

RECORD

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SWEET DREAMS,
CONSTANT FRICTION

**ELVIS
COSTELLO**

PUNCH IN,
PUNCH OUT

THE FIXX
IS IN

EXCLUSIVE

**KEITH
RICHARDS**

REFLECTIONS OF A
ROLLING STONE ■



PLUS MUSICVIDEO AND
INSTRUMENTS & AUDIO

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The music is on your records, you just
haven't heard it all. REVEAL it.

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THE SUBJECT IS music. Specifically, Rolling Stones music. In an exclusive interview, Keith Richards discusses how the Stones operate under the weight of myth and how the band's changed through the years. Along the way he offers some choice words on fashion and music, the songwriter's responsibility and the strange mechanism known as the music industry.



PHOTO JEAN PAGLIUSO

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TELL EDDY GRANT that he's standing on his head, and he'll investigate the possibility. Tell him he's a smash in America—after 15 years of trying—and he'll shrug. "I make music," says Grant. "I'll do it whether anyone listens or not." This is your way, when the gods smile on you.

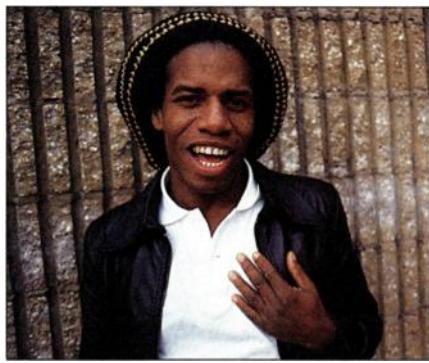


PHOTO GARY GERSHOFF/RETNA LTD



PHOTO PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

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MINIMALISM DEFINES THEIR lives and their music, low-key their approach to stardom. With their second album nearing the top 10, the British quintet known as the Fixx is taking everything in stride.

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A FEMALE lead singer with chopped-off hair wearing men's clothes? A bizarro video which mixes a cow with computers? Top Ten acts (are made of this)? RECORD investigates.



PHOTO STEVE RAPPORT/RETNA LTD

Cover photo of Keith Richards by Jean Pagliuso

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RECORD

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LETTERS



VIDEO CLICHES

PLEASE ADD THE FOLLOWING rock video cliches to Alan Hecht's preliminary listing: motorcycles and their accessories; *film noir* lighting; circus performers; White Voids; Black Voids; eyes with tears; stars and/or crosses; strange headgear; wet streets (see *Film Noir*); animals (particularly horses and cats); and *anything* pastel. Makes you look forward to the next six years, doesn't it?

Doesn't broadening our video horizons *really* mean broadening the traditionally limited subject matter of the music itself? Is this still possible?

And doesn't this also portend a potential video backlash by those tired of sitting on their butts in front of the tube—and a subsequent "rebirth" of radio?

ROBERT DUPREE
Square Video Productions
Vancouver, WA.

POLICE BLOTTER

I WAS VERY DISAPPOINTED TO find that the Police have become a money-first industry ("Twilight of the Gods," August RECORD). What used to be a group full of talent is now three arrogant, egotistic, selfish jerks.

I had hoped that their recent album would be as good as their first three, but found it the same as *Ghost In The Machine*—in other words, Sting's views on the world. Boring. EILEEN A. CRONIN
Des Plaines, Ill.

OKAY, SO YOU CAN'T BEGIN ONE of these letters without saying whether or not the article of your particular interest was good or bad. Both! The former being my opinion of the writer's qualities as a journalist and the latter referring to the ambiguous statements of the interviewees. At the mere mention of an arena concert the realization of my mortality slides into home! Anyone who assumes they have the power within them to create an intimate atmosphere at such an event rides an elevator that doesn't go all the way up, or is 98 cents short of a dollar. Stop me when I get too intimate: "Hey mom, I made 70,000 new friends tonight!"; "The gentleman next to me is wielding a pocket-size machete and there isn't a security person within distance of a blood-curdling scream!"; "Will Tide remove the stain created by an inebriated 16-year-old who re-

cycled a fifth of Jack Daniel's on my lap?"; "Ooooh! Look at the wide screen video! It's just like being home *watching television!*" Well, it is rather intimate to sleep overnight outside the stadium for a shot at a decent general admission seat. To see the Police? It's worth it, I think.

Surely there's a medium between 2700 seaters and 70,000 capacity arenas. I adore Sting, Andy and Stewart. They deserve all the acclamation they've received. But boys, remember what it was like to be on the other side of the music business? Like the general public? Never has such a majority been so discriminated against. This love affair is desperately ill-fated. I leave the noble three with supplications for mercy. MICHELLE A. GAUVREAU
Newton, MA.

HERE, HERE!

RE: LINDA HUMMEL'S (RHETORICAL) question in July Letters, "If Journey are such terrible musicians, why do so many people buy their albums?" I wish I had an answer to that question. But I don't. What I do have is this admonition—oft repeated—for sloppy thinkers of Ms. Hummel's ilk: *popularity is unrelated to quality*. Just because lots of people like it doesn't make it any good. 40 million Americans can indeed be wrong. For example, Richard Nixon was elected President—twice! What this means to Ms. Hummel is that Journey would be just as mediocre as a band if no one bought their records, only they would be less popular. Further, reference to their supposed Messianic qualities does nothing to establish their musical merit, just as tasteless comments about reviewers' names does nothing to disestablish theirs.

Taste, incidentally, along with quality and sophistication in music, seem to me more central concerns of the listener than popularity (which is a consideration appropriate to the labels). Taste could be said to involve a discernment of different kinds of music; a taste for heavy metal is just as valid as a preference for Baroque (for, thankfully, taste is the one sublimely arbitrary bastion of the listener)—but liking it does not make it good. Some tastes are more refined, or sophisticated, than others: true sophisticates breathe the rarefied air of Classical, while cavemen ritualize the primal disco beat. But even sophistication does not equal quality, for there is bad Classical and good disco. Problem is, there is no real way to measure quality—and thus we run to the top 40 charts for an Empirical Sign from the Merchants. What we have got is *hindsight* and *expertise*, which develops through years of listening, academic as well as leisure; mine proclaims Crispin Sartwell's embattled review of Steve Perry's singing voice as charitable.

STEPHEN CAMPBELL
Columbia, S.C.

TOP 100 ALBUMS

1	SYNCHRONICITY	Police A&M
2	THRILLER	Michael Jackson Epic
3	FLASHDANCE	Soundtrack Polygram
4	PYROMANIA	Def Leppard Polygram
5	THE WILD HEART	Stevie Nicks Arista
6	LET'S DANCE	David Bowie EMI/America
7	KEEP IT UP	Loverboy Columbia
8	CARGO	Men At Work Columbia
9	1999	Prince Warner Bros.
10	FRONTIERS	Journey Columbia
11	H2O	Daryl Hall & John Oates RCA
12	STATE OF CONFUSION	The Kinks Arista
13	REACH THE BEACH	The Fixx MCA
14	DURAN DURAN	Duran Duran Capitol
15	PIECE OF MIND	Iron Maiden Capitol
16	SHE WORKS HARD FOR THE MONEY	Donna Summer Mercury
17	SPEAKING IN TONGUES	The Talking Heads Warner Bros.
18	CUTS LIKE A KNIFE	Bryan Adams A&M
19	KILLER ON THE RAMPAGE	Eddy Grant Epic
20	SWEET DREAMS ARE MADE OF THIS	Eurythmics RCA
21	ALBUM	Joan Jett and the Blackhearts Blackheart/MCA

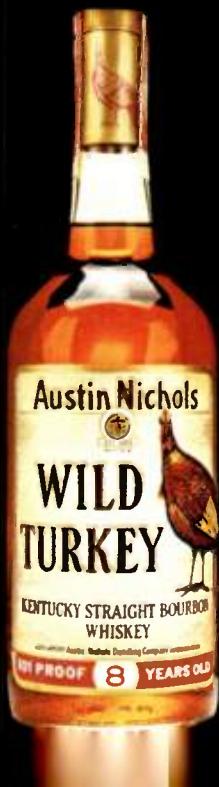
22	KISSING TO BE CLEVER	Culture Club Virgin/Epic
23	STAYING ALIVE	Soundtrack Polygram
24	ELIMINATOR	ZZ Top Warner Bros.
25	FASCINATION	The Human League A&M
26	THE PRINCIPLE OF MOMENTS	Robert Plant Swan Song/Arco
27	MENTAL HEALTH	Quiet Riot Epic
28	KILROY WAS HERE	Styx A&M
29	ZEBRA	Zebra Atlantic
30	LIVING IN OZ	Rick Springfield RCA
31	IN YOUR EYES	George Benson Warner Bros.
32	LISTEN	A Flock of Seagulls Jive/Arista
33	VISIONS	Gladys Knight and the Pips Columbia
34	BETWEEN THE SHEETS	The Isley Brothers Epic
35	MURMUR	R.E.M. IRS
36	ROSS	Diana Ross RCA
37	GIRL AT HER VOLCANO	Ricki Lee Jones Warner Bros.
38	TAKE ANOTHER PICTURE	Quarterflash Geffen
39	BODY WISHES	Rod Stewart Warner Bros.
40	JUICY FRUIT	Mtume Epic
41	ALLIES	Crosby, Stills, & Nash Atlantic
42	SECRET MESSAGES	ELO Jet CBS
43	FASTWAY	Fastway Columbia
44	BUSINESS AS USUAL	Men At Work Columbia
45	OUTSIDE/INSIDE	The Tubes Capitol
46	HEAD HUNTER	Krokus Arista
47	WAR	U2 Island
48	YOU BOUGHT IT, YOU NAME IT	Joe Walsh Full Moon/Warner Bros.
49	FIELD DAY	Marshall Crenshaw Warner Bros.
50	PLAYS LIVE	Peter Gabriel Geffen
51	CONFRONTATION	Bob Marley & The Wailers Island
52	BILLY IDOL	Billy Idol Chrysalis
53	WHITE FEATHERS	Kajagoogoo EMI/America
54	ONE NIGHT WITH A STRANGER	Martin Briley Mercury
55	ALL THIS LOVE	DeBarge Motown
56	MAMA AFRICA	Peter Tosh EMI/America
57	JARREAU	Jarreau Warner Bros.
58	GET IT RIGHT	Aretha Franklin Arista
59	TOO LOW FOR ZERO	Elton John Geffen
60	TEXAS FLOOD	Stevie Ray Vaughan Epic
61	THE NET	Little River Band Capitol
62	WHAMMY	The B-52's Warner Bros.
63	HOLY DIVER	Dio Warner Bros.
64	TRAVELS	Pat Metheny Group ECM/Warner Bros.
65	LIONEL RICHIE	Lionel Richie Motown
66	MODERN HEART	Champaign Columbia
67	MADNESS	Madness Geffen
68	MARY JANE GIRLS	Mary Jane Girls Motown
69	WE ARE ONE	Maze Capitol
70	INFORMATION	Dave Edmunds Columbia
71	THE HURTING	Tears for Fears Mercury
72	THE GOLDEN AGE OF WIRELESS	Thomas Dolby Capitol
73	OLIVIA'S GREATEST HITS, VOL. 2	Olivia Newton-John MCA
74	LOST IN SPACE	Jonzun Crew Tommy Boy
75	GET LUCKY	Loverboy Columbia
76	25 #1 HITS FROM 25 YEARS	Various Artists Motown
77	NO PARKING ON THE DANCE FLOOR	Midnight Star Elektra
78	SIOGO	Blackfoot Arco
79	TOTO IV	Toto Columbia
80	FAREWELL TOUR	Doobie Brothers Warner Bros.
81	A DECADE OF HITS	Charlie Daniels Band Epic
82	KASHIF	Kashif Arista
83	WHAT GOES AROUND	The Hollies Atlantic
84	NAKED EYES	Naked Eyes EMI/America
85	HIGH & DRY	Def Leppard Mercury
86	BRANIGAN 2	Laura Branigan Atlantic
87	BELLA DONNA	Stevie Nicks Arista
88	STAY WITH ME TONIGHT	Jeffrey Osborne A&M
89	RIO	Duran Duran Capitol
90	RHYTHM OF YOUTH	Men Without Hats Backstreet/MCA
91	THE DISTANCE	Bob Seger and the Silver Bullet Band Capitol
92	LOW RIDE	Earl Klugh Capitol
93	LOVE FOR LOVE	Whispers Elektra
94	I'M SO PROUD	Deniece Williams Columbia
95	YOUR MOVE	America Capitol
96	ANTHOLOGY	Diana Ross Motown
97	THE KEY	Joan Armatrading A&M
98	THE GETAWAY	Chris DeBurgh A&M
99	GOOD AS GOLD	Red Rockers Columbia
100	THE LUXURY GAP	Heaven 17 Arista

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GOING WHERE THE MUSE LEADS

Aztec Camera embraces the simple and intuitive

NEW YORK—We're all students of our intuition, but some of us learn better than others. Roddy Frame is a 19-year-old singer-songwriter-guitarist who intends to follow his as far as it takes him. With his band, Aztec Camera, Frame performs a folky, refreshing band of pop that's catching on with fans and peers alike: asked in a recent interview who he considered his primary competition today, Elvis Costello answered "Roddy Frame"—and then took Aztec Camera on the road with him.

"I try to embrace the simple and intuitive," he says, slumped on a couch in a "lived-in" hotel room randomly decorated with empty Heineken and Budweiser bottles. "My music is really very traditional, based on classic singer-songwriters—Lou Reed, Paul Simon, Neil Young. I like wordplay, clichés, Jack Kerouac's speed-raps, childish naivete. I don't want to be too cynical."

That's right. Aztec's sound resonates with the flowered, youthful optimism of gentler '60s psychedelia, more Love than the Doors. The band could loosely fit into a burgeoning neo-folk movement along with new guitar-based groups from both sides of the Atlantic: Big Country, the Go-Betweens, Weekend, Violent Femmes, Dream Syndicate.

For Frame, the folkie obsession began

three years ago when he made his first child-prodigy singles for Postcard Records, a willfully obscure label based in his hometown of Glasgow, Scotland. "Postcard was really against the whole British funk thing," Frame recalls. "We were all into the Velvet Underground, Dylan, jangly guitars. Everyone took delight in having the weirdest guitar. If you had a guitar Lou Reed was seen with in a photo from 1969, that was great!"

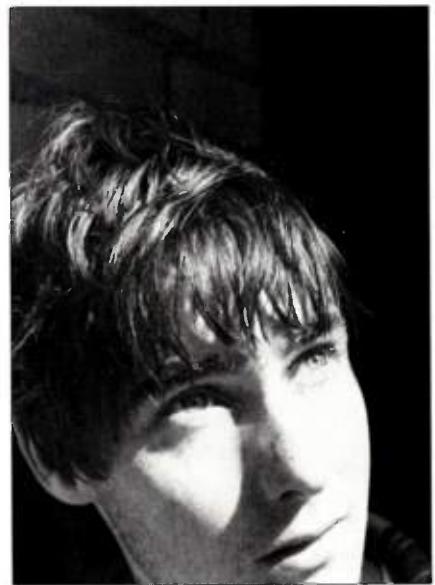
Frame soon fled the insularity of the Glasgow scene, though, and moved to London where, last year, the band recorded their first album, *High Land, Hard Rain* (Sire). The album's songs reflect Frame's search for broader horizons. London, he says, has made him tougher, more aware of competition, of the need for writing songs accessible to listeners. "The Bugle Sounds Again," "Pillar to Post," "Back on Board"—three of the album's best tracks—put the first-grope feelings into words and music.

Frame, however, declines to be made a spokesman for young men starting out in life. He doesn't want to give anyone any advice. The songs, he says, are impressions, based on his own experience.

"I think there's more substance in personal songs, love songs—I think they inspire people more. Who wants to sit

around unemployed in some awful industrial area like Birmingham and hear about how bad it is on the streets of London?"

Not Roddy Frame, apparently. He's getting ready to abandon those streets for a cottage in the country. Before he does, though, he'll realize a life-long dream and



Frame: revolt into optimism.

see America, at least through the windows of a tour bus, as Aztec Camera opens up Costello's summer U.S. tour. He'll be on the road, a little bit like Jack Kerouac, following his feelings, going to where intuition leads him.

—Stuart Cohn

ALL THINGS IN THEIR PLACE

New Order picks up the pieces

NEW YORK—There's a lot of life in New Order these days. The music on their new album, *Power, Corruption and Lies*, has spark, spirituality and soul; it's so moving it verges on transcendence. Clearly

Power... is a step forward from the band's previous LP, *Movement*, a murky, moody, unfocused affair that New Order's Bernard Albrecht says is simply "very sad," a reflection of the musicians' frame of mind at the time. And that brings us to the legacy, hardly a trivial matter.

The New Order story begins in 1980 with an overwhelming jolt—the end of Joy Division, the most provocative and compelling of the English post-punk bands. On the eve of their first American tour, Joy Division's singer-songwriter Ian Curtis found the solution to nightmares he'd been detailing over the course of two startling albums: he took his own life.

There was, Albrecht says, no chance of the three remaining members not continuing to play. They regrouped as New Order,

adding synthist Gillian Gilbert to the core of Albrecht, bassist Peter Hook and percussionist Steve Morris, and began the scheduled American tour. But with Curtis gone, the steps taken, however quick, were tentative. It was a period of transition, where Albrecht hesitantly emerged as the new lead singer. "When we first came to America," he recalls, "everyone had a go at singing. For quite a while I didn't like singing at all, but I like it now. All I wanted to do was play synthesizer and guitar."

New Order's music contains—to borrow a John Martyn album title—grace and danger. There are layers of seductive sound, whooshing synths, rippling electronic and live percussion, jagged, mesmerizing guitar lines, penetrating vocal fragments sifting in and out. There are intertwining elements of fragility and strength. And just as *Movement* captured New Order at a low ebb, so does *Power* speak volumes about the band's renewed sense of purpose. "When we started as New Order we thought it would be a continuation," says Albrecht. "But it was like starting over completely. Ian used to call the musical ideas; he was a catalyst. (When he was gone) it was like a piece missing in a jigsaw puzzle, something was wrong. Now, that extra piece comes from all of us: we've made up for it."

—Jim Sullivan



New Order (from left: Gilbert, Albrecht, Hook, Morris): the band as missing link.

EMERGING FROM A GRIM PAST

The Peech Boys take control of their destiny

NEW YORK—When keyboardist Michael de Benedictus of the n.y.c. Peech Boys claims "We want to control our own destiny," he ain't just whistlin' cliché. For the Peech Boys, in their four years of

their prior incarnation as Snatch.

"It's our deep, dark secret," mutters de Benedictus, as if discussing an old wart. "Management brought in somebody, and we just played our little parts and that was

rather than the Francis Coppola, school of direction. Altman talks to his artists about emotion and feeling, Coppola takes your head in his hands and tells you how your eyeballs are supposed to be focused. The Peech Boys are based on the principle of giving everybody a chance to play, to write, to contribute."

The group, which meshes traditional guitar-heavy rock with elements of progressive disco and funk, also prides itself on accepting challenges. Recently the integrated quintet played an all-white bar in New Jersey, and were at first met with considerable skepticism.

"It worked out well," de Benedictus says, "because we play easily identifiable beats and rock riffs, and anybody, white or black, who's listened to pop music in the past 20 years is gonna relate to it."

de Benedictus himself is by no means easily identifiable. He studies organ in New York with a French priest who schools him in Bach. Nearly every Sunday for the last seven years, de Benedictus has performed at morning Mass at St. John the Baptist Church in midtown Manhattan.

He calls his organ studies "coaching in life," noting the French School stresses "inspiration, interpretation and improvisation, rather than strict fingering."

The Peech Boys, says the keyboardist, already have all those elements.

"What we need to really solidify this band," de Benedictus declares, "is a big tour where we can play live night after night and get our rhythm. That is, if we hold up."

—Mark Mehler

Peech Boys (de Benedictus, far right)

marginal existence, have always ended up furthest behind the 8-ball when they've entrusted their fate to strangers.

Consider the most egregious example of ill-guidance: an obscure dance cover of Pink Floyd's "Another Brick In The Wall," which the Peech Boys recorded in

it. It wasn't music, really."

With their first bona-fide LP, *Life Is Something Special*, due in September on Island, and a major U.K. tour winding up, the band has finally put its shadowy past behind it. As a producer, de Benedictus claims to belong to the "Robert Altman,

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Kajagoogoo puts one over on us Yanks

NEW YORK—Popular music in England is producing an alarming amount of teen pop confections these days. Duran Duran, Haircut 100, the Thompson Twins: they are all '80's versions of Frankie Avalon, Bobby Rydell or Paul Anka, with their watered down and palatable syntheses of "electro-funk," tentative rhythm experiments and synthesizer glitz. Only the hairdressers have changed.

Enter Kajagoogoo.

Lead singer Limahl is bursting with excitement as he walks down a sun-drenched midtown Manhattan street. Within hours of his arrival in New York, he's been recognized by at least a half dozen people, including a couple of construction workers who noticed him and bassist Nick Beggs from several stories up. With a passable American accent, Limahl imitates their salutations. It seems America is not immune to ga ga's over Kajagoogoo, either.

Despite being the whipping boys of the British music press, Kajagoogoo's rise to the top of the pops has been nothing short of meteoric. Beggs, guitarist Steve Askew,

keyboardist Stuart Croxford and drummer Jez Strode were knocking around the local clubs in Leighton Buzzard, 40 miles north of London, playing anything from heavy metal to Steely Dan-style "weird" experiments. Limahl joined the band two years ago after placing an ad in *Melody Maker* describing himself as "good looking, talented . . . and looking for four guys with the same qualifications." The four guys from Leighton Buzzard felt up to that challenge and Limahl quickly joined forces with them. A chance meeting with Duran Duran keyboardist Nick Rhodes in a London nightclub led to a meeting with A&R men at his label, EMI, which in turn led to a contract in June of '82. Rhodes, along with Duran Duran engineer/producer Colin Thurston, took the band into the studio last December; "Too Shy" was released early in January, and England tumbled. Next stop: America, and, if not exactly Googomania, a surprising showing.

One last thing, though, fellas—where did you get the name? Nick: "It's like something a child would say. When people say it,

they can't quite pronounce it but once they know it, they can never forget it."

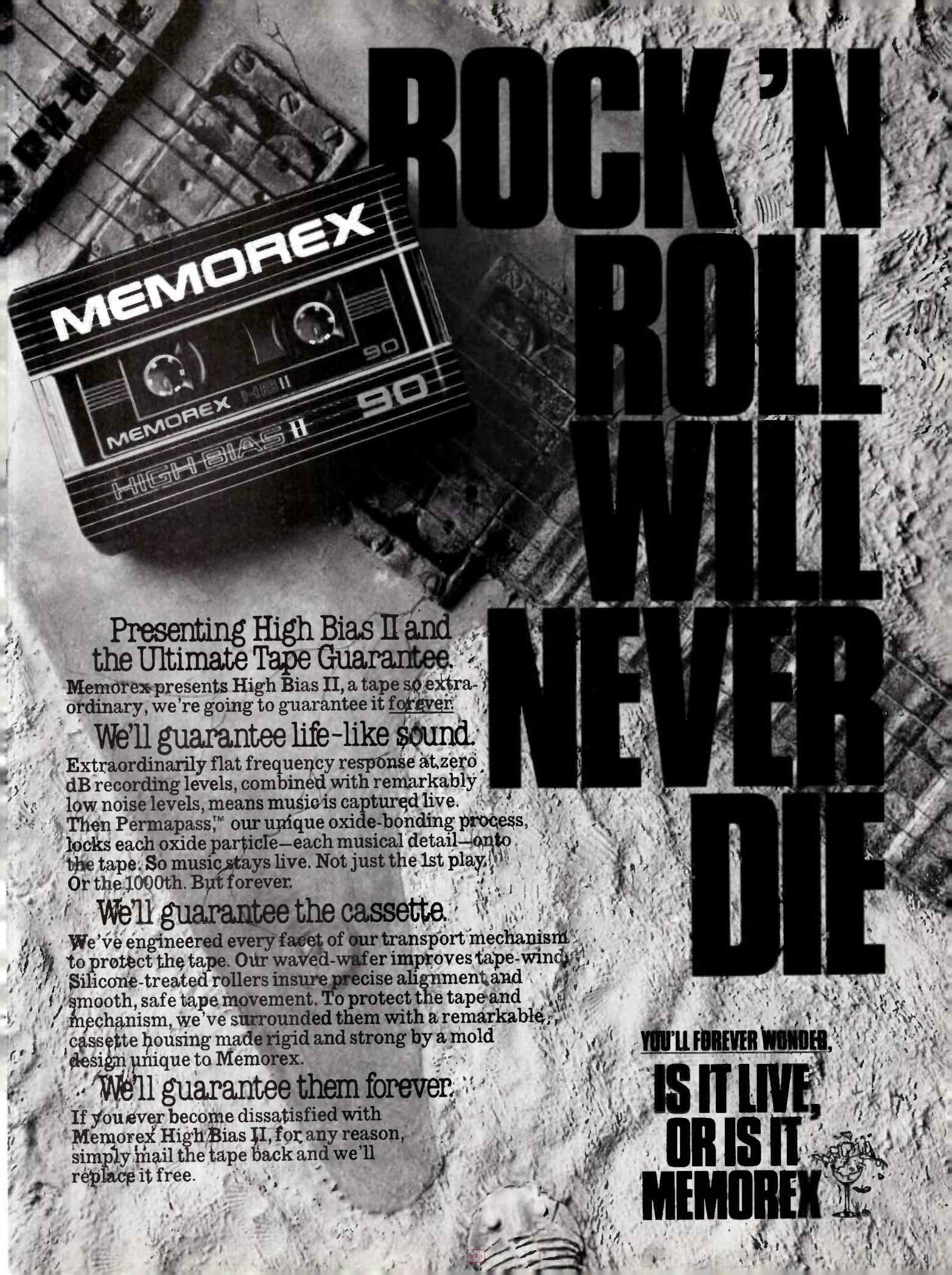
Try me.

(Ed. note: at press time it was learned that Limahl has left the band to pursue, yes, a solo career. Kajagoogoo—or "Kajagone-gone," as a *New Musical Express* headline put it—will continue as a quartet.)



Kajagoogoo: What's in a name? Nothing.

PHOTO: R. RETNA LTD.



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WHERE HELP SPRINGS ETERNAL

Louisville organization doles out bucks for needy musicians

LOUISVILLE—For 15 years Marvin Maxwell made his living drumming for various Louisville bands. Then, four years ago, his ankles were crushed in an accident. In addition to having to find a new career, Maxwell had to pay off some staggering medical bills.

Other musicians came to Maxwell's rescue, as musicians often do, performing a benefit concert. It was a stunning success, with Maxwell ending up with more money than he needed and a new job.

He's now the president of MERF—the Musician's Emergency Relief Fund—an organization dedicated to helping musicians in need. Over the past two years, MERF has aided 10 musicians with problems ranging from leukemia to a singing drummer's need for false teeth (his real ones were knocked out in a car accident).

At present, each case is limited to a \$1000 award so that one musician with a catastrophic illness will not wipe out the fund. But in 1983, MERF has \$20,000 in its bank account.

It also has the IRS to deal with, since

that agency informed MERF in July that even though it is a non-profit corporation, it had not applied for the correct tax exemption. The IRS' Cincinnati office suggested applying under a different classification which would effectively make MERF a labor union, in competition with the Musicians Union Local 11-637.

MERF, of course, could go other ways. It could spend or give away all its money each year, for instance, and not owe any taxes. And spending might be the best idea, board member Mike Hutchinson thinks.

"That way, we could buy a computer to use as a referral service—a gig line—for musicians looking for work. We'd have all the vital statistics on them—what they play, whether they sing, how much they want to work for—so that people could get an instant match-up from this area."

Another plan, if the bank account grows enough, is to buy a hall for musicians—something like one of the old cast iron buildings on Main St. where players could gather, jam, exchange ideas and contacts.

As the board members talked, ideas

were coming fast and furious. Plans for a benefit concert next year (one was held this year on the Fourth of July) involve adding more clubs around the city and across the Ohio River in Indiana, to be connected by a free city bus, rented by MERF for the occasion.

If it works out, the funds collected should grow, which may allow for other kinds of help from MERF—things like money for food between gigs and equipment replacement after robberies.

"We can't help out with unemployment now or medical insurance," Maxwell says, "but down the road, we might be able to get a good group rate for our members."

And the membership of 245, all within 50 miles of Louisville, could be expanded. Already, Maxwell has had calls from out-of-state players who'd like to join.

He's amazed by that, he says, but so far he hasn't found evidence that anything like MERF exists elsewhere. But Marvin Maxwell thinks it should, and he's willing to help anyone interested in starting their own chapter. He can be reached by letter or phone at: Mom's Music, 2920 Frankfort Ave., Louisville, Ky. 40206; (502) 897-3304.

—Laurice Niemtus

Laurice Niemtus is music editor of the Louisville Times SCENE magazine.

TALKING TRASH, SOTTO VOCE

Carlene Carter gets a PG rating (well, maybe R)

NEW YORK—Carlene Carter can talk; that much is established early on in an interview with her. Inside of ten minutes, she's answered almost every question one

for Warners), I decided to make an R&B record—I'd always wanted to. And it was really good, but it was also really raunchy; in fact, most of the songs, you couldn't



PHOTO: ROBERT MATHEU

Carlene Carter: toiletmouth cleans up.

might ask, and a few that maybe one wouldn't. Now, not every response is delivered in language suitable for reprint, but she's been working on that language problem. And with good reason, too.

