

# RECORD

MARCH 1984 VOL. 3 NO. 5 \$1.50 U.K. 80p.

**THE  
BEATLES**  
LEGACY AND MYTH

**LOS  
LOBOS**  
ROOTS 'N' ROCK

**1983  
CRITICS  
POLL**

**STEVIE  
WONDER**

INTERFACING WITH  
THE WONDERMAN





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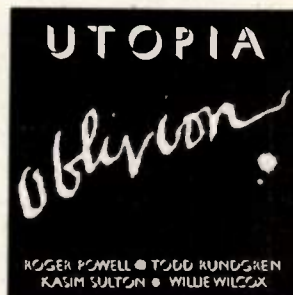


PB 11001

## THE EVERLY BROTHERS— "Reunion Concert"

A historic double album live recording of The Everly Brothers first concert reunion in ten years! Superb performances with a crack band and ultra-clean digital recording on all their hits: "Wake Up Little Susie," "Bye Bye Love," "When Will I Be Loved," "All I Have To Do Is Dream," "Cathy's Clown" and dozens more.

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PB 6029

## UTOPIA—"Oblivion"

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On Passport/Utopia Records and Cassettes

PASSPORT  
UTOPIA

## MOVING HEARTS— "Dark End Of The Street"

WEA 1802



## MOVING HEARTS— "Dark End Of The Street"

Moving Hearts are the only band to enter the Irish Top Ten at the #1 position. A unique combination of rock/folk/traditional Irish/jazz and pop influences. Includes Jackson Browne's "Before the Deluge" and Quicksilver Messenger Service's hit "What Will You Do About Me."

On WEA International Records and Cassettes

wea  
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WEA 1803

## BODINE— "Three Times Running"

Bodine are the new metal masters from Holland. This is their crunching followup to their well received U.S. debut of 1983, **Bold As Brass**. Featuring "Shout," a call to arms for metal bangers everywhere.

On WEA International Records and Cassettes

wea  
International



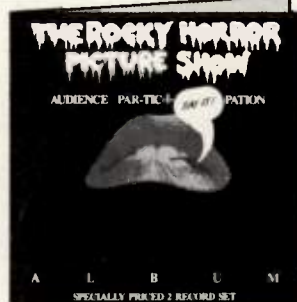
WEA 1804

## NEW ADVENTURES— "Radiator"

A hard rockin' power trio from the Netherlands, New Adventures in their homeland rank with Golden Earring for popularity. Their fourth album contains the blistering "Rag Fever" and Sam Cooke's classic "Shake."

On WEA International Records and Cassettes

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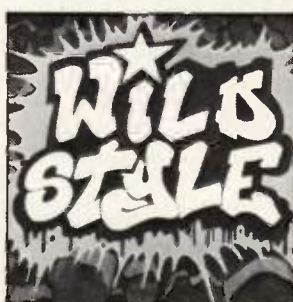


ODE 1032

## ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION ALBUM

The Rocky Horror Picture Show has been the #1 Midnight Movie cult classic for nearly a decade. And for good reason—audiences have always been able to get directly involved—the show's as much in the theater as on the screen. This two album set makes the audience the stars! It was recorded live in the 8th Street Playhouse Theater audience in New York City as the movie rolled.

On Ode Sounds and Visuals Records and Cassettes



APE 6005 ST

## WILD STYLE— "The Original Motion Picture Soundtrack"

The soundtrack to the hot movie on the rap/breakdancing/scratching DJ/graffiti artist scene in New York City. Featuring Chris Stein of Blondie on guitar, Fab Five Freddie as musical director, Grandmixer DST (who did the scratching for Herbie Hancock's "Rock It"), Cold Crush Brothers and more.

On Animal Records and Cassettes







PHOTO: LAURA LEVIN

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## ROOTS 'N' ROCK, CON SALSA

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With their debut EP making several "Best of" lists in 1983, Los Lobos figure to parlay their compelling blend of Tex-Mex, swing, bop and R&B into mass appeal success.

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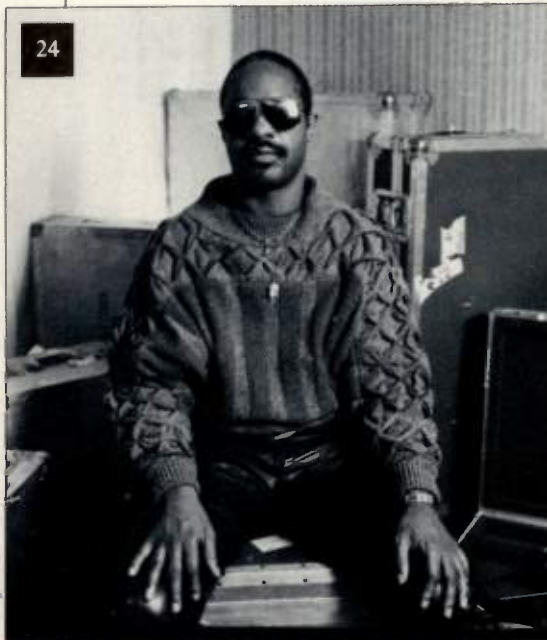
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A testy Adam Ant explains why it's hard to make the transition from novelty to novel. Do tell.

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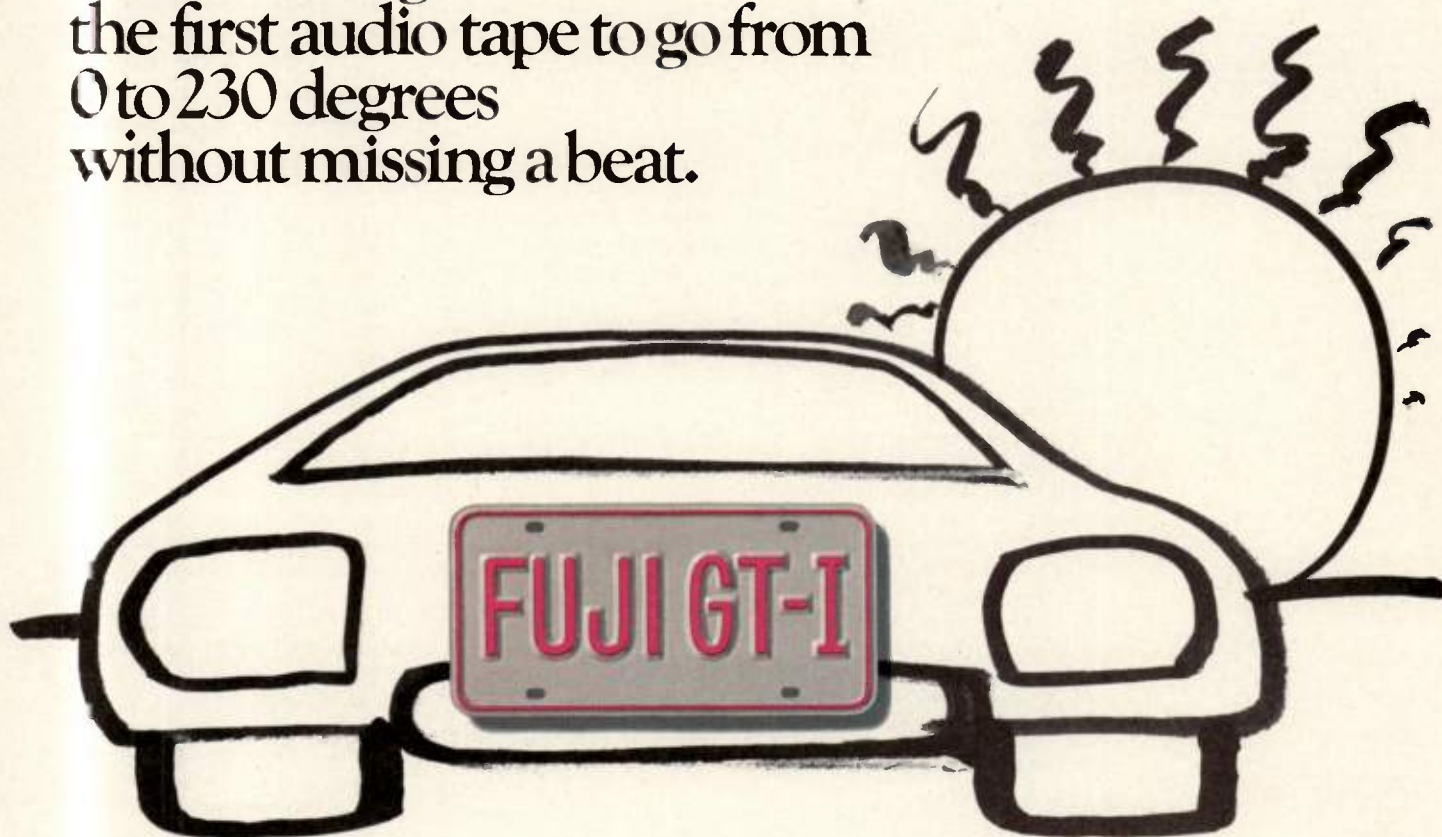
In which Stevie Wonder gives our reporter some skank for the head, if you can get to that, as a way of clueing in our reporter on the topic New Media and the Future of the Human Race. Sidebar features include a critical appraisal of Wonder's music by Dave Marsh, and an exclusive photo essay on the life and times of you know who.







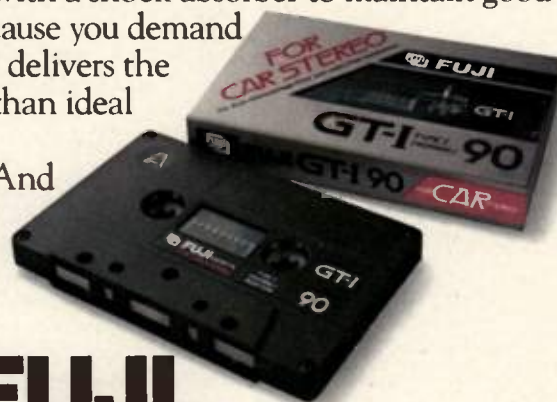
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## PROS ON MTV

BOB GIRALDI HIT THE nail on the head when he said MTV will be ruined by professionals ("Bob Giraldi: Shifting Gears With Distinction," October RECORD). Unfortunately, he is one of those responsible for paving the path in that direction. The video "Beat It," which features shoulder-shaking, finger-popping, leg-kicking choreography, was one of the first indications that MTV had gone Hollywood. As Giraldi said, this video belongs in a Dr. Pepper commercial. As Michael Shore observed in his piece in that same issue ("The Tube Goes Clip Crazy"), music video will go the way of Top 40 radio, where crass commercialism dominates and creativity is virtually ignored. If Giraldi is concerned with the future of MTV and other video outlets, it's my hope that he'll take it upon himself to produce video clips that go further than the basic song and dance routines that dominate many of the videos currently being programmed.

MARK FARRELL  
*So. Dartmouth, MA*

## CATS TALK BACK

WE ARE WRITING IN REGARDS to the Big Country interview in the December '83 issue of RECORD, "And Let The People Hear" in which Stuart Adamson states, "Americans have never produced a thing worth calling art themselves. They've borrowed everything from Europe, even punk rock."

Well, it's debatable whether you could go as far as calling punk rock art, but to say we've no artistic culture is carrying things too damn far. Does Mr. Adamson play in a rock band? Well, who the hell does he think invented rock 'n' roll anyway? Oh right, Angus McPresley. Sorry! Who invented the blues, and jazz, and country and western? Our manager, who is from Scotland, is quick to agree that they've never had anyone to compare to Duke Ellington, George Gershwin, Robert Johnson, Elvis Presley or Hank Williams. Instead of Big Country

covering "Tracks of My Tears," which is an insult to Smokey Robinson, they should cover homegrown Lonnie Donegan's whining version of "Cumberland Gap," a place he's probably never even been to.

Big Country probably do okay in New York or Los Angeles, where if you come from sacred Great Britain yer shit don't stink. We'd like to see how they're gonna do in the Midwest and the South with their holier-than-thou attitude.

So kids, the next time yer sittin' inside and it's rainin' down harder than a cow pissin' on a flat rock, take your Big Country album, open your window and see how it flies.

THE STRAY CATS  
(BRIAN SETZER,  
SLIM JIM PHANTOM,  
LEE ROCKER)  
*Tulsa, OK*

I AM A GREAT FAN OF BIG Country. However, Stuart Adamson's comment in your December issue is the singularly most ignorant remark I've had the misfortune of stumbling across in recent memory. Someone ought to remind that boy where rock 'n' roll came from in the first place.

THOMAS HOLMES  
*Seattle, WA*

HERE, HERE! TO STUART Adamson's heartfelt belief in the importance of music in people's lives, particularly rock music, which at its best offers hope to those who think life can be special. More such sentiments need be openly expressed. Thanks to Adrian Thrills for an in-depth look at one of rock's brightest young bands.

GARY KIMBER  
*Downsview, Ontario*

## AL GREEN

JAMES HUNTER SAYS "POP fans cannot afford to ignore Al Green's gospel records" ("There Are Riders Approaching," December RECORD). I don't know why not. After all, for over a decade they have largely managed to ignore comparably talented Christian rock, pop, soul, jazz-rock, folk, new wave and

heavy metal musicians.

I don't wish to detract from Al Green—his music and ministry are wonderful. But although it's true that he has a "rare pop ministry," it's not nearly as rare as most of those in the secular music media would lead people to believe.

MARK PETTIGREW  
*Boston, MA*

## SOME STYLE

WHY IS IT, WHENEVER A project doesn't work out to everyone's satisfaction, that a man's ego often finds it necessary to strike out at a woman's "vanity"?

If director Brian Grant wants to talk about the ill-fated "Stand Back" video ("The Elements of Style," December RECORD), why doesn't he mention that the production had to come together in about two days and, as a result, the hastily-assembled costumes (very important for an "epic drama") looked like rejects from Western Costume and the rockers who were recruited as extras looked totally out of place in several sequences? Or let's talk about a video which went against the natural inclinations of the star/performer (specifically, letting everyone else dance).

Believability counts; period pieces, if not executed properly, look silly on MTV or anywhere else. Of course, Mr. Grant is a fine video director and I'm sure that what he assembled in "Stand Back" was perfectly serviceable. But perhaps he wasn't able to view it with the same critical eye as Stevie Nicks and her advisors. To try and pass her legitimate criticisms off as simply a woman's vanity is being more than a little unfair to an extremely talented artist.

By the way, I believe Mr. Grant owes Modern Records an apology. They did *not* steal his ideas for their subsequent "If Anyone Falls" video. The original concept was created by Jim Lenahan; additional input came from co-directors Gordon Perry and Stevie Nicks and creative consultant Marty Callner.

KAREN SWENSON  
*Los Angeles, CA*



# TOP 100 ALBUMS

- 1 UNDER COVER  
The Rolling Stones *Rolling Stones*
- 2 WHAT'S NEW  
Linda Ronstadt *Asylum*
- 3 90125  
Yes *Airco*
- 4 SYNCHRONICITY  
The Police *A&M*
- 5 COLOUR BY NUMBERS  
Culture Club *Epic*
- 6 INFIDELS  
Bob Dylan *Columbia*
- 7 CAN'T SLOW DOWN  
Lionel Richie *Motown*
- 8 UNDER A BLOOD RED SKY  
U2 *Island*
- 9 THRILLER  
Michael Jackson *Epic*
- 10 SEVEN AND THE RAGGED TIGER  
Duran Duran *Capitol*
- 11 BIG COUNTRY  
The Crossing *Polydor*
- 12 BIG CHILL  
Soundtrack *Motown*
- 13 PIPES OF PEACE  
Paul McCartney *Columbia*
- 14 AN INNOCENT MAN  
Billy Joel *Columbia*
- 15 GENESIS  
Genesis *Atlantic*
- 16 YENTL  
Soundtrack *Columbia*
- 17 ROCK 'N' SOUL, PT I  
Hall & Oates *RCA*
- 18 METAL HEALTH  
Quiet Riot *Epic*
- 19 HEARTS & BONES  
Paul Simon *Warner Bros.*
- 20 PYROMANIA  
Def Leppard *Mercury*
- 21 BARK AT THE MOON  
Ozzy Osbourne *CBS*

- 22 ELIMINATOR  
ZZ Top *Warner Bros.*
- 23 ALIVE, SHE CRIED  
The Doors *Elektra*
- 24 SPEAKING IN TONGUES  
Talking Heads *Sire*
- 25 TRUE  
Spandau Ballet *Chrysalis*
- 26 LIVE FROM EARTH  
Pat Benatar *Chrysalis*
- 27 UH-HUH  
John Cougar Mellencamp *Riva*
- 28 FLASHDANCE  
Soundtrack *Casablanca*
- 29 STRIP  
Adam Ant *Epic*
- 30 LITTLE ROBBERS  
The Motels *Capitol*
- 31 REBEL YELL  
Billy Idol *Chrysalis*
- 32 BEAUTY STAB  
ABC *Mercury*
- 33 SWEET DREAMS ARE MADE OF THIS  
Eurythmics *RCA*
- 34 SPORTS  
Huey Lewis & The News *Chrysalis*
- 35 LET'S DANCE  
David Bowie *EMI*
- 36 MORE FUN IN THE NEW WORLD  
X *Elektra*
- 37 PRINCIPLE OF MOMENTS  
Robert Plant *Atlantic*
- 38 PUNCH THE CLOCK  
Elvis Costello *Columbia*
- 39 RHYTHM OF YOUTH  
Men Without Hats *MCA*
- 40 REACH THE BEACH  
FIXX *MCA*
- 41 THE WILD HEART  
Stevie Nicks *Modern*
- 42 FEEL MY SOUL  
Jennifer Holliday *Geffen*
- 43 FASTER THAN THE SPEED OF LIGHT  
Bonnie Tyler *Columbia*
- 44 CARGO  
Men at Work *Columbia*
- 45 LAWYERS IN LOVE  
Jackson Browne *Elektra*
- 46 THE PRESENT  
Moody Blues *Threshold*
- 47 IN HEAT  
The Romantics *Nemperor*
- 48 MIKE'S MURDER  
Joe Jackson *A&M*

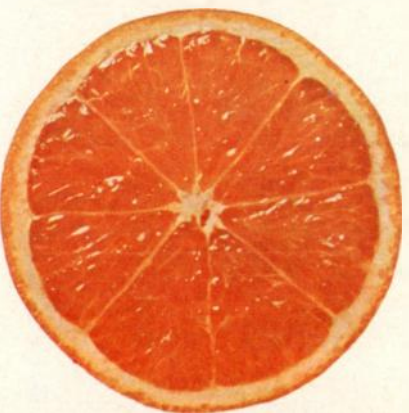
- 49 THE REAL MACAW  
Graham Parker *Arista*
- 50 BORN AGAIN  
Black Sabbath *Warner Bros.*
- 51 HELLO BIG MAN  
Carly Simon *Warner Bros.*
- 52 PASSION WORKS  
Heart *Epic*
- 53 WAR  
U2 *Epic*
- 54 RANT 'N' RAVE  
Stray Cats *EMI*
- 55 FLICK OF THE SWITCH  
AC/DC *Atlantic*
- 56 COLD BLOODED  
Rick James *Geffen*
- 57 PLAYS LIVE  
Peter Dinklage *Geffen*
- 58 MURMUR  
REM *IRS*
- 59 EVERYBODY'S ROCKIN'  
Neil Young *Geffen*
- 60 FASCINATION!  
Human League *A&M*
- 61 STATE OF CONFUSION  
The Kinks *Arista*
- 62 KEEP IT UP  
Loverboy *Columbia*
- 63 TRASH IT UP  
Southside Johnny & The Jukes *Mirage*
- 64 DURAN DURAN  
Duran Duran *Capitol*
- 65 NO FRILLS  
Bette Midler *Atlantic*
- 66 WHAT IS BEAT  
English Beat *IRS*
- 67 TWANG BAR KING  
Adrian Belew *Island*
- 68 TEXAS FLOOD  
Stevie Ray Vaughan *Epic*
- 69 SHE WORKS HARD FOR THE MONEY  
Donna Summer *Mercury*
- 70 PLEASURE VICTIM  
Berlin *Geffen*
- 71 ALPHA  
Asia *Geffen*
- 72 CLOSE TO THE BONE  
Tom Tom Club *Sire*
- 73 1999  
Prince *Warner Bros.*
- 74 LISTEN  
Flock of Seagulls *Jive/Arista*
- 75 KILLER ON THE RAMPAGE  
Eddy Grant *Portrait/CBS*

- 76 BUSINESS AS USUAL  
Men at Work *Columbia*
- 77 NAKED EYES  
Naked Eyes *EMI*
- 78 MADNESS  
Madness *Geffen*
- 79 ALBUM  
Joan Jett & The Blackhearts *MCA*
- 80 GET IT RIGHT  
Aretha Franklin *Arista*
- 81 TRAVELS  
Pat Metheny *ECM*
- 82 THE HURTING  
Tears For Fears *Mercury*
- 83 PIECE OF MIND  
Iron Maiden *Capitol*
- 84 TOO LOW FOR ZERO  
Elton John *Geffen*
- 85 FRONTIER  
Journey *Columbia*
- 86 SECRET MESSAGES  
ELO *Jet*
- 87 GIRL AT HER VOLCANO  
Rickie Lee Jones *Warner Bros.*
- 88 WHAMMY  
B-52's *Warner Bros.*
- 89 INFORMATION  
Dave Edmunds *CBS*
- 90 NEW GOLD DREAMS  
Simple Minds *A&M*
- 91 FIELD DAY  
Marshall Crenshaw  
*Warner Bros.*
- 92 STAYING ALIVE  
Soundtrack *RSO*
- 93 KISSING TO BE CLEVER  
Culture Club *Virgin/Epic*
- 94 OUTSIDE INSIDE  
Tubes *Capitol*
- 95 JARREAU  
Al Jarreau *Warner Bros.*
- 96 WHITE FEATHERS  
Kajagoogoo *EMI*
- 97 TAKE ANOTHER PICTURE  
Quarterflash *Geffen*
- 98 THE KEY  
Joan Armatrading *A&M*
- 99 BODY WISHES  
Rod Stewart *Warner Bros.*
- 100 YOU BOUGHT IT, YOU NAME IT  
Joe Walsh *Full Moon*

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## NEW R.E.M. LP DUE IN APRIL

*Buck says new songs are "all guitar-oriented"*

ATLANTA—"You know how second albums are," opines R.E.M. guitarist Pete Buck. "It's the point where people decide if you're a flash-in-the-pan or if you've actually got something."

Second record jitters have hardly paralyzed this prolific Athens quartet: after three days of recording in early December R.E.M. had seven songs ready for mixing. With 20 tunes vying for spots on the band's



PHOTO LAURA LEVINE

**R.E.M.: Prolific and confident second time around**

follow-up to last year's highly-regarded *Murmur* LP, material seems not to be much of a problem. As yet untitled, the album is slated for mid-April release, with a single likely to appear at the end of February.

To record their new album, R.E.M. returned to Reflection Sound Studios in Charlotte, North Carolina, where *Murmur* was done. And the band is again working with producers Mitch Easter and Don Dixon. But Buck asserts that some shifts in direction are in store.

"So far the songs are really all guitar-oriented," he says. "There isn't a whole lot of overdubbing; there's hardly any acoustic guitars. We overdub a fair amount of guitars, but there aren't keyboards and cellos and stuff. It's a lot more straight ahead. We knew we had a hard act to follow, so we concentrated the whole year on writing songs."

As for mystery man Michael Stipe's lyrics, Buck suggests that some relief may be in sight. There are no plans for a lyric sheet, "but most of the stuff is coming along so that the lyrics are a lot more understandable—I think. A good portion of them, anyway. Some of them are still going to be completely out there, but that's okay. We're real confident at this point."

—Anthony DeCurtis

## PYLON THROWS IN THE TOWEL

*Athens torchbearers are 'just tired of rock music'*

ATLANTA—Pylon, the arty dance band that helped establish Athens, Georgia, as home of the New South Wave, has called it quits after nearly five years. "From the very start, all we ever said was, as long as it's fun, we'll keep doin' it," states bassist Michael Lachowski. "The only career decision we ever made is that we were going to break up."

This easy-going attitude epitomizes the fun-as-art ethic enshrined by the B-52's and handed down to Pylon, R.E.M., Love Tractor, and other Athens bands. Pylon's break-up is particularly discouraging because the quartet's acclaimed *Chomp* LP, released earlier this year, more than delivered on the promise of their impressive 1980 debut, *Gyrate*. Lachowski, though, insists that "the music scene, at least the one we were involved in, has disappeared. The independent label business is getting harder and harder, and the role of the small, quirky, individual-sounding band seems to be less important now."

While Lachowski states that the band was never "disappointed" with its lack of broad, commercial success, Athens observers note that Pylon seemed to lose spirit when they bogged down recording *Chomp* and were eclipsed on the local and national scene by R.E.M. The two bands are close friends (R.E.M. has added Py-

lon's "Crazy" to its live shows as a tribute), which only made things worse.

Speculation aside, however, Lachowski,

and return to the activity that brought them there in the first place. "All of us are real excited about art," Lachowski reports. "When we got into music, it was because of the art scene. The music scene became so big that the art thing withered away in this town. We're gonna start campaignin' more



**Pylon: Making good on a vow to break up**

vocalist Vanessa Briscoe, guitarist Randy Bewley and drummer Curtis Crowe all seem content. They plan to stay in Athens

for the art thing, 'cause at this point we're just tired of rock music."

—Anthony DeCurtis

PHOTO LAURA LEVINE



# THE ART OF TAKING IT EASY

*The Elvis Brothers lighten up (and clean up) their act*

NEW YORK—Graham Walker of the Elvis Brothers has a vivid recollection of the day the Champaign, Illinois, trio realized it was time to clean up their act. Back in their fraternity party days, the Brothers had a standing offer to anyone who would come onstage and relieve himself of his precious bodily fluids.

"We were a little crazy back then," says bassist Walker. "Hell, we never thought anybody would do it."

Of course, one night in Springfield, Illinois, a young man volunteered. "I looked him in the eye," Walker recalls, "and I knew he was gonna do it. The guy put one hand on the mic and one hand on the cymbals and concentrated with all his might—you know, it isn't easy to take a leak when a crowd is screaming at you. Anyway, the crazy bastard had all this pee coming out of the bottom of his pants and he just went back to his seat and sat there with the most miserable expression on his face that I've ever seen."

Walker quickly realized the dare was "an amazingly classless thing for us to do. We retired that little stunt right then and there."

Today the trio no longer finds it neces-

sary to appeal to the lowest common denominator. Since that night in Springfield a couple of years ago, the band has toured with Men at Work, Culture Club, the Clash and Adam Ant, and recently released a debut LP on Epic, *Movin' Up*, an impressive showcase for their scaled-down amalgamation of rockabilly, English pop and light R&B. "Before we formed this band we always went about things very seriously," says guitarist Rob Newhouse. "That was the wrong way. So we said, Let's have a good time and forget all the

pressure. It's been working pretty well."

But hasn't anyone told the Elvis Brothers that rock 'n' roll is not one big party? "Sure," says Graham Walker. "Radio tells us that all the time." —Mark Mehler

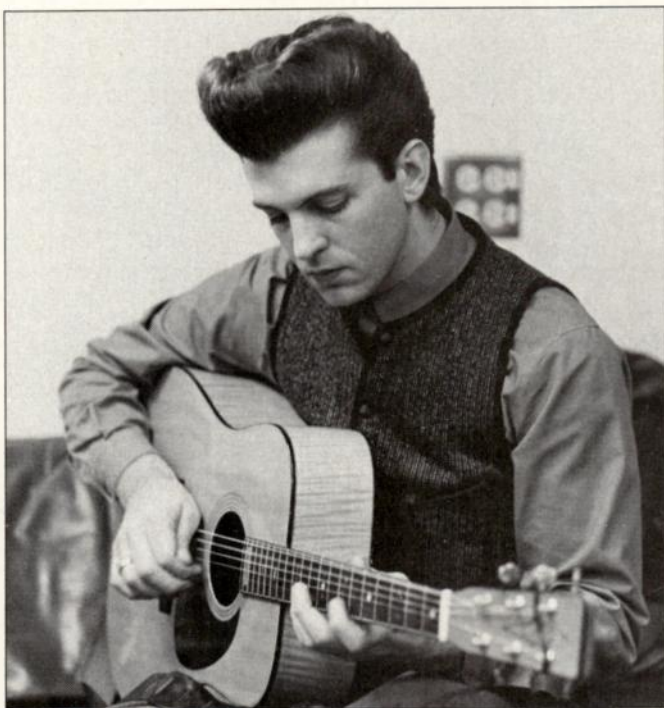


PHOTO: BILL HOLLEN/PIX INTL

**Graham Walker: The old days had their moments, but life is good out of the fast lane**

# TIM FINN, WITHOUT SHAME

*Split Enz founder pours out his heart on solo debut*

OAKLAND, Ca.—Tim Finn was in love when he stepped out of Split Enz to record his solo debut, *Escapade*, and it shows in the music. "I was feeling really positive

about things, and I tended to go for the simpler approach and wrote from a male-female point of view. Like every writer, I was very much influenced by what was going on in my life," he says. "I was unashamedly pouring out my heart, and I loved doing it."

Finn, a New Zealand native who founded Split Enz with his brother Neil 11 years ago, originally intended to make his solo project exactly that—"Me sitting in the studio with a drum machine and maybe one other person"—but it

became a team effort, "like stepping out of one band and into another." His producers, Ricky Fataar and Mark Moffatt, brought out American influences that Finn didn't realize he had, even though Fataar is a South African who only lived in the States for a few years and Moffatt is an Australian. "I was brought up on radio music in the very late '50s and early '60s, and I've always slavishly followed the English groups. I hadn't realized there was so much American influence in my background." As a result, the American label displayed much more enthusiasm toward *Escapade* than anyone—least of all Tim Finn—expected. "I had fairly modest aims for the record," he says. "I suppose deep inside I was looking for a release, but I decided to take it as it came. A&M Records even gave me a very generous video budget as well."

Recording a solo album—which he hopes to do again between Split Enz projects—"made me feel fresh, like a new artist again. It was a shot in the arm for the old bugger."

