Laurel and Hardy; a Crusaders LP, *Ghetto Blaster,* featuring vocals by Larry Graham ("the ghetto blaster is the ultimate urban symbol for a love of music," says Sample); a tour of Asia and Australia (through mid-August) and a series of U.S. college dates in the fall.

Sample and Felder have been primarily dipping into the Los Angeles pool for session help on their LP, and though Sample notes, "I'm compatible with them to a point," there is the clear implication that 30 years of togetherness produces more beautiful music.

"I admit it's all kind of sad, like a divorce in a sense," Sample sighs. "But everybody's still good friends, and it isn't like we didn't have to make musical compromises before.

"You know," he concludes, "you can talk about 30 years, but birthdays, anniversaries aren't very important. I try not to think about them anymore." **—Mark Mehler**

Rubinoos: Back In The Big Leagues

WOODSTOCK, N.Y.—"The last time we made a record," says guitarist songwriter Tom Dunbar of the Rubinoos, "the songs were on the level of 'Your momma's gonna be pissed if I spend the night.' Teen stuff. I'm not saying we've become a heavy AOR group, but we're well into our 20s now, and the material's got to be a little more grown up. I can't relate to what we did then. It was another era."

The Rubinoos—Dunbar and singer Jon Rubin—have just launched a new era with a five-song mini-LP for Warner Bros. under the production guidance of Todd Rundgren and Utopia. The record, the Rubinoos' first in four years (the band cut two LPs for Berserkley, *The Rubinoos* and *Back To The Drawing Board*), is scheduled for mid-September release.

Though they had initially sought the working partnership with Utopia, Rubin says he and Dunbar had some reservations.

"I didn't see how the members of Utopia (Rundgren's role as executive producer involved only mixing and generally overseeing the project) were going to mesh into one unit. I thought there might be disagreement and confusion in the studio, but right from the start it was obvious they've been together so long they're like one, with the same set of personal tastes. And as our backup band, they grooved so heavily together that our job was easy."

Among the five original Dunbar compositions on the new record are dance tunes ("Faded Dream"), a Beach Boys-style ballad ("Crash Landing") and other pop-rock confections, all with vocals mixed far out front, a Rubinoos trademark. Rubin says the new material differs from previous efforts in its extensive use of keyboards and overdubs.

Since co-founding the group as a couple of 13-year-olds in '70, Rubin and Dunbar have hung tough amid a series of label and distributor problems, ill-timed band defections and shifts in popular tastes that invariably left the group in the cold.

"We got pretty disgusted," says Dunbar, noting that until the Utopia connection was made, "we began to think it would never happen." Though he realizes that success is by no means guaranteed, "It's nice to be back in the studio."

—Mark Mehler

INTO THE LIGHT

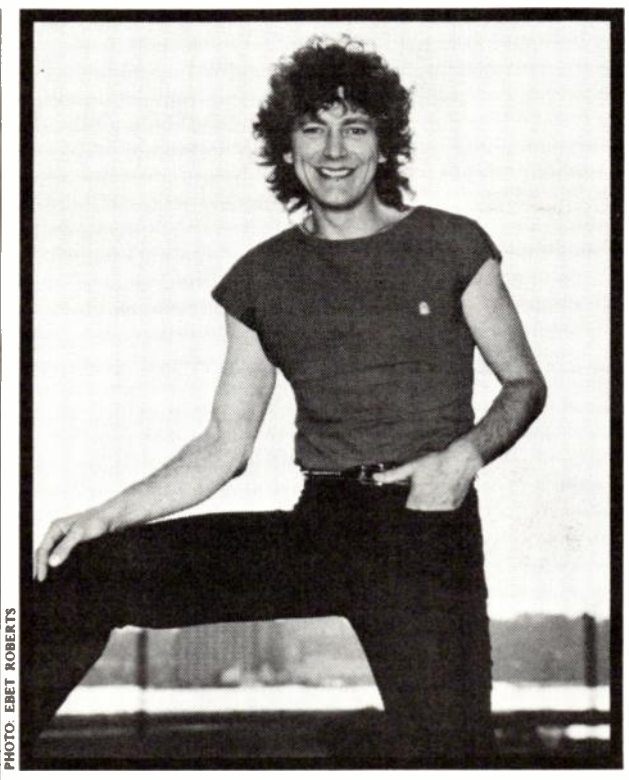


PHOTO: EBET ROBERTS

Led Zeppelin now a fond but distant memory, Robert Plant turns his attention towards a new solo album, a new band and a world tour – all part of a mission, he says, "to exude an air of positivity rather than one of darkness and pondering."

Continued from page 1

ham's unexpected death, Led Zeppelin announced their breakup. Zeppelin fans had speculated endlessly about who might be drafted in as a substitute, but in vain. The three remaining members believed that Bonham was irreplaceable, and rather than limp along without him, they decided to call it a day.

The end of Led Zeppelin had a profound impact on Robert Plant. He had been friendly with Bonham for years, and it was he who had put forward Bonzo's name to Jimmy Page as a suitable drummer for the group—they had played together in the Birmingham-based Band of Joy. Bonham's death was a personal loss, and probably served to remind Plant further of the transience of life, because it was only three years earlier that he had lost his young son through illness.

Besides the distress Bonham's death caused Plant, the band's demise left him musically adrift. Led Zeppelin had always been a tightly knit group, its members seldom straying far beyond the confines of their joint activities, so after twelve years of musical introversion, Plant found himself having to face up to the challenge of starting over, without the benefit of support from his friends. And, as he is quick to point out, he was a singer, not an instrumentalist.

As Plant describes it, the task before him was imposing, but less than two years later his first solo album, Pictures at Eleven, *was moving rapidly up the charts. Though he was encouraged by the record's sales (it reached number three in the States and number two in Britain), and by its critical reception, Plant was particularly delighted with his own personal achievement in bringing the project to fruition. Almost immediately he began work on a second album,* The Principle of Moments, *which has just been released on his own new label, Es Paradar, distributed in the States by Atlantic.*

On June 7th I met Plant in a London hotel. It wasn't difficult to spot him there, because among the brisk, neatly suited businessmen who passed to and fro in the marbled foyer, Robert Plant was something of an outsider. He is almost 35, tall, well built, and lightly tanned; on that occasion he was wearing a faded black jumpsuit, with white espadrilles on his bare feet. He looked as though he would be more at home on a Greek island than in the bustle of urban London.

Plant is a gentle and courteous man, who acts with firm composure. He's extroverted, but you can see that life has mellowed him, and there is a fundamental seriousness in his character that regularly comes to the surface in conversation. He's humorous, but he is also a private person; while he's prepared to talk about almost every issue that touches on his music, he is guarded about anything that concerns his friends and family. For instance, at one point during the interview he mentioned that he is now separated from his wife, Maureen, but it was clear that he wished there to be no further reference to the matter. The abiding impression I was left with after talking to Plant—our second meeting within a few months—was of a highly sensitive man, devoted to his music.

Do you feel you have more freedom now than you had with Led Zeppelin?

Most definitely. But freedom is something that I wouldn't have considered with Zeppelin, because I was quite happy. Now that I'm finding my own feet, I can see that my approach and my whole ideology have changed tremendously.

What is that ideology? What are your goals and visions?

I would say that my goal is to continue making music that is as varied as I can imagine, and, in my travels, to meet people who might come along with me for perhaps a few months. Their appearance will probably leave an indelible mark on my musical knowledge, which means that in five years' time my voice may well have the same qualities, I may have the same style, but I will be surrounding myself with ideas that are quite different from what's going on now.

You've said that with Zeppelin you felt ostracized from other musicians. Was that a consequence of your popularity?

Well, we were kind of a family, and when we worked we didn't have support bands, so we never got to know the young musicians on the way up. Nor was I much of a clubgoer, so I didn't get much of a chance to have a look around. Now, though, I meet at least one or two new people every day, and I get approaches from the most remarkable angles and directions.

You seem very open to change.

I was talking to a drummer friend of mine recently and we both agreed that the only reason why he and I are really going for it now is because we possess the quality that a lot of people tend to lose, either out of choice or out of neglect, and that is "keenness." It's a really corny word, but it's apt. And it seems great that, providing you are good at what you do, you can draw in people from all over the place and do anything—anything at all.

Do you have much company pressure regarding what you do?

No. There was never any pressure on Zeppelin, so there should never be any pressure on me. I'm the artist, and if I don't want to go out on tour, or feel uncomfortable about doing so, there's absolutely no pressure that they can exert on me—or anybody, for that matter. You make your own rules, and you should only go where you want to go. Who wags the dog's tail, after all? I really believe the artist can't just turn it on if the well's dry. You can only turn it on when the soul is so full that it's just going to pour out. I think you'll find that on the new album there are some dramatic moments that are strange, and maybe a little uncomfortable for the listener, but at the same time they *transfix* you. You see, although people say that I've got a good voice, and that I express myself well, they also say that I've been something of a "hero." But I don't play any roles, and I don't really care who wants what—the only time it's worth giving is when you're full of feeling and you can't suppress it any longer. Then you might manage to induce the same emotion in people around you.

You must find it very different from working with Zeppelin, when you could share responsibility with the others. Now the buck stops with you.

Yeah. If Jimmy and I had disagreements we would curse each other to everyone else, but be very polite to one another. We knew what we were talking about, because we were very close. With these new people it's extremely difficult, especially because my track record is a little daunting for anyone who is going to step into the situation with me. The fact that *Pictures at Eleven* actually exists at all is a major milestone in my life—I fought to put it out when I did because I couldn't sit on it any longer. It was very respectable in the way it was received rather than in the way it sold: whatever commercial success it had was greatly outweighed by the fact that it was reviewed seriously. I imagine that a lot of critics approached it with the attitude of "Oh, here we go, here are the death throes of another hero of the Sixties and Seventies," so it was wonderful to see that people actually listened to it and analyzed it, rather than just wrote it off.

The last time we met you said your new album, *The Principle of Moments*, was going to be quite different from *Pictures at Eleven*. How do you feel about it now that it's done?

It's a departure. On this album there has been a distinct effort—no, effort is the wrong word—there's been a movement towards the creation of more space and light within the whole thing. There is still a lot of intensity, but the delivery is different. Also, strangely enough, there are more tunes for tunes' sake. I used the same band and we recorded it in stages again: like the last time, we used two drummers, Phil Collins and a guy called Barriemore Barlow (former Jethro Tull drummer). The two tracks that Barry played on are very stark, so for me and for the people who are accustomed to listening to what I do, they add a really pleasing alternative to conventional drumming.

I would say that it is probably, and pleasantly, the most fragmented piece of work I've had anything to do with since *Physical Graffiti*. For that reason, if anyone were to analyze the emotion in it, or its musical direction, there is nothing they can get a grip on. And that's very healthy. On one track one person's influence might be stronger, and on another somebody else's, so the album swings from one intention to the other. I've had a part in everything, though, and in that way it's getting easier and easier.

How long are you going to tour?

I would think that there's a distinct possibility I'll tour for at least a year. The musicians themselves have become far more comfortable and at ease with the situation. Usually when you talk to a journalist you can smooth over any rough edges by saying, "Yeah, it's coming along nicely," and all the rest of the bullshit that goes with it, but I don't need to do that. It actually has gelled now, and in every respect we are a working unit.

We're playing together every day. We finished recording the album in the middle of May, and I took a little time off because I think the studio had got to me a bit. Because of our intention to make the album different, we took great pains to make sure we didn't overdo anything. It's harder to understate than to flood a track; when you try to take everything away and just leave the bare essentials and the occasional dynamic effect, it can take that much longer.

Has working with new musicans changed your style at all, or are you very much the dominant musical personality?

Sometimes it changes a bit. I'm only dominant when I don't like what's going on.

Who have you been listening to recently that might have influenced your music?

No one consciously. I listen to Gustav Mahler occasionally; Ry Cooder, the Beat—I go from one extreme to another. I've also been listening to the Cocteau Twins: they're very spacey, like a modern-day version of Kaleidoscope. Incidentally, it seems as if a lot of music has gone right 'round and is knocking at the door of Clear Light and bands like that. I was talking to Echo and the Bunnymen the other day, and from what they were saying it appears that there is a resurgence of interest in all that sort of early psychedelia.

I know you used to listen to folk music, to groups like the Incredible

PHOTO DAVID MONTGOMERY

The mellow Robert Plant: from the dark fury of Led Zeppelin to an album full of space and light.

String Band. Were you influenced at all by their vocal style?

I always admired Mike Heron and Robin Williamson's vocal approach, just as I liked Dave Swarbrick (of Fairport Convention) and Richard Thompson. That kind of Eastern European folk intonation is beautiful—I don't think I can do it, but it is very lovely. If I manage occasionally to touch it for a second, then that's all well and good, and I'm pleased to know I listened to the music closely enough to hit it just like that. It's not easy, especially because I have a vocal style that isn't very changeable—or rather, which I have no wish to change. As long as everything underneath is moving all the time, then my voice should be the characteristic across the top.

Who did you listen to in the early days who influenced your singing style?

I used to listen to what were, in England, the more obscure American hits—a lot of New Orleans rock, what you might call R&B for whites. It was mostly remarkable one-off records that set the whole imagination tingling. It was really "roots" music—the vocals were very plaintive. Although it wasn't Robert Johnson or Blind Willie McTell, it was still very poignant, and had a remarkable effect on how I wanted to sing. I realized that immersing myself in country blues on a folk-club circuit was perhaps too well-mannered and predictable. There was just polite feedback coming from the audience. I wanted to get some balls, some shrieking, into my music, so that took me vocally more into the guttural American approach to singing, which I suppose people like myself, Robert Palmer to an extent, and definitely Lennon and McCartney got into. We all had a kind of edge on our voices which comes from American R&B. Steve Stills had that kind of voice too, as he had been tuning into that kind of stuff, as had Ry Cooder. We're all from the same school.

Since we're talking about influences, I'd like to ask if Jimmy Page's interest in the occult was really serious?

I don't think that Jimmy was particularly interested in the occult, but only in Aleister Crowley, as a great British eccentric. All eccentrics are interesting, but Crowley was a very clever man. Jimmy had an innocent interest in him, just as many people have fixations on individuals at one level or another.

I seem to remember reading that you blamed his dabbling in the occult for some tragic events in your life.

No, that's bullshit. I never said that; it's absolute poppycock. It wouldn't have made any difference who listened to one thing, or who did another. You can be anything, or do anything, and you don't have to affect your friends by what you do. At least not in your leanings and desires.

In retrospect, how do you assess your contribution to Led Zeppelin?

Zeppelin is still very wonderful and always will be. The tension in some of the tracks can't be touched by what I'm doing now. It's far superior in many respects—not in the quality of the music, but in the amazing moments. There are times of magic on every record.

What were the highlights?

Things like "The Wanton Song." I remember recording it, the whole session—it was so electric, so quick and so fruitful. "Trampled Underfoot" was another one. The more impromptu numbers are the ones that really come to mind, rather than the time-consuming things that were worked out and constructed.

In a previous interview you told me that your singing in Led Zeppelin was a form of "counterwork" with Jimmy Page. Exactly how did the two of you work out your parts?

There were so many elongated and freeform guitar sections, and at certain points in the proceedings there were anchor points, like junctions, which I knew were coming. Maybe four bars beforehand there would be a musical signal, and after a while I felt the natural need to express myself at the same time, so at these signals we developed instrumentally and vocally into the next pattern. I'd been listening to scat singing along the way, and maybe that was in the back of my mind. But the more flowing, searing notes that were shared between guitar and voice were very eerie and dramatic—and a hell of a risk too, because whenever it happened they were usually pretty high notes. I couldn't do it today, that's for sure—not right now, anyway! The fact that I didn't stop singing when the lyrics finished became one of my trademarks.

Besides the emphasis on the bottom end, there was a good deal of echo and reverb in Zeppelin productions. Was that the key to the band's "big" sound?

I suppose what you say is correct, but the combinations are infinite, really. The echo and the use of the voice in that style also made the music spacey and ethereal.

You didn't use quite as much echo on *Pictures At Eleven*.

Not in that way, no. But I'm sure that if I hit the road again I've got to throw it in because I enjoy it and it's me. It's nice to be able to play against the echo: you can get multiple vocal things going by just phrasing the voice at the right time, hitting a note, letting the echo do its bit and then compounding harmonizing with yourself until you've got a block of sound. I can get 32 voices in a matter of 15 seconds through that sort of compounding. Just to have something in the middle of nowhere taking off like that . . .

What would you regard as your major triumphs? And at what points in your life have you felt most fulfilled?

I felt most fulfilled upon the arrival of my children, because they don't really change. Obviously they have their own changes, but our relationship doesn't alter that much. Everything else has its fluctuations. I suppose I would have fluctuations with my kids too if I weren't a reasonable father to them. Besides that, I can't recall any particular triumphs, other than the fact that I've got very close to touching base a couple of times with some of Zeppelin's early success, and coming out of one or two situations when I thought "This is it . . . no more," then picking myself up and starting again. To that extent *Pictures At Eleven* will always remain a major part of my life, symbolically, if nothing else. One thing about being a member of a very close-knit family is that you can never ever imagine you're going to be without them; so when you have to re-evaluate your position and what it takes to make you function as a reasonable human being, you find that one of the most important things is to express yourself with whatever the gods have given you. Then you ask yourself, how on earth do I begin? You have to take it from the point where you realize that you do have to start, rather than sit around in the stately home or wherever, and get to the position where there is a piece of vinyl in front of you. The fact that people buy it is secondary—it sounds easy to say that, but I've had to go from fourteen years of insulation, away from everybody, pick my way through everything, and come up with a record that some people actually enjoy. Every step of the way was an experiment, dealing with each individual, dealing with the moments of frustration.

Being one of heavy metal's elder statesmen, how do you feel about the bands that have sprung up in the years since Zeppelin's formation?

Zeppelin emerged from the embers

Continued on page 30

DON'T LOOK BACK

(SOMETHING MIGHT BE GAINING ON YOU)

Down and almost out at the end of the '70s, their music, values and perceptions seemingly passé, the Kinks have been riding a hot streak in the '80s. Why? "Because we recreated what we started out doing," says head Kink Ray Davies, who then adds: "I'm amazed that people come out to see us play." Paranoia, too, is part of the story.

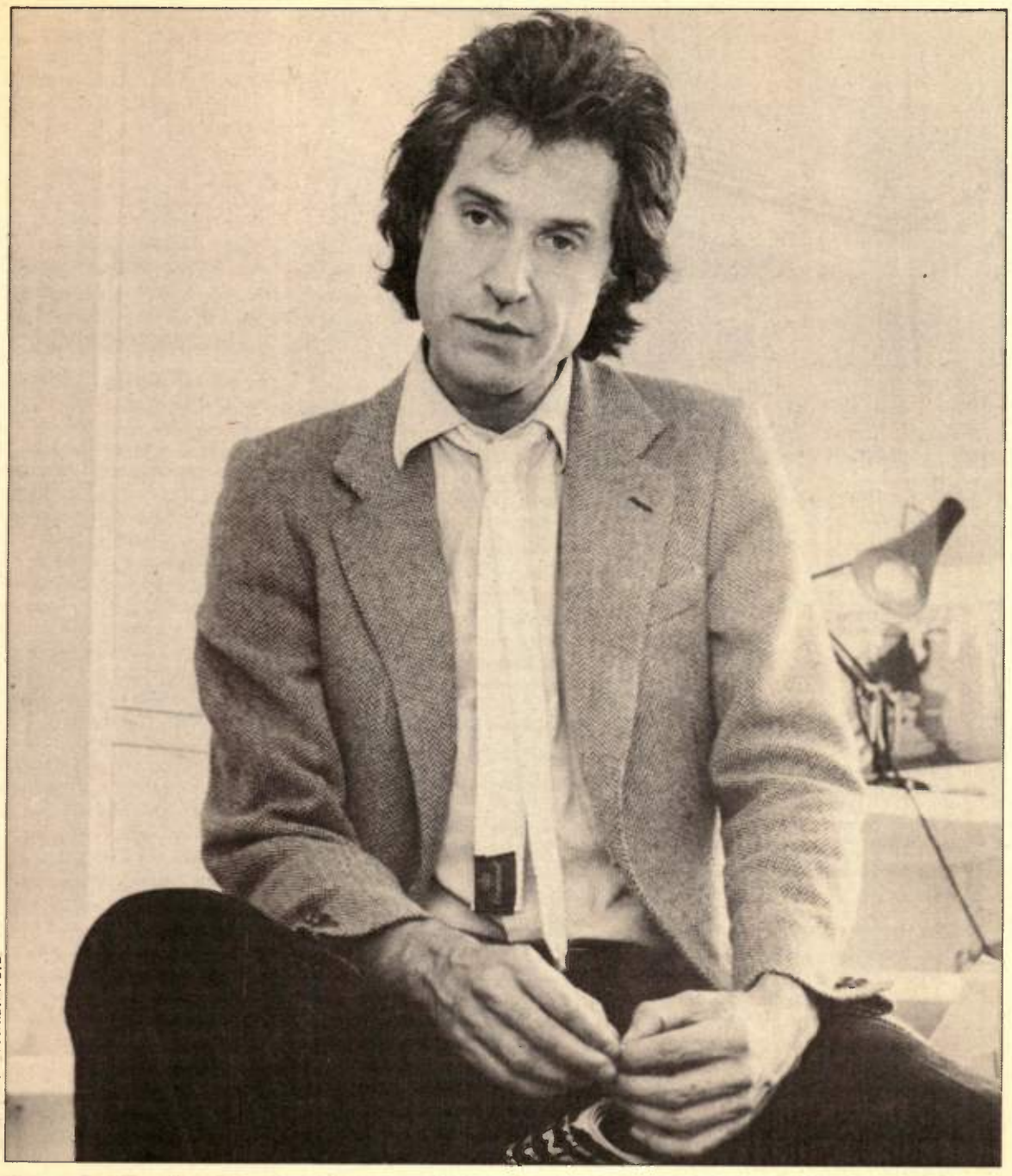


PHOTO ADRIAN BOOT/RETNA LTD

A pensive Ray Davies: "I'm a very nervous person."

BY JIM SULLIVAN

Ray Davies is sitting in his hotel room, talking about his first time in America. It was 1964, he was 19, and the British Invasion was beginning to take America by storm. The Kinks were riding the waves, fresh over from London to do a TV show and a few West Coast dates. They were on the launching pad of success.

And Ray Davies was scared out of his mind. "I would barricade myself in the room," the Kinks' lead singer, songwriter and occasional rhythm guitarist recalls. "I didn't know much about America. I didn't want to go out there. I thought I was gonna get shot."

"Now," says Davies, "I've grown to kind of love America." He keeps a flat in London, where he spent most of last year writing songs for an upcoming English TV special and for the Kinks' new album, *State of Confusion,* and one in New York. He's in New York now, at the tail end of the Kinks June jaunt. "I get into the swing of America," Davies says. "It makes me work faster, New York. The general atmosphere is very aggressive. It draws me out, because I'm a recluse, really. I still lock meself in. I don't mix at all."

And so, it seems, in two decades Ray Davies' American perspective has moved from guarded paranoia to guarded appreciation. Definite progress. Yet, when he's got the choice, Davies implies, he'd just as soon watch it all go on from the sidelines. A 20th century man who doesn't want to be here, as he sang back in 1971's "20th Century Man," "a paranoid, schizoid product of the 20th century." Growth and progress? "A mechanical nightmare." Modern art? "You keep all your smart modern writers, give me William Shakespeare. You keep all your smart modern painters, I'll take Rembrandt, Titian, Da Vinci and Gainsborough."