"After *Musical Shapes* (her 1980 record

have played on the radio. I started looking at my lyrics and some of 'em get . . . too obscure, let's just say. And I decided that I could keep all my humor in there, all my little twists, without actually saying 'I need a hit of something strong, something sweet

and something long.' "

When Warners passed on *Blue Nun* (as that record was titled upon its eventual release in England), that ended Carter's four-year association with the label ("I understood; I didn't know how I had gotten away with not selling records for so long, anyway"). Recruited for Epic by the now-departed Gregg Geller, Carter retreated to the confines of Rockfield Studios in Wales, legendary for some outstanding Dave Edmunds productions in the mid-'70s. Settling in with some of husband Nick Lowe's cronies (producer/keyboardist Roger Bechirian, guitarist Pete Marsh and bassist Andy Howell, collectively known as Blanket of Secrecy; also bassist/songwriting partner James Eller and drummer Terry Williams), she then moved as far away from her noted country roots as possible to deliver the fresh, modern-sounding *C'est C Bon*. The abrupt stylistic reversal was not pre-planned to take advantage of the currently bullish new music market, she claims, but the natural result of working with so many pure popsters. And unlike too many synth-dominated records, "It sounds relaxed, but it doesn't sound bored." The reason? "There was a lot of collaboration on this album. I mean, if one of us didn't like something, the others would say, 'Go ahead, take it home and make it better!' " And after a few years spent in a musical and contractual limbo, Carlene Carter knows precisely what she's going for with her next record: "We're gonna make it the same as this one, only tougher."

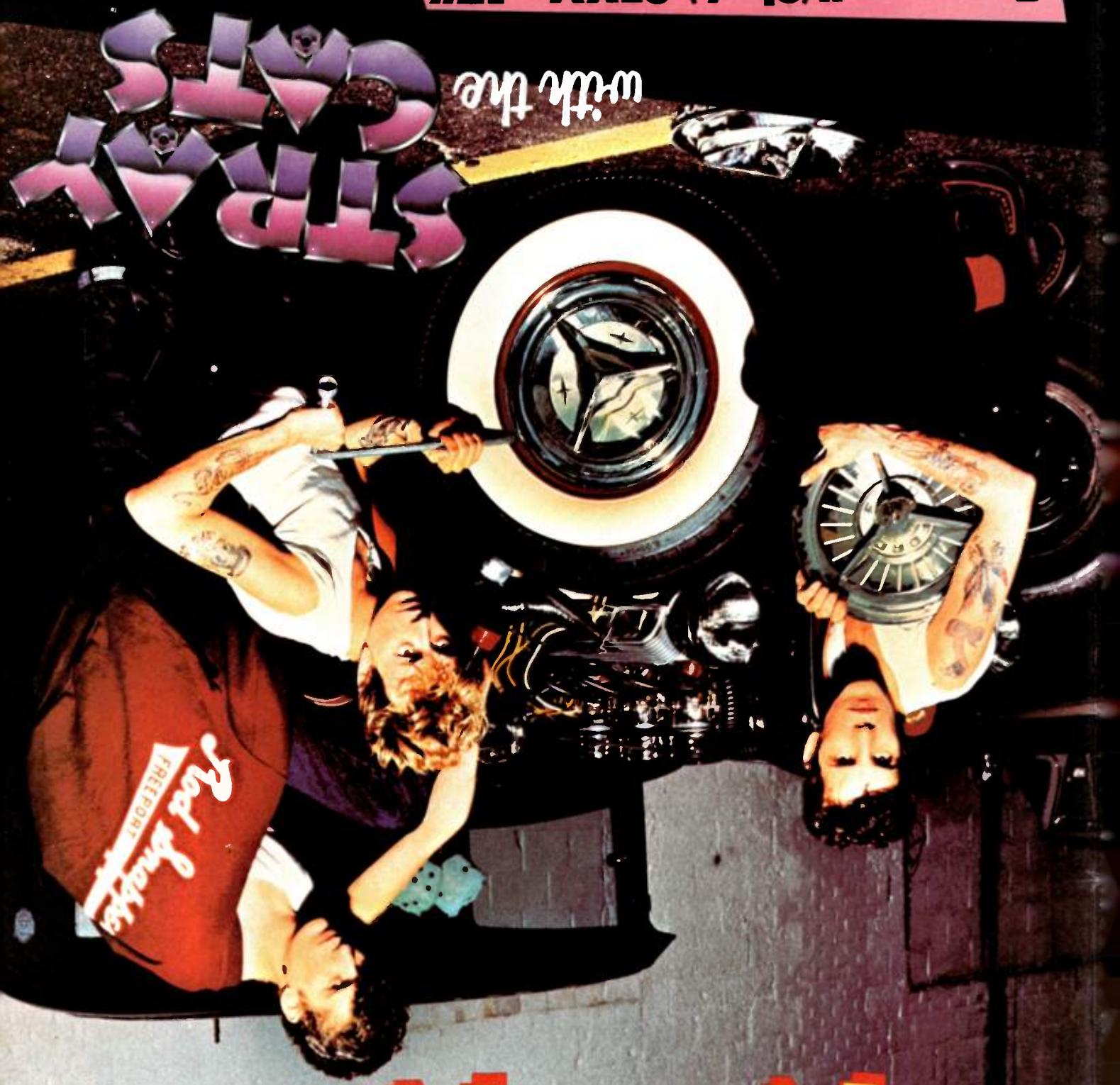
—Wayne King



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ON THE BEAT

THE VINYL WORD

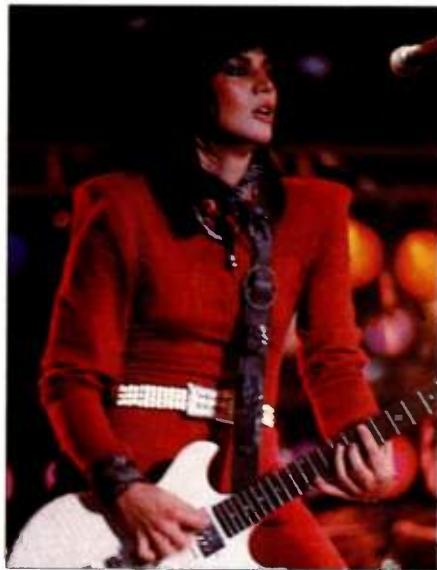
Style Council, Paul Weller's post-Jam experimental troupe, recently released an EP on British Polydor that was recorded in Paris. Weller and company laid down the tracks in the City of Lights because the four songs had a "blue" mood to them; there are tentative plans to record in other countries, soaking up atmosphere along the way . . . **R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe**, he of the incomprehensible vocalizing, lent his voice and pen to two songs on *Fervor*, a mini-album on Praxis Records (P.O. Box 120235, Nashville, TN 37212) by **Jason and the Nashville Scorchers**. The Scorchers, a quartet who blend country and punk in a livelier manner than similar musical cross-breeders Rank and File, have opened up for R.E.M. on various occasions. ■

TRANSITION

Solar Records artists **Shalamar** are back together, at least for now. After **Jeffrey Daniel** gave an interview to Britain's *Melody Maker* suggesting the band had broken up, the following statement was hastily pieced together: "After a hectic month-long promotional tour of Europe, Shalamar filmed a promotional video during which fatigue gave way to a slight rift among the members which has now been resolved. The rift should be regarded as little more than a family tiff." Still, there remains one ominous clue as to Daniel's future with the group: his name appears nowhere on the act's latest release, *The Look*. ■

BAD CINEMA

Joan Jett, like any other new celebrity, is subject to having people make money off her based on past connections. After "I Love Rock 'N' Roll" 's success, Mercury Records, one-time home of the Runaways, issued a "greatest hits" package; more recently, the label put out a bad heavy metal record by fellow Runaway Lita Ford. And now a film that Jett made post-band, pre-solo entitled *We're All Crazy Now* may well see the light of day. The available footage, approximately 60 minutes worth, will be used as the "film within a film" currently being spliced together by producer Alan Sacks (whose credits include the *Welcome Back, Kotter* TV series). The new concoction is called *du-BEAT-o*; named for its lead character, the movie documents his attempts to get the *Crazy* film together. Fea-

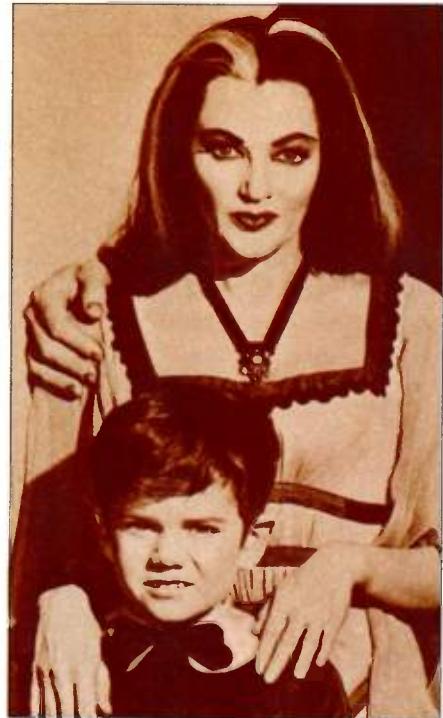


Joan Jett: a star is born?

tured in Jett's scenes are six unreleased songs and the talents (?) of Peter Noone and Arte Johnson. Jett's management's perhaps predictable response: the film is "garbage quality," and the entrepreneurs peddling it "vultures and whores," . . . See, there's this rocker, Eddie Wilson, who was way ahead of his time back in '64. When an old fuddyduddy at his record label rejects his experimental work, *A Season In Hell* (title courtesy of poet Arthur Rimbaud), Eddie jumps in his car and snuffs himself—or does he? Almost two decades later, Eddie and his band, the Cruisers, are experiencing a Morrison/Doors-like revival, and people want to know—did Eddie really die? And what happened to the *Season In Hell* tapes? And what if the college-educated keyboard player had made it back then with the chick singer, Eddie's girlfriend? Answers to these and other burning questions can be found in the movie *Eddie and the Cruisers*, as muddled and idiotic a rock movie as one could (n)ever hope to see. Decent performances by Tom Berenger, Helen Schneider, Mike Antunes and Michael Pare hardly transcend Eddie's dopey premise and banal dialogue, but the film is redeemed slightly by its soundtrack, out since early August on the Epic-distributed Scotti Bros. label. **John Cafferty**, front man for **Beaver Brown**, a formidable sextet from Rhode Island, wrote the music, and he and the band strain mightily against this cinematic bomb. Buy the music, and skip the movie. ■

BITS & PIECES

Musicvideo prices plunge: "Historically, people are in the habit of buying their music, so we wanted to get musicvideos to the point where they were perceived as a 'keeper' and not a 'renter,'" said Robert Blattner, president of RCA/Columbia Pictures in announcing the new pricing structures for their new music videos. RCA/Columbia releases at \$29.95 are *Fleetwood Mac: The Mirage Tour*, *Rush In Concert*, and all subsequent '83 releases. At the same time, Warner Home Video has also dropped the price of their musicvideos to \$29.95 and re-released their catalogue at that price, including such popular titles as *The Doors: Tribute To Jim Morrison* and *Paul Simon In Concert*. A company spokesperson said the move was simply to make musicvideos "more appetizing to more people," and to enhance the possibility that people would "try videos that were not necessarily their favorites but were of



DO THE MONSTER MASH: Rocshire Records has released "Whatever Happened To Eddie?," a 45 by Eddie and the Monsters. The leader of this ghoulish group is none other than Butch Patrick, better known as Eddie Munster back during the mid-'60s heyday of *The Munsters* TV series. Can a composition for piano and one hand by the *Adams Family*'s Thing be far behind?



After eleven years away, The Four Tops have returned to Motown, home of their greatest successes, and have an album due in late September. The Tops, nearing their thirtieth anniversary together, recently completed a tour with the Temptations, an idea borne of their spectacular vocal battle waged on Motown's Twenty-Fifth Anniversary TV special.

interest to them." Lower the price to \$15 and we'll try them all... Sorry, Girls. He's married: **David Evans**, known to one and all as The Edge, U2's splendid guitarist, followed the lead of singer Bono Vox and tied the knot to a young lass named Aislinn, in a July ceremony held in Dublin. Bono, you'll recall, was the first U2er to wed, late last year... I Don't The Want To Spoil The Party: October 1st is the last day for Soviet Union rock groups to get their act together, or else. Culture Ministers Gregory Ivanov and Yuri Melentyev, writing in the Party organ *Sovietskaya Kultura*, have advocated the disbanding of those rockin' Russkies whose music doesn't attain "an adequately high ideological and artistic level." Their conclusions about the current state of the State's music: "The lack of discipline and low quality of the performances significantly damages the moral and aesthetic upbringing of the working people, especially the young." And tell Tchaikovsky the news... **Chris Wood**, the excellent woodwind player for Traffic, died in a Birmingham, England, hospital of liver failure on July 12th. In recent years, both health and career had been running downhill, and plans for a solo record were never carried out. Wood, who joined up with Steve Winwood, Dave Mason and Jim Capaldi in 1967, played in Traffic throughout the band's existence, a career which spanned eight years and nine albums. Wood also lent his talents to records by Ginger Baker's Airforce, Crawler, John Martyn, Heavy Jelly, Jimi Hendrix and others... The Peace Museum, a non-profit institution which opened its doors in Chicago in 1981, is mounting an exhibition of interest to all music fans. Entitled *Give Peace A Chance*, the show—scheduled to run from September 11 through January 31, 1984—will feature instruments, awards, photos, manuscripts and memorabilia from stars as diverse as Yoko Ono, Randy Newman, Laurie Anderson, Joan Baez, Stevie Wonder, U2, Pete See-

ger and others. The purpose of *Give Peace A Chance* is to demonstrate the role music has played in the pursuit of peace in this century. ■

BOOKS

Most interesting of the newest rock book releases is Jerry (Elvis, No One Here Gets Out Alive) Hopkins' bio of Jimi Hendrix, *Hit*

and Run (Perigee). Hopkins' dry reportorial style, just one step above a dull "just the facts, ma'am" recitation, serves well enough with Hendrix's story, so distorted in the 13 years since the guitarist's death. One sure page-turner: the dubious but intriguing tale of Hendrix's kidnapping by some low-level Mafiosi... May Pang and Henry Edwards' *Loving John: The Untold Story* (Warner) sheds no light on the creative side of the smart Beatle; Pang's romantic involvement with Lennon coincided with his driest artistic stretch in the mid-'70s, just prior to his self-imposed exile from rock. Any doubts as to the book's worthiness were confirmed upon noting co-author Henry Edwards' name; his claims to fame (?) include writing the screenplay for the wretched *Sgt. Pepper's* film, and once postulating in the pages of *The New York Times* that "If There Wasn't A Bruce Springsteen, The Critics Would Have Invented Him." Great idea man, that Henry... Avoid *The Pages of Rock History* by Sean Brickell and Rich Rothschild, the fourth January-December datebook or rock history available, and, along with Dan Formento's execrable *Rock Chronicle*, the worst of its ilk... Highly recommended is John Swenson's *Bill Haley: The Daddy of Rock and Roll* (Stein and Day); revisionist history at its best. The most touching moments in the well-researched bio occur at the beginning (an account of the funeral of Haley's eternal sideman, Rudy Pompilli) and the pathetic end (highlighted by a transcript of a disjointed phone call made by Haley to a friend that graphically shows the extent of his decline). ■

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DAVE MARSH

CONFIDENTIAL NOTES

*Ed. note: Dave Marsh is on vacation this month; he'll return in our November issue with a new American Grandstand column. We thought this would be a perfect opportunity to clue our readers in on Marsh's other ongoing project, a monthly newsletter he co-edits with Lee Ballinger, a RECORD contributor and author of *In Your Face: Sports for Love and Money*, and Sandra Choron, who heads her own book producing and agenting firm in Manhattan. This month's Grandstand is drawn from Rock 'N' Roll Confidential, Vol. I, number 2.*

ALAN FREED WEPT

AMERICAN RADIO IS A CESSPOOL that daily expounds racism, greed, vanity and contempt on a non-stop basis. Corruption is rampant: obtaining a hit single costs \$100,000 (and up!) in fees to "independent promo men," many of whom are little more than payola bagmen, intermediaries for corporate graft. But Top 40 radio is only more overt in its sickness than the most villainous format of all: AOR (Album—or Apartheid—Oriented Radio, depending upon whom you ask). At least payola doesn't give a shit about skin color. At AOR, only white musicians are allowed airspace. The few token blacks are practically forced to don whiteface and utter the WKRP version of "massuh" to gain their limited airtime. MTV's racism is more dizzying in its complexity and dimensions simply because the channel is nationwide. But MTV's programmers, Bob Pittman, Les Garland and Lee Abrams, all learned their tricks at AOR, a true school for scandal. For example, one of the first concrete steps a station adopting Abrams' "Superstars" format *always* takes is the elimination of black acts. The ostensible purpose is to guarantee demographics: 18- to 34-year-old white males allegedly don't like black music. Instead, they want a nauseating and endless repetition of "hit" tracks. Today, these very men are proclaiming a revolution. Abrams says that AOR must change in the wake of MTV; he is now promoting "Superstars 2," a format that incorporates a few new names and eliminates a few old warhorses but which continues to program a moronically narrow spectrum of music. Out go the Who; in come the Police. Even Yes, whose Chris Squire is Abrams' erstwhile business partner, has been kicked out in favor of such putative progressives as Kajagoogoo, Duran

Duran and Def Leppard. Abrams is hardly the only culprit, just the most notorious and most flexible. Consultant John Sebastian, whose bigotry extended to any woman who sang softer than Pat Benatar, has ducked out of sight these past few months, and others are on the run, driven by a "sudden" change in audience tastes and the so-called "new music" format developed by Rick Carroll at KROQ in Los Angeles. "New music" is supposed to be AOR's salvation, a next step that will draw in younger listeners, hang on to old ones, update a station's image and power. In the long run, it won't work. Sooner or later, "new music" is as doomed as "Superstars," and the reason why is simple. The issue isn't which records are picked, but the insistence on a rigid, dehumanizing format. Despite the best efforts of programmers and consultants, radio listeners

connects all that he does to the daily lives of his listeners. Perhaps what distinguishes Mojo from other radio programmers in the U.S. is that he has common sense—and uses it.

TOKYO ROSE

47 MILLION PEOPLE WATCHED the Motown 25th anniversary special on TV, an impressive rating by any standard and one that gives the lie to the formatters' notion that white Americans aren't interested in black performers. Linda Ronstadt ignores this reality at her peril. Her futile attempt to sing with Smokey Robinson was a low point of the Motown special, which was by and large terrific. But the low point of her career was her five late-May concerts in Sun City, South Africa. Her managers tried to imply that this indicated some progress in S.A. race relations and that they were supporting it. How much has South Africa changed? Last year two reggae musicians got six-year prison sentences for singing a song that displeased the regime in "South Africa proper." Nor did Ronstadt's visit have any liberalizing impact: two weeks later, the S.A. government hanged three members of the African National Congress. Why did Ronstadt violate the 15-year-old U.N. boycott of South Africa? The million-dollar fee that Sun City paid her may have played a role. Clearly, her violation of the boycott and tacit support of the racist "homeland" concept was premeditated. Not that Linda's alone. One of her partners in crime is Rod Stewart, whose position seems to be, "If playing there is wrong, I don't want to be right." Added to his statements over the years in support of racist British politicians and his recent acknowledgement that he would vote for the dreaded Maggie Thatcher, it's obvious that Stewart (whose style also derives from black Americans) has a lesson to learn. Maybe Rod and Linda could take their cue from Millie Jackson, who abandoned her Sun City junkets because her concert tickets and recordings stopped selling in the States after fans found out about her betrayal.

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JIM SULLIVAN

BOSTON

EURYTHMICS: SWEET DREAMS AND CONSTANT FRICTION

We are not your average rock 'n' roll band," says Annie Lennox very deliberately, very seriously. This is the first thing out of Lennox's mouth after the introductory hello-how-are-yous are exchanged. At the moment—the moment being in a car on the way to back to the hotel an hour or so after Eurythmics' Boston performance—Annie, with short orange-red hair, wearing green military-style fatigues, is relatively unprepossessing.

But, yes, average does not describe a band whose lead singer boasts a garish red blotch of makeup that makes her appear to have been socked repeatedly between the eyes, and high-contrast blush that makes it look like she's been knocked about the cheeks as well; a singer who casts menacing ice goddess glares about the club, describes her performance as sometimes "very alienating," and asks ironic questions in song such as "How can you be so cold with my arms to hold you?"

Lennox is not talking makeup, however. She's talking about Eurythmics' current (and first) club tour of America and the sound system limitations of the small-to-medium sized venues on the band's itinerary.

But she will talk makeup or, more accurately, makeup and modern society. Lennox laughs slightly when the beaten-singer image is raised. "I don't put the makeup on to beautify myself. But no, it's not really meant to look like a black eye. The way I see the makeup, it sort of starts the transformation from normal life to stage projection. I liken it to a very ancient ritual, a theatrical ritual, where you almost transcend what is happening. There's some sophistication in the makeup, but there's also something very primitive in it.

"I see pictures of New Guinea tribesmen who decorate themselves; yet they might have picked up an American T-shirt or a pair of sunglasses from some white trader. That really fascinates me. It's a real statement about the state of the world. You have a very primitive man, very close to caveman, who has just touched on Western society, who doesn't even know how much it's touched him. I think that's a very

relevant statement about the world we live in today. There's a culture clash. I evoke it, just the way I present myself. I rather want to evoke something tribal, because I think what we're doing is tribal. But the audience is not aware of it."

Befitting her appearance, Lennox likes the idea of constant friction in music; she talks about the world as a jungle, a panorama of side-by-side beauty and squalor, and Eurythmics' music as a reflection of the clashing elements. When her shaggy-haired songwriting partner, guitarist Dave Stewart, talks about the most fun he has as a composer he uses the words atmosphere, mystery and strangeness. "We like having blank bits of tape and putting collages on them," he says. "We've never done anything really happy. We like to have something that sounds really sweet and it'll go really bitter. Or something that sounds really light and suddenly goes really dark."

"It's not good time rock 'n' roll," Lennox points out.

Right. There's a bit of subversion at work. Take "Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)"—and a lot of people have: as of this writing, the single is top five and rising, while the like-titled album is top 30 and bulleting. "Sweet Dreams," a seductive, questioning, moody song, is stylistically representative of Eurythmics' accessible approach to subtle pop. Or subtle approach to accessible pop. Whatever it is, the swirling guitar and synth hooks sneak up on you, the rhythms put you in a trance-and-dance haze, and Lennox's voice acts like a Greek siren, drawing you in for the lyrical kill. "Everybody's looking for something," she sings. And what are those dreams? "Some of them want to use you/ Some of them want to get used by you/ Some of them want to abuse you/ Some of them want to be abused." Not the prettiest of pop pictures.

"Sometimes," muses Lennox, the performer, "I will draw people in and then cut them out."

"Sweet Dreams," comments the soft-spoken Stewart, "wasn't even conceived as a song. What happened was Annie and I were having a row in the studio about what music we were making. So I said, 'I'm just gonna fiddle around, you can sulk or what-

ever.' And I got this (melody) and Annie said, 'This is really good.' She started getting interested again and she sang it straightaway, those words, 'sweet dreams are made of this.' It just came. Just taped it and that was it. Since we didn't write it down, we had to think to ourselves what it was about. Something that's just off the top of your head, it takes you a while to realize what you're doing."

The video—and this duo considers video an artistic extension of their music, rather just a commercial for the song—goes a few more dimensions toward surrealism. If you've seen it you'll be struck by the Dali-esque interplay of computer, cow and corporate boardroom. "I just wanted to do the extreme thing," explains Stewart. "It's an extreme computer world and you can't get further removed than a cow, which has nothing to do with that—it's a basic, sacred thing. And I was mixing the two up. All the things, what dreams are—gathering all this stuff, getting TVs—and suddenly you see a cow munching who has none of these aims in life. No matter what we do, the cow is still happy eating the same grass in the same field."

Eurythmics are happy in their little pasture, a church not far from their North London flats that houses an audio/video production facility for and for other groups they take an interest in. Members of Eurythmics' present backing unit, consisting of drummer Pete Phipps and keyboardist Vic Martin (both ex-*Random Hold*) and bassist Dean Garcia, have recorded there. Clem Burke, ex of *Blondie* and an occasional contributor to live gigs, is planning to record there. Eurythmics' umbrella company is called DNA. They have their own small record label.

While both Lennox and Stewart are exacting perfectionists—Lennox: "We're not intellectual about the way we approach music, but we are always striving for better"—they're also quite forthcoming and friendly. On stage, Stewart, all sunglasses and flying hair, takes the role of backup foil. Off stage, he has an intent but easy-going manner, making eye contact through rose-tinted glasses. Lennox presents a strong, sometimes foreboding, stage image and in interviews comes off as

a strong-minded person. But she discusses music in terms of depth and variety (a representation of her own diverse moods), not in terms of clinging to a Grace Jones style of machismo. "I am a very feminine person," she asserts, "wholly feminine, and yet on the other hand, there's something anachronistic about me. There's a need to be sometimes very sweet and sometimes also be incredibly dangerous." She laughs. "You know, allow the possibility of somebody being that way. It's not necessarily a feminist stance but it does encompass all the vulnerability, the positivity, the aggression, all the elements that exist within a person like myself."

Eurythmics came together in January of last year when Lennox and Stewart, romantically involved for several years, decided to leave the Tourists, a group they had formed with songwriter-guitarist Peet Coombes. Two Tourists' albums, including 1981's superlative *Luminous Basement*, came to our shores via Epic Records, but the Tourists received, in Stewart's estimation, zero promotion and were screwed by bad management.

"It was basically a sort of breakdown of personal relationships," says Lennox, discussing the band's demise. "David and I never wrote anything for the Tourists, really. Our reference points were different, there was a clash there." She suffered a nervous breakdown at one point.

The Tourists were a rock 'n' roll band—not a simplistic good time band, but a mélange of styles: jangling, 12-string folk-rock; hard, melodic new wave; harmonica-led blues jaunts. Lennox's voice was magnificent—she got tagged as "the voice of the '80s" in England—but the band was derided by certain critics for not being "punk" enough. Counters Lennox: "The Tourists' energy was inspired through punk and yet in a way we didn't conform to those values entirely. We felt a backlash because we were melodic." They also were mistakenly tagged as '60s revivalists because "I Only Want to Be With You," their Dusty Springfield cover, became something of a hit.

Stewart remembers the "great songs, brilliant words," but says at the end, "you were on this conveyor belt of rock, and before you know where you are, you're doing all the things you never wanted to, singing songs about hotel rooms and all the cliched things. We said, 'Screw all this'."

The Tourists dissolved at the end of '81 in a Bangkok hotel room. "The three of us [Dave, Peet and Annie] said 'let's pack it in.' We never really argued. After that we said, 'let's have a drink'."

Coombes, Stewart says, has become a total recluse, dropping hints of Syd Barrett Syndrome. "He stays in his flat and he writes lines and lines of unconnected prose—they're really good—and he makes home tapes on a portable studio. But he doesn't try and put them out. He was never interested in being famous or anything."

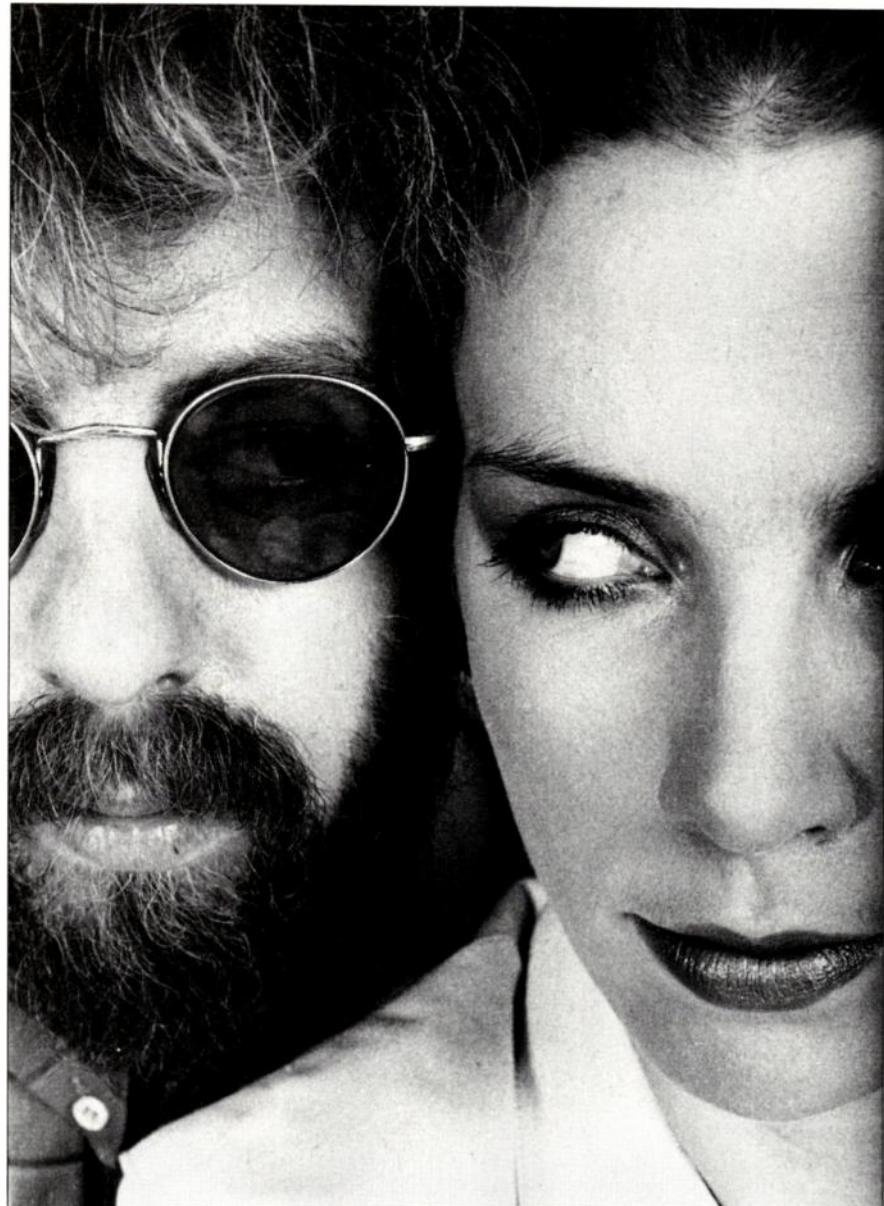


PHOTO: LAURA LEVINE

Eurythmics Dave Stewart and Annie Lennox: all sorts of activity under the surface.