"Split Enz is still the main event and always will be," Finn insists. "I'm very much a band man, period. It's sort of like being a bit naughty, running out and doing something on my own and then running back to the family. I didn't want to lose it up—it would've been embarrassing to the guys." —David Gans

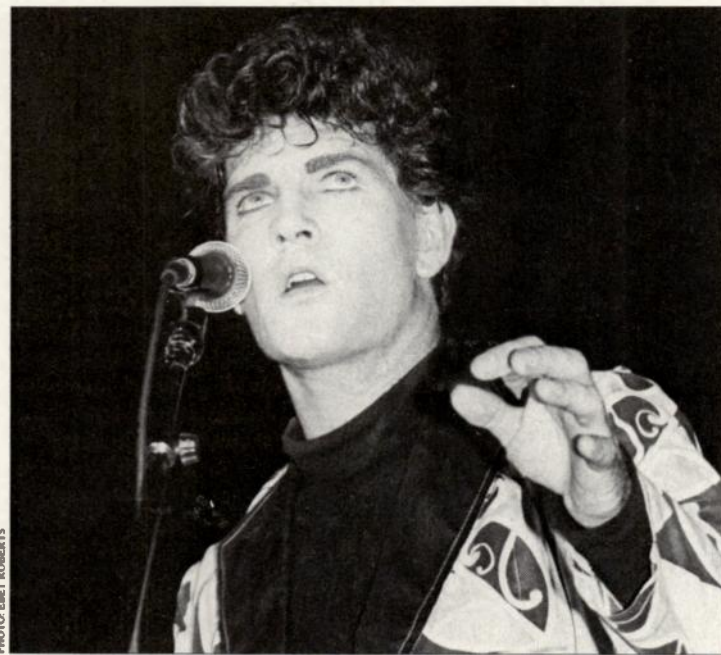


PHOTO: EMBET ROBERTS

**Finn: "Deep inside I was looking for a release"**



# SCOTS ON THE (FOLK) ROCK

*The Bluebells are updating the Sixties, Scottish style*

NEW YORK—So there's this young group from Glasgow, and they play music heavily influenced by mid-'60s folk rock, and Elvis Costello rates them highly, and... No, this isn't an accidental reprinting of last year's Aztec Camera story—we're talking the Bluebells here.

"It's perfectly reasonable to lump us together (with Aztec Camera)," says outspoken guitarist Robert Hodgens in a nearly undecipherable Scottish brogue. "We all hung out together, trading records—it was like a club." The records the five Bluebells—Hodgens, bassist Lawrence Donegan, second guitarist Russell Irvine, and brothers Ken and David McLusky handling vocals and drums, respectively—apparently dealt in were Buffalo Springfield, Byrds and Searchers platters, for their sound, as evidenced by their self-titled mini-album on Sire, abounds with harmonies soaring over jangly chords played on big Gretsch guitars, all c. 1965. But this is no nostalgia trip for an era which they barely saw firsthand: "We didn't grow up in the '60s—we're trying to do our thing for the '80s," Hodgens stresses.

Their thing is done in the U.K. for London Records, a subsidiary of the Polygram conglomerate, which makes their appearance on the Warners-distributed Sire a bit puzzling. "We were thinking of signing with CBS in England," singer McLusky claims, "but then we would have been on CBS worldwide, and we wanted to remain somewhat independent." Their goal of independence backfired a bit, though, when Sire released its mini-LP collection of the band's first efforts. "They got all the wrong masters on it, there's outtakes on it, and the sleeve is horrible," Hodgens laments. But they'll admit the problems are mainly

their fault: "We're naive sometimes, and not always very competent." Such honesty, and the clannishness which binds the group together on and off stage is refreshing, and lies at the heart of the Bluebells'



**The Bluebells: Naive and not always competent**

## OF UNDETERMINED ORIGIN

*Under which rock do JoBoxers live?*

NEW YORK—"We're not middle class," says drummer Sean McLusky of JoBoxers, a London-based quintet represented on

these shores by a debut LP, *Gangbusters*, on RCA. "Well, we're sort of working class, actually, between working class and

middle class, maybe sort of middle class... hell, I don't know what we are."

In trying to outline the social roots of JoBoxers, McLusky does somewhat better when he sticks to facts and leaves analysis to analysts.

"Four of us were living in Camden Town in London, putting on the dole, working under another name, Subway Sect, playing very lightweight, soft pop. It wasn't very interesting, until Dig (Wayne, the American expatriate vocalist) came along. We finally had a real front presence, a fresh voice, with good

fresh-scrubbed appeal. And that's how they'd like to keep it, claims Hodgens: "We're not trying to be super human beings, like Duran Duran; there's a good chance you could feel personally involved with us."  
—Wayne King

range. Then we really started to put all our energy into the band."

Though the music improved immediately, the social conditions, if anything, regressed. McLusky, Wayne and bassist Chris Bostock holed up in a "squat" house, a building said by the state to be unfit for human habitation. When the others moved on, McLusky stayed. Sitting in an office in the RCA building, he expresses concern that he'll return to find the place ravaged. Then he decides, "It's okay, because I don't own anything. But on the other hand, I do get free electric, free rent, three floors to myself. I mean, we only pay ourselves a small wage."

Thus JoBoxers still hang loosely about the fringes of Britain's labor classes. A number three charted record there hasn't elevated them to any position of power. "It's a long-range thing," opines Wayne, whose experiences in other rock bands taught him how the business can get very silly very fast. "Fads come and go. We're just doing some three-chord rock, some swing, some R&B, complete songs, and keeping a sense of humor, because there's nothing stupider than being cool without it. Influences don't change much, only attitudes."  
—Mark Mehler



**JoBoxers: Small wages, generous attitudes**



# IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING

*West Germany's Nena write what they feel*

remain thus for the time being. Epic has no immediate plans to release an album or for Nena to tour here, despite impressive sales throughout Western Europe. Again, that language barrier looms, but Kerner has at

NEW YORK—Gabriele Susanne Kerner (aka Nena), of the West German rock group Nena, has been singing in English for years, but not until recently did she understand a word of it. The old songs were fine, she says, but something important was missing—feeling.

"I had no relationship to the lyrics, no idea what I was singing about," she explains during a visit to the home office of Epic Records, the band's U.S. label. "Finally I said this isn't rock 'n' roll and went back to singing in German."

All well and good, but most of the money to be made in this business is contained in the country sometimes called the U.S. of A. So Kerner is back to singing in English, but with a better feel for it now. That's not to say, though, that the songs are translating well to another language. Nena's European hit, "99 Luftballons," for example, is a bouncy vision of accidental nuclear war that simply doesn't pack much punch when translated to English as "99 Red Balloons."

Is there no way out of this paradox?

"It's a complex question," agrees Kerner, who journeyed to West Berlin with her friend and drummer Rolf Brendel and linked up with three more local musicians to form Nena. "'99 Red Balloons' is not the same story. I guess you could say the German is like a picture, the English is like a comic strip."

And will



**Nena: But is the feeling right?**

# LESS THAN A JOYFUL NOISE

*"Metal music" is England's latest rivetting experience*

LONDON—"Rattle those pots and pans" advised a sage Joe Turner in "Shake, Rattle, and Roll." But in the history of rock music, noise was never quite like this. For one thing, it was never so noisy.

Since the new art rock has petered out, the latest musical trend in England, land of musical trends, is "metal music." But

we're not talking about Def Leppard here. The style may involve the occasional conventional guitarist, keyboard player, or singer, but mostly it involves huge chunks of sheet metal, rusting car bodies, scaffolding, and oil drums. These "instruments" are played with a variety of lead pipes and chains, as well as electric drills, hacksaws,

least been able to put the problem in some perspective. "We have to write what we feel," she states. "We can't do any better than that."

—Mark Mehler

and jackhammers.

The result is not what you'd call melodious. But bands like New Zealand's SPK, Berlin's Einstürzende Neubauten, and Britain's own Test Department, all of whom have found an artistic home in London, have a certain demented visual appeal. As the rhythm players hop around looking for something to bash and something to bash it with, one gets the impression of barely controlled, industrial-strength anarchy. Jools Holland, introducing SPK on a recent edition of the rock TV show *The Tube*, described the band's show as "a rivetting experience."

The whole thing may sound rather unlikely, but A&R people are already investing cash in the notion that metal music, or as it is also known, "foundry" or "scrapyard" rock, has a future. Test Department and Einstürzende Neubauten have already signed recording contracts.

And the bands have already tangled with the authorities. Test Department was arrested at a recent London concert for violations of various obscure licensing and zoning ordinances. An SPK appearance at London's Venue club was halted after it became clear that sparks from their machinery presented a fire hazard, and that the lengths of chain they were swinging posed a health hazard for fans at the front of the stage.

—Crispin Sartwell



**A member of the German rock group Einstürzende Neubauten cuts loose on a solo for jackhammer**

PHOTO ANDREW CATLIN



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JONATHAN GROSS ●

# WHO CARES WHAT DIRK WEARS?

Underwhelmed  
by Adam Ant



PHOTO GERARD MANKOWITZ/RETNA LTD

Adam Ant in repose: A difficult transition from novelty to novel

I don't drink and I don't smoke. But whatever it is I do do . . . no, no . . . let's do that again. I don't drink and I don't smoke. What do I do? I don't know. But whatever it is I do do, I'm going to keep on doing it in 1984."

"Sorry Adam," yells the floor director at MTV's studio on Manhattan's west side. "You lost eye contact with the camera. One more time."

After about five takes Adam Ant nails

down a passable holiday greeting for MTV's audience. As a performance the whole sequence was uncomfortable to watch, and had all the gusto of flat light beer. Sans band, footlights and the adoring tribes that clothe his character, Adam looks very much naked out there and slightly shrivelled, not much larger than nearby munchkin, VJ Martha Quinn.

One is tempted to add the word "lonely" to that description, but that would infer

that Adam is "at the top," as the saying goes. For he is most definitely not, not here anyways, where he returned from the edge of the abyss last year with the make-or-break album *Friend Or Foe* and a dog-eat-dogged 120-date tour. The way he describes it, the whole adventure sounds like Lewis & Clark with MTV doing the recon work.

"MTV saved my career in the States," said Adam earlier, while holed up in a ter-



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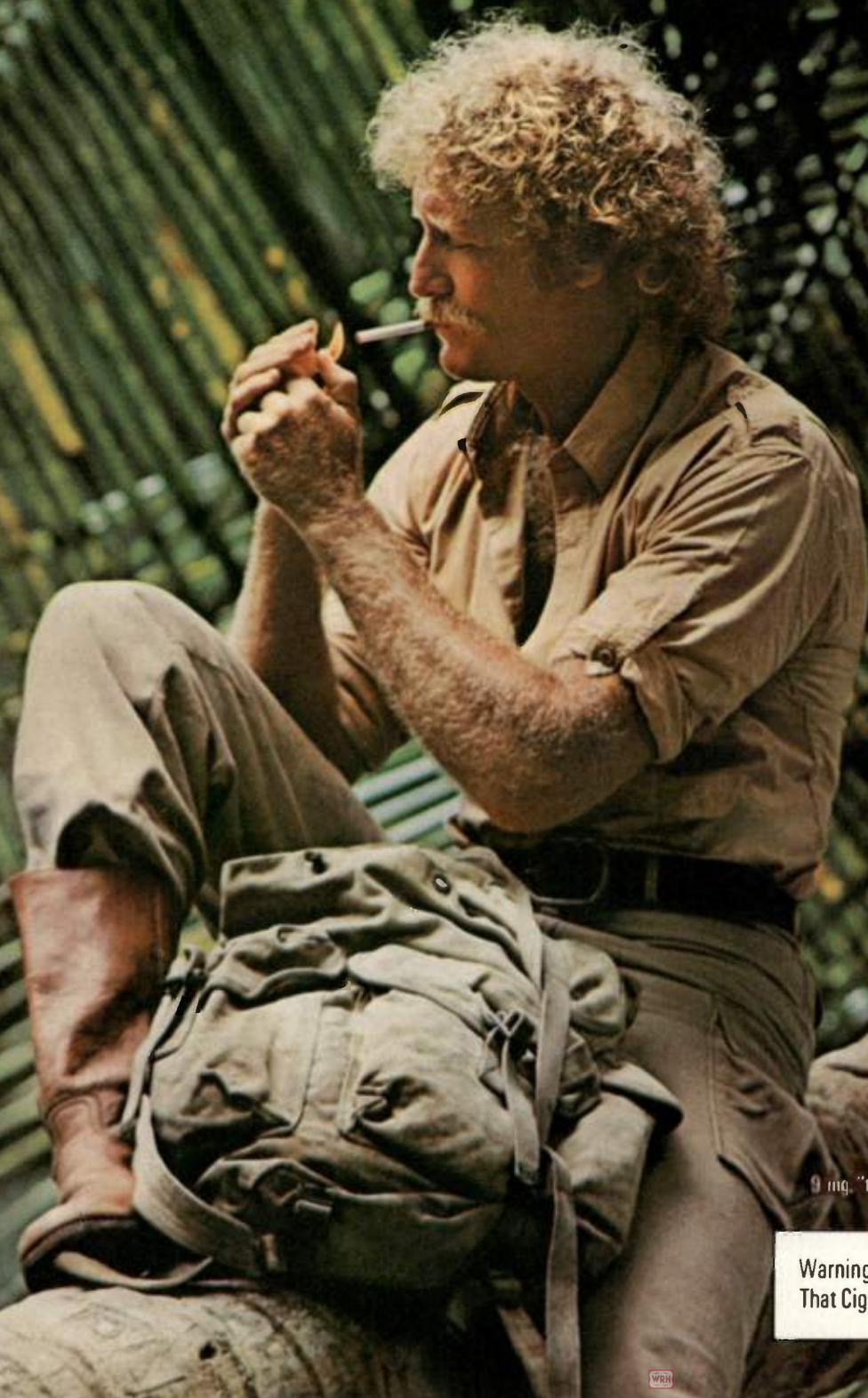


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ribly overpriced Central Park South hotel suite, laying the media groundwork for this year's 'Strip Show' tour supporting the *Strip* album. "But I had decided before *Friend Or Foe* was released to really work America. I wasn't going to do nice, safe showcases any more where the audiences were going to dress great. We went out there, to Cleveland, Detroit, Shippensburg, Normal (Ill.), Norman—a lot of places a lot of Americans have never seen."

The whistle stops roll off his tongue in the grim cadence usually reserved for narrators of old Civil War flicks. You could almost hear a lone snare drum in the background. But Adam feels he was fighting other people's battles; and watching Boy George waltz onto the Carson show with his pal, Joan Rivers, causes him to be uncharacteristically bitter.

"When I went on the Tom Snyder show three years ago you couldn't just sit there and giggle and be wonderful," says Adam, who says he is not usually given to slagging off contemporaries. "He's basically lucky that a lot of groups have come over here since and kept bashing on the door. To me, minor celebrities in London are just Bowie clones, and that's what George is."

For someone who signs his checks "Adam Ant" to engage in a debate over substance and celebrity is a potentially dangerous gambit.

"The media are very good at looking at you, using you, thinking you're just a freak show while taking every pitch about your life, your family and where you're from," says Adam, who is, if nothing else, a survivor of his own hype. "The last thing that's taken into consideration is any real value. You're a novelty and the transition from being a novelty to novel is difficult in the U.S.A."

"Image has overtaken reality" wrote Barbara Goldsmith in a *New York Times Magazine* article, "The Meaning of Celebrity," that supports what Adam is saying. But where does that leave him, who was once a graphic arts student named Stuart Goddard? There was a time, back in the late '70s, when Adam & The Ants, attracting a London cult following of "all the best-looking punks," maintained a certain roguish charm.

However, the soul of *Dirk Wears White Sox*, their first album, has long been sold for a career as a Top 40 star. Though he denies he's a pop star, as does Spandau Ballet's Martin Kemp—"Popular but not

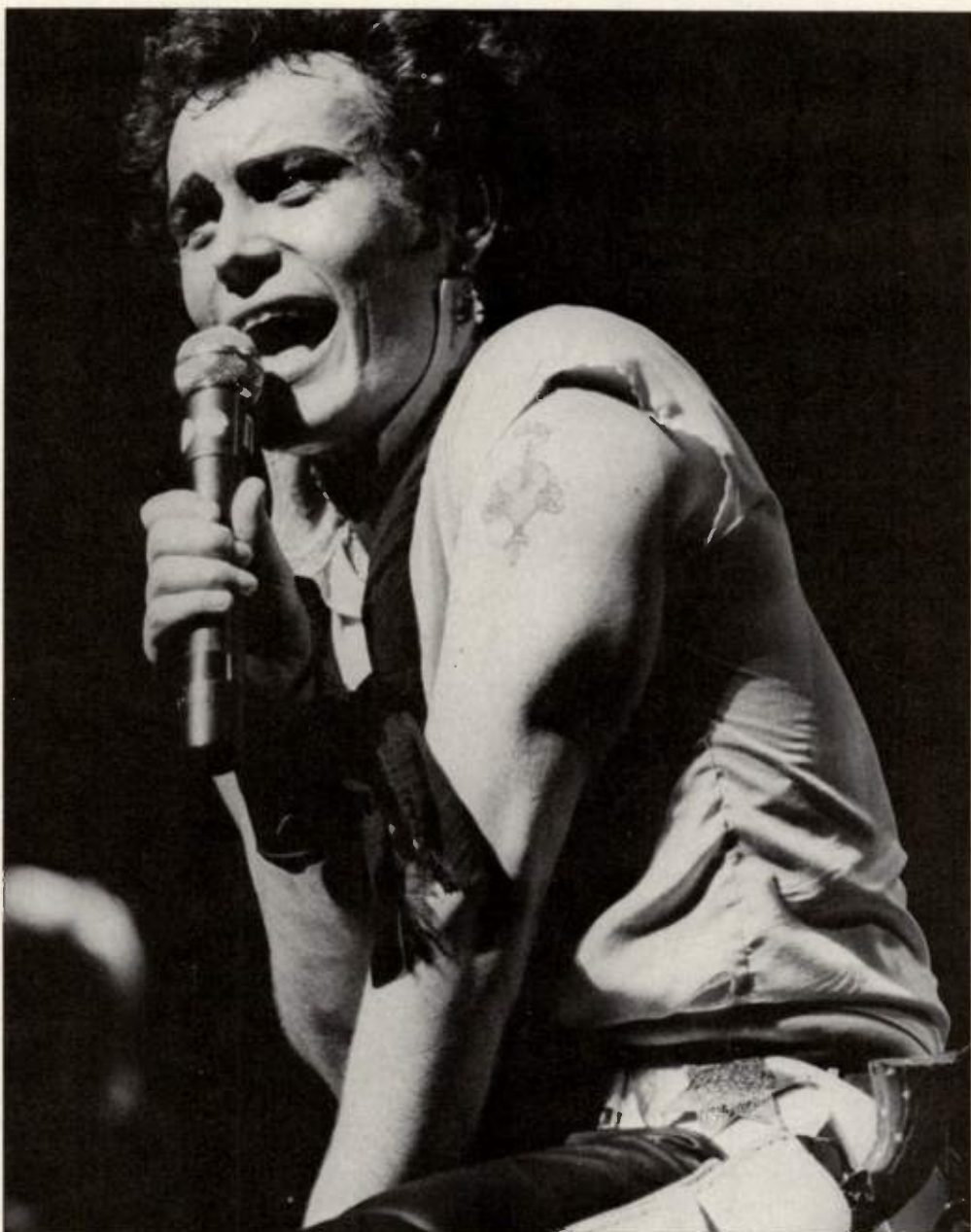


PHOTO MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA LTD

**"... you'd end up with something that is very fashionable but has no sense of style or direction at all"**

pop," says Kemp—the contributions by Phil Collins to *Strip* (drums and co-production on the two singles) would seem a calculated effort by Adam to crack mainstream rock.

"Collins was the only man who could give me the sound quality I needed," roars Adam in response to the mere suggestion, his south London accent at full crank. "I met him over a cup of tea with no big negotiations, we recorded and that was it. If you want to talk about the rock establishment, there's the Clash supporting the Who. They've got money, they make money. It's a joke, a complete farce.

"I'm not into that hypocritical thing, that 'I'm from the gutter and don't you forget it cause I won't.' Or, 'I've got the money but let's not talk about it because I'm the same person I was.' I don't think there's anything wrong with working very

hard, going through a lot of shit and being successful. I give everything I can on stage. And I put back everything I make.

"I've suffered for the way I look," Adam remonstrates, his small ponytail the only reminder of his war-painted past. That Adam is no longer fashionable actually works for him. Having done its job, the pirate/savage look bought from Malcolm McLaren in 1980 (McLaren then nicked the Ants and rebuilt them as Bow Wow Wow) has been summarily dismissed, thus allowing its most noted (only?) adherent to proclaim he's "never taken notice of what is current or what is hip or not hip," to which he adds one more startling nugget: "If you did, you'd end up with something that is very fashionable but has no sense of style or direction at all."

Ladies and gentlemen, Adam Ant, naked as the day he was born. ○



# ROOTS 'N' ROCK Con Salsa

Los Lobos spring from the East Los Angeles barrio with

a compelling blend of Tex-Mex, swing, bop and R&B.

All ingredients are guaranteed authentic

By Dan Forte

P a l o A l t o , C a .

STRIKING HIS BEST ROCK STAR pose, complete with obligatory leather pants and shag haircut, the stage hand opens the dressing room door. "Are you guys *Las Lobos*?" he asks.

The band and crew members, all Chicanos, nod silently, ignoring the grammatical error. "Well, you're in the wrong room," says the welcoming committee. "Your dressing room is the little one at the end of the hall."

Having just settled in after a long rainy drive from Los Angeles, the members of *Los Lobos* prepare to bug out. Not a moment too soon, the group's road manager, known simply as Mouse, appears. "The Plimsouls said it was okay for us to share their dressing room," he informs the stage hand. The musicians sit back down as the soundman arrives to tell them they've got 20 minutes in which to do a soundcheck.

Onstage, go-fers dressed like teen idols adjust monitors and cables while *Los Lobos* (dressed more like factory workers) wait their turn. Louie Pérez sets up his modest drumkit in front of the Plimsouls' drum riser. Conrad Lozano—wearing a gray sweatsuit (the kind you wore in high school P.E., not the designer variety)—straps on his Fender bass. Cesar Rosas, the hefty lefty in sunglasses, tunes his bajo sexto. "What's this mic for?" the stage hand

asks guitarist David Hidalgo.

"That's for my accordion," he says without a hint of embarrassment. The perplexed look on the stage hand's face is one that Hidalgo is by now familiar with.

After the tedious but necessary procedure of checking the levels on each drum and guitar, a voice comes from the sound booth at the back of the club. "You want to run through a song?"

One almost expects to hear a collective guttural "Sí," but instead the players just nod in unison and glance at each other. After a quick countdown from Pérez, the quartet blasts off with "How Much Can I Do," an original from their recent *Slash EP*, . . . *And A Time To Dance*.

Suddenly the room is filled with an odd but contagious blend of electric guitars and push-button accordions propelled by Pérez' hybrid polka rhythm, heavy on the off-beats. An unsmiling look of determination lines each face, as Hidalgo sings in a powerful unaffected style: "To show I love you, sugar/Baby, hear me through/I'll quit hanging around those topless bars/And stay right here with you."

At song's end a round of applause comes up from the stage hands, go-fers, waitresses, and sound engineers. No longer impatient with the "warm-up act," they request an encore. Allowing themselves their first grin since unloading their van, *Los Lobos* oblige.

On the basis of a 12-inch seven-song EP and paying a lot of dues on the Hollywood club circuit, *Los Lobos*, probably the least contrived band to come out of L.A. in years, has become the Southland's most talked about act. The quartet blends traditional norteño folk music with Tex-Mex rock 'n' roll, swing, bop, and R&B the way a great chef tosses in seemingly random herbs and spices to come up with a thick,

hot salsa. There are no artificial ingredients to be found in *Los Lobos*' music—no hype, no pretense, no posturing, no bullshit at all. They have the unique ability to make something brand new sound comfortable and familiar, while rejuvenating the old sound.

The group was formed in 1974 from various East L.A. garage bands. Dissatisfied with the prevailing Top 40 trend in the community, the four began playing acoustic folk music—the kind they grew up with but never paid much attention to. "When we started doing this, it was unhip to do," stresses Pérez. "Young people like us playing folk music—they'd never heard of it. Everyone just wanted to hear the Top 10."

"We died," Rosas admits, with a laugh.

After releasing two self-produced traditional LPs, *Los Lobos* gradually allowed electric instruments and contemporary styles to seep into their music. "At first we were real purist," explains Lozano. "But we put the accordion into our show, then I started playing electric bass, instead of upright or guitarron. Then Louie, who'd been playing woodblock, brought out his drums. It took about a month for us to change from all acoustic to what we have now."

Still, *Los Lobos*' electrified hybrid was no better accepted in the Chicano neighborhood than their folk music had been, so they began playing clubs in Hollywood, where to their surprise audiences were generally more open-minded. "There's no place for original music in East L.A.," states Pérez. "To get where we are now, we had to go to the West Side. Quite a few of our old friends still travel to the West Side to check us out, but East L.A. is pretty isolated. It's their fault that they don't go across the river and see what's going on in Hollywood clubs."





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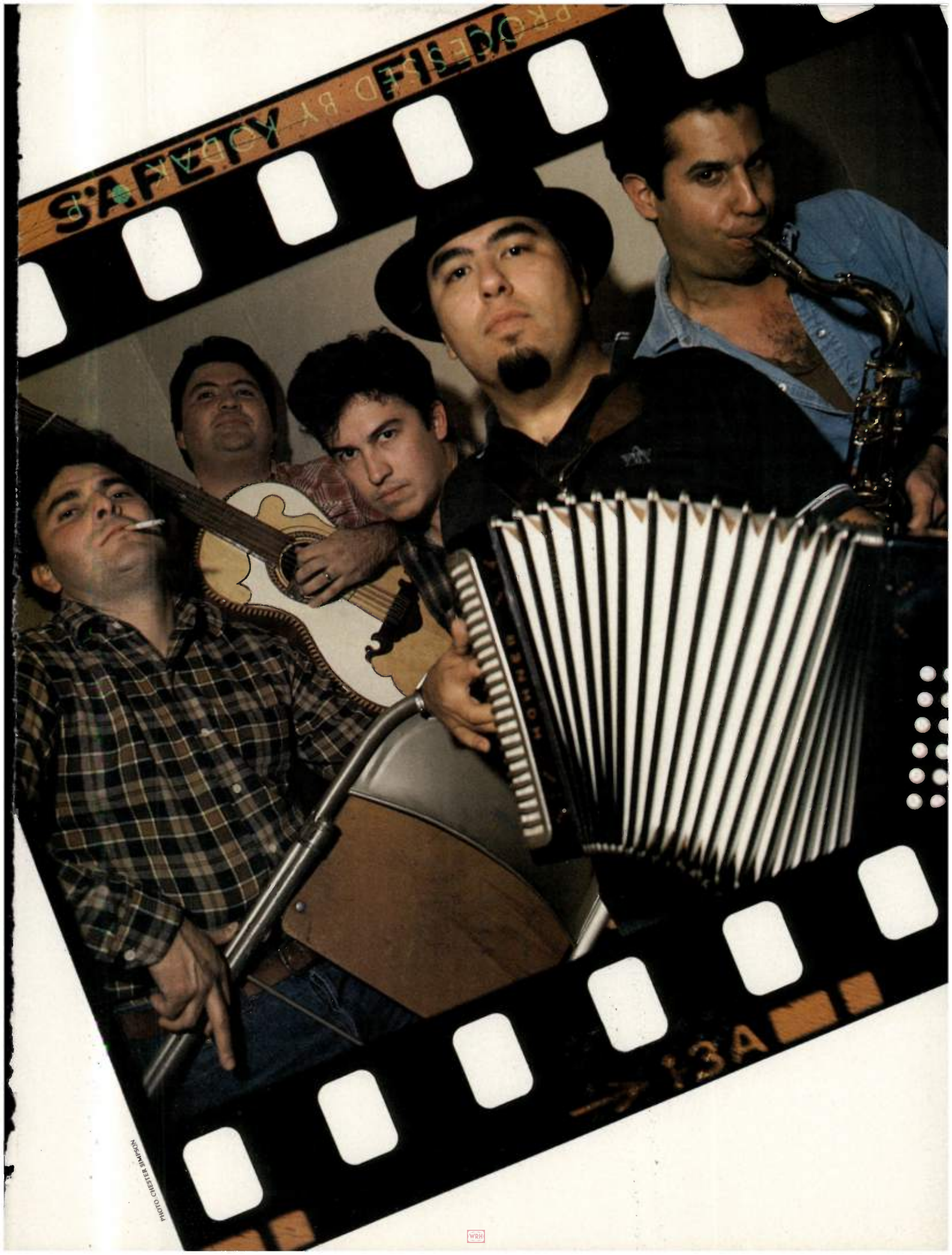


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PHOTO: HOWARD ROSENBERG

**Los Lobos (from left) Conrad Lozano, Louie Perez, David Hidalgo, Cesar Rosas.**

Not all bills they played on were compatible, though, and not all audiences were receptive. One of their first experiments with a punk audience was opening for Public Image, Ltd. "We got flipped off by 6,000 people at the same time," Lozano remembers. "There was like a big gust of wind from all their middle fingers going into the air at once."

Opening for the Blasters at L.A.'s Whiskey-A-Go-Go two-and-a-half years ago, they met saxophonist Steve Berlin, who subsequently co-produced (with T-Bone Burnett) . . . *And A Time To Dance* and tours with Los Lobos whenever his itinerary with the Blasters allows. "After our soundcheck, I was upstairs," recalls Berlin of his introduction to the group, "and I heard this great music coming from the stage. They asked me if I'd like to sit in, and, not knowing at that time how difficult it is to play this stuff, I said sure."

"The alto saxophone is an essential part of traditional Tex-Mex music," Pérez points out. "Steve's a little different because he plays tenor."

"It was a real challenge," the saxophonist continues. "It's a completely different concept and feel—unlike jazz, unlike rock, unlike anything. It broadened my perceptions of the way I play."

Berlin got the proper feel right away, however, as Pérez recounts: "David was showing him this one line, and they were playing it together. I thought, God, that would make my mother cry if she could hear this."

As for his role as co-producer, Berlin says, "There wasn't a whole lot for me to do but stay out of the way."

Burnett, a Texan whose own records reflect his awareness of the Tex-Mex traditions central to Los Lobos' music, found working with the group "very easy. They haven't had a tremendous amount of experience in the studio, but basically we did the songs live, vocals and all. There were just a couple of minor adjustments in the arrangements. Mostly I was just listening. That's the most fun when you produce a record, when all you have to do is listen." Asked what he thinks of the band's chance of sustaining a recording career, Burnett says, "I don't know about careers—I'm out of my depth."

