

DEAR MICHAEL: WATCH IT—AN OPEN LETTER FROM DAVE MARSH

# RECORD

## ZZ TOP

STRANGE  
TALES OF SHARP-  
DRESSED MEN

## THE CLASH

TAKE THE MONEY  
AND RUN (OFF AT  
THE MOUTH)



PAGE 14

## R.E.M.

AN OPEN PARTY

## CONSUMER GUIDE TO ROCK VIDEO



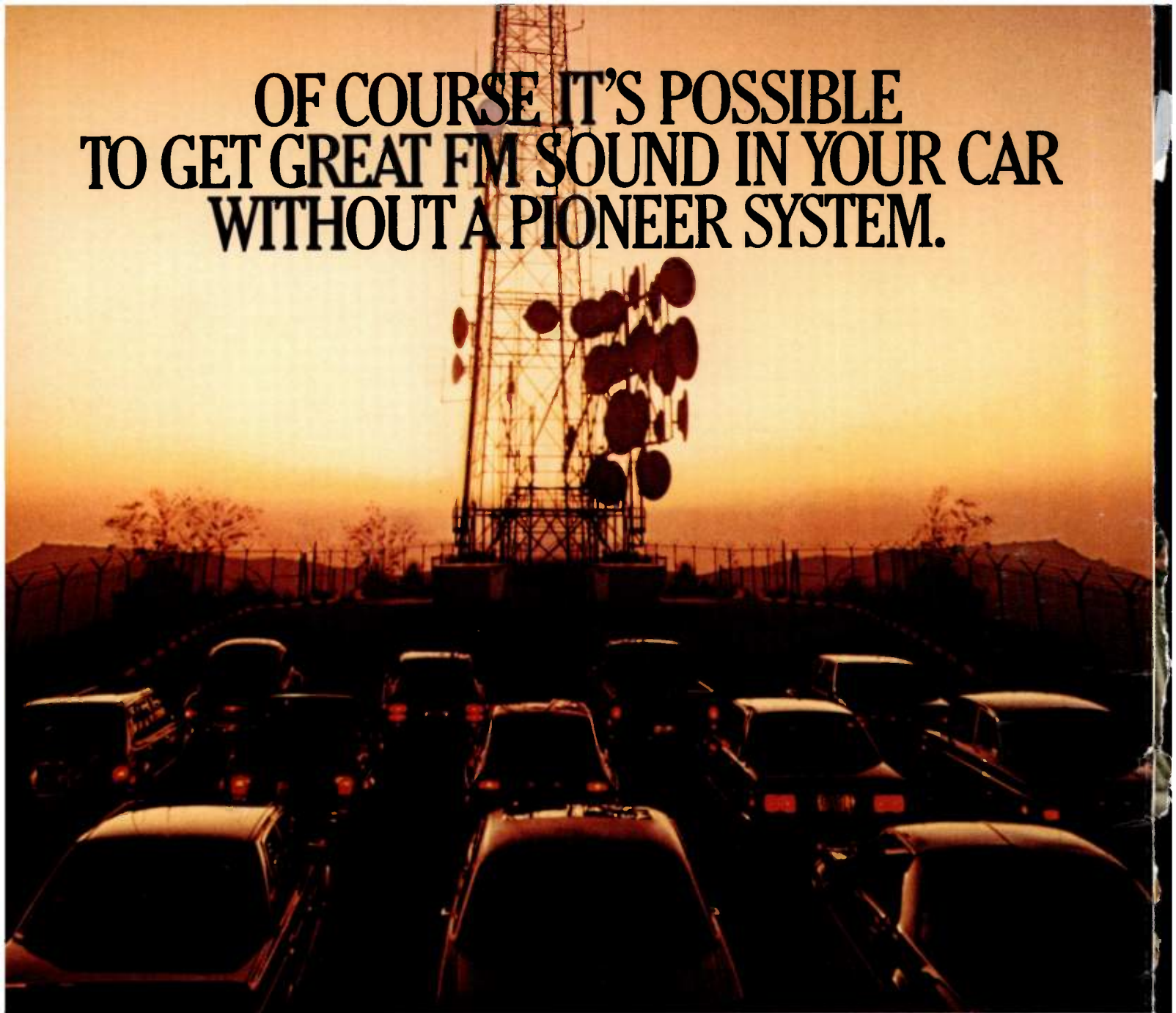
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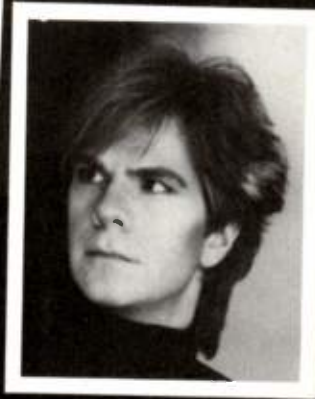
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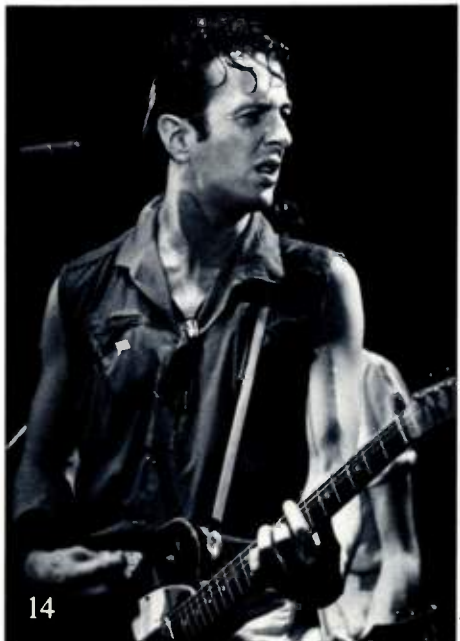


PHOTO STEVE RAPPOPORT/RETNA LTD

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## ROUND 2: CATS VS BIG COUNTRY

(Ed. note: In a feature story in *RECORD's* December 1983 issue, Stuart Adamson of Big Country told reporter Adrian Thrills that "Americans have never produced a thing worth calling art themselves. They've borrowed everything from Europe, even punk rock." Adamson, as our reader mail indicated, touched a nerve. Among the respondents were the Stray Cats. *RECORD's* March issue included a letter signed jointly by Brian Setzer, Slim Jim Phantom and Lee Rocker objecting, in rather strong terms, to Adamson's appraisal and suggesting fans throw their Big Country albums out the window "to see how (they) fly." We offered Adamson an opportunity in this space to clarify his remark, and he took us up on it. His reply follows, along with a sampling of reader reaction to the Cats' letter.)

I am writing this as a reply to the Stray Cats letter printed in the March issue of *RECORD*. The "ridiculously controversial" quote in question was made in relation to the Lincoln Center in New York. I think it sad that a city with the social problems of New York finds it more important to build a multi-million dollar center for the use of a city's elite. We have the same problem in Britain with multi-story car parks, shopping malls and cruise missiles. I think the artists mentioned in the Stray Cats letter—Duke Ellington, George Gershwin, Robert

Johnson, Elvis Presley, Hank Williams—have far more relevance to America than do corrupt European opera stars. Art should be the visible expression of human emotion, not wealth.

On the question of who invented rock 'n' roll and country music, I hope the Stray Cats aren't narrow-minded enough to believe that the integration of the folk music of European immigrants and uprooted African culture bears no relation to either the development of popular music in America and the West, or to the history of the nation itself.

If music can ever be more than "entertainment," as I believe it can and has been, then America, because its youth has great potential for change, needs to show the way.

Like it or not, popular musicians do have an influence on people. I have tried to take some of my musical roots and contribute to them by merging the music with human situations I feel strongly about, hoping this may bring about understanding and unity not only between people of different cultures but different social groups as well. I may well be failing miserably, but I feel that making the effort is better than succumbing to the apathy so prevalent in western countries.

It's up to popular groups to show some responsibility to the people who support them and not treat them like so many "marketplaces." Perhaps we could all get together and do a charity show in a Stray Cats limousine, or, if the car's too full of sexy 40-year-

olds, we could lease Brian Setzer's mouth.

Stay alive,

STUART ADAMSON

Big Country  
New York, NY

Having failed to see the attraction of Big Country, I've got one thing to say about the Stray Cats' impression of Stuart Adamson—AMEN!

Buddy Holly, Elvis Presley, Jim Croce, Sam Cooke, Otis Redding, etc. were such accomplished artists that their music will outlive their legends. I can't speak for everyone, but this Southern lady can live without ego feeders like Adamson.

JULIE R. VROOMAN

Montgomery, AL

It wasn't until I read the Stray Cats letter that I realized what Stuart Adamson had said. And the Cats are right. America has produced and still does produce some of the greatest music in the world. However, the Cats didn't really need to resort to childish name calling and insults. More to the point, encouraging people to throw away their records over one foolish statement is reminiscent of those "Burn Your Beatles Records" rallies held after John Lennon said the group was more popular than Jesus Christ. On top of that, I haven't heard Big Country's "Tracks of My Tears," but I have heard the Stray Cats do "You Can't Hurry Love." Now that was insulting.

STEVEN J. MESSICK

Laurel, DE

Stuart Adamson's remarks

about American music were both inaccurate and uncalled for, but the ignorance of those remarks is matched only by the Stray Cats' statements. Big Country has a lot more to offer artistically than most American bands—including the Stray Cats, who must be worried that people are listening to intelligent music and, hence, not to theirs.

ANDREW NOBLE

Tallahassee, FL

Although Stuart Adamson's remark about America's cultural heritage, particularly in regards to rock 'n' roll, seems to be a gaffe of major proportions, he's actually rather close to the mark. In the 1950s two separate streams of "American" music—the rhythm and blues imported to our shores by African slaves and the so-called "hillbilly" music descended from English, Irish and Scottish folk traditions—merged to create a unique style of music called rockabilly. America's contribution to music has been more as a synthesizer than as a progenitor. Rock did indeed begin here, though, and I'm sure Stuart Adamson is well aware of this, just as I'm convinced that his mild remark was far removed from the cheap name-calling and mud-slinging the Cats engaged in. I would like to assure the Cats that I know many Big Country fans, including my husband. I liked the Cats, although I'm not so sure I do anymore. But then, the music is more important than the spouting off, isn't it?