Eurythmics' beginning also turned out to be the end of Annie and Dave's relationship. "The first day I met Annie," recalls Stewart, "we moved in together. After about two hours we were sort of living together. We didn't say anything about it, we just naturally assumed that's the way it was. We were writing songs 'til four in the morning, tape recording things. But when two people are together all the time in an obsessive way with one particular subject, you start getting closed off from other people and getting into your own little world. It was getting more and more claustrophobic. It's much better now; we can come to each other with fresh ideas."

Stewart and Lennox both hold to progressive ideals, developed within the pop context. Stewart sings the praises of sly melodic hooks, but says the aim is "not to make it crass. I can't stand the Kajagoogoo kind of things, which is the rotten end of synthesizers. They make everything sound

like wallpaper, no kind of substance, really. That's our constant thing: to have a great melody, but a bit dark, a bit mysterious. It's difficult to do that."

The last time Eurythmics played English television, they played "The Walk" and "This City Never Sleeps" with an instrumental lineup that included a grand piano, a dobro guitar and a 16-piece gospel choir. "Fantastic," says Stewart. "Annie singing live, crossover gospel harmonies."

This sort of penchant for the experimental is what Eurythmics point to as evidence that they're neither a New Music band ("a convenient label by the media, rather misplaced," states Lennox) or a synth-pop band. "There's all sorts of activity going on beneath the surface," Lennox opines. "In my own personal experience that's how I perceive the world. I don't see it as something black and white. I want people to understand there's always friction happening."

CARY BAKER

CHICAGO

BACK ON THE GOOD FOOT, SORT OF

The issue is strength, or what it takes not only to endure but to thrive for nigh on to three decades in the notoriously fickle world of popular music. James Brown likes to talk about strength, and then walk it like he talks it.

Onstage, for instance, the 55-year-old Godfather of Soul/Soul Brother Number One/Hardest Working Man In Show Business rips through nearly 30 years of classic songs with the same degree of agility he displayed way back in '56 when he burst on the scene, fresh out of Augusta, Georgia,

bus. I go in a plane. I want them to get the feel of where they're going so that when they get there, they're strong."

These days the Godfather himself is getting an object lesson in strength, owing to the reluctance of a number of black radio stations to play Brown's new single, "Bring It On," the title track from the artist's first new album in nearly four years, recorded for his own Augusta label (distributed by Churchill Records, about which more later). Apparently Brown's been told that black radio, having turned largely "adult contemporary," feels his

et, like Gladys Knight and the Pips. I saw a couple of James' concerts last year. Maybe he can't hit those high notes, but he dances and screams. We're not so far from that now. Look at Prince—that's James Brown reincarnated."

An independent promotion man contracted to work the record to his long-standing contacts in black radio and retail says that "for the most part there was a general negativity to 'Bring It On.' It was called too raw; some didn't like the mix. One even told me he'd abstain because James Brown is no longer the spokesperson for causes. Another groaned, 'If it'd only been produced by Kashif!'"

Yet this same promoter saw first-hand how the record was capable of striking a nerve right in the heart of the urban panorama: a record store at 47th Street and Martin Luther King Drive, in one of Chicago's oldest black neighborhoods, blared the disc on its sidewalk bullhorn one summer afternoon and dozens of passersby stopped to dance. "There's still something about James Brown's squeal that makes it sound like Friday payday," the promoter observes of the scene that convinced him to keep pushing Brown's album.

If *Bring It On* should falter, though, Brown will be hard-pressed to claim his label didn't support him, seeing as how he is pretty much the label: his staff at Augusta Sound handles most of the promotion while distribution is the function of Churchill Records, based in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Churchill/Augusta seems an unlikely pairing. The former is part of the Jim Halsey Company, which has made its considerable reputation managing country acts such as Roy Clark, the Oak Ridge Boys and Don Williams. Brown, however, feels a kinship with Churchill that he hasn't felt towards a label since his early days on King Records.

"I met Mr. Martin (Churchill president Tommy Martin) at Charlie Daniels' Volunteer Jam last year," Brown relates, "and he seemed to be a real classy, decent man. And that's something you just don't find in the record business anymore. The man believes in God; he's a strong man. Everything we discussed in the contract was written the way we discussed it, and that ain't happened before."

Which brings us around to the topic of
Continued on page 61

James Brown: the common denominator is life.

with "Please Please Please." He screams and shouts and stops on a dime, all the while remaining in time with his eight-piece band, the JB's.

Strength. Would-be JB's typically spend five years of internship before graduating to the front line. Even then, each instrumentalist has a backup, the better to insure that James Brown never misses a single engagement.

"By the time they're with me," says Brown, "they've been through the school of hard knocks and have a doctorin' degree in feelings, timing, mathematics and voicing.

"Also," he points out, "I ride 'em on a

music's too close to the street for such formats.

To which the Godfather succinctly retorts: "My music is like water. And is there such a thing as adult and kid water? I wanna know. The common denominator is life."

Get down, James. But listen to what the man says.

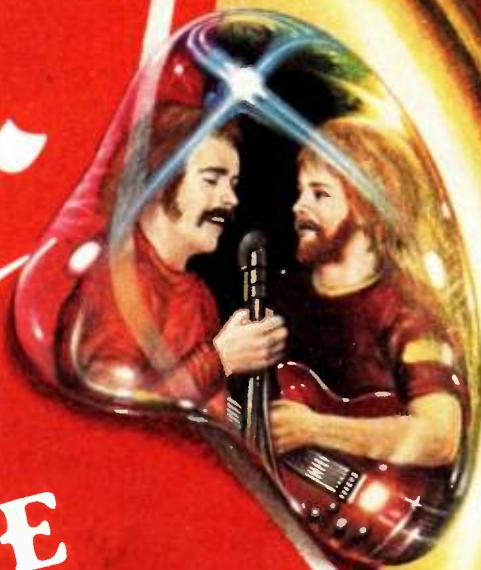
"Now I'm one of the staunchest James Brown fans I can think of," says Graham Armstrong, music director at WGCI-FM, Chicago's top-rated black station. "But I think he needs to find a contemporary producer and open up to what's happening now. He needs to give us something 'pock-

PHOTO: DARRYL PITTS/RETNA



Miller

HIGH LIFE



WELCOME
To Miller Time

SUSANNE WHATLEY

LOS ANGELES

NEW MUSIC'S LATEST FIXXATION

This time last year, the Fixx couldn't buy a date at the Club Lingerie.

It wasn't due to lack of public interest, though. "We had a lot of phone calls on them," recalls a worker at the Hollywood cabaret. It was to avoid angry fans' backlash that club management placed a cancellation notice in the papers blaming the band's record company for pulling them out of schedule appearances. MCA perceived the Fixx's debut album *Shuttered Room* as not sufficiently happening to warrant tour support beyond the East Coast. That was under a regime since replaced by one committed to breaking the Fixx Stateside.

Recently Fixx singer and lyricist Cy Curnin has been carrying a film script around in his suitcase during the band's three month U.S. tour as an opening act for A Flock Of Seagulls and the Police (they return in November for more dates). The script's titled *Sixteen Candles* and the Fixx has been asked to contribute to the soundtrack.

It's happening now for the Fixx; in fact, last year's lapse in corporate interest actually set up the serendipitous succession of events in 1983. The group went home to England where the new *Reach The Beach* album was recorded in time for a May release. Via radio and the video for the single, "Saved By Zero," plus their visibility on the road, America has taken the Fixx to heart enough to place *Reach* in the top 20.

"The Seagulls supported the Go-Go's and eventually grew from there," Curnin explains happily. "We in turn supported the Seagulls, and grew from that basis. It's like 'one thing leads to another.'"

Any guy who quotes from his latest single has to appreciate that a bit of self-parody goes with the self-promotion territory, no matter how serious one's lyrics about nuclear conflagration and social degeneration might be. The band's progression of expression grew out of theatre; when drummer Adam Woods was in drama school with Curnin's sister, the two men would rehearse scripts together. The relationship quickly spilled over into their mutual love of music. The duo was joined by keyboard man Rupert Greenall, and the trio formed the Portraits, but with little immediate success. Two-and-a-half years ago guitarist Jamie West-Oram found them through an ad, and the Fixx was born. A

single, "Lost Planes," came out on the 101 indie label and MCA grabbed them up in 1981.

"Concise without any limits" is how Woods defines their name, savoring the ambiguity. "A fix on something, perhaps." Their compositions are sharply focused with coolly intelligent bites of social criticism; simple instrumental lines retain their clarity even when the mix roars.

"It's quite often what you leave out, not what you put in, that's important," asserts Curnin.

Minimalism defines their lives as well; they spent two years of solid rehearsing in London, bumming cash from girlfriends and sleeping on friends' floors. "No money," Woods recalls. "We'd given up everything else. We used to get massively depressed because we thought we'd never get out of this rut. But we felt successful because we'd just meet and write another song. That was the real sweet taste."

Until their first taste of commercial success with "Stand or Fall" last year, the Fixx members spent cheap recreation hours watching television, developing a disrespect for mass media abuse and the society which mandates its passive utility. Curnin, in fact, was so shocked at a televised nuclear debate based on casualty projections of a mock war zone called the "Euro theatre" that he wrote "Stand or Fall" in response.

Through his terse lyrics Curnin clearly wants to wake up the world. "I think sometimes when people put records out they presume too little of the audience. They think 'I love you' will suffice, when hidden behind a beat. But I tend to think that most people cover a lot of ground when listening to things, as I do myself. More than just the obvious emotions. If you listen closely, you'll realize there's a hell of a lot of other things going on."

Curnin's emotional range broadens on *Reach The Beach*, a subtler work than *Shuttered Room*. The instruments are even more restrained, more powerful, delicate and self-distinguished while creating a more cohesive whole than you'd expect in a young band.

The cleansing properties of the Fixx's enhancement-by-reduction theory is epitomized in "Saved By Zero." The song's engaging melodicism helped propel the LP into the chart's upper reaches before "One Thing Leads to Another" took the Fixx higher still, but the lyrics speak of freeing the creative spirit from encumbrances. More specifically, the message is: don't sell art for financial reward.

Says Curnin: "There's always compromise on the decision. You must remember that with a pen you can fantasize forever and a day, and that is the wonder of music. You can actually fly off with it."



The Fixx (from left: Curnin, Woods, West-Oram, Greenall): minimalism, clarity, conscience.

PHOTO PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

There's only one way to play it.



Wherever the music is
hot, the taste is Kool.

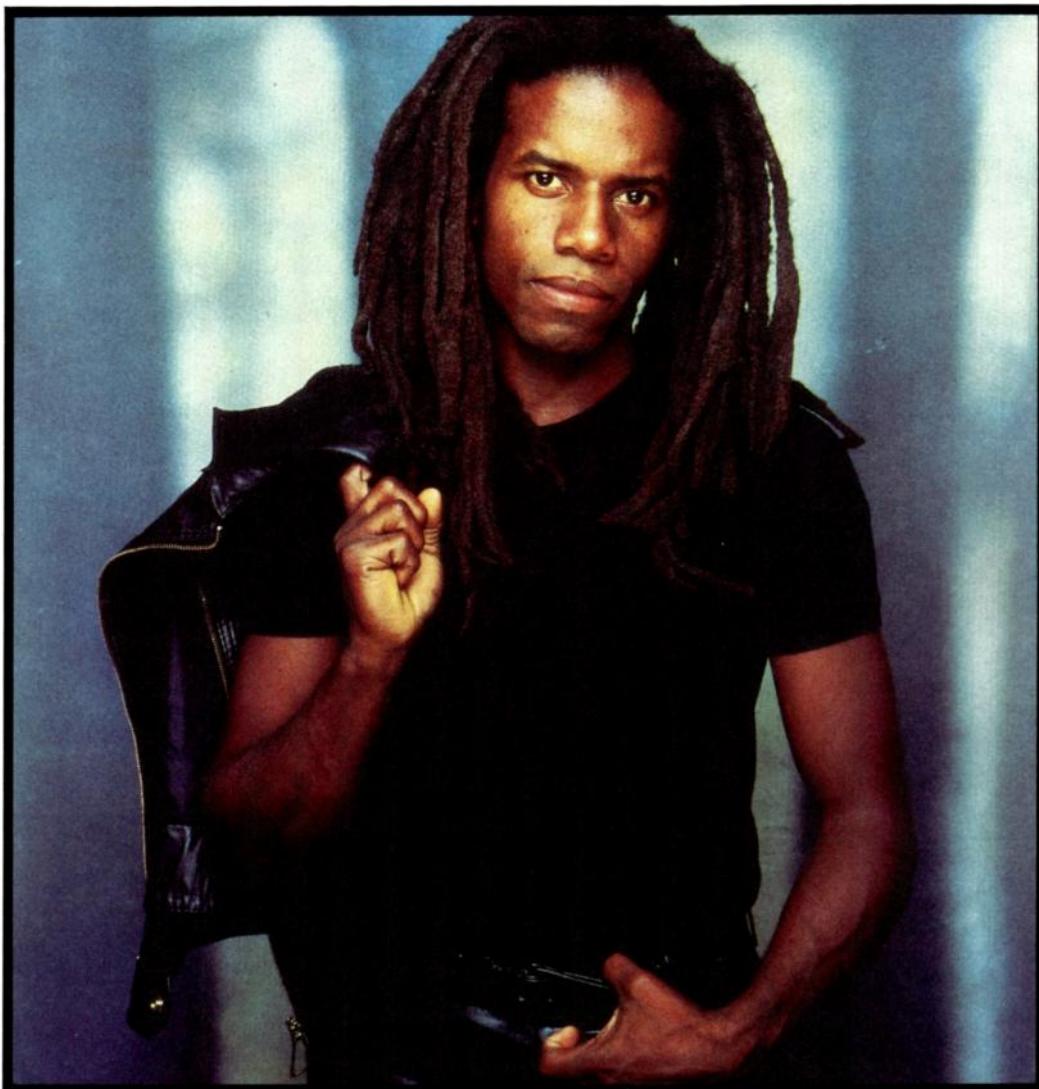
Because there's
only one sensation
this refreshing.

Kings, 17 mg. "tar", 1.1 mg. nicotine; Longs, 14 mg. "tar",
1.0 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette, FTC Report Mar. '83.

Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined
That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

THE SUPERNATURAL EDDY GRANT

Tell Eddy Grant that he's standing on his head, and he'll investigate the possibility. Tell him he's a smash in America—after 15 years of trying—and he'll shrug. This is your way, when the gods are with you.



ANTHONY DECURTIS

ATLANTA

HAVE A GREAT FEELING FOR WHAT PEOPLE CALL SUPERNATURAL things . . . I am totally open-minded about everything. If somebody told me now, in fact, I'm not sitting but I'm really standing on my head, I would seriously investigate the possibility!"

Near as I can tell, Guyana-born reggae rocker Eddy Grant is sitting comfortably in his suite at Atlanta's Omni International Hotel, talking animatedly about the maiden U.S. tour he's just kicked off behind his monster LP *Killer on the Rampage* and chart-busting single, "Electric Avenue."

But who's to say? After more than 15 diligent years of trying to conquer America with the funky fusion of Latin, Afro, and Caribbean sounds that was steadily winning him a large international audience, this man has paid his note and is entitled to believe what he

wants. Besides, certain events can convince you that the supernatural's helping to shape your fate. "I don't know if you know the story with *Killer on the Rampage*?" Grant tosses out, his resonant, mildly accented voice rising to turn a statement to a question. No, I don't know it. He goes on: "*Killer on the Rampage*, as it is, is not the album that should have been." Come again? "The album that should have been was lost in transit from London to Barbados. That's right. I had to go back and write completely new songs because I didn't even have my cassette with me. I think, *everything* gone. And I thought, oh boy, this is really rocking-out time, because if I don't come up with the goods now and I tell people that I've lost all my songs, they would say, 'What a bloody liar! He just didn't do the job, you know, and now he's bullshitting!' But, in fact, it came up, and it came up *trumps*. That's got to be the greatest!"

In many ways, *Killer* is the album "that should have been" a long time ago. Born in 1948, Grant moved from Guyana to London when he was twelve, and made his first musical mark in the late '60s with the Equals, the racially integrated soul-pop combo that cracked the American top 40 in 1968 with "Baby Come Back." But the English music scene would not be truly ready for politically savvy, musically eclectic interracial bands for another dozen years, and the Equals never attained the degree of success Grant fervently believed they deserved.

Frustrated and emotionally wasted by the forces holding him back from the big time, Grant left the Equals in 1971 and launched a thorough analysis of how a creative artist could control the means of production and distribution that make or break careers in the pop music field. All supernaturalism aside, he very literally began taking care of business.

Late in 1973 he bought a home in North London, and in the actual coach house established Coach House Studios with the help of his friend and eventual engineer, Frank Agarrat. In 1974 he founded the independent record label, Ice Records, and in 1976 released his first solo LP, *Message Man*. Grant later even acquired his own pressing plant to ease the crunch of bills generated in part by *Message Man*'s sales.

The son of an impecunious, ace Guyanese trumpeter, Eddy was not born to the business life. "It was a question of expediency," he explains, "because when I started, I started like everybody else. I just wanted to make records, it was a fun thing to do, and so on, and so on. But then I realized that if I was going to be in this business for a career . . . I should get to know what it is about this business that keeps artists, *some* artists, alive in it and sane, as opposed to the others that become rock 'n' roll casualties. And I realized early on that it was a firm grasp of the business of the business. So I went around reading books

and asking questions."

This entrepreneurial curiosity and drive on the part of a black immigrant hardly elicited approving smiles from the powers-that-were. "I wasn't a welcome sight to a lot of guys who were sharp operators in the business, who could have given me a hand but who wanted too much," Grant recalls. "I didn't want it that way. So it took me a little longer to get the recognition that I suppose was coming to me."

Through energetic marketing and distribution Grant solidified his multinational following in the mid-'70s, with the percussive "Hello Africa" from *Message Man* helping to put him over on that continent. His reputation spread with the 1979 Epic release, *Walking on Sunshine*. That LP's opening side—consisting of the throbbing dance-tune title track, the emotional reggae protest, "Living on the Front Line," and the elegant, powerful synthesizer fugue, "Front Line Symphony"—constitutes some of the strongest material Grant has done to date.

Epic dropped Grant after 1980's *My Turn to Love You*, on which the unevenness of the material—only "Preachin' Genocide" and "Exiled (From the Love I Know)" are first rate—was aggravated by record company meddling in the mix and unnecessary strings. Grant released two more solo albums on Ice, *Can't Get Enough* and the hot double-set, *Live at Notting Hill*, before CBS's Portrait label picked him up for *Killer*.

A couple of covers also set the stage for Grant's breakthrough. A high point of the Clash's three-record agitprop masterpiece, *Sandinista!*, was their siren-guitar version of "Police on my Back," written by Grant in 1967. In 1982 the New York funk outfit Rockers Revenge fired up the international dancefloor with Grant's "Walking on Sunshine," a cover Grant himself terms "superlative."

The commitment and discipline Grant drew on to forge his own path in the music industry are also evident in other aspects of his public and private lives. Despite his dreadlocks and bad-ass reggae rebel image, Grant is a married man with four kids who makes no move without gauging its impact on his extended family. He is not a Rastafarian and consumes neither ganja nor tobacco. Most remarkably, he has written, produced, and, with few exceptions, sung and played all parts on all his solo studio records, controlling the music he makes with a passionate obsessiveness.

This urge for personal control also has its disadvantages. Grant's whims occasionally go unchecked, and clunker lyrics or derivative material gets by that would never pass the scrutiny of a more collaborative effort. And while it dug a groove deep enough to unearth some gems, Grant's Atlanta show, the fourth date on his American tour, was marred by his unwillingness to give up some of the funk to the band. He repeatedly introduced num-

bers as "this next track," a term more redolent of the studio than the heat of the stage and suggestive of the environment in which he feels most comfortable.

Grant, however, has no misgivings about his solitary working habits. "As the creator of the music, as the creator of the work, you have the original concept," he details with a conviction that will brook no disagreement. "And ideally, in a perfect situation, you would take that concept to completion. If you were, for example, a painter or a writer, you understand, the concept would be taken through to completion by you. It's only a mechanical process that causes a breakdown of that normally, because the writer is not capable of articulating on the various instruments to make the composite sound."

"Now I am able to do that. And so therefore I get exactly what it is that I envisaged from the word go, give or take a little bit here or there. When I've ever played with musicians, all they've brought to me is their problems, and that becomes now a part of my music, which was not part of the original concept."

At its best, Grant's music is an infectious blend of traditional and contemporary elements: reggae spiked with rock 'n' roll kick; funkified calypso lilt and Afro rhythms; soul and pop melodies spiced with Latin inflections. Among the most distinctive components of Grant's sound is his fondness for synthesizers, a taste he shares with the British technodisco brigade. But there, according to Grant, the similarity ends.

"A lot of guys have not personalized synthesizers," he asserts. "The synthesizer for Human League is the same as it is for Thomas Dolby and the same as it is for somebody else. You hear those same sounds. And I can use those same sounds. I can go and take the sound that they use for 'Don't You Want Me' and it'll sound exactly like Eddy Grant. Like if Eric Clapton used a Rickenbacker guitar, it would sound like Eric Clapton playing a Rickenbacker guitar, because he injected his personality and his love and emotion into this inert object and made it human."

"Music now has something to do with androids. But music has to do with people. We're not making music for androids, we're making music for *people*, right? But because it looks good in print, people are saying different things, and it's not really . . . it's not really *true*. And people are now *behaving* like androids as a result! You write about it, 'android music,' and people start to behave like it, you know? Cut their hair, walk like it (Grant laughs and makes mechanical man gestures). It's ridiculous!"

As he grew up in Guyana, Grant listened primarily to South American music. His rock 'n' roll schooling occurred after he moved with his family to London, with one band especially opening the door to a whole world of new sounds and visions. "The first real R&B that I heard, which we

called rock 'n' roll in the '60s in England," he recounts, "was the Rolling Stones and the Yardbirds. But mainly the Rolling Stones. I had this great feeling towards them, you know, because there was something quite different about their music.

"And one day I was sitting talking with a guy, and I was telling him, I said, 'You know, I like this music from the Rolling Stones.' I was out of a classical background; I enjoyed playing traditional jazz on trumpet and so on at that time, but I wasn't really interested in pop music. To me, pop music was really the . . . the *pits*! But I really liked the Rolling Stones.

"And the guy says, 'Well maybe you like it because there's a black guy involved in it.' I said, 'No, there's no black guy in the Rolling Stones!' He says, 'Yeah, but they play black people's music.' I said, 'Oh, is that so? Well, maybe that's a reason, too.' I said, 'I like them because they have *spirit*. You know, there's this guy jumping about on the stage and they're carrying on and so on.'

"And from the Rolling Stones, I found out about Chuck Berry's music. I didn't know who the hell Chuck Berry was, but all the time I would see on the labels of (Stones) records, 'C. Berry.' And then I started to look for this 'C. Berry.' I thought, I've gotta go and see this guy when he comes into town. And so I found that he was a great performer."

Another writing credit on early Stones' albums, "M. Morganfield," produced further discoveries: "Through Muddy Waters I found Big Bill Broonzy, then I found Slim Harpo and I found Sonny Boy Williamson, Little Walter, and on and on."

And if any of Grant's grunting exclamations on "Electric Avenue" sound at all familiar, check this out: "Then I found James Brown and that was the end, you know what I mean? When I saw James Brown I thought, Jeeee-sus God, could an artist be so dedicated to his craft? I have to be that good, it's as simple as that."

Grant's admiration for the Stones turns out to have been mutual. Around the time of *Message Man*, Bill Wyman visited Grant backstage after one of his shows. "Bill sent Todd Rundgren's manager to talk to me first, because he's shy and he thought I'd have a big head or something," Grant remembers, smiling. "He said, 'I've always loved your music, I'm a fan of yours.' I said, 'That's ridiculous, I'm a fan of yours. You guys are my *gods*!' He told me Keith had all my records. I couldn't believe it!"

The range of Grant's musical sources is matched by the array of interests that surface in his writing. Like Grant's previous records, *Killer on the Rampage* intermingles tender love songs ("Too Young to Fall," "Drop Baby Drop" and "Latin Love Affair") with songs addressing social concerns ("War Party," "Another Revolutionary," and the street-political "Electric Avenue"). This emotional and

thematic breadth has encouraged comparisons with the late Bob Marley. It may also have been another factor delaying Grant's success. The love songs presented no problems, but titles like "Black Skin Blue Eyed Boys," "Cockney Black," "Curfew," "Living on the Front Line," and "Preachin' Genocide" raised complex, discomforting questions about minority rights in England and the use of political violence. This outspoken willingness to take on the big issues again branded Grant an upstart and limited his exposure.

But while Grant sees "political songwriter" as another bag in which he's been put in order to be labeled and dismissed, he still believes that songs about romance or individual sorrow don't tell the whole sto-

"I make music that must disturb you in some way. Either it makes you dance, it makes you listen, it makes you laugh or it makes you cry. All these human emotions, that's what I make music for."

ry. "The lives that we live, whether artistically or just on a human level, are so geared to political happenings, sociological happenings in our communities, wherever they are, that you can't divorce one from the other," he insists. "I write first of all as a man, and as a commentator on what I see from time to time. I'm not a man who writes bitter songs, or even bitter songs for the sake of writing bitter songs. I write songs that purely and simply comment on sociological conditions, political conditions, or whatever it is to do with people like myself. There should be nothing wrong with that. I shouldn't be stigmatized by that, because the converse is also true. I write love songs. I write songs of my own personal emotions and feelings. And I shouldn't be stigmatized by that either. I only basically comment on situations as a writer, as I think writers should really, because we are chroniclers of certain events in time."

When told that his response brings to mind the lyrics from "Living on the Front Line" ("What kind of man could I be/If I

can't talk about what I see?") he nods agreement. "That's right. When I wrote that song, I wasn't making millions of dollars or nothing, you know? I was writing purely and simply what I felt. And knowing very clearly again that the radio stations might not play it, but it was important that I put that down, because it is what I felt at the time."

But beyond commenting on conditions and chronicling impressions, does Grant believe that music itself can inspire social change? "About once every day or every other day I think about the lyrics of 'Imagine,'" he says slowly, leaning forward to make his point as directly as possible. "Now it might be of no earth-shattering significance. It may not move President Reagan to making a certain decision on his policies in Central America. It may not affect Mr. Andropov in Russia. It may not do any of those things. But at least once a day I think about 'Imagine,' because it's a song I wish I had written. It was very clear, concise, and still it left room for *imagination*.

"Having said that, I think basically I've said everything about my approach to songs of this nature, because I believe that you write a song, it's like you make a child. For better or for worse, you've made it, and you hope that the end result will be a pleasant one. If it stimulates some thought or brings about some social change, fine. But irrespective of that, you have made it. And it's got to go out there and do its work."

Part of the work of Grant's songs—political or not—is to unsettle his listeners, provoking a response. "A lot of music, especially nowadays, has become euphoric," he states, shaking his head in a combination of amusement, disgust, and wonder. "Put it on and you can talk over it, you can kick ass over it, you could do anything over it, you know? Totally *ignore* it, you know what I'm saying? I don't make music for that purpose. I don't make muzak. I make music that must disturb you in some way. Either it makes you dance, it makes you listen, it makes you laugh or it makes you cry. All these human emotions, that's what I make music for."

Grant now resides in St. Philip, Barbados, with his family, having moved there in the fateful lost-tape journey from London in 1981. He laughs off claims that he is based in Barbados for tax purposes, pointing out that such rumors would never have arisen but for his huge sales this year. Happy to have finally escaped the cold, damp British winters, he is comfortably settled in a restored plantation house on the same grounds as his new Blue Wave Studios, where he recorded *Killer on the Rampage*.