Davies has spent most of his personal life reluctantly living in the world of modern convenience and a fair share of his professional life writing about it. One of rock 'n' roll's first and most socially conscious songwriters, Davies is the quintessential participant-as-observer. In it, but away from it. He's an ingratiating performer, a wonderfully adept showman—and yet he'll talk about "what rock 'n' roll people do" as if he's an alien peering in at some odd, foreign spectacle.

The Kinks were outside the mainstream for years and years. They were in danger of breaking up throughout the '70s (remember the quaint, desperate rallying cry "God Save the Kinks!"?), and toward the end of the decade seriously running out of cash. Their kind of music, values and perceptions had faded from the popular front. Now, in a most interesting twist of fate, the Kinks are back on top. They're riding a hit single ("Come Dancing") and packing arenas across the country. Which makes them, clearly, not just one of the survivors.

"We've recreated what we started out doing," Davies says insistently. "We're a dance band with good lyrics." *We* is very much a fresh-sounding quintet—Ray, brother Dave, and drummer Mick Avory from the original unit; and the latest additions, bassist Jim Rodford and keyboardist Ian Gibbons.

What about that renewed popularity? "I don't think we're very popular. I'm amazed that people come to see us play," says Davies. He pauses. "Bullshit. We're the best rock 'n' roll band in the world today," he claims with a sly, gap-toothed grin.

Dave Davies, lead guitarist, is later asked the same question. He laughs tentatively. "I suppose we're more popular now," he answers. "For all the good and bad that is."

Let's ponder good and bad for a moment. Good: The Kinks are stars to a generation that may have first heard them when older siblings played "Lola" on the stereo; or maybe when they heard "Around the Dial" blast out of AOR radio in 1981. Which means the Kinks' audience has broadened beyond the cultists and they haven't been shunted off to the slag heap of nostalgia. The Kinks remain, by and large, a creative, potent, provocative force. Bad: There's been a loss of intimacy and idiosyncrasy. On '81's *Give the People What They Want* (a title that was less ironic than truthful) the Kinks pulled out the arena rock guns. (*State of Confusion,* although it begins and ends with power chord roars, is much less bombastic.) Concerts don't have quite the same feeling. They're not the parties-with-close-friends they were in the '70s. The Kinks are playing more to the far corners.

"I hope we don't lose our Kinkness, our individualness," says Dave Davies softly when some of this is brought up. "There's a certain kind of atmosphere about those old songs that's very special."

Ray Davies says making set lists —trying to balance the old and the new—is the one thing that bothers him most about the modern day Kinks. "There are songs I don't want to abandon. I like playing '20th Century Man,' but by the time we get around to it on stage, it's difficult to get the balance. It's very dif-

ficult for the people that work with us, the sound people and the lighting people, to keep up with too many changes. There's always somebody that's disappointed. We must be the only band that people go [to see] and when they leave the show they're over the moon with enjoyment and they're still disappointed."

Over the course of several talks between late 1981 and this past June, Ray Davies described, himself, variously, as: "a son of a bitch"—for not giving Rasa, his first wife and "great inspiration" any credit for singing on numerous Kinks' songs; "a nutter"—for when, at 12, he was placed in a school for maladjusted children; "a jumping jack flash"—"people kind of distrust me, they can't believe that I'm the same person that wrote 'Waterloo Sunset' "; and "really insignificant"—"I'm not that much to look at."

Eminently affable—don't think I've ever seen anyone so gracious with autograph seekers and starry-eyed fans—Davies nevertheless considers himself, basically, a social misfit. "I'm a very nervous person," he says. "Very quiet. I think it makes people even more nervous. I wish I could make people feel more comfortable with me."

Ray Davies doesn't talk like most rock stars. And quite plainly, the Kinks have never been like most rock bands.

In the early '60s, Ray Davies, who grew up as a "sheltered suburban kid," was living away from his home, with his sister Rose and uncle Arthur, attending Hornsey Art College by day and playing traditional jazz and blues with a band in Soho clubs at night. Davies says he was a good art student, but trapped by the educational process, by the dead-end "career opportunities" offered him. "I wanted to be an artist, a musician and [a youth employment officer] said, 'Well, we've got a few good jobs here. Do you like silk-screen printing? There's a good factory job, you can get an apprenticeship.' I said 'Fuck you, I'm not gonna do that. I'm good at art, I'm good at music.' All that optimism after the war . . . I was one of the bulge, the baby boom of the late '40s and early '50s. I was walking around the streets talking to meself, 'I've got to be better than all this.' "

He was hearing about this band, the Beatles, making hits; he saw the Rolling Stones do a fill-in gig at a club and said, "I think this is what I want to do. This is the most exciting thing I've ever seen." Ray discovered that his brother, Dave, living at home, was playing rock 'n' roll guitar with groups.

Dave was equally bored and pissed off. "When I first picked up a guitar," says Dave, about two years Ray's junior, "and listened to Buddy Holly and those people, it made me want to do something other than just go to school and learn a load of information I probably wouldn't use. I felt really liberated. I was thrown out of school when I was 15. I didn't have to make a decision 'cause they made it for me. I was chucked out 'cause I never went. Hooky, you call it."

Ray dropped out of college, linked up with Dave, friends Mick Avory and (bassist) Pete Quaife and the Kinks were formed, hitting the London scene as a hard rocking pop band. Dave was in the process of inventing the slashing, manic guitar style that would be later termed heavy metal. Ray was writing exuberant glad-to-be-alive-and-in-love-and-lust songs like "You Really Got Me" and "All Day and All of the Night."

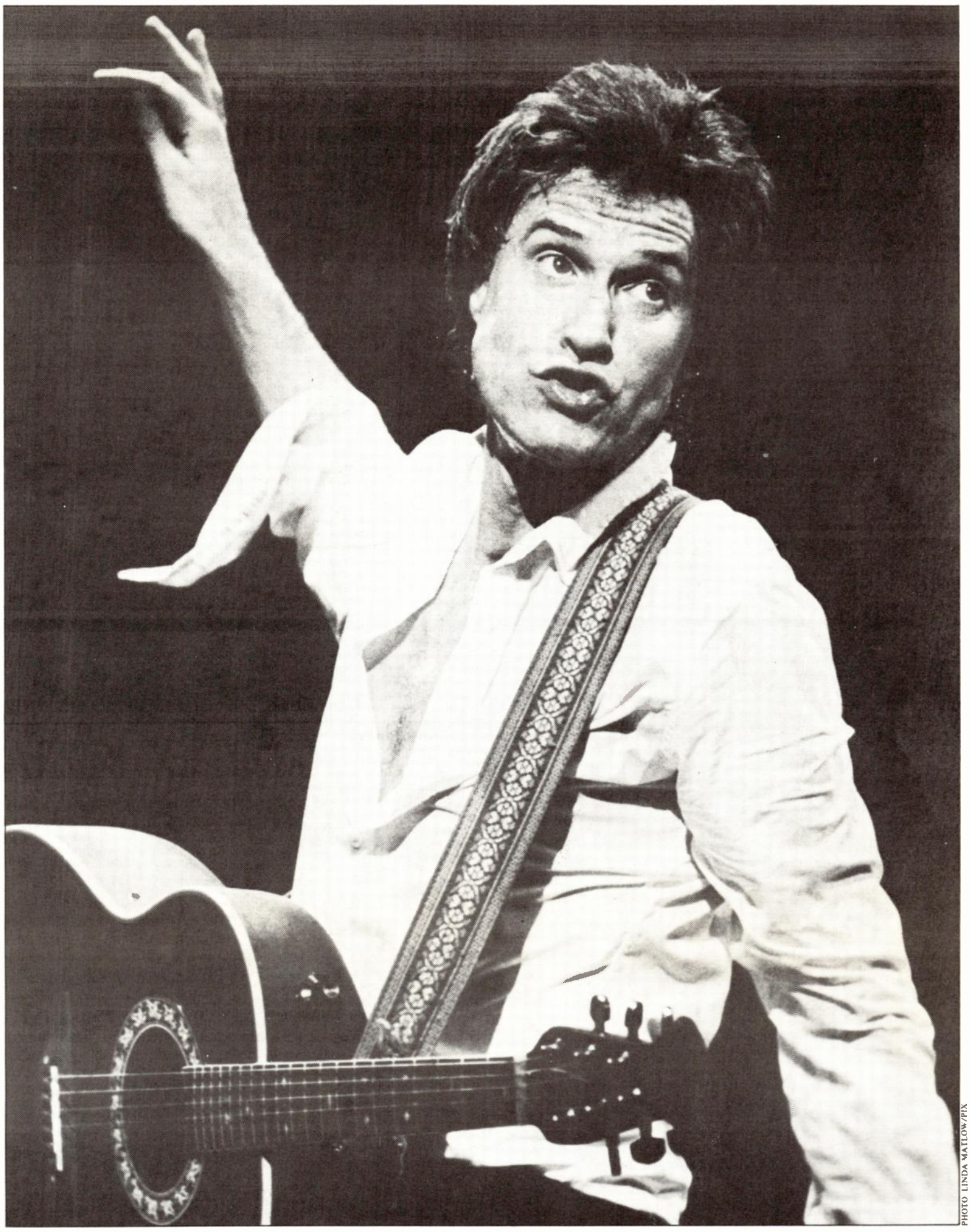


PHOTO LINDA MATLOW/PIX

With 'State of Confusion', Ray Davies and company retain their Kinkness.

Soon, however, Ray was asking the question, "Where Have All the Good Times Gone?," making statements like "It's Too Late" and "You Can't Win." Essentially, starting to develop a questioning, probing perspective that went beyond the usual rock 'n' roll concerns. What happened?

"I read a book by Noel Coward called *Future Indefinite,*" remarks Davies. "And I think he said, 'The greatest power I have is in my writing and I can say the most devastating things in a joke.' I think he learnt that from Shakespeare."

Hence was born "A Well Respected Man," where our self-centered *objet de respect* gets little of Ray's (new Kinks converts can meet similar characters in *State of Confusion*'s "Young Conservatives") and "Dedicated Follower of Fashion," a sharp poke at trendies. The path went on from there—"House in the Country," "Tin Soldier Man," "Two Sisters." But as late-'60s rock mutated one way—psychedelia, long guitar solos, drum solos—the Kinks steered their own idiosynchratic course. Albums from that period, *Face to Face, Something Else, Arthur, Village Green Preservation Society,* are mentioned by Ray as his favorites. It's a period he'll drift back to frequently in conversation and it wouldn't be far-reaching to term it their artistic heyday. It also coincided with a time, 1965 to 1969 to be precise, when the Kinks were banned from touring the States due to a dispute the band's management had with the U.S. Musicians Union. "I was really frustrated," says Davies. "I knew I had communication with kids. Fortunately, I kept writing songs."

When asked if there's a strand that runs through his songwriting, he replies, "All my work has an element of weakness in it. There's a duality in what I do. There's an element of weakness and an element of violence within me."

Violence? Consider this all-too-Kinksian tale of hotel trashing: "It got as pathetic as this. I threw a Guinness bottle against the wall once to smash up the room and it bounced back and hit me on the head and knocked me out." He laughs. "It's the humorous side that I like—which is always close to tragedy. That's where I get a lot of my input and energy from."

Songs from that period—such as "Afternoon Tea," "Victoria," "People Take Pictures of Each Other," "Waterloo Sunset"—teetered on fine lines, half sendup, half celebration of English mores, customs and traditions. They were personal songs of everyday people, pop songs of understated complexity, elegance and wit. The *Village Voice*'s Robert Christgau calls "Waterloo Sunset," where two lovers find solace amidst squalor, "the most beautiful song in the English language." With the exception of *Arthur,* in its own odd way a determined anti-war album, the songs seemed to exist in another, more genteel time, an England long past. Did that world exist?

"It existed for me," Davies answers.

But at the time, it was certainly out of step with . . .

". . . rock 'n' roll," Davies finishes, laughing slightly. "Certainly out of step with Led Zeppelin. The crucial period, with the war and the flag, the greatest but the silliest." Davies does a vocal take on Jimi Hendrix's "Star Spangled Banner," wailing off into his hotel room.

"I was going into my own form of escapism. I became like a recluse. I could see it happening and I was frustrated 'cause I wanted to come over and do something about it. Going out and doing concerts is doing something for people. I wanna see the waitresses, I wanna see the guys who work in factories.

"I'll never be able to make records like that again," he says later.

Why?

"Times are different. A lot of *Face to Face,* it's to do with the era, the times, where you live . . . I don't think you can do anything unless you're affected by the world. I don't feel I've done meself any good or done any justice unless I've made a statement about something I feel angry about. In that case, I'm just a cabaret entertainer."

And yet Davies, who, in concert, will interrupt any of the Kinks' songs for a call-and-response of "Day-O," incorporates elements of cabaret in the Kinks act.

"A sendup," says Davies. "Sometimes it's just a parody of what rock 'n' roll people do, a parody of Foreigner or something like that. Jim and I will get together, heavy metal pose, the guitar hero."

"The greatest thing that ever happened," Davies says, "is I saw a film of a Bill Haley concert in London and when Bill Haley left the stage, the kids got up on the stage and started playing the instruments. The kids could do it! That's why kids come to see gigs, certain groups, the Clash, the Pretenders, the Kinks . . . they say, 'You said something in a song I wanted to say.' I felt in the '70s that was being lost. It was technical rock, bands standing up there, you know, trying to look like gods. It was becoming an industry . . . In 1976 I started making *Misfits.* That's why I made it; I didn't fit in with *anything.* I hated my contemporaries—I hated the lifestyle of Paul McCartney. I didn't want to be like Elton John or Rod Stewart, most of all Rod Stewart who I grew up with."

Kinks

The Kinks have never been the steadiest of bands. Ray and/or Dave, off-and-on vegetarians, but never teetotalers, were always threatening to break it up in the '70s. Tales of disharmony are legendary. Years back, Ray and Dave got into a drunken fight on the morning of a Boston press conference and thrown out of the hotel. The press conference was moved to another hotel. One Davies brother boasted a black eye. During the Boston stop on the "Preservation" tour, Dave Davies stalked off stage early in the show and played his guitar from behind the curtain rather than share the stage with Ray. John Mendelssohn dredges up this Ray Davies quote in his liner notes to *The Kink Kronikles:* "I tried to stab Dave last week. Stab him. With a knife. We were having eggs and chips after a gig and he reached over with his fork and took one of my chips and I . . . could have killed him."

"It's something to do with being brothers," Ray Davies says after a couple of incidents are recalled. "It really has calmed down. It's much easier."

Dave agrees. There are still fights, but, he says, they're "subtler. We get on quite well now. We talk to each other. We didn't talk to each other for years."

Jim Rodford says it's the creative tension between Ray and Dave that propels the Kinks. "Dave's very rock 'n' roll," says Rodford. Ray, says Rodford, sees the Kinks in a broader context.

"I've never seen myself as a guitar hero," says Dave. "But when I'm in front of an audience something very different happens. At times, when I've come off stage, I've not been really sure of what has happened. You lose your identity; you become totally different."

Just as in 1965 Ray Davies' ambitions were growing beyond simplistic rock 'n' roll concerns, in the early-to-mid-70s he, like the Who's Pete Townshend, was moving beyond the confines of pop songs themselves. *Arthur* and *Muswell Hillbillies* set the stage. The concept period hit full tilt with the political satires, *Preservation Act I* and *Preservation Act II*, then went on to tales of domestic misery and fantasy (*Soap Opera*) and humorous, cutting swipes at the educational system (*Schoolboys in Disgrace*). The Kinks troupe—horn players, female backup singers, etc.—numbered up to 20 at one point. Shows encompassed film and music, rock 'n' roll and boozy cabaret. Artistically, the Kinks were often very good. Commercially, well . . .

"From 1970 to 1978 we sold zero," Davies says bluntly. "I had it in my head that I wanted to write musicals—which was bad for the band. People who I love, around me, in the band, were losing self-esteem simply because of my creativity. So I had to find a way that I could be creative and still give them some pride and dignity. I wanted to retain, regain, that spirit that I got when I heard 'You Really Got Me' for the first time on the radio."

In 1977, when they signed to Arista, the Kinks shifted course and, slowly, began the commercial renaissance that bore fruit around 1980. No more involved concepts. Songs were more direct, generally more hard rock-oriented, more contemporary (no arcane English themes) in lyrical content.

When we talked in 1981, Ray Davies had promised the next album would contain some of the best songwriting of his career.

Give the People What They Want, was, he admitted, somewhat rushed. *State of Confusion* does contain some middling power chord rockers, but there's a better sense of balance. Three of the songs, "Come Dancing," "Don't Forget to Dance" and "Property," brimming with lyrical and musical twists and turns, rank with any of the Kinks' classics.

"On stage, it's still very much a rock 'n' roll band," says Ray, "but on record I wanted to work on the guitar textures a bit better than I did on *Give the People What They Want.* I wanted to give it more depth. There is more attention to bringing out the lyrics."

Although he's suspended the grand concept approach, Davies is still linking songs. "Come Dancing" and "Don't Forget to Dance" both use dance as a central motif. "It's really kind of a basic ingredient in music," Davies notes. In certain ways, both are sad songs. "Come Dancing" boasts a lilting, carnival-like organ riff, has a bouncy acoustic rhythm guitar, and at the end incorporates a touch of big band brass. But the song is of memories and change, fond recollections of a past gone by. The lyrics are drawn from real life, his sister's evolution from freewheeling teenager to stay-at-home mother. "My sister's married and she lives on an estate," sings Ray. "Her daughters go out, now it's her turn to wait." Davies implores his sister, still, to come dancing.

In "Don't Forget to Dance" Davies sings of a woman who looks out her window, watching the world pass by. Her friends are gone, her daughter has moved away. Davies wants, somehow, to rescue her as he watches.

"I was walking around the streets of London one day," he says. "It was about eight at night and I saw this woman looking down, a neighbor. She just waved at me and she looked kind of lonely up there. That gave me the first couple of lines, started off with that image and it went on from there and built up into more of a fantasy."

"Property" is the coup de grace, a gorgeous, aching, minutely detailed song of a marriage busted apart. The details come tumbling out: "You take the photographs, the ones of you and me, when we both posed and laughed, to please a family/Nobody noticed then we wanted to be free, and now there's no more love, there's just the property—you take the property." In '81, Davies' marriage to his second wife, Yvonne, broke up. "Property" is not entirely autobiographical, Davies says—"not wholly. I think every relationship that goes through that sort of thing has the same sort of debris left behind . . . but, yeah, taking the photographs, yeah, it was based on that experience."

Davies is now, of course, in a publicized new relationship, a marriage to the Pretenders' Chrissie Hynde, mother of Natalie, Ray's third daughter. Davies would just as soon keep the media spotlight on the music and away from Ray and Chrissie details.

Are there songs about their relationship on the record?

"Well, it's in the record," Davies says. "Not in a whole song, maybe in a verse or two. I felt it wrong to devote a whole song to it. There's something in me that rebels against that."

Overobviousness?

"Yeah. If you listen to a few songs, there are a few lines that give it away, really."

* * *

The man who wrote "People Take Pictures of Each Other" has, over the years, become something of a shutterbug. At the conclusion of the Kinks' spring tour, in Worcester, Mass., Davies wants to get the road crew assembled for parting shot hotel room photos. Alas, the hotel room is packed with various hangers on and groupies. "There would be more girls in the picture," Davies sighs.

So Davies, accompanied by his constant attendant, the genial Big Bob, walks to the elevator, on his way to a local diner for a late night bite to eat. He's trailed by a dozen or so women. Is it always like this? "Pied piper," he says, smiling wanly.

Out in the street, we pass by the hotel balcony where Ray spies member of the road crew involved with a woman on the balcony. Cat-like, Ray Davies springs into action. Big Bob assumes the crouch position and in a flash Ray is up on his shoulders. Teetering precariously, Ray points his hopelessly ineffective camera lens over the hedge, shooting into the darkness, laughing hysterically. ○

Ray Davies' road follies: "I threw a Guinness bottle against the wall once to smash up the room and it bounced back and hit me on the head and knocked me out."

Confronting Marley's Legacy

By Carol Cooper

NEW YORK—King Tut was playing Munich when I arrived in January of 1981 to pay my last respects to Bob Marley. I remember well because I passed the museum on the way to Dr. Issels's cancer clinic. The synchronicity was impressive: the sarcophagus and golden relics of an Egyptian king (who also died young) being in Germany while the King of Reggae was struggling against his own mortality.

The original reason for my trip was more personal than journalistic. Knowing the man was terminally ill, and aware of certain plans he had made to firmly establish his music and message in North and South America, I had wanted to see for myself whether Marley's death would be the death of these ambitions. Since 1979 I and a growing number of journalists had been watching Bob Marley spearhead the evolution of reggae music, and it had rapidly become much more than charting the course of one more sexy pop star. Those of us who had goals and concerns larger than our individual well-being found a leader—or if you will, a catalyst—in Marley. Those of us privileged to spend time among his entourage were astonished at the ease with which he brought out the best in people: career gangsters and college graduates, groupies, ingenues and daughters of the people would go about whatever errands he sent them on, cooperating to an extent that would not have been possible had they not been obedient to the strength and warmth of Marley's own personality.

The various Marley biographies now appearing come close to describing this minor miracle; but just as no one has taken the time to analyze the music and lyrics Marley gave us in any comprehensive way, no one has really discussed the constructive one-worldism that was an everyday part of Wailer tours and the Wailer ethos.

The Issels clinic is in a part of Bavaria particularly beautiful in winter, and as one who had never seen the Alps before, I couldn't help but compare their austere grandeur with the riotous fertility of the Caribbean. At the office of Tuff Gong Records in Jamaica, Marley kept several world maps with flags marking the routes of various tours and sojourns. Italy and Germany were no stranger to him than the U.S. or Canada. Once you knew him better you might engage in a conversation which unveiled a formidable knowledge of ancient and modern world history, edged with a sardonic humor that could appreciate the fact that Issels' clinic was mere miles away from the route Hannibal used to descend on Rome.

I took a hotel room within walking distance of the clinic, and spent some part of the next seven days visiting the ailing master. This is why I am sure that the many decisions that Island, Rita Marley and some of the Wailers have made since Bob's death are partially predicated on his instructions. Although noticeably frail, Marley continued to receive visitors, emissaries, intercontinental phone calls, as well as compose and conduct business during his last months in Germany. His people, for the most part friends of long standing, were well-drilled as soldiers, and did much to create an atmosphere of normal activity around Marley on those days he was well enough to bear it. There were several cassette tapes around full of songs and scraps of songs that Marley had been fooling with in hotel rooms from Miami to New York to London that year, and hearing them I was aware of a distinctly more acoustic turn in his songwriting, a trend well reflected in the songs collected on the artist's first posthumous LP, *Confrontation*. I remember a particularly haunting tape with just Marley on guitar singing "Can't Take Your Slogans No More," a refrain that captured all his increasing delusion with the sycophants and arm-chair revolutionaries that had descended on the lucrative Wailers camp in the last few years.

Both Rita Marley and Tuff Gong's art director, Neville Garrick, confirmed that the title *Confrontation* was Bob's own choice for the album to follow *Uprising*, and if there is nothing on *Confrontation* to equal the unique harmonies of "Forever Loving Jah" or the unexpected instrumentation of "Bad Card," it is only because there was not enough time to fine tune these little details.