KATRINA MCGHIN SNYDER

Ocala, FL

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# TOP 100 ALBUMS



1 1984  
Van Halen Warner Bros

2 THRILLER  
Michael Jackson Epic

3 LEARNING TO CRAWL  
The Pretenders Sire

4 TOUCH  
Eurythmics RCA

5 SPORTS  
Huey Lewis and The News  
Chrysalis

6 COLOUR BY NUMBERS  
Culture Club Epic

7 SYNCHRONICITY  
The Police A&M

8 CAN'T SLOW DOWN  
Lionel Richie Motown

9 MILK AND HONEY  
John Lennon and Yoko Ono  
Polydor

10 SHE'S SO UNUSUAL  
Cyndi Lauper Portrait CBS

11 AN INNOCENT MAN  
Billy Joel Columbia

12 90125  
Yes Alco

13 WHAT'S NEW  
Linda Ronstadt Asylum

14 SOUNDTRACK  
"Footloose" Columbia

15 WINDOWS AND WALLS  
Dan Fogelberg Full Moon Epic

16 LOVE AT FIRST STING  
The Scorpions Mercury

17 GENESIS  
Genesis Atlantic

18 ELIMINATOR  
ZZ Top Warner Bros

19 AMMONIA AVENUE  
The Alan Parsons Project  
Arista

20 MISTER HEARTBREAK  
Laurie Anderson Warner Bros

21 SEVEN AND THE  
RAGGED TIGER  
Duran Duran Capitol

22 UH-HUH  
John Cougar Mellencamp  
RCA

23 THE FLAT EARTH  
Thomas Dolby Capitol

24 UNDER A BLOOD RED  
SKY  
U2 Island

25 SOUNDTRACK  
"Flashdance" Casablanca

26 LABOUR OF LOVE  
UB40 Virgin/A&M

27 INTO THE GAP  
Thompson Twins Arista

28 SOUNDTRACK  
"The Big Chill" Motown

29 CHRISTINE MCVIE  
Christine McVie Warner Bros

30 REBEL YELL  
Billy Idol Chrysalis

31 ROCK 'N' SOUL PT. 1  
Hall and Oates RCA

32 THE WORKS  
Queen Capitol

33 DEFENDERS OF THE  
FAITH  
Judas Priest Columbia

34 MADONNA  
Madonna Sire

35 DECLARATION  
The Alarm IRS

36 SPARKLE IN THE RAIN  
Simple Minds A&M

37 SHOUT AT THE DEVIL  
Motley Crue Elektra

38 IN HEAT  
The Romantics Nonesuch

39 TOO LOW FOR ZERO  
Elton John Geffen

40 BUSY BODY  
Luther Vandross Epic

41 THE CROSSING  
Big Country Polydor

42 UNDERCOVER  
The Rolling Stones  
Rolling Stones

43 SPEAKING IN TONGUES  
Talking Heads Sire

44 METAL HEALTH  
Quiet Riot Pasha/CBS

45 WHAT IS BEAT  
English Beat IRS

46 INFIDELS  
Bob Dylan Columbia

47 LET'S DANCE  
David Bowie EMI

48 PIPES OF PEACE  
Paul McCartney Columbia

49 TRUE  
Spandau Ballet Chrysalis

50 MORE FUN IN THE NEW  
WORLD  
X Elektra



51 SOUNDTRACK  
"Yentl" Columbia

52 LIVE FROM EARTH  
Pat Benatar Chrysalis

53 ERROR IN THE SYSTEM  
Peter Schilling Elektra

54 ABOUT FACE  
David Gilmour Columbia

55 BARK AT THE MOON  
Ozzy Osbourne Jet/CBS

56 BEAUTY STAB  
ABC Mercury

57 PYROMANIA  
Def Leppard Mercury

58 STRIP  
Adam Ant Epic

59 1999  
Prince Warner Bros

60 REACH THE BEACH  
The Fixx MCA

61 WAR  
U2 Island

62 MURMUR  
R.E.M. IRS

63 HEARTS AND BONES  
Paul Simon Warner Bros

64 PRINCIPLE OF  
MOMENTS  
Robert Plant Atlantic

65 PUNCH THE CLOCK  
Elvis Costello Columbia

66 PLAYS LIVE  
Peter Gabriel Geffen

67 ALIVE, SHE CRIED  
The Doors Elektra

68 THE PRESENT  
The Moody Blues Threshold

69 DURAN DURAN  
Duran Duran Capitol

70 FASCINATION!  
Human League A&M

71 THE WILD HEART  
Stevie Nicks Modern

72 STATE OF CONFUSION  
The Kinks Arista

73 FLICK OF THE SWITCH  
AC/DC Atlantic

74 THE REAL MACAW  
Graham Parker Arista

75 RANT 'N' RAVE WITH  
THE STRAY CATS  
The Stray Cats EMI

76 JUNGLE  
Dwight Twilley EMI

77 KISSING TO BE CLEVER  
Culture Club Epic

78 MADNESS  
Madness Geffen

79 LITTLE ROBBERS  
The Motels Capitol

80 COLD BLOODED  
Rick James Gordy

81 KEEP IT UP  
Loverboy Columbia

82 LISTEN  
A Flock of Seagulls Jive/Arista

83 FRONTIERS  
Journey Columbia

84 ALPHA  
Asia Geffen

85 LAWYERS IN LOVE  
Jackson Browne Elektra

86 NAKED EYES  
Naked Eyes EMI

87 BORN AGAIN  
Black Sabbath Warner Bros

88 WHAMMY  
The B-52's Warner Bros

89 NO FRILLS  
Bette Midler Atlantic

90 CARGO  
Men At Work Columbia

91 SWEET DREAMS ARE  
MADE OF THIS  
Eurythmics RCA

92 THE HURTING  
Tears for Fears Mercury

93 PLEASURE VICTIM  
Berlin Geffen

94 JARREAU  
Al Jarreau Warner Bros

95 NEW GOLD DREAMS  
Simple Minds A&M

96 GET IT RIGHT  
Aretha Franklin Arista

97 TWANG BAR KING  
Adrian Belew Island

98 PIECE OF MIND  
Iron Maiden Capitol

99 WHITE FEATHERS  
Kajagoogoo EMI

100 MIKE'S MURDER  
Joe Jackson A&M

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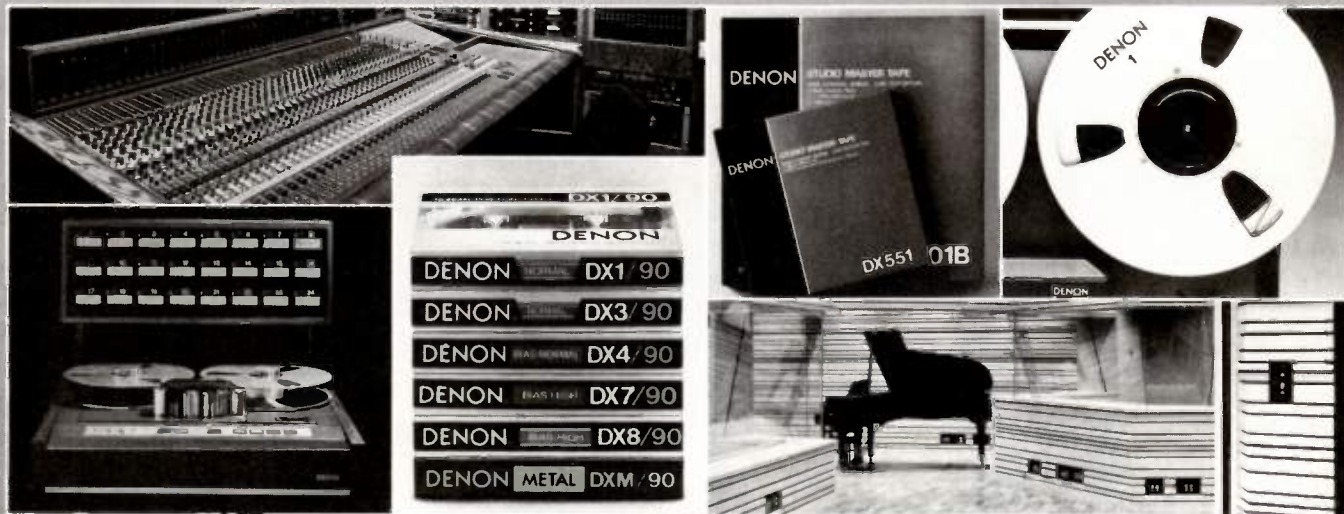


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## A QUIET SUMMER

**Big Country heads for the studio; fall tour expected**

ATLANTA—"I think we proved that the only way to make powerful emotive pop music is through the use of guitars," claims Big Country's Stuart Adamson in assessing the impact of his band's roof-rocking debut album, *The Crossing*. "Pop music will never get away from those basic roots of guys with guitars."

To prove their point further, Big Country will return to the studio in late June to do a follow-up to *The Crossing*, again with studio wiz Steve Lillywhite twiddling the knobs. A U.K. jaunt and a fall tour of the U.S. will likely follow the album's completion. Meanwhile, an EP featuring the British single "Wonderland" and "The Crossing" (not on the like-named debut LP) was recently released Stateside.

While Big Country credits its songs as group composi-



**Big Country: New LP to be 'just another bunch of songs'**

tions, guitarist/lead singer Adamson writes almost all of the band's material. Adamson suggests that the next album will not differ radically from *The Crossing*'s distinctive blend of sky-rocketing twin guitars, folk melodies and highly poetical lyrics: "Al-

though you have your own basic style, outside influences may change that, to what degree is hard to say until the thing is absolutely finalized. But I do have a stylized way of writing lyrics, and I can't see changing that in the foreseeable future.

"I see myself as someone who puts the ideas he has on paper in order to get people to discover what is common between them, to make the crossing. In that respect, all I do is write songs. So the next LP will just be another bunch of songs." —Anthony DeCurtis

PHOTO ERET ROBERTS

## A ROCKY ROAD BACK

**Dwight Twilley did mind, after all**

NEW YORK—Twilley don't mind.

Like hell he don't.

"*Twilley Don't Mind* was the title of my second album," says Tulsa, Oklahoma's Dwight Twilley. "One of the guys in the band started saying it as a joke, like 'Hey, Bo Diddley,' and it was a running gag for a long time. But actually, it's not true. I'm very sensitive about what the press says, how my records sell...when they talk about my music, they're talking about something I really believe in."

It could have been a scene from *Rocky*, when the Italian Stallion admits to Adrienne that he really didn't enjoy being made fun of during a TV interview. Rocky Balboa, of course, went on to fame and fortune; Twilley was as unheralded as Balboa when his first hit single, "I'm On Fire," suggested the start of a long and influential career. Since beset by myriad legal and financial

problems, Twilley has finally, with *Jungle*, his fifth album (second for EMI America), got back on the good foot.