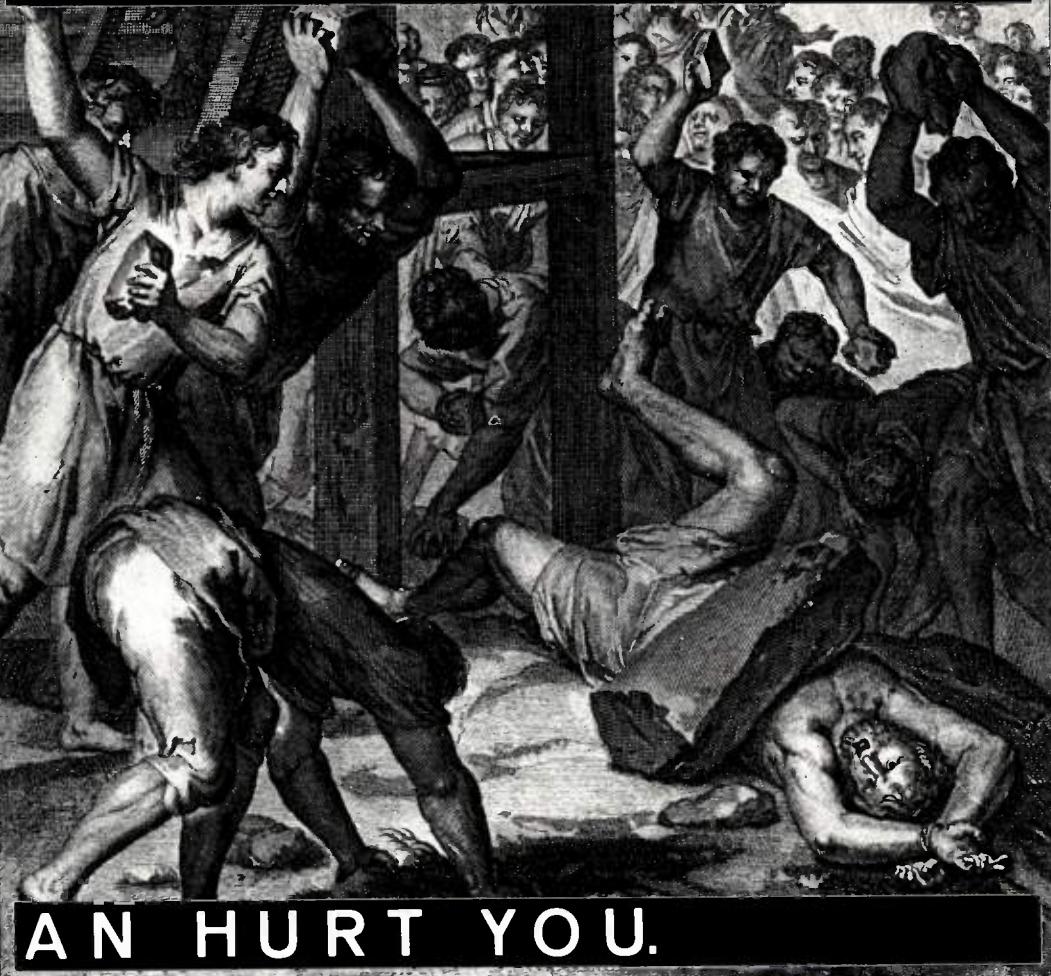
But Grant is hardly one to let the ease and beauty of his new environment lull him into quietude. Shortly after his arrival in Barbados, he learned that the government was harrassing local beach vendors

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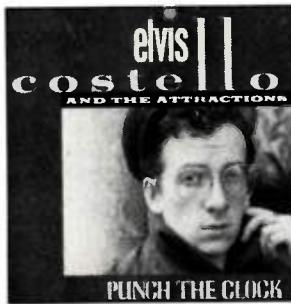
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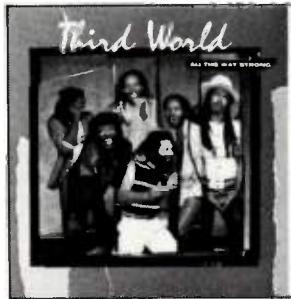
These people were trying to have an intelligent discussion about new music until it became clear that the citizen above was bluffing...he hadn't actually heard the new albums by Elvis Costello & The Attractions, WHAM! U.K., Translator, Third World and Herbie Hancock. Let's hope he learned his lesson.



TRANSLATOR



No Time Like Now



ON COLUMBIA RECORDS AND CASSETTES.

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The Record Interview

KEITH RICHARDS



Flowers & Thorns: Reflections of a Rolling Stone

**"Pause you who read this, and think
for a moment of the long chain of iron
or gold, of thorns or flowers, that
would never have bound you, but for
the formation of the first link on one
memorable day."**

CHARLES DICKENS,
Great Expectations

AND SO IT WAS THAT I CAME TO INTERVIEW KEITH Richards, Rolling Stone, carrying some heavy-duty emotional baggage accumulated over 19 years of following the band's every move—the great (the 1972 tour), the good (the 1969 tour), the indifferent (the 1964 tour), the bad (the '75 and '78 tours) and the ugly (Altamont). Like so many Stones fan (atic)s, I measure the best years of my life against their records and concerts.

Oddly enough, so does Keith Richards, Rolling Stone, who says he no longer thinks in terms of years, but in terms of "the 'Some Girls' tour, the summer of 'Satisfaction,' and so on." Thus the point of this interview.

Clearly, the problem in questioning Richards is to find a fresh avenue of thought. A mere bag of shells, you say? Not quite. But in poring over nearly two decades' worth of press on the band, I found that the path least trod was the one of reassessment/reflection/perspective. Here, then, the focus was on matters of how the Stones function under the weight of myth, and where they stand historically, from Richards' point of view, with certain necessary digressions into the realm of the extramusical as a means of getting a better fix on the man himself.

It proved to be a fruitful line of questioning. Sometimes Richards would resort to stock answers, then pause and stare at the floor in deep concentration. After several seconds in which no words were spoken between us, he would begin again, picking up on a theme vaguely implicit in the original question or answer and running with it—witness his remarks on fashion and music—until he'd arrived at something approaching a definitive comment on the subject.

This interview was conducted on July 26 in Richards' suite in an upper east side hotel in Manhattan. Tanned and trim and dressed in a pink shirt unbuttoned to the waist, black jeans and—horror of horrors!—argyle socks, Richards sat patiently for three hours, answering, thinking, answering, chain smoking, and drinking Jack Daniel's mixed with ginger ale. He is a soft-spoken and articulate man, given to considering his words carefully before speaking, not as a means of censoring himself, but rather as a way of assuring some clarity of thought. The quality evident in his speech and in his attitude is one of enormous pride—pride certainly in himself, pride in the individual members of the Rolling Stones, pride in the band's achievements.

Richards' fiancee, Patti Hansen, ventured into the room twice, both times to ply me with another bottle of Coke and Keith with more ginger ale. Once when she came in, Keith took the opportunity to sprint off to the bathroom. After he was gone, Patti turned to me and said, "He's a good egg, isn't he?" I replied as to how, yes, he seemed like a regular joe having a good time in New York City. It got a laugh. But if the truth be known, the man was a perfect gentleman. Is that a legend or what?

By David McGee

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
JEAN PAGLIUSO





Sloppy Stones

"Yeah, sometimes we're sloppy—who isn't? There is a certain amount of unstructuredness about the Stones, especially on the road. We're not the kind of band that goes 'one, two, three, four,' you know, and segues into another number. That's not the way the guys are; you can't make an SS regiment out of the Stones. And rock 'n' roll doesn't lend itself to being cleaned up to the point of perfection. In the process of perfecting something you lose spontaneity. We might stand around the stage going (scratches head), 'Well, what should we do next?' 'Do you feel like doing it?' 'No, I don't feel like doing that.' In that respect, yes, we're sloppy. But if we're having this slight conference on stage and seem to be wasting time, it's because we're trying to do the best thing for everybody. I don't think there's any way you can accuse the Stones of not caring about what they do, or of trying to shuck it off."

How do the Stones handle the mythical status they've been elevated to by their fans? Maybe the better question is, how does this limit you as a band?

I suppose in the broadest sense it prevents us from doing as much as we want to or would like to; it makes us work in fits and starts. When you get to that semi-mythical stage, it takes so long to organize, especially touring, going on the road. Recording stays pretty much the same. But your life goes on . . . you don't count years anymore. You think in terms of tours: you know, the "Some Girls" tour. So things go in fits and starts, but we've learned to cope with that over the years.

The band certainly doesn't view itself as mythical, though. We'll just get up there and do our job. But it affects us in that it limits the amount of things we can do and the way we can do them, as far as playing certain places or just gettin' out and doing a week of cabaret houses or clubs.

When you plan a set, do the fans' expectations ever enter into your discussions of what you will or won't play?

We know very well that there's certain songs we can't omit. Our first criterion in choosing what we're going to play live is usually how well we're playing it. If the band is enjoying playing it, getting off on the song, nine times out of ten that works for the audience as well. If it's an old one or one we haven't done in ages, we'll find some little different way of playing it that we all get off on that might not even be noticeable to anybody else. But we'll sense something's going on there. As long as we're not bored with a song—that's the worst thing. That's why "Midnight Rambler" had to go (laughs). I mean, it was a great song for years and years, but after awhile you start saying, "Oh no, now he's gonna get the whip out." And you see Mick going (groans softly). You get to that point and you know it's time to drop it.

One frequently hears musicians claim they got into rock because it was a good way to meet girls—and Eric Burdon is on record as claiming that's the reason everybody in England started playing. But at some point it had to change for you, if that was even the reason you started in the first place. When did the reasons for playing change?

The reason the band started playing is not actually Eric's definition. There were no birds hanging around—well, very few, and not the sort to perk your interest. If it'd been for chicks, we'd have gone straight on to the ballroom circuit and played early '60s pop music. That was the way to get girls. There wasn't much of a demand for weird-looking rhythm and blues bands. We were on this burning mission to spread rhythm and blues; we were very young, you know. It wasn't until the band had been together for a year or so and had actually left the club circuit and made the first record that these other advantages became

apparent to us. Because in a matter of two months we went from a small London club band to a contender for the charts and then Stone-mania started. Beatlemania was there, so it was mania-this, mania-that, mania, mania. Suddenly all those things dawned on us. That was where the sense of mission left us as far as spreading rhythm and blues through London (laughs). There was suddenly so much more to take care of; it was totally mind-blowing, especially when one day you're playing by yourself in the back room of a pub and the next you're on a major tour with Little Richard and the Everly Brothers and Bo Diddley. It's like being plucked out of reality and plunked down in one of your favorite dreams. Then the whole thing started with records. Andrew Oldham sat Mick and me down and said "write songs," which had never crossed our minds. It was always somebody else's job. But he was quite right to do it, because without new sources of material we would have dried up after we'd gone through our Jimmy Reed, Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley and Muddy Waters records. It was absolutely essential, but at the time we said, "You've got to be kidding," you know, "writing songs is a songwriter's job. I'm a guitar player." But Andrew shut us up in a kitchen for a weekend. "Where are we gonna pee, Andrew?" "Out the window." Yeah, he said, "Come out with a song," and we came out with "As Tears Go By" for Marianne Faithfull. And Andrew said, "See, you can do it." After that Mick and I started to get interested in writing. I didn't think we were capable of doing it, and to actually find out in that manner is like finding out that not only am I blessed with this talent to play music, but I can also build sheds. You know what I mean? You suddenly get turned on to something inside yourself that you didn't know was there. I'm eternally grateful to Andrew, because without him pushing us maybe Mick and I would never have actually got down to it. It would certainly have been a lot different.

Up to that point, then, you had no vision of what the Rolling Stones would be a few years down the road.

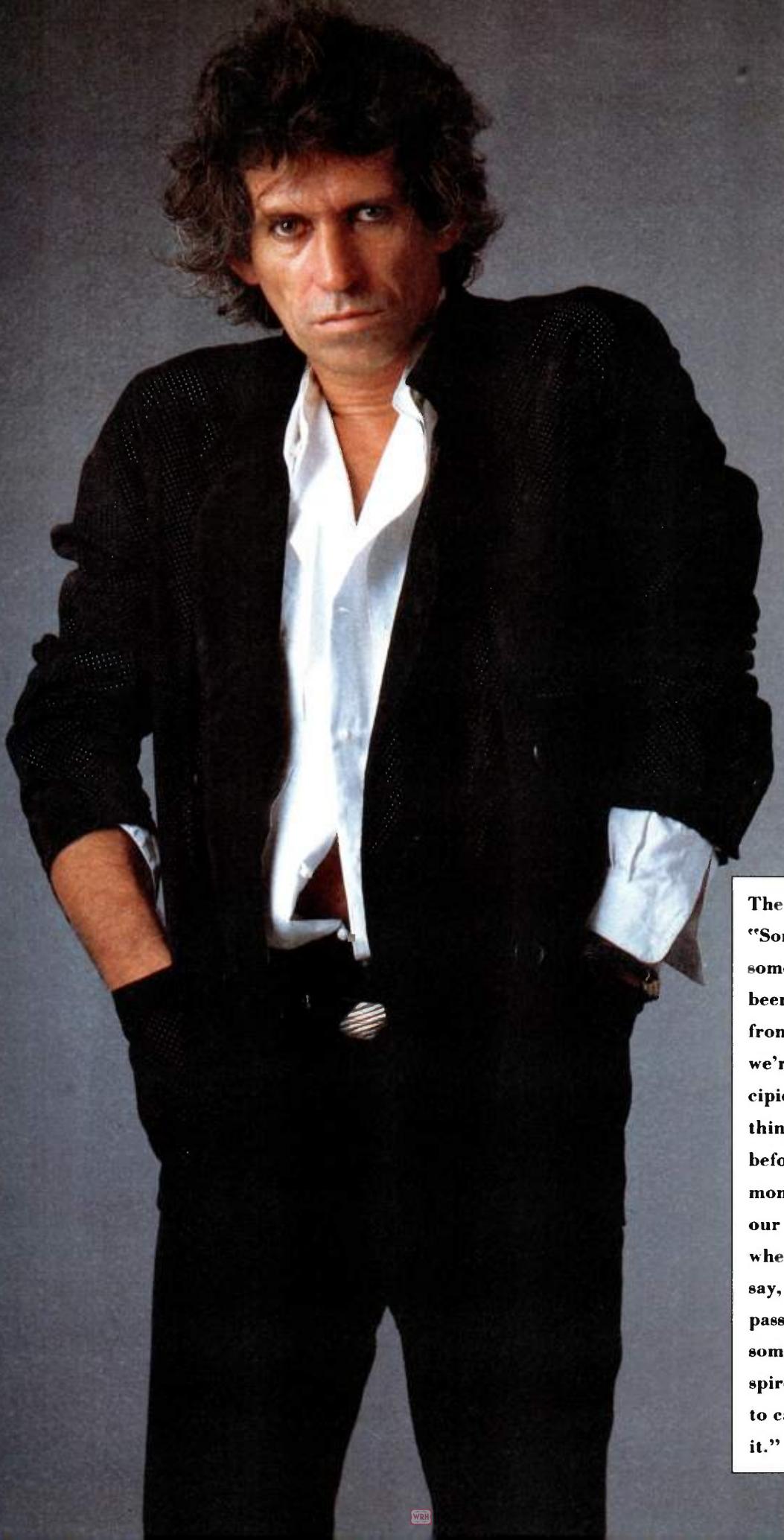
Right. The general length of a rock 'n' roll recording act in the early '60s was about eighteen months to two years. So when we finally got to make records and they became hits, we said, "Oh well, it's a drag in a way. We're just starting to enjoy this and it's the beginning of the end." There was no reason for us to expect it to last more than any other band from that period. Then the '60s took over didn't they? Things changed as they went along, and I suppose we got better at what we were doing.

We've always had a very loyal following of fans no matter what stage we were in; even when there were just a few hundred kids in London, there was still very much of a strong feeling among the fans—sometimes

more than we had. In a way that kind of keeps you going. It certainly helped us out later on through the ups and downs. You begin to take it for granted after so many years, but at times of trouble they can amaze you with how much they need the Stones in their lives. It took us a long time to realize that. Sometimes it's quite touching.

You've known Mick most of your life. How has your relationship with him changed over the years?

Obviously there's some difference in a relationship between people from the time they're four years old together to the time they're 40—there's another zero for starters. It really hasn't changed that much, though, in actual fact, considering the things we have to go through and the decisions we have to make about records and what the Stones are going to do next.



The long view:
"Songwriting is something that's been handed down from year one, and we're here as the recipients of everything that's gone before. Our finest moment comes with our dying breath when each of us can say, 'Ah, at least I passed it on.' Just something that inspires somebody else to carry on doing it."



On The Beatles

Do you and Mick see each other outside of the band much anymore?

Oh yeah, yeah. Quite a lot lately, as a matter of fact.

Because you're working on a record.

Yeah, a lot of what we see each other for is that, the work. But it's remarkably the same in lots of ways. Probably if we were just friends we wouldn't see as much of each other as we do because we're working together. And we probably wouldn't argue as much as we do if we were just friends and not involved in the same thing. He's one of the guys I can argue with to the death. If I get into an argument with somebody I don't know in a nightclub or something, they're drunk and I'm drunk, you know, it can get nasty. With Mick and I, it's civilized. After all, we've known each other for so long it's almost like we're in the same family. Brothers also have the worst arguments in the world. You can do that.

Would you say Mick still has the same passion for music as you do?

When it comes down to actually doing it, absolutely. He's one-hundred percent with it. The hard thing with the Stones is getting into it; it's very easy to get lazy and lethargic because you have such a long layoff between things. It's such a big deal to get everything together. The *idea* of doing things sometimes doesn't appeal to Mick—to Charlie even less. He's a real homebody. The road is another problem, because sometimes the thought of doing it . . . "Oh God, *twenty years*."

Did you find it amusing that Mick got so much press when he turned 40?

How amusing is it? I've got five months to go before I catch up with him.

You said that in the beginning the band was trying to promote rhythm and blues in London, but left that mission behind after getting caught up in the frenzy of the time. Did you acquire a new sense of mission somewhere along the line?

We realized that if we were no longer playing to the small audience in London that was into the Stones and that we wanted to carry on with us, what we had to do was grow out and broaden the whole spectrum of our music. We listen to all kinds of music. Mick and I have always been great cornball rock 'n' roll fans, too, you know, Dick and Dee Dee, Paul and Paula. We used to listen to everything. Big doo-wop fans, too.

That's one of the most significant points to be made about you and Mick as songwriters: during your formative years as musicians you were absorbing all kinds of musical influences and taking those inspirations and transforming them so that they came out as Rolling Stones songs, something that wasn't here before. Do you de-

TECT THAT SORT OF ORIGINALITY IN CONTEMPORARY SONGWRITING?

Yeah, I hear possibilities for it. There's always been a tendency to say this guy's got it and this guy ain't, but you can't always tell on the spot. But if I were to say there aren't any good newcomers, then I haven't done my job, because my job is to pass it on. Right now there's a lot of checking out what's gone before, and I find that very interesting and unexpected. I wasn't particularly hopeful in the late '70s that kids wanted to learn where it came from. In the early '60s, when we were becoming musicians, we started thinking, "Where did these guys get it from?" Over the years we tracked it down as much as you can, through recorded music, through blues, through jazz, through popular music, etcetera, etcetera. I'm wondering if anybody else now ever thinks, "Where did these guys find it? I like the beat, I love the Stones, but where did they get it from?" That was one of the things we arrived at ourselves: a burning desire to find out—"hey, if these guys can play like this they must have heard somebody in their time who was shit-hot. Let's find out who *he* was." Then you go back to that guy and you find out who *he* was listening to, then you find somebody before him who played, and you can trace the influences to a certain extent, the main ones anyway. Chuck Berry to Muddy Waters, Muddy Waters to Robert Johnson, Robert Johnson to Charlie Patton, etcetera. There seems to be a lot more of that, which for me is very hopeful, because that's what I was missing in what was coming out in the late '70s, which was real negative "na-na-na"-sounding crap, badly written, badly performed, it just looked interesting.

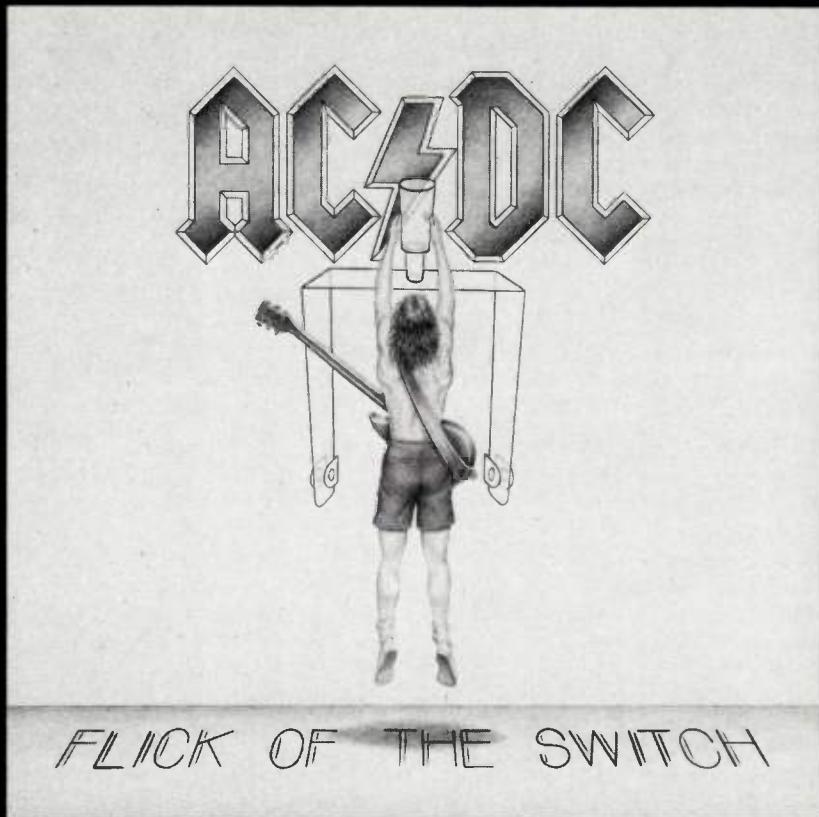
There's still considerable emphasis on fashion over musical expertise.

Always. That's pop music. I think in popular music you've got to allow that 70 or 80 percent of it is crap. That's the music business, the record business. 70 or 80 percent of the movies that come out are crap, too. One exists on the 20 or 15 or, if you're unlucky, the 10 percent that isn't; if you've got any aspirations and you know what you're about, you'll gravitate towards the good stuff. After all, if it was all fantastic, nobody would know it. Like with albums, you can only tell if you've got a good album by realizing that the one before wasn't that great. The good stuff might not be particularly successful when it comes out, but it will have its day through other people and the influence it exerts long after it's a viable commercial proposition. The trouble with making music and records is that not only do you have to be good at what you do, but you have to be able to go through the process of selling it as well, making it commercial. And there's your biggest limitation. I mean, we could all attempt to write symphonies if we really wanted to go down in the history books as Beethoven or Bach or whatever—roll over—but . . . which I would never say

"I think the only reason the Beatles didn't get back together again was the fear of the anticlimax. I have no doubt really that if it was left up to those four guys themselves, they might have just taken a vacation for a year or two then carried on again. Sometimes people take the most drastic steps when they're totally unnecessary. Witness Mick Taylor. Not that he didn't want to play with the Stones, just that he wanted to do other things. But in the Stones there's enough free time to do anything you want to do. In actual fact, Mick Taylor did virtually nothing. And that same situation really applies to the Beatles. There was no need for them to break up. They could've taken a couple of years off, resolved their problems and still carried on. It would have been an intriguing thing, and probably better for music all around, if they'd stuck it out."

personally to Ludwig. Ah, roll over, Ludwig, will ya? You have to be able to make it commercial, which means not only making it acceptable to the public, who are *far* more willing to listen to loads of different things than the people are who play it to the public, but also going through the mechanics of the business, through the disc jockeys, through the record companies; you have to convince them. You have to be willing to go through a certain whoring process of flogging it—selling it is part and parcel of the business. Being a successful record maker is equal amounts of talent for making music, putting up with loads of crap, being able to take it on the nose, having doors slammed in your face, being willing to go through the process, which you may not be at all interested in, of actually finding out how records are made, how they're sold, what distribution means. The only reason you make a record is for other people to hear it. If you don't know how the hell to get it to other people once you've made it, then you've just wasted tape.

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The Who

See, the record business is a fascinating process; it has very little to do with making records. These guys come from A&P, half of them, you know; they just happen to be up there on the executive ladder, which is a whole business of its own, the executive shuffle. Except this is different from selling more baked beans than anybody else: you're picking stars up at the airport, there's Lear Jets, limousines, "hey, you wanna blow, baby," you know, weird chicks. These guys can't go back to A&P after that, so they get very, very tenacious about their jobs, because they know there's nothing quite as much fun as this. But at the same time it's got very little to do with selling records. These guys talk in units—it's not a baked bean, it's not a record, it's a *unit*. That's what rules their lives, and it has very little to do with the actual thing. You know, a baked bean isn't particularly interested in whether it's being sold or not or whether it's presented in the right way. But obviously recording *artistes* are. And if you don't have some comprehension of that and aren't willing to learn it, then you're a schmuck.

How long did it take the Stones to learn all these truths about the industry?

Andrew Oldham sat me down on the first day and told me all about it (laughs).

Do you have any sense of the Stones having had an impact comparable to the Beatles' not only on music but on the way a lot of people live their lives?

Umm, yeah, yeah. We're fairly conscious of the fact. The Beatles we got to use as door openers. In England there were plenty of people around who looked like us, but at that time it wasn't the music you were doing that was considered to be interesting, especially in America—it was the image. And there's no way we could've made the impact we did without the Beatles. You can remember, the Beatles were the first act for many, many years to come from England and mean a *thing* in America. It was total one-way traffic. In fact, with all that traffic, you'd send us so much good stuff, as well as a load of garbage—like I said, the music business is 80 percent garbage, 20 percent good. In that 20 percent were some gems which the English kids picked up on because they weren't subjected to the pressures of American kids, who were told they couldn't listen to the black stations. We didn't know what color these people were. It was just a record, you know what I mean? Also, color at that time was a minimal problem, it didn't come into our life; our life wasn't structured in the American way where you had to cross the tracks. So you had in your very own back yard stuff going down that we were listening to and getting interested in because there was not this same emphasis on color in England; it didn't matter.

The basic thing those days in America, as I remember from when I first came, was

that people kept their radio tuned to their favorite acceptable station and very rarely flipped the dials. And even if they did they flipped it between the number one big white station and the number two big white station. And they only got to hear the spades that managed to break through, like Chuck Berry, Fats Domino, Little Richard, because they were so good they couldn't be denied. So really, when we came out we were playing music that had somehow circumvented the mass of white America—the main thing we did was give America back some of the things it had ignored, for one reason or another.

But in the mid-'70s radio decided it could deny even the most talented black artists. So you got all-white stations, with black music summarily dismissed from the playlists.

It's like that on MTV now; it's not that much different. I mean anybody would think the music business is run by Governor Wallace, and even he's changed his mind a bit lately. Yeah, first thing I said after I watched a bit of MTV, you're lucky to see one black act every two hours, *if that*. Michael Jackson gets played; I heard MTV was playing the Bus Boys a few months ago, but it's real tokenism. When you consider the contribution black people have made to American music, it's disgraceful.

Keith, if you feel so strongly about this, why don't you pull the Stones' videos off MTV? Why don't you and the rest of the band stop making promotional appearances for MTV? Why don't the Stones make a stand?

When we did all that stuff it wasn't apparent to us what was going on. We weren't in the country and we weren't really aware of what MTV was up to. It hasn't entered the mainstream of our consciousness until lately. MTV's not something I watch all the time, but over the last couple of months I've been watching it and saying, well, it's a little bit one-sided.

Isn't it worth making a stand on that as a band?

I don't know. The answer to that is that the answer's not formulated. First, if we were gonna do something, would it have any effect? Our portion of MTV's time is very small; to pull it off is no big deal. It requires a concerted effort on the part of a lot of bands, which isn't in the wind.

Did you hear how "Beat It" made it on to MTV? CBS allegedly threatened to pull the Journey and Billy Joel videos if MTV didn't play Michael Jackson.

It is amazing. That's what I mean about the short-sightedness of the record business. It's run to a certain extent by people who have no idea really what they're doing. Anybody who's studied American music and realizes what they're involved in has

"The loss of Keith Moon was a real body blow in that there's never going to be a drummer quite like Moonie. If you asked Moonie to play, he probably couldn't find the off beat, but he could play with Pete Townshend better than any drummer in the world. Kenney Jones is a great drummer, but he knows too much about drumming to be anything like Moon. Moonie's beauty was that except with Pete Townshend he wasn't really a drummer at all; he was just fantastic, sticking it into Pete, anticipating his moves and giving them great percussive accompaniment. You got drums like that, it makes a lot of difference. Pete's problem now is in translating what he wants through the instrument that is the Who, when he can actually do it better himself. But he needs a band; he needs those guys as much as the Stones need each other."

got to be a dummy to not understand that black music is the number one ingredient in American popular music; it's the one thing America's contributed to the world. Music itself is a bigger weapon than the cruise missile; it's something that can't be regulated. Government officials and authorities are at a loss over how to deal with popular music, because you can't say "this isn't a weapon; it's a bunch of kids playing guitars." At the same time, I've always felt that if the Stones are gonna ever go down, first I gotta play Russia. Because how can you not lay it on them? You know, we did it to you guys, why can't we do it to them? What are they so scared of? Let us in. From their point of view they're probably right. I think they've sussed it, too. But at the same time, if it doesn't come from us it's going to come from somewhere else. If the will to be subverted is there, subversion will out. Might as well let us come and do a clean job.