According to Pérez, Burnett "was real sensitive about transferring all that technology into what we want to get out of, say, the accordion."

Artistically, the EP is an unqualified success, having placed high on several 1983 critics' polls (including *RECORD*'s). Hidalgo and Pérez collaborated on three tunes, and Rosas contributed one. The originals are the LP's strongest, most focused tracks. Hidalgo exhibits more than just a passing acquaintance with bebop guitar on "Walking Song," while Rosas shows off his Chuck Berry chops on "Why Do You Do." The two guitarists split lead vocal duties throughout, with Rosas handling the record's two Spanish songs.

Hidalgo delivers an energetic, heartfelt tribute to the late Ritchie Valens on "Come On, Let's Go," the '50s star's first single. "Ritchie Valens was kind of a hero, as a Chicano artist," says Hidalgo, "so we did that out of respect for him."

"He's more like an inspiration than an influence," adds Pérez.

With the exception of Carlos Santana—who grew up in Tijuana, Mexico, and rose to fame by incorporating Afro-Cuban rhythms into modern rock—Los Lobos may become the first Chicano rock stars since Valens, who died in 1959 in the same plane crash that took the lives of Buddy Holly and the Big Bopper. There were a few isolated hits by Chicano groups in the mid '60s—such as Thee Midnitters, the Premiers, and Cannibal & the Headhunters (recently reissued by Zyanya Records)—but most working bands from the East L.A. barrio have little connection with the past or their Chicano roots.

"Groups like Thee Midnitters were local heroes," affirms Pérez. "But after that, it pretty much died out. It got to be all Top 40 bands, with no place for anything else. Now, because of the alternative types of music going on in England, there are a handful of groups, like the Brat, who are exploring that. Some are carrying real heavy political messages, but we don't. There's a way to get to people without picket signs and all that. It's like poisoning someone who doesn't know he's being poisoned," he laughs.

In fact, about the only thing Chicano about groups like the Brat, the Plugz, and the Odd Squad are the surnames of the groups' members. Moreover, their faceless pop/punk has not reached the masses with the impact that Los Lobos' mixture of roots and rock has. "What's amazing," concludes Pérez, "is that we'll be singing a Tex-Mex song in Spanish, and all different colored people will be dancing to it. It feels good to see all those people all together. That's important." ○



# 1983

## CRITIC'S POLL



PHOTO: PETER MAZZE/REXNA LTD



### TOP ALBUMS

1. U2, **WAR** Island
2. Michael Jackson, **THRILLER** Epic
3. R.E.M., **MURMUR** I.R.S.
4. Talking Heads, **SPEAKING IN TONGUES** Sire
5. Big Country, **THE CROSSING** Mercury
6. Richard Thompson, **HAND OF KINDNESS** Hannibal
7. T-Bone Burnett, **PROOF THROUGH THE NIGHT** Warner Bros.
8. Graham Parker, **THE REAL MACAW** Arista
9. Eddy Grant, **KILLER ON THE RAMPAGE** Ice/Portrait
10. Bob Dylan, **INFIDELS** Columbia
11. Culture Club, **COLOUR BY NUMBERS** Virgin/Epic
12. The Blasters, **NON FICTION** Slash/Warner Bros.
13. The Police, **SYNCHRONICITY** A&M
14. King Sunny Ade, **SYNCHRO SYSTEM** Mango/Island
15. Elvis Costello, **PUNCH THE CLOCK** Columbia
16. Culture Club, **KISSING TO BE CLEVER** Virgin/Epic
17. Eurythmics, **SWEET DREAMS (ARE MADE OF THIS)** RCA
18. Los Lobos, . . . **AND A TIME TO DANCE** Slash
19. David Bowie, **LET'S DANCE** EMI-America
20. Van Morrison, **INARTICULATE SPEECH OF THE HEART** Warner Bros.
21. Tom Waits, **SWORDFISH/TROMBONES** Island
22. Marshall Crenshaw, **FIELD DAY** Warner Bros.
23. New Order, **POWER, CORRUPTION AND LIES** Factory/Rough Trade

### TOP ALBUMS

For U2, 1983 was put up or shut up time. 1981's *October* LP showed them to be unable, momentarily, to follow through on the enormous promise displayed on their thrilling debut, *Boy*. 1982's lone, desultory single, "Celebration," offered little hope that they might find the right direction for their seemingly boundless promise. But all questions were answered with the arrival of *War*, a tumultuous collection of fiery, questing rockers, and whose best songs, "Sunday, Bloody Sunday" and "New Year's Day," hit hard, with a force that struck close to the strife-ridden Ireland U2 call home.

### TOP SONGS

The only surprise here is that the critics agreed with the record buying public for a change: 12 of our first 16 selections made the Top Ten at some point during 1983. The reasons for that are obvious—a lot of great songs—but the reasons for *that* are not entirely clear. Maybe it was the new wave's pre-occupation since its punk origins with the old (read: short) rock song forms; perhaps it's the dominant influence of black music which, even during these last few years of disco madness and 12-inch mania, has emphasized traditional songwriting concerns; or maybe one good song is all artists today are capable of delivering. The latter cynical viewpoint is borne out to some degree by the overwhelming vote for the Police's stunning "Every Breath You Take;" many of the same writers who voted that song of the year also voted *Synchronicity* as being overrated.

### OVERLOOKED RECORDS

If there is one constant here, it's the quality of the songwriting and the passion with which these performers ply their trade. And just maybe there's a touch of wistfulness present in the voting for a pre-electronic age; the instrumentation and most of the sounds on each of these albums had all been heard years ago, if not always played with the same degree of intelligence and verve obvious in these artists' best moments.





## TOP SONGS

1. The Police, **EVERY BREATH YOU TAKE** A&M
2. Michael Jackson, **BEAT IT** Epic
3. Talking Heads, **BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE** Sire
4. Michael Jackson, **BILLIE JEAN** Epic
5. Prince, **LITTLE RED CORVETTE** Warner Bros.
6. Eurythmics, **SWEET DREAMS (ARE MADE OF THIS)** RCA
7. Big Country, **IN A BIG COUNTRY** Mercury
8. Elvis Costello, **EVERYDAY I WRITE THE BOOK** Columbia
9. Eddy Grant, **ELECTRIC AVENUE** Ice/Portrait
10. R.E.M., **RADIO FREE EUROPE** I.R.S.
11. David Bowie, **LET'S DANCE** EMI-America
12. Dexys Midnight Runners, **COME ON, EILEEN** Mercury
13. Grandmaster Flash, **WHITE LINES** Sugarhill
14. Culture Club, **TIME (BEAT OF THE HEART)** Virgin/Epic
15. Prince, **1999** Warner Bros.
16. Lionel Richie, **ALL NIGHT LONG** Motown
17. U2, **NEW YEAR'S DAY** Island
18. Donna Summer, **SHE WORKS HARD FOR THE MONEY** Mercury
19. T-Bone Burnett, **SHUT IT TIGHT** Warner Bros.
20. Afrika Bambaataa and the Soulsonic Force, **LOOKING FOR THE PERFECT BEAT** Tommy Boy
21. George Clinton, **ATOMIC DOG** Capitol
22. Paul Young, **WHEREVER I LAY MY HAT (THAT'S MY HOME)** Columbia
23. Ian Hunter, **ALL OF THE GOOD ONES ARE TAKEN** Columbia
24. Herbie Hancock, **ROCKIT** Columbia
25. Men Without Hats, **THE SAFETY DANCE** Backstreet/MCA
26. Spandau Ballet, **TRUE** Chrysalis

## BIGGEST FLOPS

To paraphrase Bruce Springsteen's onstage introduction of Clarence Clemons, do we have to speak his name? **Neil Young**, despite hot and heavy competition from Linda McCartney's husband, virtually retires the trophy the first year it's even offered by copping the top two spots. Our writers' position was summed up nicely enough by Anthony DeCurtis, who wrote: "Be nice to get a real record next time."

## BEST DEBUTS

A very strong year for rookies; just how many will beat the ol' sophomore slump (you know, that syndrome whereby critics who rhapsodized over your initial work now have time for only the latest brand of eyeliner rock from Britain) remains to be seen. The first five choices, excepting Los Lobos, are all guitar-dominated quartets—could this be a trend, or the last gasp of the old rock style?

## COMEBACK OF THE YEAR

It's funny what a little thing like putting one's excursion into Christianity on the back burner and working with Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare will do for a guy's esteem. Those who loved *Infidels* thought it **Bob Dylan's** best work since 1975's *Blood On the Tracks*, although no consensus was reached as to what everyone liked about it: of its eight tracks, seven different ones received votes in the Top Songs category.



PHOTO: KEES TABAK/RETNA LTD.

## MOST OVERLOOKED RECORDS

1. Tom Waits, **SWORDFISH/TROMBONE** Island
2. T-Bone Burnett, **PROOF THROUGH THE NIGHT** Warner Bros.
3. Midnight Oil, **10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1** Columbia
4. NRBQ, **GROOVES IN ORBIT** Bearsville
5. The Plimsouls, **EVERYWHERE AT ONCE** Geffen



## TOP DEBUT ALBUMS

1. R.E.M., **MURMUR** I.R.S.
2. Big Country, **THE CROSSING** Mercury
3. Aztec Camera, **HIGH LAND, HARD RAIN** Sire
4. Los Lobos, **... AND A TIME TO DANCE** Slash
5. The Alarm, **THE ALARM** I.R.S.
6. Violent Femmes, **VIOLENT FEMMES** Slash
7. Stevie Ray Vaughan, **TEXAS FLOOD** Epic
8. Eurythmics, **SWEET DREAMS (ARE MADE OF THIS)** RCA
9. The Style Council, **INTRODUCING THE STYLE COUNCIL** Polydor
10. Tears For Fears, **THE HURTING** Mercury
11. Let's Active, **AFOOT** I.R.S.
12. Rank and File, **SUNDOWN** Slash



PAUL NATHAN/PHOTO RESERVE





PHOTO: LYNN GOLDENMITH

## COMEBACK OF THE YEAR

1. **BOB DYLAN**
2. **ANIMALS**
3. **JIM MORRISON**



## BIGGEST FLOPS

1. Neil Young, **TRANS** Geffen
2. Neil Young, **EVERYBODY'S ROCKIN'** Geffen
3. Paul McCartney, **PIPES OF PEACE** Columbia
4. Linda Ronstadt, **WHAT'S NEW** Asylum
5. Asia, **ALPHA** Geffen

## HEROES

Top spot goes to **U2** and **Bono Vox** for coming up with *War*, a great tour following it up, and for stirring up hopes that maybe, just this once, a rock band can live up to its professed ideals. Bono was specifically singled out for reasons summed up by J.D. Considine: "(Proving) it is still possible for a performer to use his status as a 'pop star' constructively . . . and demon-strat[ing] once again the sense of community rock can, when unencumbered by greed and show biz, create."

**Independent labels** are keeping rock alive by displaying much of the same care and concern for the music which made it great in the first place and for keeping alive that peculiar and endangered American idea—Do It Yourself—in a way truer to the spirit of community and interaction than the corporate mentality will ever be able to deal in. Special kudos to **Slash** and **Rhino** for respecting the past and the future with equal amounts of intelligence, humor and passion.

Despite some rare missteps for **Michael Jackson** near the end of the year—the dubious "Thriller" video, signing up with both Pepsi and Don King—there was no denying that his was the single most dominant presence on the scene this year. Who else has forty-seven million people still guessing how he did it on Motown's TV special, and who else has a record which might never come off the charts (and don't say Pink Floyd, either)? If you don't know the answer to that, all we can say is: wanna be startin' something?

## CHUMPS

**MTV** was the runaway winner, reflective enough of most contributors' wishes to see the rock cable network do just that: pack up and run away. Individual votes for executives **Bob Pittman**, **Les Garland** and poor **J.J. Jackson** were counted as part of the collective vote, since they are mere cogs in the mindless machinery reflecting everything stupid and venal about rock, advertising and the "non-linear television babies" generation sought after by MTV.

We have met the enemy, and he is US. Will an Apple a day keep **Steve Wozniak** away from rock 'n' roll this year?

For firing **Mick Jones**, and all the other nonsensical shenanigans—like telling everyone else at the US Festival how to spend their money—which have made this band as corrupt and dishonest a bunch as all the Boring Old Farts they've yet to dislodge from the charts.

## BEST LIVE ACTS

Although **U2** and **Talking Heads** might seem very far apart on paper, it was on stages around the world where they proved themselves to be ahead of the pack, giving us both power and subtlety in large doses and, oh yes, a righteous good time.

Participating Critics: Vince Aletti, Ken Braun, Nick Burton, Brian Chin, J.D. Considine, Anthony DeCurtis, Jody Denberg, Laura Fissinger, Bill Flanagan, Dan Forte, David Gans, Michael Goldberg, Jim Green, Jonathan Gregg, Jonathan Gross, Dan Hedges, Christopher Hill, Dean Johnson, Wayne King, Dave Marsh, David McGee, Derk Richardson, Crispin Sartwell, Michael Shore, Jim Sullivan, John Swenson, Craig Zeller.



PHOTO: BOBEN KAPLAN/RETNA LTD

## TOP LIVE ACTS

1. **U2**
2. **TALKING HEADS**
3. **KING SUNNY ADE**
4. **T-BONE BURNETT**
5. **R.E.M.**
6. **MARVIN GAYE**

## HEROES OF THE YEAR

1. **U2/BONO VOX**
2. **INDEPENDENT LABELS**  
with special kudos to **Slash** and **Rhino**
3. **MICHAEL JACKSON**

## CHUMPS OF THE YEAR

1. **MTV**
2. **STEVE WOZNIAK**
3. **JOE STRUMMER/THE CLASH**



LYNN GOLDENMITH



RETNA LTD

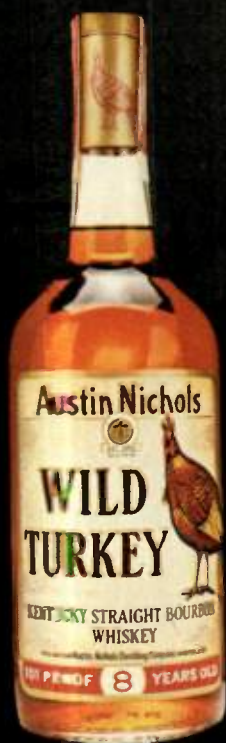


PHOTO: LYNN GOLDENMITH



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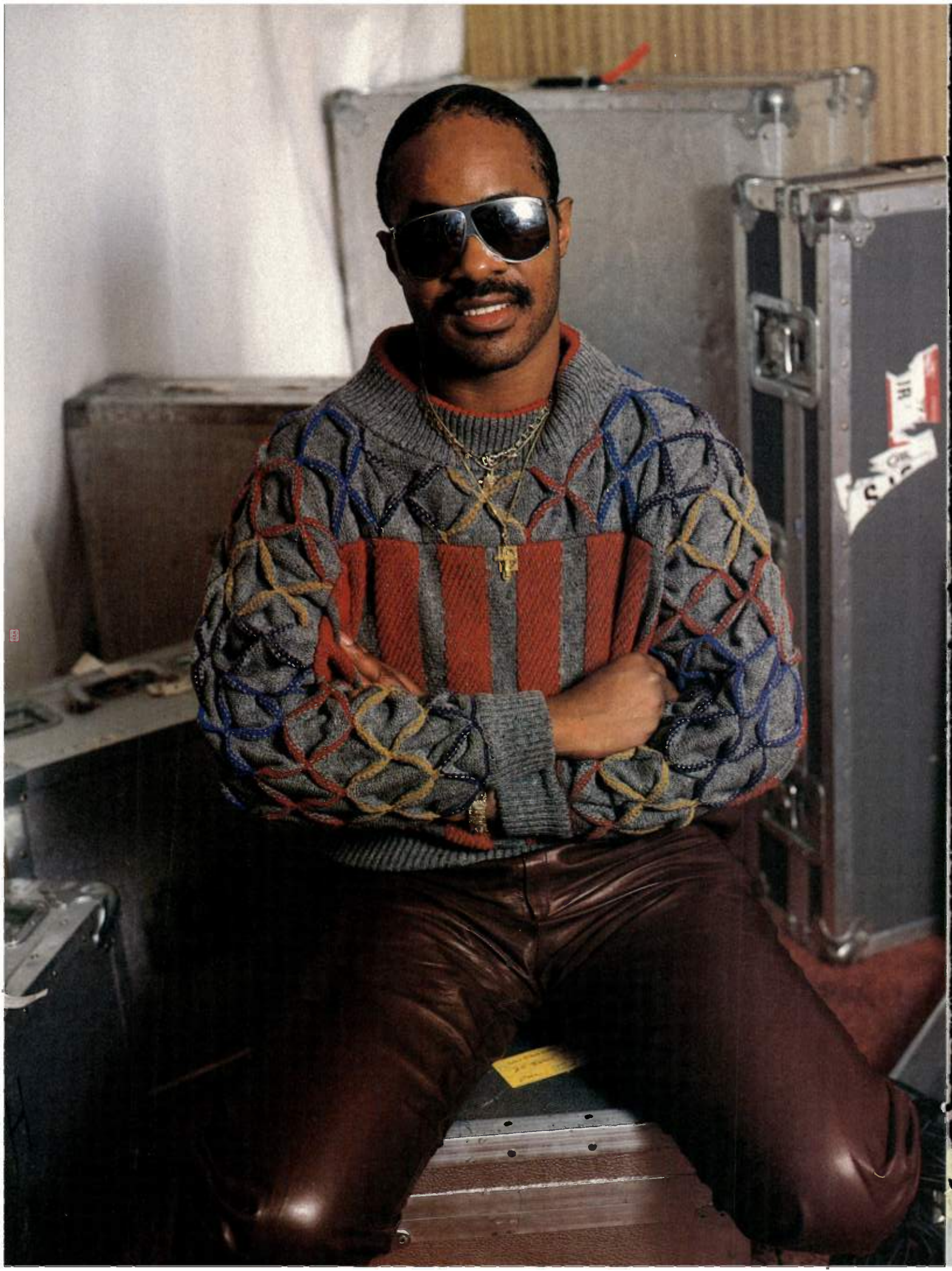


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# LOG ON: STEVIE WONDER DER COMMAND: CLOSE ENCOUNTER

BY GREG TATE

IN WHICH THE  
WONDERMAN GIVES  
OUR MAN SOME SKANK  
FOR THE HEAD, IF YOU  
CAN GET TO THAT

Enter Program  
keypunch: greg tate  
code name: ironman  
begin  
main menu program code: stevwonfeat  
edit function?  
interphase new program: transcript  
contextualization  
main menu code: transconx  
begin

THIS IS A TALE OF MEN AND MACHINES: OF WALKMEN and ironmen, of MD 11s and PPGs, of Linn drums and Dr. Clicks, of wave sequencers and not so little Stevie Wonders; a tale, if you will, of interviewing and interfacing. In a nutshell, canning the technobabble for a sec, picture this: Say you're an intrepid young reporter, Aiwa poised at the ready, attempting dialogue with Stevie Wonder as he rapturously dialogues with his six-month-old PPG Wave 2.2 computersynthesizer and the synth's touring programmer, Jim, assigned to work with the Wonderman until he becomes a fully-operational manipulator of the thing's zillion and one storage retrieval/modification functions. Therefore, what

goes on tape isn't your average interview with your average black rock genius but you shooting the bull with *the* Stevie Wonder while he embraces another electronic tool. Only let's also say that as this is unfolding you're slightly depressed because you've come into this tale with a mindset which says that for you to get a decent dialogue going with Stevie it's gonna have to be a strictly one-on-one affair, no synths or programmers allowed. This, however, isn't going to happen, because you make the fatal mistake of letting photographers eat up Stevie's one-on-one time and so you, buddy, will have to make do with the chance of a lifetime, sitting at Stevie Wonder's knee, so to speak, while he creates some new music. So while I didn't get the interview with Stevie that I wanted, in terms of delving into his innermost thoughts on the evolution of his career and social conscience, I did luck up on this really incredible new-age consciousness cybernetic experience. Trip is, I didn't even realize it until two days later when I was on the phone with one of my walkpartners rapping on image-processors, video synthesizers, chreodes, and panophyrins and suddenly realized that what Stevie gave me was his side of our conversation on the topic of New Media and The Future of The Human Race. See, us interviewers usually just love to dredge up a person's past, where they've been and whatnot. Visionary that he is, Stevie took me by the hand and said, Hey brother, check out where I'm going. I might have been too myopic to know that at the time, not to mention too dumb, but thank God for Memorex, right? Now some of what went down does lose something in translation. Like the new tune I heard him work out which chimed like a collaboration between Stevie and a Gamelan orchestra; Indonesia in the key of life, if you can get to that. Or like the utter lunacy of yours truly trying to sing "Living for The City" like an Islamic muzzein while Stevie accompanied inna Middle-Eastern stylee (sic). Another still would be the Linn drum track he laid under a processed voice sample which managed an instantaneous fusion of reggae and hip-hop. Bronx dub? (I swear Stevie's on top of everything, yunno?)

Traveling with Stevie as entourage on this tour (I caught up with it in Valley Forge, PA) besides Jim and the PPG are his brothers Milton and Calvin, who besides handling his business affairs keep the atmosphere around him remarkably folksy, family, and low-key. Also along for the ride is a cousin, Dameon, who shares with me over sweet potato pie what a no-bulljive relationship he and the Wonderman have. Like yeh, Stevie's a genius alright but that doesn't mean I don't tell him what I don't like in his music. Dameon also lays on me an observation I take as a revelation, namely how amazing it is that a blind man can make music as descriptive as Stevie's is of a world he's never seen. And when you think of all those songs about sunshine and stars and birds and how New York really is just like he pictured it, you realize it is amazing and understand that being blind has perhaps intensified Stevie's imagination rather than dulled it. Which may in turn account for howcum nobody else this side of Duke Ellington makes music more rich in aural hues and textures. From time to time on the grapevine you'll hear mutterings that Stevie, contrary to happy-go-lucky appearances, is bitter about his blindness. Knowing his commitment to various causes, however, my response to the rumormongers is, well maybe so, but that alleged bitterness hasn't disabled his empathy and concern for those less fortunate than himself. Counter to the bull being passed around, though, let me relate an anecdote I got from a friend who runs a New York art gallery. Seems that once upon a time Stevie's publishing company, Black Bull, used to share a building with her exhibition space. On occasion Stevie would come into the gallery to experience some of the exhibitions by hand. One day my friend's four-year-old marched up to Stevie and said, like,

*Continued on page 28*



# STEVIE WONDER: LOOKING BACK

Stevie Wonder, age 12: "Being blind, you don't judge things by their covers; you go through things that are relatively insignificant, and you pick out things that are more important. I can feel the cycle of the sun going up and down. I can feel the world spinning 'round."

PHOTO: PICTORIAL PARTNER

Then as now, Stevie's obsession with music and instruments tests, if not exhausts, the patience of everyone around him, even as they express their admiration for the fruits of these labors. Clarence Paul, Stevie's first arranger, remembers him as "a pest" in the studio: "He'd come by at three every day and stay until dark. He'd play every instrument in the place and bust in on you when you was cuttin' somebody."

PHOTO: BRUCE KESSER  
WONDER: MICHAEL O'NEILL  
CLARENCE PAUL: ANDREW A. KATZ

Blues artists such as Muddy Waters (shown here with Stevie) and B.B. King had a profound impact on the boy Wonder. "I used to listen to this black radio station in Detroit on my way to school. Like, I was the only black kid on the bus and I would always turn the radio down, because I felt ashamed to let them hear me listening to B.B. King. But I loved B.B. King. Yet I felt ashamed because I was *different* enough to want to hear him because I had never heard him anywhere else. I spent a lot of time listening to the radio, and I was able to relate to the different instruments and know what they were. I began to know them by name. I played Jimmy Reed's blues, Bobby Blue Bland's. I used to sit by the radio and listen till sunup. Took a little of everybody's style and made it my own."

PHOTO: BOB D'AMICO/RETNA





In 1971 Stevie turned 21 and told Ewart Abner, then-president of Motown Records, that he wanted complete control of his career. He set up his own production company, his own publishing company, hired his own attorney and his own assistants, in effect leaving Motown in charge only of distributing and promoting his records. It was an unprecedented move for a Motown artist, but Wonder saw it as the only escape from what was becoming an artistic dead-end. "I wasn't growing," Stevie said. "I just kept repeating the Stevie Wonder sound, and it didn't express how I felt about what was happening out there. I decided to go for something besides a winning formula. I wanted to see what would happen if I changed." Stevie is shown here with his attorney, Johanan Vigoda, who in 1976 struck a new deal with Motown that guaranteed Stevie an income of \$13 million over the next seven years; adjusted his royalty rate upwards to an extraordinary 20 percent-plus; granted Stevie the freedom to produce artists on other labels, as well as the right to choose which of his songs would be released as singles and the right to suppress a greatest hits album Motown had planned to fill the void between *Fulfillingness' First Finale* and Stevie's next studio album. Marvin Gaye, too, would later negotiate an independent relationship with Motown, and years later Abner admitted, "Stevie and Marvin changed Motown's approach. They loosened us up. We make a lot of money and we didn't have to change. They taught us how to have a little fun."

PHOTO: MICHAEL BEAL



Over the objections of his advisors, Stevie (seen here with Mick Jagger), toured with the Rolling Stones in 1972. The Stones had opened a U.S. tour for Stevie eight years earlier, and Stevie was urged not to take a back seat to them now. Stevie, though, saw it as an opportunity to gain valuable exposure in front of a young white audience that would be hearing songs from one of his most ambitious albums, *Music of My Mind*, released just prior to the tour. Said Stevie: "I want to reach people. I feel there is so much through music that can be said, and there's so many people you can reach by listening to another kind of music besides what is considered your only kind of music. I'm a Taurean and people say Taureans don't dig change too much. I say as long as it's change to widen your horizons, it's cool."

PHOTO: GARY HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES

Bette Midler presents Stevie with one of the five Grammy Awards he won in 1974. Nominated in six categories, Stevie won for Best Pop Vocal Performance by a Male Singer ("You Are The Sunshine of My Life"), Best Pop Vocal Performance ("Superstition"), Best Rhythm and Blues Single ("Superstition"), Best Engineered Recording ("Superstition") and the top award, Album of the Year (*Innervisions*). Stevie was especially pleased that none of the Awards contained the word "soul," a categorization of which he was often critical. "I kinda feel that after writing songs like 'All In Love Is Fair' and 'Visions,' well, that to say I'm just a soul artist is wrong because all those songs are typical ballads of America. I am a black man, but music is music. I want to be an inspiration to my people, but I don't want to be categorized." For the record, Paul Simon, upon winning a Grammy for Album of the Year in 1975, commented, "I want to thank Stevie Wonder for not making an album this year."

PHOTO: BRUCE STEVENS/WONDER MUSIC







Stevie, his wife Yolanda and daughter Aisha Zakia, born April 7, 1975. Aisha's name is a combination of African words for strength and intelligence. The song "Isn't She Lovely" on *Songs in the Key of Life* was inspired by the sounds Aisha made in the bath. Of his daughter, Stevie has said: "I can sense Yolanda and me in her. Like me, she is inquisitive about the way things work. I'd like 24 kids, a whole bunch, but I don't know if I'll ever make that."

PHOTO: KWAME NATHANIEL



While his career has been marked by consistent and influential artistic breakthroughs, it is as a humanitarian that Stevie Wonder has set himself apart from his contemporaries. In addition to playing numerous benefits on behalf of the needy and underprivileged, Wonder has served as Special Honoree at a celebration of Human Kindness Day in May 1975, performing a free concert for 50,000 people assembled at the Washington Monument; established several scholarships and provided funds for a complex sound system at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, where he is a trustee; been honored by the Symphony for the United Nations (SUN) with its Peace Award in 1977 for his efforts on behalf of world peace. His finest hour, though, came this past October when the United States Senate voted overwhelmingly to establish the third Monday of January, beginning in 1986, as a national holiday commemorating the birthday of the Rev. Martin Luther King (the House of Representatives had voted 338 to 90 in favor of the holiday this past August). Wonder was tireless in helping to rally public support for the bill, spearheading two marches on Washington, composing what became the campaign's theme song, "Happy Birthday," and working behind the scenes with King's widow, Mrs. Coretta Scott King, and others affiliated with the campaign. In the photo above, Wonder presents to House Speaker "Tip" O'Neill petitions bearing over seven million signatures in support of the MLK holiday. Wonder also testified in Congress in support of the bill. With Wonder in the photo are (from left), Congressman Robert Garcia (D-NY), O'Neill, Mrs. King and Congressman John Conyers (D-Mich), who sponsored the bill in the House of Representatives. In the photo below, Wonder (center) is shown flanked by (from left) Mrs. King, Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr., and Roberta Flack at a birthday concert for Martin Luther King in Atlanta, Georgia in 1982. The night before the bill was passed in the Senate, Stevie was performing at Radio City Music Hall in New York. While introducing "Happy Birthday" as his final number, Wonder made reference to the impending vote and also to Sen. Jesse Helms, who, in opposing the legislation, was engaged in a McCarthyesque attack on King's character. The mention of Helms' name set off a round of booing in the audience, to which Stevie responded: "Every minute you allow yourself to hate, you've wasted one minute God has given you to love." Silence ensued. Let the singing begin.