"It's the most direct, clear statement I've ever made," Twilley says of the new LP. "Working in the studio always gave my stuff a kind of dreamlike, random quality. I wanted everything this time to be very clear. Like 'Girls,' the single. All it says is, 'Hey girls, don't beat around the bush, why are you breaking my heart?' What could be simpler than that?"

Having an album and a single in the Top 100, says Twilley, helps an artist feel accepted. But there's more to it than that. "I just did a bit of national in-store promotion where I talked to kids from all around the country," he explains. "You forget, living in Los Angeles, about all the genuinely sweet and nice kids out there, but it's an amazing experience to talk to them for eight hours straight. I had forgotten



**Twilley: 'Bud Anderson and Opie Taylor are still out there'**

that Bud Anderson and Opie Taylor still live out there. And they know the difference between jive and reality; they're

real. I felt humbled by it, but I felt real good about being a rock 'n' roll musician."

—Mark Mehler

PHOTO PAUL NATKIN



## IT'S ALL FUNKED UP

*The Deele has a feel for what the people want*

ATLANTA—"We went through phases where all our tunes had a message," states drummer L.A. Reid of the Deele, as if struggling to recall a laughably naive stage of someone else's life. "It was either about politics or social injustice. But the music was boring, you know? So we just threw it all away and said, *body talk!*"

When the Deele got physical, people got the message. The Cincinnati sextet's sassy funk single, "Body Talk," swiveled up the dance charts, and their debut album, *Street Beat*, started steaming too. Reid hopes a second single, the smoky ballad "Just My Luck," will push *Street Beat* over the top.

"As we recorded each song

in the studio, we would make a test pressing and take it to clubs, play it and try to get a feel for how the people were responding," Reid explains about *Street Beat*, which was produced by Midnight Star's Reggie Calloway. "We'd go out on the floor and jam, or just stand back and observe. We did this two or three times a week for a month. That's why we called it *Street Beat*—we felt it was the people's music 'cause we did it based on what we'd seen them do."

And where did Reid learn to please the people? "I remember seeing Grand Funk Railroad do an outdoor stadium show in Cincinnati. They just blew me away," the drummer recounts admiringly, momentarily incapacitating the interviewer. "It was rainin' and they didn't stop. I said, 'I wanna do that!'" Having made the leap from Grand Funk to elegant electro-funk, the Deele's toughest changes are most definitely behind them.

—Anthony DeCurtis

## A WOBBLY CONCEPT

*Jah Wobble eyes a tenuous proposition*

NEW YORK—"I hate shaving and I can't stand beards," says Jah Wobble, explaining the perpetual three-day stub-

ble that is as much his signature as the hairy bass lines he's provided for Public Image Ltd., Invaders of the Heart and, most recently, his own *SNAKE CHARMER* project.

The five-song sampler is an unusual outing, featuring a loose collective of talents as diverse as U2 guitarist The Edge, avantist bassist Holger Czukay



The Deele (L.A. Reid, seated, back row): From Grand Funk to elegant electro-funk

PHOTO: JONATHAN BURNETTE

of the German experimental group Can and other cult musicians who dart in and out of the mini-album. "There's no handle on this record that the company can promote," says

Wobble. "It's very abstract for the times. But musically, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts."

Adds Wobble: "I think we ended up with something orchestral but not orchestrated. It's all quite fragile."

Translated that means no tour. But Wobble is busy enough. Since leaving PiL a few years ago he's been running his own record company, Largo. Wobble handles all the administrative duties, a nerve-racking task, he admits, for someone who would rather "drink and play bass, not necessarily in that order."

Publishing and various joint and solo efforts that sell upwards of 30,000 copies apparently afford Wobble a decent living. By his own measure, the artist figures "eight out of every hundred people are going to check out what I'm doing."

How's that?

"You just know that over 90 percent of the people out there are assholes."

—Jonathan Gross



Wobble: Disdaining the status quo

PHOTO: CHISTIE SIMPSON



**THERE IS AN APOCRYPHAL** (look it up) story that Paul Weller, former front-man of the Jam, and Mick Talbot, formerly of Dexy's Midnight Runners, met on the ground floor of Bloomingdale's and decided to form a band called **Style Council**. Another story indicates the two attended grammar school together, and although never popular enough to be elected to Student Council, vowed someday to establish their own. Wherever the truth lies (and it's clearly not on this page), Weller and Talbot's Style Council presents a vision that's both personal and upbeat. That personal vision is reflected in the title of their new Geffen album, *My Ever Changing Moods*. We like the title. No we don't. Yes we do. Shut up.



Vol. 84, No. 2

# THIS

**HE WRITES, HE PLAYS, HE RECORDS, HE BUYS, HE SELLS.** He's **Steve Tibbetts**, and he may very well be the ultimate music machine. Steve "O-Matic" Tibbetts works in a record store one day a week, dividing the balance of his time between duties as an ECM recording artist and a compulsive music composer, consumer and listener. You can hear Steve's masterful guitar on *Safe Journey*, his latest ECM album, and you can meet him Mondays at the Wax Museum (a record store) in Minneapolis. Hint: he even *signs* records.

**THIS PARAGRAPH USED TO BE VERY FUNNY.** So funny, in fact, that the lawyers wouldn't let us print it. There was an elaborate joke about... Oh. Never mind. At any rate, *Through The Fire* is an album of high-energy rock and roll by super-rockers Sammy Hagar, Neal Schon, Kenny Aaronson and Michael Shrieve. The Geffen release was inspired by **Hagar/Schon/Aaronson/Shrieve Bay Area** concerts, and in turn inspired the HSAS Theorem: *The number of lawyers required for a given record project is geometrically proportional to the level of public interest in said project.* The proof? You're reading it...

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**AUSTRALIAN CRAWL** has nothing to do with kangaroo belly races. The Crawl is an Australian sextet that's sported no less than four Top Five albums and a No. 1 EP in recent years—now their hit tracks have bounced Stateside on a Geffen LP entitled *Semantics*. It's pop music in the best and most enticing tradition of that genre, and if you think you can do any better, we'll send you to the outback with nothing but a Telecaster and a Pig-nose amp.

**"THE SMITHS AREN'T JUST A GROUP,** they're a crusade. Through their music and the ideals it embodies, The Smiths are determined to rekindle the optimism they fear is nearly extinguished. For Morrissey, the decadent kick of living life on the edge of the apocalypse is one more dead end drug." So *Melody Maker* summed up a band that has set both England and Burbank buzzing, **The Smiths**. Fronted by Morrissey (one name, thank you) the group combines a sound (vocals that work across the music rather than with it) and a style (the single-handed reinvention of flower power) that shouldn't be missed. Just when you thought it was safe to go back to the florist... On Sire.

**THIS SPECIAL** blood, guts and sarcasm issue of "This Is Advertising?" was brought to you by a failed love affair and mounting psychiatric bills. And if you don't like it buddy, why don't we just step outside and settle this thing here and now? You can still write to "TIA?" at P.O. Box 6868, Burbank, CA 91510, although given our current mood, you'd have to be a masochist to consider it. Stay linear.

ADVERTISING?



**RICOCHET DAYS, FALL-OUT NIGHTS.** "I Melt With You" was a major hit for **Modern English** last year, a favorite in the U.S., Europe and Japan. Now the band is back with *Ricochet Days*, a Sire album of new material led by the inter-continental "Hands Across The Sea." Modern English has expanded an already impressive vocabulary, and the resulting record finds nouns, verbs and even an occasional adjective cohabitating in a package that's aurally and visually glowing.



## A LOT OF LIFE TO IT

*Willy DeVille is saved by a Rocky Mountain high*

CHICAGO—In this political year, you might say Willy DeVille has momentum. His current cross-country tour has the air of a winning campaign. There's a new tightness and energy in the shows, an honest-to-God smile on Willy's face, and, most importantly, a hit in the making—"Each Word's A Beat Of My Heart" from Mink DeVille's new *Where Angels Fear To Tread* LP. Why are things suddenly so upbeat for this one-time chip-on-the-shoulder cult figure with a recognized penchant for unhealthy habits?

"Well," DeVille ruefully concedes, "I guess I got myself kind of a reputation." He laughs. "A reputation that was mostly true. These last few years I let myself get pretty

screwed up. And when my street life isn't together, my life on stage isn't either. I tended to become a parody of myself on stage," says the performer whose long suit has always been his *West Side Story* hauteur.

What finally turned things around for DeVille were friends—"The people I had around me, people who never stopped giving me encouragement and support." His manager lent him his home in the Colorado Rockies and DeVille nearly tapped out. "I was sick for months after I got up there," DeVille recalls. "Dope sick and altitude sick—a bad combination."

Eventually the altitude helped Willy come back down the mountain stronger than when he'd gone up. "I got to know this dancing master who was living up in the mountains, and he started working me out. I could hardly stand it at first—everything you do in that thin air up there is like three times harder than when



**Willy DeVille: 'I let myself get pretty screwed up'**

you're at sea level. But my manager said to me, 'If you can get in the kind of shape this guy wants *up here*, think how you'll be able to dance

anywhere else.'

So," he concludes, "I stuck with it. And here I am—it worked."

—Christopher Hill

PHOTO: CINDY ROSENTHAL

## EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

*Wire Train's songs work on several levels*

OAKLAND, Ca—Neither Kevin Hunter nor Kurt Herr had much musical experience when they met at San Francisco State University and started

writing songs together three years ago. In fact, Herr hadn't played any instrument at all when he took up the guitar, and Hunter had played only

briefly in a band in Los Angeles before becoming Wire Train's rhythm guitarist. But within a year they were rehearsing with a procession of bass players and drummers and in another year they were signed to San Francisco's 415 Records and cutting an album.



PHOTO: CHESTER SIMPSON

**Wire Train: Trying to get below the surface**

"In the beginning it was practically like a race, trying to learn enough so we could express ourselves," Hunter recalls. "We're starting to have a little more fun with ideas now." The songs on their LP, *In A Chamber*, are image-laden portraits of contemporary relationships rendered in opaque detail by Hunter, who says he "was force-fed literature as a child." All the songs—including "Chamber of Hellos," which became an underground hit before a single was officially released—"tend to deal with the idea that any given situation can be perceived by two different people as having completely different meaning and value," Hunter declares.

Wire Train's sound is driven by drummer Federico Gil-Sola and bassist Anders Rundblad, both recent immigrants to America (Gil-Sola from Argentina, Rundblad from Sweden). Hunter doesn't see his and Herr's lack of technique as a drawback, though: "By the criteria people use to judge music I don't think we're brilliant," he says, "but I like the noise Wire Train makes."