Rita and Chris Blackwell, founder of Island records, spent much time in private conference with Marley from the time a scheduled American tour was officially cancelled to the day Marley died some eight months later. Bob's refusal to give in to the severity of his condition prevented certain business decisions from being made—for instance, he refused to complete a will, owing to the document's negative connotations, and later was unable to because the disease had robbed him of his lucidity and impartiality. But when one considers the extent of the mini-empire of people and projects Bob Marley was involved with (aside from a huge extended family, there were subcorporations, real estate in several countries, and outstanding contracts to settle up) it's a wonder that any of it remains intact. Diane Jobson, the lawyer and personal friend who helped Marley run his Jamaica-based business and studios, was shuttling between Kingston, Miami, and Issels's clinic almost as much as Bob's wife and mother. None of this inner circle actually entertained the idea of Marley's imminent death, which is part of the reason it has taken two years for the Wailers to decide to reform, and personality rifts caused by guilt and loss to start healing.

I spoke to Chris Blackwell last year at Island's New York offices and touched on the issue of Island's continued involvement with the Marley legacy via Island Pictures. A documentary then in post-production compiled hundreds of reels of footage on Marley culled from disparate sources all over the world. Blackwell was and is sensitive to the issue of exploitation, and strove to make clear that *Marley*, the documentary, did not pretend to be a biography. Rather, it was a part of Blackwell's own perceived responsibility to retrieve for posterity the many bits and pieces of Marley's history tucked away in radio, television and university archives. Studio, performance and interview tapes even now continue to trickle into Island. But Blackwell does foresee a larger project some eight-to-10 years down the line—a genuine biopic based on the full, as yet untold, story, on which he expects the cooperation of the Marley family.

August should find the Wailers preparing for a European tour with the I-Three's fronting and the probable inclusion of Tyrone Downie on lead male vocals. This is less odd than it might seem, because Downie had long been cultivating such skills, encouraged and coached by Marley himself. In '81 a Japanese import album appeared in the states called *Pecker Power* featuring some members of Yellow Magic Orchestra teamed up with the Wailers, Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare. On one side (that delegated to the Wailers), Downie, backed by the Wailers and the I-Threes on a techno-pop version of "Jamming," bears an uncanny resemblance to Marley. That same year several of the Wailers were commenting on the progress of Ziggy, Marley's son, as a singer, and mentioned that the boy did not copy his father so much as he copied *Downie*'s version of his father's style. There is every indication that Marley foresaw his work continuing in ever-changing configurations with or without him. The *Survival* album is notable for the use of a *male* chorus and horns instead of the usual emphasis on the I-Threes' harmonies; and from talking to the band during that tour I found that the I-Threes had been petitioning for time to develop their solo careers, and were probably going to open as a trio for the Wailers during their next European tour. By diminishing his reliance on the I-Threes sound, Marley was preparing for their independence from his own grueling schedules.

In Germany, two years ago, all of this was eclipsed by the deteriorating condition of the man who was still the focus and inspiration of these plans. Several white roadies who'd worked on the European tour dropped by while I was there to hail "the skipper," as did a steady, respectful trickle of concerned "others" who couldn't stay away. Bob would joke with us, tease us, if we were being unforgivably maudlin and foolish, even berate us—just as he always did. It took some courage for me to finally express my worst fears—that without him all that he's built would fall into chaos. "Then put it together again," he challenged. "The future is now.

"The only light I have is the one my father gave me," he said, stressing once and for all that Jah Rastafari was the source of anything we might continue to find special and necessary about Bob Marley. And so the mystery of his talent deepened, at the same time that it somehow dispersed and rested like a benediction on all of us who had known him. ○

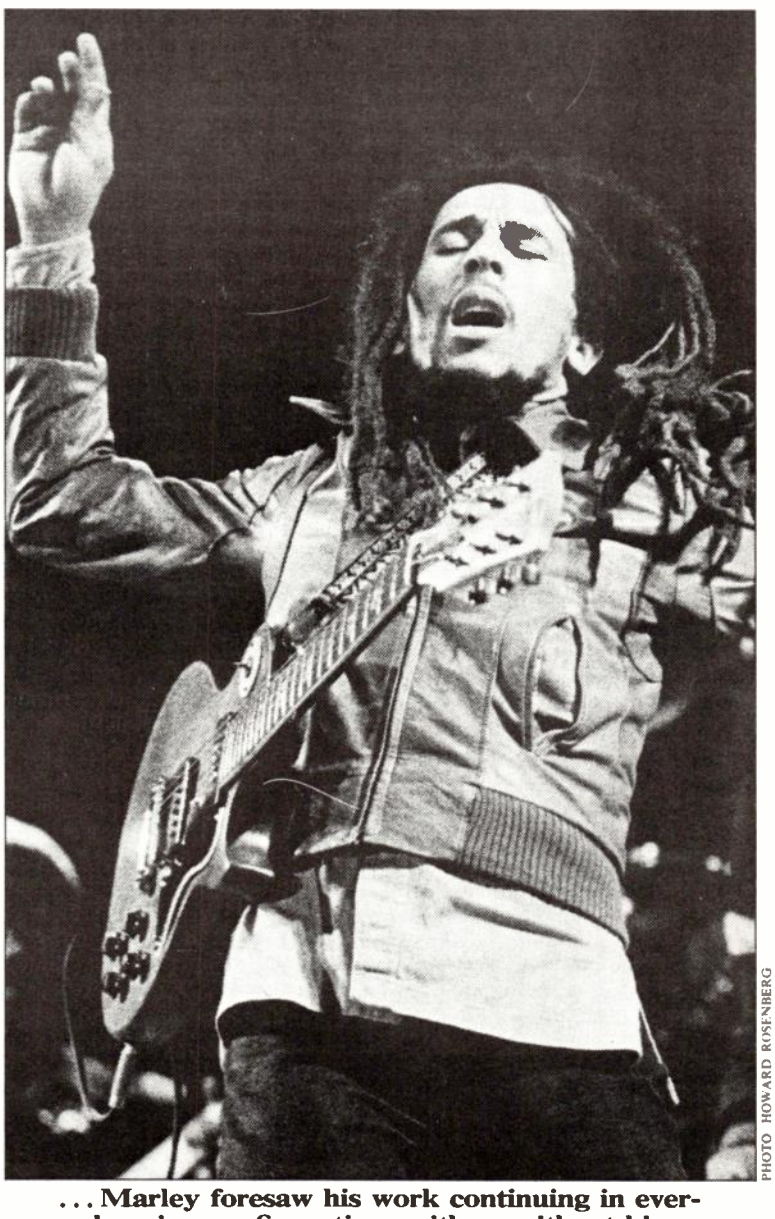


PHOTO HOWARD ROSENBERG

. . . Marley foresaw his work continuing in ever-changing configurations with or without him.

Mtume: A Little Night Music

By Mark Mehler

NEW YORK—In the matter of percussionist/producer/writer James Mtume—"my friends call me Mtume, the James is for the I.R.S."—you can pretty much throw away the book. Virtually any Mtume tune fits neatly into one of two simple categories: (1) songs that make you want to jump out of bed, (2) songs that make you want to jump back in bed. Anybody sense a common thread here?

"Yeah, I guess it all does seem to revolve around the bed, doesn't it?" says Mtume (pronounced em-too-may) with a mile-wide grin. Like the Victor Hugo character whose face was carved into a permanent smile, the 35-year-old Mtume appears in marked danger of terminal gaiety. Things are that good.

PHOTO JIM VARRIALE

Terminal gaiety and boudoir sonatas: vocalist Tawatha and James Mtume (minus shades) in the neighborhood.

His three-month-old album, *Juicy Fruit*, is a major crossover hit, with sales approaching a half-million units, while the single of the same name was the number one R&B record for a month-and-a-half and has recently surpassed a million in sales. Mtume has completed a television script based on the life of Bessie Smith, starring Roberta Flack as the legendary blues singer. And he's currently negotiating to produce a new album by Liza Minnelli. All this is in addition to a dozen other projects in the works, including a couple of feature films (Mtume as the writer), more outside record production, and, of course, an ongoing concert tour in support of *Juicy Fruit*.

Caught working out on a corned beef sandwich at New York's noted Stage Deli, the loquacious Mtume readily admits to being one calm, happy man. But his serenity was hard-won. The last few years, which saw Mtume write, produce and arrange some 16 LPs, left the artist a classic burnout case.

"Man, I was doing about five albums a year of MOR, everything from Lou Rawls to Phyllis Hyman, the Spinners, the O'Jays, Stephanie Mills, Roberta Flack. I got a couple of Grammies (for Mills and Flack), but producing and writing put incredible double pressure on me every time out of the box. Nobody was handing me any hits. I never had time for me, for what I really like to do."

What Mtume really likes to do is funk, intermingled with bursts of be-bop, soul and pop. Two previous solo albums, consisting mainly of hard-core funk, were sandwiched tightly between other assignments. As far as Mtume's concerned, *Juicy Fruit* is a debut record.

"I finally decided I was gonna treat myself as well as I treat my other acts. This time I gave myself four whole months to record, not six weeks, and I went out and got quality players, guys like Bernie Worrell (late of Funkadelic), David Frank and Gary Bartz. I think this record really shows the other half of me, the funky half, the thing that makes me go."

An astute observer of popular taste, Mtume wisely tapped into a vein that lately has yielded some big dividends to R&B acts—sex. That is, sex as more than a fact of street life; sex as a healing balm, soothing and consuming at the same time. In short, the stuff that puts you back in bed ("Candy rain coming down/Taste you in my mind/And spread you all around").

"Sure, sex is part of the success of the single," Mtume admits, "but 'Juicy Fruit' is more; it's a statement of female sexual liberation. Most of the songs you're hearing are written strictly from the male perspective, overly aggressive, y'know, 'come here, baby,' or 'give it to me, baby,' but women don't think that way, don't relate to that. I wrote from the woman's point of view—sex is sweet candy, a giant fantasy . . ."

Born and raised in Philadelphia ("music's like air and water there"), James Mtume is the son of Jimmy Heath and the nephew of Percy Heath, members of the seminal Modern Jazz Quartet. Yet their influence on young James seems to have been limited to providing his family's household with a musical ambience.

"I'm self-taught," Mtume points out, "but in my house be-bop was everywhere and I grew up right along with it. I didn't hang out with my dad or uncle Percy. My dad's a quiet, introspective man, like anybody would be who spends 12 hours a day writing music. He left me alone to do my thing."

While in his teens, Mtume began listening to Miles Davis, James Brown and Sly Stone, sifting it all

Continued on page 30

There's only one way to play it.

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On Stage

Willie's American Spectacle

The Willie Nelson 4th of July Picnic
Atlanta International Raceway
Hampton, Georgia
July 4, 1983

By Anthony DeCurtis

Willie Nelson may have the broadest audience in show biz, but you wouldn't know it from the 30,000 or so homogeneous devotees who baked in the infield of Atlanta International Raceway to catch the Georgia swing of Nelson's movable holiday feast. These were not habitues of Caesar's Palace—where the red-headed stranger to no one entertained some *real* outlaws on July 4, 1981—or the condo cowboys and Stetson-hatted executives who know a great deal more about the good life than the night life.

No, this crowd of long-haired rednecks and wiry honky-tonk angels was the authentic article. They bathed each other in Bud, whooped proudly at the mention of states below the Mason-Dixon line, erupted into fights with alarming regularity, clogged to fiddle breakdowns and belted out the entire 39-word chorus of Hank Williams, Jr.'s "Family Tradition" unprompted after staring blankly as Stray Cat Brian Setzer vainly urged them to shout the title of Eddie Cochran's "C'mon Everybody" on cue.

But if the crowd wasn't moving upward, the Picnic itself certainly has been. Nelson threw the first of his Independence Day bashes in Dripping Springs, Texas, in 1973 to showcase himself, some fellow renegades from Nashville's studio sterility, and a host of indigenous Austin players. The next seven years saw the outlaw movement gain increasing acceptance, and at the last Texas picnic in 1980, noted pickers Dyan Cannon and Slim Pickens joined Willie on stage and everyone limoed to the world premiere of *Honeysuckle Rose*.

This year's country 'n' northern Picnic was booked in three locations—the Carrier Dome in Syracuse, New York, Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, and Atlanta International Raceway—between July 2nd and 4th. The Atlanta bill featured David Allan Coe, Merle Haggard, Hank Williams, Jr., Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, and, for demographics, the Stray Cats and Linda Ronstadt. With enough gold records, movies, and books among them to stock a good-sized library, these media professionals may be outlaws somewhere these days, but not in any country that celebrates its birth on July 4th.

Still, upward mobility has its advantages. Among them are relatively prompt starting times and set changes; a decent sound system; enough concession stands, parking, and rest areas; and performers who know they're being paid to work. If the Picnic abandoned cultural resonance in favor of profit, it at least provided 12 hours of quality music and reasonable comfort without a major hitch.

Between David Allan Coe's rowdy blend of country and folk-rock that kicked off the day and Nelson's reprise near midnight of "Whiskey River," the crowd was treated to a survey of American (and American-influenced music) as full as the big land itself. In addition to their own original material, the seven-act line up performed compositions by Bob Dylan, Mel Tillis, Robbie Robertson, Chuck Berry, Hank Williams, Holland-Dozier-Holland, Buddy Holly, Chips Moman, Jagger-Richards, Kris Kristofferson, Elvis Costello, Bo Diddley, Lowell George, Little Richard, Warren Zevon and Hoagy Carmichael, among others.

As for the performances themselves, the retrorockabilly Stray Cats had the toughest time, undeservedly but understandably. Amid this world of halters and cut-offs, the Cats' fancy 'dos and duds (not to mention the apparition of lacey Britt Ekland, drummer Slim Jim Phantom's fiancee, loitering in the wings) suggested that they had shown up for the wrong party on the wrong holiday. Their energetic 10-song set drew a polite, but hardly enthusiastic, response.

Linda Ronstadt went over a bit better with a sexy, professional performance of 16 greatest hits. The set worked best when it rocked ("Tumblin' Dice," "Livin' in the USA"), and rolled ("Silver Threads and Golden Needles," "Blue Bayou"), but sagged during the more modulated material ("Party Girl," "That's Easy for You to Say") not well suited to the keg-party context.

The crowd first roused from the 95-degree heat three quarters through Merle Haggard's set, when a beaming Willie Nelson strolled out and joined the Hag for a tasteful jam on "Going Where the Lonely Go." A tender reading of "Reasons to Quit" followed, after which Nelson left Haggard to close with "C.C. Waterback," "Okie from Muskogee," "Rainbow Stew" and a stunning "Sing Me Back Home."

Then Bocephus dropped the bomb. As the Bama Band rocked a welcome with "Hank Williams Junior-Junior," the eternal son barreled out, grabbed his axe, and ignited "Dixie on My Mind" with a fervor that would have exploded any roof lower than the Georgia sky smiling above. Williams worked the crowd to fever pitch with a rambling, sloppy, wildly inspired turn that, with true Oedipal fury, simultaneously betrayed and fulfilled the ambiguous legacy he inherited both from his father and the staunchly traditional/rebel-rousing culture of the South. The crowd answered his enactment of the rebel son's New/Old South identity crisis by a howling send-off after he closed with (natch) Hank Sr.'s "Kaw-Liga."

A hoarse, apparently tired Waylon Jennings rocked competently through 18 numbers, highlighted by duets with Willie on "Good Hearted Woman," "Mammas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to be Cowboys," and "I Can Get Off on You," and set the stage for Willie to bring down the Lone Star curtain. For his part, Willie delivered the assured, intelligent, graceful balance of country standards, Tin Pan Alley ballads, polkas, rockers and spirituals that have kept his earliest followers with him while putting his records in all the best homes. Haggard joined him for "Poncho and Lefty," and Coe came on for "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?" and "Amazing Grace." Coe also stuck around for the four-song encore, which at least half the crowd did not.

The transformation of Willie's Picnic from a traditional event rooted within a specific local culture into a marketing device to draw crowds to festivals in Anywhere, USA, was perhaps the most American aspect of this shindig. But people's ability to make beer, fun, sun and good sounds triumph over callous marketing is the virtue of a better America, one that was fully evident on July 4th in Hampton, Georgia. ○

PHOTO: MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA LTD.

Willie Nelson: music for a better America

Return of The Twangy Guitar

Duane Eddy
The Catalyst
Santa Cruz, CA.
June 22, 1983

By Dan Forte

For anyone of the pre-Beatles generation who ever took up the guitar, Duane Eddy was more than likely the inspiration. Prior to the British Invasion, Eddy's "Twangy Guitar" accounted for more airplay and record sales than any rock instrumentalist; his estimated 60,000,000 units sold worldwide still place him at the top of the heap.

From 1958's "Movin' & Groovin' " to 1963's "Boss Guitar"—with classics like "Rebel Rouser" and "Forty Miles Of Bad Road" along the way—Eddy scored hit after hit, 20-some charted singles in all. But the Beatles rendered Eddy and most other rock instrumentalists all but obsolete, and the Twangy Guitar was stowed away. Prior to this year, Duane Eddy's last concert appearance was at a 1970 rock 'n' roll revival in Los Angeles. But in May, Eddy's signature model Guild electric was dusted off, after studio keyboardist Don Randi put together an all star band to back Eddy at his jazz club, the Baked Potato, in L.A.

The following month the 45-year-old Eddy came to the Bay Area for the first time in over twenty years. The 800-seat Catalyst started turning people away after 905 tickets were sold. Those who were lucky enough to get in under the wire were treated to some of the most satisfying, upbeat rock in recent memory, played by a dream band of veterans—Randi on keyboards; Eddy's old partner, Steve Douglas, on sax; Ry Cooder on second guitar; John Garnache, from Ry's recent touring band, on bass; and the most recorded drummer of all time, Hal Blaine.

One might have expected (and been satisfied with) a sentimental trip down memory lane played at lounge-level intensity by a group of rock has-beens and studio robots, but that was hardly the case. From the opening of "Peter Gunn," and on tunes like the slow "3:30 Blues" and the rocking "Ramrod," Eddy threatened to bring the rafters down. Smiling, sweating, and attacking every note, the guitar virtuoso not only lived up to but outplayed his old records—no small feat. The only other group I can think of that has outdone themselves in similar fashion was the revived Ventures. But with the Ventures, it's the familiar songs that stick in your mind; with Duane Eddy, it's the sound—that immediately identifiable sound—and the mood it creates. You might not even remember the song's title, but you'll instantly recall the way you felt the first time you heard that guitar over the radio. ○

PHOTO: JON SIEVERT

Duane Eddy: It's the sound that sticks in your mind.

Video

J.J. Jackson: A Life In Video

By Carol Cooper

NEW YORK—The problem in confronting racism on MTV is in trying to point to a competitor of similar clout—14 million homes, at last estimate—with more enlightened and egalitarian programming policies. But while MTV executives deflect all criticism of the Warner-Amex channel's programming policies with talk of "target audience" and "demographics," MTV's most visible representatives, those curious amalgams of disc jockeys and talking heads known as vee-jays, remain conspicuous by their silence.

On the theory that it might be instructive to find out what the oldest and most music industry-experienced vee-jay thinks of himself, the music he touts and his employer, I spoke with J. J. Jackson earlier this year when MTV became available in New York and the racism issue was just heating up. At that point, *1999* had yet to be released, and Prince, Michael Jackson, Eddy Grant and Musical Youth were a ways from even making the channel's light rotation list.

Now in his early 40s, Jackson is a 14-year veteran of radio. He began his career as a progressive rock disc jockey at Boston's highly-regarded WBCN, and moved to Los Angeles' KLOS in 1970. In 1977, while still employed by KLOS, he began doing a series of rock star interviews for the local ABC-TV affiliates' *Eyewitness News* program. It was during this period that Jackson refined almost a decade of intimate involvement with—for lack of a euphemism—white rock into two years' worth of video encounters with Rod Stewart, David Bowie, Bruce Springsteen, Queen and others.

It's not surprising, then, that Jackson's maturity and professionalism are most apparent on MTV's interview and live concert segments: a production format in which he considers himself a pioneer. While his view of the rock world is too often shaped by the industry itself rather than by his gut reaction to an event, Jackson remains a man whose experience in his field sets him apart not only from his fellow vee-jays, but from most everyone else in the fledgling musicvideo genre. Being a token black in a situation that has little use for blacks at all is a conundrum that Jackson handles with uncommon grace. His sense of humor derives from pragmatic cynicism, perhaps the only rational response possible for one who is a cog in the wheels of institutionalized racism.

How did you land an audition for your position at MTV?

From what I understand it came about through Queen. I'd done two *Eyewitness News* pieces on the group which they liked well enough so that later, when they were making their own movie, they invited me to interview them in that. Subsequently, Queen's business manager, Jim Beech, was speaking with Bob Pittman, who runs MTV, and said, "There's this guy on the west coast who's been doing rock 'n' roll for a very long time, has the respect of a lot of big-name people, and has television experience as well. You might want to audition him." And that's how I got the call.

How did you move from radio into doing rock mini-specials for *Eyewitness News*?

In '77 Led Zeppelin came to town to do six nights at the Forum. Nobody had ever done that before, and I turned on the TV and no one was covering this. It turned out that a station had sent a crew down, thinking the band would just usher them in for the free publicity, and of course that's not what happened. So I went to ABC and made a proposal to them, pointing out that there was a whole new market out there interested in rock events and not being gratified by TV's coverage of the music. I pointed out that having someone who's knowledgeable about the music would make all the difference in the world to that audience as well as to the performers themselves. They thought it was a good idea and agreed to try one piece, with a promise to do more if the ratings were good.

Rod Stewart was someone I'd known since the '60s who was touring at this time, so I asked him to let me do the piece on him. I had a talented young crew, and we did a perfect piece. We got about six minutes on the air, and I think it was the first time concert and interview footage had been edited together like that. Similarly, my crew got the first TV interview Bruce Springsteen ever did, and everyone was pleased.

The station asked me after the second piece if I'd like to do one every week, but I knew I'd never be able to maintain the same standards of quality with such frequency. If I had to fill in with any and everybody, it might discourage the bigger names. How could I follow, say, a Shaun Cassady piece with Bowie? So we did about one a month, all very strong. The only time I almost had a problem was when we did Ringo Starr, and we had no current concert footage. Production wanted to graft some old footage of John Lennon saying the Beatles were bigger than Christ, and of course this had nothing to do with the current material. I told them that if they screwed my credibility like that I'd have to quit. Fortunately they saw it my way, and we ran the piece as I'd planned it.

What brought you into the interview side of things as opposed to just riding the music?

It's something most progressive rock jocks had to do when I started, and in Boston at that time we had a club called the Boston Tea Party, where all the bands who used to play the Fillmore East and West would come. We'd get to meet these people, and talk to them, as a normal adjunct to the music we were playing. Interviews were my forte; I enjoyed bringing an artist out in that way. And I never tried to exploit an artist, just get to another side of them.

Now that you're associated with MTV, do you have any misgivings about the lack of variety in the artists you present? Rock 'n' roll to me is the whole spectrum of white and black artists who work within a certain rhythmic framework, and with specific instrumentation. I've always been reluctant to restrict the term to a specific color or cultural orientation.

That's not fair. If that were true, then a black station like WBLS should be playing Led Zeppelin, because that band has a very mean, blues-based backbeat.