PHOTO: JAMES AUBURN



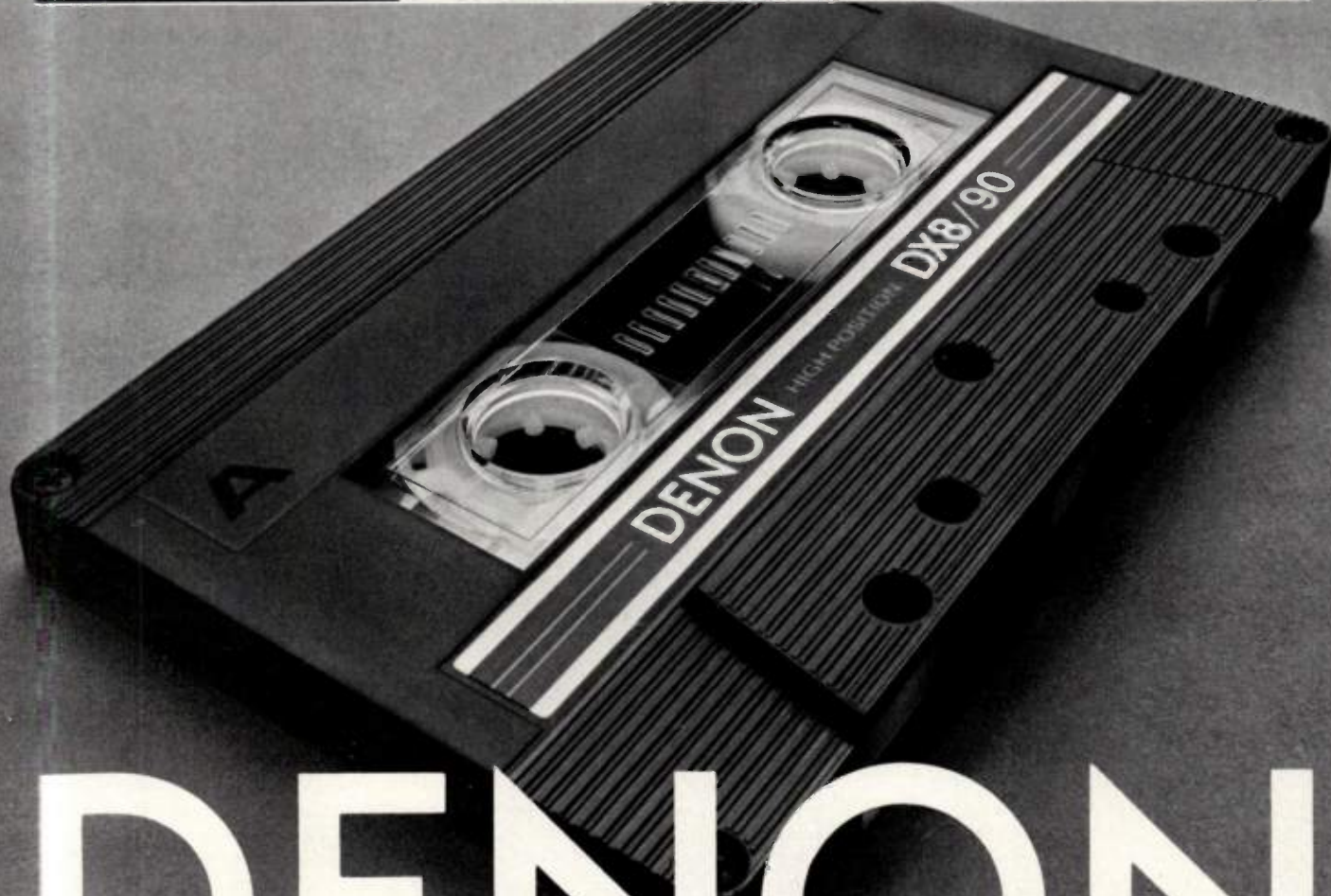
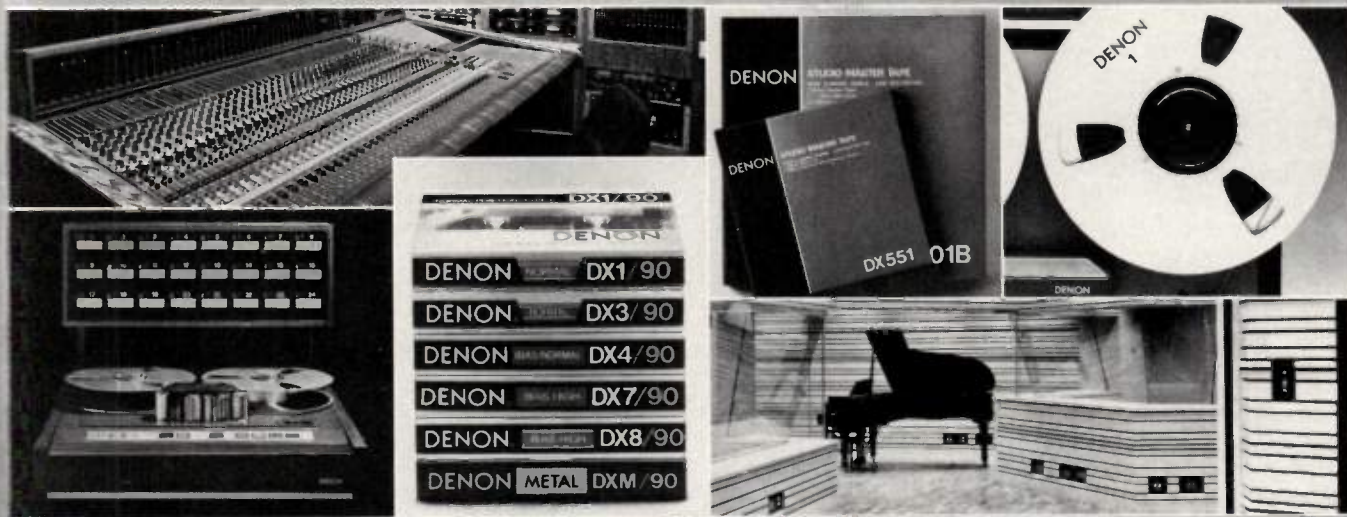


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## 'AN UNRECOGNIZED CREATIVE FORCE'

**L**et's consider a few facts. He has been recording since he was 12 years old. His first Top Ten hit, "Fingertips, Pt. 2," predated the Beatles' American chart debut by six solid months. Since then, he has placed 23 singles in the pop Top Ten and made more than a dozen Top 40 LPs. The music he has written and performed includes gospel-based and straight blues tunes, pop ballads, rockers, reggae and funk and a few numbers that actually deserve the description art-pop. He is a masterful singer, a sensitive and inspired band leader, a marvelous drummer, a whiz at the recording console, capable of getting across on any number of other instruments from harmonica to synthesizer.

Yet Stevie Wonder remains a largely unrecognized creative force. Wonder's influence is so quickly absorbed that when he's off the scene, people tend to forget him, and when he's on it, he's taken for granted (unless he makes an album as intricately confusing as *Journey Through the Secret Life of Plants*).

His accomplishments have been so many and so diverse that one can already speak of periods in his work. Consider the sweep of history the man's art encompasses, and you cannot fail to be overwhelmed. There were the days of Little Stevie, the 12 Year Old Blind Genius who created "Uptight," "Fingertips, Pt. 2," "I Was Made to Love Her," "Nothing's Too Good for My Baby," "Workout Stevie Workout," and half a dozen other singles that were (and are) as powerful, compelling and danceable as anything *anybody* created at Motown.

Stevie's next series of records, though they may have been dictated by Motown's needs as much as his own, established him as a masterful ballad singer. "For Once in My Life" wouldn't have been surprising coming out of Sinatra's mouth, but Stevie pushed the tune past its own blandness, gutting it for soul. He did the same for such superficially slight tunes as "My Cherie Amour," "Yester-Me, Yester-You, Yesterday" and "Signed, Sealed, Delivered, I'm Yours." This period reached its conclusion and perhaps its pinnacle, with "Heaven Help Us All," Stevie's last big hit with an outside producer. It was also his first, give or take "Blowin' in the Wind," with a serious theme, and its complex arrangement, with gentle lead vocal, gospel chorus, prayerfully utopian lyrics and elaborate rhythm section and horn charts suggested much of what would come next.

Upon turning 21, Stevie achieved his independence from the Motown production mill and, in the course of liberating himself from the restrictions of that somewhat monolithic institution, saved it (with additional aid coming from Marvin Gaye and Norman Whitfield). *Where I'm Coming From*, his first flash of adultish enthusiasm, was a false start, but the four records which followed it—*Music of My Mind*, *Talking Book*, *Innervisions* and *Fulfillingness' First Finale*—are as completely realized a string of LPs as anyone has ever made. In such tracks as "If You Really Love Me," "You Haven't Done Nothin'," "You Are the Sunshine of My Life," "Living for the City," "Higher Ground," "Don't You Worry 'Bout a Thing," "I Believe (When I Fall in Love It Will Be Forever)," "Superwoman," and the kingpin of them all, "Superstition," Stevie went a long way toward redefining the dimensions of pop music—not just black pop, either. He held on to his ballad style, *steamed* through all sorts of uptempo grooves, created heady aural collages, commented upon everything from getting off and down to the sundry perils of life in black America.

The three albums Stevie has released since 1976 represent another distinct break. *Songs in the Key of Life*, a two-and-one-half record set, *Journey Through the Secret Life of Plants*, a double-disc soundtrack for an abortive film, and the more modest but conceptually ambitious *Hotter than July*, grow out of the assurance gained on those earlier LPs. On them, Wonder explores more formal styles of composition, African and Caribbean rhythms, deeper aspects of his belief in spiritualism and animism (thus *Plants*, many of whose songs are written from the point of view of the potted ones themselves) and social and political issues.

On these LPs, Stevie attempts to unite his vision of musical and human harmony with his knowledge of how desperately off-the-track most lives (and societies) have become. Despite some of the most convoluted lyrics this side of Curtis Mayfield, when he needs to speak clearly, his voice is always there, strong and proud. The best evidence is his trio of "biographical" hits: "Sir Duke," written for Duke Ellington, who would seem to be the model for Stevie's musical ambition; "Master Blaster (Jammin')," a tribute to reggae king Bob Marley, whom Stevie saw as not only a peer in stardom but a kindred spirit in his social ambitions and "Happy Birthday," the theme song of his leadership of the successful movement to make Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday a national holiday.

The best argument for Stevie's recent music is *Stevie Wonder's Original Musiquarium I*, which rummages through seven self-produced Wonder LPs, beginning with *Music of My Mind*. The assemblage is convincing, especially since it is buttressed with four exquisite new songs, "Front Line," Stevie's ode to Vietnam veterans, "Do I Do," "Ribbon in the Sky" and "That Girl," which extend his legendary prowess into contemporary terms. Like all his best, it leaves you wanting more.

—Dave Marsh

*Continued from page 25*

hey, you're blind, ain't you man, that must be pretty bad, huh? As mama cringed, Stevie took junior on his knee and said, Hey kid, listen here: I can hear things you can't hear, smell things you can't smell, feel things you can't feel. And with common objects Stevie then proceeded to prove his extra-sensory powers, even going so far as to locate the brat's mother using only his ears and olfactory lobes.

Watching Stevie work wonders with slews of synths, portable studio equipment and digital computer boards you get the feeling he's got eyes in his fingertips. As he guides his fingers across the PPG's computer keypad functions, Jim's high-tech instruction tends to run like so: "Now this function key is called edit. Punch in which bar you want to edit. In this case you want to insert something in an eight-bar sequence. So punch that line and insert that note in the eight-bar sequence. On the screen now is bar eight and there's a line for each note. Here are the semitones and they're all Cs."

Gotcha. Turning to me, Stevie asks if I've been following along. I laugh and say, Well, I've been trying to keep up. Jim breaks it on down for me: "All we were doing was using the computer to call up specific information about that bar rather than play it manually on the keyboard. We used what's known as the edit page to allow access to any note we wanted to change."

That's *all*? Well, that's pretty funk'n' amazing, Jim, only seeing as how I need to call up a few specific bytes of info from Stevie's memory banks myself, maybe I should take this opportunity to ask a few related questions. Like why his use of electronics has always been about eliciting warmth from the machinery rather than industrial simulation. I mean, Stevie, is this like unconscious on your part or merely your own sensitivity dominating the technology?

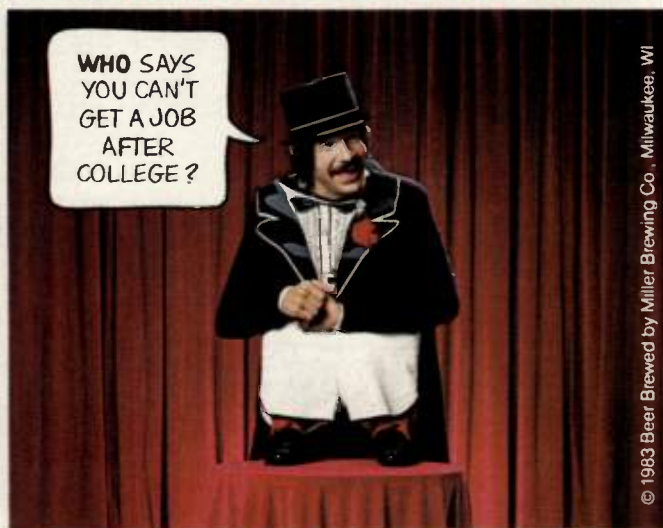
"I think it all comes down to how you perceive it: Whether you perceive technology as something you control or as something which controls you; something you use as a tool of expression for yourself as opposed to you being a tool of expression for it. People have always used technology in some sort of freaky way, but for me it's like where you have abstract art and you have an art form of beauty. You've got artists who will paint a very abstract painting and then artists who will paint a picture of beauty. But then beauty is in the eye of the beholder; and if you're versatile in the way you're able to perceive things, then there's also beauty in creating a piece that is very abstract."

All of which leads me to wonder whether or not Stevie is at all intrigued by what folk like, say, Talking Heads, Eno and Phillip Glass are doing with regards to electronic music. "Yeah, I listen but basi-

*Continued on page 62*



# Miller Brewtahas





# Salem Spirit!

# ON THE BEAT

## TRANSITION

WHERE ARE THEY NOW? DEPT.: **Chad and Jeremy**, the poor man's Peter and Gordon (the mind fairly boggled at the concept back in the duo's mid-'60s heyday), are on the comeback trail. *Bite The Bullet* is the name of their new LP on Rocshire Records—the folks who recently brought you the return of Eddie Munster—and a video of the title track featuring Lauren Hutton was shot in November in Hollywood. Rockin' (?) for television is no novelty, however, to Chad Stuart and Jeremy Clyde; their brief day in the sun twenty years ago netted them appearances on *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, *The Wild, Wild West* and *Batman*, the latter program featuring their kidnapping at the hands of Catwoman. . . . The end of 1983 marked the end of a very long road for renowned free form pianist **Keith Jarrett**. His December 11th show at Cleveland's Severance Hall was the last in his old format of concerts consisting of extensive improvisation which had been his trademark for years. We can

assume that the proud keyboard man will come up with some alternative to attain his professed goal of "affect(ing) a smaller amount of people at once rather than to completely confuse entire populations" . . . Expect the new **Go-Go's** LP in mid-March; tentative song titles include "I'm The Only One," "You Thought," "Head Over Heels" and "I'm With You." The British-based recording sessions are going so smoothly that bassist **Kathy Valentine** claims there's been time for "shopping with a vengeance." . . . **Jake Burns**, former leader of the seminal Irish punk outfit, **Stiff Little Fingers**, is returning to the music scene after a year's absence. Almost a year to the day since SLF's farewell show, Jake Burns and The Big Wheel were scheduled to play their first showcase gig supporting the **Alarm** at Britain's St. Alban's City Hall. The spot on the bill was a reversal for Burns, whose Fingers had given the Alarm the opening slot on some of their last gigs. The dates mark the last in the U.K. for the Alarm prior to their U.S. dates with the **Pretenders**. ■

## CINEMA

**Phil Lynott**, former head honcho of the defunct Thin Lizzy, is reported to be first choice to play **Jimi Hendrix** in the upcoming British film biography of one-time **Who** manager **Kit Lambert**. *Hope I Die Before I Get Old*. Hendrix's "Purple Haze" was the first song released on Lambert and Who co-manager Chris Stamp's own Track Records, established in late 1966 after constant legal hassles with the Who's record companies. The movie, scheduled to commence principal photography in April, is being produced by Jon Lindsay, who spent 18 months researching the life of the man responsible for suggesting many of the Who's greater '60s concepts and conceits, notably pop art and the rock opera. Director Greg Dark recently completed a film with **Roger Daltrey** entitled *Bitter Cherry*, and presumably dug up some choice anecdotes from the Who lead singer about Lambert, who discovered the Who while searching for an unknown band to star in a movie. ■



PHOTOS AP, WIDE WORLD

The two men, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, who served as symbols, and later as martyrs, for the two powerful and contradictory streams of black thought in the Sixties, are in the music news. Malcolm X, the radical ex-con who converted to Elijah Muhammad's Black Muslim religion while in prison and who renounced the faith after a falling out with Muhammad before being shot to death in a Manhattan community center in February of 1965, was a fiery speech maker, as proven by the five record Chess package *Black Awakening! Roots*. Excerpts from some of his speeches were edited by Marshall Chess and turned into a rap single entitled "No Sell Out." Chess, employed by the New Jersey-based Sugar Hill Records label in what he terms a non-exclusive relationship, then sold the master to Tommy Boy Records, the New York independent label. But Sugar Hill, distributors of the Chess catalog, claim that Chess had no right to sell the record and that they, not he, should own the rights to the final product. After ten days of court hearings in Newark, the two labels reached an agreement whereby Tommy Boy would manufacture and distribute the singles but would share a percentage of the retail sales with Sugar Hill. All the legal wrangling might prove irrelevant, anyway; while prior to the injunction some black radio stations were playing the record, many might take the stance of Jim Gates, part owner of East St. Louis' WESL-AM, who decided during the legal proceedings that "Malcolm would have never approved of putting himself in a dance music context. Imagine a rap record featuring Menachem Begin, Nelson Rockefeller or John Kennedy." Meanwhile, Stevie Wonder, who wrote the great "Happy Birthday" for his 1980 LP *Hotter Than July* as an anthem for the since-successful movement to have Dr. King's birthday honored as a federal holiday, has had the song issued as a twelve-inch single by Motown. The back side offers the bonus of including seventeen minutes from King's best known speeches, and gives the generation too young to understand the hoopla surrounding last August's twentieth anniversary celebration of the fabled 1963 March on Washington a chance to understand the Southern preacher's imagery and impact firsthand.



PHOTO: LISA LEVITT



**What A PAL, What A PAL:** The die-hard rock video collector might just want to invest in the British PAL format VCR, considering the wealth of music video available in the U.K. The British home video boom, huge compared to the U.S., allows the release of musicvideo titles that the current American marketplace would never allow. Christmastime music video chart hits included *Jam: Video Snap*, a greatest hits collection styled after their LP of the same name; *Joy Division: Here Are The Young Men*, *Heaven 17: Complete Madness*, *Pil Live*, *The Stones in the Park* (the free concert in London's Hyde Park in July 1969 two days after Brian Jones' death), and *Style Council: Videosingles*. If that's not enough to make the collector drool, consider the recent release of a tape consisting of highlights from the legendary *Ready, Steady, Go* TV show. Encouragingly subtitled *Volume One*, this tape features footage from the program's early mimed performances through its changeover in spring of 1965 to an all-live presentation (made necessary by some eccentric and obscure British Musicians' Union ruling which tripped up many an amateur group of the time). You can catch the Stones doing "Under My Thumb" and "Paint It, Black," or the Who (seen above) raving through "Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere" (familiar to American audiences through its inclusion in *The Kids Are Alright*), or Van Morrison with Them doing "Baby, Please Don't Go." Owner of the rights to the series is Dave Clark, whom you might remember as the drummer in a not unsuccessful mid-'60s Tottenham-based beat group. Let's hope that somebody in the States will market a cheap PAL-to-VHS converter real soon.

## THE VINYL WORD

Prepare to dig a little deeper into your pockets for your favorite records, because a price hike just might be coming. WEA (Warners-Elektra-Atlantic) raised the price of three of its current Top Twenty albums—**Yes'** 90125, the **Rolling Stones'** *Undercover* and the self-titled **Genesis** record—to \$9.98 list in early December. Although no word was immediately forthcoming as to whether or not future WEA product would be jacked up the extra dollar, at least one leading retailer seemed to think so. Barrie Bergman, president of Record Bar, one of the nation's leading retail chain, pulled the three albums from his stores' shelves for a week, protesting a move he sees as "horrendous," and one capable of skewering the industry's ballyhooed recovery if the idea catches on with other labels: "The really sorry part is not these three records but the fact that everyone will follow them." ... **Elvis Presley**, whose first recording successes came in the then-dominant medium of the 78 rpm record, is now represented in the purported medium of the future, the compact disc. RCA has released a limited-edition 5000 sets of *Elvis, the Legend: Vol. 1, 2 and 3*, a total of 60 songs, worldwide ... A compact disc featuring the entire length (over 71 minutes) of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony on its one side has just been released by Denon. The CD represents a breakthrough in the development of the disc; real success will be achieved when engineers can get *Tommy* or *Songs In The Key of Life* on one of the suckers. ■

## VIDEO

While music on vinyl is ready to go up in price (see THE VINYL WORD), music on videotape and disc is coming down. CBS/Fox Video slashed the price of all their single CED disc programs from \$29.98 down to \$19.98 in December. This cut is for all types of programming—feature films as well as music videos—and represents the first time a company has dropped all its product to the lower price. This follows on the heels of RCA's decision to release all future music video disc items at the same \$19.98 price; both moves are seen as attempts to fight the growing trend towards videotape rental, and as acknowledgement that the difference in manufacturing costs between disc and tape are not quite so great that the junior medium can compete at the higher price against the videotape-first mentality which prevails in the marketplace. Too bad, then, for disc manufacturers that one tape company, Media Home Entertainment, is preparing to unleash all future product at the list price of \$19.98, a price slash which could send their sales skyward; competitor Paramount Home Video, which started the price wars with its \$39.95 release of *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* last year, has done studies that show \$19.95 might just open the floodgates in the home video field. ■

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DAVID GANS ●

# 'WE DON'T WAIT FOR THE WOUNDED'

Australia's Hunters and Collectors roll over the faint-hearted

If you think Australian rock is all bubbly, you haven't heard Hunters and Collectors yet. "We are a very loud rock 'n' roll band which plays ponderous, repetitive music concerned principally with aspects of our lifestyle in Australia," explains vocalist and sometime

and clattering percussion laying down a rhythmic texture punctuated by deep, resounding booms from a seemingly huge bass drum. Seymour begins his disjointed story of travel and close encounters of the weird kind, but the first real indication of the song's harmonic comes from the bass,

bios said very little about bands anyway," he says. "We went on the basis that to understand a band you have to see them play."

In concert, Hunters and Collectors develop their energy "over the whole set, sort of a gross exaggeration of the way most

rock groups try to make their sets work," Seymour explains. "The beginning is kind of slow and easy, and then it gets harder and harder until the end. It doesn't really ever get fast, but it gets more intense. It's only good if it's super-intense; otherwise, it doesn't work. People who see us for the first time when we're playing well just don't know how to handle it at all; we don't wait around for the wounded."

*Hunters and Collectors* includes the single "Talking to a Stranger," a college radio favorite and the video of which made it onto MTV's playlist. Shortly after recording the LP, which hit the top 20 in Australia, the band moved to England—for no particular reason, says Seymour, "apart from a general feeling of 'We've got to prove ourselves' and feeling guilty

about being on the ass end of the world, which is what a lot of Australians think.

"When we got there we discovered we were a lot better than we thought we were, and a lot better than most English groups." They were signed by Virgin Records and recorded a second album, but it pleased neither label nor artist and they were dropped. After six months in London, Hunters and Collectors returned to Oz and went right back out on the road.

Seymour's perspective on the band remains remarkably clear and unsentimental. "There's no logic to our existence as a group as such," he says. "There are people in our group who would never normally associate with each other; the only thing we all have in common is a fundamental desire to play music. You've got to be foolish enough to see it in larger terms than simply how much money you've got in your pocket. You've got to be convinced that what you're doing has some sort of universal significance, even if you're only playing to 60 people at a time." ○



Hunters and Collectors in search of logic: (from left) John Archer, Doug Falconer, Mark Seymour, Martin Lubran, Geoff Crosby

guitarist Mark Seymour, who delivers the band's bizarre, nonlinear lyrics in a powerful, if unpolished roar.

"Sometimes it's arguably a bit cosmic, this music we play," Seymour continues. "It ends up being based on trying to describe the feelings we get when we travel, which is constantly. You have to tour to survive as a band in Australia, because there aren't enough people there to sell records to." But the songs on *Hunters and Collectors*, their debut album, bear no resemblance to the genre of road songs which traffics in telephones, vehicles, motels and bad food. "I don't ever refer specifically to motels and sound checks," Seymour notes. "I look at it as a metaphor for issues and feelings that are much larger and broader than that."

The sound of *Hunters and Collectors* is surprisingly thin considering it's a nine-piece group (bass, drums, percussion, keyboards, two guitars and a three-piece horn section). The opening track of the album, "Tow Truck," begins with a trebly guitar

which functions less as a rhythmic component than as countermelody to Seymour's vocal.

An Oz Records executive suggested it would be best not to try and make too much sense of the band's lyrics—"Not many people can, as I've discovered since coming to the States," Seymour affirms. He was pleased to find Americans curious about the songs rather than greeting them with suspicion. But America is good at embracing the unfathomable and finding charisma in the strangest of places.

Mark Seymour is a somewhat charismatic and unfathomable character himself, with his hair long on top and sideburns shaved all the way up to his temples creating a savage first impression that belies his basically friendly nature. His conversation is at once revealing and secretive, like the words he sings with the band. The bio supplied by the record company offers little in the way of history or insight into the minds at work in the band—and neither does Seymour. "I always thought



OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN

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Videocassette \$19.95

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# PURE VIBES

**UB40 may lack technical expertise, but their no-frills reggae comes straight from the heart. By Mark Mehler**

FOR THE RECORD, THE LONGEST sound check in the history of rock music occurred at the Ritz nightclub on December 1, 1983. The band was UB40, and when I finally gave up the ghost and left the hall the sound check had been under way for some three hours and 15 minutes. It might, indeed, still be going on . . .

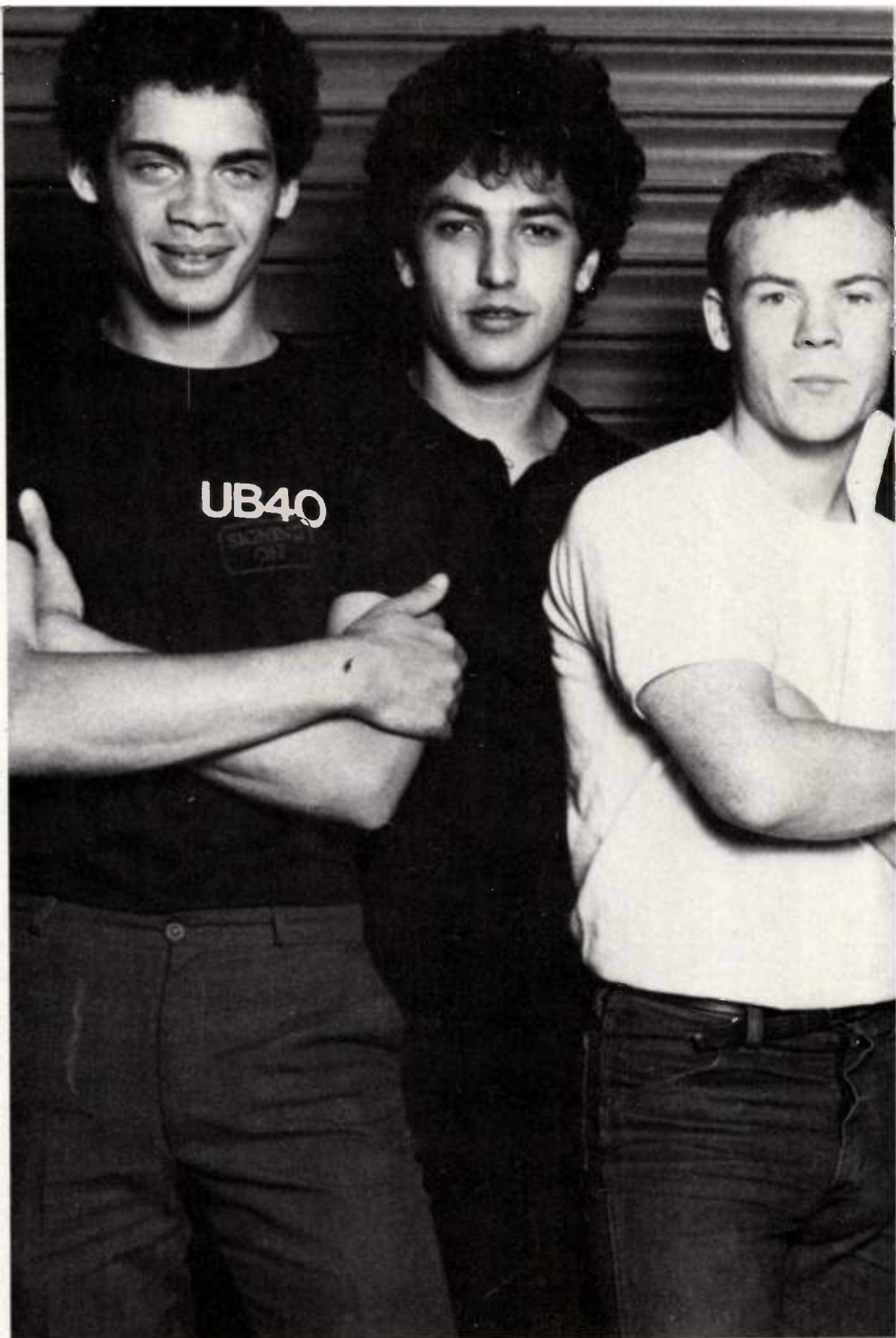
"We *do* like to get things right," says drummer Jim Brown, during a short break in the pre-show marathon. Earl Falconer, the bass player, offers another explanation: "We don't know what we're doing up there. None of us reads or writes music, we can't diagram it, we just know how to play it somehow. Everything we do is pure vibes, and we have to work to make sure all those vibes are right."

Given the lack of musical knowledge, if not acumen, among the eight members of UB40, plus the fact that when they formed the reggae octet in 1978 not a one of them could even play his instrument, you might well expect their show to consist of a giant collage of bum notes, missed cues and assorted disasters.

However, UB40, which has released two LPs here in the past year, is rock steady in live performance. In essence, they are a Walter Mitty rock fantasy—one day eight guys on the dole (UB40 is a reference number on a U.K. unemployment benefit form), the next day a self-supporting band with a number of hit records and a reputation for seamless, roots-reggae that preceded them here.

"I don't know how we did it," says Falconer with a mildly sheepish grin. "It's like a kid learning to talk. You don't remember how you did it. You said a few words and then a few more words and pretty soon you were speaking in sentences."

Though they make light of musical technique, the members of UB40 do not trifle with the soul of fundamental reggae. It's



**UB40: Eight guys off the dole, working to make the vibes right**

virtually all they play and represents the length and breadth of their ambition.