—David Gans





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# Salem Spirit

# ON THE BEAT



DOUGLAS BRYANT

Berlin recently faced the dilemma of trying to decide which track off their second album, *Love Life*, would be the first single. Geffen Records was sufficiently moved by the quality of the LP to declare five of its tunes contenders for the honor. Berlin, bleary-eyed from the studio, couldn't decide. When band guitarist Ric Olsen left his L.A. apartment one morning, however, he forgot to switch off the cassette deck he'd been using to play a tape of the album in question. As a result, the deck (equipped with auto-reverse) spent the rest of the day blaring *Love Life*. Non-stop. When Olsen came home that night, he found that his pet parrot, Kah-lua, had made its own choice for a single. Riveted to its perch in the empty room, the Berlin-shocked bird was squawking the title of one track over and over again: "No More Words... No More Words... No More Words..."

## THE VINYL WORD

You might recall the item in last month's column on the New Music Distribution Service, the country's largest and oldest distributor of independent/small label recordings. If your taste in alternative music runs to the more esoteric end of the spectrum, you might look into the extensive stock offered by a firm called Vital Body Marketing. The five year old mail order house specializes in "New Age Music" from around the world. Their invento-

ry isn't limited to independent micro-labels and obscure artists, however. Alongside lesser-known names like Laraaji, George Winston, Lothlorian, and the Harmonic Choir, you'll find more "mainstream" luminaries like Keith Jarrett, Steve Reich, Steve Hillage, Paul Winter, Alan Stivell, and Phillip Glass—musicians you might have trouble finding in the record bins at your local mall. The company also offers a varied selection of related items, ranging from books and Eastern musical instruments to self-hypnosis and instructional tapes on a wide range of topics. For a

free catalog, write Vital Body Marketing, PO Box 703, Fresh Meadows, NY 11365... Amidst preparations for the mammoth Jacksons tour, **Jermaine Jackson** teamed up in a West Coast recording studio with the inimitable Pia Zadora. The pair entwined vocachords on the theme song for Zadora's forthcoming celluloid epic, tentatively titled *When the Rains Begin to Fall*... IRS Records steps into the realm of movie music this month with a soundtrack album for the new feature-length film, *Bachelor Party*. The LP sports tunes by, among others, the **Go Go's**, **R.E.M.**, **Stan Ridgeway** (ex-Wall of Voodoo), and **Adrian Zmed** (of T.J. Hooker fame). The collection was put together by famed L.A. whiz kid **Danny Goldberg** (the man responsible for setting up Modern Records and Led Zeppelin's Swansong Records), who recently served as executive producer for studio projects by Bette Midler and the newly-unmasked Kiss. ■



## SCREENINGS

Although England's Squeeze is now a memory, band cornerstones **Chris Difford** and **Glenn Tilbrook** haven't been cooling their heels. With a new Difford-Tilbrook album under their belts, they've now set their sights on composing the score for a new film called *Absolute Beginners*. With a script based on Colin McInnes' cult novel about coming of age in London during the 50s, the film will be shot there this summer with Julian Temple in the director's chair... When **Joan Armatrading** was invited (along with Princess Margaret) to be guest of honor during 1983's independence celebrations on the Caribbean island of St. Kitts, it was the first time she'd visited her birthplace since emigrating to Birmingham, England as a child. A camera crew captured the homecoming, and much of the resulting footage (along with extensive in-concert material) is included in a new video documentary on the singer/songwriter that's just been completed in London... For those who can't get enough of their MTV, the video music channel is making some of its more popular special programs available on video cassette. The first batch, out this month, includes a 30-minute music/interview mini-program on **Pete Townshend**, and a quartet of 60-minute in-concert specials on **Kansas**, **Warren Zevon**, **Split Enz**, and **Graham Parker**. ■



Just prior to his current Stateside trek, **Ted Nugent** played a lengthy series of gigs in Europe to promote his latest album, *Penetrator*. Amidst several weeks of characteristic revelry, Nugent decided to take the wheel himself for the journey to a gig in Offenbach, Germany. He rented a brand new Jaguar, his crew piled into a more sedate station wagon, and the two cars roared off down the Autobahn toward the concert. Half an hour later, the crew noticed that their employer had vanished from sight. Although they didn't know it, Ted had put his foot down and burned out all four of the car's forward gears, forcing him to coast to a stop on the shoulder of the road and rethink the situation. The road crew had given him up for lost when their driver spotted something long and lean in the rear-view mirror, gaining on them fast. It didn't look like the front of any car they were familiar with, but as the machine streaked by and left them in its wake, they realized what it was: twisted around in the Jaguar's seat, the grinning Motor City Madman had just cruised past at a cool 85 miles per hour. In reverse.



With 1982's *The Lexicon of Love*, Britain's **ABC** stepped into the American charts as a quartet. By the time *Beauty Stab* was released late last year, they'd been trimmed to a trio. Now the band has become a duo with the departure of sax player Steve Singleton, amidst the usual all-purpose grumblings of "musical incompatibility." With Singleton out of the picture, remaining members Martin Fry and Mark White have been combing the hills for a permanent bassist and drummer. While they had preferred to hire their rhythm sections on a part-time basis, this recent flurry of activity indicates a conspicuous change of heart, though there are still no plans for a *Beauty Stab* tour. Even before Singleton's exit, Fry and White had sworn off further road work until after the completion of the third ABC album.

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# THE MOUTH THAT ROARED

**Joe Strummer  
announces  
the Clash's  
comeback  
in no  
uncertain  
terms**

**By  
John  
Mendelssohn**

CONVERSATION WITH THE CLASH'S Joe Strummer elicits the simplest, most blindingly self-evident solutions to agonizingly difficult political problems since the non-release of *Billy Jack Goes To Washington*. On the subject of terrorism, for instance, the artist concedes, "It's dumb moves blowing innocent people up—it doesn't get them anywhere. But I try to understand the feeling behind it. Terrorism only occurs when the people holding power won't negotiate. After World War II, the super powers divided up the world at the Yalta Conference and thought they'd solved things, but all they did was create long-running problems. What did they think people were going to do? Suppose we were Palestinian—what would we do? I'll tell you what I'd do—exactly what they're doing. They can't get anybody to even sit down at the table, so what else are they going to do, piss off?"

"If you had an orange you wanted to sell me, I'm sure we could arrive at a price even if you were a stubborn bastard and we had to sit here all night. But the Western governments just bring in these laws, like you can't have a lawyer for 92 hours, and never say, 'Right, let's sort this one out.' It's always, 'Let's get more security. Let's do this and that,' when all they really have to do is sort it out somehow."

"I think it's great," he says of Nicaragua's immensely impeachable Sandinista regime, "but I'm worried that you lot are going to invade it." When the long-ago campus radical who's serving as his con-

versational foil objects to being lumped in with "you lot," the artist sneers, "Every American is responsible for what their government does—if it ain't being done in your name, then whose name is it being done in? I read all about the Committee on the Present Danger, and I know that they're the ones calling the shots. Why doesn't every American know that? Why is everybody on drugs and goofing off?"

Alternately perceived as The Only Rock and Roll Band That Matters and as the most shrilly self-righteous boors in pop history (see above), the Clash visit California as January becomes February to battle-test their new Mick Jones-less line-up in Los Angeles, San Diego and a handful of small towns where rock traditionally disdains to tread.

"After the US Festival last summer, we promised we'd come back to California," explains Kosmo Vinyl, the group's aide-de-camp/designated talker, whose speaking voice makes Joe Strummer's singing voice sound like Tony Bennett's. "And as Joe says, rock 'n' roll is best when it's fought on enemy territory—in the halls that were meant to be cinemas, in basketball pitches, in sports arenas. So we'll go out this year and play all these little towns—Stockton, Santa Cruz, Santa Barbara—instead of sticking to the usual English group thing of just playing the major cities. It isn't compensation, though, because we don't have any doubts at all that what we did at the US Festival was right."

What they did—besides change their

minds (most clamorously) approximately every 45 minutes about whether they would or would not actually perform, besides trying to shame their fellow performers into donating parts of *their* fees to local charities—was demand that festival bankroller Steve Wozniak donate \$100,000 to a Southern California summer camp for disadvantaged youth. Off the top of his head, Vinyl can't tell you much about the camp, or even its name. "We thought, 'Why shouldn't those kids go on holiday? Wozniak's rich.' I don't know how much the guy's got, but I think it's in the region of \$284 million, and all the hack-type industry people he had working for him were already shaking him like a money tree. In the end he agreed to \$32,000. But then he announced that he would have given the money anyway, which was a damned lie. Our lawyer had stood there arguing with him for seven hours!"

After the group's second performance at Santa Barbara's cozy Arlington Theatre, Strummer explains why, when the group was apparently so intent on sending disadvantaged young Californians to summer camp, they didn't simply hand over a hunk of their own \$500,000 paycheck. "We needed it for London. We don't have people in London who want to throw Woodstock as a tax writeoff. If Wozniak wants to be a sucker and give us half a million dollars, we'll take it. If we can get it out of Mick Jones's lawyer's hands, we can set up a scene in London with it—a club, a bar, an *atmosphere*, somewhere to hang out. We don't have that anywhere. It's all like Studio 54."

What made them so obstreperous at US, they tell you, was Wozniak's Utopian pretensions. "If he'd just said he was putting on a show to make money," Vinyl claims, "we would have gone, 'All right, Jack.' But that whole Unuson-us-togetherness community thing! There weren't no community! It was rubbish."

Strummer's contribution to the festival's Woodstockian vibe was to snarl, "Here we are in the capital of the decadent U.S.A." at the tens of thousands who'd waited patiently in the mud for two hours before the group finally took the stage. "I wanted to wind them up," he reveals. "There was too much self-congratulation in the air. I wanted to get a reaction, and I felt that we'd never reach them—it was too vast. When you're on stage, you forget about those giant TV screens even being there." He's a big enough man to concede that this tactic failed.

When asked why his group agreed to perform for Wozniak in the first place, he zealously asserts, "We *had* to go there. Otherwise we'd have been condemning rebel rock to the basement. I wasn't having all that other nonsense up there without some rebel rock as well—I don't care if it's us or somebody else. That was the rock 'n' roll event in America that weekend, and I was going to be damned if I'd crawl off to



show how pure I am."

"We want to be in the Top 10," Vinyl adds earnestly, "so that young groups will think they have to speak the truth to make it big instead of go to Egypt to make a video."