If music can be such a force for change, exactly how do you view your responsibility as a songwriter? Are you influenced at

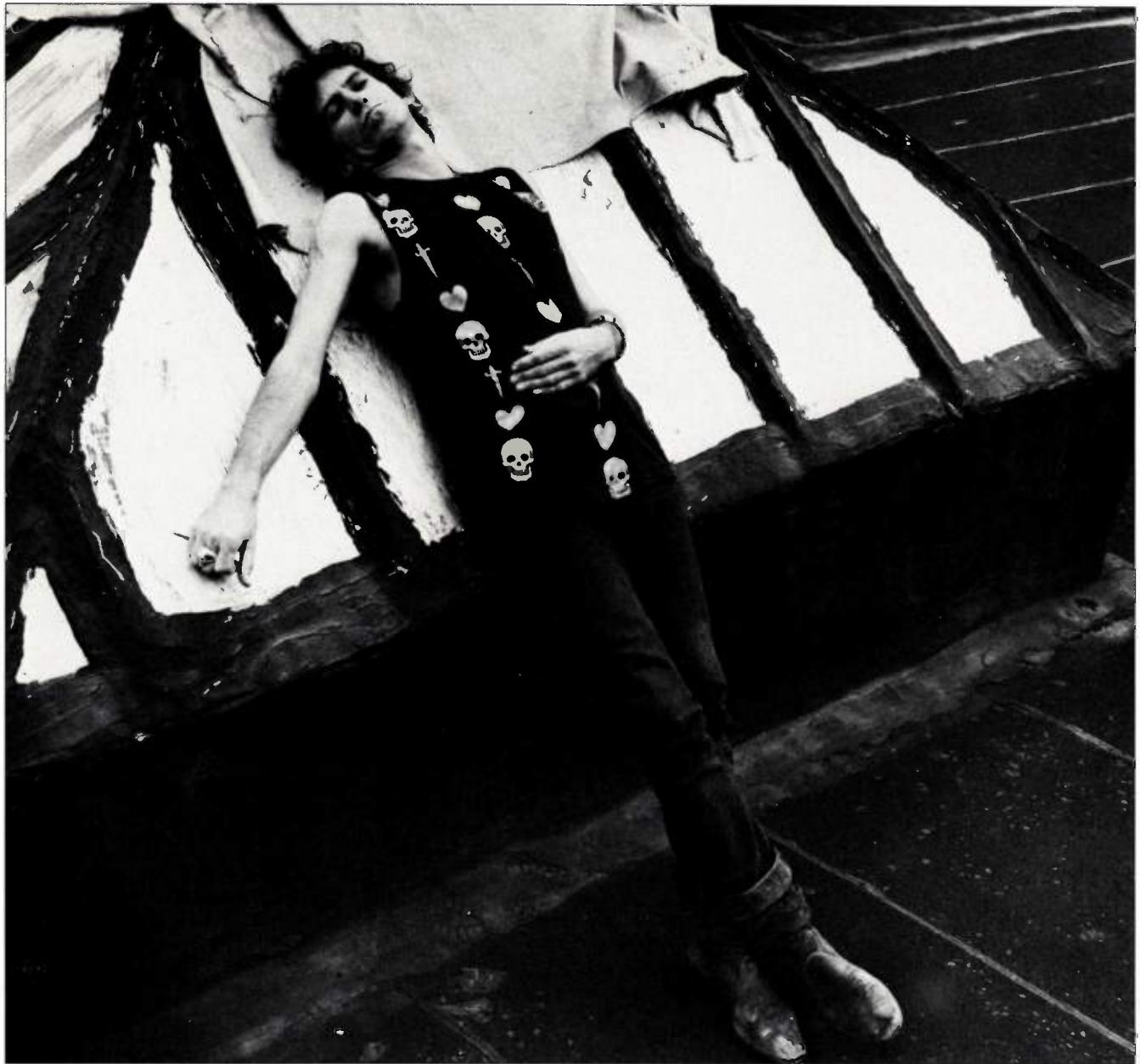


PHOTO: JEAN PAGLIUO

So crucify me: "I've not hidden nothin'. Everybody knows what I did, everybody knows everything about me. There's no trash in my garbage can."

all by, say, Bruce Springsteen and U2, whose music is very socially- and politically-conscious?

I listened to politically-conscious songwriters for many years, from Woody Guthrie and way before, and obviously Dylan. It doesn't interest me that much in respect to songwriting. I'm not saying you can't do it, or you shouldn't do it. If you can do it well, then that's fine. I don't think songwriting's real strength is in stating obvious political stances. To me, a good song works 200 years after it's written, five years after it's written, and it can be played by virtually anybody and sound like it's almost their song. A good song is one anybody can get their teeth into and feel comfortable with and be able to add something to. Most songs that are heavily opinionated in a political way tend to just sort

of be some standard for a particular period in time and have no relevance when that viewpoint is proved invalid or unnecessary. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with it; some songs have enormous effects on society and on people, but it's not one of the things I consider to be important about songwriting necessarily. First off, is it a good song? Songwriting is something that's been handed down from year one, from balladeers, troubadours, court jesters and the whole lot; and we're here as the recipients of everything that's gone before. Our finest moment comes with our last dying breath when we can say, "Ah, at least I passed it on." Just something that inspires somebody else to carry on doing it. It's all no doubt been written before, and if you can make it relevant to your time and it lives on after you, then I think that's all a musician or writer

can really hope for. In the long run, never mind the money or the success; when it's all over and done, it's what lasts. Are people still singing it when you're molding, or whatever you're doing?

The Stones' legacy, though, raises some interesting questions. So much attention has focused on the negative aspects of songs such as "Sympathy for the Devil," "When The Whip Comes Down," "Under My Thumb," while moments of great tenderness and compassion in your work have been almost ignored. Off the top I think of "Wild Horses," "Empty Heart," "Waiting For A Friend."

That's more the work of the journalists than anybody else, because they're the ones who focus on a particular aspect of what we do and make mileage out of it. As you say, there's two sides of the coin. But

because we write a song that expresses a certain point of view or opinion doesn't necessarily mean it's ours. Of course, it's easy to say, "You wrote it, you sang it, it's what you mean." But at the same time we're just presenting a point of view, just highlighting a particular aspect of it. Seems that's what people find interesting and make a big deal of; doesn't mean we go off and say, "All right, now we're gonna write chauvinist pig and devil worship songs." You know, we carry on doing what we do, and whatever gets highlighted by the press or by the public is obviously what interests them most. There's percentage in pushing that angle. It's not us pushing it; those particular things are picked up on by the media and they get more mileage out of that than they do out of "Wild Horses" or "Angie" or "Empty Heart," the other side of the coin that we present. Those things go along with it. I mean, what would Mae West be without tits?

Were you taken aback by certain women's groups' criticism of the way the Stones' write about females in their songs?

No, I thought it was a fairly feeble effort, really; we didn't feel the sting of it at all. I appreciate their point of view, but if they were dumb enough to think that we're like this and expressing this point of view and meaning it . . . we were just trying to help them by highlighting *their* point of view. And if they didn't realize that, then, you know, maybe they deserve the whip to come down.

You've lived in the States for awhile, and you've been touring the country on and off since 1964. In what ways has America changed, from your viewpoint, since you first arrived here?

What I like about America and what I've always admired about it—(affects a Cagney growl) and I'm not buttering you guys up or anything—is America's ability to change. In Europe it's difficult to change things because of the traditions. And Europe's less capable of dealing with change. Outwardly at least, America can change. When I got here, being in the south was almost like being in South Africa today. But in a matter of a few years people had changed their attitude considerably towards the problem. The good thing about America is its ability to accept changes fairly fluidly; not saying the problem's disappeared because there are these changes, but there is this great capacity for riding it out and going through it, which I'm sure wouldn't happen in Europe and certainly hasn't happened in South Africa—if anything it's worse there in terms of the racial problem. And I don't think the world can afford that anymore.

Most of your life has been spent in the public eye—almost everything you've done has been news—and at the same time you've grown older, you've fathered children (a son, Marlon, now 14; and a daugh-

ter, Angela, now 11), you've taken on certain responsibilities outside the Stones. How do you balance the public and private in your life? At what point do you quit being a Rolling Stone and start being a father?

When I see Marlon I'm a father. When we're together and we're talking, he knows that. It's probably a better question to ask him because he's grown up with both of me. Both of my kids have been around when they want to be around. They've been on the road with me. I find it hard to understand too. Growing up like that . . . it's like the old show business thing of being born in a trunk way out in Peoria. As far as I'm concerned, though, I couldn't be happier with the way my kids are growing up and my relationship with them. Apart from wishing I could see them more often, I'm extremely happy with the way they are and the way I am and the way we are together.

After you have a child you have to examine your own life in light of theirs. How has being a parent changed you?

Obviously being a parent and being the father of things like babies does change you, certainly. It's more of a two-way thing if it's a good relationship, because they remind you so much of what you've forgotten, of what you should've remembered. Through kids you get a second chance to remember some of the things that, because you've been so busy for so many years, you'd forgotten. It's like a re-education in a way, if you spend time with them when they're young and actually bring them up yourself. Because while they're learning just to grow up you're also learning to remember what it was like. Through them you get another view of it; it's like a little mirror and a little jolt in the head, too.

Do you steer your children away from getting involved in drugs and going through all you went through? Do you use yourself as an example in that way?

My example is enough to put them off all that for life (laughs). I'm hoping they grow up to be accountants so they can take care of my money—and *their* money.

Bill Wyman has spoken very eloquently on the subject of the Stones' responsibility as role models for their fans. How do you feel about it? Knowing how your actions influence others outside the band, how great a responsibility do you feel you have to your public?

I continue to do the things that have made the Rolling Stones and myself something that people would want to listen to and want to know about. Before they were even interested in what I did when I was off-stage or out of the studio, (music's) what brought us to the public's attention. And that's what I continue to do. It's not so much the public as the media that's responsible for that, and obviously at times



Who's In Charge?

"Bill and Charlie are very much involved in Stones records when we're cutting the tracks; they also know that if there's five of us standing around the control board when we're starting to overdub and mix that all you'll get is five people saying, 'I think this,' 'I think that'—I mean, if they don't like something, Mick and I will talk to them about it. And sometimes we might even listen to them."

the authorities. I could stand out there and say, "Well, if you don't bust me nobody'll know." So who's moral responsibility is that? Especially when you're planted. So I don't give a damn, quite honestly. I don't think I have a public responsibility in that sense, and I hope that even if I screw up and it becomes public, that what I do and how I handle it is still figured out the right way. Okay, so I did all that and I went through all that, but there's no trash in my garbage can. There's nothing to find, it's all out there anyway. I've not hidden nothin'; everybody knows what I did, everybody knows everything about me and how I've handled it. I don't care what anybody knows about what I do. Hopefully I'll deal with everything in a righteous way, and everybody will know it. Maybe that's a better example than pretending to be Mr. Goodbar.

What's happening with the Keith Richards solo album we've been hearing about for several years now? Will it ever see the light of day?

Other people have been talking about it. I have no plans to do one. Not saying I ain't got loads of stuff I've done over the years when nobody else turns up at a session, or when I turn up too late and everybody else is gone. I always say I'm not interested in that. I can't put myself in that position, and neither will Mick, ever. What do you say when you write a song? "Do I give this to the Stones, or do I keep it for myself?" To put yourself in that position versus the group is *dumb*, as far as I see it. If I've got anything to do by myself, this is not the time to do it. If I'm really any good at it and it's still in the can, maybe I can do it better later anyway. I'm interested in doing it—I love doing things by myself; everybody does and we all do it. Witness Ronald Wood: four bloody albums. But it's not a position I would want to get into in the foreseeable future.

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By Alan Hecht

BOB GIRALDI: SHIFTING GEARS, WITH DISTINCTION

Observations on rock video by the man who directed Michael Jackson in "Beat It."

WITH A CLIENT LIST that includes McDonald's, Dr. Pepper, General Electric and others, 44-year-old Bob Giraldi ranks as one of the top commercial directors working in the broadcast medium today. Born in Paterson, New Jersey and educated at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, Giraldi's early work on Madison Avenue brought street smarts to the slick advertising community. By the time he and his partner, Phil Suarez, formed Giraldi Productions in 1973, he had long since established a reputation as an original talent in a field littered with creative copycats. And daring, too: in the mid-'70s Giraldi ventured into previously-uncharted territory by directing spots for several Broadway shows, including *A Chorus Line* and *Evita*, that were subsequently credited with helping to revive the general public's interest in the theatre.

His most acclaimed achievements are his most recent ones, starting with the Miller Lite Beer commercials featuring male luminaries from the sports and entertainment fields. Here he demonstrated an uncanny ability to draw warm, natural performances out of non-actors such as Mickey Spillane, Boog Powell and Marv Throneberry. This year Giraldi shifted gears again, venturing into the burgeoning musicvideo field to direct Michael Jackson in "Beat It" and Diana Ross in "Pieces of Ice" (the former, incidentally, was named the most popular musicvideo of all time—?—on the debut show of NBC's *Friday Night Videos*). Being in demand is a condition Giraldi's become accustomed to, but his work with Jackson and Ross has opened up even

more possibilities for the man who claims to have a tin ear and "no rhythm."

The following interview took place at Giraldi's Chappaqua, New York estate. Though his work allows him to remain "rich, thin and tanned," Giraldi's concern for rock video's future bespeaks a man of substance as well as style. Also present were Giraldi's producer, Antony Payne,

on the same side. I'm just a fanatic about not doing the same thing over and over. The only things I keep constant in my life are my wife, my family, my partner—the things that really go beyond superficial.

How did you land the Michael Jackson "Beat It" project?

I had listened to his record and wanted to do the "Billie Jean" video, but his managers had already lined up a British director for it. After that they decided that "Beat It" would be done by somebody else! So I was in Santo Domingo with my family, Antony was in New York, Michael was in California, and we kept trying to call each other. Did you ever try to call anybody in Santo Domingo? One day my wife picked up the phone and she hears (speaks in a falsetto voice) "Hello, is Bob there?" It was Michael Jackson. She puts the phone down and says, "Bob, Michael Jackson sounds like a girl!" I said, "Well, he certainly doesn't dance like one." Anyway we talked, and he told me it was a go. He said the



Bob Giraldi: "Professionals are going to ruin MTV."

and his agent, Andy Howard, who runs Giraldi's new musicvideo production company, Gotham Entertainment.

You've been enormously successful as a commercial director and now you're moving into musicvideo. Why?

Change. The normal next thing to do. No strategy, no pre-planning; just change for the sake of change. A lot of times that's wrong and a lot of times it doesn't do any good, but sometimes I hit on something. For instance, I won't shave every morning

song to him was nothing more than turning the other cheek. Michael Jackson's never been in a gang war; Michael Jackson's probably never been out of that house. I think the world knows he's been watched and protected all his life. He just said, "Let's do something street."

Who brought the street gangs to you?

They were brought to us by a combination of the Los Angeles police department, my production company and (Jackson's former manager) Ron Weisner. The police

warned us to be very careful. We were, and I've never had a more wonderful experience in my life as a director than watching these tough gangs. They were taking my direction, but they were skeptical, dubious. Watching the dance sequence start to happen, they looked at each other as if to say, "Holy shit, now there's some of our brothers doing something that none of us will ever be able to do." And they found from the piece another kind of macho. From that point on we were home free.

In both "Beat It" and the "Pieces of Ice" video you did with Diana Ross there's overtones of violence. As a director do you find violence appealing in some way?

I dream about making love much more than I do about fighting. No, I think that's really a result of the two songs I picked.

Do you approve of violence in musicvideos?

I think violence sucks. The whole beauty of "Beat It" is how it shows that the macho trip is bullshit. I had peace come through in this magical, mystical creature named Michael Jackson. Obviously, if anybody ever analyzes it properly they will see that it's anti-violence, not pro-violence. In Diana's case, I think "Pieces of Ice" is about a figment of her imagination and dreams. The visions and illusions turn out to be fine with dance and all.

What sort of moral and/or aesthetic obligation do directors have to their audience when handling violent themes?

Any director who uses violence simply for the sake of kids getting off on it is a director who doesn't understand his craft or is a poor writer. I won't name names, but there's plenty of pieces on MTV that are violent just for the sake of violence. That's silly. But you know what? They're infantile, because those directors don't really know how to portray violence.

I have far greater problems in two other areas. One is horror films. When you do a piece like the original version of *The Thing* you've done a beautiful and interesting movie that has some thought to it. But when you turn out *Halloween* . . . you can take John Carpenter and take that movie and stick it up his ass. Number two, violence on television is worse than all of it, because for many young people there is no option. That's all a lot of people in this country have. And look what's selling: *The A-Team*. To me it's just sub-creative people unable to be inventive.

How important is the song in your creation of concepts for musicvideo?

Totally important. That's one of the reasons my work has been considered clear and to the point. I believe the script is what it's about, unlike my English brothers who seem to get off on surreal images and making you fill in your own idea of what the piece is. The closest I come to that is



Michael Jackson in a scene from "Beat It."

"Pieces of Ice," because it's that kind of song. "Beat It" is more literal; "Pieces of Ice" is more abstract, dream-like.

I'm sure you know MTV's played "Beat It" but not "Pieces of Ice."

They haven't so far, the racist bastards. MTV makes a big mistake by not playing a very tasteful, exotic video featuring a song by a major American artist who really does appeal to a large white population. What can I say? MTV can say all they want about over the line, across the line—they are obviously racist and there's nothing else to say about it.

You have a "no frills" approach to cutting and producing pieces. To date, musicvideos have been very special effects oriented—

But nobody would have done musicvideos in the professional arena if you didn't have the kids, the young filmmakers, doing those special effects. I think we professionals are going to ruin MTV because we'll make it another wonderful media communication form. Last year and the year before and maybe for another year it's still very special and very much a kids medium. The reason it's successful is that kids say, "Enough of your commercials, enough of your movies that make a lot of money, enough of your slick TV shows, enough of all the shit I see on billboards and in magazines. We have our own station and we can do anything—we can piss on it, we can do special effects. We can do things that are amateurish and silly. And you know what? The more amateurish it is the more it's ours and the more it's not yours." It's very important for the professional artist to understand this. I was scared to death that "Beat It" was too professional, too slick, that kids would say they didn't want it. Put it on another station, put it in a commercial, do a Dr. Pepper commercial, do a commercial for *Dreamgirls*, but leave us

alone. But it didn't happen.

Do you feel musicvideos require viewers to re-train their eyes in order to understand the very nature of the art form itself, specifically the conceptual productions which predetermine the images for you instead of allowing you to free-associate with the lyrics?

I do think adult viewers have to re-train their eyes. I've heard more negative comments from adults to the effect that "that stuff is such crap." They're not really trained to see it as being very interesting. All you have to do is spend one day watching their soaps to realize what real crap is. It does take re-training of either one's eyes or one's attitude regarding what television really is.

What do you see in the future for musicvideo?

One trend you'll see is less experimental artists in it and more people like Steven Spielberg, Francis Ford Coppola and writers of the magnitude of Bill Goldman getting involved. More and more of the professional people are going to want a piece of the action because it's a hot item. Another trend you'll see is kids, instead of carrying big boxes and listening to music, they'll be carrying those big boxes and watching music.

And what's in the future for you?

My only goals are to stay healthy, be happy with my family and do things differently than I did the day before. Sometimes I wish I had a goal, but I don't have one.

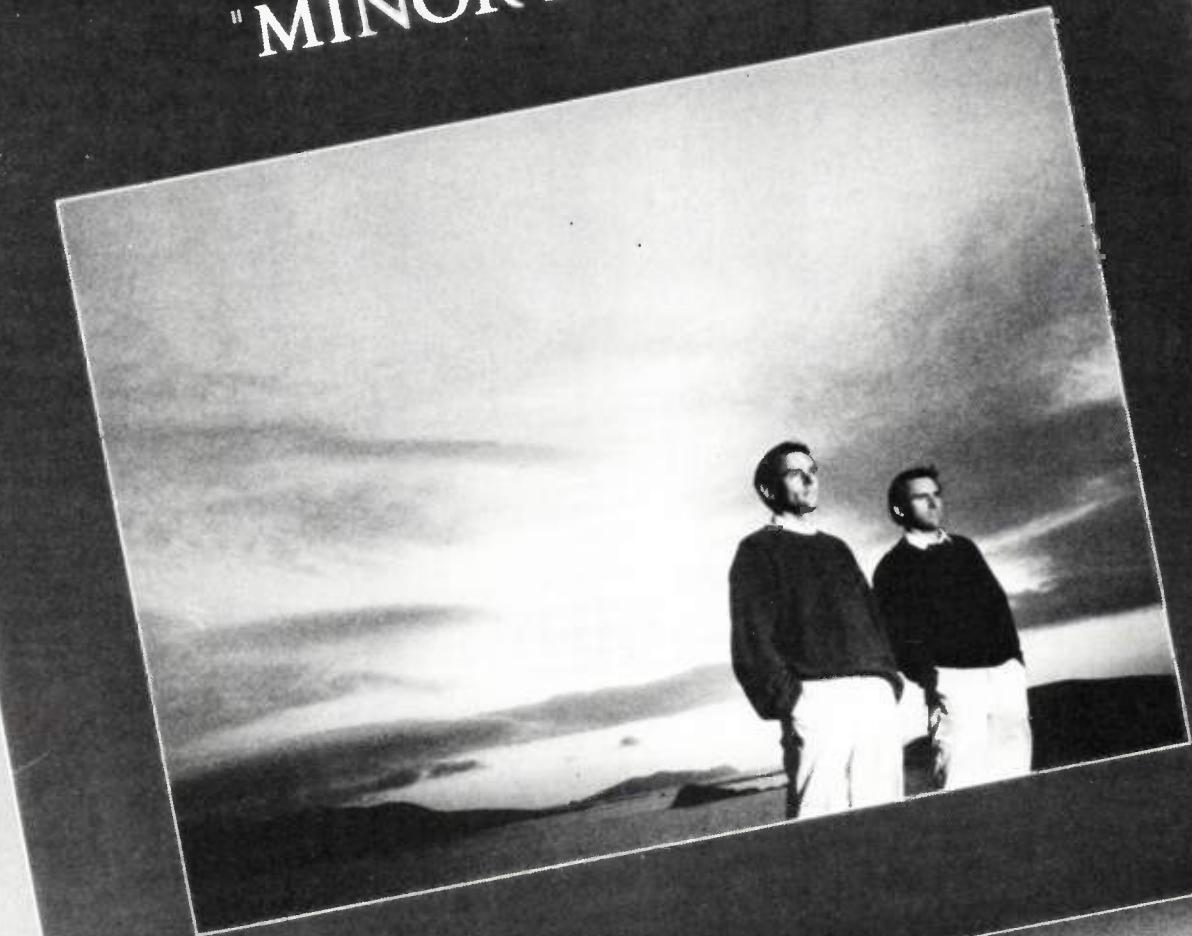
You don't have a vision of Bob Giraldi, say, 30 years from now?

He'll be very rich, thin, tan and be eating pasta. He won't be pumping gas. He'll be eating pasta; believe me, he'll be eating pasta. Somewhere he'll be traveling to eat pasta.

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THE TUBE GOES CLIP CRAZY

By Michael Shore

Video may kill the radio star, but it's breathing life into late-night television. Stay tuned for shakeout and overkill.

REMEMBER THE ANCIENT days, oh, three or four years ago, when the only rock music on TV was scarce and lousy? You remember, those late-night, unhip MOR showcases hosted by the likes of Don Kirshner and Wolfman Jack?

Well, things have changed. A lot. Rock video may not have killed the radio star—not yet, anyway—but it's created a monster of its own. In the wake of an intense media barrage equating rock-video with Warner-Amex's revolutionary 24-hour cable video-clip channel MTV, the whole tube seems to have gone clip-crazy. To wit:

On the night of Friday, July 29, 1983, music buffs with access to a cable-equipped TV set had the following options: MTV, with its AOR/new music mix of promo video clips; *Night Flight*, ATI Video's eclectic weekend musicvideo showcase for a wide range of long-form feature-oriented music video on the USA cable network; *FM-TV*, ATI's repackaging of *Night Flight* material for network syndication channels; WABC-TV New York's *N.Y. Hot Tracks*, with local DJ/VJ Carlos De Jesus playing urban-contemporary funk, rock, rap and reggae vidclips; *Video Soul*, another urban-contemporary showcase for promo clips on the Black Entertainment TV cable network; NBC-TV's premiere of its super-slick, we've-got-our-MTV *Friday Night Videos*; cable superstation WTBS's hyper-eclectic clips showcase *Night Tracks*; *America's Top 10*, the syndicated video version of Casey Kasem's "American Top 40" radio countdown; and the venerable *Soul Train*.

And for once, New York is not ahead of the rest of the country. These rock-video shows are everywhere. Aside from the ever-proliferating nationwide network, cable, and cable- or broadcast-syndicated shows, most impressive is the preponderance of local and regional rock-video shows on broadcast, cable-access, UHF and low-power-TV channels. At last count, there were roughly 125 such local/ regional shows around the country, and that number may have increased by the time you read this. There are prime-time and late-night clips shows spun off of (and

simulcast on) local radio stations, using the stations' playlist format and its DJs as VJs; there are independent vidclip shows, with or without on-camera VJs, in a variety of music-mix formats; there are afternoon new wave *American Bandstand* spinoffs like L.A.'s *MV3* and San Francisco's *TV20 Dance Party*; and more. L.A. has about a half-dozen such local shows; Detroit has four; Boston has three; Tulsa and Oklahoma City have 'em, as do Denver and Aspen, Seattle and San Diego, Phoenix and Tucson, Minneapolis and Wausau, Wisconsin, Tallahassee and Savannah and Charleston. Ft. Smith, Arkansas has its own vidclip show, *Rock Image*, and in Mobile, Alabama low-power-TV channel 69 has *Video Music Box*, showing clips for 20 hours a day.

Get the picture? All across the nation, there are clips in heavy rotation. And starting this fall, there's more to come: following NBC's lead, CBS-TV just debuted the late-night half-hour music-video *Haughton/Worth Show*; Showtime will unveil the new music concert show *Rock Of The 80s*, co-produced by KROQ guru

Rick Carroll (and "definitely inspired by the success of MTV," says a Showtime source); pay-cable service Cinemax will premiere *Album Flash*, a half-hour of interviews, clips and performances by major rock artists timed with their new record releases; two of America's first cable-syndicated vidclip networks, Atlanta's *Video Music Channel* and *Video Concert Hall*, both of which have been gearing up in self-imposed non-syndication recently, will be relaunched into national syndication; The Playboy Channel will show the raciest, uncensored promo clips on *Playboy Hot Rocks*; and broadcast syndication will see MCA-TV's rock game show *The Pop 'n' Rocker Show*, and *The Music Guide*, rock's answer to *Sneak Previews*—with record and vidclip reviews by rock critics Robert Christgau (*Village Voice*), Steve Pond (*Rolling Stone*), and Mikal Gilmore (*L.A. Herald Examiner*), and interviews by the L.A. Times' Robert Hilburn.

For now, never mind where it'll all end—why did it all start? Simple. As technology, art and commerce have marched on, the music-video industry has exploded

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DOLBY "A" STEREO
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Time 90 Min.
8/2/83

in (pardon the pun) record time, and its growth has been matched—or enhanced—by the expansion of new media technologies like satellite-cable and low-power-TV. There are more and more channels with more and more programming time to fill, and rock video clips provide a dirt cheap—as in free (except NBC's, but more on that later)—source of programming. This material ostensibly being promotional in nature, record labels investing upwards of \$25,000 on a typical clip give them away to whoever will play them, in hopes of recouping their investment through record sales generated by the clips. Like them or not, promo clips are something to be dealt with—so naturally everyone in TV is dealing *in* them, and reporting tremendous audience response.

Though NBC has been criticized for dumping the highly-regarded but low-rated *SCTV*, programming czar Brandon Tartikoff says *SCTV*'s replacement, *Friday Night Videos*, proved itself a viable commodity (financially if not aesthetically) from day one. "First of all," Tartikoff points out, "the price was right. Secondly, last fall we had *SCTV* in the Friday-late 12:30-to-2 A.M. time slot, and as great a show as it was, it just cost too much to produce and wasn't pulling in the 12-to-17-year-old audience we needed for advertisers. We were losing about \$2 million annually on *SCTV*. We needed something to replace it, and we figured some sort of music show would be a good try. At the same time, *Saturday Night Live* producer Dick Ebersol came to me with a typewritten proposal for a rock-video show; what you see now on *Friday Night Videos* is more or less what was in Dick's proposal. The ratings for the first *FNV* showing were phenomenal, way beyond our wildest expectations. *SCTV* had always had a 3 rating and a 16 audience share. We were hoping for maybe a 4 rating and a 20 share for *FNV*. Based on the overnights, we got a 5.6 rating and a 24 share. In Chicago, which has very little cable penetration and hence almost no *MTV*, we had a 12.3 rating and a 50 share. We're off to a very promising start."

"NBC's show will help rather than hurt us," says WTBS *Night Tracks* executive producer Scott Sassa, "because not only will it help prove the viability of such a show to advertisers, but if it stays hot, it will bring more people to their sets. WTBS has an audience of about 22 million people, which is about twice *MTV*'s audience; there are very few markets we don't reach. And in this instant-gratification generation, people will be channel-punching. We'll get seen by more people. That's why we consciously try to program as broad a range of clips as possible—so you might see, say, a New Edition clip followed by a Ronnie Milsap clip, and so on."

FNV, on the other hand, is programmed to attract big numbers of viewers with big-name artists and big-budget clips; never

mind that most of the clips it showed have been played to death on other already-existing rock-video outlets, and that its "authorized premiere video" of Elton John's "That's Why They Call It The Blues" was actually shown by *Night Tracks* three weeks prior to *FNV*'s debuts—for now, it seems to have worked. And that only means the rock-on-TV race will heat up even more.

But the most intriguing aspect of *Friday Night Videos*, and the area of rock-on-TV that will heat up the most, is the money angle. *FNV* is the first clips-show to offer to pay record labels for their clips; in fact, NBC has to pay for clips to fulfill its own network-programming administrative obligations, whereas cable is unregulated in

The pay-for-play issue, along with the inevitable overkill resulting from everyone jumping on the rock-video bandwagon, is sure to result in a major shakeout somewhere down the line.

this regard. Now, NBC pays only about \$1,000 per clip (actually \$2,000 counting repeat broadcasts, and \$3,000 for "premiere videos"), a mere pittance both for the network (thus Tartikoff's "price-is-right" quip) and to the record labels. But it's already become something of the precedent-setting gesture: some local shows claim certain labels, especially Warner Brothers, have already begun badgering them to pay for clips (Warners has no comment on this). Says producer David Kellogg of Los Angeles's late-night-weekend clips show *Goodnight L.A.*: "If the labels begin charging low-budget local shows like ours, we'll just have to close shop. We can't afford it. Then the labels would be losing the promotional value for the clips. They'd be cutting off their noses to spite their faces, wouldn't they?"

Perhaps. And it wouldn't be the first time. But on the other hand, Robin Williams, producer and host of Ft. Smith's *Rock Image*, says, "Record companies have been totally cooperative—but that could be because aside from NBC now,

we're the only outlet in our area for rock videos. We don't have any MTV here." *Night Tracks*'s Scott Sassa puts it best: "With all the outlets for rock video proliferating out there, record labels are going to have to be selective in giving out clips and/or charging certain places for them. You'll probably see some sort of priority system developing soon."