"We all listened to that music when we were growing up in Birmingham," according to Falconer, whose brother Ray coproduced their new LP, *Labour Of Love*. "It was our music."

As for those who automatically link reggae and rasta, Falconer offers a blunt observation: "The sects came along and claimed it like it was theirs, but it's no more theirs than it is anybody else's. It's just music. You might think of it as protest songs, but reggae can have any interpretation the musician wants to give it. The bottom line is it's great dance music."

Following the formation of UB40, the

band holed up in a local cellar for awhile, finally venturing out to their first club gig in early '79. It is certain that those first few months were as structured as an urban riot.

"You want to know why I picked up the bass?" queries Falconer. "Because they needed somebody to play bass, and I happened to have one. Ali and Robin (Campbell) were the singers because they used to sing around their house. James started playing drums because he volunteered."

"It was easy," insists Brown. "All you do is keep the beat."

By the time the band had sorted out who would play what and how, reggae was in commercial trouble. "The punks were hav-





PHOTO: MICHAEL PITLAND/RETNA LTD

ing a negative reaction. We knew that to be successful in that climate we had to do something different," Falconer notes.

What UB40 did was play straight-ahead, no-frills reggae, disdaining the eclectic approach employed by such pop acts as the Police. And if the "liberals, punks, rastas and lefties" wouldn't accept them, a lot of others did.

Over a three-year period, they released a substantial body of work (five LPs, numerous singles), a sample of which was included on their debut US album, *1980-1983*. In America, they toured and impressed an audience not used to hearing the spirit of reggae embodied in a group of scruffy, multiracial Englishmen.

But the band had another surprise in

store for the U.S. market: *Labour of Love*, an album of cover versions of various reggae tunes first recorded in the late '60s and early '70s. Among the artists represented are Bob Marley ("Keep on Moving"), Boy Friday ("Version Girl"), Jimmy Cliff ("Many Rivers To Cross") and Neil Diamond ("Red Red Wine").

Neil Diamond? "We never knew it was *his* song," says Falconer. "The only version we knew before we recorded it was Tony Tribe's. As far as we're concerned, that song originated in Jamaica."

Following completion of their fall-winter U.S. tour (if they ever complete the last sound check), UB40 returns to Birmingham to begin another LP, in a 24-track facility they've constructed in their

hometown. Neither Falconer nor Brown will advance any word on the project, perhaps because that might suggest they know what they're doing before they do it.

"We finally got to where we have a machine that plays it on tape so we can play a song back and remember what we did," Falconer says. "That's what's called a natural approach to music."

Soon the road manager appears and beckons the drummer and bassist back for another hundred run-throughs of "Red Red Wine," stripping Neil Diamond to a natural state, as it were.

"I don't think we could play anything but reggae," concludes Jim Brown. "It's hard to imagine anything we do taking any other form." ○



# THE BEATLES: LEGACY AND MYTH

By Anthony DeCurtis

On the 20th anniversary of the Fab Four's U.S. conquest, the author considers what they—and we—have left behind

**T**HE RE-cent release of *A Hard Day's Night* as a videocassette continues the ongoing documentation of the Beatles' career and legacy. *Let It Be*, *Magical Mystery Tour*, and a John Lennon interview with Tom Snyder are already available in video form. *The Compleat Beatles* represents an ambitious attempt to explore the band's history in its entirety, though it fails to provide a satisfactory social or cultural context into which the phenomenon of the Beatles can be placed.

Yet, these works, even taken with the flood of books published about the Beatles in recent years, hardly tell the definitive story. Without a doubt, more Beatles tapes will be issued soon. Interest in the Beatles remains so strong and widespread in America that a close look at how completely the Beatles have infiltrated our culture and how we have responded to them, both in positive and negative ways, seems to be in order. For many reasons, the time is right.

This month we are celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Beatles' arrival in the United States. This past November we observed the twentieth anniversary of John Kennedy's assassination. This past December we marked the third anniversary of John Lennon's murder.

These events are interrelated in



Beatles '64: Wrapped in a mantle of hope

complex ways, but the nature of their relationship is critical to understanding the glorious and grotesque history the Beatles have lived in this country. These events also contain important implications for the '60s "revival" currently gathering steam in America for reasons as diverse as renewed concern about nuclear annihilation, the popularity of *The Big Chill*, and the new psychedelic bands. If this interest in our recent past is to be at all serious and not simply a feast of nostalgia, figuring

out the impact of the Beatles on our lives has got to be a high priority.

The Beatles arrived on the American scene almost immediately after the Kennedy assassination, and that fact has colored their function as a cultural symbol in this country to this very day. The shots that cracked in Dallas in November 1963 ripped a wound so wide in our national consciousness that the Beatles slipped right in and became burdened with myth virtually the minute they stepped



off the plane in New York.

John Kennedy symbolized youth, wit, glamour and energy, and he whipped those virtues into a vision of national unity unlike anything we have experienced since. Despite what we now know about the macho blustering of the Camelot crowd, we were not so sophisticated then. Kennedy's murder spun our country into a profoundly depressed grief and triggered the first of those torturous—and by now tedious—moral examinations of “how this could have happened here.”

And then suddenly, from the home of the real Camelot, ladies and gentlemen—the Beatles! The millions who wept watching every movement of the Kennedy family between the assassination and the burial—the point at which television first made the United States a truly mass culture—were now riveted to the screen watching two consecutive weeks of the Beatles on *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

What a celebration! You want youth, wit, glamour and energy? Here it is, times four. Even today, watching the press conference segments of *The Compleat Beatles* or the zany romps of *A Hard Day's Night*, it's impossible not to be caught up in the joy, positiveness, cohesion, and charm the band radiated. We wrapped them in a mantle of hope.

But the bright place the Beatles occupied in our national consciousness contained a darker, more dangerously irrational element, as so often occurs in modern America. This began to become apparent with the furor that erupted in 1966 when John Lennon casually remarked to a British reporter that the Beatles were “more popular than Jesus Christ right now.”

Lennon's comment provoked a Beatles backlash in the U.S., particularly among the religious right, which organized record burnings and radio boycotts of the band. Its mildly blasphemous connotations aside, Lennon's statement was subversive because it blew the lid off the notion, for anyone still naive enough to hold it, that the Beatles were merely pop stars. They had become figures of almost religious significance, and by calling attention to that fact Lennon generated the first ugly American scene to dramatize the explosive underside of our need to transform the Beatles into myth.

But other events would convey even more compellingly, and more disturbingly, the strange resentment underlying our Beatles worship. The “Paul is dead” mania that swept the U.S. in 1969 (a premonitory fear of the band's break-up) expressed once again the associative link between the myth of the murdered President and the Beatles' myth. Paul's death, the rumors ran, had been covered up by a “conspiracy”—conspiracy having become a national obsession since the Warren Commission—on the part of the other Beatles. Again the truth was being concealed from us, but

# COMPLETE BEATLES VIDEOGRAPHY

## A HARD DAY'S NIGHT

Length: 90 minutes, Black and white  
Directed by Richard Lester  
Released by MPI/Price: \$69.95

**T**he Beatles' first movie and still a winner, in spite of its too-cheeky dialogue. Terrific music, to say the least, and director Lester's stark black and white photography captures all too well the spirit of a moment. For those who may have missed that moment, this is an essential document; for those who were there, it's a nice way to remember. One quibble: if *Raiders of the Lost Ark* can come out in a home video version for \$40, why not this?

## MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

Length: 60 minutes, Color  
Released by Media Home Entertainment/Price: \$49.95

**W**idely regarded as the Beatles' first misstep of any magnitude, *Magical Mystery Tour*, in conception and execution, is simply a “small” movie, outright amateurish at times, but with some amusing scenes. We expected more of the Beatles, of course, and coming after *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!*, *MMT* was a bitter disappointment. Still, there's a fair share of good music here, in sequences that some may point to as seminal rock videos.

## LET IT BE

Length: 80 minutes, Color  
Directed by Michael Lindsay-Hogg  
Released by CBS/Fox Home Video/Price: \$69.95

**T**he last days of the Beatles, and what a long, strange trip it was from *A Hard Day's Night*. Even though these are four musicians going four separate ways, there are still some scintillating ensemble moments here: George's solo on “Let It Be” John and Yoko waltzing to “I Me Mine,” the rooftop concert. Caveat emptor: *Let It Be* hasn't been scaled down from the theatrical version, so be prepared to lose some of the picture unless you have a large screen in your home. On my 19” screen, for instance, I lost almost everyone when the

band performed “Two of Us” save Ringo, who's in the center of the picture. That's an extreme example, but there are other occasions when faces you'll remember having seen on a movie theatre screen simply aren't there on your TV screen. Forewarned is forearmed.

## INTERVIEW WITH A LEGEND: JOHN LENNON

Length: 60 minutes, Color  
Released by Karl Video/ \$59.95

**T**om Snyder's interview with John Lennon, seen on the *Tomorrow* show in April of 1975, is released here minus the commercials but with the addition of sincere, though uninformative, post-assassination interviews with rock columnist Lisa Robinson and producer Jack Douglas. Despite Snyder's weak questions and his preoccupation with such topics as groupies and the Beatles breakup, there are some interesting moments when Lennon discusses his then-pending immigration hearings and his efforts in the peace movement.

## THE COMPLEAT BEATLES

Length: 119 minutes, Color and black and white  
Released by MGM/UA/Price: \$69.95

**A** hit-and-miss sociological and musical portrait. Among its virtues are some wonderful concert scenes from the early '60s, some intriguing videos shot post-*Sgt. Pepper* and the reminiscences of producer George Martin. Conspicuous by their absence are the subjects' own recollections. And at the point where the Beatles retire from live performances, so do the filmmakers choose to ignore the impact their music and mere presence, in some form or another, continued to exert on the world. And why is there no mention of Pete Best until the moment he is replaced by Ringo Starr? This, even though the other Beatles (including Stu Sutcliffe) are profiled up front and the band, with Best on drums, is shown in some rare footage performing in Hamburg. It is the Beatles, then, but it isn't complete. But is it fun? Well, sure. Your move.

—David McGee



A bloomin' book: Wilfred Brambell confronts Ringo in *A Hard Day's Night*





**McCartney on the set of *A Hard Day's Night*: His "death" in 1970 conveyed the strange resentment underlying our Beatles worship**

hints of the truth were everywhere. Like Kennedy, Paul had died violently "in a car," as the "clue" in "Don't Pass Me By" suggested, or, as in another version of the JFK folklore, he was still alive and sequestered somewhere, a vegetable.

Yet macabre as that little episode was, it was nothing compared to the helter-skelter horror of Charles Manson's insane conviction that the Beatles were prophets of a new apocalypse and a new age to follow. For Manson, the Beatles' being "more popular than Jesus Christ" was the least of it: on the two-record set popularly known as *The White Album*, they had written their own Bible. Only their songs could explain the wildly disordered world around him, the unspeakable life he had lived in America's penal institutions and streets.

Still another indication of the many ways in which the Beatles became identified with our cultural condition was the unyielding hope beyond hope that the

band would someday reunite. The Beatles became the image of our shattered national unity. The youth and optimism of *A Hard Day's Night* had become the weariness, intolerance and resignation of *Let It Be*.

But all our innocence and promise—the Kennedy virtues of youth, wit, glamour and energy—would return if only the Beatles would get back together again, get back to where they once belonged. This poignant fantasy went so far as a proposal for a Beatles concert to end world hunger.

This primitive projection of power and significance onto a rock 'n' roll band, even onto the greatest rock 'n' roll band in history, expresses our fear that our world is dislocated and adrift, headed for disaster, and we ourselves can do nothing. John Lennon was shot not by a man who hated him but by a man who worshipped him, a drifter who could locate a self only through a complete pathological identification with his hero. Lennon was youthful, settled,

seemingly happy, prosperous and admired throughout the world; his killer was unsettled and alone, an unhappy fan.

Lennon's murder represents the reflection in a deranged man's mind of a more general societal wish for some way to make the perceived virtues of our heroes our own. If all this sounds remote to you, please keep in mind that this magazine still receives the phone calls, the messages that fuse reverence and rage into a vision that is absolutely chilling: This is an important story. Yoko Ono had John Lennon murdered. She will kill Paul next. Play *Double Fantasy* backwards, you'll see. Listen to Jimi Hendrix' *Electric Ladyland*, it's there. We must do something to save Paul.

None of this means that "we all" killed John Lennon or committed the Manson murders. But we must recognize that every society brings certain pressures to bear on every individual who lives in it. In a society as troubled, uncentered, and violence-prone as ours, this presents some very real dangers. There is a dark underside to every mythic belief; those whom we raise up will have a fall. When myth conspires with a harsh, unlivable reality to impinge on a person too weak, too emotionally unstable, or simply lacking viable beliefs, the results will be tragic.

No wonder each of the Fab Four fought so hard to escape their identity as "Beatles," a condition they would rarely allude to in interviews without a certain exasperation and ironic humor. It was as if they sensed the danger, the inappropriate hopes invested in them, the furious urge to see them as more than human, and sought their own avenues of escape and retreat. With only partial success.

We create social myths out of what we lack. When we cannot explain the voids in our lives to ourselves, we project our fears and fantasies onto others. This far exceeds healthy admiration. Much as we continue to enjoy what they have given us on record and on film, the Beatles could never end world hunger or any of our other problems. They could only assist us in that effort. Their stake in finding solutions was not and will never be any greater or less than our own.

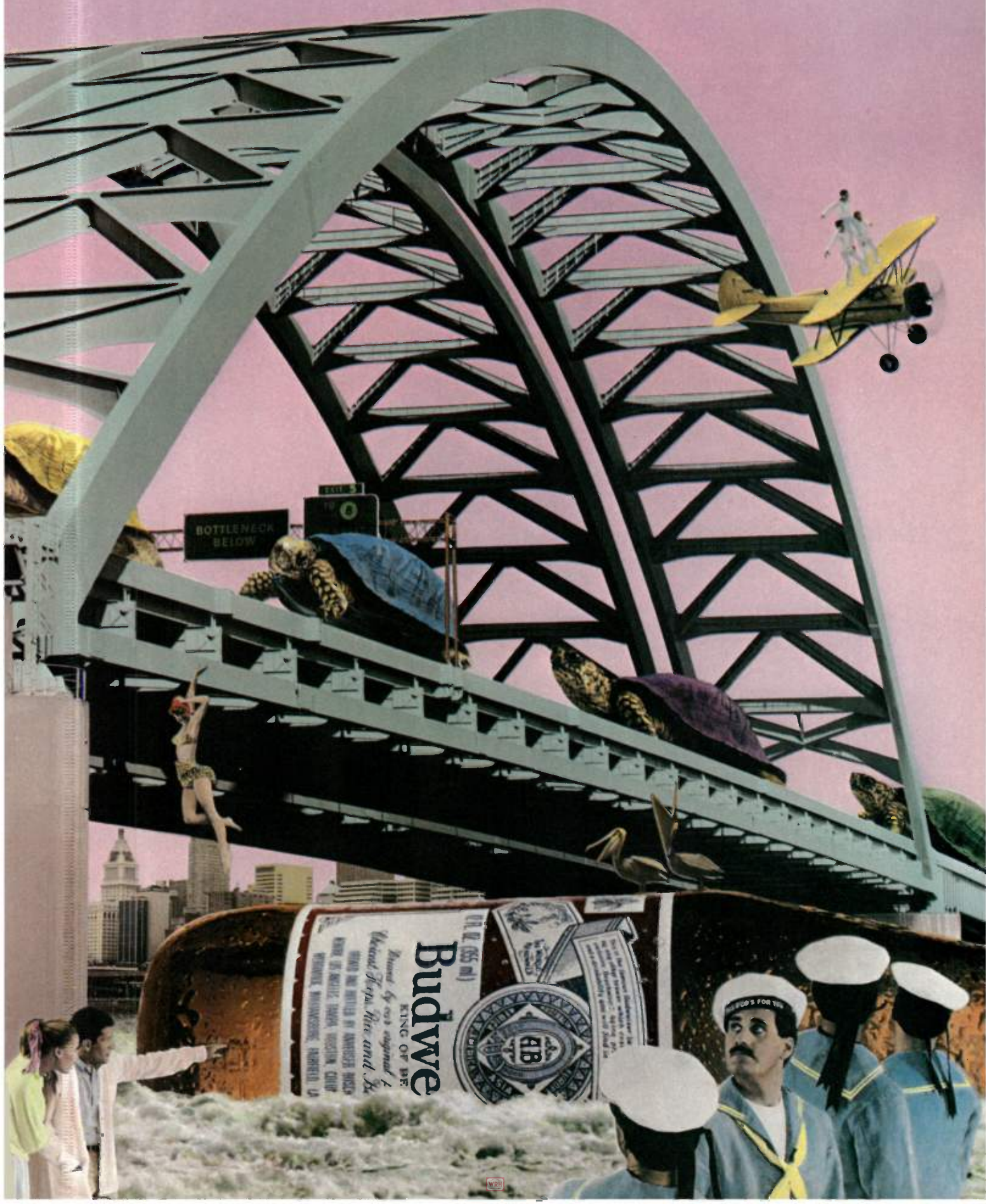
But our problems seem so intractable that it's easier to wish for our heroes to somehow solve them magically than to begin to define the hard work necessary to solve them ourselves. For this reason, our mythic heroes become in our desperate eyes more than just models of what we should strive to be. They become larger than life. And, like John Lennon, larger still in violent death.

Indeed, "it was twenty years ago today/Sgt. Pepper taught the band to play." Watch the films, listen to the records, and read the books and articles. Celebrate, remember, and learn. But, for their sake and ours, honor the four people and their genius, the legacy of their extraordinary work, not the myth. ○



For a 20" x 28" full-color poster of this ad, send \$6.00 check or money order payable to Anheuser-Busch, Inc. Dept. 11-D, One Busch Place, St. Louis, MO 63118. Allow 4-6 weeks. Offer expires December 31, 1984. Void where prohibited.

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# THE BEAT CLUB: BIG DADDY OF ROCK VIDEO

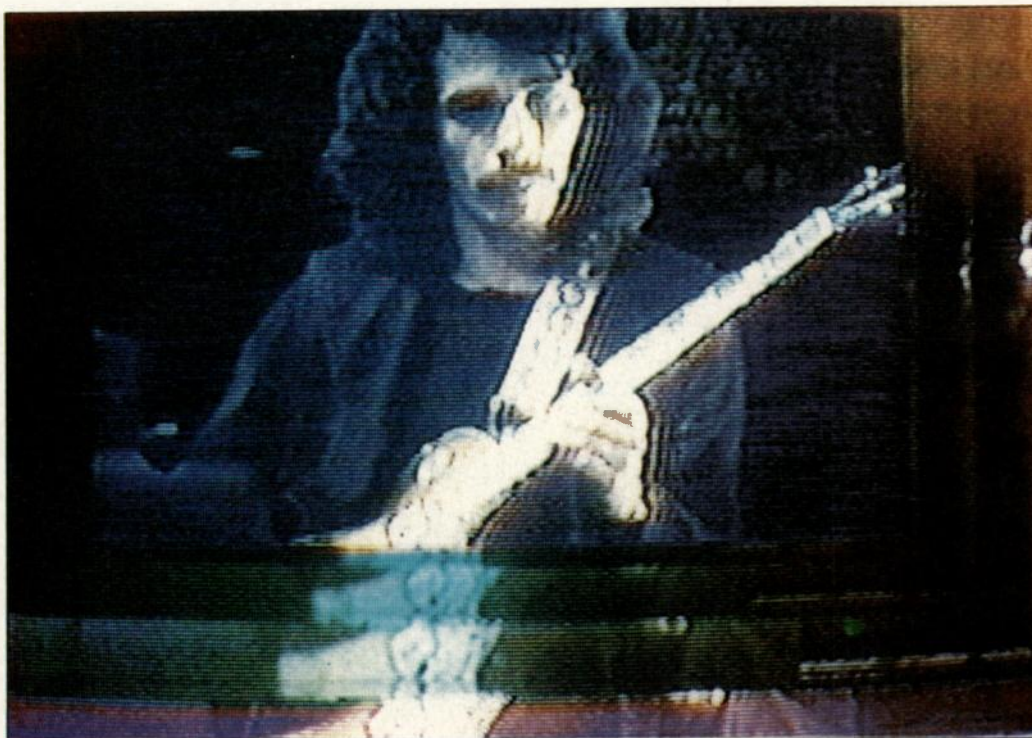
By Alan Hecht

A German TV rock show of the '60s was a crucible for the music video explosion of the '80s

**M**USIC VIDEO history begins with music on television. In the '50s, the States had Dick Clark's *American Bandstand* and *The Ed Sullivan Show* as the primary outlets for rock 'n' roll musicians to be seen nationwide; in the '60s, in addition to *Bandstand* and *Sullivan*, came *Shindig*, *Hollywood Palace*, *Hullabaloo*, *It's What's Happening*, *Baby*, *The Lloyd Thaxton Show* and *The Smothers Brothers Show*—repositories all of visual documents of rock 'n' roll's evolution.

Overseas, England's *Top of the Pops* and *Ready, Steady, Go* reflected their American counterparts' preoccupation with chart acts. In Germany, though, *The Beat Club* came on like a visual, free-form FM radio station, its lineup keyed more by what passed in those days for "underground" tastes than by chart action. Unlike most of the aforementioned U.S. shows, *The Beat Club* tapes have not been melted down or otherwise disposed of; they live on, 138 of them to be precise, and have been released to the American public for the first time on such shows as Home Box Office's *Video Jukebox* and the USA Network's *Night Flight*.

Produced by Radio Bremen (a radio and television station) in Bremen, West Germany during the years 1965 to 1972, *The Beat Club* was a monthly half-hour show whose archives include vintage performances by Jimi Hendrix, Cream, the Beach Boys, the Who, the Bee Gees, Fleetwood Mac (in the Peter Green days), Led Zeppelin, the Kinks, Black Sabbath and the Byrds. Each show featured three or four bands performing in front of a live audience, with a master of ceremonies introducing each act. And in a departure from standard music procedure, many *Beat Club* acts forsook lip-synching in favor of live performances in a video environment designed by the show's director, Michael Leckebusch.



What's now commonplace was new in '69: Multiple images of Carlos Santana on *The Beat Club* were produced by monitors keyed into the picture

"When you talk about *The Beat Club* you have to talk about Michael Leckebusch," notes Robert Odell, executive vice president of Producers Services Group (PSG). PSG distributes *The Beat Club* in the United States and is responsible for preserving the collection. "Leckebusch served as producer, director, executive producer, vision mixer, everything" says Odell. "His inspiration for the show was the Star Club in Hamburg, where he saw the Beatles perform."

Leckebusch was a stage director before joining Radio Bremen. There he directed and produced classical ballet and sports, performing all the technical functions necessary for a live presentation. It was a trial by fire and error that paid off handsomely later on.

"I learned the technical end from the ground up and I chose to do everything on my own," says Leckebusch, who's now producing and directing a rock show called *Electric City* for Dutch television, with plans for worldwide syndication this year. By assuming the role of vision mixer

(or technical director, as the position's called in the States), Leckebusch not only determined the camera shots but actually executed the cutting from shot to shot on the video switcher. The result was a spontaneous and direct style which became integral to the *Beat Club* *mise en scene*.

"I had the attitude of being the extra member in each band because I wanted to feel it along with them as I mixed the visuals," Leckebusch says of his approach. "I didn't bother the bands with camera rehearsals. I'd already listened to their music and when they were on stage for five minutes, I knew what kind of mood they were in. Then I'd be there with them immediately."

These "videojams" became a *Beat Club* trademark. Leckebusch's freewheeling style, plus his uncanny instinct for cutting on the beat and producing unusual visual effects, clearly foresaw modern music video techniques. Initially produced with only four old-fashioned black and white cameras (the show moved to color in 1969) on a budget of \$3000 to \$5000 a show, *The Beat*



*Club*, in short, relied heavily on the director and the featured performers finding some common creative spark. Leckebusch didn't perceive himself as a newsman there to "cover" the action—he was *part* of the action. Hence, the best *Beat Club* performances have a spontaneity and freshness that's conspicuously absent from more rigidly formatted music shows. This was due in part to the artists, of course, but also to the director's determination to capture the essential but fleeting moments of the rock 'n' roll experience.

Leckebusch achieved this intimacy by having the cameras zoom in and out on the subject at key moments, in a constant search for the quintessential shot (damn the focus—get close to Alvin Lee's fingers!). Although excessive at times, the technique is indicative of Leckebusch's fearless live direction: stationary shots were *verboten*; cameras attempted to stay in sync with the musical action.

*The Beat Club* also helped pioneer the video environment concept. Images, projected on screens placed behind the bands, gave the illusion of musicians working in some weird dimension "beyond time and space," as Rod Serling might have put it. Lighting, an important element of this environment, was pushed considerably beyond basic TV white. Theatrically lit, the sets were often dark and moody; Procol Harum performing "A Salty Dog," and Yes performing "No Experience Necessary" luxuriate in this minimal setting, while Nilsson enters the realm of special effects while singing "Everybody's Talking At Me": using a simple out-of-focus spotlight, Leckebusch managed to inject surrealism into the artist's performance.

Special effects were another area of extraordinary experimentation here. Modern equipment, such as the Quantel and the ADO, make the contemporary music video director's lot an easy one; Leckebusch had only a special effects generator, a video switcher and, best of all, an active imagination. One of his principal effects was the use of "keys," or electronic mattes. Keys insert one image into another, as on news broadcasts when the anchor reads a story while pictures of the event appear on a screen behind him. On *The Beat Club*, the band's performances were used as the foreground event for a series of background keys. Abstract, real or electronically generated images were utilized (some not unlike the "amoeba" effects of the Joshua Light Show from the Fillmore days). Manfred Mann's "Mighty Quinn" clip is a fine, clean example of keying: slides of the band, along with images of Eskimo life, illustrate the song's story, turning the segment into a low-budget concept video.

Leckebusch was inspired by video artists such as Nam June Paik, who was experimenting with video feedback as a "down and dirty" approach to original imagery. Paik, for example, would send signals back at each other until a loop built up which,

when controlled, could produce startling images and sound. Most of the time Leckebusch could only control the feedback enough to produce multiple images of the performers on a bank of monitors lining the stage or keyed into the picture.

By pushing the special effects generator to the limit, Leckebusch achieved a version of a special effect that wouldn't become commonplace for another 10 years. In T. Rex's "Jewel," he washed the band in colorized geometric overlays; with Black Sabbath and Edgar Winter he reversed colors to produce negative images and tints. Today the extension of this post-produc-

tured for posterity performances by several acts that didn't survive to see the music video era, such as Led Zeppelin, whose "Whole Lotta Love" clip (complete with nude dancers) is that supergroup's only known video.

"No one has the variety and depth of clips that *The Beat Club* collection has," states Odell. "*Shindig* and *American Bandstand* never presented the likes of Black Sabbath or Deep Purple."

Asked about current music videos, many featuring techniques he developed on *The Beat Club*, Leckebusch says he finds much of the fare lacking. "There are



**The Byrds on *The Beat Club*: Video feedback as a "down and dirty" approach to original imagery**

tion technique is called solarization, and it's used to good effect in Eddy Grant's "Electric Avenue" video.

*The Beat Club* also proved to be a crucible for the development of concept videos, although the show's on-location forays were limited—due to lack of portable equipment—to the studio's parking lot (Madeleine Bell's "I'm Gonna Make You Love Me") and rooftop (Procol Harum's "Homburg"). Finally, Leckebusch cap-

too many concept videos which are disturbing or destroying the live scene of rock music," he remarks. "There's too much TV out of the can."

Artists looking for inexpensive ways to produce inventive clips would do well to study the *Beat Club* collection, rather than the expensive, nonsensical videos so prevalent today. Matching the mood to the music is what it's all about, and *The Beat Club* had it right from the start. ○



# TRENDS IN TUBE TECHNOLOGY

## BLUE TUBE

General Electric has introduced its Neo-Vision™ TV screen in nine new models. Neo-Vision is a blue picture tube that contains neodymium oxide, a rare earth element that absorbs ambient room light, producing richer, more natural colors when the set is on, and

Electric Video Products Division, Portsmouth, Virginia 23705)

## STEREO VIDEO

Panasonic's new model CT-3173M Omni 13-inch diagonal screen component video monitor provides high fidelity sound via a built-in stereo am-

Panasonic component tuner, model TU-1012 on a lower shelf. Below, behind glass doors, a VCR or other auxiliary video device can be connected. Model CT-3173M has a two-year limited warranty on labor, parts and picture tube. Suggested retail price for the monitor is \$449.95. The optional equipment retails at the following prices: model TY-SP143P speakers, \$89.95 (pair); model TY-GB33P rack, \$109.95; model TU-1012 component remote tuner, \$399.95.

## FLAT TUBE

As part of its "Visual Integration" System lineup, Sharp has introduced a 20-inch diagonal color television with a flat, square picture tube, the model 20J580. Flat-faced and square-cornered, the new model's tube reduces distortion for a more natural TV picture. The flat-cornered design reduces reflection from overhead lights and other light sources, and also increases the tube's effective viewing area, adding a total of one additional inch in diagonal radius as compared with conventional tubes of the same dimensions.

Other features include an

on-screen color-code-by-mode display of channel selection, time, sleep timer display and type of input. VHF/UHF code is green; cable is yellow; external video equipment is red. The 20J580's 142 channel cable-compatible tuner eliminates the need for external channel selectors and provides direct tuning of normal broadcast VHF/UHF channels in CATV mode.