Between the US debacle and their California trip, of course, the group expelled guitarist Mick Jones, whose ego, to hear Vinyl and Strummer tell it, had run amok. "We'd get some dates together for a tour, right?" asserts Vinyl. "We'd talk to Paul and he'd go, 'Yeah!' We'd talk to Joe and he'd go, 'Yeah!' We'd talk to Mick and he'd just shrug."

"Or," snarls Strummer, "say he'd have to talk it over with his lawyer."

"He said if we didn't produce *Combat Rock* in New York, he wouldn't be at the sessions," Vinyl charges, by way of illuminating the departed guitarist's accelerating insufferability. "So we cart everything to New York and make the record there. One day there's an argument and that gets brought up and Mick goes, 'Oh, I didn't mean it.' You don't pull that sort of thing on your friends. Surely you don't!"

"I could take the moaning and the not wanting to work and the lack of enthusiasm," Strummer claims. "And did until I had all that up to the neck. But what *really* got me was when he started saying he'd have to check things with his lawyer first. I thought, 'Since when was lawyers involved

in this team?' We never had a lawyer to begin with. We would have run a mile before we'd have had one in the room with us! What's a lawyer anyway—an overpaid geezer who's out of touch with reality, who charges you fifty quid to say good morning and make a telephone call." (Or a guy who badgers someone like Steve Wozniak on your behalf?) "And all that language—that legal mumbo-jumbo. They *could* make it plain as day. Don't tell me they couldn't. They've translated the Bible into Scottish, into Greek, into plain English. But no, they won't allow that because then we'll do 'em out of a job, right?"

"Another big problem," Vinyl recalls, "was that he thought he should produce, but the rest of us didn't think he was ready. Maybe you've heard rumors about Mick being opposed to the commerciality of *Combat Rock*. Well, in fact, all that Mick was opposed to was Glyn Johns doing the final mix. Mick liked his *own* mix, and when everybody else didn't, he took it really bad. But it's kind of like if your friend don't brush his teeth and the girls all go, 'His breath smells.' If you're his friend you've got to tell him."

"He felt after *Combat Rock* that we'd arrived, and started all this my-room's-too-cold/I-don't-want-to-ride-in-this-bus stuff—this rock star behavior! But to me and Joe and Paul and Bernie (Rhodes, the group's manager) *Combat Rock* was just a

foot in the door. What's the point of getting that enthusiastic about selling a million records when Michael Jackson's sold 30 million, and is probably selling another million while we talk?"

Strummer chimes in. "I finally said, 'Go and write songs with your lawyer, and piss off!'"

Replacing the banished Jones, whose lawyer has since had the group's US Festival paycheck and *Combat Rock* royalties impounded, required Vinyl and Rhodes to spend three weeks listening to 350 respondents to their anonymous advertisements in the British pop weeklies for a "wild" guitarist. "I wanted someone," says Strummer, "who knew that the guitar is for accompaniment and not for ego-tripping. The ones we chose (Vince White and Nick Sheppard) changed their playing for each of the three backing tracks they had to play along with for their final audition. And they were punks—they'd been in the punk rebellion in '76, been excited by it, swept up in it. So they don't moan."

The group hired both new boys so that Strummer could concentrate exclusively on singing, but only a few numbers into the new lineup's first show he discovered that "I missed thrashing myself into a frenzy." One of the least rhythmic rhythm guitarists in pop history—one who rarely strums less than 25 percent faster than anyone else in the band is playing—Strummer gives



PHOTO HOWARD ROSENBERG

Joe Strummer (left) with original Clash member Paul Simonon: Rekindling the old fervor





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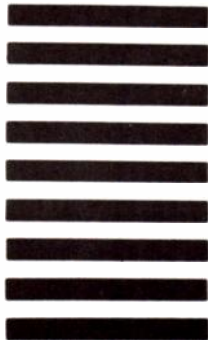
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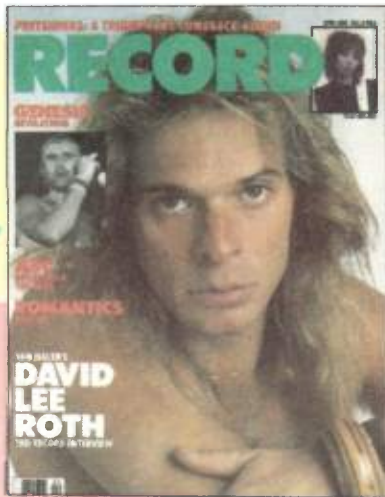




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the impression of having changed his mind primarily so that he can make a big production of angrily yanking his black Telecaster off and flinging it a roadie in the wings every couple of numbers.

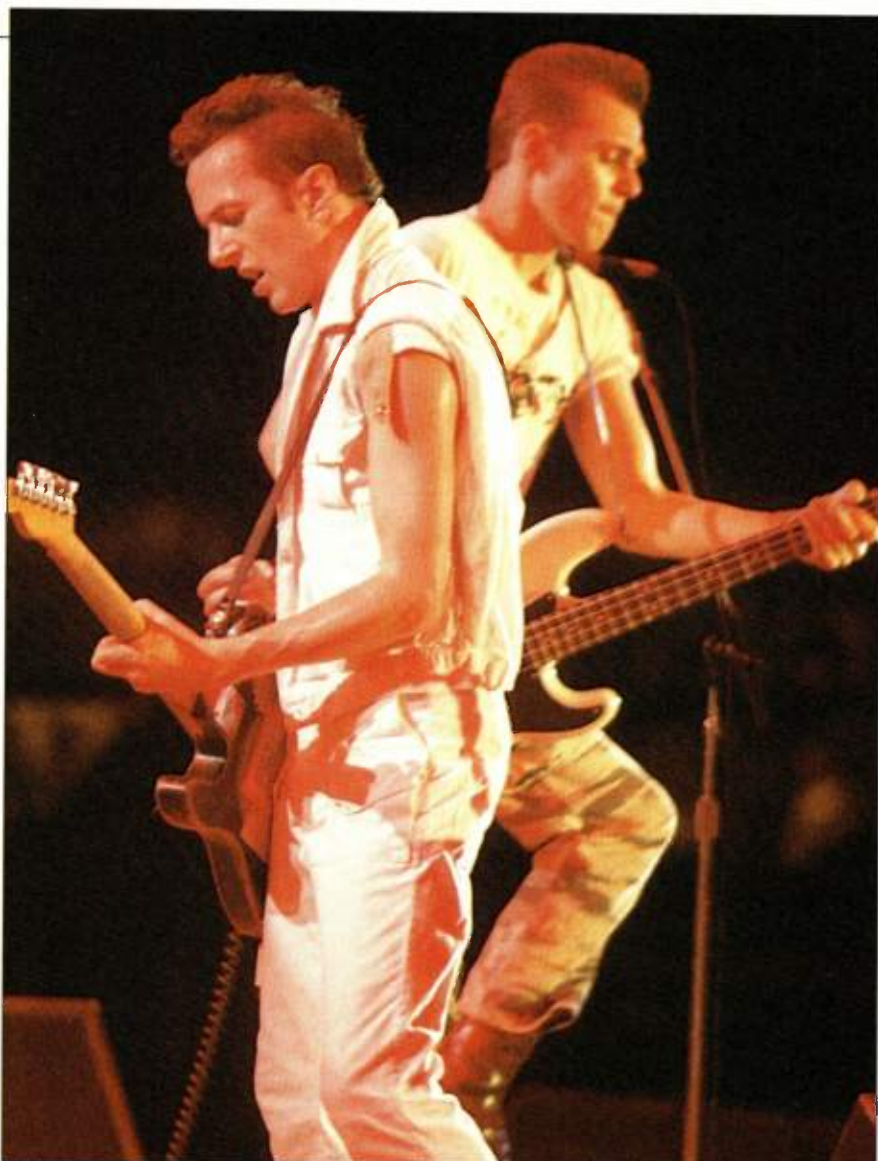
"I'm looking for the ultimate wipe-out," Strummer confides, by way of elucidating why he always appears in a rage on stage, "or the ultimate feeling out of every song. It isn't something you can just do—you have to work yourself up to some elusive pitch. If I look angry, it's because I'm trying to reach that pitch, to be took away and out of my mind." He's nearly sheepish when he concedes that "sometimes I do turn 'round and smile at the drummer."

"People think we're these studious, deadly serious people who slave over big thick books in their rooms in the middle of the night and never have fun," says an obviously concerned Vinyl. "We are serious, but that doesn't mean we don't like fun, or have a sense of humor. I think we're really funny. We spend a lot of time laughing. And we appreciate style. We like to see the kids in our audiences dressed great and having a great time. We want to make it so a teller could go, 'I was checking out Jean-Luc Godard the other night,' or, 'I've just been reading some Sartre,' and all the girls would go, 'Oh, really?'"

And just when you think you've heard it all, you find out that Joe Strummer refuses to be spat on. Indeed, he urged those members of his Santa Barbara audience who "really support the Clash" to wallop unceremoniously in the kisser anyone they see "gobbing" on him. "You'll be playing down this end of the neck," he explains, "and somebody'll gob a great yellow-green goolie that'll just lie across the fretboard up there, getting cold. The next time you move your hand up there, it winds up in the middle of this freezing cold diseased mess. I went through it in England for years. It wasn't just a gob here and gob there—it was like a rainstorm that never ended. I ain't going through it again. If that's what they want to do, they can find themselves another dummy."

Exhibiting that zany Clash sense of humor, Vinyl cheerfully notes that Strummer "once caught hepatitis when somebody in front of the stage gobbled at him while he was singing and he swallowed it."

It's the perpetrators of the diseased green goolies, one supposes, who make up most of what Strummer calls "the meat-head section" of his group's audience, and who often make life very miserable for the group's hand-picked opening acts. "You know what they shouted at me in Long Beach?" Strummer queries, clearly marveling at the fact he's about to reveal. "'You nigger music lover!' But three years after they shouted the same sort of redneck stuff at Grandmaster Flash and threw rubbish at him when he opened for us at Bcnd's Casino in New York, I'll bet they were all rocking out to 'The Message' at their discos in Queens and Brooklyn. They



Strummer onstage with Simonon: Looking for the ultimate wipe-out

help us face reality."

The subject of facing reality gives Strummer second wind. He's entering the stretch run at full froth. "People in England are asleep," he charges. "They don't realize what a fascist, racist press and police and government we've got. And here too, where MTV won't play black music because they think their ideal customer is a white middle-class Midwestern racist. They had to be forced to play *Michael Jackson*. Not that I consider Michael Jackson a black artist. If he is, why did he get a nose job? And why doesn't he give half the black leadership he should as the biggest superstar in the whole bloody world?"