The pay-for-play issue, along with the inevitable overkill resulting from everyone jumping on the rock-video bandwagon, is sure to result in a major shakeout somewhere down the line. In the meantime, the scramble to keep pace ought to make for fascinating viewing. Early on, MTV began anticipatory counter-programming: three weeks before *FNV* first aired, MTV countered *FNV*'s "Video Vote" with its own "Friday Night Video Fights"—as of this writing, Def Leppard's "Photograph" rules, and in fact just as *FNV*'s off-camera announcer intro'd Michael Jackson's "Beat It" by calling it "possibly the most popular video ever," Leppard was trouncing it on MTV. And to fight the growing number of urban-contemporary music-video shows, the latest adds to MTV's rotation include Grandmaster Flash's "The Message," Tom Tom Club's "Genius of Love," and least likely of all, Shalamar's "Dead Giveaway." Finally, MTV is acknowledging that rock history goes back before 1980 with its new MTV "Archives" show (*FNV*'s debut had "Hall of Fame" footage of The Beatles '64 and a "Where Are They Now?" segment on Ray Manzarek). MTV, however, should be the last to come under the pay-for-play gun, due to its 24-hour rotation and its unique position as a nationwide video-radio network. In fact, MTV's Bob Pittman had the gumption, in a recent cabletrade publication interview, to insinuate that the channel may even charge record companies for the privilege of having clips put into 24-hour rotation.

It could be that rock video will go the way of rock radio: big-time video showcases will get all the big-money wide-appeal acts, and newer music video will have to be broken through an "underground" network of smaller-scale outlets (video recreates the radio star?). History does, after all, repeat itself. Len Epand, head of Polygram's newly-formed musicvideo division says battles among television stations for the rights to world-premiere videos are "amazing. It's just like what FM radio stations used to do over a new Led Zeppelin album."

Between the pay-for-play boondoggle and Sony's release of video 45s, the clips themselves are steadily evolving from purely promotional items to saleable commodities in their own right. That, and the overkill/shakeout factor, will strongly affect what and how much rock video will be on the tube. For now, though, the hoariest of TV clichés remains the most appropriate: stay tuned. ○

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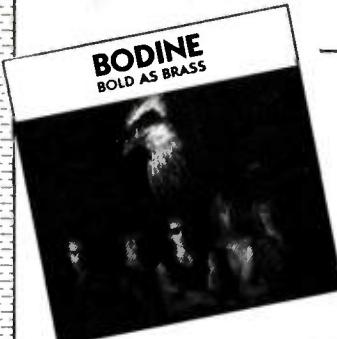
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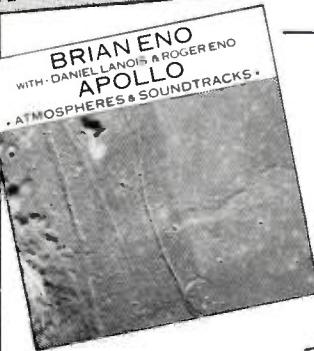
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MUSICVIDEO Testing

By John and
Joellen Tierney

SONY BETA HI-FI: A HOME VIDEO BREAKTHROUGH

UP UNTIL NOW, TELEVISION audio has always taken a back seat to video. And it might have remained that way for quite some time had a phenomenon known as musicvideo not made its debut. Sony's new Beta Hi-Fi video recorder (SL-2700; list price, \$1500) touts audio innovation as its primary selling point, and indeed, it is.

The SL-2700's audio recording system is capable of providing superior sound—through both ordinary television speakers where the audio is noticeably improved, and stereo systems, where the improvement is dramatic.

The Beta Hi-Fi's secret to good sound reproduction is a new recording design. Unlike all previous VCR's, which record audio along one edge of the one-half inch wide tape, the Beta Hi-Fi has taken advantage of the existing technology (a spinning cylindrical head) used to record and playback video. The SL-2700 FM encodes the stereo audio signal onto the video wave-

tracks onto existing video.

Music video was also meant for the eyes. The Beta II and Beta III modes both produce relatively crisp video, with Beta II, the faster tape speed, affording sharper images. Overall video quality was good, but not exceptional.

The physical design of this sleek front loader is well laid out and attractive. All the transport controls lie just beneath the cassette slot. To the right is an LED clock displaying either time of day or, when a tape is loaded, cassette running time. This is a welcome replacement for the near useless counters found on other VCRs. The machine also has a valuable indexing feature which electronically marks the tape when a recording begins. These marks can be located automatically in fast forward and rewind.

Another feature of this VCR is Swing Search, which enables freeze frames and step searching free of video breakup in the forward modes only. However, the Swing



Sony's Beta Hi-Fi: a home video breakthrough

form and records the combined signal using the spinning head, creating a slant track across the tape. This effectively increases the tape to head speed.

Using this design, high end frequency response jumps from the normal 7,500hz. to a respectable 20,000hz. Other machines, even with Dolby, claim only 15,000hz. Wow and flutter are virtually unmeasurable, and the dynamic range is rated at more than 80 db. Stereo separation and signal to noise ratio were judged to be very good. In fact, Beta Hi-Fi sound is close to the quality that a Walkman delivers.

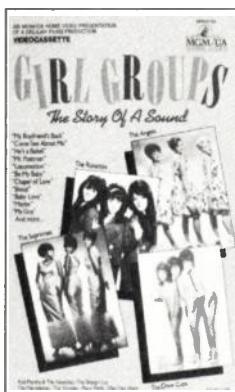
In order to maintain compatibility with older Beta systems, the audio is also recorded, in mono, on the standard track. If the SL-2700 does not detect the Hi-Fi signal it automatically switches to the traditional audio track. The only inherent limitation is the inability to dub audio

Search buttons are grouped in two small rows, flush with the front of the machine, and are poorly defined. It's very easy to hit the wrong button. We found the remote control layout more comfortable to use.

The Hi-Fi controls allow recording audio from a stereo tuner which is useful for stereo simulcasts or MTV stereo hook-up. And twin LED bar type VU meters hold peak levels for about a second, which facilitates level settings in the manual mode.

Once again Sony has made a breakthrough in the home video field. With smart marketing and extensive software support, in video 45's and feature films, the SL-2700 may revitalize the Beta format. □

John Tierney is the senior videotape editor and director of post-production at Unitel Video, New York. Joellen Tierney is an Emmy-award winning videotape editor for WABC-TV New York.



GIRL GROUPS: THE STORY OF A SOUND (1983)

Missing vintage video clips, historical stills, voice-over narration and on-camera interviews, the musicvideo documentary has developed into a curious subgenre (apparently inspired in equal parts by *60 Minutes* investigative reports and the voyeuristic lure of coffee table picture books) that's yet to be effectively exploited. MGM/UA came close with *The Compleat Beatles*, but weren't thorough enough to successfully pull off the title conceit. The company's second entry in the field, *Girl Groups: The Story of a Sound* (an adaptation of the like-titled Alan Betrock book) is considerably more successful in tracing this evolution from the Chantels through the Supremes.

To his credit, director Steve Alpert forgoes innovative production techniques that might have detracted from the content, and goes instead for substance. Breezy but personal interviews with Darlene Love, Mary Wilson, Ellie Greenwich and Ronnie Spector reveal not only the thrill of the times but also the dark side of the business, where talented artists were totally controlled and manipulated according to the needs of the marketplace. The discussion of the enigmatic Phil Spector is especially eerie: when Ronnie Spector laments, "All of a sudden I married him and everything went dark," you get a life-size picture, in that one brief comment, of the high price of fame. In this way, Alpert's straightforward approach serves to both underscore and embellish the power of the music.

The video's real bonus is its wealth of historical performance footage, featuring the Ronettes, Martha and the Vandellas, the Shirelles and the Supremes. There's even a segment from one of the earliest conceptual music clips, "Tell Him," a 1963 production of the Exciters' hit wherein the group is seen prancing through a zoo, singing to the animals.

Be advised: *Girl Groups* is more than nostalgia. Along with Betrock's book, it goes far towards doing justice to the important contributions made by these un-

derappreciated artists. A must for rock historians, to be sure, but essential viewing for anyone remotely interested in the roots of a sound very much alive in contemporary music. Director: Steve Alpert 60 min. MGM/UA Home Video. \$59.95 (Beta, VHS), \$29.95 (CED).

—Alan Hecht



FLEETWOOD MAC IN CONCERT: MIRAGE TOUR '82

Fleetwood Mac's 1982 Home Box Office special taped at the Los Angeles Forum

scores a big zero in the hit-and-miss realm of concert videos. Predictable and uninspired, this outing finds the band performing a collection of jukebox hits—"Gypsy," "Rhiannon," "Go Your Own Way," "Tusk," etc.—in a somewhat rote and uninspired manner (Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham never do connect here). Toss in Marty Callner's flat, lifeless direction, "set 'em and forget 'em" camera angles and stock coverage and you'll find that a TV test pattern makes for more interesting viewing. No effects have been added for the videodisc version, and there's only a couple of dissolves; transitional changes consist of a band shot, cut to a wide shot of the audience, cut back to the band beginning a new song. Save for Christine McVie's eloquent rendition of "Songbird," Fleetwood Mac would have done themselves and their fans a great service by releasing a collection of the superior *Mirage* videos rather than this stillborn concert video. Director: Marty Callner. 89 minutes. RCA Selectavision VideoDisc (CED). \$24.98. (Stereo)

—A.H.

MUSICVIDEO TOP TEN

- 1 LET'S SPEND THE NIGHT TOGETHER
ROLLING STONES
Embassy Home Entertainment
- 2 DURAN DURAN
DURAN DURAN
Thorn-EMI Home Video
- 3 WHO ROCKS AMERICA
1982 AMERICAN TOUR
The WHO
CBS/Fox Video
- 4 THE COMPLEAT BEATLES
THE BEATLES
MGM/UA Home Video
- 5 FLEETWOOD MAC:
MIRAGE TOUR '82
FLEETWOOD MAC
RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video
- 6 STEVIE NICKS IN CONCERT
STEVIE NICKS
CBS/Fox Video
- 7 ABBA
ABBA
Monterey Home Video
- 8 CROSBY, STILLS & NASH:
DAYLIGHT AGAIN
CROSBY, STILLS & NASH
MCA Home Video
- 9 WORD OF MOUTH
TONI BASIL
Chrysalis Home Video
- 10 JUDY GARLAND
JUDY GARLAND
Pioneer Artists Laserdisc

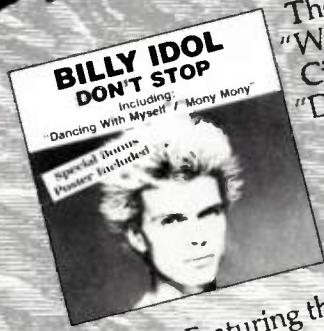
The Musicvideo Top Ten indicates the fastest-moving sales and rental titles as reported by the country's leading video retail outlets.

VIDEO CLIP TOP TEN

- 1 BEAT IT
MICHAEL JACKSON
(Epic) D: Bob Giraldi
- 2 SAFETY DANCE
MEN WITHOUT HATS
(Backstreet) D: Tim Pope
- 3 EVERY BREATH YOU TAKE
POLICE
(A&M) D: Godley-Creme
- 4 I'LL TUMBLE 4 YA
CULTURE CLUB
(Epic) D: Zelda Barron
- 5 SWEET DREAMS
EURYTHMICS
(RCA) D: Dave Stewart, Annie Lennox, Jon Roseman
- 6 FASCINATION
HUMAN LEAGUE
(A&M) D: Steve Barron
- 7 BILLIE JEAN
MICHAEL JACKSON
(Epic) D: Steve Barron
- 8 SHE WORKS HARD FOR THE MONEY
DONNA SUMMER
(Mercury) D: Brian Grant
- 9 CHANGE
TEARS FOR FEARS
(Mercury) D: Tony Hazel
- 10 I LOVE YOU
YELLO
(Elektra) D: Dieter Meier

(Compiled by Rockamerica, the Video Clip Top Ten indicates the most popular rock video clips being played in over 250 clubs, colleges and record stores. In addition to title, artist and label, each entry contains the name of the clip's director.)

HEAR THE HEAT.

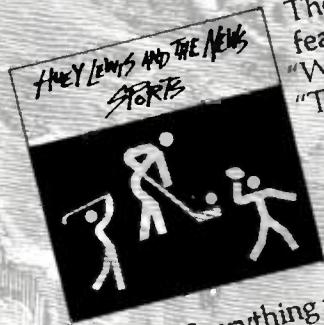


The debut that now features:
"White Wedding," "Hot In The
City" and the new single
"Dancing With Myself."

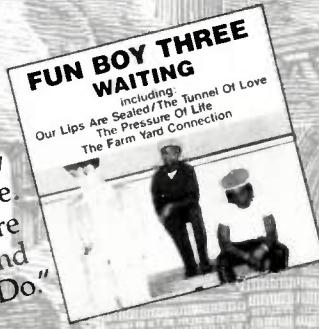
Featuring the hit single "True,"
Plus "Communication,"
"Lifeline" and "Gold."



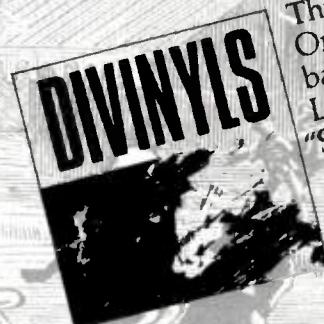
The new album "Sports"
featuring "Heart And Soul,"
"Walking On A Thin Line" and
"The Heart of Rock & Roll."



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Featuring "Our Lips Are
Sealed," "Tunnel Of Love" and
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Lonely," "Boys In Town" and
"Science Fiction."



ON
Chrysalis
RECORDS AND CASSETTES.

INSTRUMENTS



NEIL YOUNG

A report on the *Everybody's Rockin'* sessions, and how Neil chases the muse (or how the muse chases Neil), plus the story on the technical side, courtesy Young's producer, Elliot Mazer. **46**

DIGITAL DRUMS

Musical Electronics digs into the history of digital drum machines, analyzes their limitations and points out their very real advantages. **48**

AUDIO

What's in a compact disc if you're a rock fan? Not much at the moment. Also surveyed are some musical electronic toys that teach you how to play. All this, plus a report on the next big trend—video-game "soundtracks." **50**

AUDIO

DAVID GANS

OAKLAND

NEIL YOUNG: THIS IS NOT THE TWILIGHT ZONE



PHOTO: C. S. SIMPSON

Respectfully submitted for your perusal—one Neil Young. Height: around six feet. Weight: variable, generally on the skinny side. Origin: Canada. Motives? Therein hangs the tale, for in just a moment he's going to ask you to shake hands, figuratively, with a rock 'n' roll musician from another time, another dimension. This is *not* the Twilight Zone.

He is in a room in a house on a peninsula in northern California. Visible from a window, down a gently winding road, past a few cows and a couple of piles of rusty auto parts, is another house. This house contains recording equipment and some up-to-date musical instruments—including computer-controlled drum machines and digital synthesizers—as well as some very old but reliable and pleasant-sounding gear.

Neil Young is just about finished recording an album using the tools of the future, and he is talking about the puzzling nature of the wandering muse that sends him his

inspirations. "I can't control it," he says. "Here I am thinking computers, doing all this with my machines, and I write a three-chord rhythm and blues song. I don't know what the hell is going on."

"I'll be driving along, and all of a sudden I'm thinking a melody. Then some words are coming." He will stop what he's doing, if he can, and think it through for a few minutes so he can remember it later. "I have to remember that what I am is a songwriter," he says. "I feel that if I close the door too many times and ignore a song when I feel like writing, then pretty soon they won't come any more and that'll be it." The muse, he seems to be saying, cannot be ignored—nor, however, can she be summoned.

A quick cut to that other house, the one with the computers and recording equipment. Unlike that hit-and-run muse, employees and production associates *can* be made to come when invited. "Neil might be in Florida or Hawaii on vacation, or in LA or someplace, and he's capable of writ-

ing ten or twelve songs, full-blown, in one sitting. And wherever he is, the call comes: 'The songs are done—play ball!' " The voice you're hearing now is that of David Briggs, who knows all too well that when the inspiration comes, soon thereafter arrive the producers and engineers. He's been one of them since the *Neil Young* LP was recorded in 1968.

Tim Mulligan, another soul who has crossed the time warp in Young's employ several times—including the music of the future (*Trans*) and the music of the past (*Everybody's Rockin'*), offers this testimony: "When he calls, we go into whatever studio happens to be available and we make the most out of it. We walk in the door, press 'Record' on the multitrack, and then start shoving up faders on the console."

Be great or be gone is an unofficial motto, but it's more a matter of pride than of pressure. "It's what we do for a living," Briggs explains. "You're supposed to show up and be great right then and there—not a

week later, not five hours later. I've been in studios with Ray Charles and Little Richard, and that's how they work: 'Here I am playing and singing great. Catch it, guys, 'cause that's why you're here.'

Flashback to Neil Young's home, some foggy night a few years back. Wood is crackling in the fireplace, a cassette recorder is rolling, and he is playing an acoustic guitar. The song he is singing is one nobody has ever heard before, not even Neil Young himself. It will be called "Will to Love," and it will appear on *American Stars 'n Bars* a few months later, fireplace pops and all.

The Neil Young people called a studio owner and booked some time, planning to work on "Will to Love." They requested drums, bass, keyboards and guitars. The owner is expecting a full band, but there is only Neil Young with a cassette in hand. "He played the drums where he wanted them—'That's good. Now let's do the bass,'" Briggs recalls. Writing, then immediately recording, Young played whatever the muse told him to add to the song.

"To me, my creation is not from a logical thought pattern," says Young. "It's from a sub-dominant hemisphere of the brain. When I'm really writing, really playing, I'm not thinking at all. I'm just there, feeling it—and in it. That's what I want; I'll do anything to get that."

Fade to black. Fade in on Prune Music, a guitar shop in Mill Valley, California. In the rear is a small repair shop, wherein labor Sal Trentino and Larry Cragg, who handle Neil Young's amplifiers and guitars, respectively. Sal Trentino points out that working for Young is a pleasure in that he is not only allowed, but *required* to design and construct the highest quality electronic tools.

"He wanted to be able to change the volume of his amplifier from a distance," Trentino explains. "Changing the guitar level changes the sound as well as the response of any effects you're using, and a foot pedal volume control also radically changes the sound." What Neil Young wanted Sal Trentino to do was make it so he could actually spin the knob between rhythm and lead settings by remote control.

"I designed a little electronic servo device that allows him to set the upper and lower volume settings; at the tap of a footswitch the knob is mechanically turned by a motor. It's very accurate; he's been using it since 1974." After Young approved the prototype Trentino set out to build another. "I had all these uptown ideas, like variable speeds—up speed controlled separately from down speed; he wanted it adaptable to any amplifier, so I made a holder with adjustable legs that would fit over any amplifier . . ." But Young used that one only once. "He likes the prototype in its plain, funky box without any frills," says Trentino. "It's called 'The Wizzer,'

because it makes a slight mechanical whizzing sound."

That second Wizzer did find gainful employment, during the making of *Everybody's Rockin'*. "Neil records in the equipment barn, which is separate from the recording studio," Trentino explains. "There was no way for the musicians to know when the tape was actually rolling, so I attached the Wizzer to a railroad semaphore. When they hit the 'Record'

button, at the same time they hit another button that raised the arm; we never got around to doing it, but we were planning to attach a rubber chicken to the semaphore arm so it would go up and down to show when we were recording. Even though the chicken never got mounted, we still used the phrase to indicate whether it was okay to start the song—'chicken up' meant 'tape is rolling,' and 'chicken down' meant it wasn't."

OLD WAYS, NEW MEDIUM

"DIGITUBE" IS THE NAME COINED TO DESCRIBE THE HYBRID TECHNIQUE USED TO record Neil Young's new album, *Everybody's Rockin'*. According to Elliot Mazer, who co-produced with Young, it was Young's intention to recreate the sound of the first rock 'n' roll and rockabilly records—but to do so in the most sonically accurate way possible.

"Digital recording is a brand-new technique, and it's totally neutral—it always sounds exactly like what you put in it," Mazer explains. "The old mixing console and the microphones we used are typical of the equipment found in recording studios in the south" in the '50s and early '60s, the period recreated on *Everybody's Rockin'*.

"We were going for a spontaneous, live-sounding record rooted in the theme of American music. Neil and the band worked very quickly, and in fact the album was recorded live"—meaning all instruments and vocals done at once, mixed and recorded in stereo in one roll of the tape. Whereas most albums begin with "basic tracks"—a whole album's worth of bass, drums and rhythm instruments recorded before vocals or other overdubs are added to any songs—Mazer notes that each song on *Everybody's Rockin'* was worked from start to finish in one sitting. "Neil would casually teach a song to the band just before we recorded it, and while they ran over it once or twice and each player worked up something he felt was appropriate, I worked on getting the sounds. Then we'd roll the tape right away. Each song was learned, recorded, and remixed, in a period of one and a half to two hours."

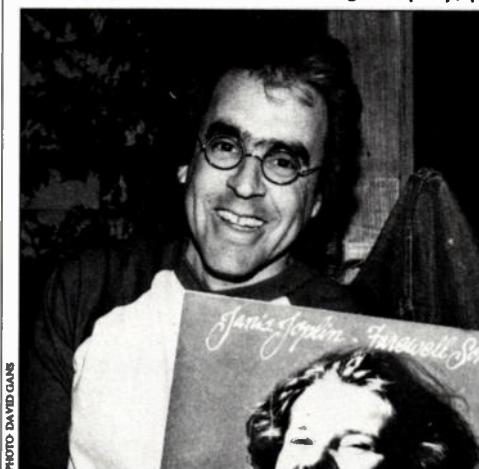
Everybody's Rockin' is the first pop album to be recorded in America with Sony's new 24-track digital machine, designed to allow experienced recording engineers to take advantage of the new technology but still use the instinctive moves they've learned over the years of working with analog tape. "It operates just like a regular tape recorder—but better," says Mazer. "And it sounds phenomenal."

In pursuit of that 1954 sound—rendered in a manner consistent with 1983 ears and stereos—the production team chose the best of both worlds. Several microphones from the '50s were used, including an RCA 77 ribbon mic for Neil's voice (processed through an ADR vocal stressor), Neumann U47 tube mics over the drum kit and for the background vocals, Beyer M360s for the bass drum and electric guitar (an authentic Gretsch hollow-body, played by Ben Keith), and a Sony C37 for Tim Drummond's standup bass. The most modern of microphones, the PZM (pressure zone microphone), was chosen for the white Steinway grand piano and the "ambience"—mics hung on the walls at opposite sides of the studio to capture the total sound of the band as heard in the room.

The recording console itself is "an old Urei tube board that Neil bought from Wally Heider's about ten years ago," says Mazer. "Before that it was used to record *Cheap Thrills* [Big Brother and the Holding Company, produced by Mazer], the live portions of Cream's *Goodbye*, parts of Neil's *Harvest* [also produced by Mazer], and other stuff. A mixer like that has some character of its own; many, many R&B and early rock 'n' roll records were made with boards just like that one."

The "slapback" echo that characterizes the Sun Records sound of the original "Mystery Train" was created with tape back then. Today it's done with digital delays (in this case, a Lexicon PCM-42), which allow more accurate and musical delay times and keep the sound considerably cleaner.

It varies slightly from song to song, but that authentic '50s sound is the direct result of different combinations of ambiances created or captured with some decidedly '80s tools. —David Gans



Elliot Mazer

CRAIG ANDERTON

DIGITAL DRUM MACHINES: THE BEAT GENERATION

The drum parts on the Human League's *Dare* album weren't played by a drummer: they were programmed on a device, about the size of a snare drum, which represents the latest in computer/music digital technology. Ditto the drums on some Olivia Newton-John tracks. Or check out Peter Gabriel's new album . . . the "second drummer" behind Jerry Marotta isn't a human, but a machine. Digital drum machines are everywhere, and manufacturers can't make them fast enough to satisfy the demand.

Before finding out how digital drums tick, consider the forces that led to their development. In the '70s, rhythm became as important as melody and harmony. Not only was there disco—the ultimate in rhythm for rhythm's sake—but also an increased awareness of reggae and other rhythmically-based music. Even traditional rock rhythms were redefined; unlike records from the '50s and '60s, where the drums were almost always supportive, the drum sounds of the '70s were recorded superbly and mixed prominently.

Another major upheaval of the '70s was punk, which inspired a do-it-yourself, anybody-can-play ethic that crossed over into a number of musical styles. Synthesizers, due to their low cost and flexibility, became ubiquitous. And if you couldn't find a drummer, no big deal—groups from Echo and the Bunnymen to Kraftwerk found that synthesized percussion not only sounded perfectly acceptable, but was also easier to use, set up, and play than traditional drums.

Couple these trends with the computer revolution (another product of the '70s) and digital drums are the logical result. Inspired by increased rhythmic awareness, sold to people such as composers who craved musical self-sufficiency, and taking advantage of technological advances, digital drum machines are an almost perfect marriage of art, technology, and convenience. They allow musicians to experiment rhythmically with a precision and quality of sound unheard of only a few years ago.

The first thing you notice is that the drums sound like real drums; unlike early

units which attempted to synthesize drum sounds using scaled-down analog synthesizer technology, digital drums use computer technology to "record" real drum sounds. This process is not simple. First, the drum machine's manufacturer records a drum sound in a conventional studio. Next, a computer analyzes this audio signal and converts it into a computer-compatible digital code; this code is then permanently stored in computer memory chips. When you ask the drum unit to play, say, a tom sound, it pulls the data for the tom out of memory and converts it back into an audio signal, thus producing a replica of the original tom sound.

There are some limitations, however. The more complex a sound you're trying to record, the more memory you need to store these complexities (recording a cymbal, for instance, requires far more memory than storing a single clave sound). Since more memory means higher costs, in order to keep prices reasonable the sustain of a crash cymbal might be cut a little short, and the high-hat might sound a bit grainy. But for recording simpler sounds (toms, bass drums, and such), present-day technology is more than adequate for high-quality emulation.

The real power of the computer comes into play when composing a drum part. Most drum machines split the programming process into "pattern" (also called "segment") mode and "song" mode. Since songs often contain identical patterns which repeat in predictable ways, segment mode lets you program these individual patterns (with virtually no constraints on time signature or measure length), while song mode lets you string various patterns together in specific ways to form songs. Programming a pattern is simple: as you listen to the unit's click track, you tap a button corresponding to a drum sound wherever you want that sound to occur. Digital drums usually hold enough data for an entire set of music, but if not, you can always store the data on cassette (just like a home computer) for later retrieval.

Interestingly, digital drums represent one instance where American technology is still way ahead. The first digital drum was invented in Southern California by

Roger Linn; Oberheim Electronics, a prominent American synthesizer manufacturer, came out with a competing unit (the DMX) and a while later, E-mu Systems introduced the "Drumulator" (which listed for under \$1000 but nonetheless included many features not found on the higher priced models). The latest entry is MXR's Drum Computer, and Oberheim now also makes the DX, a lower cost version of the DMX.

As to whether these machines will put drummers out of business, drummers are actually some of the biggest users. For one thing, they know how to think in terms of



Oberheim's DX digital drum machine: a savior and a teacher

realistic drum patterns (non-drummers often program parts which are too complex). Also, they can program back-up drums—literally becoming a second drummer—over which they can then add their own accents.

And for composers, the digital drum machine is a savior. When recording demo tapes, the hassles of finding a drummer and spending all day getting a "good drum sound" in the studio are over. Besides, learning to program drums can often inspire new songs or riffs; and non-drummers who have learned more about the intricacies of percussion by programming these devices find it easier to work with "real" drummers.

Digital drums are here to stay. The direction in which they will take music is not entirely clear, but what is clear is that the results will be far-reaching.



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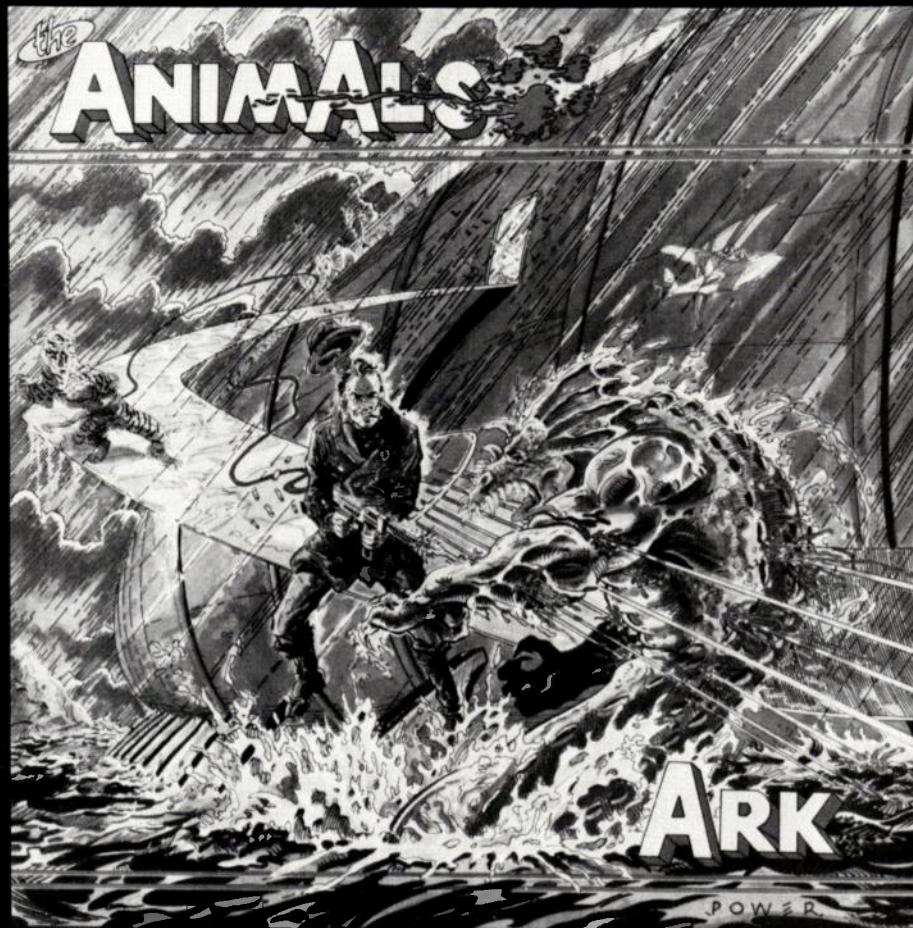
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MARTIN PORTER

CDs, TOYS THAT TEACH, AND MUSIC TO GET ZAPPED BY

AT HOME WITH THE COMPACT DISK

THE COMPACT DISC PLAYER joined my family of audio components during the same period as I was listening regularly to several new rock releases, among them the Police's *Synchronicity*, Elvis Costello's *Punch The Clock* and Fun Boy Three's *Waiting*—all released on the standard 12-inch vinyl platters that have served man so well for so long.