But they play the Police. And Blondie, going back as far as "Heart of Glass."

But that's Frankie Crocker, and very atypical. I don't think you'd find that at a black station in Boston, Detroit or Los Angeles, where black stations play black music. They might play Hall & Oates, but that *is* black music. On MTV we've played Pauline Black with the Selecter, and Phil Lynott because they're rock 'n' rollers. When the Bus Boys put out a video, we'll play that. We're a rock 'n' roll station, and people never point out that we don't play Christopher Cross. We played Olivia Newton-John at one point, and there was a big backlash from the vee-jays and everyone else, because *that's* not rock 'n' roll. You think Donna Summer, Rick James and Prince are rock 'n' roll? I don't.

The dividing lines between "race music" or R&B and what's going to be considered "rock" seem to rest on very miniscule differences in rhythmic base, on whether you emphasize the 2/4 or the more traditional, simpler 4/4 blues base.

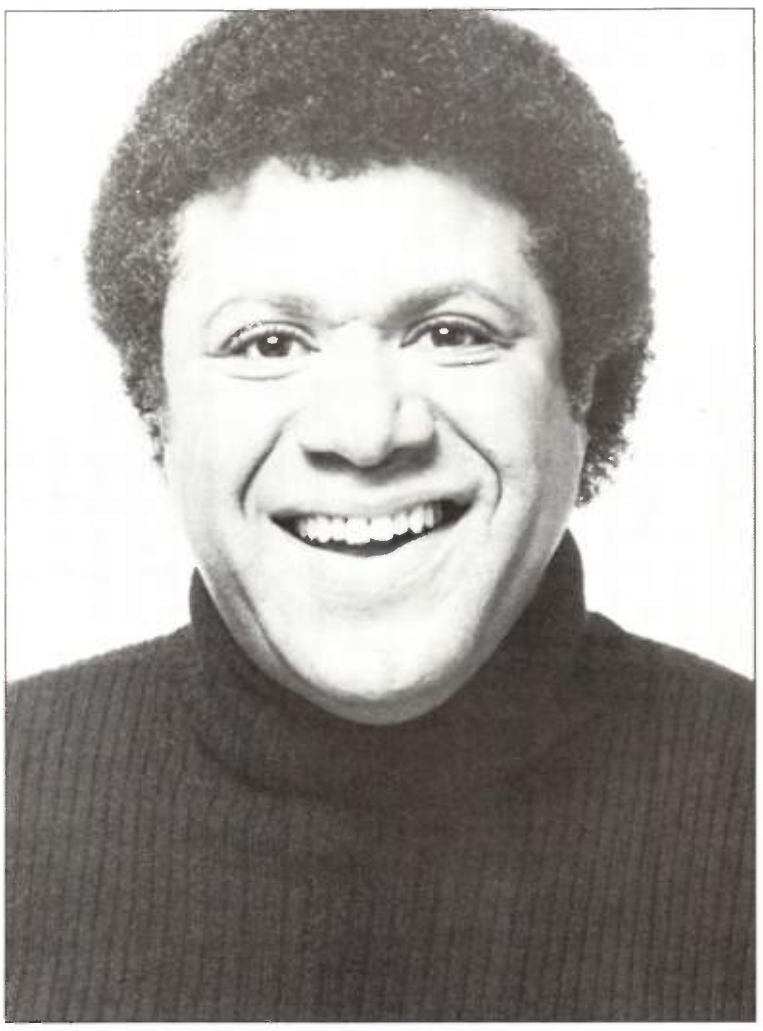
No, I think that's the way you want to see it. The difference has to do with lyrical content, presentation and everything else. Because Prince puts on an outfit that might remind you of an outfit Freddy Mercury wears doesn't mean he's rock 'n' roll. Prince is very good at what he does, but it's rhythm and blues. His songs all sound pretty much the same, they use pretty much the same backbeat. I've not heard a long guitar run on any one of his albums ever, which is like the heartbeat of rock 'n' roll. Take the guitar out of rock 'n' roll and you've got no rock 'n' roll. It's like taking the rhythm out of rhythm and blues.

But in terms of how all these musics borrow from one another, the bottom line is that the roots of white rock are in black music, so there shouldn't be such a big deal made over the various cross-pollinations occurring, especially with all the African and Caribbean-based New Romantic stuff.

Yeah, maybe philosophically there shouldn't be, but the fact of the matter is there is. I rarely will go into any black household and find a Pink Floyd record. And I've heard too many blacks say to me, "What's that shit you're listening to?"

If you listen to my interviews, from David Gilmour of Pink Floyd to Robert Plant, you'll hear me getting them to reach back and say, "Yeah, my roots are in black music." But the kind of black music they're pulling from is not the kind you're talking about. Even blacks don't go back that far, to the blues roots of their own music.

When I was on radio there was a song on Led Zeppelin's second album called "The Lemon Song" which was very controversial because of the line "Squeeze my lemon 'till the juice runs down my leg," which was borrowed from an old Robert Johnson blues. Back then, before all this heavy formatting, I was able to play them back-to-back. So not only was the kid who is crazy about Robert Plant entertained, but he was educated as well. When is the last time you heard a Howlin' Wolf record on WBLS? And nowadays, if you're a progressive rock station and there's a minute when John Cougar's not on the air, the kid who loves John Cougar is *gone*.



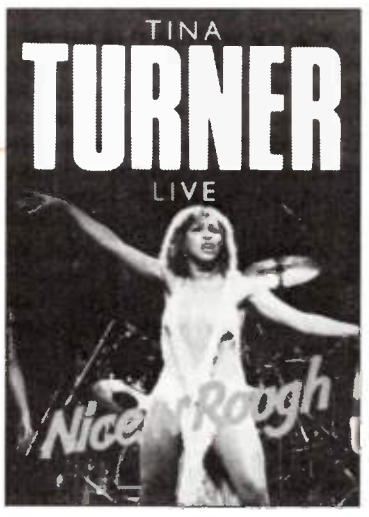
J. J. Jackson: ready to call his shots.

What I'm trying to say is that if a rock 'n' roll channel or a radio station decides it wants to be rock 'n' roll—or R&B or country—*fine*. And it's up to someone to decide what the cutoff point is going to be. And people who don't agree with that particular cutoff point are going to be a little angry.

Okay, sure, it might get ridiculous if every idiom were thrown together with no continuity for the sole reason that they're all music and they all want to be sold. But in the same way that you used a Robert Johnson tune on radio to illuminate something by Led Zeppelin, you might be able to take a video that juxtaposes certain performance and musical dynamics against the "white rock" idiom. And thereby entertain and edify your audience.

I agree, and maybe that's something that I personally would like to do. MTV is not necessarily being done the way I would do it. But I'm not the one who decides how it gets programmed. If I were, it would be substantially different, but you still might not agree with it. I don't agree with all of MTV's policies, but I think it's a wonderful opportunity, an incredible thing to see, and a way that perhaps one day I'll get my own show.

But none of the vee-jays are privy to management decisions, so we can't defend or criticize policy, which is one of our gripes. But to tell you *my* position, as far as being black, there's no way in hell that I'm gonna make it to the top in an executive position. Because they don't do it that way, not in this company or any other. I spent 14 years at top radio stations and never got offered a position as program director. And not because I wasn't qualified. Sure there's prejudice in rock 'n' roll. So the only way I'll get where I want to go is by a Dick Clark sort of route. Regardless of my race, if I'm known on television, and I've established that I can bring in money, then when I walk into a company with a solid idea, they'll listen to me. But I don't like to kiss ass, and here at MTV I don't have to do that. Like a ball player, all I have to do is deliver on air. And if I become a big enough ball player, then I can call my own shots. If not here, then maybe at one of the other channels that will be opening up. And that's what I want, personally, out of MTV. ○



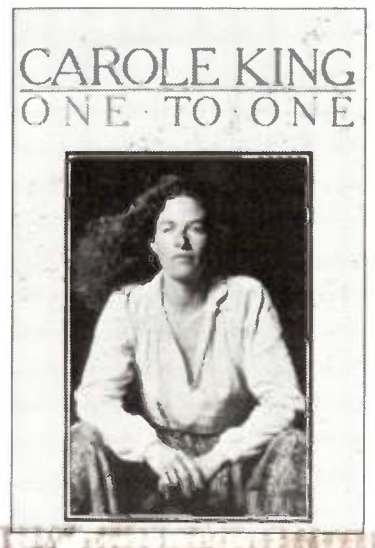
Tina Turner Live: Nice 'n' Rough

A go-go concert tape propelled by the exotic Tina Turner, who can still turn it on, and the quick-on-the-eye direction of David Mallet (technically enhanced by editor Tim Waddell of "Rio" fame). Backed by a raucous rock band and two devilish dancing partners, Turner works at a breakneck pace through 13 numbers, many of them familiar to anyone who's seen her perform in the last 10 years ("River Deep, Mountain High," "Proud Mary," "Acid Queen," et al.), but all sounding fresh and new in this feverish context.

Mallet (David Bowie's collaborator on "Ashes To Ashes") is a musicvideo director, not a television hack, and his high-impact style is a perfect match for the volatile Turner. He covers the artist and her backup singers with enough camera angles to catch all the sweat and skin you could ask for.

Nice 'n' Rough has all the elements necessary for an excellent concert video: an all-out performer, a stimulating supporting cast and a director who understands the spontaneity of rock 'n' roll. *Director: David Mallet. Thorn-EMI Home Video. 55 minutes. $39.95 (Stereo)*

—Alan Hecht



Carole King: One to One

Nostalgic and easy-going, this standard musicvideo mixes concert and at-home footage to draw a sympathetic portrait of one of pop's major artists. Sitting in the living room of her Idaho home, King discusses her musical roots, her philosophy ("The '60s aren't dead for me") and the price of success. Tinkling away at the piano, she punctuates her thoughts with performances of some of her classic songs, such as "Locomotion," "Hey Girl" and "Up On The Roof."

Director Scott Garen's transitions between this intimate setting and the concert stage are well-executed. He avoids the predictable by cutting away during a song rather than at the end of each number. Yet, with the exception of the clean stereo sound, the video has zero production values. While King delivers exciting performances of "Jazzman," "Smackwater Jack" and "I Feel The Earth Move," the concert stage is flooded with white light. The mood shifts only once, during "So Far Away," when King appears in a white wedding gown, a sea of candles highlighting the twinkle in her eyes.

Despite some endearing moments, *One To One*'s flat, workmanlike visuals are too harsh, and ultimately conflict with the artist's gentle nature and sublime music. *Director: Scott Garen. 60 minutes. MGM/UA Home Video. Stereo. $59.95 (Beta, VHS), $29.95 (CED disc).*

—A.H.

Sound Signature

Wynton Marsalis Under Fire: 'It's Like I'm The Enemy Now'

By Steve Bloom

It takes a rare kind of chutzpah to tell Johnny Carson where to go. Wynton Marsalis, *Downbeat*'s "Musician of the Year" in 1982, did just that earlier this year when his group appeared on *The Tonight Show*. Instead of playing the standard "Who Can I Turn To" as was originally planned, the 21-year-old trumpeter switched, at the last moment, to "Hesitation," a terse, original composition with a bebop arrangement. Halfway into the song the group received, and duly ignored, the "cut" sign. Says Marsalis' saxophone-playing brother, Branford: "Wynton can be pretty stubborn, man. But it was cool. We said what we had to say."

Affected to some degree by what he has accomplished in the last two years, yet humbled by the constant comparisons to Miles Davis and other jazzmen whose efforts revolutionized the music at one time or another, Marsalis has reached the first crossroad in his young career. Lavished with praise since his first appearances with Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers in 1981, he is suddenly being criticized by some members of the jazz press, who claim his songs are overarranged, his execution of ballads is slipshod and his respect for the jazz tradition is somehow lacking.

"It's like I'm the enemy now," Marsalis bristles in a Columbia Records conference room the day after his Kool Jazz Festival concert in New York. "What am I supposed to be doing, playing 'Well, You Needn't' (the Thelonious Monk tune) like they did in the '50s? It's like I'm supposed to be Bird (Charlie Parker). There's no way I'll be able to play like that, 'cause I didn't grow up in that era. And I'm not going to go through that," he says defiantly, "so my music'll be different."

Marsalis' music, which can be heard on his two solo albums, *Think of One* and *Wynton Marsalis*, is, in fact, a challenging blend of bebop, hard bop and post-bop, the predominant jazz idioms from the '40s to the '60s, but stops short of embracing fusion, funk and the other electronic fads that diluted jazz in the '70s. Even in the best of times, this is not exactly a formula for success in the music business. Jazz records generally sell well below 50,000 copies, yet Marsalis' self-titled debut has sold in the neighborhood of 100,000, according to Columbia. Boasts the artist: "I'm young, marketable, and I came along at the right time. I was just lucky, man."

There's an even more unusual twist to this story, however. The New Orleans-born trumpeter performed the *Haydn Trumpet Concerto* when he was just 14 and, two years later, the *Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 in F Major*, both with the local Philharmonic. At 18, after spending the summer at the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood, Marsalis entered Julliard. This past summer saw the simultaneous release of his second jazz album and his first classical recording, *Haydn/Hummel/L. Mozart Trumpet Concertos* (with the National Philharmonic), on CBS Masterworks. That's no simple feat.

"I can do something," Marsalis observes while carefully dividing a strawberry on the lunch platter that has been provided for him, "nobody else can do right now—I can play classical music and jazz equally well. That's not a statement of arrogance; it's just saying I know I can do that. Which means I'll never have to play funk to make money. Classical is my ace-in-the-hole."

But jazz is, without question, Marsalis' first love. His father, Ellis, a jazz pianist who worked regularly with Al Hirt when Wynton was growing up, was a major influence, as were the recordings of John Coltrane and Miles Davis, which he first encountered at age 12.

Interestingly, in 1977, when the first edition of Herbie Hancock's V.S.O.P. group made the rounds, Marsalis didn't know that Hancock, Ron Carter and Tony Williams, the superstar trio he's subsequently toured with in two of the last three summers, had ever played with Miles Davis. "When I heard that first *V.S.O.P.* record, I never listened to the jazz side," he laughs. "I only listened to the funk side."

But Marsalis, who was only 15 then, has had the last laugh on those who predicted he would never be able to handle the pressure of touring with musicians of the V.S.O.P. caliber (who happened to be twice his age), much less the group's '60s-based repertoire. "Sure, I was scared," he says of the 1981 concerts. "The first few nights I didn't have any idea what was going on. But they made me comfortable. Ron kept telling me, 'It's cool, man.' Now I know more. I love it; it's challenging on your brain."

Both in concert and in the recording studio, Marsalis employs a medium-large Bach trumpet with a 72-sized bell. His mouthpiece is a 1½ B-cup Bach with a 25 throw. "I like Bach trumpets," he explains, "because they're real heavy trumpets and the sound doesn't spread too much. The only problem is they're better for classical music than jazz." Marsalis is hoping to have a custom trumpet made to his own specifications in the near future. "I want a real big trumpet and a real big mouthpiece so I can get the maximum of everything. With a bigger bell I think my sound would be more open."

PHOTO: LYNN GOLDSMITH

Marsalis at the crossroads: "My music will be different."

And what's next on the recording agenda for Wynton Marsalis? He pauses to give the subject sufficient thought. "Maybe I'll do a string record. Orchestrated, you know, with ballads. They say I can't play ballads," he smiles. "I'll show them."

Just like he showed Johnny Carson. ○

Audio

Loftech's TS-1: Three Tools In One Affordable Package

By Stan Cotey and David Gans

The lines between "professional audio," "consumer electronics," "musical instruments," "broadcast" and other classifications of recorders, amplifiers, signal processors, etc., are becoming increasingly blurred. Equipment which was once prohibitively expensive is now finding its way into home studios; sophisticated rack-mounted gear is being used where once a Fender amp was the state of the art; and the "techno" in techno-pop refers both to the sophisticated production methods (synchronizing several machines so a two-person band can sound like a dozen) and the advanced digital synthesizers and drum machines currently in vogue.

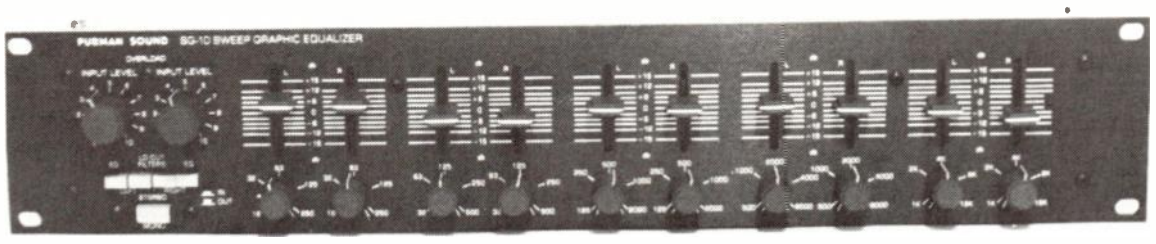
The interfacing of these diverse devices, many of which operate at different internal levels because of the design traditions from which they sprung and the needs which they were meant to meet, is more critical—and user maintenance and calibration more common—than ever before. A tool such as Loftech's TS-1 test set can be handy for musicians, recording engineers, equipment handlers and even audiophiles, since it combines three essential testing tools (audio oscillator, frequency counter and decibel meter) in one small and well-documented package.

"Well-documented" is an important feature, especially in a piece of equipment intended for use other than exclusively by professional technicians. A great tool can be rendered virtually useless by poor instructions; such is definitely not the case with the TS-1. The manual furnished with the test set, *Audio Measurements/ Their Importance and How To Make Them,* by Larry Blakely and John H. Roberts, is informative well beyond the basic demands of a user's manual. In addition to step-by-step instructions for many operations, the book explains such elusive (but basic) concepts as relative decibel values (dBv, dBV and dBM and how they refer to specific voltages—and how they relate to the "O VU" reference common to all genera of gear and different in each), RIAA equalization curves, etc.

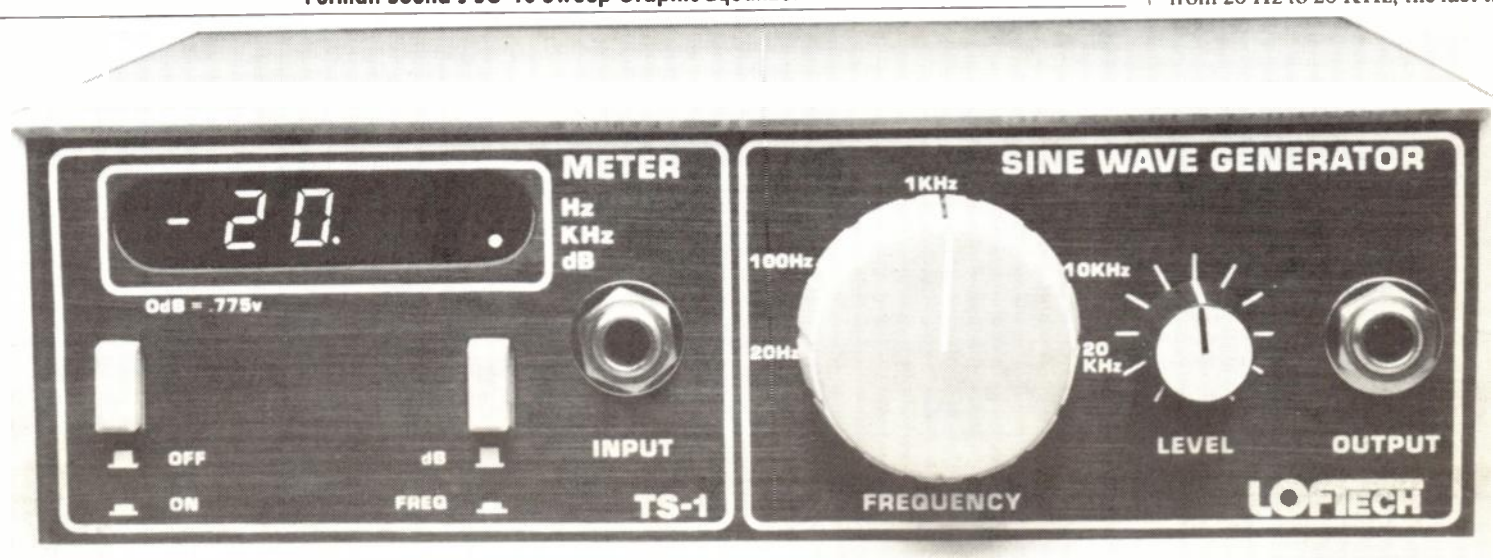
There's a discussion of the importance of measuring frequency response—not just to verify published specs, but as a periodic check on the state of your equipment. For the same reason a craftsman cleans and lubricates his power tools and sharpens his saw blades, it is necessary to observe the frequency response of tape decks, mixers, noise-reduction systems, etc.; even without any moving parts, electronic devices are subject to their own version of wear and tear as capacitors and other parts age and deteriorate. The degradation in performance is often too gradual to be noticed; comparing test results against specifications, however, will show it immediately.

Measuring signal-to-noise ratios can be educational as well as practical for home-recording enthusiasts, rack-minded musicians, and others. This is one realm where the cross-breeding of pro audio, musical instrument and home stereo gear has created a huge potential for troublesome interfaces. Measuring one component's S/N ratio relative to nominal output level, "O VU" and maximum output can teach an observant do-it-yourselfer a great deal about local and system-wide performance, especially when real-world behavior can be compared with theoretical expectations.

Audio Measurements even describes a method for testing a microphone's performance *while in use,* as an aid for troubleshooting of mixers as well as determining the condition of the mike itself. There's a method for determining the input and output impedances of various devices (except microphones), including a chart which maps impedance values into dB readings on the meter. Other information is provided relating the TS-1 to crossover alignment, tape deck bias and azimuth adjustment, speaker-system troubleshooting, measurement of frequency response in all kinds of devices, and more. It wouldn't be at all surprising to learn that Phoenix Audio Laboratory is selling the book separately (it does sport a $2.00 cover price—quite a bargain), since it would very likely promote the sales of TS-1s while it advanced the general awareness of audio testing on the end-user level.



Furman Sound's SG-10 Sweep Graphic Equalizer



Loftech's TS-1: pro testing at the right price.

Now, to the Loftech TS-1 itself. It is a combination audio oscillator, frequency counter and decibel meter contained in a plastic cabinet and weighing less than five pounds. The combining of these three basic tools in one convenient and compact unit is of great value to the working technician as well as to the conscientious musician, hobbyist or explorer, saving a lot of time and hassle compared to setting up and correctly grounding three separate pieces of test gear.

The audio oscillator produces a sine wave sweepable in frequency from 15 Hz to 30 KHz and adjustable in level from -70 to +18 dB (referenced to 0.775 volts; the manual explains how to adjust the TS-1 so that its nominal "0" corresponds to the different operating levels of broadcast, pro audio, home multitrack and musical instrument systems). Our tests showed that the factory specifications are accurate, and in some cases understated. The oscillator's frequency and amplitude ranges were found to be satisfactory for most situations—and a nice touch is that the response is even across the entire frequency range, meaning that you don't have to realign every time you change frequencies.

The frequency counter section measures from 1 Hz to 99.99 KHz, with 1 Hz resolution from 1 to 9999 Hz and 10 Hz resolution above 10 KHz. The display is a large, four-digit, seven-segment LED with two discrete LEDs to indicate whether the reading is in Hz or KHz. The counter is capable of giving accurate readings with input levels from -40 to +24 dB (again, as with all our measurements, referenced to 0.775 volts).