As suddenly as he'd exploded in vitriol, Strummer turns somber. Leadership, it seems, is another sticky subject, especially as it applies to the Clash. "When we said, 'Let's have a punk rebellion,'" he explains, "we didn't mean for everyone to become copies of the Clash. For awhile, being a punk group was a good way to get signed and make a few bob. But you don't discover and participate in the creation of a culture every week. When you abandon your culture, you don't know what you've lost

'til it's gone. After a few years, we could see that we'd had a culture, and that we'd abandoned it.

"We thought we could make pop real again," Strummer says, apparently resigned to the Clash's melancholy lot in life. "We were going to destroy British pop television and rebuild it into something vital. We were going to do all those things. We didn't realize what a lonely road it was going to be. We didn't know the punk movement was going to fall apart, that Siouxsie and the Banshees would become like Led Zeppelin, that the Pistols would fall apart so fast, that Rotten would get a Holiday Inn band and the Damned would become comedians. We didn't have a clue about all the pitfalls we were going to stumble on.

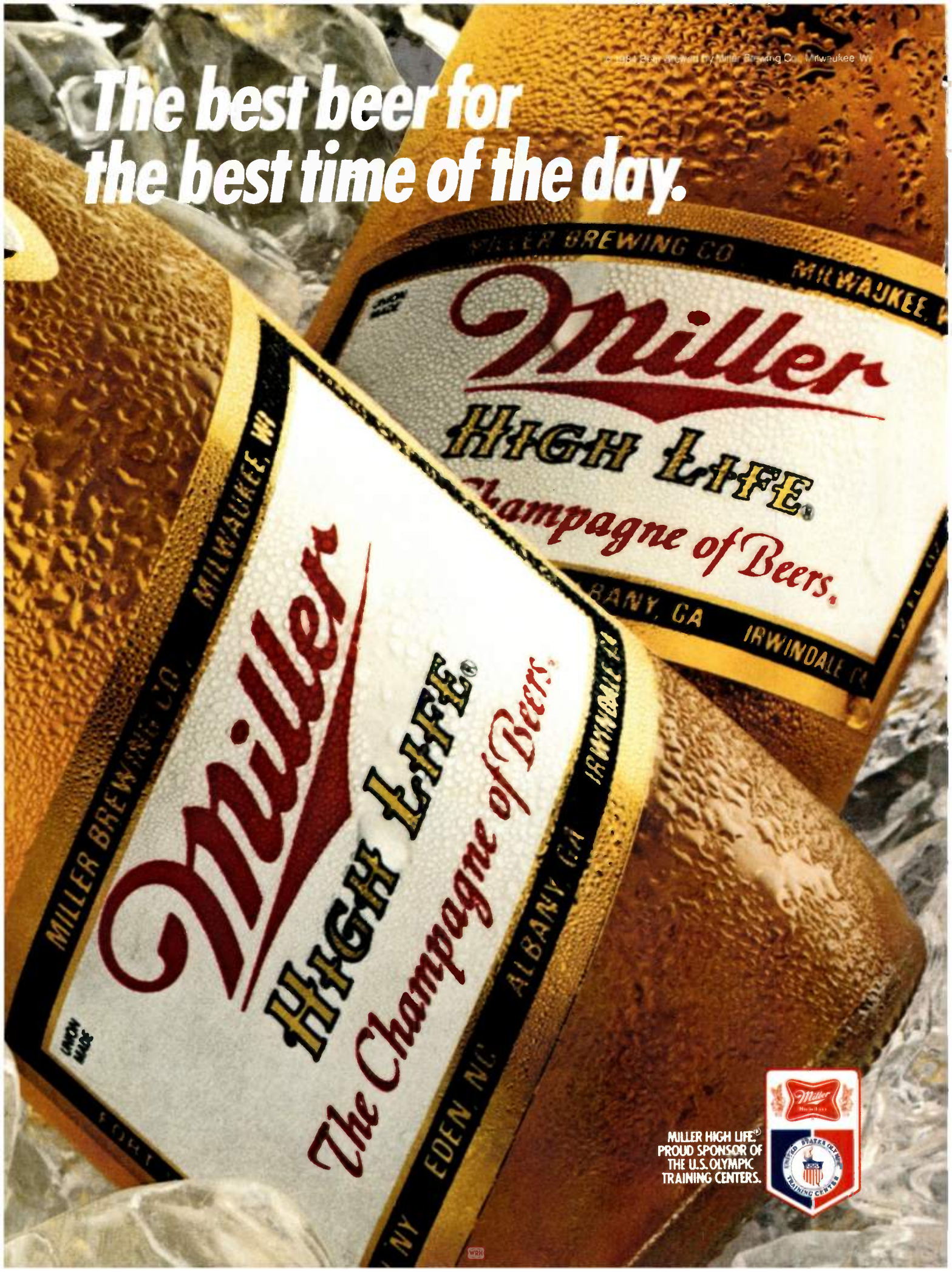
"We've been through everything in the book. We've been through drugs. We've been through pretension. We've been through studio bullshit. You name it—I bet we've been through it.

"But," Strummer announces as he boards the bus heading for the next whistle stop, "I'm still walking around the stage without a crutch." ○



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JONATHAN GROSS

# AGAINST THE WIND

Motown's Rockwell is running on fumes

**P**ffft. It was a small fart and probably would have been politely ignored had Rockwell not, in complete and utter embarrassment, burst into a flustered apology.

"Hey, excuse me, really sorry about that. You won't tell anybody I farted, will you?" the flatulent pop star pleaded as his manager and publicist looked on in complete horror. "It's just that I have gas."

Sorry, guy. In an interview divided between mental constipation and verbal diarrhea, Rockwell's sphincter-released syllable was one of the few quotes worth documenting. Not that it was totally his fault. At 20, he's new to the business, and with "Somebody's Watching Me" he's had greatness thrust upon him, although this should have been anticipated given Michael Jackson's assistance as background vocalist on the record. Get Michael Jackson to break wind on your record and it quickly turns to gold.

Our encounter was scheduled at the tail end of a gruelling session of "Meet The Press"—that is, a day of non-stop interviews—and Rockwell was running on fumes, so to speak. He was tired and impatient. Sentences didn't end but rather evaporated with his attention. Simple queries into his background and schooling were met with lines like, "I don't want to talk about that shit." He also apologized a lot. It was mentioned that the preliminaries could have been avoided had the Motown biography provided more than just a few paragraphs of murky hype, part of a half-baked plot to keep Rockwell's true identity a secret. But that shtick was quickly abandoned when Rockwell started doing interviews. He is really Kennedy Gordy, son of Motown founder Berry Gordy.

"I didn't want anyone to think I was riding on my father's reputation, that's all," says Rockwell. "That kind of thing can work against you especially when you're trying to get a record done in his company."

Jermaine Jackson, Rockwell's brother-in-law, was dropped by Motown last year.

"The name Rockwell goes back to my high school days," the artist adds, sounding like he's told the story too many times. "My band was playing rock 'n' roll so the kids were always calling me 'Rock.' I just added the 'well' part. It seemed right."

Rockwell's rocky synth-pop stands in direct contrast to the cool soul of Motown's other hot young act, DeBarge, and, in a way, fits with his subsidized rebellion: "I could've played the millionaire's son

and lived off my father's money. But I didn't. I got my own place and got a job."

That "job" was a staff writing sinecure at Motown where the young Gordy tried to sell songs to new artists, unsuccessfully for the most part. But it was because of the move to his own Hollywood apartment that he got the inspiration for "Somebody's Watching Me."

"My place faced onto a courtyard and a weird lady in the apartment across the way was always looking at me through the window," explains Rockwell. "I just tried to expand on it, writing it not like rap but like the way an average guy would talk."

After months of trying Rockwell finally got signed to the label shortly after Motown's 25th Anniversary TV special. "It was a very difficult thing to get into motion, not only because I was the boss's son but because a lot of people at Motown were resistant to the music. What was good for Motown 20 years ago might not be good today. Some people there are living in the past."

Rockwell is well aware that his record and shadowy image has quickly overtaken DeBarge, the clean-cut throwback to the '60s. Still, his Princely perm and bezipped pants are strictly teen idol stuff and as a presence he's no more imposing than Leif Garrett. An announced devotion to health foods becomes immediately suspect when he stops the interview to scrounge for a cigarette. Let's say Rockwell hasn't quite found himself yet.

Most important, he's got to prove he can make it without Jackson.

"I've known Michael for ten, maybe fifteen years, since I was a little kid," he says.



**Kennedy Gordy, aka Rockwell: Flustered apologies and half-baked plots**

"We kept in contact, and he always showed interest in what I was doing. When I told him I was doing an album he asked me over to play a couple of songs. He liked 'Somebody's Watching Me' and kept calling in his family to hear it. I think I sang it about a dozen times that day. I told Michael I didn't know what I was going to do about the backing vocals and he, Jermaine and Randy just volunteered to help out." (Randy subsequently never made it to the session.)

Rockwell should heed the warning of Van Halen's David Lee Roth: "Here today, gone later today." However, the young hunk feels his best work is yet to come, and he's planning to get a band together for a tour this summer to reinforce his tenuous position.

"It's all pretty new to me," he admits. "I never really knew what I wanted to do; this music thing was just an idea to pass the time until I did."

No explanations necessary, good buddy. A lot of us out here wind up in the old man's business. ○



# AN OPEN PARTY

## R.E.M.'S HIP AMERICAN

### BY ANTHONY DE CURTIS

## DREAM



A SUBDUED SUNBELT SPRAWL-town and would-be convention center paradise, Charlotte, North Carolina, has striven for years to broker good manners and mild winters into boomtimes. But attracting out-of-state business, even from nearby Athens, Georgia, can trigger unpredicted results.

It's hard to imagine, for example, what the local Chamber of Commerce would make of the wild scene unfolding here at Reflection Sound Studios, where R.E.M. has camped in bohemian splendor to record *Reckoning*, the followup LP to their 1983 poll-conquering debut, *Murmur*.

At this precise moment the four lads are swept up in a rush of lunatic activity to produce what guitarist Peter Buck calls "spectral, ghostly sounds" for "Camera," a foreboding ballad that graces *Reckoning's* second side. Incited to gleeful mayhem by producers Mitch Easter and Don Dixon, singer Michael Stipe seizes a T-shirt from manager Jefferson Holt's valise, records the sound of himself ripping it to shreds and then wanders through the studio endlessly mouthing two muted harmonica chords; guitarist Buck alternately shakes bells and noodles psychedelic guitar riffs for backwards recording; drummer Bill Berry raises a piercing, feedback-like howl by whipping his finger around the rim of a drinking glass; and bassist Mike Mills hammers at the vibes.