The new technology was irresistible, however. It's convenience, impeccable specifications (+90 dB, 20 Hz-20kHz) and those cute, manageable laserdisks that look like miniature frisbees all combined to make a gadget-freak's holiday. Over the course of several hours' tinkering the player went through its routine of tricks, elicited several audible exclamations of audio excitement and did its job without a slip.

But the paucity of non-classical product is a real problem. Though the CD has everything over the turntable—bright lights, programmable buttons, shiny aluminum finish—it's missing one important element, at least from the rock fan's viewpoint: the music.

From a CBS/Sony representative I secured CDs of Billy Joel's *52nd Street*, Simon and Garfunkel's *Bridge Over Troubled Water* and Kenny Loggins' *High Adventure*. Two samplers I was able to acquire from Polygram and Magnavox contained little better selection of new listening. A run through New York record stores days before the official Polygram shipments found a veritable wasteland of CD rock and pop product.

So after a week of audiophile tinkering and gadget madness, I returned to the vinyl. My neighbors had stopped coming around to gawk; the myriad features retained their attraction but lost their novelty. I wanted to listen to Elvis' new record, not Kenny Loggins'.

The Compact Disc's many selling points make its replacing the LP all but inevitable. Programmability and sound quality are a mere bonus. Despite reports that you can destroy the discs with mishandling (a

two-hour torture test performed largely by my two-year-old son failed to substantiate these claims), the CDs are easy to handle and comparatively indestructible next to the nick- and scratch-happy LP. These advantages become an even greater draw once there's more good rock releases and after prices take a serious fall.

There's also the issue of sound quality to contend with since, even though all available disc players boast blue blood specifications, the technology is far from perfect. A friend recently offered the following pearl of wisdom: "Those who buy the first generation Compact Disc player will pay for the R&D (research and development) on the next generation."

Any serious audiophile will admit that the filters that make analog-to-digital-to-analog conversion possible still need development. Though the signals are crystal clear and the dynamic range impeccable, trained ears can detect the Achilles Heel responsible for making high frequencies sound brittle. That almost all the pop offerings were first recorded analog and then mastered to a digital format ensures that this high-end will sound edgy when played with CD perfection.

Classical music is tailor-made to demonstrate digital's real promise, anyway. The command for absolute silence and the sound of concert hall ambience are usually recorded with breathtaking accuracy. Many of these recordings were originally taped digitally, which may account for the difference. The amount of "air" that is often mixed in with classical and jazz performances may also make the difference—previously these blank passages were dirtied with surface noise and distortion, pointing up all the weaknesses of your turntable and stereo system.

But these problems shall pass. The A/D-D/A converters will be perfected. The CD production process will get into gear, and the record labels will have to drop the prices and release current rock product simultaneously in analog and digital formats. The programmability of the players will then apply perfectly to selective record listening—no more wading through those throwaway cuts in between the gems on Elvis Costello's albums.

"SO YOU WANNA BE A ROCK AND ROLL STAR"

... YOU NO LONGER PICK UP AN electric guitar. While today's music hasn't exactly eliminated the six-string celebrity, it has enhanced the attraction of the keyboard via new electronic sounds.

Keyboard wizardry and musical electronics have moved from the studio and stage into the living room as a result of new digital instruments that create new options for the amateur player and also serve as effective teaching tools.

CASIO was one of the first electronics manufacturers to tap this market via the sale of their popular VL-Tone, a lap-sized



Casio's MT-70 with "Bar Code" music and scanner

keyboard that contained everything from ten basic rhythms (including rock 1, rock 2), six voices including one that allowed you to create your own sounds, and even a calculator (for figuring out royalties, I guess).

From these roots have emerged an entire line of Casio keyboards for rank amateur and pro alike, and a recent entry (the **MT-70**) combines high-end synth features (ten auto-rhythms, 20 preset sounds) with music training programs. The unit contains a melody guide which instructs your fingers via adjacent LED indicators. The synthesizer is also equipped with the MS-1 Bar Code reader which can read and store tunes without sacrificing pitch or duration. Once the musical bar codes are stored in the unit's memory, it can either play the tune back by itself or serve as a back-up for rhythm or bass accompaniment.

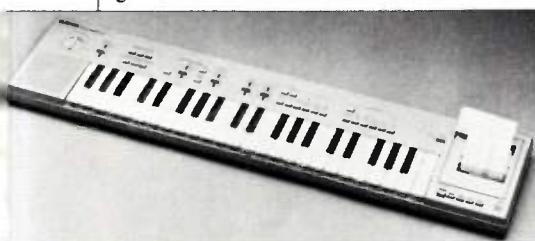
YAMAHA has also aimed its keyboard products at the Keith Emerson hopefuls

throughout the world. Its **PC-1000** keyboard contains a Card Reader feature capable of storing songs contained on



Yamaha's Portatone PC-1000

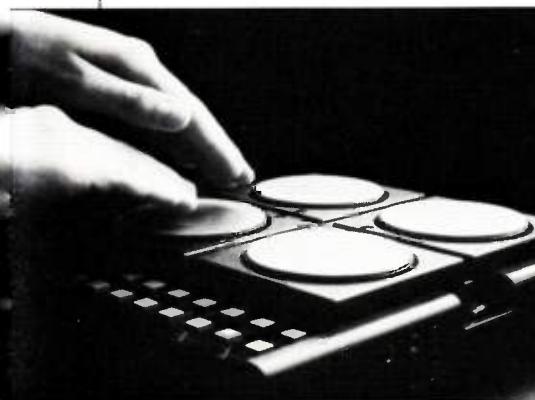
cardboard song sheets that are passed through its reader. The music lesson begins when the memory lights feed your fingers their chord cues one at a time until the



Yamaha's MP-1 Mini-Printer

entire score is through. The keyboard features 49 keys and a choice of 24 musical voices. There are about 500 song cards currently available for use. Meanwhile, to drill all musical neophytes in sight-reading, the company has introduced the **MP-1** mini-printer which prints out your melody lines on $2\frac{1}{4}$ " wide paper. The ballpoint stylus even draws the staves, time signatures and up to three sharps and flats.

The personal computer itself can serve as a music training device and **MATTEL** has offered a keyboard option for its Intellivision home computing system. This 49-key synth connects with the appropriate adaptors to become a six-note polyphonic keyboard. The music training comes from the



Mattel's Synsonics Drums

Intellivision software. A game—"Melody Blaster"—is a musical take-off on the company's "Astro Smash" and demands that you press the appropriate ebony or ivory to avoid being smashed by a dive-bombing quarter note. Also available is "Music Tu-

tor," which teaches you how to read music, and "Song Writer," which serves as a word processor for composers.

Mattel hasn't forgotten those whose hyper-activity demands a release on the drums. The **SYNSONICS DRUM** is an electronic practice pad that lets you practice your paradiddles without disturbing your neighbors. You get a big and controllable electronic percussion via a pair of light-weight headphones. And with four drum pads you can tune an entire drum kit, compose, record and play back over 4,000 drum patterns. The company has designed another model, "the Rhythm Maker," to let you beat the skins along with your favorite LP since the unit plugs into any music source (including a portable radio). The unit has finger pads the size of a quarter and with its battery pack it can easily go with you on the road when you play the neighborhood concert circuit.

For those with a lingering affection for hugging a guitar and strumming their finger blisters bloody, **SUZUKI** has introduced the **OMNICHORD MODEL OM27** which is shaped like a guitar, designed like a guitar and even features a series of "sonic string" buttons which can simulate the strum of a guitar. Actually the Omni-Chord is a complete synthesizer with a variable series of rhythm patterns, walking bass lines, 27 chords and a built-in speaker and internal amp.

VIDEOGAME SOUNDTRACKS?

LONDON IS PLASTERED WITH posters for the new Pete Shelley LP and cassette release, *XL-1*. What's interesting about the product is how Shelley and producer Martin Rushent (of Human League

renown) took the music into the computer age.

The two programmed a series of audio sub-tones that were mastered into an extra cut on the LP, and underneath the mix of the cassette version, so that when it's connected to your stereo and your micro-computer you can listen to the tunes and watch a series of routine computer graphics dance across your monitor along with the music.

The program was designed to interface with the Sinclair Research ZX81 four-color computer, a popular item in the U.K. at present, but currently unavailable in the States. Its forerunner, distributed here by Timex as the TS 1000 (retailing for under \$30), was unable to satisfy the technical requirements of the more powerful four-color unit. As a result, Arista's release of the Genetic Records product was pressed on vinyl without the additional/digital instruction cut. However, Timex has since scheduled a fall introduction of its ZX81 equivalent, the TS 2000.

According to a Genetic Records representative, there was an attempt—nixed by Warner Communications—to convince Atari to co-sponsor the project Stateside along with a rewritten program for the Atari 800 home computer/game system. Genetic will be prepared for the launch of the TS 2000, since it promises a special return program which will allow XL-1 buyers to obtain the needed computer instructions via the mail.

With 750,000 ZX81 owners in the U.K. alone, it's believed that this music/computer tie-in might have some commercial value, giving videogames the audio boost they need and new music another marketplace. EMI Records has already taken the next step and hired a programmer (musician Chris Sievey) to develop videogames to accompany songs recorded by label artists. The concept may catch on yet. ○



Pete Shelley: spearheading a new trend

FENDER'S NAMM SPLASH

Fender used the Summer NAMM show in Chicago as an opportunity to unveil a multifarious product-line upgrade, including an all-new venture into professional sound reinforcement gear, a second entry in the Chroma synthesizer line, and an all-new line of guitars and basses called the Elite Series.

The Pro Sound products division introduced three mixers, five powered mixers,

models 3208, 3212 and 3216 offer eight, 12 and 16 inputs, respectively, with four graphic EQs and stereo outputs. Stereo (non-powered) mixers are available in 8-, 12- and 16-channel models with signal insertion patch points on each input, four auxiliary inputs (two with panning), two monitor mixes, headphone amp, etc.

Key features of the ELITE series of instruments include active preamps designed to retain the warmth of passive designs; a new noise-canceling pickup using Alnico II magnets for longer sustain and truer intonation; new tone-control circuitry; jumbo frets, wider nut and 12" radius fretboards and a new "Biflex" truss rod, plus a new neck pitch adjuster; a simplified string-loading system that eliminates "through

loudspeakers with the standby E SERIES. What they'd done was set up six speaker cabinets in a row, with 10", 12" and 15" speakers of each series and a switch box that allowed for instant comparisons to be made between them. There was a small Gibson



Fender's Chroma Polaris six-voice programmable polyphonic synthesizer

amplifier connected to the array, and a solid-body electric guitar as well as an Ovation acoustic with a built-in pickup.

The MI Series is, as advertised, a little less sizzly in the high end than the E drivers; this is where JBL's ad campaign, "Some like it hot . . . Some like it cool . . ." comes from. An A/B comparison of the 12" speakers using the electric guitar, for example, indicated strong bass response in both, while the E version had a little more sibilance and bite with the treble knob wide open. The overall output seemed pretty much the same between the two.

There was quite a revelation when I plugged in the Ovation and switched in the 15" speakers. What bottom! There was plenty of chest-thumping bass, no mud in the middle, and even the MI speaker delivered handsome amounts of treble. Still, 12" speakers seem better suited to the broadband needs of acoustic guitars.



Fender's new powered mixing consoles

two stereo power amps, three varieties of microphones, and three loudspeaker systems. In addition to some subtle improvements in the internal design of their mixers, some obvious features include "signal present" lights as well as the usual "peak" indicator, and knobs with molded pointers to settings can be sensed with the

the body" stringing; on/off pushbuttons on the Stratocaster; allowing seven pickup combinations instead of the old five; improved tuning machines; positive locking strap buttons; etc.

The CHROMA POLARIS is a six-voice programmable polyphonic synthesizer with a 61-note, velocity-sensitive keyboard, a built-in sequencer and a computer interface bus which enables connection to a computer for expanded capabilities. Each voice has two oscillators, a voltage-controlled filter, two envelope generators and a low-frequency sweep generator. The instrument also features a ring modulator and a noise generator; the non-volatile memory stores 132 presets, including keyboard splits. In addition to the usual sequencer functions, the Polaris remembers pitch bend, modulation and velocity information from the keyboard; up to 12 sequences can be chained together. The built-in microcomputer greatly reduces the number of pushbuttons and sliders on the front panel while increasing the power of the instrument.

Fender has handsome printed matter on all these new products (there are others not mentioned here), available now at your dealer or by writing to *Fender/Rogers/Rhodes, 1300 East Valencia Drive, Fullerton, CA., 92634*.

One of the most enjoyable moments of the four-day Summer NAMM show in Chicago was the time I spent in a soundproof room comparing JBL's new MI SERIES



JBL's MI Series musical instrument speakers

MI Series loudspeakers can handle 150 watts RMS with their 5 1/2-pound magnets and 2" voice coils. Die-cast frames provide better heat-sinking than stamped ones, increasing their power handling capacity and—because heavy cast frames don't flex as much as their stamped counterparts—reducing the resonances that adversely affect frequency response. —David Gans



We Separate the Walkmen From the Walkboys.

Why an Equalizer? Most audiophile sound systems already use an equalizer to selectively enhance the sound of music. If you use one with your stereo, you know what a difference it makes. You pick the frequencies you want to enhance. You can boost the low bass at 100hz without disturbing the lead guitar. You can cut tape-hiss. You can even (within limits) compensate for the difference between the noise-reduction technique your tape has, but your tape-deck hasn't. (For a full-blown noise-reduction, try our brand-new dbx PPA-1!) And you can play with the controls, make the music sound new and different every time you hear it.

Prosound Boosts Walkman™. "Personal Stereos" such as

Walkmen™ etc. need an equalizer even more. Many of them have just a dinky little sound-control with a choice of very muddy or very shrill or somewhere in-between. Some have no sound-control at all. Prosound DEQ-60 to the rescue. It is a masterpiece of miniaturization. It's just 2½ inches wide, 4 inches high and less than a mere 5/8 inch slim. And yet it comes with the power of a machine which used to be big and bulky. It really separates the Walkmen™ from the Walkboys. The Prosound Equalizer brings your new lightweight headsets to the life they were built for. It has five slide-controls for 100hz, 300hz, 1000hz, 3000hz and 10000hz. It boosts or cuts up to 10db, that is, a range of 20db. In addition to

this, it has two volume controls, one for each stereo-channel. It has a signal to noise ratio of more than 60db! And a THD of less than 0.2%. It runs off two AAA-size batteries (not included) without running you out of money. Dry batteries should give you approx. 70 hours of fun and control, with alkaline batteries, the Pro-sound is rated at approx. 70 hours! Try that with your "Personal Stereo"!

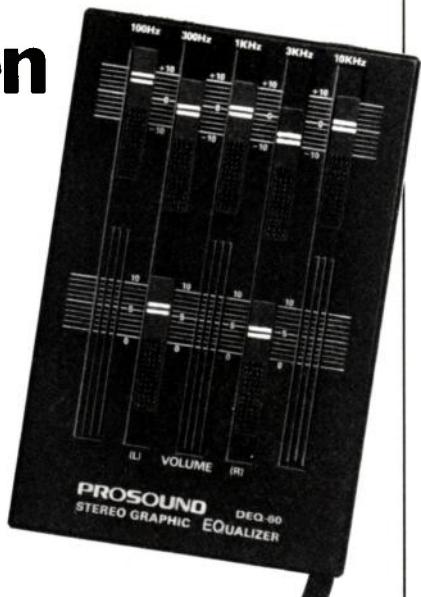
Yes, It Will Work. The Prosound DEQ-60 Stereo Graphic Equalizer will work with just about anything with a 3.5 Stereo Jack. It plugs between your headphones and your Walkman™. The cable is included. Do you have active speakers for your Walkman™-type stereo? You can use your Prosound with

those, too. It even comes with a lightweight carrying-pouch.

Nope, No Risk. The Prosound DEQ-60 carries a 90 days limited warranty. And if you aren't satisfied with it for any reason, simply return it to Blue Angel within 20 days in its original box for a quick refund, no questions asked.

Save 10 Dollars! The Prosound DEQ-60 has a list price of \$34.95 and you probably can't even get it for that, because it's a brand-new device. Blue Angel bought LOTS, and we pass our discount on to you. We sell it for just \$24.95, that's a savings of 10 Dollars! **Prosound Stereo Graphic Equalizer, Item# 50101. Not \$34.95, only**

\$24.95



Now They Hear It...



Now You Do!

Flip Out Sound! When I first heard about the Prosound AP-2S, I didn't think much of it. Who would, with a name like this? Then I saw it. A compact little mean-looking tape-machine, just a little bit larger than a cassette. Two words on it: "Auto Reverse." Not bad. And two funny little hinged black things, flush with its cream-colored housing I flipped them out. Speakers! The room was suddenly filled with stereo-sound. My beautiful wife Winn loved the lightweight, foldable headphones (included) even better. We loved the machine so much we immediately bought two. One for

her, one for me. So much for sharing. We had so much fun with our little AP-2S's that I decided to sell them.

The Facts. The Prosound AP-2S is a portable auto-reverse stereo cassette player. This means that you don't have to stop the aerobic action to turn the cassette. The Prosound AP-2S switches to the other side, automatically. It has 2 built-in stereo speakers. This means that you don't have to buy and lug around heavy and expensive extension speakers. It plays normal and metal tape, which gives it a frequency response from 40 to 12000 hz. It runs off 2 standard "AA" size batteries (not included). And it sounds great!

The Price: Not \$110, Only \$89. The Prosound AP-2S has a list price of \$110, which is already a bargain. This is a top-of-the-line machine, with auto-reverse and metal capability. And it has its

unique built-in, flip-out speakers, which would cost you dearly if you could buy them as an accessory. But we are Blue Angel. And we hate list prices. So we went in on a healthy quantity of those nifty machines. Which brings your price down to just \$89.5, a savings of more than \$20!

Nope, No Risk Either. The Prosound AP-2S carries a 90 days limited warranty. And if you aren't satisfied with it for any reason, simply return it to Blue Angel within 20 days in its original box for a quick refund, no questions asked. Even if you've never ordered through the mail, now you are perfectly safe to buy your **Prosound AP-2S Auto-Reverse Stereo Cassette Player With Built-in Speakers. Item# 50102. Not \$110, only \$89.50**

\$89.95

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dbx just did. The inventor of the famous professional dynamic expansion and compression units just came out with a tiny little accessory, about the size of a candy-bar. And yet it contains enough electronic circuitry to make the sound of your Walkman™-type stereo explode. And the hiss shut up. It plugs in between your headset and your cassette player. It gives you the fancy dbx Type II noise reduction. And it works with the popular DOLBY™ Type B noise reduction. (dbx calls it coyly

"dbx Type B", as if they don't want to confess that there's another type of noise reduction besides theirs... oh well...) It runs on 2 AAA batteries (not incl.) and it runs, and runs, and runs. It runs even if the batteries are down to 1.8 V! The unit has a dynamic range and a signal-to-noise-ratio of a whopping 90db! It has two separate volume controls for left and right, and a clip for your belt or carrying-pouch. It even has a bypass-switch for nostalgic reasons.

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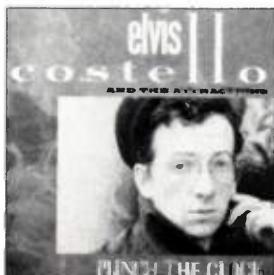
PUNCH IN, PUNCH OUT

PUNCH THE CLOCK Elvis Costello and the Attractions

Columbia

By
J.D.
Considine

This much is certain: Elvis Costello is at a surprisingly awkward stage in his career. After five years of being a critic's pet without managing much in the way of popular success, he's finally come out with a single that should break him once and for all in America, the irresistibly tuneful "Every Day I Write the Book." That ought to make his new album something to cheer about, but instead of being a long-sought



vindication, *Punch the Clock* raises some troubling questions about Costello's artistic weight and musical strengths.

To begin with, there's the problem of Costello's growth as a writer. The best material on *Punch the Clock* continues the musical development that has been Costello's hallmark from the first. Rather than radically changing style, as he did with each new album from *This Year's Model* through *Imperial Bedroom*, *Clock* takes a sort of scattershot approach, suggesting that Costello is ready to apply the lessons he learned from his genre exercises. There is an occasional echo of earlier work, such as the *Armed Forces*-style arrangement to "Love Went Mad" or in the way "The Greatest Thing" applies the same Bo Diddley-beat pulse that powered *Trust's* "Lover's Walk." But the overall effect is one of total command. From the stark piano-and-claptrack treatment of "Pills and Soap" to the rich, supple rhythm arrangement of "Everyday I Write the Book," and from the cool pastels of "Shipbuilding" to the bright colors and harmonies of "King of Thieves," it's clear that Costello is working with a full palette, and working well.

Until you get to the heart of the music, that is. For beneath the glossy musical sur-

faces and stylistic mastery of this album lies appallingly little.

Start with the lyrics. Costello's verbal agility and knife-twisting puns have long been one of his most consistent strengths, from the vicious intensity of "Alison" on. And though he does get off some good ones throughout *Punch the Clock*, often as not they serve no purpose other than demonstrating Costello's cleverness. "With these vulgar fractions of the treble clef," he sings in "Love Went Mad," "I wish you luck with a capital 'F'." Or then there's "T.K.O.," which applies an elaborate pun on Boxing Day (in Britain, the holiday celebrated the day after Christmas), and closes with the lines, "Now you don't look so glamorous/Whenever I feel so amorous/I can count you out." But too many of these nifties are practically non-sequiturs, leaving several tunes—"Charm School," "The World and his Wife," "T.K.O.," "Love Went Mad"—reading less like songs than a string of one-liners.

Is it just a case of obsessive cleverness? It would be easier to answer no if the music were less obviously aware of its own facility, but here, too, Costello seems to be showing off, with a good bit of help from the Attractions. Steve Nieve's keyboards

can be stunningly effective, as on the understated "Pills and Soap," but Nieve is equally adept at hot-dogging, and without a second guitar to fill out the sound (as there was on *Trust*) or a cushion of orchestration (as through *Imperial Bedroom* and this album's "King of Thieves"), Nieve consistently overplays. Similarly, bassist Bruce Thomas can hit a complex groove as effectively as James Jamerson in his heyday ("Everyday I Write the Book" is a good example), but just as frequently he is simply too busy a player. Even producers Clive Langer and Alan Winstanley find it difficult to resist a bit of flash, and apply needless echo to blur part of Chet Baker's wistful trumpet solo in "Shipbuilding."

Enough of *Punch the Clock* works, however, to suggest that this is just a symptom, not the disease. "King of Thieves," "Every Day I Write the Book" and even the lyrically insipid "T.K.O." are wonderfully-played marvels of musical ingenuity and cooperation. Unfortunately, they're also utterly hollow—brilliant exercises that ultimately express next-to-nothing. Only "Shipbuilding" and "Pills and Soap" manage to rise above mere mechanics to actually leave the listener feeling as if he or she has come into contact with the emotional power that is supposed to lie at the heart of great rock and roll.

And that's what is most worrisome about the Elvis Costello of *Punch the Clock*—that his immense musical ability and lyrical prowess have become not a means of expression but a sort of camouflage for his emotional limitations. Costello may be eager to move beyond his early reputation as new wave's angry young man, but if this album is any indication, anger remains the only emotion he can adequately express. Perhaps another performer, one with greater depth of feeling and a better-rounded emotional make-up, would be able to do these songs justice. But for Elvis Costello, it's time to stop pushing technical development and get to work on growing emotionally.

GET IT RIGHT

Aretha Franklin

Arista

By
Brian
Chin

Unlike many successful first-time teamups which turn stale by the obligatory second go-round, *Get It Right*, the second collaboration of Aretha Franklin and producer/writer/singer Luther Vandross, finds the pair digging deeper into Franklin's range of moods. The results are even more inter-

esting, and possibly inadvertent.

There's a bit more fight, more ambivalence and more conflict in the new material, again written largely by Vandross and bassist Marcus Miller, and this becomes more apparent as the first side progresses, following "Get It Right," a slightly more adult version of "Jump To It."

Three truly outstanding cuts make up that side: "Pretender," with its slow-beating bass tug and languid, erotically lush background singing, sounds impossibly intense, hypnotic and heated-up. Franklin sounds as if she'll start moaning at any second. Britain's outrageously sensual balladeers Imagination are the only people I can think of who've come up with such sly suggestiveness lately. "When You Love Me Like That," the side's closer, also turns out more aggressive than one might have expected from a Vandross production.

Then there's "Every Girl (Wants My Guy)," the real successor to "Jump To It," elaborating the note of carefree confidence with which she talked about herself and her man in the earlier song: "I'm a rough and tough and ready girl," she grins at her many competitors—"So don't you even try it." This, Vandross' strongest song since his own "Never Too Much," is the stuff of intense pleasure, and it's even more his own stylistically than the heavily Chic-influenced "Jump To It."

And there's the rub. What sounded last year like a Vandross approach (when he released highly divergent albums by Franklin and by Cheryl Lynn), now sounds dangerously like a sound. The second side of *Get It Right* returns to the dreamy romance of the previous album, and while Franklin is very perceptibly shaping songs more, pushing and pulling instead of stretching out luxuriantly on top of them—the last third of "I Got Your Love," for instance—Vandross isn't providing much of anything different in support. This album's classic remake also falls short of the producer's peak moments: "I Wish It Would Rain" finds Franklin shaking her fist at the sky, in a swirl of voices, but what was meant to be dazzling comes off as just a bit overworked.

Of the many things Vandross has done with distinction as producer and artist, the one he hasn't tried yet with Franklin is the simple, solo-voice treatment, without copious choral vocals, which worked so movingly on his own "A House is Not a Home" and his duet with Cheryl Lynn of "If This World Were Mine."

Franklin's work on *Get It Right* continues to fascinate, and re-evokes the awe the listener experiences in realizing that Aretha still has ideas and approaches to try out. For all intents and purposes, even song-for-song quality, it's a stronger album than *Jump To It*.

But Vandross, since his own second album, and with the exception of the first side of *Get It Right*, has been working

too close to the middle of the road. His sounds are, as ever, flawless and tasteful, but one hopes that his next visit to a recording studio will find him concentrating more on the sort of things that turned out harder, softer, jazzier, poppier or bluesier on this album.

INSIDE LOOKIN' OUT

Junior

Mercury

By
Derk
Richardson

Hearing the sounds of American soul steam



across the Atlantic from Great Britain hasn't seemed strange since Hot Chocolate growled onto the radio in the 1970s. Now, what with Linx and especially Imagination exporting the funk back to the colonies, country of origin is less an issue than ever. Junior Giscombe fits right into the nouveau limey soul thang with a raft of synthesized effects, a knack for the ambiguous romantic lyric and a voice to challenge the best Stateside high-note warblers.

Junior owes much of the success of *Inside Lookin' Out* to producer Bob Carter (also responsible for Linx) who co-wrote seven out of nine songs, played the all-important keyboards on every cut and, despite a stunning array of swooshes and snaps, and the cluttered accompaniment on the opening tune, "Communication Breakdown," refrained from making Junior's second LP a producer's album. Horns and heavily-textured background vocals don't detract from Junior's extraordinary Michael Jackson cum Prince voice.

Touches of twangy guitar, often in call-and-response with a keyboard or synth riff, and straightforward funk rhythms set firmly in a dance groove accent the kid's puzzled (or puzzling) inquiries into love and modern life. Just what "Woman Say It" means—men get it up, women lay down, men can't understand but women don't either—remains as abstruse as the object of "Story Teller" which seems to be some sort of veiled political comment. "F.B. Eye" is the only explicit social tale, describing a sweeping arrest of suspects based on skin color—as trans-national a story as the love songs which dominate the rest of the record.

With his voice and Carter's production savvy, Junior doesn't have to worry too much about song content although he does just fine addressing domestic affairs and broken hearts. He already has more than a "sexy thing" and "body talk" consciousness and as it grows he should be a soul contender on both sides of the Atlantic.

RAILROAD I John Fahey

Takoma

By
J-C
Costa



Too many of us tend to file John Fahey away as an authentic American curio, an iconoclastic presence whose extended acoustic guitar improvisations can be called upon occasionally to provide pastoral Delta blues "trance music" for citified listeners reeling from electronic aftershock.

But Fahey, whose prodigious output of albums on Vanguard, Reprise and his own Takoma label has pioneered a fiercely independent style of instrumental guitar music rooted in the genius of Delta bluesmen like Bukka White and Charlie Patton, has resolutely followed his own path for a reason: his playing captures the most finite nuances of specific time and place while accurately transducing a state of mind. The shimmering brilliance of his six- and twelve-string guitars bespeak the few remaining basic truths of the American experience.

Yes, his improvisations do ramble from time to time and he's given to dense, witty and somewhat elliptical liner notes that wear thin when Fahey decides to revel in his unique world view. But albums like *Railroad I*, his latest offering on Takoma, continue to reaffirm the need for his guitaristic vision of the spiritual topography of Americana.