Housed in a metallic silver cabinet, the 20J580 measures 20 $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide by 19 $\frac{13}{64}$ " high by 19 $\frac{29}{32}$ " deep, and carries a suggested retail price of \$759.95. Limited warranty covers one year in home parts and labor. (Sharp Electronics Corporation, 10 Sharp Plaza, P.O. Box 588, Paramus, New Jersey 07652)

## STEREO SYNTHESIZER

Vidicraft's Stereo Synthesizer creates a sense of auditory perspective by dividing the output of a mono sound source into separate portions and channeling these to separate outputs. And like other sophisticated simulators, it is designed for hookup between a mono (non-stereo) sound source and a ste-

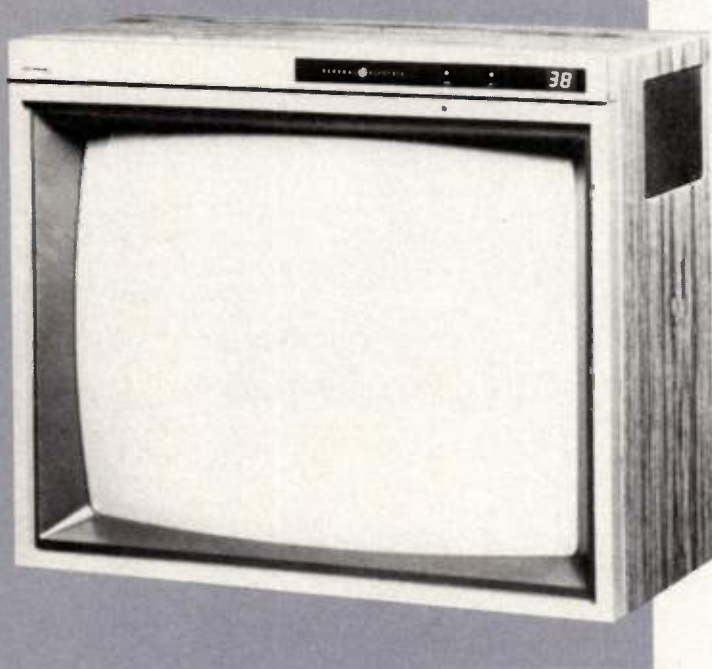
**GE's 25-inch screen model 25PM4860K (along with 19-inch counterpart model 19PM4758K, not shown) features the Neo-Vision blue picture tube and "side-firing" speakers**

giving the screen a blue tint when turned off. By absorbing the yellow-green light given off by bulbs or the sun, the neodymium screen is less affected by bright light in a room.

Among the models featuring Neo-Vision is a line of video component television systems, known as the Command Performance™ series, that offers high-fidelity stereo sound through separate speakers. Two newly-designed "space saving" TVs, model 19PM4758K and model 25PM4860K, also feature Neo-Vision. The former carries a suggested retail price of \$649, while the latter's suggested retail price is \$749. (General

plifier and a pair of internal side speakers. Output is rated at 1.5 watts per channel. Optional speakers, model TY-SP143P, can be mounted on the side of the set or separated further with connecting speaker wires. When using the optional external speakers, audio power is boosted to four watts per channel. To enhance the picture, model CT-3173M has dual RGB (Red-Green-Blue) capability. One RGB connector receives TTL signals from computers; the other accepts text signals from teletext services. Panasonic offers an optional rack, model TY-GB33P, that will hold this monitor on an open top shelf and optional

**Panasonic's model CT-3173M features a built-in stereo amplifier and a pair of internal side speakers for better quality sound**





reo, stereo VCR or a stereo recorder. However, the synthesizer's patented stereo simulation system does not simply send highs to one speaker and lows to the other, as most such systems do. Instead, it sends a mixture of highs and lows to each speaker, just as regular stereo does.

The synthesizer's noise reduction system provides alternative ways to counter the excessive noise (tape hiss, etc.) present in TV or VCR sound: an adjustable DNR Dynamic Noise Reduction Filter reduces high frequency noise without unnecessarily interfering with desirable high frequency sound, and an adjustable four-pole filter complements the function of the DNR when extremely noisy sound sources are used. These may be used together, apart, or not at all, depending on the amount and kind of noise present. Suggested retail price is \$249. (Vidicraft, 0704 S.W.



**Sharp's 20J580 Visual Integration color television reduces distortion for a more natural picture**

stopping each time one is located. 16 broadcast frequencies can then be preset for easy channel selection thereafter. Other features include Instant Recording convenience and a Picture Sharpness control that varies the definition of the vid-

able timer are among the unit's other notable features. Suggested retail price is \$950.

The HR-D120U incorporates features of deluxe models and some new ideas in a design that accents convenience. The control panel now features

modes, four-head technology is incorporated.

Among the new features on the HR-D120U is the Instant Recording function. Apart from the regular tape transport controls, this feature enables recordings of pre-determined length to be initiated immediately at the press of a button. This facility can also be used as a sleep timer for automatic shut-off of recordings started with regular controls. A Picture Sharpness control, varies the definition of the video image so that the most preferable degrees of "softness" or "sharpness" can be achieved. Suggested retail price is \$750. (JVC Company of America, 41 Slater Drive, Elmwood Park, New Jersey 07407; tel. 201-794-3900)

## FRONT LOADER

Sharp's VC-481U front-loading videocassette recorder features eight-hour record/playback capability with T-160 tape and two-four-six hour switchable modes. The new model, with "cassette in" illuminated indicator, has a video search system in both forward and reverse at five times the normal speed.

In addition, the VC-481U boasts still frame stop action in EP mode and a built-in seven-day, one-event daily programmable timer with 12-hour AM/PM digitron display. It also offers a 12-position VHF/UHF electronic tuner with AFT, a four-digit tape counter, built-in dew sensor and dew warning indicator. Suggested retail price is \$599.95. (Sharp Electronics Corporation, 10 Sharp Plaza, P.O. Box 588, Paramus, New Jersey 07652) ○



**Vidicraft's stereo synthesizer simulates stereo from any mono source**

Bancroft St., Portland, Oregon 97201; tel. 503-223-4884)

## NEW ENTRIES IN JVC's D SERIES VCRs

JVC's D Series videocassette recorders now includes two new models, the HR-D225U and the HR-D120U. The HR-D225U incorporates two audio channels and Dolby noise reduction circuitry for better-quality soundtracks. Like all of the D Series recorders, it includes a double-flap, dust-proof front-panel cassette compartment. All controls are also positioned up front, allowing installation of the recorder in a cabinet or shelf.

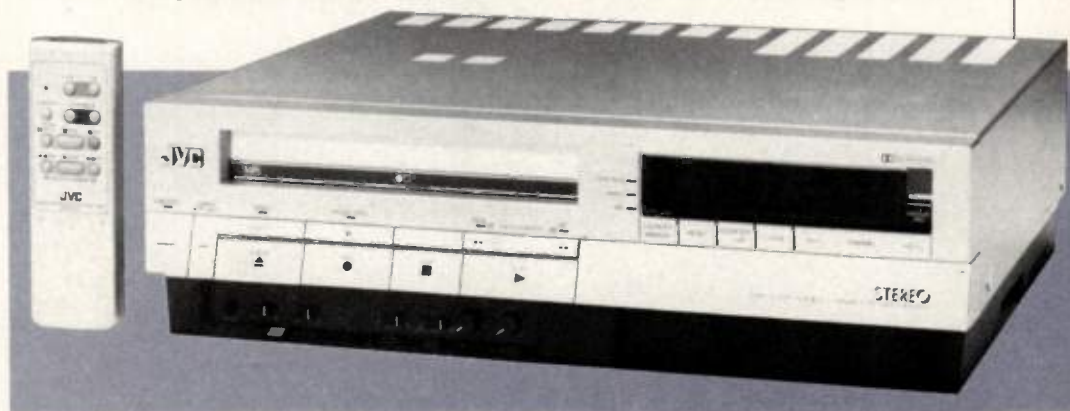
An advanced voltage synthesizer tuner is built in which tunes to 105 broadcast frequencies including CATV stations. It scans automatically the entire frequency range for television broadcast signals,

eo image. Four-head technology permits Shuttle Search and special effects at both SP and EP speeds.

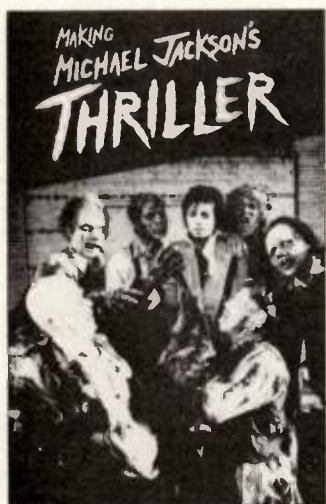
Full-function wireless remote control, a comprehensive fluorescent display with lap time counter and a deluxe timeshift viewing convenience with 14-day/8-event program-

large, symbolic control buttons which simplify operation and reduce the possibility of operation errors. A wireless infrared remote control unit, usually found only with luxury models, is standard equipment; and to assure high-quality picture reproduction in SP and EP recording and all three playback

**JVC's new D series VCR entries: the HR-D225U includes a built-in synthesizer tuner which tunes to 105 broadcast frequencies**







## MAKING MICHAEL JACKSON'S THRILLER

**T**he problems with *Making Michael Jackson's Thriller* are many: the placement of the finished clip up front, thus killing any possible suspense or anticipation as

we watch what went into the creation of it; the nature of the video, which is nothing more than modern day effects-heavy Hollywood horror schlockola; the purpose behind the making of *Making*, which has more to do with recovering an investment than giving anyone their dollar's worth; and the simple fact of "Thriller" not being the greatest song in the world to begin with. Of course, the song is not the thing here; if it was, this would be a rock video, and it's not.

If all this seems like excessive criticism of Michael Jackson, so be it; for all the man's undeniable talent, some owning up is due and due soon from Jackson and his supporters. The man's entire escapist fairy-tale vision—his backyard menagerie, his Disneyworld fixation (he visits there so often that a hotel suite has been named for him), his avowed professional goal of playing Peter Pan, the boy who never wanted to grow old, for like-minded fantasist Steven Spielberg—is on display in *Making*. We hear director John Landis telling us



how much Michael wanted to be made up as a werewolf, see a clip of him and his brothers for "Can You Feel It" which makes them super beings sprinkling magic dust over cities below, watch a snippet of the energetic "Beat It" video which has him as a supernatural force halting gang warfare with the power of his dancin' feet (and who knows? they just might be that powerful). Even the selection of former *Playboy* Playmate Ola Ray as the female lead opposite him might be another fantasy for the sexually ambiguous persona the public Michael Jackson deals in.

All of which signifies nothing, and plenty. If "Thriller" was even half the video "Billie Jean" is, all of the above would still be true, although less relevant to the case at hand. The reason—aesthetics aside—why "Billie Jean" is better is because it's intriguing; we sense we're getting some clue into the life of the real Michael Jackson, one who maybe feels pain and persecution and the nasty limitations of his rarified position. So to this admirer of Jackson the performer and not Jackson the embodiment of Motown's move to Hollywood and complete denial of one's roots (be they Gary, Indiana or Detroit, Michigan), *Making Michael Jackson's Thriller* is just another letdown in trying to understand—to reach out to—this young man who touches all of us with his magic. And for those who wish to always see him as a boy, keep in mind that accepting Pepsi's corporate sponsorship and hiring Don King are decisions that need more thought than that which a child can muster. *Director: Jerry Kramer. Vestron Video. 60 minutes. \$29.95.*

—Wayne King

## MUSICVIDEO TOP TEN

- 1 **THE WALL\***  
PINK FLOYD  
MGM/UA Home Video
- 2 **DURAN DURAN**  
DURAN DURAN  
Thorn-EMI Home Video
- 3 **MAKING MICHAEL JACKSON'S THRILLER\***  
MICHAEL JACKSON  
Vestron Video
- 4 **POLICE AROUND THE WORLD**  
POLICE  
I.R.S. Video
- 5 **GIRL GROUPS: THE STORY OF A SOUND\***  
MGM/UA Home Video
- 6 **THE COMPLEAT BEATLES**  
THE BEATLES  
MGM/UA Home Video
- 7 **LET'S SPEND THE NIGHT TOGETHER**  
ROLLING STONES  
Embassy Home Entertainment
- 8 **A HARD DAY'S NIGHT\***  
THE BEATLES  
MPI Video
- 9 **WHO ROCKS AMERICA: 1982 AMERICAN TOUR**  
THE WHO  
CBS/Fox Home Video
- 10 **SHEENA EASTON IN CONCERT**  
SHEENA EASTON  
Thorn-EMI Home Video

\*Denotes new entry  
The MusicVideo Top Ten indicates the fastest-moving sales and rentals titles in music product as reported by the country's leading video retail outlets.

## VIDEO CLIP TOP TEN

- 1 **SAY, SAY, SAY**  
PAUL McCARTNEY-MICHAEL JACKSON  
(Columbia) D: Bob Giraldi
- 2 **ALL NIGHT LONG**  
LIONEL RICHIE  
(Motown) D: Bob Rafelson
- 3 **TALKING IN YOUR SLEEP**  
THE ROMANTICS  
(Nemperor) D: Bob Dyke
- 4 **UPTOWN GIRL**  
BILLY JOEL  
(Columbia) D: Jay Dubin-Jon Small
- 5 **PARTY TRAIN**  
GAP BAND  
(Mercury) D: Don Letts
- 6 **ROCKIT**  
HERBIE HANCOCK  
(Columbia) D: Godley-Creme
- 7 **CHURCH OF THE POISON MIND**  
CULTURE CLUB  
(Virgin/Epic) D: Chris Gabrin
- 8 **LOVE IS A BATTLEFIELD**  
PAT BENATAR  
(Chrysalis) D: Bob Giraldi
- 9 **UNDERCOVER OF THE NIGHT**  
THE ROLLING STONES  
(Rolling Stones) D: Julien Temple
- 10 **CANDY MAN**  
THE MARY JANES  
(Motown) D: Nick Saxton

Compiled by RockAmerica (27 E. 21st Street, N.Y., N.Y. 10003), 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. These charts reflect video play for the month of November.



# THE SIGHT OF SOUND



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WRN



# COMPONENTS: GETTING YOUR MONEY'S WORTH

**W**hen it comes to buying an audio component system, juggling prices becomes more an issue than evaluating specs. Let's face it—most of us go shopping with a budget or a balance on a credit card, not bottomless pockets.

The idea is to get the most for your money without putting all the quality in one end of your system. For instance, it is no use to have three-way, tower speakers



**Technics' SL-B300 turntable:**  
Automatic belt-drive and low  
wow and flutter (approx. \$130)

without having enough juice to drive them or all the money in a cartridge and turntable without having any way to reproduce those glorious db's that your system can cut from a vinyl disc.

What follows are three suggested systems for three different price ranges: \$6-700; \$7-800; \$8-900. A survey of the available equipment found that cutting a decent system price for under \$600 these days is a near impossible feat and even keeping your budget to just over the \$600 mark takes some finagling. One guideline to keep in mind is to stick with the brand names. Keep in mind that the esoteric audiophile manufacturers don't usually market for these price ranges. This is not to say that you can't occasionally find an off-brand bargain; it's just a lot safer to deal with manufacturers who sell volume and can often offer you a good buy. You'll notice, as well, that the following samples have paired turntable and receivers by the same company. You can mix and match the following selections to create the system that best suits your tastes and needs.

## THE UNDER \$700 SYSTEM

WHEN BUYING A RECEIVER, make sure that the unit offers power and decent receiver tuning. These are the two ingredients that make the Technics SA 310 receiver a good value (approx. \$250). The unit boasts 35 watts per channel and its quartz synthesizer tuning assures drift free reception. Other features include 16 station FM/AM presets (8 per band) and auto-scan tuning. The read out is LED, and the input selector includes options for a Compact Disc player and a video source.

The receiver is nicely paired with the company's new Model SL-B300 automatic belt-drive turntable (approx. \$130). Wow and flutter is rated low due to the unit's patented servo-control. Meanwhile, the spinner features oil-damped cueing and a sensor that prevents tonearm movement when no record is on the platter but which correctly sets down the needle on any size disc. A nice partner for the tone arm is the Shure M104E (about \$70) cartridge which will work with the turntable's P-mount configuration.

Meanwhile, to maintain your budget limitations, try JBL's two-way, 6½ inch J216s which are equipped with one-inch dome high frequency loudspeakers and 6½-inch bass drivers (about \$100 per speaker). The bass driver utilizes the company's symmetrical field magnetic structure for reduced distortion, making for a decent midrange and tight bass response.

Total list price (before local taxes): \$650.

## Pioneer's PL-S50 turntable: A lot of turntable for \$130



## THE BELOW \$800 SYSTEM

BY ONLY BOOSTING YOUR BUDGET over one hundred dollars, things don't loosen up all that much in terms of features and components to choose from.

One suggestion includes the PL-S50 automatic turntable from Pioneer which features a Quartz-PPL servo for error compensation and steady platter speed. Automatic features include auto record size selection and detection and the tone



**Shure's M104E cartridge:**  
Proven reliability for \$70

arm contains a device that eliminates resonance induced vibration. It's a lot of turntable for \$130 (\$200 with Shure M104E).

The unit teams nicely with Pioneer's SX-40 receiver (approx. \$335) which pumps 38 watts per channel, offers eight FM and eight AM station presets, will simulate stereo for any mono program. An LED readout keeps you up on the operating information and the internal microprocessor should give the unit the staying power you need for years of listening.

For speakers, the AR 18Bs were selected (\$120 each), offering a two way bookshelf design with an eight-inch woofer and 1¼-inch liquid cooled cone high range driver. As with the company's other B-series products these speakers carry long throw woofers, offering a tight bottom end at up to 100 watts of power.

Total system price: \$775.

## THE UNDER \$900 SYSTEM

IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS WHEN bucks were bucks, this amount could near-





**Denon's DP-15F automatic direct drive turntable: Improved tracking, reduced distortion, increased clarity (approx. \$200)**

ly bring you everything you wanted in a stereo. No such luck today, but \$900 can still buy a lot; it also puts you in a league where you can now begin to afford products by Denon, a company well-regarded for its higher-end merchandise.

Some serious disc spinning with the company's full automatic direct drive DP-15F turntable proved that despite its low price (about \$200) it could perform its required tasks nicely. The turntable features a tone arm similar to that designed for the company's more expensive products, a "dynamic servo tracer" that can shut out unwanted resonance (created from record warpage). The result is that tracking is improved, leading to an overall reduction in distortion and increased clarity. The Stanton 680EE cartridge, a noted rugged cartridge lightweight, matches well for \$76.

Denon receivers, meanwhile, don't come as cheaply as other well-known brands, still, the company's DRA 300 (approx. \$300) might be just the ticket. The unit's non-switching amplifier packs 33 watts per channel. Frequency drift is overcome with a high-grade tuner which allows ten station presets (five for FM, five for AM). It offers a Compact Disc selector as well as a subsonic filter switch to polish off ultra low frequencies usually caused by warped discs.

The ADS L470 loudspeaker completes

**Denon's DRA 300: 33 watts per channel, plus a high-grade tuner and Compact Disc selector (approx. \$300)**



the package. The 17-pound bookshelf speakers feature one-inch soft dome tweeters with a high temperature all-metal voice coil assembly, and a seven-inch woofer. The speakers are power rated up to 75 watts maximum peak program. The units, in either black finish or walnut, retail for about \$160 each.

Total system price: \$896.

## MICRO SOFT RULES

WHEN IBM's NEWEST MICRO OFFspring, the IBM PCjr, hits the stores this spring it will be riding high on the reputation of its parent, the IBM PC, that established the first serious micro computer standard with its software configuration MS DOS.

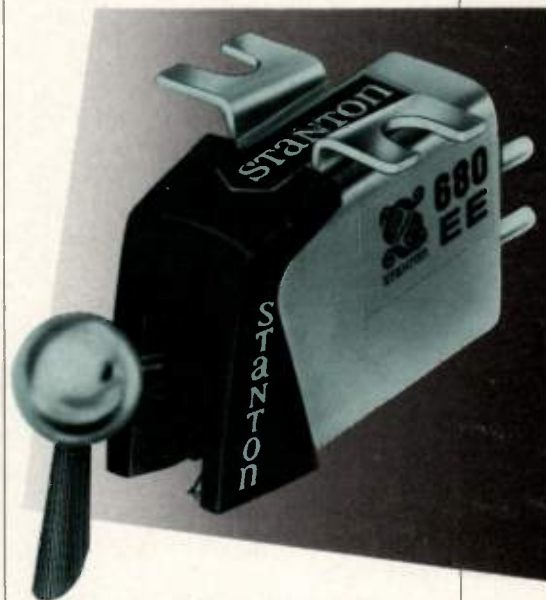
MS DOS, in computer terms, is the computer's operating system—a code on a magnetic disc that teaches that hunk of hardware how to think. MS DOS is now widely used by many products in the microcomputer marketplace—trying to feed off the IBM PC's popularity. The PCjr (about \$670, without disc drive; about \$1270 with disc drive, neither come with monitor or printer) also uses MS DOS, produced for IBM by a northwestern firm that, by now, virtually defines the software business—Microsoft.

Microsoft's success is one that would have made a kid millionaire like Phil Spector green with envy. It was started eight years ago by Bill Gates, then a 19-year-old Harvard dropout who developed the first BASIC programming language for a micro computer. This was followed by the sale of this easy-to-use program for the landmark micros by Radio Shack and Apple. Since that time his company has designed the popular Radio Shack Model 100, a revolutionary notebook computer, created one of the best micro games, *Flight Simulator*, as well as produced a well-received word processing program, *Word*, and a new package that allows micro users to integrate various types of software at one time (called windowing) that has been adopted by an enviable crowd of leading micro manufacturers. *Fortune* magazine estimates that this year the company will generate \$70 million in sales. IBM's adoption

of Gates's operating system didn't hurt business, one bit.

Neither will the adoption of yet another Microoperating system by the consortium of eight Japanese electronics manufacturers, hoping to move in on the floundering home computer marketplace in the United States, so far dominated by Atari, Coleco, and Texas Instruments (which has since dropped out). The operating system is called MSX and, if the machines are ever introduced here in the United States, it is figured that IBM's PCjr may have some tight competition for home computer sales.

Japanese MSX computers by Panasonic, Mitsubishi, Toshiba, Sanyo and Yamaha were introduced in Tokyo last Christmas and at the recent Consumer Electronics Show Spectravideo became the first American home computer manufacturer to release an MSX machine (an upgrade of its SV 328).



**Stanton's 680EE cartridge: Rugged and lightweight (\$76)**

What's so important about standards when it comes to home computing, you may ask? Currently, software programs developed for one machine don't necessarily work on another. If you buy a \$250 word processor, let's say for the Apple IIe, you can't use that same program on an IBM PC. If one computer manufacturer decides to discontinue its product line, users will still be assured of a continuous software supply, as well as a market full of software compatible machines once they decide to upgrade their existing hardware.

However, Jon Shirley (former president of Radio Shack, now Microsoft boss), predicts that MSX machines won't be seen stateside before the middle of 1985, which shouldn't worry him or anyone else at Microsoft at all. The company will own an estimated 40 percent of the micro marketplace via its MS DOS software sales by that time. Bill Gates, meanwhile, will only be 28 years old—and counting. ○



ROBERT POOR + DAVID GANS

# YAMAHA'S DX7: FM SYNTHESIS FOR THE MASSES

**Y**amaha's DX7 is the first of a new line of synthesizers to use a new technology called *frequency modulation* (FM), which has previously been available only at computer-music facilities such as Stanford's CCRMA, where Dr. John Chowning and his associates developed and implemented it. The DX7 brings all the power and range of FM synthesis to the masses in a well-designed package costing under \$2000. Because it does so much for so little—and sounds so good—FM is going to set the world of analog and digitally-controlled analog synthesis on its ear.

Reduced to its simplest terms, music consists of sound waves, whose properties are *amplitude* (volume) and frequency (pitch). The basic building block is the sine wave, that classic undulating line with a crest and a trough for each cycle. Given a sufficient number of *oscillators* (the device that generates the sine wave), any sound can theoretically be created. Now that digital technology has reached our daily lives, it's possible to make a powerful, versatile digital synthesizer small enough and inexpensive enough to be feasible from a production-and-marketing standpoint.

What is FM? Consider a violinist playing a single, pure note. As he begins to apply vibrato by wiggling his finger on the string, the note's pitch rises and falls slightly. In engineering parlance, this is known as *modulating* the frequency of the original note. Thus, vibrato is a form of FM.

Imagine that the violinist increases the rate of vibrato to something impossibly fast: the frequency of the string itself. We would no longer hear a single, varying pitch; instead, the modulation would add new harmonics (multiples of the fundamental frequency) to the sound of the note. Musically speaking, this is the essence of FM. In FM digital synthesis, one oscillator produces the main pitch and is called the *carrier*. The second oscillator, playing the role of the wiggling finger, is called the *modulator*. In most applications, the frequency of the modulator is equal to, or a multiple of, the carrier's pitch. The power of FM synthesis lies in the arrangement of these carrier-modulator combinations. Complex waveforms are created by combining carriers and modulators in different ways, making rich and varied timbres from the simplest of building blocks.

FM synthesis accurately models the sound made by percussion instruments

such as gongs, vibes, bells and the Fender Rhodes (the DX7's Rhodes-ish E PIANO 1 preset is reason enough in itself to buy it). But sounds such as brass and strings are more complex. A trombone played softly gives a sweet, pure tone, but as the force of the note increases it becomes brighter—the harmonic content of the note changes according to its loudness. This characteristic is common to many instruments, and FM synthesis is a natural tool for recreating it.

To understand this, let's go back to our violin vibrato virtuoso. If he is playing A (440 Hz) and applying vibrato at 440 wiggles per second, we hear the A-440—but it

single one. The factory-supplied voices are a good starting point for creating custom sounds; they can be edited to taste and stored either in the internal memory or in a "blank" cartridge supplied with the unit, which has storage for 32 presets.

The DX7's MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface—see separate story in this section) port makes it possible to integrate it into a larger ensemble of synthesizers, rhythm machines, sequencers and keyboards. If you have a personal computer with a MIDI interface, you can load and store the programs from the DX7, greatly extending its capabilities.

The DX7 has dozens of other features,



**Yamaha's DX7: Remarkable functionality in a well-designed, \$2000 unit**

sounds brassier than an ordinary violin. If he reduces the strength (amplitude) of the wiggle—but not its frequency—the violin's tone will settle down from brassy to natural. In terms of the DX7 and FM synthesis, the benefit here is that with a single control—the modulator's amplitude adjustment—we can change the spectrum (harmonic content) of the note produced by the carrier. Each of the DX7's 16 voices has six oscillators which may be interconnected in any of 32 different arrangements to create extremely rich sounds.

It is to Yamaha's credit that despite the multitude of parameters associated with each voice, creating and editing a custom sound is a pretty straightforward process. The DX7 packs remarkable functionality into the 42 switches and one slider used to program and name your sounds. But with 128 sounds supplied with the unit (and the promise of periodic software updates expanding the DX7's library), it may never be necessary for some players to program a

such as keyboard transposition, master tune, glissando/portamento, and mono or polyphonic operation. Its most significant feature, of course, is the way it sounds—so the best way to find out about it is to drop into your local Yamaha dealer and *hear it*.

Caveat emptor! Because of the tremendous success of the DX7 and the related DX9, it seems that many merchants who are not authorized Yamaha dealers have been buying units from foreign distributors for sale here in the States. These units may not work properly, Yamaha says, and they are not protected by warranties. Before you buy, look for the FCC approval sticker and a seal such as "UL Approved" or a state or local agency's. If you have questions as to the authenticity of a DX synthesizer or whether a dealer is authorized, write to Yamaha at this address: Combo Products Division, Music Marketing Group, Yamaha International Corporation, P.O. Box 6600, Buena Park CA 90622. ○



MARTIN PORTER + STEVE SCHWARTZ

# MIDI: A NEW AGE IN ELECTRONIC MUSIC BEGINS

The microchip meets the synthesizer

**T**he microcomputer is not just the work tool of stock market analysts or high-ticket CPAs. Rock 'n' rollers are quickly turning to this new age brain-aid, with a particular eye on enriching and expanding popular music.

Clearly, the micro's silicon chip cousin the keyboard synthesizer, is making its chart-topping mark. But soon those racks of keyboards that bury the piano player on stage behind a wall of electronics will be joined by a keyboard of yet another type. The synthesizer and the micro are about to merge and the end result, many musicians agree, will be electronic music never before believed possible.

The way this technical marriage will be arranged is via a recently adopted synthesizer standard called MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) approved overwhelmingly by leading digital instrumental makers. With it, a new generation of musician who may resemble more a computer programmer than the note fiddler of yore will be able to connect his instruments with most types of personal computers and, with the help of specially designed software, be able to compose, arrange, perform and even record full scale compositions in a completely digital format and with only two hands.

Utopia keyboardist Roger Powell, an authority on synthesizers and computer music, is one of the many who are cautiously optimistic about MIDI technology. He says, "MIDI's biggest advantage is the automated control; you can record the notes you play, put the control functions into the computer and it will play them back. You can also organize a whole piece that way by rearranging the various sections without having to record them over. It's the modern day version of the player piano: the piano roll becomes the computer and piano becomes the synthesizer."

There are many applications that electronic composers are considering for the keyboard/computer interface, ranging from musical instruction to canned jingles. Others feel that MIDI could, ultimately, pose a threat to multitrack recording since the players can layer and edit their music before setting it onto magnetic tape.

Either way, since the music professional will be able to play many different digital instruments from a single keyboard via the MIDI interface, originally composed or sequenced from a computer program, the possibilities for recording and performance are limitless.

Or are they? Powell hedges his enthusiasm: "There are limitations to the (MIDI). For one there's no software available for it yet, although that will probably be remedied within six months, if not sooner. There's also a time limitation; it is possible to play more notes than MIDI can handle simultaneously and the end result will be a slight delay between some of the notes."

In terms of software, designers have long been eager but have been waiting for a reasonable and intelligent interface that could make the promised technical marriage happen. The latter took a major step forward late last year when Roland Corporation, maker of synthesizer keyboards as well as computer peripherals, unveiled the first interface between the personal computer and electronic instruments. The MPU-401 (under \$175) came in conjunction with two software programs, for the popular Apple II and IBM PC, which enables up to eight instruments to be controlled by one computer. Roland decided to make the software requirements for the device open information to the public to help get the MIDI software ball rolling (for a copy of its manual contact Roland: 1022 South La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90035).

Other manufacturers are doing their own bit to give MIDI a lift-off. It appears that the keyboard manufacturers are not alone in adopting the format with electronic drum machine makers and even signal processing involved in R&D to interface their gear in the MIDI chain. And the standard is expected to get its biggest boost when next year's line of keyboards by mass

marketer Casio adopts the interface format.