The dB meter measures from -50 to +24 dB, with accuracy of ±1 dB from 20 Hz to 20 KHz; the fact that it reads out in dB instead of volts is extremely practical for most applications since it saves the extra step of converting the value. The input impedance of the meter section is high enough not to load down most applicable audio outputs (which would result in inaccurate readings). Its settling time (how long it takes to stabilize and read accurately after a signal is applied) is satisfactory in both frequency and dB modes.

Ease of operation is the key phrase here; the TS-1 is a good idea, well-executed and well-documented. With a list price under $300, it puts sophisticated test equipment in the price range of just about everybody. ○

The Well-Tempered Equalizer: Shaping And Sculpting Sound

By Craig Anderton

Just about every hi-fi amp includes tone controls. That way, whether you like a booming bass that will bring down walls, or prefer a bright, trebly sound, you can change your stereo's tone to suit your personal tastes. Tone controls can also help overcome acoustical problems. For example, if your listening room contains sofas, drapes, and other furnishings that tend to absorb high frequencies, you can turn up the treble to compensate.

The tone controls you find on a typical hi-fi, however, are primitive compared to the tone controls used in modern recording studios and PA consoles. In fact, much of the polished sound of today's music owes a lot to selective control of tone.

Tone control is actually somewhat of a "pop" term; recording engineers refer to tone-altering devices as "equalizers," a holdover from the days when tone controls were intended to "equalize" frequency response in order to give a more accurate sound. But these days equalizers do a lot more than help recreate the most accurate version of reality—they can also tailor and modify sounds to create larger-than-life effects.

No one equalizer covers all possible applications, so many different types have been developed. The simplest type is the *shelving equalizer,* which is the bass/treble, boost/cut circuit you'll find on hi-fi and guitar amps. These create broad changes at the high and low ends of the audio spectrum and are extremely common, probably because different people's ears respond very differently at these higher and lower frequencies. (For example, the older you get, the less highs you hear; and at softer volumes, the ear is less sensitive to both high and low frequencies. Shelving equalizers can help compensate for these situations.) While shelving equalizers are effective for broad sound-shaping, though, they are not really suitable for precision applications.

The graphic equalizer represents one improvement. Instead of boosting or cutting response in only two or three areas ("bands") of the audio spectrum, a graphic splits the spectrum up into anywhere from five to thirty-one bands. Each band has a control which lets you boost or cut the response within that band. So, if you had a graphic with nine bands at 60, 120, 250, 500, 1000, 2000, 4000, 8000, and 16000 Hz (note that these are all spaced an octave apart), you could cut the response at 60 Hz to reduce hum, boost at 120 and 250 Hz to increase the bass, boost again at 2000 or 4000 Hz to make a vocalist more intelligible, and trim back at 16000 Hz to reduce hiss. Of course, this is just one application; you might instead want to cut the bass, boost the upper midrange, and leave the treble flat.

The graphic equalizer, while far more flexible than a simple shelving equalizer, still has certain limitations. Suppose with the equalizer given above, you wanted to boost the response at 3200 Hz? Since there is no control for that frequency, you're out of luck; the best you could do is boost a bit at 4000 Hz, which is the closest frequency band. One solution would be a graphic that lets you change the frequency of each band over a limited range, but these are relatively rare and expensive. A more prevalent way to deal with "problem" equalization is the *parametric* equalizer.

Unlike the graphic, which has multiple bands, a parametric will typically offer only two to four bands (also called "stages"). However, the parametric gives you a much greater degree of control over each band. Not only can you boost or cut, you can dial in the precise frequency at which you want to alter the response, and even alter the intensity of the boosting or cutting action.

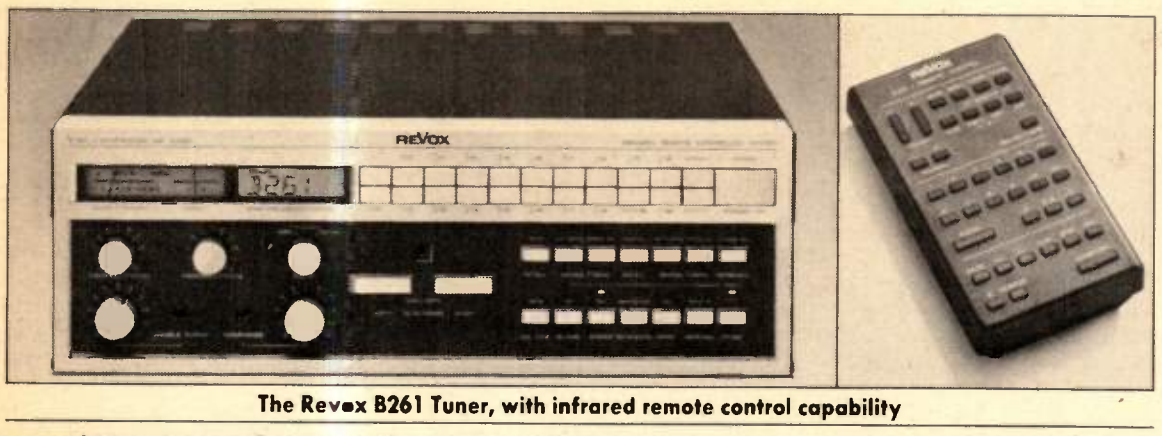
A parametric can be a real problem solver. What if a drum sound is perfect, but one of the drums is slightly too prominent? With a parametric, you can dial in the frequency of the offending drum and cut the response at the drum's resonant frequency, thereby placing the overly prominent drum further back in the mix. Or how about a bass with a "dead spot" on the neck, where the response is weaker than at other places on the neck? You could dial in that dead spot, and add a judicious amount of boost. Other uses for parametrics include cutting out hum, making effects units less noisy, and even eliminating mechanical noises such as squeaking chairs and air conditioning rumble.

The more bands available in a parametric, the more places in the spectrum where you may alter the response. While a one-stage parametric would be ideal for adding a slight midrange peak to a voice to increase intelligibility, if you wanted to boost the bass as well to make the voice a little deeper you would need another stage. The more complex the response-altering requirements, the more stages you would need in your parametric.

While shelving, graphic, and parametric equalizers dominate the world of equalization, new technologies are creating new types of tone controls. Some recording engineers run instruments through the filters found in keyboard synthesizers. Others use delay lines (see April RECORD), phase shifters, and other special effects used by musicians to alter tone. And for a taste of things to come, it's worth noting that the Commodore 64 computer lets you run sounds through a built-in filter which can be programmed under computer control for a variety of responses.

Equalization can brighten dull sounds, increase the fullness of thin voices by boosting low frequency response, improve intelligibility by boosting those vocal frequencies where sibilants and consonants occur, turn a dark Les Paul sound into a bright Stratocaster sound (or vice-versa), and perform lots of other miracles. In fact, equalizers are so useful that they span the range from low-cost, consumer oriented devices to elaborately engineered, high-end equipment for recording studios. But whatever the hardware, the goal is the same: to shape and sculpt sound to end up with something that is subjectively pleasing. ○

New Products



The Revox B261 Tuner, with infrared remote control capability

The **200 Series** from **Revox** includes the B261 tuner, which can be programmed with 20 frequencies plus their call letters and reception modes such as stereo/mono, muting and high blend. Presets are protected against power failure or accidental disconnection of power by virtue of EAROM (Erasable Read-Only Memory), a non-volatile memory chip which requires no battery back-up and will retain programmed information until it is reprogrammed. A liquid crystal display shows the frequency and call letters—7 numbers for frequency and four letters or numbers for the station name.

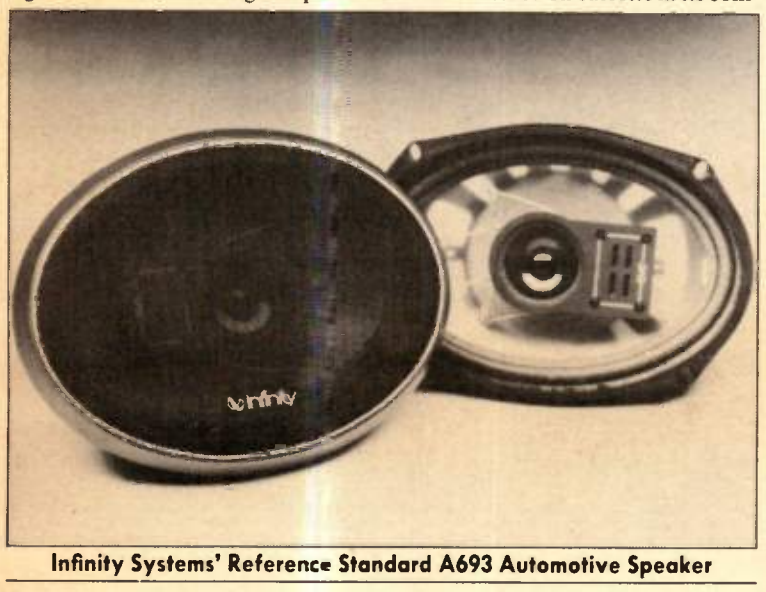
The B261 has an optional second antenna input with the ability to assign either antenna to a given preset for optimum reception. Other features include a built-in 400 Hz test tone, used to set levels on a tape deck when recording from the tuner; headphone jack with its own level control; variable output level; adjustable muting threshold for stereo and for station.

The Revox 200 Series includes the B201 infrared remote control, which will operate the B261 as well as other 200 Series items and other Revox products. The B201 controls all the functions of the tuner, tape transport and integrated amplifier—including source selection, balance, tone-control presets, etc.—all in one hand-held, wireless unit which contains two microprocessors.

Infinity Systems' Reference Standard Automotive Speakers are equipped with polypropylene woofers, Infinity's exclusive EMIT tweeter, reinforced grilled, heavy-duty steel frames and rugged driver materials. There are four models, designed to fit "almost anywhere in any vehicle."

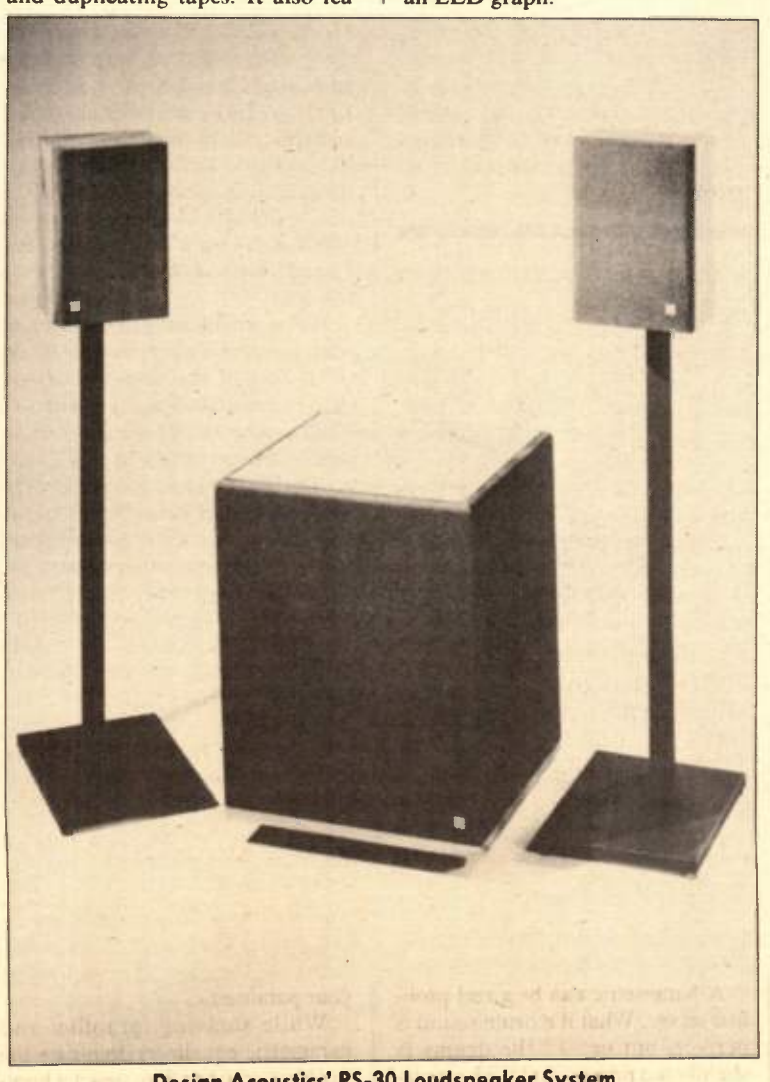
The A693, the top of the line, is a three-way system with a polycarbonate midrange driver mounted in a module with the tweeter to minimize interference from the woofer; the A63 is another three-way system, designed for smaller locations, with a smaller woofer than the A693; the A62 is a two-way design in a 6½" round configuration; the A42, 4" in diameter, can be placed in situations where the mounting depth is only ¾." Its polypropylene woofer is linked to a separate polymer cone through a mechanical crossover.

The **PS-30** loudspeaker system from **Design Acoustics** applies point-source technology to an earlier design, as well as improving efficiency. The two satellite speakers are arranged in a mirror-image asymmetrical configuration for optimum imaging, with a variable tweeter adjustment to compensate for room acoustics. Drivers include a 5½" mid-woofer and a 1" soft-dome tweeter in the satellites, and a 12" dual-coil downfiring woofer in the bass module. All three cabinets are finished in mar-resistant real walnut veneers, and the subwoofers has casters to make it easy to move.



Infinity Systems' Reference Standard A693 Automotive Speaker

Sharp's Music Processor includes a compact keyboard-like device with a microprocessor memory capable of storing up to 340 notes and chords so that a song can be programmed and then played back at the touch of a button. The input melody can be recorded onto cassette as either digital or analog information—which is to say that the program can be recorded as music for playback on this or other systems or stored on cassette in its computer-code form. The latter method requires only 20 seconds of tape, so a single cassette can hold dozens of compositions. The Music Processor has four rhythm patterns (waltz, swing, rock 'n' roll and beguine) and three tones (xylophone, piano and organ), as well as a variable tempo control. The double cassette feature enables the user to make "sound on sound" recordings as well as editing and duplicating tapes. It also features two-way speakers, AM/FM tuner, Automatic Program Search System, and more.

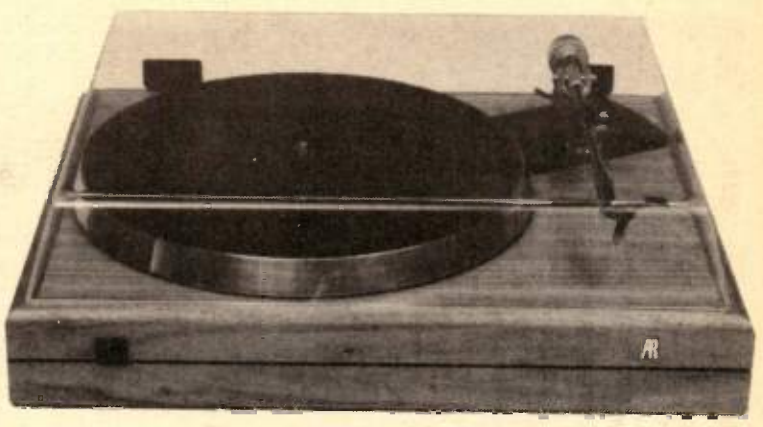


Design Acoustics' PS-30 Loudspeaker System

After a four-year absence from the market, the **AR Turntable** is back sporting new design from top to bottom. A universal tone arm mounting platform will accommodate most audiophile tone arms, or the turntable may be purchased with its own ultra low-mass tone arm. The platter rides a three-point spring hung suspension which isolates the system from the wood veneer top and base. Wow and flutter specifications are 0.03%, with rumble less than or equal to -65 dB (DIN B weighted). The AR Turntable is available in either walnut or oak veneer finish.

Sharp's Music Processor with microprocessor memory

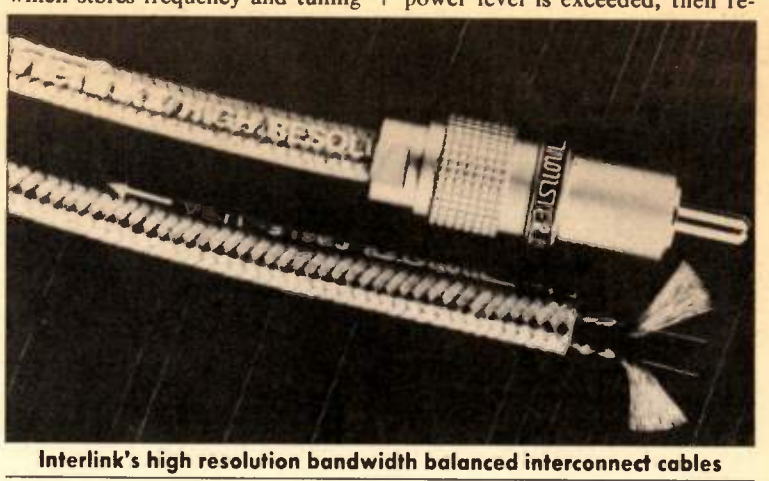
Yamaha's new home receivers incorporate microprocessor control for added flexibility of operation and sound. The **R-100**, with 100 watts per channel, features Yamaha's new Computer Control Sound System (CCSS), a five-band equalizer that replaces conventional tone controls, loudness controls and filters and permits one-touch selection of parameters. Three different response curves for different listening situations can be preset in the R-100's memory, recalled at the touch of a button, and adjusted with an up/down control bar within a range of ±12 dB; the curve is displayed on an LED graph.



The newly-designed AR Turntable

The R-100's other features include a Dynamic Noise Canceller circuit, which increases signal-to-noise ratio in music from tape, disc or tuner without the need for encoding and decoding systems such as Dolby or dbx; an "auto phono" circuit switches the unit's input to Phono whenever the turntable is activated; Zero Distortion Rule power amplification; Computer Servo Lock Synthesizer tuning for optimum performance under varying reception conditions; a Spatial Expander Control which extends the stereo field beyond the physical location of the speakers; a 10-station Random Access Station Status Memory which stores frequency and tuning mode data for ten presets; two tape monitors with dubbing; Infra-red remote control; and more.

There are four other models in this line, ranging down to 25 watts per channel and with different combinations of these advanced features.



Interlink's high resolution bandwidth balanced interconnect cables

Tandberg's new **TCD 3014** cassette recorder was designed to advance the state of the tape-deck art while maintaining a "user-friendly" front panel design. The audio circuitry uses up-to-date design techniques including direct coupling throughout the signal path, discrete transistors instead of integrated circuits (except in the Dolby B and C chips), phase compensated ultra-wideband amplifiers, high-grade resistors and capacitors, a subsonic filter, etc. Two built-in tone generators enable the user to adjust bias, sensitivity and record head azimuth; equalized peak-reading meters with rapid attack and slow release achieve response to 2-millisecond peaks (plenty quick enough for most musical transients) within 1 dB.

Tandberg's patented "Dyneq" system varies the high-frequency record equalization to optimize high-frequency information; the new Actilinear II transconductance amplifier increases the headroom of the record amplifier to a level 20 dB beyond the signal current requirements of any currently-available tape. The transport uses four servo-controlled DC motors in a closed-loop dual-capstan drive, with several features incorporated to protect the tape against spillage, stretching, etc. An 8-bit microprocessor controls all transport operations, including scan, search and memory functions; the 32K EPROM memory, programmed by Tandberg, can be updated at a later date to add functions. The TCD 3014 also includes an infrared remote control, Dolby B and C noise reduction, fixed as well as variable outputs on the back panel, etc.

The **B&W DM17** Limited is a compact loudspeaker system designed to provide high-grade performance in smaller listening rooms. The bass/midrange driver features a 150-millimeter Bextrene thermoplastic cone heavily damped with polyvinyl acetate compounds, and a 26-mm high-temperature voice coil, phenolic resin impregnated on a foil-lined former. The high-frequency driver's diaphragm is a 26-mm multi-filament polyester weave dome with a 26-mm voice coil and a high-energy nickel cobalt center pole in the magnet system. The high-frequency driver is time-aligned in relation to the bass/midrange driver; along with a computer-optimized crossover network, the system puts out a coherent, symmetrical wavefront.

The speaker pairs are computer-matched to within ±0.5 dB for optimum performance; B&W's "audio powered overload circuit" cuts out the drive unit if the preset safety power level is exceeded, then restores operation automatically when the overload condition is removed. An LED at the base of the cabinet gives a visual indication of the overload condition. Cabinets are available in veneers of walnut or black ash.

Interlink High Resolution "Bandwidth Balanced" Cables are designed to increase clarity, dynamic range and imaging while lowering distortion in audio component systems. These cables feature a balanced-lined configuration of two identical litz wires inside a densely braided copper shield. The litz wires are made of many gauges for accurate response throughout the audible range; balanced lines reduce phase disturbances and interference from outside. Interlink Reference Cable, also from Monster Cable of San Francisco, uses a sophisticated three-wire multiple-gauge network for each conductor, providing "absolute coherency of frequency and phase response" over the entire musical spectrum. A thick core wire handles information from subsonic to 300 Hz; four intermediate-sized conductors handle the midrange; and hair-thin strands transmit frequencies over 700 Hz.

The new **Paper Thin Crash Cymbal** from **Avedis Zildjian** is designed for fast response and rapid decay—"a precise, bright crash that cuts out quickly," according to company president Armand Zildjian. The cymbal is exceptionally thin, almost flat in profile, and given a smooth, lustrous finish. It's available in 14", 15", 16", and 17" diameters. *Avedis Zildjian Company, Longwater Drive, Norwell MA 02061.*

Records

Country That Counts

Delia Bell
Delia Bell
Warner Bros.

Old Familiar Feeling
The Whites
Warner Bros.

By Crispin Sartwell

As these two breathtaking albums demonstrate, country music has been busily, and joyfully, rediscovering its past. As a result, the form is as rich and vital now as at any time in its history.

In the late '70s, success for country stars meant crossing over to the pop charts. Established performers like Dolly Parton and Willie Nelson recorded light soul and old-time jazz, respectively, and relative newcomers like Kenny Rogers, Crystal Gayle and Ronnie Milsap established their careers with syrupy crossover hits.

Crossing over to pop brought country music high sales and high visibility, but it also eroded country's distinctive sound and emotional impact. After merging with the mainstream, it seemed that country music might disappear completely. Great singers like Tammy Wynette and Merle Haggard, who didn't try very hard to change their sound, began to seem anachronistic, and they receded from the forefront of the genre. Southern drawls and twanging pedal-steel guitars, formerly country's signatures, were out of fashion.

But about three years ago, the pop charts, by and large, stopped accepting country songs. Radio stations tightened their playlists and record companies stopped promoting country artists to pop audiences. Country acts (and black acts as well) were thrown back on their own resources, on their original audiences. As a result, 1980 and '81 produced such pleasant phenomena as the rediscovery of George Jones, one of Conway Twitty's finest albums, *Mr. T,* Barbara Mandrell's huge hit "I Was Country When Country Wasn't Cool," and the emergence of bluesy new stars like Lacy J. Dalton and John Anderson, all of which served to codify the country audience's pride in the music it loved. Drawls and twangs were back in fashion.