Railroad I (the first in a series?) benefits immediately from a more cogent thematic approach: every composition evokes a particular train (from rapidly disappearing lines like the Chesapeake & Ohio, Norfolk & Western and Southern Pacific) or train man. These spring from a lifetime's preoccupation with the rhythmic lure of the railroads and love of the myths surrounding them. Tracks like "Frisco Leaving Birmingham" and "Summer Cat By My Door" recall specific memories of a train coinciding with Fahey's peripatetic existence: the former with a propulsive twelve string motif steadily building steam, the latter using a delicate melody and fingerpicking counterpoint to create a sense of warmth and dappled sunlight. Fahey juxtaposes stark chords on "Oneonta" to convey the "eerie" feeling he has about the valley the Delaware & Hudson ran through along the Susquehanna between Albany and Binghamton. His three-finger picking blues-based inventions tumble out on "Steve Talbot on the Keddie Wye," based on the hair-raising exploits of railroad's forgotten times. *Railroad I* ends with "Delta Dog Through The Book of Revelation," a beau-

tifully phrased and languid treatment of the old Yazoo-Delta line plowing through Northwest Mississippi bottom land with a fiery sunset as backdrop.

For all of his uncompromising brilliance, John Fahey will probably continue to plow on as a highly revered cult figure whose acerbic personality and lack of editing prevents him access to a larger audience. And that's too bad because, at his best, Fahey's startling clarity and focus on the guitar can be a wonder to behold.

TIN ANGEL Tin Angel

Atlantic

By
Dan
Hedges



It stands to reason that when the Go-Go's took their featherweight Looney Tunes to number one (and made the long-gone Runaways, by comparison, sound like post-grads from Juilliard), the major labels would have been falling over their checkbooks to sign every "all-girl" garage band who cared to unload a demo tape at the reception desk.

That didn't happen. Possibly because the bozo-esque success of the Go-Go's was perceived as a freakish shot-in-the-dark; probably because all-women bands—even good ones—are still viewed as having zero long-term sales potential in a market geared to seventeen-year-old guys. Lady frontpersons like Pat Benatar are one thing, but how can you polish up your struts and poses in front of the bedroom mirror against a backbeat from a drummer named Sherri?

With a little luck, Tin Angel will be able to skate around the obstacles. A five-woman band working out of New York, they've come up with a debut album that's (to cop from Atlantic's bio) "infectious": a middleweight, multi-textured sound built around Lori Zee's clear, pop vocal style and guitarist/vocalist/main songwriter Karen Atta's strong, melodic tunes.

There's nothing cute, calculated or pretentious about *Tin Angel*. Filled with hooks, choruses and resonating guitar that stays in the room even after the record's over, a good two-thirds of the songs are instant playlist naturals, ranging from the gliding airiness and interwoven four-part vocal lines of "Rearrange," to the bounding, handclapping rhythms of "Itchin' to Win" and "Round Round," to the soaring, almost Byrds-like drive of "Imagination." Now and then, Zee, Atta, drummer Sherri (Sherri!) Waggoner, bassist Cindy Dell and keyboardist Julie Last are joined by vari-

ous friends (like guitarist Randy Jackson of Zebra, who co-wrote and sings on "Ain't Worth a Dime"), but the band has an obvious aural unity that shines through on every track.

Producer Jack Douglas (John Lennon, Aerosmith, et al.) might have been wiser to aim for a grander, wide-screen ambience in the mix to better assure radio interest, but it's still a good start, a great cruising sound that (unlike that of the Copeland brothers' one-and-a-half hit wonders) has potential for expansion, particularly in the case of those vocal harmonies, where the possibilities are only hinted at. Who knows? *Tin Angel* might even stand a front row chance of moving the case for all-women bands out of the pajama party and into a space that commands some genuine respect—not because they're "a bunch of girls" and look real swell in those short little dresses, but simply because they're good at what they do.

THE REAL MACAW Graham Parker

Arista

By
J.D.
Considine



Marriage seems to have done well by Graham Parker. On this, his first album since wedding his "Jolie Jolie," he sounds confident and assured—in better form, in fact, than on either *Squeezing Out Sparks* or *Heat Treatment*. It isn't that domestic bliss has mellowed him; "Just Like a Man" starts the album with the same biting delivery we've come to expect from Parker, while both "You Can't Take Love for Granted" and "Anniversary" suggest that Parker's married life hasn't been entirely blissful. Instead, what marks this album is a sense of artistic assuredness, that Parker no longer feels obliged to scoff and growl and is ready to expand his musical persona.

The most obvious changes can be heard in "Life Gets Better" and "You Can't Take Love for Granted," where Parker's melodies could almost be described as pretty (just try saying that about "Discovering Japan" or "Stupefaction"). The latter is particularly striking, in part because it features Parker using a falsetto voice that, up until this album, was kept well under wraps, but also because it finds Parker lending a poignance to his singing that has surfaced but rarely in the past ("You Can't Be Too Strong" from *Squeezing Out Sparks* was the closest he'd come before this). Not only do such new developments leave Parker sounding wonderfully re-

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freshened, they give his older mannerisms a new life, because Parker's mode of expression has been so significantly broadened. Thus, when Parker goes from the understated anger of "Passive Resistance" to the fiery passion of "Sounds Like Chains," it's hard not to be impressed by the shift in intensity.

Although there are touches of the Rumour-era Parker—"Last Couple On the Dance Floor" could as easily have been on *The Up Escalator*—the overall sound is equally varied. George Small's keyboards are as likely to dominate the sound as Brinsley Schwartz's guitar, and the light, lyrical approach he takes gives the album an unexpected gentleness at times (not to mention a better shot at making it onto the American airwaves). Of course, the album does get down and dirty when needed, from the sweaty funk of "(Too Late) The Smart Bomb" to the rocking middle section of "Anniversary," but the general sense of the album is that Parker has found a musical voice that doesn't lean on the ghost of the Rumour the way *Another Grey Area* unfortunately did.

In short, *The Real Macaw* is the beginning of Graham Parker's artistic maturity, finding him addressing both his topics and his music in a strikingly adult way. And if this is just the beginning, it's a sure bet that his best is yet to come.

ANY TROUBLE
Any Trouble
EMI America

By
Derk
Richardson



In the four years since Any Trouble was first signed to England's Stiff Records, the skinny-tie pop movement so tunefully epitomized on their first LP, *Where Are All the Nice Girls?*, has grown up into smoking jackets and tuxedos. Elvis Costello, who could once pass for a punk in a melodist's clothes, has evolved through boozy C & W into a satin-robed bedroom crooner. Joe Jackson aspires to Noel Coward and Cole Porter although he wears his uptown sophistication with an engagingly gangly awkwardness. Clive Gregson may be just another dedicated follower of fashion but this year's model of Any Trouble is a stylish, easy-on-the-ears respite from the monotonous whir and whack of the British techno-pop onslaught.

On their second U.S. release, the band strips down to the bare fact that singer-songwriter-keyboardist-guiding ego Gregson is Any Trouble. (Only bassist Phil Barnes is held over from the 1979 quartet

and the roles of Steve Gurl and Andy Ebsworth are clearly dictated by Gregson's overall design.) He then dresses up his formerly simple pop-rock structures with lilting synthesizer riffs (approximating everything from strings to concertinas), chimes, bells, and the shimmering production of David Kershenbaum.

Gregson's music bears the same relationship to the post-pub rock of Costello, Jackson, Nick Lowe and Squeeze as the syntho-poppers do to R & B and funk—the same as polyester to wool and cotton. It bubbles with hooks, harmonies and quirky changes over rolling bass lines and concerns itself with romance and disillusion but it lacks the wit, passion and self-deprecation which makes the other cats' cool contrivance so contagious.

But pop-addicted Anglophiles take their minor pleasures where they find them. Although Gregson's chameleon voice carries minimal conviction whether breathy, mellifluous or torn, and his claim to be "shaking the foundations" is a transparent pretense, and he will never be the "Man of the Moment" he longs to be, it is possible to forgive him his overdressing and indulge in the superficial appeal of *Any Trouble* without much difficulty at all.

HIGH LAND, HARD
RAIN
Aztec Camera

Sire

By
Barry
Alfonso

Ten years ago, Aztec Camera's Roddy Frame would've been hyped as one of those "sensitive singer-songwriters" so abundant in those days. Pop fashion being what it is right now, this 19-year-old Scotsman's best chance of reaching the public is as part of a band (with a suitably odd name). But make no mistake: Aztec Camera's debut LP is very much Frame's affair, and he makes it an impressive one.

It's been awhile since a genuinely exceptional composer/artist has emerged from Britain—no one comes to mind after Elvis Costello and Mark Knopfler first began recording. While it's too early to place laurels on Frame's still-teenage head, his work on *High Land, Hard Rain* is promising indeed. Literate but rarely precious, gifted with an obvious melodic talent, his strengths as a writer compensate for a rather unspectacular voice (suggestive of a less-harsh Joe Strummer). His group is adequate, but could probably be dispensed with: the key to Aztec Camera's folkishly rocking sound is Frame the singer, guitar-

ist and composer.

Thematically, Frame's songs cover familiar ground—youthful confusion ("Pillar To Post"), romantic uncertainty ("We Could Send Letters"), quests for maturity ("Walk Into Winter"). His approach, though, shows above-average wit and craftsmanship. "Release," for example, depicts bohemians and would-be revolutionaries in an affectionate but sobered light ("I wanted the world/And all I could get was a gun or a girl . . .").

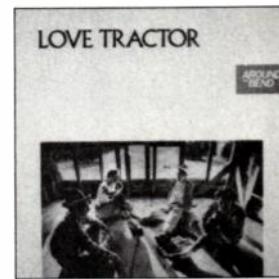
Frame's skills at tune-writing are strong, though he does fall prey at times to over-sweetness. Scattered comparisons are suggested: "Oblivious" is Nick Lowe-ish pub rock, "Back On Board" brings to mind early-'70s Rod Stewart, "Walk Out To Winter" has the lilt of a (sorry, Roddy) old Osmonds number. These disparate elements add up to an individual whole. *High Land, Hard Rain* presents a still-growing artist—there's every reason to expect even better from Roddy Frame in the future.

AROUND THE BEND
Love Tractor

DB Recs

X-TEENS
X-Teens
Dolphin Records

By
Anthony
DeCurtis



Southern-based independent record labels have a double-shot of problems. Not only do they suffer from the difficulties with promotion, distribution, and collection that plague independents everywhere, but their local support often isn't strong enough to ensure a consistent baseline of success. Because independents tend to be progressive and Southern audiences are relatively conservative, these labels must continually appeal to the bicoastal avant crowd to generate sufficient sales to meet the bills.

Given this less than ideal situation, very fine records sometimes slip through the cracks. Last year this undeserved fate befell the eponymous instrumental debut album by the Athens, Georgia, quartet, Love Tractor. On that record, Love Tractor defined a melodic Ventures-meet-Verlaine guitar sound composed of equal parts uplift, yearning, and danceability.

Around the Bend (DB Recs, 432 Moreland Ave. NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30307) is Love Tractor's worthy successor. In addition to incorporating some rather abstract vocals, the band's instrumental sound now embraces country elements. But this is

country as it might be experienced in a druggy rural afternoon reverie, not a sweaty honky-tonk. "Spin your partner 'round and 'round/When she stops, I'll be comin' around the bend" all four band members drone-sing in the delightful "Spin Your Partner." The country expressions are there, but the country evoked is dreamland. *Around the Bend* is music suitable for a hoedown on any farm that plows its fields with love tractors.

The X-Teens' debut album is on Dolphin Records (P.O. Box 8744, Durham, North Carolina 27707), the independent that has a unique advantage over other small labels: Dolphin is owned by Record Bar, the second largest chain of record outlets in the country, with stores in 30 states. This arrangement guarantees Dolphin an impressive degree of national distribution and gives the label some leverage in getting other distributors to pay their bills, a chronic problem for independents.

The X-Teens were among the 10 bands featured on the well-regarded North Carolina compilation, *Mondo Montage*, put out by Dolphin earlier this year. Of those 10 bands, Let's Active (led by R.E.M. producer, Mitch Easter) has been snatched by I.R.S. and will have an EP out soon, and Dolphin will be releasing LPs by The Snap and The Accelerators (formerly Moon Pie). Justice will not truly be served, however, until someone signs the fabulous Rick Rock, whose "Buddha Buddha" and "Sputnik" were among *Mondo Montage*'s brightest.

X-Teens, produced by Easter sidekick Don Dixon at Mitch's Drive In Studio in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, is a spunky, energetic debut. It includes the appealing, reggae-tinged "Heaven in Your Eyes" from *Mondo Montage* and other strong tunes like "Hard Is a Love Departing" and "Cold War."

The X-Teens got some of their strongest material, however, by confusing cleverness with intelligence and technique with complexity. Perfectly good songs are sabotaged by Yes-style time changes, lame instrumental pyrotechnics, and absurd vocal excesses. Less would definitely be more from these talented popsters, who apparently are not content "merely" playing pop.

BEAT MUSIC

Spongetones

Ripete



By
Laura
Fissinger

When having hip people over for dinner, hide this record. They'd probably start at

the entree and never let up, spotting snatches of "Mr. Moonlight" or "Matchbox"—or was that just a whole section of "You're Gonna Lose That Girl" that just shot by? Non-hipsters will play the same parlor game, but more in the spirit of delight and delirium in which this little ripple of weirdness was made.

In an era crammed with musicians and fans who'd rather sleep on nails than loosen up and get goofy, here come (according to the back cover) Pud, Stiff, Rocko and Jumpy. Their sole purpose, apparently, is to rewrite songs and riffs from early and mid-period Beatles, and have a wonderful time doing so. To that end, there's a cheesy cover, cheesy production and some amazingly smart songwriting.

Don't think for a minute that the Spongetones are satirists like the Rutles or dim-wit, dead-serious copycats. No kidding—whole sections of songs are reheated verbatim, but it's not necrophilia, either. Tracks like "She Goes Out With Everybody" or "Every Night Is A Holiday" are gentle, intelligent meditations on riches in the pop treasure chest that lots of '83 bands use carelessly and never say thank you for. *Beat Music*, hat in hand and heart on sleeve, says thank you.

ROCK FOR LIGHT

Bad Brains

PVC

By
Crispin
Sartwell

Hardcore is the primal scream therapy of rock 'n' roll. Defined by the brutal simplicity of its guitarists and the screeching atonality of its vocalists, it slices rock to the bone that lends it form. In the hands of bands like Flipper, who have no desire to tune their instruments or craft their songs, hardcore is some of the most noisome garbage ever dumped onto vinyl. But played by folks like Fear and Bad Brains—the fundamental west coast and east coast thrash bands, respectively—hardcore allows the listener to achieve a catharsis that's rarely engendered by any musical form. Both bands possess the intelligence and sense of humor to channel their fury in constructive directions.

The BB's were the first and, with Minor Threat, the most important of the Washington, D.C. hardcore (or harDCore) bands, who represent the angry underside of life for the rich kids of the nation's capitol. HarDCore is designed for a form of dance that is, to say the least, physically demanding. The idea is to jump up onto the stage, garbed in leather and heavy

boots, and then leap back into the swarming crowd with a twist or a flip. Amazingly, the incidence of serious injury is relatively low. The HarDCore bands play songs—many of them less than a minute long—that possess a pile-driving rhythm and virtually no tune.

That's the formula that the Bad Brains apply on much of *Rock For Light*, and it's never been applied more precisely or effectively. There's enough raw power on this record to light a major urban center for several decades. But what's surprising about this record is that the BB's are also a reggae band, playing everything from basic reggae-rock to more contemporary dub styles. They're certainly one of the best American reggae outfits, and just when you think you couldn't stand another 60-second kamikaze punk song, they offer up a mellow, four-minute skank that provides blessed relief.

And if that isn't unique enough for you, the BB's also have the distinction of being the world's only all-black hardcore band. On "Sailin' On" they create the first synthesis of thrash and r&b. Produced by Ric Ocasek, *Rock For Light* possesses the most transparent sound of any hardcore album thus far released.

Listening to *Rock for Light* is, in short, a pleasurable and intensely odd experience.

DON'T TAKE MY COCONUTS

The Coconuts

EMI America

By
Nick
Burton



Kid Creole and The Coconuts' *Wise Guy* was one of last year's best albums, a smooth mixture of Latin rhythms, calypso and funk, the product of August "Kid Creole" Darnell's fertile musical imagination. And although *Don't Take My Coconuts* is for all intents and purposes the first solo album from the three female vocalists known as The Coconuts, Darnell plays such a major role on this record (he produced as well as wrote or co-wrote six of the nine tracks here) that it could well bear the subtitle *Wise Guy II*.

This is not to imply that The Coconuts—Adriana Kaegi, Cheryl Poirier, and Taryn Hagey—don't deserve any of the artistic credit. The trio harmonizes beautifully, and Poirier, who handles most of the lead vocals, has a sweet, sexy style. On tracks like "Maladie D'amour," "Ticket To The Tropics" (a dead ringer for *Wise Guy's* "I'm Not Your Daddy"), and "The Glory That Was Eden," Poirier's vocals convey

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Darnell's tropical island atmosphere in a lovely way. With the samba/calypso musical backing, the overall effect is akin to a cool breeze on a hot summer's day.

Like everything Darnell has had a hand in (from Dr. Buzzard to Kid Creole), this album follows a scenario. Here, Darnell introduces the girls by way of the title track (a rather evil-sounding voodoo-reggae cut), and what follows is a Coconuts "benefit concert," complete with song introductions and thank-yous from the girls amidst canned applause. But don't let that throw you off; the music here is what counts, and fine music it is. It's eccentric, refreshing, and about as up-beat as pop ever gets. I mean, anyone who can take Harold Arlen and E.Y. Harburg's "If I Only Had a Brain" from *The Wizard of Oz* and turn it into a cool, sexy samba rather than pop kitsch deserves praise indeed.

Like *Wise Guy, Don't Take My Coconuts* is extremely effective in its meshing of ethnic musical styles (or to use Darnell's own term, "race music") and The Coconuts themselves are a joy to listen to.

HEXBREAKER

The Fleshtones
I.R.S.

By
Craig
Zeller



The Fleshtones are proud practitioners of house party rock 'n' roll with generous doses of garage band earnestness thrown in. At their best they sound like a distillation of a dozen AM '60's punk-rock outfits trying to barrel their way past one hit-wonder status. On their first official LP release, *Roman Gods*, they were right on the beam for the most part. It was a rollicking affair with all the borrowings and influences neatly absorbed, freshly squeezed and amusingly rendered. It was the sort of record where you could imagine band members using rolled up *Shadows of Knight* posters to bat out the beat, loving every minute of it.

Unfortunately, no such visions come to mind on the very unimpressive *Hexbreaker*. By no means a disaster, it's still a distinct letdown with plenty of dead air and tossed-off filler. Sure, this band still makes with the enthusiasm and they're miles away from the dreaded jade-out. But all the high spirits in the world can't save—or excuse—material as relentlessly ordinary as this.

The songs on *Hexbreaker* are generally eager beaver mixtures of done-to-death clichés and we've-heard-it-all-before recy-

clings. (The closest thing to an element of surprise on this album is the demented disco falsetto that pierces the chorus of "Right Side Of A Good Thing.") On something like "Deep In My Heart," the sly organ break is the one part of the song where I wasn't moved to mutter, "Come on, boys, let's get the hell on with it." Which pretty much sums up my attitude on the ten cuts that follow it.

The 'Tones do try to liven up the mediocrity from time to time. They pitch in all sorts of little bits to spruce things up, like scuzzy fuzztone leads and back-up vocals that shout "HEY!" or "Whoa-oh!" and fade-in carousing (the title cut) and anxious harmonicas and Revere's Raiders rhythm ("Want!"), and painfully embarrassing dialogue (like "We reject your false values" from "New Scene").

But it all adds up to nada because the songs are so stupefyingly average that no matter how many twists you give them, you're still left with the sad truth: this stuff is strictly Xerox City. The Fleshtones may have willing spirits (the better part of the title cut) and strong flesh ("Screamin' Skull" is a halfway decent pounder) but their minds are weary and they're far too ready to settle for being second best. They need to put something in their originals besides pilfered afterthoughts inspired by *Nuggets*.

And please God (or whoever's up there), could we have a 10-year moratorium on bleached-out token LP instrumentals like "Legend Of A Wheelman"? I swear by all that's holy—if I hear one more this year, I'm locking myself in a closet with Red Prysock's "Hand Clappin'" for a week.

WHAM

Wham
Columbia

By
Laura
Fissinger



If this band was smart it would have named itself something silly like, say, Flock of Spinners, or Earth Wind and Fire and the Furious Five. But silliness on this debut is not deliberate; these Brits are toothless tourists gawking at American soul, their songs blurry Polaroids at best. "Bad Boys" crawled up the charts in their homeland anyway, a really silly thing considering all the decent dance music to pick from.

This division of dance pop is remedial synth-soul, with that last word used very loosely indeed. So clumsy is the thievery that one wonders why they bothered to put their own names on it. In a gaffe-track

called "Wham Rap" alone, you've got the horn arrangements of EWF, the chat scat of Grandmaster Flash, the rhythm and bass guitar lines of Chic, and the harmonies of MORs like the Commodores. In the mood and scope of its misfire, "Bass Line" is the Cowsills doing Sylvester; "Club Tropicana" might well be Freddie Mercury jamming with Peter Allen (if you can picture such a thing).

The bliss of ignorance might have made Wham into perverse pleasure, but no such luck, not with passable cocktail jazz piano and the kinky rhythmic wisecracks from the bass and drums. Was this actually somebody's final project in a modern music class? They probably got an A for neatness, a B for effort and a happy return to a dentistry major.

SWEAR
Tim Scott
Sire Records

By
J-C
Costa



As if to prove that producer Richard Gott-ehr's penchant for the platinum "new music" hook is not foolproof, along comes this OK but virtually unremarkable EP from newcomer Tim Scott. Gottehrer may have played a significant role in getting the careers of Blondie and the Go-Go's off the ground, but, based on this outing, his perception of Scott as "something unique, a really fresh talent" escapes these ears.

Scott has impeccable credentials as a musician, culminating with a three-year tenure as a member of the Rockats, a popular regional rockabilly band. His guitar playing is tough and occasionally perverse (intro to title track), his synthesizer textures colorful and discrete. But even Gottehrer's full-bore production sound can't obscure the fact that Scott's material has yet to crystallize and his singing can't support the gusto dunk soul-shouter style he's writing in.

In fact, Scott has the maddening talent to *nearly* succeed at everything: the guitar hook on the single "Swear" is *almost* compelling, the ominous sounding vocal on "Uncommitted," the closest thing to a standout track on the EP, *almost* convinces. When Scott tries to inject some message mojo into lightweight vehicles like "Good As Gold," things get really painful. There is definitely some promise here, but at this point, Scott seems like nothing more than just another high-tech guy destined to fall into the cracks between significant music.

EDDY GRANT

Continued from page 24

for hawking their goods to tourists. In short order there appeared a soul-calypso protest hit, "Jack (Dah Beach Is Mine)," by Barbadian recording artist The Mighty Gabby, co-written and produced by Grant at Blue Wave Studios and released on Ice Records.

Grant has already completed all but the final editing of the tracks for his next album, tentatively titled *Going for Broke* (an early '84 release is expected), and plans are being made for a feature-length movie, with concert footage to be filmed in Caesarea, Israel.

With these two projects in the works, his first American tour in full swing, and *Killer on the Rampage* and "Electric Avenue" still riding high on the charts, these are heady times for Grant. Asked if, after so

many years of struggle, it's penetrated that he's finally hit, he answers by first describing his response at learning how *Killer* was beginning to take off, and then displaying an equanimity and openness appropriate to a man willing to question whether he's sitting down or standing on his head: "I thought, this is crazy. These people have never bought one record of mine before. I've been an underground artist for so long—in New York, in places like Chicago and Washington, lots of little ghetto areas in other parts of country—trying to pump this music out, and the radio would not play it.

"Now all of sudden they're playing it. And then all of the sudden it's successful. So now I say, all right, fine, I'll just continue in the way that I've been doing. I mean, I've never bowed to format or whatever it is, because, I don't *understand* it. I understand only one thing: how to make music. And I make the music, and if people like it at the radio, or the TV, or wherever, fine. If they don't, well that's fine too. Because I'm used to it both ways."

JAMES BROWN

Continued from page 18

Island Records and the reason why James Brown is releasing a new LP this year rather than last. In mid-'82 word came that Brown had signed with Island and would be recording in the Bahamas with the redoubtable Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare. But what appeared to be a collaboration made in Heaven turned out to be an idea whose time had not yet come. After a few sessions Brown returned to his home in Augusta.

"Island and I did sign a contract," he explains, "but they decided they didn't want to be changed. If I couldn't deliver a message that was true and sincere, I didn't want to deliver *no* message. I haven't anything harsh to say against them—just that I had different thoughts and they had different thoughts."

Left to his own devices, Brown came up with a six-cut LP on which no one track sounds like another. *Bring It On's* song selection is diverse enough to include a bluesy remake of Ray Charles' "The Right Time" and a soulful reading of Roy Acuff's "Tennessee Waltz," as well as an urgent new original entitled "You Can't Keep A Good Man Down" and, in the tradition of some of Brown's old King sides, a Bill Doggett-style organ instrumental (with JB at the Hammond B-3) ideal for skating.

Still, it comes out pure James Brown, programmers be damned. And once again, the issue is strength, having a code and holding fast to it under the most trying

conditions. "I've recorded and produced myself from jump street," proclaims the Godfather. "I went to all the labels with the tapes and told them all I need is total contentment and to be left alone. There

"I've recorded and produced myself from jump street," proclaims the Godfather. "There ain't no King Records no more. But I've stayed true to James Brown. And what you're hearing—what radio's hearing—is at least faithful to that vision."

ain't no King Records no more. But I've stayed true to James Brown. And what you're hearing—what radio's hearing—is at least faithful to that vision." O

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DEBORAH FROST

NEW YORK

DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING TO?

Diana Ross's two-night stand in Central Park in late July emphasized some sad truths about the artist and about free shows, black shows, perhaps any popular entertainment aimed at American youth in general. You take your chances when you go to a rock concert held in an arena or stadium. You also get searched at the door—something that didn't (and probably couldn't) happen in Central Park. But what does it say about the music being made in the arenas when you've got to be drunk, stoned and/or stupid in order to appreciate it? Still, if you've worked hard for the money (or just worked hard conning your folks out of the money) some acts are charging these days, you've got an investment in the proceedings. If you've paid for it, you're less likely to let some jerk mess it up. The people who flock to free concerts have no such stake. Elton John's Central Park concert a few years back was typical: packs of young white males in altered mental states committed minor acts of vandalism and abuse (the latter being mostly verbal and directed primarily at women).

But black concerts attract a slightly different element. After the Jacksons' and Rick James' shows at Madison Square Garden in 1981, there were numerous chain snappings and muggings—a problem that occurs at many shows that attract black teenagers in urban areas. The kids who hurt, hassled and robbed after both of Diana Ross' shows (although the violence of the first night went virtually unreported by the press, which chose instead to make front page news out of the lady singing in the rain) were just taking care of business.

You can chalk it up to unemployment, bad schools, teenage welfare mothers, lack of stable home environment. The fact is, they pull these stunts every day, anywhere they can get away with it. They not only prey regularly on white people, but on their own communities, which in the end suffer most. The result is not only an additional log on the racist fire that's smoldering beneath every American city, but something more immediate. There will simply be fewer cheap mass events that enable black and white people to celebrate our mutual culture. So what are we going to do about it, short of arming ourselves, which is the solution too many people I know have not only suggested but adopted? Maybe more important, what are black

performers, who provide some of their communities' few role models, going to do? Isn't it about time someone like Rick James, instead of moaning about not getting on MTV and being deprived of the bucks white boys are making, ought to accept some responsibility for the behavior he encourages? On the other hand, his complaints draw some fire away from his real problem: not only is his stoned super-

I wonder how the events of July 21 and 22 will affect the consciousness of Diana Ross, a woman whose entire career has been devoted to getting as far away from her roots as possible?

stud act a dated exploitation of the basest black stereotypes, but he can't come up with a new riff. And I wonder how the events of July 21 and 22 will affect the consciousness of Diana Ross, a woman whose entire career has been devoted to getting as far away from her roots as possible?

In one of the greatest publicity stunts in pop history, Ross got herself booked on the pretense of providing a new playground (named after her, naturally) for the park. If this great humanitarian were really so concerned about the condition of the city's swingsets, why didn't she just write a check? Likewise, if she really wants to perform for the people who can't afford her regular shows (as Parks Commissioner Henry Stern claimed—too bad Ross could barely remember her staunch defender's name when the credits rolled on her TV special) why doesn't she just lower her ticket prices? Because they wouldn't pay the upkeep on her Connecticut weekend place,

which is where her kids likely do most of their playing, contrary to the pre-concert hype she fed eager interviewers. And isn't the \$60,000 the city was supposedly getting rather piddling in comparison to the million-dollar fee Ross purportedly received from the cable satellite hookup that beamed her ego trip around the world?

In a way, though, Diana Ross was lucky. She's too MOR to suffer the stigma attached to the Stones after Altamont. And the acts of God and the mob that marred her shows helped mask another fact: put bluntly, her performance sucked.

What was this tacky production, complete with hula-skirted chorus line, doing anywhere beyond Las Vegas city limits? Stop! In the name of taste. The band? It remained offstage like a group of servants, precluding any genuine musical interaction. Not that there would have been any—these musicians were a dull, pre-fab bunch best suited to the wedding and bar mitzvah circuit. Which is where most of Ross's current material belongs, too. Where are the Motown bosses who provided her with good songs, and taught her how to move onstage and how to relate to an audience? Left to her own devices, she communicates nothing, save a love of money and a willingness to do anything to get it (such as stripping to her underwear in the middle of Central Park to display her "Muscles," or lack thereof). And in a telling moment, she demonstrated her love for the songs that established her by performing a superficial, one-verse medley of three Supremes hits. No wonder that on the cover of *Ross* she presents herself as a glassy-eyed mannequin, perfectly matching the disembodied voice within.

I escaped from the park during an endless version of "Endless Love." My editor didn't make me go back the next night. He'd run into the mob on Central Park West and decided to re-assign the story to Mr. T. Anyway, I figured I could always stay home and watch it on the tube. As if it mattered. Rain or no rain, Diana Ross is a washout. O

Deborah Frost is a freelance writer living in New York City.

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