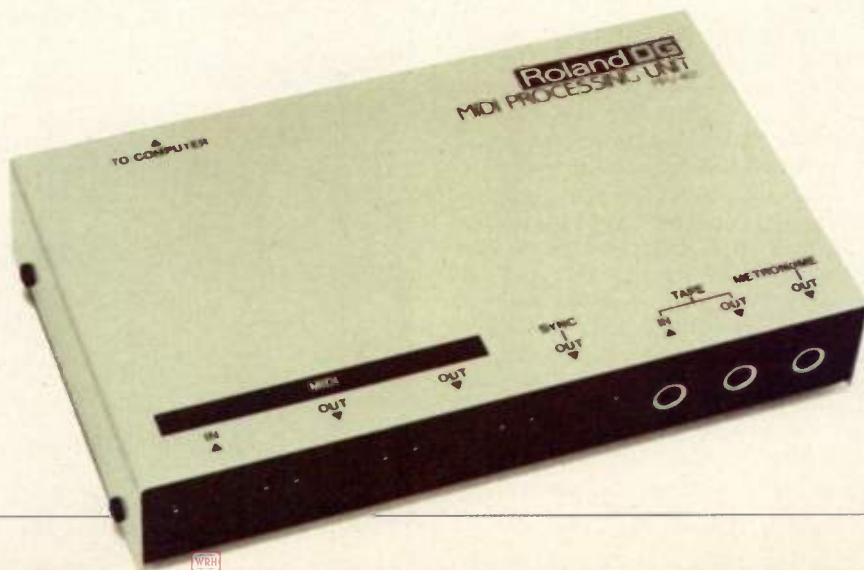
With all this action there is bound to be those ready to yell "hype" while there also appears to be confusion in some circles about what MIDI can and can't do.

Powell claims MIDI "is not going to help the synthesizer overcome any limitations it might have. If you have 'x' amount of voices in your instrument MIDI is not going to increase that output. But, as an organization tool, the compositional flexibility becomes enormous."

To aid in the dissemination of information, the International MIDI Association (IMA, 8426 Vine Valley Dr., Sun Valley, CA 91352) recently grouped and is expected to sponsor the most comprehensive MIDI display to date at the 1984 Olympics Games in Los Angeles this summer.

However, news about MIDI is already spreading throughout the rock world. It has been reported that Donald Fagen began a total synthesizer project in New York in mid-January using several MIDI products adapted by engineer Roger Nichols. And although Roger Powell doesn't expect to be using MIDI in any upcoming Utopia projects, he does see the microcomputer in his future as well: "My goal is to get my total software system going and then make a deal with a Compact Disc company—do the entire album on my IBM PC with no tape recorders involved, no synthesizers and have the final waveforms of my pieces directly transferred to a Compact Disc. So there's no air anywhere in the sound; it would be hermetically sealed until it reaches your ear." ○

**Roland's MPU-401: The first interface between the personal computer and electronic instruments**





## SC'S MIDI SEQUENCER

SEQUENTIAL CIRCUITS' MODEL 64 Sequencer is the first SCI sequencer available using MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface, see separate story in this section). The cartridge plugs in to the memory expansion port of a Commodore 64 personal computer, taking advantage of that system's portability, memory capacity, cassette or disc storage and video interface. The Model 64 records whatever is played by storing the MIDI information sent from any MIDI equipped instrument compatible with the Rev 1.0 MIDI spec. Up to 4000 notes can be recorded. It also stores velocity, pitch-bend and modulation information (if the synthesizer is so equipped). For playback, the sequencer sends MIDI information back to the synthesizer either as recorded in real time, or



**Sequential Circuits' Model 64 Sequencer with MIDI capability**

auto-corrected for subtle timing errors. The playback tempo can be varied by using either the internal clock or the drum machine clock.

As a digital recorder, the sequencer's editing facilities allow for multi-track overdubbing, duplication and correcting parts without re-recording, splicing or accumulating noise through the processes of "mix-down" and "bouncing" generations of tape tracks. The sequencer memory can be allocated to eight independent variable-length sequences, each of which can have five tracks for overdubbing. Eight different timing error-correct values are available, from a quarter-note (lowest resolution) to a sixty-fourth note (highest resolution). A sequence can be transposed within a six-octave range. A library of songs can be built by chaining sequences together and storing them on disc or cassette. Songs can also be overdubbed and transposed.

For precise start and stop control of recording and playback, the Model 64 cartridge has a jack for an optional footswitch. A second jack accepts the synchronizing clock from an external drum box. The sequencer will record this drum box clock with the sequence. On playback the drum box clock can then keep the sequence synchronized to the drum part.

The Model 64 Sequencer is ready to use with SC's Sixtrak, Prophet-600 and Prophet-T8 synthesizers, with the Prophet-5 or Prophet-10 equipped with a Model 841 MIDI retrofit kit, or with any other MIDI-equipped synthesizer. Suggested retail price for cartridge and manual is \$195, and it comes with a one-year limited warranty. (Sequential Circuits, 3051 N. First St., San Jose, CA 95134)

## THE JUNIOR PARTNER

MXR'S JUNIOR IS A PORTABLE sound box designed to generate popular drum and percussion sounds, as well as

special audio effects. Its initial configuration includes a laser blast, hand claps, shaker and drum. In addition, numerous digitally-recorded sounds will be available through replacement chips, part of Junior's extensive library of sounds. Modeled after MXR's Series 2000 pedals, Junior can be used by itself or easily incorporated into the effects chain for user convenience. While not affecting an incoming signal, Junior mixes in the selected voice for down-line amplification. Junior also features many of the standard features of the Series 2000 effects, including multiple power sources, automatic re-charging of ni-cads, internal voltage regulation and filtering, and MXR's exclusive tactile feedback footswitch. In addition, LEDs give Run and Power status indication, and the Run

**MXR's Junior portable sound box**



**Shure's A45Z miking bracket for use with amps and speakers**

LED pulses when the voice is activated, for visual synchronization with the unit. The MXR Junior is backed by a one-year warranty. Suggested retail price is \$165. (MXR Innovations, Inc., 740 Driving Park Avenue, Rochester, NY 14613, 716-254-2910)

## AMP MIC

SHURE HAS INTRODUCED THE A45Z speaker miking bracket, a microphone mounting device designed for use with instrument amps and speakers. One end of the Z-shaped bracket easily slips underneath any conventional amp or speaker cabinet to hold the microphone firmly in place. The A45Z can also be positioned on

top of an amp or cabinet, held in place by the carrying handle. The bracket's other end features a sliding mounting screw which will accommodate any standard microphone swivel adapter. The slotted bracket permits the user to experiment with different speaker-to-microphone and angular placements. Suggested retail price is \$12.95. (Shure Brothers Inc., 222 Hartrey Avenue, Evanston, Illinois 60204)



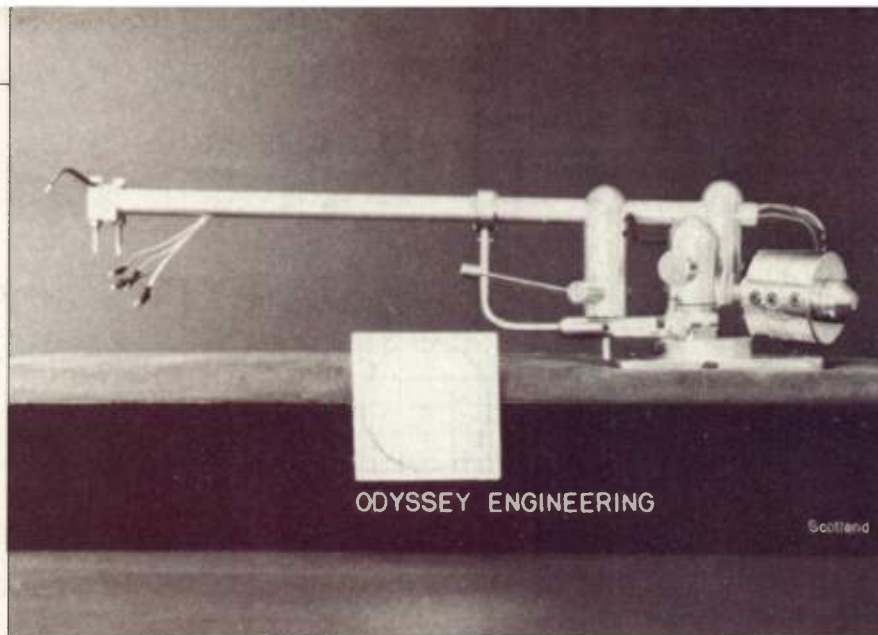
## HI-HAT IMPORT

PAUL REAL SALES, INC. IS NOW the exclusive U.S. importer of the Capelle Hi-Hat from France. Formerly known as the "Orange" hi-hat or "Pro Mark" hi-hat when it was distributed by Pro Mark from 1974 to 1980, the pedal is noted for its smooth, precise operation. The Capelle Hi-Hat has been redesigned and improved to incorporate state-of-the-art technology with performance-proven practicality. The stand features quick release clamp systems; three-piece, large diameter tubing; twin external, adjustable, non-compression springs; double reinforced legs; dual spurs; and link-type pedal connection which allows for stroke length and angle adjustment. It retails for \$189.00 (Paul Real Sales, Inc., 745 Oak Knoll Circle, Pasadena, CA 91106, Tel. 1-800-722-0558 or 213-792-6847)

## POLY-SYNTH

ODYSSEY ENGINEERING'S MODEL RP1-XG asymmetric tonearm incorporates several attractive features, including asymmetric pivot assembly to control vibration and resonance by way of spherical pillar terminations, choice of material,

**The Capelle Hi-Hat: smooth, precise operation**



## Odyssey Engineering's RP1-XG Asymmetric tonearm

thick wall arm tube, and the placing of precision ball races at stylus level. A solid, fixed headshell ensures absolute rigidity and perfect tracking. The center of gravity of the counterweight is positioned at stylus level, again to ensure optimal center of gravity position and stability. For easy installation, the eccentric pillar mount enables very fine adjustment of overhang. The tonearm is finished in 24 Karat hard gold-plated brass and satin anodized aluminum. The RP1-XG retails at \$798. (Odyssey Engineering Ltd., 3 West 37th Avenue, San Mateo, CA 94403. Tel. 415-341-6182)

## PRECISION TONEARM

UNICORD'S KORG POLY 800, a fully professional, digitally programmable

System (DACS). Full edit capability allows instant temporary or permanent changes to any program during performance and moving of programs from one location to another. 50 parameter "high resolution" control provides the most fine-tuning of each patch. Also, the unit's envelope generators utilize six individual envelope parameters (Attack, Delay, Slope, Break Point, Sustain and Release), rather than the usual four.

Individual patches can be "saved" in the memory and offloaded to tape in 14 seconds. Programs can be rearranged into a specific order and recalled in live performance via a footswitch. The Poly 800 also comes equipped with the new MIDI interface which provides external link-up to other MIDI-equipped synthesizers or



## Unicord's Korg Poly 800 digitally programmable eight-voice synth

eight-voice polyphonic synthesizer, delivers a wide variety of sounds and textures, such as fat brass sounds, expressive strings, distinctive lead lines sounds and realistic piano, organ and clav patches. The Poly 800's 64 programs can be instantaneously accessed via its Digital Access Control

computers as a means of expanding sound and performance capabilities.

Both AC and battery powered, the Poly 800 also features a headphone jack for private practice anywhere. Suggested retail price is \$795. (Unicord, 89 Frost Street, Westbury, NY 11590; Tel. 516-333-9100)



# RECORDS



PHOTO: SCOTT WEINER

## THE ARTIST RETURNS

**PAUL SIMON**  
**Hearts and Bones**

Warner Bros.

By  
John  
Swenson

**D**iscounting the *One Trick Pony* soundtrack, *Hearts and Bones* is Paul Simon's first solo album in nearly a decade. You might expect him to have changed since *Still Crazy After All These Years*, but it's



the similarity rather than the difference between this and past material that is striking. Simon is still very much the poet, playing games with songs, matching images with numinous feelings, investing commonplace items with religious meaning and pawing through his heart's rag and bone shop looking for a clue to match up the disconnected sections of his life.

The difference in Simon's songwriting now is in how he manipulates its elements. It's not so much that he's improved technically, it's that the writing is more soulful, more emotionally resonant. He's no longer worried about his audience reading his songs as autobiographical. Simon's lines have always called attention to themselves in the past. Emotions expressed in songs like "My Little Town," or "Duncan" are so carefully arranged they seem presented like precious gems in tasteful settings—very beautiful but nevertheless conveying an icy formality. Simon appears to be more connected to the material on *Hearts and*

*Bones*—you can feel his presence in the songs.

The love songs—"Hearts and Bones," "Train In the Distance" and "Rene and George Magritte With Their Dog After the War"—contain as much psychological information about their characters and implied dramatic action as a well-developed film script, yet Simon suffuses them with his own personality. The shifting metaphorical conceit of the "Train In the Distance," which is likened to a range of lovers' feelings, is one of the most beautiful turns Simon's ever drawn. Even the seemingly innocuous "Cars Are Cars," which at first appeared to be a child's sing-song along the lines of "Fifty Ways To Leave Your Lover," contains the revealing punch line:

*"If some of my homes/Had been more like my car I probably wouldn't/Have travelled this far."*

Simon has revelled in self analysis before, and the two versions of "Think Too Much" included here are astute pieces of



# ON MAXELL, ROCK 'N' ROLL IS REALLY HERE TO STAY.



Every Maxell cassette is destined to become a golden oldie. Because at Maxell we build cassettes to standards that are 60% higher than the industry calls for.

Durable cassettes you can shake, rattle yet they keep on rolling.

Precision engineered tape that even after 500 plays still delivers high fidelity.

So when we say, on Maxell, rock 'n' roll is really here to stay...Be-Bop-A-Lu-La... we don't mean maybe.



IT'S WORTH IT.



auto-criticism taking dream-like inspiration from his father and making a simple but compelling observation about his attitude toward love.

The overall effect Simon's renewed confidence has on this material makes it seem like he is standing outside of his own song-writing process, monitoring and commenting on its method. He solves his writer's block by constructing a piece, "Song About the Moon," in which he coaxes himself to follow through his ideas, then reassures himself by noting how effortless it all seems once it's finished.

The album closes with "The Late Great Johnny Ace," one of Simon's finest song-writing achievements, which features a compelling instrumental coda scored by Philip Glass. He turns the old cliché about having your life flash before your eyes into a powerful framework for understanding the deaths of Johnny Ace (a.k.a. John Marshall Alexander, Jr., a great '50s R&B singer who lost it all on Christmas Eve of 1954, killing himself backstage at a show in Houston in a game of Russian roulette), John F. Kennedy and John Lennon as symbolic milestones marking stages of his life. The magic of the song is that even though Simon is making an extremely personal statement he manages to make it apply to our lives as well. And it is that continuing and growing capacity for making matters of the heart really matter which makes Paul Simon's art what it is, and *Hearts and Bones* such a fine example of his talents.

## ELECTRIC UNIVERSE Earth, Wind & Fire

Columbia

By  
James  
Hunter

**C**an Earth, Wind & Fire virtually subtract



one of the signature elements of their lunging, lulling, perfectly-assembled music—the Phenix Horns—and still make their finest album? 1981's powerhouse *Raise!* lived off those horns: it was drop-dead trumpet disco on its own spiritual quest. From the start, these were horns too big, too rambunctious, too untameable for most black-pop—if Maurice White hadn't been so huge-hearted and unfastidious, and if his trusting disposition hadn't so often asserted itself with such dazzling smooth sweetness, you'd never have relaxed at all in EW&F's superbly relaxed settings. But horns never dominate *Electric Universe*, EW&F's sixteenth album, much of which enthuses over the world-contagious ener-

gies of switched-on dance-pop, and all of which is terrific.

Four numbers—the kicky "Moonwalk" and the jivey "Sweet Sassy Lady," plus "Could It Be Right" and "We're Living In Our Own Time," both unabashedly romantic and starry-eyed—showcase multi-layered, deft popcraft at one of its heights. "Magnetic," "Spirit Of A New World," and the title cut make serious dance arguments, informed of course by White's immense optimism. Although the latter tracks do not want for wholesome synth-beat charisma, the other cuts' impressive feats of passion and technique bolster their persuasiveness. But EW&F go right out of this world on Martin Page and Jon Lind's "Touch," a seduction song whose yearnings for intimacy ultimately portend more than just two people. It starts out as a mid-tempo ballad, cleanly stroked by percussion. Then it casts itself into more of a strut, blooming into the chorus with bold vocal thrusts of "touch, touch," and yammering little synth accents. By the time Bailey tenses and makes his most confident pitch—"And when I reach for you/You better let me through"—four different melodic ideas have melted into one gracefully modern soul anthem. You just don't miss the horns.

When the crisp female chorus bounces out of "Moonwalk," when Phillip Bailey turns his thoughtful lungs loose on top-drawer ballads as brilliantly arranged as "We're Living In Our Own Time" and "Could It Be Right," when the band sneaks through "Sweet Sassy Lady" with such sure bite, it's OK for EW&F to issue invitations to "step into the dance of life" on "Spirit Of A New World," for them to celebrate, without apparent reservation, the glories of synthetic music on the title cut; they've established the right. Or at least the way.

## BEAUTY STAB ABC

Mercury

By  
Duncan  
Strauss

**L**ast year, ABC glided onto the pop scene with *The Lexicon Of Love*, a widely-endorsed collection of wry, elegant tunes that spawned two smash singles, "The Look Of Love" and "Poison Arrow." On *Beauty Stab*, the British band retains some of the stylish, seductive traits that distinguished its debut, but also introduce enough unexpected elements to avoid simply making *Lexicon II*.

Though an admirable approach, *Beauty*



*Stab* offers a mixed bag of results—the aural equivalent of dressing to the nines, then strolling into church and belching. The LP gets off to a grand start with "That Was Then But This Is Now," an attractive piece of polished dance-rock, replete with lush, swirling textures and Roxy moxie that's underscored by Martin Fry's Ferryesque vocals. Later, smoothly shifting rhythms propel "King Money" across some enchanting musical terrain, while "S.O.S." is a poignant ballad that certainly doesn't need to be rescued.

But ABC needs to be saved from a newfound tendency to mine a gnarly hard-rock vein. "The Power Of Persuasion" and "Hey Citizen," for instance, strut perilously close to being heavy metal anthems. Who'd have predicted there would be enough wild fret-grinding on an ABC album to invite your average air guitar aficionado to play along?

To ABC's credit, these stylistic missteps don't completely destroy *Beauty Stab*. For one thing, some of the musical miscalculations are offset by the intriguing observations, verbal agility and dry wit that continue to inform Fry's lyrics.

However, in making a handful of wrong turns, ABC raises more questions than it answers regarding the band's musical direction. At any rate, if they pull up to anything resembling numbing stuff like "Hey Citizen," someone should cut them off with a sign that reads "WRONG WAY—DO NOT ENTER."

## SHE'S SO UNUSUAL Cyndi Lauper

Portrait

By  
J.D.  
Considine



**I**f good singing were its own reward, then

*She's So Unusual*, the solo debut of former Blue Angel singer Cyndi Lauper, would be one hell of an album. As it is, it's far from bad, but there are just too many problems with this album, from conception to execution, for it to live up to Lauper's vocal potential. The album starts off with a bang as Lauper leaps headlong into the Brains' "Money Changes Everything." The arrangement is tough but not too heavy, correcting some of the metalloïd tendencies of the Brains without losing any of their drive, but it's Lauper's catch-in-the-throat delivery that clinches the thing. From the way she nearly chokes on the line "there was one thing we weren't really thinking of, and that's money," to the gripping wail that caps the song, Lauper sells the song like she's got an exclusive contract on it.



"Girls Just Want To Have Fun," a Robert Hazard tune, falls back a bit as Lauper oversells the lyric on what one assumes is an attempt to cash in on the Go-Go's giddiness, but the album jumps right back on course when she turns in a marvelous Chrissie Hynde by-way-of-Darlene Love rendition of Prince's "When You Were Mine."

It's on side two that the real problems set in. "All Through The Night" manages to fill out the loopiness of Jules Shear's original with the sort of vocal confidence Shear will never have—cue this one up if you ever want to hear what romantic anxiety really sounds like—but to get to it, you have to pass through "She Bop," and given that song's pointless frivolity and nudgely sexual content, you're more likely to want to simply pass by it. Likewise "Witness," a ska-styled throwaway, and "I'll Kiss You," a hyperactive attempt at Fifties Carole King, both of which seem to have been included to give Lauper a few writing credits. That leaves "He's So Unusual," a Betty Boop number (honest to God!) that segues into the farfisa-beat new wave of "Yeah Yeah" for no particular reason.

All of which is apt to leave the listener scratching his or her head, when by that point he or she should either be cheering or getting ready to flip the record over and play it again. Why exactly producer Rick Chertoff decided to let this album lapse into becoming a personality vehicle—not the brightest of moves, given the material on hand—is anybody's guess, but the lessons of Blondie ought to be fresh enough in everyone's mind for anyone to fall for that guy again. Or perhaps Lauper merely wanted to let the world know that She's So Unusual; but if that's the case, someone more mundane than a mediocre album.

.....

# **ODYSSEY** James Blood Ulmer Columbia

By  
Mark  
Richardson

**G**ive a long-struggling jazz artist a contract with a major record label and he'll either succumb to the corporate pressure and compromise his music with commercial considerations or indulge his whims in esoterica that don't have a prayer in the marketplace and thus blow the chance (for himself and others) in the "big time." That received wisdom of the '70s, handed down by purists on the one hand and miserly executives on the other, is being contradicted in the '80s by the handful of jazz musicians



who've scratched out a tiny enclave overseen by the giants. With his third album for Columbia, electric guitarist James Blood Ulmer flexes his considerable creative muscle, resisting any stylistic tourniquet that might cut off the flow of his jazz-based ideas or his populist expressiveness.

Ulmer's personal odyssey has taken him from his goshaw South Carolina roots (born 1942) through street-corner R&B in Pittsburgh, organ trio jazz in mid-west lounges, late-Sixties jazz experiments in Detroit, early Seventies loft jazz struggles in New York and his crucial apprenticeship with "harmolodic" pioneer Ornette Coleman. Still, he is a raw talent, impelled to depart from the layered ensemble sound of 1982's masterful *Black Rock* and to revamp the power-trio base with which he tours and from which his music builds. "Harmolodics"—constant collective improvisation on evolving melody lines, all in harmony—is hard enough to comprehend but now Blood throws another wrench—Charles Burnham's sawing violin—into his loudly grinding gears.

The results of this guitar-drums-fiddle collaboration are rich, powerful and amazingly folksy. With a song called "Little Red House" and the lilting fills and the sultry, growling vocal on the gently bluesy "I Had to Go," the comparisons with Jimi Hendrix will continue, to the insult of neither innovator. And Ulmer keeps up the ceaseless choppy chording and lead-line inventiveness that hails from his Ornette-funk jazz influence. But it is the down home drone of Burnham's violin that gives *Odyssey* its unique flavor: an exotic Middle Eastern air on "Love Dance," a backwoods bluegrass reel on "Little Red House," and an anthemic Scottish folk-march feel (Big Country?) on "Election." *Odyssey* carries Ulmer beyond the driving urban funk that first landed him in the Rough Trade Records "no wave" crowd with *Are You Glad to Be in America?* (the title cut of which is reprised here in the new context). There's no reason to think that the earthy guitarist's journey will hold still in this place for long so jump on board.

.....

# **RIDING WITH THE KING** John Hiatt Geffen Records

By  
Christopher  
Hill

**T**he plates on the '74 Vega Wagon said HIATT and it was rusted through in more than one place. It was parked by that little man-made lake just off Highway 3 north of



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Muncie, where on summer weekends fathers with big bellies stretching their white t-shirts sit and sweat on the itchy grass and the kids play around the old brick boat-house that hasn't rented any boats for the last four summers. At night, that's when we're all usually there, and we mostly just get loaded and wait for something to happen. This car had obviously been around a lot: the windows were full of different colored vehicle stickers that nobody'd ever peeled off. What was inside it was kind of interesting, if you weren't turned off by the fact that it looked like somebody'd been living inside it for a year—you know, bottles, socks, cigarette butts. There were magazines: *Swank* and the *Star* and something called *The Face*. And records lying all over. Some of them I knew; you could see some Clash, John Lee Hooker, even the Band, I think. And there were some real old ones I didn't really know, like Manfred Mann, the Tremeloes, Johnny Rivers.

But then—this was the funny thing—as you looked at the stuff more, you could almost hear, or maybe make up, these little songs and stories to go along with it. Like, there were these letters to and from this really pretty girl (I could see part of a picture of her) who I guess got knocked up by this real loser and married him. This Hiatt guy seemed to still like her a lot—he'd scrawled "She Loves the Jerk!" across one letter, and in my head it sounded like some dopey early '60s love song, funny, but sad, too, 'cause this guy was really mean and she was never going to get out. Then there was this scuzzy looking paperback in the front seat that had Elvis or Jesus or somebody on the cover—some guy dressed in white with lights coming out of his hands—and it was called "Riding With the King." And it was funny 'cause then I heard this real low-down sort of sound, like what you think it ought to sound like when the Doors sing about Texas Radio and the Big Beat. There was a real sleazy-sounding organ, and a voice that I guess was bluesy, but not in that usual hunh-hunh-hunh bullshit way, more like he was making fun of it. Then I saw an ad for some kind of sweepstakes in one of the newspapers and he'd underlined the headline that said "You May Already Be a Winner," and they showed this fat old couple who'd already won, and you could hear this tacky *Let's Make a Deal* kind of roller-rink music, but it didn't make you want to laugh at them completely because, the way they looked at each other in this picture, you could see that they somehow really loved each other, fat and dumb as they were.

Like I say, the way that car looked seemed real crummy at first, but the more I thought about all that junk inside there, I saw there was something kind of cool about it. It was like the car said if you were loose enough and crazy enough and tough enough, like the guy that owned it, then

you could find all sorts of weird things around you to love, anywhere, even in Indiana. And it might be a real good time doing it, just driving around in that junky Vega.

.....

## LOVE WARS Womack & Womack

Elektra

By  
James  
Hunter

With a sassy authority too gritty to be bitchy,

too determined to be shrill, Linda Womack lithely barks out the phrase "I can't understand that" ten times before she and husband Cecil Womack finish with "Baby, I'm Scared Of You," the dramatic high point of *Love Wars*, the Womacks' highly dramatic new album. She starts doing it after the number's turned from a pleasant if conflict-ridden ballad rolling along on James Gadson's wonderful drumming into a blistering disagreement between a suitor who would be Ray Parker Jr. and a sensible, perhaps old-fashioned woman who "needs a little more" than a clever come-on—she definitely doesn't appreciate this groove-magic stuff. It's an odd move from a record these days: funky but unstreamlined, catchy but weird, and it's more like hearing Stevie Nicks be vocally repetitive than the Gap Band. But this touch epitomizes the way the Womacks take a rock 'n' roll intensity, a C&W lyric realism, and the securest grasp of gospel-fed soul and make distinctive, eloquent music on *Love Wars*.

The Womacks have written and produced for years—they're responsible for a moment in the smooth-soul sun as blinding as Teddy Pendergrass's classic "Love T.K.O." on his 1980 *T.P.*, as well as memorably meaty recent album tracks by such artists as Patti Labelle, Randy Crawford, and Bobby Womack. On *Love Wars* they attempt a sort of less high-nosed Ashford & Simpson album (*sans* that couple's life-is-show-business attitudes) full of intended narrative connections among songs, a record about how, for two people in love, fighting and loving are (yawn) essential parts of the same great process. Despite the dubious worth of this oft-argued domestic thesis, these songs are smart—the Womacks do a more intimate "Love T.K.O.," a less whiny version of The Rolling Stones' "Angie"—and sometimes witty: the narrator of "A.P.B." admits he feels "so blue" because his woman's boyfriend buys "some mean alligator shoes" on his credit card.

But the record, inasmuch as it presents



itself as a loose suite of adult love songs, is disorientingly ordered and conceived. Both the churning title cut, with its fiery choral work, and "A.P.B." with its powerful down-home swagger, refer to a man's woman deserting him for the man's best friend. This not-unimportant information—thrown out, then never really addressed again—sets up an unavoidable sympathy for the man. Later, when in the gorgeous expanse of "Woman" the narrator gives a close description of the big-league loving she needs—and can mightily return—it's just the wrong time to hear her expound on the subject. And if the Womacks were so hell-bent on giving the sequence a neat, happy ending (something Ashford & Simpson wisely avoided in their 1982 *Street Opera* piece) the let's-stop-the-fighting title song would have done the job far less drizzily than the vapid "Good Times," the record's one forgettable song. Still, even with these structural imperfections, *Love Wars* is probably neosoul as robust and sincere as it gets in the '80s.

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## SWEET SOUND Simon Townshend

Polydor Records

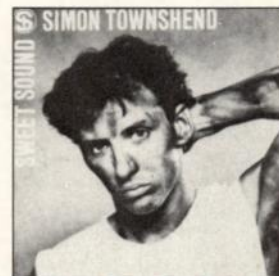
By  
Anthony  
DeCurtis

This debut LP by Simon Townshend, Pete's younger brother, doesn't ransack the archive of Who hits as much as one might cynically expect. Nor, unfortunately, as much as one might hope.

The echoes are there, of course, in the urgent tenderness of "I'm the Answer," the harmonies of "Palace in the Air" and "Freakers," and the drama and strain of Simon's vocals throughout. For the most part, however, *Sweet Sound* establishes Townshend the younger as an independent, if not overwhelming talent.

As producer, Pete fashions a big sound for this LP. Each of the nine Simon-written songs presents itself as a powerful, assured entity that demands to be met on its own fully realized terms. The problem is those terms aren't terribly interesting. *Sweet Sound* comes on with a self-importance that the songs themselves fail to make convincing. In short, it's pretentious. A more compact and focused effort would have made for a much more satisfying first outing.

The unnecessarily precocious Simon has "progressed" too soon to the vague, quasi-spiritual meanderings that have made the last 10 years or so of Pete's career, with few notable exceptions, essentially dismissible. For example: on this disc's title track, Si-





# INDEPENDENTS DAY

By Anthony DeCurtis

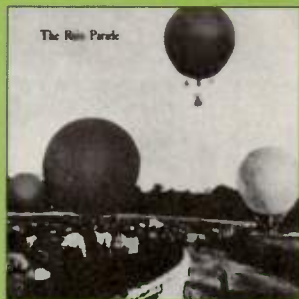
Economically imperiled but creatively thriving, the independent recording scene presses on, performing a variety of necessary and worthy functions. The small labels, often local or regional in focus, serve both as farm systems for the majors and specialty houses for quality music unlikely to crack the Top 40. Their flexibility, low overhead, personal commitment to the area bands they record, and realistic attitude towards profits enable the indies to spot trends early and take chances the corporate bigs never would. This makes for dynamism and diversity, two virtues much in evidence in the crop of independents under review this month.