It was only a matter of time before country proceeded backwards toward its origins in mountain music and bluegrass. Largely under the aegis of Emmylou Harris and former Hot Band member Ricky Skaggs, 1982 and '83 have been years in which it has done just that. Both Harris and Skaggs, particularly the latter, have had hits in an acoustic, semi-bluegrass vein, but with *Delia Bell* and *Old Familiar Feeling,* they've diversified into A&R and production.

Produced by Harris, *Delia Bell* is pure, perfect country music. Bell sings with absolutely no ornamentation or affectation; she weaves her raw ruralism over extremely simple instrumental tracks. Songs of the Carter Family close both sides, and they're performed with simultaneous freshness and veneration of tradition.

The album's all-star lineup includes Byron Berline and Carl Jackson; Harris and Holly Tashian provide beautiful harmonies on many of the songs, and John Anderson performs a duet with Bell on "Flame In My Heart." Still, it's Bell's uncut gem of a voice that's the center of this album; her singing is both rough-edged and radiant.

The rough edges, in fact, may keep *Delia Bell* from producing any hit songs; it's perhaps too old-fashioned for substantial airplay. Not so the music of the Whites; *Old Familiar Feeling* has already produced three lovely hits: "You Put the Blue In Me," "Hangin' Around," and "I Wonder Who's Holdin' My Baby Tonight." On these and other songs, the Whites steer a deft course between the traditional and the commercial viable.

There are three Whites on this album; Buck, a longtime journeyman pianist, mandolin player, and singer, and two of his daughters, Sharon White and Cheryl White Warren. Sharon is married to Ricky Skaggs, who produced this album with the sumptuous understatement of his own recent work.

The Whites specialize in gentle songs that are carried by the daughters' sweet harmonies and Jerry Douglas' distinctive dobro. Dad adds swing flourishes on piano and vocals. This is music that's as simply enjoyable as anything current country has to offer.

Those who forget the past may be condemned to repeat it, but as these albums indicate, country music, in recalling its past, is creating a marvelous future.

PHOTO: HENRY DILTZ

The Best of Slim Harpo—
The Original King Bee
Slim Harpo
Rhino

The Okeh Sessions
Big Maybelle
Epic

By Derk Richardson

Sometimes history bears repeating. Just ask the Rolling Stones, Van Morrison, The Kinks and Dave Edmunds. They are among the many who spotted the genius of Louisiana bluesman James Isaac Moore and reworked his sound into their own. Moore, who became known as Slim Harpo in the late 1950s, is best remembered for his 1966 hit, "Baby, Scratch My Back." But without the precedent of his thick, swampy blues style and the raw material of his songwriting, a 1980s' blues band like the Fabulous Thunderbirds wouldn't be half so fabulous.

Harpo might have become more than a fascinating minor figure in the history of the blues if he'd had time to capitalize on the success of "Baby, Scratch My Back," but he died of a heart attack in 1970, leaving his laconic legacy to the likes of the T-Birds and Rhino Records, the cockeyed L.A. indie which collected this invaluable selection of nuggets.

"Baby, Scratch My Back," with its lazy beat, simple, echoey guitar line, down home harp and quietly evil vocal, opens the LP. It's anything but downhill from the hit. Included are "I'm a King Bee" and "Shake Your Hips" (both covered by the Stones), "Tip On In," (revived by the Thunderbirds), the classic "Mohair Sam," and a touching, Fats Domino-styled "Raining in My Heart."

Like other bluesmen recorded at J.D. Miller's Crowley, Louisiana, studio in the late '50s and early '60s—such as Lazy Lester and Rocket Morgan—Harpo played and sang with a unique tension somewhere between smouldering passion and an "I don't give a damn" off-handedness. The results are sultry and dark—hot enough to give off steam, eerie enough to give you the willies.

Mabel Smith's story was as hard-lucked and star-crossed as any that the blues ever laid on a woman. Earning her stage name, by weighing in at over 250, Big Maybelle was never able to savor the success that her enormous talent as a blues, R & B and jazz singer might have brought. The heroin habit which finally brought her down in 1972 devoured a large part of her career as well. It took awhile to get to her voice.

This double LP chronicles the sides she cut for the Okeh label from 1952 to 1955. From "Just Want Your Love" through "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On," Maybelle is a tower of strength, seizing and sometimes overpowering the songs with her giant voice. Although the arrangements, performed by such ace R & B and jazz musicians as trumpeter Joe Wilder, tenor saxophonist Sam "The Man" Taylor and drummer Panama Francis, are ripe with intrigue, these are performances less likely to seduce you than to bowl you over.

The down and dirty humor of her legendary live shows and the jazz stylings of her later sessions for Savoy (available on the *Roots of Rock 'n' Roll* series) are secondary here to Maybelle's terrifying hurricane of a

voice. Bessie Smith before her and very few after unleashed similar furies upon a song. Hers is the wail of a willful woman whose heart may have been broken and whose body may have been possessed by junk but who would take no guff from anyone—a woman trying to gain some control in the world by embracing it with a song.

The Pursuit of Accidents
Level 42
Polydor

By Bill Flanagan

Level 42 are a British funk band who . . . No! Wait, come back here! These guys are okay.

The English have a remarkable gift for absorbing American musical forms and feeding them back to us with fresh enthusiasm. A quartet led by singer/bassist Mark King, Level 42 play light, melodic funk of a sort Americans have become too sophisticated to produce. It's a little like middle period Steely Dan (without the black humor and irony) and a little like the Police (without a foot in new wave). Level 42 aren't equal to those two bands, but they have the sort of youthful enthusiasm the old pros have left behind.

When American rockers get sophisticated they move toward jazz (we created fusion) while Britons tend toward Europe's classical tradition (they created art rock). Though Level 42's U.S. roots echo throughout the LP, the vocal melodies occasionally drift toward Yes territory. The fairy dust singing on "Eyes Waterfalling" draws attention to the silly lyrics ("Take me out to play, let me find a way to be/Let me feel the sun, life has just begun for me").

Yet starry-eyed innocence can also be charming. The instrumental "Shapeshifter" sounds for all the world like Herbie Hancock playing one of Vince Gauraldi's *Charlie Brown* scores; funky, technically precise, and at the same time fresh and opened.

"Are You Hearing" and "Last Chance" are fine mainstream dance numbers that demonstrate the group's greatest asset: in this era of disco-synth bands Level 42 sound like breathing, sweating human beings.

Johnny Gill
Johnny Gill
Cotillion

By Crispin Sartwell

Johnny Gill, a sixteen-year-old vocal prodigy from Washington, D.C., is an astonishingly mature talent. His debut album fails in many ways to provide an ideal showcase for that talent, but his raw ability and intelligence cannot be concealed even by relatively mediocre material.

Saying that Gill is mature doesn't mean his voice has changed (though it has), but that he's a self-assured interpreter with a well-developed sense of timbre, phrasing and dynamics. He's spent most of his life singing in a choir, which goes far towards explaining the full realization he achieves here. He combines the churchy bravado of the great '60s soul shouters with the smoother, more urbane approach of contemporary crooners.

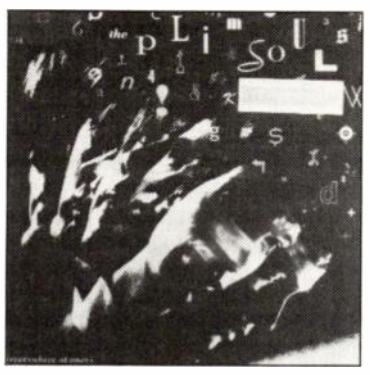
The album opens with an old-time bubblegum soul number, "Super Love." Gill's producer, Freddie Perren, probably expected this kid to sound like early Michael Jackson, but that implies a serious misjudgment of Gill's abilities. He throws down too hard to be talking about puppy love.

It's no coincidence that Perren, who also co-wrote most of the album's songs, produced the J5 in their early years. Most of *Johnny Gill*, however, owes more to another recent Perren product: the Spinners' *Grand Slam*. It's light funk with synthesizer as its basic instrument.

But Gill has the potential to handle songs of much more emotional depth and breadth. He's at his most convincing belting out the old Sam and Dave song, "When Something is Wrong With My Baby." And while the original arrangement is still the best, Gill does manage to uncover some heretofore-unnoticed nuances in the Hayes/Porter tune.

Gill drew the attention of record companies through his acquaintance with another D.C. teen phenom, Stacy Lattisaw; both went to Sousa Jr. High. Narada Michael Walden has produced Lattisaw with breezy wit, playing up her girlishness and sense of humor. Perren takes a somewhat more serious approach here, and provides several fine frames for Gill's range and power. "Thank You" is a particularly moving composition; on it, Gill creates a bittersweet minor-key ambience.

Gill slides perfectly into the groove on two gospel-oriented funk songs, "Guilty" and "Half Steppin'," on which he bids fair to become the next James Brown. And even "I'm Sorry," a maundering apology for a song, is redeemed by the artist's intuitive mastery of melody.



Everywhere At Once
The Plimsouls
Geffen

By J.D. Considine

After their debut album, *The Plimsouls*, sank without a trace two years ago, it looked as if the Plimsouls were doomed to join the Romantics, 20/20 and the Brains in the ranks of great regional bands that got screwed in a major label deal. Yet here they are again, back in the big time with an album that not only successfully adapts the Plimsouls sound to AOR dimensions, but does so without sacrificing their garage band grittiness. In short, *Everywhere At Once* lets them have their cake and eat it, too.

There have been some changes made, the most obvious being the rethink of "A Million Miles Away," which hard-core fans no doubt remember as last year's hit-that-never-was. But even as producer Jeff Eyrich smoothed the band's material for general market consumption, he merely emphasized their pop instincts; none of the band's snap or crackle was dropped in favor of the pop. In fact, Greg Ladanyi's mix gives the Plimsouls a hot and sweaty sound that would do any rec room proud.

Still, the bulk of the credit belongs where you'd expect—with the band. Pete Case is equally adept at sophisticated chord changes, as with the spring-tense verse structure to "Shaky City," and refitting old chestnuts, the way "Lie, Beg, Borrow and Steal" winks at "Dirty Water." But what he knows best is how to make a guitar roar like an orchestra and how to get the most out of a battered voice, and between them he gives the Plimsouls the sort of gutsy drive that's hard to find outside the oldies bin. Not that these guys are locked in the past—Lou Ramirez is as contemporary a drummer as anybody could want, and Eddie Munoz's arsenal of lead licks is pretty much state of the art—just that they understand what made those old records work, and what still makes records work. And if you need proof, well, it's waiting for you right on this record. Do yourself a favor, and check it out soon.

The Key
Joan Armatrading
A&M

By Jim Toler

Perhaps *The Key*'s most audible sound is the collective mutterings of long-time Joan Armatrading fans. For although the wattage has gradually increased on her past few albums, *The Key* is Armatrading's free-fall into taut, bristling rock. The album's opener, "(I Love It When You) Call Me Names," with its ominous, growling/sputtering bass line and thick, industrial strength beat, defiantly stakes out a new, aggressive musical turf for Armatrading. At first it's as disconcerting as, say, encountering Kate and Anna McGarrigle doing "Cat Scratch Fever," but Armatrading's confidence has never seemed so solid, nor her musical skills so finely honed.

Produced by Steve Lillywhite and, for two tracks, Val Garay (the ophthalmologist for "Bette Davis Eyes"), *The Key* frames Armatrading's straightforward, melodic songs with dense instrumental texture. However, her voice (she is certainly one of rock's most powerful and expressive singers) more than stands up to the production. Moreover, she has that rarest of vocal qualities: the ability to convey the excitement and urgency fundamental to the best rock without resorting to melodrama or stridency.

The album contains 11 of the most direct songs Armatrading has ever written. Less idiosyncratic and lyrical than her earlier efforts, they nonetheless avoid formula. And for the first time one can discern outside influences: "What Do Boys Dream" is Go-Go's style pop, but smarter; with its lilting melody, great brass charts and early '60s sensibility, "Foolish Pride" is the closest Armatrading's ever come to the perfect radio single. "Bad Habits" wears its Rolling Stones badge of approval proudly—and justifiably, since it beats anything Mick and Keith have come up with in years.

"I want the key to your heart," Armatrading sings in the title track, and certainly *The Key* is her most overt attempt to gain America's acceptance. She's long overdue, but with music this compelling she shouldn't have to ask anymore.

Jim Toler's review has been selected as the winning entry in the Joan Armatrading Key Contest announced in the June RECORD. His prize is an expenses-paid trip to see Armatrading in concert in either New York City or Vancouver. Toler, 30 years old, lives in Superior, Michigan, where he attends Washtenaw Community College and owns a blueberry farm. When notified of the editors' decision, Toler replied: "You're kidding. I wanted to win fourth place; I wanted the 50 albums." Sorry, Jim. Second prize (keys to a Honda Aero 50) went to Dan McMillan of Oregon City, Oregon. Third prize (a Casiotone 501 keyboard) went to Michael Roberts of Grand Junction, Colorado. Fourth prize (choice of 50 albums from the A&M Records library) went to Tim Gioe of Hanover Park, Illinois.

Power, Corruption, and Lies
New Order
Factory/Rough Trade

By Stuart Cohn

New Order is three-fourths of Joy Division, the missing quarter being Ian Curtis, one of the few post-'60s rock singers ever to become a legend in his own time. Curtis, though, didn't live to see much of his own time. He hung himself in 1980 at the age of 23, victim of a love triangle he couldn't resolve.

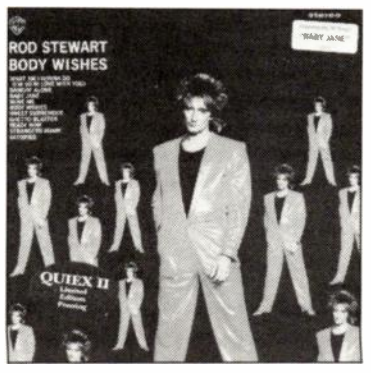
The reason I mention this is because Curtis' death, coming on the eve of Joy Division's first American tour, prevented that group from gaining the household-word status that seemed assured them. One of the most influential of the late-seventies post-punk Brits, their music spawned at least three trends—the new Romantics, the psychedelic revival, the synthesizer revolution—and an almost unbearably avid and loyal cult. A Joy Division fan worships Curtis' suicide as the ultimate gesture of the romantic and alienated adolescent. But however uplifting their music got—and their final single, "Love Will Tear Us Apart," is about as richly joyous as rock can get—Joy Division's overall mood was one of desolation; they spoke for a young man who could not fit himself into this world.

New Order has to bear Curtis' legacy, but their mood is something different. Their voice represents a disaffected spirit, too, but one which avoids self-dramatization, says its piece and gets on with it. The voice belongs to guitarist Bernard Albrecht, and when he sings, "For these last few days/Leave me alone," I think of a person dying a natural death, not a suicide.

There's warmth, humor and a self-deprecating ambiguity amidst the high seriousness on this album, the group's second (the *Movement* LP, a five-song EP, and the dance-hit 12-inch "Blue Monday"/"The Beach" are their other U.S. waxings). On the record's best song, "Your Silent Face," the singer lampoons and dismisses a person obsessed with silence and nothingness—"The thought that never changes/remains a stupid lie"—yet feels a bit incommunicado himself ("You caught me at a bad time/So why don't you piss off"). The group embodies these conflicting attitudes with church organ synths, twangy guitar, and a jaunty, insouciant rhythm box to make a gorgeous yet gently mocking hymn to alienation.

New Order, though, is not an "attitude" group. Albrecht's shy, strangulated singing style turns your attention away from the words and back to the music. And the music is rewarding for its texture and nuance. "Ecstasy" 's glistening vocodered voices; the stately tempo and meditative jazz chording of "We All Stand"; the early-'70s-Miles static funk bass bridging the two wry electro-disco sections of "The Village" . . . it's a new kind of ear candy which penetrates the emotions and the pleasure center.

Joy Division was a glacial wind, but New Order is more alive. When the expansive, chiming guitars meet the almost garroted vocals of "Leave Me Alone," the tension is warming, pleasant. The lyrics turn away from issues of entrapment and transcendance and instead focus on simple images: "On a thousand islands in the sea/I see a thousand people just like me/A hundred unions in the snow/I watch them walking, falling in a row." In the background, the group exults in the formalistic interplay of sound and texture, thereby finding beauty which one can live with and, in their own way, getting to where Ian Curtis wanted to go.



Body Wishes
Rod Stewart
Warner Bros.

By Dan Hedges

Ever since he divorced Ron Wood and set sail for Beverly Hills back around '75, Rod Stewart has been sounding more and more like the right guest stranded at the wrong party. Make no mistake about it, the man can sing; the pipes that once fronted the Faces and strolled down Gasoline Alley have, if anything, improved with the pasing years.

But by repeatedly striking his poses against the shopping mall backdrop of L.A. disco-schlock/Cuisinart rock that's characterized so much of his West Coast output, the poor guy's only succeeded in cutting his own throat for the sake of a few hit singles, sadly turning his career into something akin to a sitcom. Over the past eight years, Stewart's Saturday night, nod-is-as-good-as-a-wink recklessness has given way to a strangely humorless brand of cartoon parody: Rod Stewart impersonating Rod Stewart. Over the course of seven albums, there's been a feeling that during his journey from London's Wardour Street to Rodeo Drive, our Roderick made a pit stop at Hanna-Barbera and somehow forgot to get back on the bus.

Body Wishes doesn't do a whole lot toward rectifying the problem. To repeat: the man *can* sing, and on "Move Me" and the Chuck Berry-esque "Dancin' Alone," Stewart, long-time guitarist Jim Cregan and the rest of the band manage to stoke the boilers up to an almost-full head of steam. But there's something forced about it. At his best, the Rod Stewart of the '80s can't seem to move beyond parody: a pre-packaged, fast food echo of the Faces, with little trace of the Faces' almost legendary joy. Then again, on "Baby Jane," "What Am I Gonna Do," "Ready Now," and "Ghetto Blaster," he's still firmly plugged into that same blandly homogenized dance beat, the same connect-the-dots riffs that made so much of his late '70s work so painful to listen to. And while slower tunes such as "Strangers Again" and the majestic "Satisfied" prove, once again, that Stewart's one of the few out-and-out rockers who can step into a ballad without sounding like a wimp, the Malibu sunset production job (attributable, it seems, to Tom Dowd), only waters down what's always been the man's ace-in-the-hole: his inherent warmth, his "have another drink" accessibility.

Rod Stewart just doesn't sound like he's having a good time anymore. On the photos that grace the outer and inner sleeves of *Body Wishes*, both he and his band look bored stiff—and maybe this is the key. Blame it on growing up. Blame it on L.A. But then, Rod always seemed like a fish out of water from the moment he kissed England goodbye. If recent reports of a permanent return to his home turf are true, there might still be some hope left. Now if somebody will only book the boy a few Saturday nights' worth of studio time at Olympic. . . .

Girl at Her Volcano
Rickie Lee Jones
Warner Bros.

By Bill Flanagan

Rickie Lee Jones is a great talent who thinks too much. This seven-song EP has clearly been sweated over; with a bit less effort it could have been perfect.

Jones spent much of 1982 touring. In concert she supplemented material from her two albums with interpretations of classic oldies and a couple of torch songs. Issuing a live EP of Rickie's best covers seemed a wise and easy thing to do.

But no, RLJ had to complicate matters by going into the studio to re-think, re-arrange and re-record all but two of the tracks. The result is a slightly schizophrenic record, too polished to be just a souvenir, yet self-consciously refusing to consider itself an album.

In concert Jones performed "Walk Away Renee" alone at the piano with heartbreaking simplicity. In the studio she's added a swelling Mahavishnu gongs-and-wind chimes section that pops up as an intro (no problem), again as a middle eight (breaking the poignant mood) and finally as a coda that tags an unnecessary cloud of pomp onto what should have been a simple, touching finish.

An infectious sing-along of "Under the Boardwalk" comes off better in the studio than it did on stage, and the one new RLJ original, "Hey, Bub," is a blue reverie in the bittersweet tradition of "After Hours" and "A Lucky Guy." It's good enough to make up for the inexplicable absence of "Trouble Man," a highlight of the '82 tour.

Still live are the saloon songs, "Lush Life" and "My Funny Valentine." Jones has the chops and intelligence to do both numbers proud, though the cheers of a worshipping audience distract from the singer's subtle shifts from humor ("But I was *wrong*") to world-weariness.

The cassette version of the EP contains a live version of "Something Cool"—another old standard—taped from the soundboard at one of Jones' 1979 shows. Not conscious of recording at all, the singer displays special charm and spontaneity. This is how Rickie Lee should always be captured: being herself. When she doesn't know she's making a record Jones can relax and be magnificent.

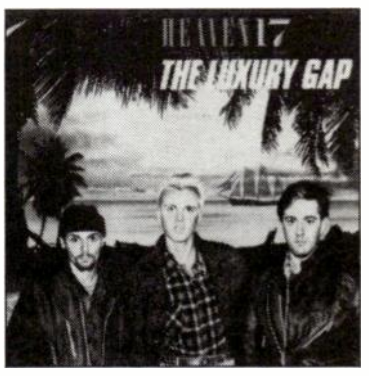
I Was The One
Elvis Presley
RCA

By Christopher Hill

During his lifetime, too few people ever showed an interest in abetting any desire of Elvis' to make a consistent presentation of his talent. Even after his death, no one has seemed willing to work *with* Elvis, to lend a little collaborative art that might show his recorded work as the coherent whole it could be. But with the release of *I Was The One*, RCA has at last shown a willingness to edit and present some of the vast Presley treasure trove in a thoughtful, conscientious manner. The result is a tour de force display of Elvis' mastery that only hints at what might be done to this end.

Ostensibly, the big news here is that certain instrumental parts and backup vocals have been re-recorded to compensate for archaic '50s technology. But the renovators have taken great pains to make their work almost unnecessary. The music—transcribed down to the mistakes and re-recorded in most cases by the original musicians—is all but undistinguishable from the original tracks. The real distinction of this set lies in the care that co-producer David Briggs has taken in the selection and sequencing of these songs. Spanning the years from the first Sun sessions to the early '60s, Briggs has avoided the obvious, stereotypical hits. The result is a feeling of new-release freshness as we hear the jubilant pop of "Wear My Ring Around Your Neck" or the down and dirty barrage of guitars that opens "Little Sister." Hearing a song like "Paralyzed" for the first time—as many will do—is a revelation. It's sung in the smooth, easy-rocking style that singers like Pat Boone would eventually appropriate. Yet the reserves of pleasure in Elvis' vocal seem to echo out of the deep shade of some ancient country lane rather than from the floor of the senior prom; the singing combines complete relaxation with a certain effortless urgency that pulls this ambling tune straight through from start to finish.

Even the cover art on *I Was The One*—with its cartoon-like style and lurid colors—speaks of an energy and dedication missing from previous packagings of Elvis material. While the technical effort here is (perhaps predictably) redundant, the selection of top quality, lesser-known Elvis material works brilliantly. Given the dubious nature of most of the posthumous Elvis releases, the care that's demonstrated on *I Was The One* is in and of itself cause for celebration.



Luxury Gap
Heaven 17
Virgin/Arista

With Sympathy
Ministry
Arista

XL 1
Pete Shelley
Genetic/Arista

By Jim Green

It's been clear for some time that brave new dancepop's due for a vigorous rethink to avoid completely disappearing up its ass; these three discs by synthesizer-based artists (all on the same U.S. label, no less) provide contrasts moderately edifying as to the state of the (non-) art.