An earlier session featured Easter prone on the studio floor clanging a metal pipe against a steel chair leg to get atmospheric percussion for "Time After Time," *Reckoning's* other mood piece. With his partner down for the count, Dixon intoned big-time professional advice from the control room. "It still doesn't have quite the 'ping' the other one had," he muses. "Try to get more pitch." Stipe, as usual, has been recording his vocals in a secluded room off the main studio, often while lying down. "He likes the sound he gets that way," Buck explains.

But, lest you and the good folks at the Chamber think it's all fun and no hump at Reflection, let auteur producer Mitch Easter disclose how his R.E.M. buddies cramp

his distinctive and much celebrated style. "I can always think of a million little noises to put on songs, and that's what most people want—but these guys don't want it," Easter sighs about his spartan work on the album he refers to exclusively as *Led Zepelin II*. "These are like field recordings compared to most pop records."

Indeed, despite the occasional chaos and outburst of zany effects, the key word around Reflection these days is "stripped down." "We came in trying to do some-

thing different from *Murmur*, which sounded very textured and layered, filled with musical colors, concerned with tone," states Buck. "As far as arrangements and what instruments we play on it, this record is much more direct. And, really, that directness has something to do with the fact that we've matured. We don't want to be a band whose music is all right there on the surface, but we're not trying to make this a closed party."

To the degree that R.E.M. ever was a

R.E.M. (FROM LEFT: BERRY, MILLS, BUCK, STIPE): EVEN







"closed party," vocalist Michael Stipe was the man checking psychic credentials at the door. "Michael is curious," is how drummer Berry understates it. "Everybody tries to figure him out."

In his singing, his lyrics, and his life, Stipe continually vacillates between warmth and distance, freedom and commitment, trust and wariness, revelation and concealment. He writes by an ever-shifting set of private "rules" (for a time he wouldn't allow himself to write a lyric with

#### DIRECTNESS IS AN AMBIGUOUS VIRTUE.



"I" or "you" in it—too personal) and dresses in comically elaborate layers of clothes on stage to "protect" himself. He is also extremely suspicious of any potential influence originating outside R.E.M.'s tight circle of associates.

Characteristically, Stipe is attracted in principle to *Reckoning's* "directness"—"If I ever see the word 'indecipherable' again I might vomit"—but he's convinced that even directness is an ambiguous virtue. "To give away everything is never good, at any time," he insists as we sit in an empty, half-lit studio. "Even in a marriage or love affair, you never reveal everything to the other person in that love. There's always something you return to yourself. I think that's real important."

An essentially introverted person who aspires to being an "open, friendly guy," Stipe will go to absurd lengths to protect anyone who approaches him from feeling discomfort. This trait, combined with a repertoire of lyrics so open-ended as to permit the most wildly subjective interpretations, makes for some bizarre happenings. Stipe relates how a theology student trailed him for hours around a Connecticut club to explain how he "knew" that the "two-headed calf" in "Pilgrimage" was the singer's conscious symbolic description of two parts of the student's room and two aspects of his life.

And as Jason and the Scorchers were tearing apart the 688 Club recently, some Atlanta politicians accosted Stipe, demanding a little on-the-spot *explication de texte*. "They were nice and sincere," Stipe recalls, "but they were convinced—and they just had to hear it from my mouth—that 'Shaking Through' was about fear of nuclear holocaust. They had the words figured out—it was really great. I said, 'Yeah, sure, it is,' but I couldn't come right out and say, 'Yes, that is what I wrote it about,' because that's *not* what I wrote it about. They wanted so bad for me to say that, and they thought I was kidding them. But I wasn't. All this was going on with incredibly loud music blaring and people milling all around us. And at the end of the day, it's still a pop song!"

While Stipe's voice and vision are the main ingredients that lift R.E.M. into the highest rank of American bands, the 24-year-old singer was never the likeliest candidate for the glamorous grind of rock front man. An art student, aspiring painter and prototypical denizen of the Athens fringe, Stipe met Buck when the guitarist worked behind the counter of a local record store. By all accounts Stipe was the sort of customer who selected albums based on how weird the cover looked. His knowledge of the rock 'n' roll canon has, shall we say, some significant gaps.

As a St. Louis high-schooler, things pretty much kicked in for Stipe with Patti Smith and Television, who are still the primary influences on his writing. An earnest, lively, and good-hearted participant in dis-

cussion about pre-wave sounds, he routinely sends jaws crashing to the floor with questions like "Was Donovan in the Turtles?" Stipe's lately developed a taste for country music (particularly female vocalists like Patsy Cline), an interest most likely derived from the stark contrast that music's complete emotional guilelessness presents to his own much more guarded sensibility.

Pete Buck, the Keith Richards of the post-punk scene, is another story. In Mike Mills' words, "Peter has rock 'n' roll in his soul. He adds fire and enthusiasm." R.E.M. is the first band the 27-year-old Buck ever belonged to, and their success has transformed his life into a dream he never would have dared imagine. His energy and unremitting optimism are the glue that makes R.E.M. stick.

An irrepresible stage-hound, rock architect, and no stranger to the sunrise, Buck will strap on a guitar at a moment's notice to do sessions (most notably with Warren Zevon) or to jam with local or visiting bands. And he is the instigator behind such classic R.E.M. episodes as opening for the Cramps at New York's Peppermint Lounge under the alias "It Crawled From the South" and doing a Southern metal cover set.

With Stipe and Buck as complementary point men and Mills and Berry holding down the rhythm section, R.E.M. comprises a classic rock configuration. Mills and Berry, now both 25, have played together since their high school days in Macon; their experience, intelligence and versatility would enable them to hammer the bottom under many different types of bands. Without Stipe as a counter-balance, however, Buck's encyclopedic knowledge of rock history would inhibit him, making



PHOTOS: LAURA LEVINE





**Michael Stipe popping a wheelie: An introvert trying to be an "open, friendly guy"**

videocassette of *The Kids Are Alright*.

Berry and Mills are locked in a momentous duel-of-the-titans pool tournament, and the indefatigable Buck holds forth to whoever drifts by about what he's been reading (Thomas Pynchon's *V.* and the story of *The Andy Griffith Show*), watching (teen movies), and listening to (Richard Thompson and hard core). Berry and Buck sport new-grown beards, and the entire combo has hair so long that—forget about similarities in sound—they now actually *look* like the Byrds.

As for the new record, the title *Reckoning* is both a pun on R.E.M.'s southern roots and an expression of the group's sense that, after *Murmur*'s virtually unanimous acclaim, this is a disc about which important judgments will be made. But

Buck ardently believes that if R.E.M. is to last, quality and the band's own creative desires must override concern about sales.

"There are things we could do that would make it a lot easier for us to sell records and get on Top 40 radio," Buck argues, "but that wouldn't be what we want to do. We want to sell records that we *want* to make. And, hopefully, they will sell. If they don't sell now, maybe they'll sell in five years. You know, Talking Heads finally had a hit album, and they didn't do anything other than make records they wanted to make. I think it ultimately pays off to do what your heart says to do and not worry about the commercial thing."

As with *Murmur* and the *Chronic Town* EP, all the tunes on *Reckoning* are group compositions. According to Berry, the band's songwriting habits have changed little since their earliest days. Stipe's lyrics—much clearer on *Reckoning* than they've ever been before—undergo a process of "emotional editing" which involves the rest of the band either identifying parts they don't like or suggesting alternatives. "We don't clarify things," Buck explains. "When we first started, Michael and I used to say how much we hated most rock 'n' roll lyrics. We had this idea that what we'd do is take clichés, sayings, lines from old blues songs, phrases you hear all the time,

and skew them and twist them and meld them together so that you'd be getting these things that have always been evocative, but that were skewed just enough to throw you off and make you think in a different way. It seemed like a really pretentious thing to do, but that concept does work its way in."

Lyrics that ring true emotionally and yet leave broad room for interpretation in part explain R.E.M.'s profound impact on their audience. Stipe himself finds the meaning of his lyrics shifting in unforeseen ways as time passes, and he often alters lyrics in performance to test the types of meanings the songs will bear. Similarly, when listeners interpret a song, they actively complete a process he intentionally set in motion when he wrote it.

"One of the things Peter always says about videos is that he hates them because they're so passive," Stipe states, referring to Buck's denunciation of "image fascism." "It's all handed to you—you just sit and watch them," the singer continues. "I think a lot of music is that way too. The idea is there and it's very clear-cut; you don't have to think about it at all. If you had to think about it some or come up with your own idea of it, the song might have more personal meaning for you."

This emphasis on "personal meaning" in R.E.M.'s music inspires their fans to action, whether that action is lyric interpretation; opening a record store and naming it *Murmur*, as some guys in Orlando, Florida, have; starting a rock magazine because you're tired of "wasting time, sitting still" as some Chicagoans did; or forming a band and calling it "7,000 Gifts," from a line in "Seven Chinese Brothers" on *Reckoning*.

These personal responses derive from the message R.E.M. embodies that, in a time when cagey career moves and bald-faced hankering for mass success dominate the scene; when rock has been reduced, in Buck's words, to "a shallow series of gestures and conventions," you can still do things your way and make it. In the course of earning a deserved reputation for independence and out-spokenness, R.E.M. has repeatedly blown off the "opportunity" to open arena dates for big-name acts (outside of a few shows with the Police last summer), opting instead to tour clubs and small halls, building their own intensely devoted audience as they go.

They are also committed to the local scene in Georgia and the Southeast in ways that count. Mitch Easter, a North Carolina native, has produced all their records (with help on the albums from another Carolinian, Don Dixon) and his trio, Let's Active, got the opening dates on R.E.M.'s national tour last year; Atlantan Howard Libov, who directed the "Spin Your Partner" video for the Athens-based Love Tractor, got the nod to do the "S. Central Rain (I'm Sorry)" video from *Reckoning*; and *Reckoning*'s cover was designed by the Rever-

*Continued on page 62*



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# TOP THIS

**One prayed to be square,  
one prays for good odds in Vegas  
and one worships at the shrine  
of Howard Hughes.**

**Welcome to the eccentric  
world of ZZ Top.**

**By Deborah Frost**

**"HEY, DO YOU WANT TO GO VISIT  
Howard Hughes' grave?"**

The question comes unexpectedly over breakfast one day in Houston, and the person asking it is dead serious, even if a price tag (\$37.50) is still affixed to his tie.