"I go talking in my sleep/ Sleeping in my dreams/ Dreaming on my feet/I don't know what it means," drones vocalist David Roback in "Talking in My Sleep," the first cut on the Rain Parade's debut album, *Emergency Third Rail Power Trip* (Enigma Records, Box 2896, Torrance, CA 90509). This record recreates the beautiful "I'm-so-stoned" ambience of mid-sixties psychedelia with a fidelity that could fail to charm only the most sullen and intransigent straight-head. Was it really only a few years ago that, in the earnest throes of punk agony, we dismissed all this stuff as muddle-headed, mellow bullshit? It's time to reconsider.

Veterans of the left coast's "Paisley Underground," the five members of L.A.'s Rain Parade have assembled a dense, dreamy jangling sound that incorporates two guitars, keyboards, bass, drums, tambourine (natch) and the occasional violin and sitar passage. The main men here are guitarists David Roback, who had a hand in writing most of the songs on this disc, and Matthew Piucci who tears off on transcendent Verlaine-like solos with a grace that makes you wish his soaring, Orien-

tal-sounding breaks would never come down. *Emergency Third Rail Power Trip* delivers on the promise that all psychedelics hold out but rarely keep: after the wonder of the trip, you know more and feel better than you did before you took it.

But if psychedelia isn't your cup of meat, you might



consider giving a spin to *Rainy Day* (Llama Records c/o Enigma same as above), a David Roback-produced compilation of sixties folk-rock tunes by a contingent of L.A. all stars drawn from the Rain Parade, Dream Syndicate, the Bangles, and the Three O'Clock. Sprung from the mating of Dylanesque surreal lyrics and sounds made possible by the electronic amplification of guitars and keyboards, folk rock is, of course, head music's most immediate



ancestor. And these California kids honor their roots with impressive reverence.

Strictly speaking, *Rainy Day* does not confine itself to folk rock. Along with covers of tunes penned by such impeccably credentialed folk rockers as Bob Dylan ("I'll Keep It With Mine") and Neil Young ("Flying On the Ground Is Wrong," "On the Way Home"), we also get takes on the "Soon Be Home" movement from the Who's



1966 mini-opera "A Quick One While He's Away," and the Jimi Hendrix jam "Rainy Day, Dream Away" from *Electric Ladyland*.

The star of the *Rainy Day* show turns out to be Bangle Susanna Hoffs, who delivers stunning vocal turns on Dylan's "I'll Keep It With Mine" and Lou Reed's "I'll Be Your Mirror." Copping chops from Marianne Faithfull and Nico, while softening both influences with California girl freshness, Hoffs displays an interpretive



sophistication here that her work with the Bangles doesn't begin to suggest.

Meanwhile, back East 10,000 Maniacs are generating a stir with their startlingly distinctive *Secrets Of The I Ching* LP (Christian Burial Music, 4 Ridgely Terrace, Jamestown, NY 14701) and a phenomenal live show featuring singer Natalie Merchant, a bohemian whirling dervish who does the jerk. As a vocalist, Merchant shares Michael Stipe's penchant for treating language purely as sound; in



other words, you can't understand a word she sings but you also can't stop listening. Fortunately, a lyric sheet is provided so you shouldn't miss a line of such art hits as "Grey Victory," "Pour de Chirico," "Death of Maniette," and "My Mother The War." Frippertronic guitarist Robert Buck, who looks like an accountant who ate five hits of acid one lunch hour and never made it back to the ledger, and guitarist/composer John Lombardo provide the perfect musical settings for Merchant's intense murmurings. These gentle Maniacs must be heard and seen to be believed.

As usual, Mitch Easter is staying busy. his latest production effort is the catchy *Four Song EP* by the Athens quartet Art in the Dark (Somethin' Else Records, P.O. Box 3287, New York, NY 10185). Characteristically, Easter takes this band's sparse and airy guitar/keyboards/bass/drums line up and endlessly overdubs the arrangements to pop symphonic proportions. The result is four meticulously detailed tunes with a rich, dreamy R.E.M.-ish feel. This strong debut calling card suggest that we can look forward to good things in the future from Art in the Dark.

From Atlanta, Kevin Dunn, whose impressive track record includes the Fans and the Regiment of Women, returns to the art wars with a solo mini-album, *C'est Toujours La Meme Guitare* (Press Records, 432 Moreland Ave., Atlanta, GA 30307). As a guitarist, Dunn explores a variety of styles with the intent of seeing precisely how far harmony can be pushed before it disintegrates into noise. *C'est Toujours* finds him in a more contemplative mode than usual, with "Fourth of July" in particular qualifying almost as a rather tender pop song. An Athens-meets-Fripp instrumental called "Shuttle" and a riotous live deconstruction of Bo Diddley's "Mona" in the mode of Dunn's classic new wave reworking of Chuck Berry's "Nadine" also demand a hearing.



mon croons portentously amid jagged power chords, "Inner self says to me/Do only you know/Maybe you can't hear me/Guitars louder so." Eh, come again? In his early days, Pete had sense enough to confess that he had feelings he couldn't "explain." Simon just enacts the problem.

Not that *Sweet Sound* is an unmitigated wash-out. Guitarist Simon and his sidemen, including Big Country drum-thumper Mark Brzezicki, play hard and consistently. And though it's difficult to tell exactly why, Simon sings with an unpolished force that conveys an ardent belief in what his songs have to say.

But in a world already overweighed with vinyl, and with an unavoidable family legacy to both overcome and fulfill, Simon Townshend will have to come up with more than he shows on *Sweet Sound* to earn himself a following.

## UNA HISTORIA DE LA MUSICA DE LA FRONTERA VOL. 1-16 Various Artists Folklyric

By  
J.D.  
Considine

Contrary to popular belief, rock and roll wasn't built on the dual axes of blues and country music, nor has it remained the result of such an elementary duality. Like so much American culture, rock has taken something from almost every element of society—so much, in fact, that it's almost impossible to sort out all the various elements that have come into play over the years. Take Latin music, for example. It's easy enough to point to Santana and smile, "Aha! Latin rock!" but the overall influence is far more diffuse. Consider, first of all, that even though "St. Louis Blues" is widely considered the first written-out blues song, its basic beat is a tango. Or ponder the fact that part of the kinkiness of New Orleans second-line rhythms comes from an undercurrent of samba and rumba drumming. And would it surprise you to learn that surf-guitar king Dick Dale used to go to Mexico for fresh musical ideas?

I mention all this because I've spent the last month pouring over albums of Tex-Mex roots music in hopes of learning more about the musical heritage that animates one of my favorite new bands, Los Lobos. It didn't take very long to tap into the *musica nortena* sound that is the basis for Los Lobos' accordion-fueled rockers, but the more I listened, the more I realized that



there was a lot more to the Texas-Mexican connection than that.

To begin with, "Tex-Mex" is a pretty nebulous term. Although it refers to the general confluence of Texan and Mexican musics, the actual styles vary greatly. Even to the average pop fan, Tex-Mex can accurately include anything from the two-step bounce of the Sir Douglas Quintet's "She's About a Mover" to the melancholy lament of Freddie Fender's "Wasted Days and Wasted Nights." Nailing down the music's roots could have been a maddening task; fortunately, Chris Strachwitz of the El Cerrito, California based, Arhoolie Records has made the task much easier by assembling a remarkable overview of Texas-Mexican Border music, subtitled *Una historia de la musica de la frontera*.

Stretching to 16 volumes, with another three due out soon, the series presents "the music of the Tejanos, Chicanos, Nortenos, or Mexican Americans." Rather than make an attempt at chronological organization, Strachwitz breaks the music down into various styles or instrumental formats, with an occasional focus on a single artist. Unless you're immensely curious, I wouldn't advise tackling the whole set at once, but there's plenty of interest if you pick your way through the series.

If nothing else, you should have Volume One, *An Introduction 1930-1960* (Folklyric 9003). Although there are a number of good introductions to Tex-Mex music available, including *Del Mero Corazon* (Arhoolie 3015), the soundtrack to the film by Les Blank, *An Introduction* offers more history in a single package than anything I've seen. The notes are remarkably illuminating, giving a capsule history of the music as well as extensive information on the groups (including where to find more of their music), but one of the most amusing lessons the album offered was its translation of the song, "La Cucaracha." Like most Americans who don't speak Spanish, I always thought the song was just a clever excuse for stomping on bugs. Then I read what the chorus *really* meant: "The cockroach, it doesn't want to walk anymore/Because it doesn't have, because it needs marijuana to smoke." This from a song that dates back to the 1910 Mexican revolution!

Musically, it maps out a good deal of territory. The bulk of the album is given over to caucions and rancheros, the sweetly-harmonized Mexican ballad; and corridos, story songs that sound similar to the rancheros and cancioneros but carry a greater urgency, since they are the Mexican equivalent of the protest songs which Appalachian singers carved out of the British ballad tradition. But there are also bits of traditional Mexicana, including a corny reading of "La Cucaracha," a couple of lively nortena polkas, and some contemporary conjunto (accordion combo) tunes.

The two volumes of corridos (Folklyric 9004 & 9005) are most easily appreciated if

you start from the texts. In part this is because they are musically rather stilted, being the final flowering of a romantic style that traces back directly to the height of the 16th Century Romance movement in Spain, which lends their performances a heavily melodramatic aura. But armed with lyrics, especially as presented by Philip Sonnichsen in the booklet accompanying the first of the two albums, the songs turn into a remarkably eloquent saga of Mexican courage and strength of character against Yankee oppression. (Should you doubt any of the accounts, Sonnichsen appends copious documentation for each case.)

By contrast, the four volumes of *Cancineros de Ayer* (*Songsters from the Past*, Folklyric 9011, 9012, 9013 and 9016) are likely to prove unlistenable to any but the most dedicated folklorist or ballad aficionado. Not so all the ballad singing, though. Lydia Mendoza, who is represented on Vols. 15 & 16 of the series (Folklyric 9023 and 9024), sings with the sort of melancholy romanticism pop fans are likely to connect with Linda Ronstadt. That may not be accidental, given Ronstadt's Mexican heritage, but Mendoza's performances boast an uncluttered soulfulness that overpowers Ronstadt's best oldie covers. Sadly, each volume of Mendoza features one side of solos, and one side of the Mendoza family, a group that sounds like the Carter Family with Kermit the Frog singing lead. Ah, well.

There's also a lot of instrumental music in the series. Although *The String Bands* (Folklyric 9007) is easily ignored, *El Ciego Melquiades: The Blind Fiddler* (Folklyric 9018) makes some fascinating connections between Mexican music, bluegrass and Western Swing.

But the most dominant style is the norteno accordion. This music is a curious hybrid of ranchera-style ballads and polka rhythms which emerged because the German-immigrant in Texas wanted the Mexican musicians to play a familiar beat for their dances. There have been three volumes of norteno accordion issued so far: *The First Recordings* (Folklyric 9006) is interesting but, aside from Santiago Jimenez's "La Nopalera," a little slow; *San Antonio* (Folklyric 9019) is closer to being an entire album's worth of material like "La Nopalera"; *South Texas and Monterey, N.L.* (Folklyric 9020) is much more diverse without being less exciting. Perhaps my favorite of the accordion albums, though, is *Narciso Martinez, El Huracan del Valle* (Folklyric 9017), both because of its wonderful energy and the amazing variety of effects Martinez was able to pull from his button accordion.

If, however, you want to get a broad overview without spending heavily, the one album you ought to have besides *An Introduction 1930-1960* is *The Chicano Experience* (Folklyric 9021), which folds a lot of the music from the other volumes



into a distinctly urban sound, as well as co-opting a number of American pop styles (check Lalo Guerrero's "Marijuana Boogie," which has the same kick as some of Big Joe Turner's work from the same period). Armed with those two records, you ought to have a significantly expanded picture of just how totally *American* our pop music really is.

(Arhoolie Records, 10341 San Pablo Ave, El Cerrito, CA 94530).

## SITUATION X Michael Gregory

Island

By  
Craig  
Zeller

**M**ichael Gregory's biosays that he's a former avant garde jazz composer. I'm not one to hold a man's past against him so I played the record anyway. What I heard was light years away from avant jazz. It seems that somewhere along the way Gregory discovered the pleasures of impassioned, soulful funk and went after it with a vengeance.

I can't believe this record hasn't been swamped with raves. Everything's *hot*. Hot vocals, hot band, *blazing* production—Nile Rodgers' behind-the-board wizardry here blows *Let's Dance* so far out of the water that it's just a speck on the horizon. The sound leaps out at you, demands your attention, and catapults you to where the action is. Do yourself a favor and hustle up a copy; then you can join me in celebrating one of the great undiscovered joys of 1983.

Of the eight songs here I cannot find anything remotely resembling a clinker. Every cut is fully fleshed out, full of imaginative twists and turns that keeps things consistently vibrant. Take the way Jackson double-times his falsetto on the chorus of "Can't Carry You" and then slams into a guitar solo that could've come from a Cream album. Or take the way he builds tension on "Small Town Talk" (his guitar playing throughout is a terrific blend of tough 'n' tender) and then increases it with just a hint of desperation when he falsettos the chorus. And how about the hypnotic suspense of "Always"?

The arrangements are wonderfully intricate and fresh. Note the piercing give and take between horns and guitar on "Zero Response." And I love the way the piano plays off the drums on "Room In My Heart." (A special award goes to drummer Tony Thompson for his relentless devotion to the pursuit of head-spinning propulsion.)



"Give And Take" is the one that's hit me the hardest. An irresistible groove is taken to the rafters by a band that knows what launching pads are for. At a certain point Gregory comes spinning out of an emotional wringer, and takes a beautifully berserk guitar solo. The dynamics are unbeatably exhilarating. But then you'll find that to be the case more often than not on *Situation X*. Hey. No kidding. *Hot*.

## WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD Mink De Ville

Atlantic

By  
Christopher  
Hill

**F**or a man like Willy De Ville, who professes contempt for standard hard rock arrangements and who has never been afraid to follow the click-clack of high-heeled shoes down any alleyway of ethnic song, 1981's *Coup de Grace* struck strangely in its mainstream conservatism, coming on big, brassy and stiff just where it most needed Willy's slinky, backroom insinuation. *Where Angels Fear To Tread* shows that there's still life, if not many new ideas, in the De Ville approach, paring down the big ensemble sound to get at essential rhythm and emphasizing Willy's unbeatable vocal charisma.

Lots of credit for the improvement should go to producers Ron and Howard Albert, who have a better sense of how to showcase De Ville than any of his previous producers. Though the melody of "Each Word's A Beat of My Heart" is standard Brill Building stuff, it rides on top of a catchily propulsive synthesizer rhythm, with a sheen of sparkly synth notes at each turn of a chorus to perfectly complement the artifice of De Ville's style. "Keep Your Monkey Away From My Door," "Lilly's Daddy's Cadillac" and "Demasiado Corazon," in drawing on New Orleans rock, James Brown-style funk and salsa respectively, are refreshing returns to the grab-bag of ethnic rhythm that's made De Ville more interesting than many another white would-be R&B shouter.

Unfortunately, this new-found liveliness doesn't carry all the way through. In the rote mechanics of "River of Tears"—the conventionally emotion-choked vocals, the "dramatic" pauses and starts—we see how stale Willy's R&B romanticism can, and often does, become, enough to lessen the album's overall impact. Still, *Where Angels Fear To Tread* makes a convincing case for Willy and Mink De Ville, artist and band, as more than retrograde fanta-



sists of a lost golden age. And if Willy De Ville will never have anything more to tell us than that true love will save your life, well, maybe his unquestioned mastery of his chosen turf has earned the man the right to keep on saying it.

## STANDING ON THE ONE

Jon Gibson  
Constellation

By  
Wayne  
King

**U**p until now, the greatest record company



gaffe of recent memory had to be just prior to the release of Bruce Springsteen's *Darkness On The Edge Of Town* when, despite CBS's best efforts, copies of the album reached listeners by being pressed up on Barbra Streisand records and being inadvertently shipped out.

So imagine my surprise when a record entitled *Standing On The One*, by some disco mannequin-looking type named Jon Gibson comes into the office, and the album turns out to be *outtakes from Stevie Wonder's Innervisions and Fulfillingness period*. What a find! Side one shows Stevie to be way ahead of the then-nascent Euro/New York disco scenes in funk/electronic/dance fusion experimentation. But the second side, for those who adore the pioneering work Wonder was doing in his attempt to reach Higher Ground during those oh-so-lame '70s, is the real revelation. Although markedly stripped-down when set against the polyrhythmically complex interplay of keyboards and voices Stevie was dealing in a decade ago, there's no denying those soaring, double-tracked vocals. And what about the hand-clapping, piano-vamping coda to "I Love Her Anyway," or the gently uplifting synth/piano groove of "It's True," recalling "Golden Lady" or "Bird of Beauty," or the strings-embellished thumping social recitation "Nation In Need" which ends the proceedings? Vintage Stevie Wonder, all right, and a tremendous substitute until his new record arrives, besides being a firm reminder that hope beats strong even in the most dire of times. In short, a must recording for one and all.

(What's that—there really *is* a white boy-type named Jon Gibson, and *Standing On The One* is his record? Sorry, Jon, Stevie—it was a natural mistake. Besides, that doesn't change anything I've said about *Standing*; it serves as both lovingly-rendered tribute to an artist in his most vital period, and as notification of the promising start to another's career.)



# STEVIE WONDER

*Continued from page 30*

cally that's all just a remanipulation of what happened in jazz a long time ago. I'm sure that when some of the new jazz people really get into electronics—like that song Herbie Hancock has out now just kind of skims the surface—I'm sure if Herbie really got into it, though, he'd blow it on out. On 'Rockit' he's just sort of messing around. It's a nice tune, I like it, but he could get into some real serious stuff if he wanted to. Have you listened to any Tomita? I mention him all the time because he can do it better than any of those people. I met him once back in '73 about two weeks before I had my accident. I gave him a bracelet someone had given me and told me never to take off. Two weeks later I had the accident."

(The accident in question occurring on the night of August 6, 1973, when Stevie and an aide, John Harris, while driving from Greenville to Raleigh, North Carolina, rear-ended a logging truck [the truck driver slammed on his brakes as Harris was preparing to pass]. One of the logs crashed through the windshield and into Stevie's skull, knocking him into a deep coma from which doctors feared he might never recover. A few days later, when Stevie had failed to respond to any external stimuli, his aide and close friend Ira Tucker leaned over him and began singing "Higher Ground." In recalling the scene, Tucker told a reporter that "Stevie's hand was resting on my arm, and after awhile his fingers started going in time with the song. I said, yeah! Yeeeah! This dude is gonna make it!" Stevie was in a semi-coma for seven more days, then slowly started recovering. Reflecting on the accident several weeks later, Stevie said, "My outlook on life has gotten a little deeper. I also see that God was telling me to slow down, to take it easy. I still feel I'm here to do something for Him, to make it possible for people to communicate with each other better. And that's what I'll do. If you go by your feelings, your first impressions, they'll almost never lead you wrong. That's what I didn't do before.")

Getting back to his new toy, Stevie reflects on how technology is opening up areas for pop musicians which were once the province of jazz and modern classical geniuses. "I used to wonder how people like Stravinsky and Moussorgsky were able to come up with so many way-out concepts harmonically. Then I realized, anything you can notate on paper is conceivable. The page is like a human synthesizer. The machine only gives you the flexibility to put those concepts on paper. Like a musician can only play what a writer or arranger puts on a piece of paper. If the musician chooses to improvise then that's one of the

blessings from a humanistic standpoint of machine versus person. But technology is also making it possible so a person can program in variations or improvisations if he wants to."

While the thought of improvising artificial intelligences may raise the specter of a Brave New World for some of us, Stevie embraces the new technology with enthusiasm. A question as to why he's always had a natural affinity for this technology while those less visionary quake at the very

**"... anything you can notate on paper is conceivable. The page is like a human synthesizer. The machine only gives you the flexibility to put those concepts on paper. If the musician improvises, then that's one of the blessings, from a humanistic standpoint, of machine versus person."**

thought of it, elicits an indirect yet provocative reply: "Well, I just hope that when I die I'm going to Heaven, and that that's going to be a whole new vibe and I'll be prepared to deal with it, like, hey, this is really great, this is really incredible."

In other words, Brave New World is here to stay so y'all might as well loosen up and learn how to grooveflow with it.

Asked why he's starting his own label and what impact he'd like it to have on the industry, the Wonderman tackles the query seriously for a moment then decides to have a little fun with the kid here.

"I've basically wanted to have a label for some time. What happened was that I produced a group called MYX and wanted to make sure they had their record out. I started out wanting to fulfill that promise and just moved on from there. So far we've signed up about six new acts. I'd like to have a variety of acts, you know what I'm

saying, not just any one particular kind of sound. You know, those soaps are getting incredibly ridiculous."

Say wha?

"I said the soaps are getting amazing; I mean, they're getting really deep. You ever watch any of that stuff? I don't really watch them. They're just on and I listen and it's just wild."

Jim tells Stevie he should do a soap. Stevie says he's been thinking about it. I tell them both, going with the flow, that Deniece Williams just did an episode of *All My Children*. "She did?" asks Stevie. "Is it out yet? There's one girl on there I like. I'd like to find her. She's fine. I heard she likes me already anyway (laughs)."

Say wha?

I know what you're thinking: You're saying to yourselves, this is rock'n'roll journalism? I paid to hear Stevie Wonder talk about soap operas?

Well, yeah, kinda. However, unbeknownst to you is that while this madcap dialogue is going on Stevie and Jim have been looping parts of a new song together for the computer to eventually play back as a complete sequence. The song is the Stevie Wonder of yesterday in feel crossed with the technopop of today in form. After they've run it back and forth on the monitors a couple hundred times, Stevie mischievously grins and turns to ask me whether or not I think people will be surprised to hear this kind of tune from him—to which my chagrined and flattered response is, hey Stevie, I mean you were into all this stuff years before anybody; I mean all these technopopsters are doing stuff you've done and forgotten; I mean—

"Thanks. I was just curious."

Now here is where things really get ridiculous. 'Cause, see, the PPG's got this thing built into it that's like an Emulator: you can simultaneously play back the voice sample and a harmonically distinct note and then modify them all kind of weird ways. So after demonstrating this over a tune or two, Stevie and Jim ask me if I want to play with it by saying something into the microphone. So using my best Rasta voice I sez "dubrap, rocker's scratch," which then goes into storage and comes out in the synth keyboard, whereupon Stevie riffs off it in a manner that evokes avant-garde jazz pianist Cecil Taylor as done up by a "scratch" turntable deejay. Then come the hiphop reggae ridim track. What it amounts to is that this little interview session ended up with a songwriting collaboration between the Wonderman and yours truly.

Is there an album forthcoming? A video? World tour, perhaps? The possibilities seem endless. Watch this space for further developments.

**Dread out. Dread out of control. Dread out. Dread out of control. Dread out. Dread out of contr-**



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DAVE MARSH ●

# EVERY LEAF MUST FALL

**T**he importance of the Call to A.R.M.S. (Action Research for Multiple Sclerosis) benefit, which finished its American tour at Madison Square Garden Dec. 8 and 9, was anything but immediately obvious. After all, its three principal performers, Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page, had spent the better part of a decade going through the motions. In fact, the most intriguing question was how anybody had been able to persuade such a troupe of dinosaurs—including two and a half Rolling Stones, a member of the Who, two partners in the celebrated Grease Band and assorted lesser lights—to play for a Cause in the first place.

A big part of the attraction was Ronnie Lane, a musician admirable not only for the spunky way in which he's coped with M.S. but also for his courage in dropping out of the big time rock rut many years before that became fashionable. But A.R.M.S. was something other than a tribute to Lane's personality, which has always been at least as ornery and irascible as sweet and generous anyway.

The motivation of the crowd was easier to discern. Again it had little to do with Lane's music, which is hardly well known at home, let alone over here. (His *Rough Mix* collaboration with Pete Townshend has recently been reissued by Atco, and a few other solo LPs may be available on import. All contain gently rocking, folkishly insightful music that's well worth the investment.)

The crowd went nuts, not when Lane appeared during the encores, but when Jimmy Page stuck his wan face out from behind the speakers downstage left around 10 p.m. An hour later, when Page sidled into his instrumental version of "Stairway to Heaven," it was impossible to forget that Led Zeppelin was the most wildly popular British band of the '70s. Playing his greatest hit, Page toyed with all sorts of ghosts—not least, those of his old band and its deceased drummer, John Bonham—and boy, did he look the part: grey as a piece of fast food roast beef.

Indeed, one of the most revealing contrasts of the evening was between Page and Jeff Beck, who in the 20 years since the Yardbirds have not changed even the way their hair isn't combed, and poor Pete Townshend, shambling around backstage, looking fit but nerve-wracked, a guy who's leaped aboard so many bandwagons that

he seems to have forgotten who he started out to be.

There's a meaningful measure of Britain's idea of rock in that comparison, more so because the similarities among these guitar greats are more striking than their differences. Each in his own way has attempted to deny the passage of time, as a method of attaining eternal youth. For Townshend, this has meant continually going where the young hipsters go (which is especially wearing when they're heading in multiple directions). For Page and Beck,

**Rather than driving him into deep conservatism, Ronnie Lane's religiosity seems to have sparked a generous, humble acceptance that strikes me as absolutely ancient.**

it has meant refusing to budge very far from the habits and mannerisms of their own youth. Either way, this trio is an incarnation of the "Hope I die before I get old" ideology of British rock.

In essence, this ideology, like any other fountain of youth scheme, is a denial of aging and death. Maybe this has something to do with the fact that British rock was founded in the ashes of a dying empire; but in any event, you don't have to be a sociologist or a shrink to see that this ultimate extension of the youth cult is pretty critical in its denial of death, not as a possibility but as a certainty. This ideology has been maintained for so long only because the central community of British rock—the Stars themselves—has yet to face an adult death (or at least they hadn't had to watch any such thing until this past Christmas, when Alexis Korner succumbed to lung cancer). British rock performers don't even die at work, or in plane crashes. They expire in sports car wrecks and swimming pools, are electrocuted in the bath, dope or

drink themselves to death.

But Ronnie Lane's death will not be a glamorous shock, and no one will be able to write it off as the product of prolonged adolescent indulgence, either. Most likely, Ronnie Lane will die at the hand of a cruel disease. As everyone who watched him proceed to the mike at the Garden now knows, MS already makes his every movement agonizing. On that stage, the performers were working for A.R.M.S. and for their mate, but I think many were also coming to terms, for the first time in their own work, with the true awfulness of dying, and with the fact that they themselves are getting old.

So it makes sense that the point men of this expedition were Ronnie Lane and Eric Clapton, the two British rock artists who have come to some kind of terms with death. Clapton was fixated upon it from the beginning—it was what was behind the terror he loved in Robert Johnson's voice. In one sense, he has let the knowledge that there's no escaping it turn him into a British Boz Scaggs, wearing beautiful silk suits and singing tailored humbuggery like "Wonderful Tonight." But no Clapton show can ever be without its bit of blues, and when he turned it on with a fine rendition of Muddy Waters' "Sad Day," he showed that he has forgotten nothing.

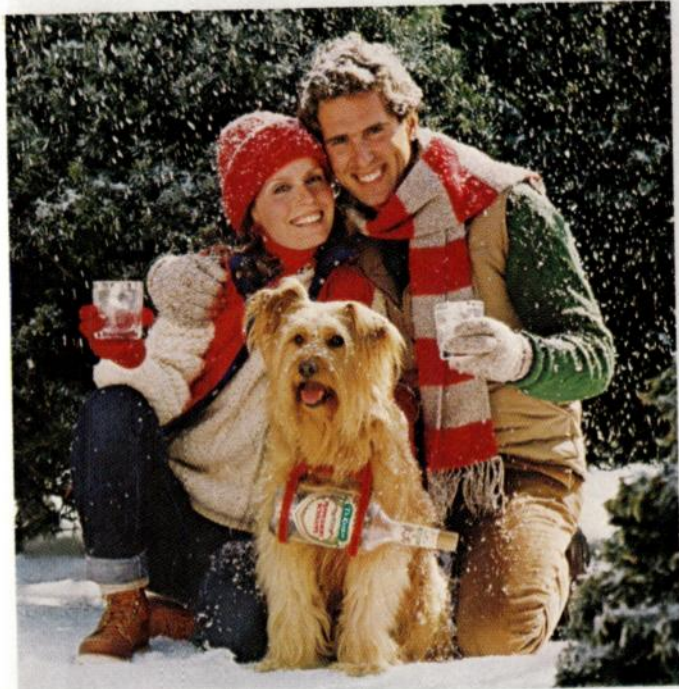
Ronnie Lane's music has been suffused with melancholy and mortality since his latter days with the Faces. Certainly, a knowledge of death infects all of the songs on *Rough Mix*, made when he already was partly incapacitated by MS. Like Townshend, Lane is a follower of Meher Baba but his religiosity, rather than driving him into deep conservatism as it has with too many of his peers, seems to have sparked a generous, humble acceptance that strikes me as absolutely ancient.

And so it was that, even as Ronnie was making me cry with the last two songs he may ever sing on a stage, his own "April Fool" and Leadbelly's "Goodnight Irene," I was hearing another tune in the back of my head. It was "Annie," the one he and Clapton wrote together for *Rough Mix*. It is, of course a meditation on eternity and death. That is, it's a prayer, and I leave you with its last, most shining verse in that very spirit.

*Hear the children, they call, Annie  
Every leaf must fall, Annie  
God bless us all, Annie/  
Wherever we'll be.*



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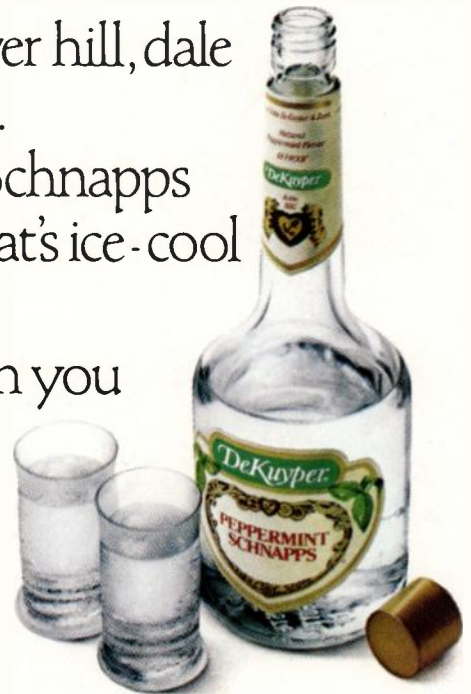
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