Heaven 17 are fairly exemplary, in their way. *Luxury Gap* shows how two non-musicians, having looked to synths as a viable avenue for the expression of artistic ideas more musically ambitious than two-chord garage guitar primitivism would allow, have arrived at the juncture at which the credibility they'd previously earned (more or less) and the financial access now available to them lets them formulate musical goals which exceed their abilities—or inclinations?—to manipulate the machines alone. The result? They (ex-Human Leaguers Ian Marsh and Martyn Ware; vocalist Glenn Gregory completes the trio) take credit for playing nothing—instead, they programmed the synthesizers, and where that wasn't enough they enlisted Earth, Wind & Fire's Phenix Horns, an orchestra, and a handful of other musicians to play it for them. The Alan Parsonses of electro-rock?

For all that, the electronics do set the tone and dominate the character of the music, for better or worse. *Luxury Gap* is mainly trebly, brittle clang 'n' smack in the plugged-in disco mode, and quite bloodless. They lack the sensitivity to bring off a potentially poignant portrait of intergenerational romance like "Come Live With Me," and for the most part their half-baked mixture of indirect or incongruously literate lyrics with intentionally obtuse catchphrases is best ignored. ("Crushed by the Wheels of Industry" and the title track are misguided attempts at adding to the canon of dancey sociopoliticisms which includes "Ball of Confusion" and "War," yet lack the panache of the former and the delightfully ham-handed earnestness of the latter.) The best moments: the harsh percussiveness of lounge lizard anthems like "Temptation" (though I can't tolerate those shrill female backing vocals) and "We Live So Fast," but the excitement is as artificial and

hollow as an amphetamine high.

That's not so in the case of Ministry, though there appears to be more talent than maturity at work here. After multiple listenings I worked up a grudging admiration for this white Chicago duo's adaptation of black dance-funk, "Work for Love" (a dance-club staple for a while), but it's an unrepresentative sample of *With Sympathy*, much of it in the vein of new romantic rock, *à la* A Flock of Seagulls, though with more emphasis on keyboards atop a dancebeat. The songs are mostly tuneful, with clear, full production (courtesy Roy Thomas Baker protegé Ian Taylor and ex-Psychedelic Furs drummer Vince Ely), and well-performed, mostly by writer-vocalist Al Jourgensen, who also plays many of the keyboard and guitar parts. (Stephen George, the drummer, is the other half of the pair, and there are a few guests lending a hand.)

Despite the occasionally grim subject matter (most of the words aren't immediately discernible, but the titles include "I'm Not an Effigy" and "Revenge"), *With Sympathy*'s lightweight, *au courant* enjoyment, like Jourgensen's stagey vocals, is pleasing to the ear but dismissible as show-bizzy rather than heartfelt (do Chicagoans really have English accents?). There's no substitution for having your own musical identity, but Jourgensen's ability and elan are almost enough to let him beg that question the first time around, and arouse great hopes for Ministry's sophomore effort.

Ex-Buzzcock Pete Shelley is at once the most mature and the youngest at heart of the bunch, still full of beans and a sense of romance in the world which, as he admits in song, hasn't ceased to amaze him. His influences (the Beatles, Bowie minus the theatrics, even Grandmaster Flash) may at times be clearly on display, yet he uses them as foundations on which to build his own edifice; his sensibility is all his own.

So, it would seem, is his technique; aside from guitar, almost all of the instrumentation is synthesizers, yet at times you don't even notice. On other occasions, such as "Many A Mile," the near-symphonic intertwining of guitars and synths harnessed to the relentless dance-pulse sounds as if it's being played by a real, vibrant, finely-meshed band, not a box of micro-chips. On certain cuts he did get input from an actual bassist and drummer, but as programmers, enabling Shelley to retain ultimate control.

Except for one painlessly forgettable number, the tracks range from quite good to brilliant, blending—or shifting effortlessly between—dance beats and funk syncopations and pop touches and hard rock, sometimes all on the same number. And Shelley's lyrics are cute but not cutesy, clever but not smartass or artsy, heartfelt—even hokey—but not cloying or shitkicking. Who else could get away with "I don't want to play the same old roles/I like you too much/It would be great if we could relate this way" ('cause "I Just Wanna Touch")?

Homo ex—or *via*—*machina*? Just goes to show ya, it ain't the machine, it's the motion.

Wild Heart
Stevie Nicks
Modern

By Christopher Hill

Consider the weird authority Stevie Nicks can command, her sense of drama, her knack for hooks, her willingness to experiment with new and different styles, and you have reason enough to tolerate her excesses. But in this case talent must war constantly with the artist's most sophomoric inclinations, in order to break through the cloying atmosphere of her conventionalized, quaintly girlish romanticism, and worse, an almost mystical fascination with her own emotions. And so it's not that *Wild Heart* is bad—some of it, in fact, is quite good; but a crucial degree of discipline has slipped, producing an album that sounds pleased with itself all out of proportion to its virtues.

Interesting ideas and nice melodies are scattered throughout this record, but they only occasionally organize themselves into good songs. In "Stand Back," she's created one of the summer's best radio songs, injecting Anglo-style "dance music" with rock 'n' roll urgency. "Enchanted" begins like a typical L.A. session player's idea of a rocker—plodding 4/4, the keyboards gracelessly hammering away—but takes on a life of its own with spunky ensemble singing and Nick's wired-up monotonal lyric spew.

But soon the walls of her private velvet underground close in. The cloud of sighs that opens "Sable and Blonde" is eerily reminiscent of the kind of background music used in TV commercials in ads for pantyhose or hygiene sprays. "Wild Heart" is fitfully engaging, but meanders unconscionably, as if to underscore the moral shiftlessness of the lyrics—"Don't blame it on me, blame it on my wild heart" is as thoroughly bullshit a sentiment as any you'll find in pop music. "Beauty and the Beast" seeks to evoke timeless longing but sinks under the weight of syrupy synthesizer washes.

One line from the end of "Beauty and the Beast," when Nicks obsessively asks, "Where is my beast?", has a special ironic resonance. The answer to that is that he lives in other Stevie Nicks songs—such as "Angel," "Edge of Seventeen," "Silver Springs"— where the rough beast that is the Other, the external world, breaks through the spun sugar walls of Nicks' dream house. You can play with crystal visions all you like, Stevie, but only at the risk of having your beast tire of the inattention and wander off for good.

Think of One
Wynton Marsalis
Columbia

Haydn/Hummel/L. Mozart Trumpet Concertos: National Philharmonic Orchestra, Raymond Leppard, Dir.
Wynton Marsalis
Columbia Masterworks

By Derk Richardson

The only threat to Wynton Marsalis' skyrocketing career is that the 21-year-old trumpeter will inspire expectations which could be met by no one less than a superman. With the simultaneous release of his second solo jazz album and his debut solo classical LP, Marsalis demonstrates that his talents are indeed heroic, if not yet otherworldly.

The New Orleans-bred horn man has already garnered more critical and popular attention than most straight-ahead jazz musicians could hope to generate in a lifetime. Comparisons to Clifford Brown, Freddie Hubbard and even Miles Davis stoked the fires of hype and his tours and recording with Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Tony Williams introduced Marsalis to some of the largest audiences in jazz.

In the face of such overwhelming notoriety, Marsalis maintains a dignity and an integrity uncommon in these days of the fast fusion buck. His jazz is acoustic, post-bebop and unabashedly mainstream, and the strength of his concept and execution make him not only one of the best young players but one of the most valuable of all players in jazz today.

From the opening cut, "Knozz-Moe-King," through the final brief but touching version of Ellington's "Melancholia," all of Marsalis' values are splendidly in evidence: his love for the mid-1960s Miles Davis quintets; his broad historical reach taking in Louis Armstrong, Ellington, Monk and Don Cherry; his commitment to the group ethic which insures that his firm sense of command is balanced by a cohesive and empathetic band working as a single unit.

Sometimes it is difficult to hear beyond Marsalis' staggering technical virtuosity. But beneath the wry humor of his quirky phrases and greasy smears, the wistful tone of his balladry and the unfettered blowing of his hard-bop, is a smart and intuitive attention to mood and feeling. Brother Branford Marsalis, on tenor and soprano saxophones, remains the gutsier player, never rendering emotions into thoughts before catapulting them out into the air. Pianist Kenny Kirkland, drummer Jeffrey Watts and bassists Phil Bowler and Ray Drummond brilliantly transcend the typical "rhythmn section" role with assertive personal statements throughout the album's eight tracks.

Think of One is not a milestone in the development of modern jazz but, given Marsalis' high visibility, it could well become a seminal record in the education of a new jazz audience. Marsalis is already the source of renewed excitement about the trumpet (although other players such as Lester Bowie and Olu Dara are taking it further). Is it too much to think that he might be revitalizing straightforward acoustic jazz as a whole?

The Marsalis name alone will put the *Trumpet Concertos* into a lot of record collections alongside *Think of One*. Still, Marsalis' date with the National Philharmonic Orchestra will probably remain unplayed until (a) you want to prove to your friends that you have sophisticated and cosmopolitan tastes, (b) you want to impress them with evidence that jazz musicians can "really" play, or (c) you want to indulge in the purest, and most silvery trumpet tones you've ever heard. And that's not a bad string section he's working with either.

Waiting
Fun Boy Three
Chrysalis

By Craig Zeller

I can remember witnessing the Specials at a glorified dive in NYC a few years back and getting a huge kick out of all the joyful harebrained mania that Neville Staples and Lynval Golding churned up with such dizzy abandon. When they and Terry Hall split from the Specials to form a new group I figured the resultant aggregation would be well worth savoring, joyful harebrained mania being the rare commodity that it is these days.

And it's getting scarcer by the minute because Fun Boy Three, contrary to the first part of their name, turns out to be one of the dullest trios to come down the pike since Winken, Blinken and Nod. Their debut was as dull a thud as I've ever heard and with this new one they've proven that consistency is in their blood: *Waiting* is a major disaster.

Where to begin? How about David Byrne's will o' the wisp production? It's thinned out beyond belief, even more tired than the mucking about he did on the B-52's' *Mesopotamia.* Of course you can't blame the guy for nodding out when he's got material as somnambulistic as this coupled to a group that sounds so dead on their feet you'd think they cut the damn thing in a morgue.

The worst moment occurs right at the outset when they do their version of "Our Lips Are Sealed" (co-written by Terry Hall and Go-Go Jane Wiedlin). It's the one memorable melody on the record and they give it the same treatment as all the debris that follows: they shuffle around in dispirited fashion, casually deaden the energy level, and just generally sap the life out of it.

Stuff like "The Tunnel Of Love" and "We're Having All The Fun" comes off like Madness on downs at best. At worst—well, I don't even wanna think about it. I'll just be kind and say that they're two of the less miserable compositions.

If you want the dregs then get into such essential filler items as "Murder She Said" (a dipsy doodle instrumental), "Well Fancy That!" (a weak-kneed conclusion with the most unwarranted exclamation point of the year) and "Things We Do" (painfully bad pop cabaret that asks philosopher-dolt questions like, "If you swallow your food, would you swallow your pride?"). I mean, the heaviness of it all is crushing me.

Why go on? You get the picture. Fun Boy Three have revealed themselves to be time wasters of the first magnitude and *Waiting* is in no danger of being chosen as a cornerstone of anyone's collection.

Travels
Pat Metheny Group
ECM

By Samuel Graham

Live albums are usually an excuse to tread water. You play a cross-section of tunes from your entire career, focusing on the newer stuff; you re-arrange or extend some familiar material, and maybe you throw in a couple of unexpected cover versions. Make it a double album, and chances are the customers'll be satisfied until you get around to writing some new music.

With *Travels,* Pat Metheny, the guitarist with a jazzman's chops and mind but a rocker's heart, follows the examples of Jackson Browne and Neil Young and makes a live album that defies the tried and true formula. Yes, there are some popular favorites on *Travels.* But of the 12 tunes here, fully eight are brand new. And if no startling new ground is broken, there are still four sides of classy, original music—a bargain any way you slice the vinyl.

Metheny devotees will hear echoes of several of his specialties in the new material: reflective, near-acoustic ballads ("Farmer's Trust," "Travels"); spicy helpings of guitar synthesizer ("Extradition," "Song for Bilbao"); soaring flights of lyrical improvisation ("The Fields, The Sky," "Straight on Red"). But there is more to *Travels* than filling new bottles with old wine, so to speak. For one thing, there is the presence of Nana Vasconcelos, a Brazilian wizard whose use of voice and berimbau (a single-string instrument played with a bow), as well as the usual battery of percussion, gives the music more rhythmic and melodic richness than the basic guitar-keyboards-bass-drums quartet could supply. Vasconcelos, who toured regularly with Metheny in a "special guest" capacity and appeared on the *As Falls Wichita, So Falls Wichita Falls* and *Offramp* albums, has since departed for other projects—but he obviously made his mark, as Metheny has hired a full-time replacement.

The four previously-recorded pieces are among the Metheny group's best and most durable works. "As Falls Wichita . . . ," Metheny and Mays' soundtrack for the apocalypse, is somewhat truncated here, but it remains their most adventurous composition to date. "Are You Going With Me?", a lengthy excursion for guitar and keyboard synths, is nearly identical to the *Offramp* version, while "San Lorenzo" and "Phase Dance" are also very similar to the studio versions on 1978's *Pat Metheny Group.* Little matter—the latter two tunes are still breathtaking, with a majestic sweep and a sense of purpose just about unmatched in the so-called fusion arena. Like all of Metheny's albums, *Travels* is refreshing evidence that music of substance can be delivered with no strings attached. These boys don't have time to pose—they're too busy playing.

Texas Flood
Stevie Ray Vaughan & Double Trouble
Epic

By Jody Denberg

Stevie Ray Vaughan has masterfully blended the finest blues guitar styles into an aggressive, biting sound of his own on his debut album, *Texas Flood.* Echoes of Albert King's high-tone attack and Buddy Guy's physical approach ring through Vaughan's Stratocaster on the record's ten tracks, but the end result is a driving, passionate guitar blitz that Vaughan has been brewing for years in Texas' finest dives.

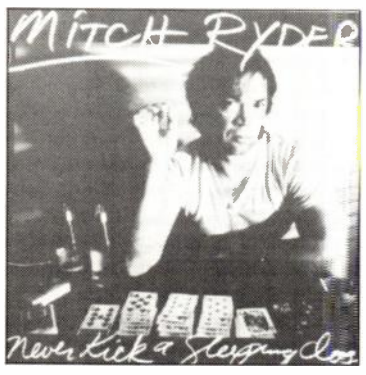
Though he first reached the public's ears on the forceful fills he provided for David Bowie's *Let's Dance,* Vaughan has been plying his trade for years—first in the Triple Threat Review, which featured vocalist Lou Ann Barton, and more recently with his own trio, Double Trouble, including former Johnny Winter bassist Tommy Shannon and drummer Chris Layton. Paying dues has obviously paid off in better blues for Vaughan, because *Texas Flood* is an assured, professional outing more becoming of a veteran than a young upstart. The guitarist renders lead breaks with the fury of a dying man let loose for the last time, while solos maintain a furious intensity without foregoing exploratory spontaneity.

The pacing of *Texas Flood* is as exemplary as the structure of one of Vaughan's well-considered solos. Each side kicks off with an uptempo boogie—the Fabulous Thunderbirds-influenced "Lovestruck Baby" (T-Birds guitarist Jimmie Vaughan is Stevie's brother) begins round one, and the nasty shuffle of "Rude Mood" begins round two. On the latter, Vaughan's fingers nimbly prance around the lower strings, alternating between clear-toned wails and muffled trails of notes. Both tracks are Vaughan originals, though he pays homage to his roots by briefly quoting from Freddie King's "Hideaway" and by hanging on the IV chord a la Lightnin' Hopkins during "Rude Mood."

On the middle songs of each side, Vaughan stretches out. His singing and guitar playing on the title track share a harsh, amelodic tonality. The haunting, minor-key "Dirty Pool," a brooding tale of betrayal, finds Vaughan fighting his way up from a series of triplets at the low end of the neck, then erupting in a fusillade of notes that would make even Magic Sam drool.

Closing both ends of *Texas Flood* are tunes that owe a great deal to Hendrix—the accelerating drive of "Testify" and the breezy "Lenny," which sounds as if it was passed down from the heavens as a gift from Jimi to Stevie.

Here, and throughout the whole LP, Double Trouble's rhythm section operates with an anticipation for Vaughan's moves that borders on telepathy. Without their accompaniment, it is doubtful that Vaughan could play with the raucous bravado he displays on every groove.



Never Kick a Sleeping Dog
Mitch Ryder
Riva/PolyGram

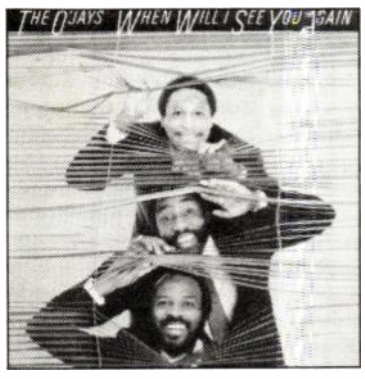
By Anthony DeCurtis

Mitch Ryder's first major label LP in more than a dozen years never quite achieves the redemptive blast of his mid-'60s' r(ock)&b classics or the unnerving fascination of *How I Spent My Summer Vacation*, his 1978 concept record about the joys and pains of boffing fellow males. This reservation stated, however, Ryder fans should take heart: our 38-year-old, leather-lunged boy has weighed in with a set that should ensure his visibility for some time to come.

Produced by John Cougar (billed here with characteristic "wit" as "Little Bastard"), *Never Kick* outfits Ryder with a tough guitar band that rollicks along as he muscles through numbers like the Eddie Cochranish "B.I.G.T.I.M.E.," an atmospheric duet with whiskey-throated Marianne Faithfull on John Baldry's "A Thrill's a Thrill," the erotically urgent "Code Dancing," and two solid rockers to which Cougar lent his pen, "Rue De Trahir" and "Come Again."

A passionate though hardly subtle singer, Ryder has never allowed the black music he loves to intimidate him. To his mind, kicking ass compensates for a world of squashed nuances. Thus, he stalks Prince's "When You Were Mine" on *Never Kick* with the same winning bravado he brought to tunes by the Supremes, James Brown, Sam Cooke, and Little Richard on his 1965 debut LP. A reading of Solomon Burke's "Cry to Me" that borrows its rhythmic theme from the Stones' "Tumbling Dice" provides another highlight.

In his personal encouragement and able production of this record, Cougar admirably absolves the debt that he (along with Bruce Springsteen) owes the heartfelt, gravel-voiced Ryder. And the earned inspiration of Ryder's performance proves that Cougar's allegiance was not misplaced. Many listeners will now encounter an impressive, influential talent they would otherwise have only experienced second-hand, probably without even knowing it.



When Will I See You Again
The O'Jays
Epic

By J.D. Considine

The trouble with a successful formula is that nobody wants to mess with it. The O'Jays have been operating in the same basic vocal style since the late Sixties. Even though there is still a lot of mileage left in their harmony approach to soul music, simple restatement of the basic moves is bound to lead to a sense of sameness. That's one of the reasons *When Will I See You Again* is such a pleasure; though it doesn't stray far from the O'Jays' *modus operandi*, it nonetheless manages to work new life into the old sound.

Because the O'Jays have never given in to a set lead-and-backup approach, *When Will I See You Again* is able to take advantage of the give and take between the three voices. On "House of Fire," the slippery funk pulse is abetted by careful overdubbing that has the three voices electronically multiplied and overlapped in giddy polyphony. "Ain't Nothin' Wrong With Good Lovin' " strikes off in the opposite direction, opening with some frisky doo-wop before settling into a more typical groove, and "Nice and Easy" uses a jive-talking routine to set up the story line while giving an added dimension of playfulness to the vocals.

On the whole, though, *When Will I See You Again* really needs such diversions, because the writing on the album simply isn't up to the standard set by *My Favorite Person* and *In the Year 2000*. Although "I Can't Stand the Pain" is a sturdy ballad and "House of Fire" stands as their best dance number in years, most of the good stuff on this album comes by way of the performance, not the material. Frankly, that's one part of the formula that deserves a little tinkering.

Plays Live
Peter Gabriel
Geffen

By Derk Richardson

When Peter Gabriel left Genesis and began making music that was trimmer and more intense, he abandoned neither art nor drama. *Plays Live*, in the classic "as he performs them in concert!" double-LP format, contains enough of the best songs from Gabriel's solo career to satisfy his more recent fans (and introduce his repertoire to new ones) and enough pomp and grandeur to please those who still cling to the Arthurian pretensions of the mothergroup.

After a long, menacing intro on the opening cut, "The Rhythm of the Heat," Gabriel describes the force that impelled him into starker, musical territory where he would flirt with Frippertronics and African drumming when he screams, "The rhythm has my soul!" Indeed, Jerry Marotta's thundering cross-rhythms and the added percussion and accents generated by synthesist Larry Fast and guitarist David Rhodes give Gabriel's live renditions a constant visceral thrust uncommon in most rock that aspires to art as well.

The art is still there, however, wafting over the dominant thud of Marotta's drums and Tony Levin's bass and Chapman Stick. Deep, expansive textures of synthesizers, pianos and echoey guitar shift around and through the beat, creating a moving backdrop for Gabriel's vocals. But through four sides, the instrumental tracks, however individually lush or evocative, come off like a sonic equivalent of the old movie trick of running stock film footage of the countryside whizzing by behind a car which was in fact stationary.

Gabriel, now the lone gladiator, is squarely in the driver's seat. The monochromatic background highlights the color of Gabriel's voice. In the end, the success of the project hinges on Gabriel's ability to program the textures and the order of songs to show off his anxious vocals. Sixteen songs in a row (10 taken from his last two studio albums) might be too much for one listening as his attractive, reedy voice, straining to communicate the middle-class angst of the worldly intellectual rocker, implies more than it actually delivers. By the third side, the implications of lonely moody blueness wear thin.

Skip to side four, though, and the project builds to a strong theatrical climax. Starting with last year's hit, "Shock the Monkey," then stalling through the overwrought and, well, he named it, "Humdrum," Gabriel and crew sweep through an orchestral rendition of "On the Air" and peak with his most moving song, "Biko," pumping as much passion into the piece as electronics and a modest, vulnerable singer can produce. Despite the flagging "double record set" syndrome and the omission of some of Gabriel's most impressive and important compositions, such as "And Through the Wire" and "Games Without Frontiers," *Plays Live* works to sum up five years of new wave-art rock from someone worth caring about.

Take These Blues And Shove 'em!
A.C. Reed And His Spark Plugs
Ice Cube

By Crispin Sartwell

A central theme of the blues is going broke, and it's a subject on which the typical blues musician is singularly qualified to comment. On "I Am Fed Up With This Music," A.C. Reed sings: "I done played a long time and I'm broke as I can be . . ./That's why I'm fed up with music/Want to make a living any way I can." He ends by observing "Many, many years I done played my saxophone with class/You can take these blues and you can shove 'em up your ass."

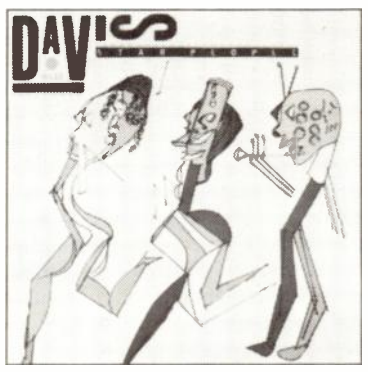
The irony is that Reed's lyric renunciation of the form is sung over some of the hottest Chicago blues tracks of the last several years. This record gets right up and *stomps.* As a sax player for Willie Mabon, Earl Hooker, Buddy Guy, and Bonnie Raitt, among many others, Reed's proven himself to be the master of blues vamp, and on occasional efforts as a frontman (four of his songs appeared on Alligator's *Living Chicago Blues Vol. 4*), he has distinguished himself both as a singer and as a writer. But nothing he's recorded before is as juicy and nasty as *Take These Blues.*

He wrote all the songs on the record, with the exception of his scorching version of Howlin' Wolf's "Howlin' for my Darling," and all are extraordinary for their raw melodic power and lyric inventiveness. His band, the Spark Plugs, includes such Chicago stalwarts as Phil Guy, Lurrie Bell and Billy Branch. Their sound is far simpler and more downhome than that of most of the major Chicago bands.

From the evil grooves of "My Baby is Fine" and "Things That Get Me Off" to the self-deprecatory clowning of "I Stay Mad" and "I'm a Jealous Man," he proves himself to be a tremendously self-possessed vocal interpreter who provides instant melodic focus with his sax solos.

So while A.C. Reed may hate the blues for putting him in the poor house, he has such intuitive mastery of the idiom that he can't, thankfully, bring himself to stop playing them.

(Ice Cube Records is distributed by Rooster Blues, 2615 N. Wilton Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60614.)



Star People
Miles Davis
Columbia

By Derk Richardson

After a lost half-decade and two overreaching comeback albums, Miles Davis has finally brought together two of his greatest contributions to jazz, specifically, and modern music in general. Combining Davis' eccentrically brooding and wistful approach to the blues, epitomized by his 1958 recording, *Kind of Blue,* with the jazz-rock fusion he pioneered at the close of the 1960s, *Star People* is Davis' most thoroughly rewarding LP since his best-selling fusion landmark, *Bitches' Brew* (1970).

Perhaps most important in the successful mix of elements on the new album is the trumpeter's confident reassertion of his powers as a bandleader. From his earliest *Birth of the Cool* days through the groups with Coltrane and Cannonball Adderly, the magical quintets with Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter to the rock fusion experiments, Davis was one of the giant forces in jazz, molding musicians as well as sound. But when he returned to active playing in 1981 after five years of injury, illness and isolation, the results, *The Man with the Horn* and *We Want Miles,* were forced attempts to regain lost ground.

During his absence Miles had been outflanked on the fusion frontier by Ornette Coleman and his students of "harmolodic funk." With *Star People,* however, he redefines his own turf, and instead of sounding like a band doing battle with a concept, the musicians unite around Davis into a genuine outfit. Cued by their leader's buoyant attitude, the players, including guitarists John Scofield and Mike Stern, saxophonist Bill Evans and drummer Al Foster, congeal into a fluid yet forceful mass.

Side one contains the most blustery fusion efforts, as Stern and especially Scofield sear through the churning brew. But side two, led off by the nearly 19-minute title cut, a long, discursive and brilliant blues, yields the proof of Miles' new mood. Whether employing the Oberheim synthesizer, skittering delicately with a muted horn or bleating and squealing perfectly wrought open trumpet tones, Miles sounds happy. The assisting hand of arranger-composer and noted Davis band alum Gil Evans may have helped pull things together, and the rhythmic certainty and intriguing mix of Foster's drums provide an immense foundation, but it is surely Miles' domestic relationship with Cicely Tyson, alluded to on the upbeat "U 'n I" and "Star on Cicely," which has made his complete comeback possible. This renewed commitment and self-assured projection have produced Davis' best work in a decade, and that's among the best in any artistic field. Best of all, it won't stop here.

What Goes Around Comes Around
Hollies
Atlantic

By Dave Schulps

Now entering their third decade, The Hollies' unflagging commitment to and unquestioned mastery of ethereal pop harmonizing has kept them in the charts through every musical fad of the past twenty years. Withstanding the defection of Graham Nash and his helium harmonies to the Woodstock generation fifteen years ago and lead singer Alan Clarke's various flirtations with a solo career during the '70s, the Hollies always seem to have the knack for rising Phoenix-like from the ashes whenever it seems like time to write them off once and for all.

This latest chapter in the group's remarkably resilient career comes about as the result of the British success of a "Stars on 45"-type medley of old Hollies hits called "Holly Days," which insired some BBC-TV producer to attempt to reunite the original group for a one-shot on the venerable pop music institution *Top of the Pops.* The reunion of Nash with Clarke, guitarist Tony Hicks and drummer Bobby Elliott (original bassist Eric Haydock is long gone and his replacement, Bernie Calvert, and Terry Sylvester, who took over for Nash, split a few years back) prompted the making of *What Goes Around . . .* , billed as the return of the original Hollies.

In its best moments, the reunion is a joyous one. They take the Holland-Dozier-Holland Supremes' classic "Stop! In the Name of Love" and remold it into yet another quintessential Hollies single: buoyant, frothy, kinetic pop. Nash, despite his superstar status, slides comfortably back into his former role as the high harmony voice and leaves the lead singing to Clarke on every track. At times the group does its thing so well you barely notice that the songs themselves (most of which are written by the band's non-featured keyboard player Paul Bliss) are basically lackluster and forgettable. Besides "Stop . . . ," a peppy love song for the nuclear holocaust called "If the Lights Go Out" and the almost-funky "Take My Love and Run," there's not a song here that stands up to repeated listenings. And the remake of the Hollies' own first U.S. hit, Doris Troy's "Just One Look," is embarrassingly

wishy-washy MOR fare. Still, it's hard to get too down on this record because when sung by the Hollies, even the lamest material offers its share of exhilarating moments. True fans of the group will want the LP, no doubt; the less rabid are still advised to pick up the single.

Fascination!
The Human League
A&M

By Crispin Sartwell

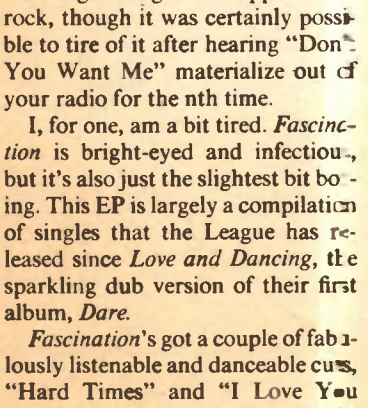
When the Human League hit the beach last year, their fresh sound provided the budding synth-pop genre with its most fully realized and commercially viable expression. It was hard not to like the League's ingenuous approach to rock, though it was certainly possible to tire of it after hearing "Don't You Want Me" materialize out of your radio for the nth time.

I, for one, am a bit tired. *Fascination* is bright-eyed and infectious, but it's also just the slightest bit boring. This EP is largely a compilation of singles that the League has released since *Love and Dancing*, the sparkling dub version of their first album, *Dare*.

Fascination's got a couple of fabulously listenable and danceable cuts, "Hard Times" and "I Love You Too Much," which will definitely get you up for getting down. These songs feature producer Martin Rushent's patented metronomic rhythm tracks and tiny, repeating synth figures, and they are constructed around melodic hooks that stand up well to anything on *Dare*.

But on other cuts, the formula wears thin. "Mirror Man," for example, which met with a disappointing reception as a single, is tired soul. Singer Phil Oakey is better with more basic tunes, and the synths fail utterly to create the proper atmosphere for a song that demands horns. That goes double for "You Remind Me Of Gold," a brooding R&B number that only picks up steam on the instrumental breaks, where Rushent repeats the riff from "Don't You Want Me."

Only intermittently enjoyable, *Fascination* fails, finally, to deliver on the League's pop promise.



The Fugitive
Tony Banks
Atlantic

By Nick Burton

Although it went largely ignored, Tony Banks' 1979 album, *A Curious Feeling*, was (and still is) one of the most satisfying solo outings to come from the ranks of Genesis. In addition to displaying an almost nostalgic concern for an early Genesis sound, Banks also showed his hand at writing beautifully understated pop melodies and delivered some keyboard instrumentals full of sweeping, majestic chord changes that evoked the *Nursery Cryme/Foxtrot* period (one of those, "From The Uncertow," was used as the theme music for Jerzy Skolimowski's film *The Shout*). *The Fugitive* lacks its predecessor's consistency, but it's a more-than-adequate showcase for Banks' talents as a songwriter and a keyboardist with uncommon taste in his use of electronics.

On *The Fugitive*, Banks is more in step with the current Genesis sound. A few cuts, such as the reggae of "This Is Love" and the progressive pop of "Moving Under," sound as if they were written for Genesis, and would have fit comfortably on *Duke* or *abacab*. Banks' breathy Rod Argent-meets-Colin Blunstone vocal style gives the tunes a lighter touch, though, and a kind of breeziness that's absent from Phil Collins' style. It's refreshing to hear Banks' voice for the first time (Kim Beacon did the vocals on *A Curious Feeling*), and makes one wonder, after hearing his performances of "By You" and "And The Wheels Keep Turning," why he hasn't sung more during his years with Genesis.

The two instrumentals here ("Thirty-Threes" and "Charm") are disappointing and uninspired, and the harder-edged tunes (particularly "At The Edge Of Night") are rather clumsy. But despite some weak spots, *The Fugitive* has its share of genuinely creative moments. Banks is an appealing artist, and if you've ever been curious as to what Genesis would sound like without Phil Collins, this is your chance to find out.

Niagara Falls
Greg Hawkes
Passport

By Jonathan Gregg

If there is a revelation on this album it is how much more than one fifth of the Cars' sound Greg Hawkes' subtle presence accounts for. Whether it be the majestic cascades of "Bye Bye Love" or the micro-chip Gothic of "All Mixed Up," it was Hawkes' keyboards that provided the future shock to the Cars' ground-breaking music. His role in defining their weird/pop duality echoes throughout *Niagara Falls*.

An echo it remains, however, and in the context of solo synth performers such as Thomas Dolby who have managed to pump a good deal of warmth into their machines, Hawkes' remote and unfunky project seems a little rigid and one-dimensional.

This is essentially an album of rhythm tracks, and as such some are quite good ("Missing Link," "Block Party") but as finished pieces, most of them fairly cry out for a melody or a hook to justify their existence. Hawkes handles all instruments, including lead guitar, competently but never daringly, and much of the album occupies a compromising limbo: too conservative in sound and structure to be experimental but not melodically coherent enough to be called a collection of songs. Only on the last cut, "Let There Be Lights," does Hawkes deliver a lovely understated melody on a treated piano which recalls vintage Frank Zappa. As a whole, however, *Niagara Falls* neither provokes nor cajoles us enough to make a lasting impression. Save up for another car.

Q-Feel
Q-Feel
Jive/Arista

By Laura Fissinger

Many are called but few are chosen applies to rock 'n' roll, too. Since the late '70s, rock has been undergoing a major transformation as the incredibly broad vocabulary of synthesizers is integrated into pop's basic musical language. Nobody needs to tell you how many one-(or none) hit wonders crowded into record racks during the British Invasion, folk-goes-electric, disco or punk. There are that many now, turning knobs and looking for the satisfaction of playing pioneer, too. This is all by way of telling you the most pertinent fact about Q-Feel: if they'd been around in the '60s, they might have become the Buckinghams.

We're into the second wave of synth bands now, where the project is heating up recalcitrant and legendary synth cool. To that end, this debut does little that you could appreciate without an audio version of a magnifying glass. But bosses Martin Page and Brian Fairweather make one outsized contribution, with the club hit "Dancing In Heaven (Orbital Be-Bop)." Synth bands far more substantive than Q-Feel consistently lose their heat to the lure of screwing around with the new toys. "Dancing In Heaven" shows what can happen when the song dictates the synthesizers' role, and not vice versa. It's worth hoping that Page and Fairweather can do another masterstroke next time. At least they know that machines can't think.

Human League

Continued from page 1
of the new spirit and methodology in pop music.

Speculation by Rushent: "I think some of Phil's problems stem from the fact that he went from being totally and utterly broke (30 quid a week not too long ago) to being very wealthy (royalties due from sales of several million records). He has yet to come to terms with it. Also he had to realize that people were going to copy him. I had to tell him that he couldn't stop that from happening."

Slagging off Yazoo in the press could do Oakey more damage than good. So why the change and the return to diplomacy? For one, Oakey has taken some of the pressure off himself and relieved his guilt for being who and what he is. On their North American tour of '82, he had struggled to keep the Human League's name in front of his own, to perpetuate the notion that these four boys and two girls were really a band.

Now Oakey admits he's "just about ready to give that up. I was making very big efforts, like refusing to have my picture taken on my own, refusing to have my pictures taken with the girls and things. We kept doing interviews, but finally the only people who bothered to participate were me and the girls, largely because when the rest of the band got there everybody ignored them. I don't really believe in pop stars. I think it's silly.

"We were in AIR Studios and met Paul McCartney, a talented guy and probably the foremost pop songwriter in the world at the moment. But he's the same as everyone else, a very nice bloke. And if Paul McCartney can't be a star I don't understand how anyone else can."

Oakey's simple anti-glamour logic (listen to "Mirror Man") has the winning innocence of the child who tugs at his indolent father's sleeve and asks, "Daddy, why do you watch TV when it's sunny outside?" Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear when Oakey, a former plastic surgery theatre porter, walked into a disco in his home town of Sheffield shortly after the old Human League had divided, saw two 17-year old girls on the dance floor and, not worrying for a minute if they could sing, asked them to join the band. Two weeks later Joanne Catherall and Susanne Sulley were performing at a concert they had originally planned to attend as members of the audience. Oakey and Sulley went on to become a famous couple but have yet to announce marriage plans.

Call him irresponsible but recruiting those teenagers was a marvelous gamble on Oakey's part and a nifty, if not quite intentional, commentary on the "shake and bake" nature of modern pop: that is, anybody can do it. Oakey's candor on this subject extends to the way he discusses his music. "Mirror Man," he admits, was "too Motown," but allegations that "Fascination" catches him with hands in Sly Stone's and/or Rick James' cookie jar (Rushent favors the latter connection and says one of the reasons he bowed out was because he didn't understand what the song was about. Oakey says it's about writing songs in the Human League) arouse his ire.

"I've never ever heard any records by Rick James," contends Oakey. "There are ripoffs in there, but that's the one that it's not ripped off from. We rip a lot of things off all the time. So far nobody's worked out exactly who we're ripping off, but there is a lot of Temptations and Four Tops. I just bought a Motown compilation album because I vaguely remember those things. I'm gonna have to work out exactly why they were so good and then we'll rip them off a lot better in the future.

"But I don't think we would actually take a record and rip it off. Say we're doing a record and that week we really like KC & The Sunshine Band, we'd perhaps ask each other, 'What would KC do here?' We try to put ourselves in their places."

However, whether the band is together enough to assemble enough material for another album is another question. It's a difficult situation. Oakey claims he could "never write a decent song on his own" and quips that the people who produce the material "never do interviews." Rushent says the band is lacking firm leadership at this point and infers that problems within the band stem from Oakey's co-habitation with Sulley. Oakey, laughing, says he hopes those problems turn out to be as successful "as they were for Fleetwood Mac." He prefers the now-communal spirit and the pressure of working with Thomas. He has also stopped worrying about what everybody else is doing and has even found it in himself to comment favorably upon Heaven 17's new single, "Come Live With Me"—a change of face from both parties' old mudslinging days. In January Oakey hoped aloud that he could put out two albums in the course of the year instead of eating up a few months touring. Yet by July the band had laid down only six backing tracks on an album tentatively titled *Right*. Some were "empty Jacksons stuff," some harder and Oakey had only vague ideas of what the actual lyrics would be. Callis came into the studio with a working title *The Lebanon*, but foreign politics scare Oakey.

> "Why am I doing this?" Oakey wonders. "I'm 27 and all I ever seem to do is work. But it's very difficult for any of the Human League to have casual fun. If the girls go into the pubs for a drink, people throw beer mugs at them."

"Chris is making us do things ourselves a lot more than Martin did," says Oakey. "We got a bit lazy because Martin is very, very good at what he does and we would tend to say, if we got a song two-thirds finished, 'That's alright, because the things we've not bothered to do Martin will do,' which made life too easy for us. Chris is refusing to be anything but a producer, so we're becoming a bit more educated at the very difficult end of our job, which is finishing things off."

There is another force pulling at Oakey, the circumstances of which are typical of the absurdity of the rock life cycle. Last winter he told *The Face* he was not interested "in luxury. I'm only really interested in hard work." Today, he's not so sure, after investing so much—maybe too much—time in what he calls "this mythical second album," but really the fourth release going back to the first edition of the band. The regimented rhythm of album-tour-album designed so as not to give the public a moment's rest from a band's name is wearing on Oakey. He lapses into a reverie: "I was in a funny mood last night. I watched the first episode of *Brideshead Revisited*. Just watching it and seeing people having fun it made me think 'Why am I doing this? I don't ever have any fun.' I'm 27 and all I ever seem to do is work which got me in a really strange mood.

"I haven't had a vacation since the group started five years ago. I thought it might be nice to have a couple of weeks wandering around the English countryside, drinking champagne and falling out of cars. But it's very difficult for any of us to have casual fun. If the girls go into the pubs with their mums for a drink, people throw beer mugs at them. We're not allowed to have casual fun."

One cannot help but be attracted to Oakey's fundamentalist sensibility. He is something of a revisionist and an impossible purist combined. He is handsome enough to be a movie star but too modest perhaps—"I don't think I'm good looking"—to allow himself the stroke a la Sting. He thinks going into film would be "a conceit, a way of getting out of our job which is doing another good LP. Talk of making all kinds of money pertains to this because suddenly we've reached a target and have to think about what's worth doing and what's not worth doing."

And the envelope, please . . .

"I feel very sure that what is worth doing is making music, which is a really good thing. People like it; it actually does them good."

That he says this with a certain amount of gee-whiz leavening his straightforwardness is a telling sign. For what ails him in this period of alternately great and diminished expectations there is no cure save the hope that seems buried deep inside, always battling more destructive impulses. Yes, music does people good. Whether it does Phil Oakey any good remains an open question. And thus may ever be. ○

Mtume

Continued from page 15
through his mind until it came out as one.

After a time in college, where he quit piano and took up percussion, Mtume joined Davis' band. After three years of playing experimental jazz/funk, Mtume took a year off, then went into business for himself. His vision of same has since evolved into something akin to a one-man conglomerate, capable of writing, producing, arranging and recording in any idiom, at any time, with anybody.

"I'm a complete hybrid, a true product of Philadelphia—the whole thing, from the early syncopation of James Brown, to Sly's pop, to George Clinton's merger of the two. I can do all of that, but only if I remember the source material.

"For me, funk is urban black ritual, like Dervish dances, the ability to use repetition to your advantage. And any record that's gonna have a chance of success has to start out there, on the urban street. I saw it with *Juicy Fruit*. That record got street credibility before all the so-called hip types went into it."

Mtume's decision to renew his efforts in main-stream adult pop, beginning with Liza and perhaps extending someday to Frank Sinatra and beyond, is, he says, by no means an abrogation of the street, but merely a desire to get back to something he does well.

"Not many guys can write and record funk *and* an MOR ballad. If I can do it, I will. Whatever it is, I think I can build my way from the street on up the pyramid."

Finishing a beer, Mtume adds that he's off to a late-night business meeting with yet another pop singer who's coming back and needs a guiding hand.

Paying his check, Mtume is still smiling. ○

Robert Plant

Continued from page 11
of the Yardbirds, and had all sorts of influences, such as blues and west coast American music. We had a certain ability to extend our music, which gave it drama, dynamics, emotion, and space. At one moment it could be Wagnerian, and at the next like Eddie Cochran. That was "heavy," in the sense that it was sometimes a little hard to take, not because it was a mass of uncontrolled crescendoes. And now, the remnants of that era's imitators—and there are only imitators left, or tired exponents from the first time 'round who are still flogging it—have all lost their way. The subtlety that was in Led Zeppelin was never shared by much of the music that was around—Blue Cheer was as "heavy metal" as Iron Maiden. I'm afraid it's all become very professional, as in Def Leppard and people like that—just pretty songs with the odd scream, and a guitarist who leans back and bursts into a great flurry of notes. Whatever was there in 1969 and 1970 has become diluted or lost in translation.

Did you ever feel a sense of responsibility as, in your words, a "hero"?

Only to exude an air of positivity, rather than one of pondering and darkness. At the time even the symbolic actions of guys like Alice Cooper made me a little sick, because I thought there was not enough light—there never is.

Apart from Zeppelin you've kept a fairly low profile. But I understand now that you're getting ready to close up your farm and move to London. Why the change?

I think I could do with a few years of total immersion in music and stage, and a whole change of stimuli: I'd like to get dug in to the next few years in every respect. I'll always keep at least a toe in the country, but maybe there *is* peace in the city—actually I think it's possible to find peace anywhere if you've got the right state of mind. The way I am now, I feel very content artistically, barring my musical frustrations. Beyond that, it's all settling down. I do take my drives in the country, and do the things I've always done, but really I haven't a great deal of time. What time I have I spend playing tennis: it's a great leveller after hours and hours of concentration.

Do you feel you have peace of mind now?

I don't know. Because I'm a singer and not a musician there's always a level of frustration that I carry with me—there's a lot of emotion that I can't express, which I have up there in my head. But I feel I have as much peace as I've ever had, which is a fair smattering, really.

What would you like to have been if you hadn't been a singer?

A whore! No, maybe a forester, or one of those nineteenth century botanists who went abroad and gathered incredible species of plants from China, Japan or wherever. Some kind of traveler, perhaps, at the turn of the century, or even as late as the '30s. A while ago I was reading books by Peter Fleming and Bruce Chatwin, and found that being a foreign correspondent for a major newspaper seems to give you carte blanche to take six months and the right calling-cards and travel from Cathay to Kashmir. I'd like to have had the eloquence and skill to write down the escapades, as well as the breeding and the ways of the gentle so I could handle all the different situations. The idea of that kind of exploration, where you don't have to be a geologist or an exceptionally daring character, appeals to me very much.

Any regrets musically?

No. I don't think I've ever had any regrets, musically, about anything I've ever done. With Zeppelin it was so homey and comfortable that I never even had a thought beyond the record or tour we were involved in—I was totally consumed by it. I suppose that socially it might have been better for me to have met more people earlier on, but I've got plenty of time to catch up. ○

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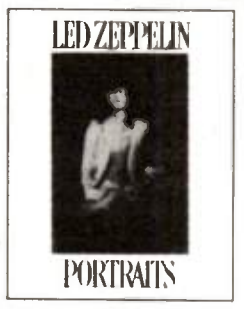

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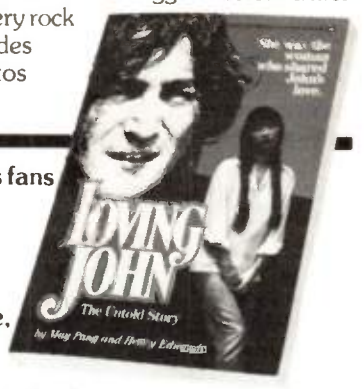

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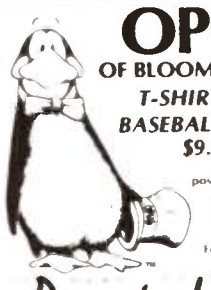

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