From anyone else a similar proposition may have seemed . . . well, *unusual*. But we're talking about Billy Gibbons, the most publicly accessible of the trio known as ZZ Top and a man with whom I'd ridden a streetcar named Desire in New Or-

leans, as his limo followed close behind; with whom I'd gone to lunch in the Crescent City only to wind up in Houston (the airport, see, was in the same direction as the restaurant), where we rarely arrived at our appointed destination because of this thing he has about chasing every other souped-up Camaro . . .

We are talking about a man who, for the last 14 years, has been singing, writing and playing blues-powered guitar for one of the most underrated—and most hysterical—

PHOTO: AARON KAPORET



# REACH FOR YOUR KIND OF TASTE.



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trios in rock history. Even if Gibbons', bassist Dusty Hill's and drummer Frank Beard's old reliable Model T boogie hadn't been hot-rodded into *Eliminator*'s modern aerodynamics (their ninth album, first Grammy nomination and WEA's biggest seller of 1983) and MTV hadn't existed to bring their southern-fried sound and hirsute vision into a new pop generation's living rooms, ZZ Top would still deserve a place in the books. If not for their bar band classic "Tush" or their *Tres Hombres* combination plate centerfold (the band claims to have eaten the food after the photo session), then for their extravaganza World-wide Texas Tour of 1976, on which the trio shared a Texas-shaped stage with a few cacti, a corral, four live buzzards, a rattlesnake, a coyote, a longhorn steer and a buffalo. Given this history, it's hardly surprising to find Billy Gibbons not only emulating the Howard Hughes look, but actually naming the famed recluse as one of his idols.

"Howard Hughes was the ace eccentric," he says. "I've been a fan of his for a long time. He said everybody would be a little bit eccentric if they could pay for it."

And Billy Gibbons is more than a little bit eccentric. He rarely forgets to stuff his pockets with a daily supply of souvenir *Eliminator* keychains to bestow on his public. But he left Biloxi without his American Express card; his gold-and-diamond ZZ skull ring showed up under a bed in Arkansas; his wallet was recovered in the French Quarter of New Orleans.

The guitarist's half-million dollar Houston townhouse is virtually bare, save for a couch and a jukebox full of Roky Erickson and George Jones, plus one curious selection titled "Freeze A Yankee" (accompanied by the scribbled credit, "I don't know who done this but it's good!"). Recognizing the comforts provided by such a dwelling, Gibbons often checks into a posh hotel right around the corner, where there's always room service and somebody to braid his pigtail.

He once wrote to NASA requesting ZZ Top be the first band to play the space shuttle. He even enclosed a potential set list—"How High The Moon," "Fly Me To The Moon," "Moon River." Unfortunately, ZZ wasn't NASA's idea of a "scientific experiment," so Gibbons hasn't made it to the moon—yet.

But he did get to see Howard Hughes.

"I went to the funeral of another friend of mine, who died in a car wreck," Gibbons recalls. "And when the funeral was over, I was with Clinton Fox, a dashing fellow who drives a Rolls Royce and is always spiffy looking. He's quite a bit older than I am. So we were parked on the corner of Sage and Westheimer and he looks at me and says, 'You know who's lying in state on that corner?' And it dawned on me—Howard Hughes. He grinned and said, 'We're wearing suits, we got the brass, let's go.' So we pulled up in the Rolls



Loyce. There were two policemen at the door. No questions asked. They opened the door, we were allowed to go in. We signed the book. There were only four other names. An aunt. So-and-so, Summa Corporation. Two weeks later I got a card in the mail—"The family of Howard Roland Hughes, Jr., wishes to thank you for expressing your sympathy in their time of sorrow." Can you dig? Oh, what a *treasure*! It's a shrine . . . a *shrine*."

"Billy Gibbons is definitely one of the strangest people I've ever met," says Frank Beard, shaking his head upon discovering Gibbons in the hotel. He pops open a Tab, sticks it in an autographed Hank Williams, Jr. foam-insulated beverage holder (a gift from Hank Jr. himself) and continues. "Billy's always been three or four pounds sky of a full load. He really is a true . . . sicko. All of his girlfriends have been universally hated. It takes a strange girl to sleep on the floor in a half-million dollar townhouse. If they're not weird in the first place, they become that way quickly. But the bottom line has always been that he's a marvelous guitar player who could play a style of music that was real close to what I wanted to play."

But because Gibbons cuts such an imposing figure, both as a gifted musician and as a colorful character who's well-versed in all sorts of arcanum (from the contents of Houston's Museum of Contemporary Art, where he's on a Patron's Committee, to the subtleties of Bobby Blue Bland's guitarist, Wayne Bennett, a Gibbons favorite), people sometimes forget that he is *not* ZZ Top. An outsider might think he is, though, because on the road, where ZZ is most of the time, Hill likes to be alone, and Beard prefers the company of his third wife, Debbie, a vivacious, leggy blonde who travels with him and is universally popular with band and crew. She's also probably the only woman you may ever see wearing a mink to a ZZ show. But Billy—Billy likes to do interviews. And in keeping with nearly every other aspect of his peculiar existence, interviews are not merely an extension of his art: they are his art.

This one started out in Des Moines (amidst a Shriners' convention and the arrival of the Democratic presidential candidates for the Iowa caucuses), got interrupted by a tornado in Kansas City, picked up after the last *Eliminator* show (also the band's 14th anniversary) in Biloxi and continued in New Orleans. The latter stop included long-neck bottles of Dixie beer at Sunny Joe White's; red beans at the Calmelia Grill; coffee on the bank of the Mississippi; and a search through the bins of Russell's Rare Records, Gibbons all the while rummaging through his own grab-bag of yarns, thumbnail reviews, personal-ity sketches and priceless memories.

He spoke of Little Stella, daughter of his family's housekeeper, Big Stella, who turned him on to R&B and took him to Little Richard shows . . . of the time LBJ



**Ace eccentric Gibbons: No one's ever seen him pray**

(Gibbons' mother was a secretary on the then-President's Texas staff) came to his house . . . of all the times he used to come home and find his father, a Houston society band leader, sight-reading sheet music the way most people read magazines . . . of the time an early incarnation of ZZ backed

up Chuck Berry, who wore a smelly green brocade jacket and told Billy, "*Please don't do that*" when he graced a Berry tune with the same kind of slide guitar lick that punctuates "Gimme All Your Lovin'."

"Every time anyone in the band makes a mistake, to this day I still say, '*Please don't*'

PHOTO ERIC ROBERTS





PHOTO SUSAN PHILLIPS/LGI

### Hill: He prays for good odds in Vegas

do that," he laughs. "14 years later, it's guaranteed to reduce Frank to a banging pile of rubble."

Standing at Tyler's Zinc Bar, smothering a sackful of fresh-off-the-boat oysters with hot sauce (hot sauce, by the way, that he carries in his coat wherever he goes), washing them down with a cold Dixie long neck and crumbly saltines, Gibbons recalls practical jokes (he once stamped 2000 postcards with Dusty Hill's name and address and sent them as responses to adver-

tisements in the back of biker magazines), fishing trips (like the time he taught the late Lester Bangs the difference between the rod and the reel) and tours gone by. The Moving Sidewalks, his early psychedelic band, must have played not only with Jimi Hendrix (who gave Gibbons a pink Stratocaster that he seems tired of talking about) but the Doors and every other big '60's act that came near Texas. Despite his nostalgia, Gibbons doesn't seem to have any regrets about the end of that era, or

about outgrowing the intimate venues of the band's early days. As Ellis Marsalis, Sr., the house pianist at Tyler's and the father of Ellis, Jr., Branford and Grammy winner Wynton plays on the tiny stage beneath a slow-moving ceiling fan, Gibbons observes, "No, I wouldn't want to go back to playing in a place like this. Be kinda hard to turn it up to 10!" He then presses an Eliminator keychain into the palm of the pleased but slightly befuddled Marsalis, who politely replies, "Oh, guess I'll be a big star at home tonight."

The volume of Billy Gibbons' life is permanently turned to 10, but the reality of the band is something else. There are few outfits, in fact, with such an equal division of labor, on stage and on record. The three Tops don't divide the songwriting credit on every number just because they're nice guys. Many of the craziest lyrics are actually Beard's, who, because he rarely sings, isn't suspected of writing them. The classic "Tush" was Dusty's inspiration. No one claims responsibility for "Pearl Necklace," which, contrary to what the co-eds happily bopping to it in concert might think, is not about jewelry. It's a common Southwest expression for a blow job. Dusty does, however, admit to making a fact-gathering field trip to "La Grange," an establishment immortalized on Broadway and in the movies as *The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas*. Says Hill: "That madam looked nothing like Dolly Parton!"

Part of ZZ Top's magic is the complete absence of a Sting-figure who comes in with *his* songs and his demands about the way they be played. On stage it's a team effort, as Hill and Gibbons attack their matching array of guitars—Eliminator-shaped, zebra striped, and day-glo—dip, dance and trade shout bamalamas, punctuated by Beard's precision punch. And although neither Hill nor Beard is as ready to take a spacewalk as Gibbons, they're both characters in their own right.

Beard spends most of his spare time on the golf course, talking to a psychiatrist (his best friend, as it turns out). Where Gibbons—and to a lesser extent, Hill—revel in their ZZ celebrity, Beard shuns it. He refuses to cultivate the facial growth that's become ZZ Top's visual trademark and would make him, as Hill and Gibbons are, instantly recognizable on the street. He'd rather work on his swing, consult his decorator about his new house or go shopping than hand out keychains. He performs for thousands of people every night, but is uncomfortable in a group larger than six. If Debbie wasn't tuned in to the radio (Culture Club was a recent discovery), Beard might be as removed from the music world as any clothing store owner (he and Debbie sell designer sportswear in a Houston mall) who likes to unwind at the country club. Yet only a few years ago this tan, together, golf fanatic was into tie-ing off, not tee-ing off.

At 15, Beard was an "All American



boy" discovering the usual recipe of sex, drugs, etc. By 17, he was no longer a high school football star; he was a divorced drop-out, with two kids (with whom he's only recently become reacquainted) and the beginnings of a serious drug and drinking habit.

"I'm a compulsive, excessive person," he explains, lighting a cigarette (smoking is next on his list of vices to give up), "but I was always in control of my talent. It was everything else that was out of control. I was irresponsible and self-centered like all young self-serving dope fiends. It was me first and to hell with the rest of it. I am just now on my first good dog."

One of the rare rock stars more interested in preventing drug and alcohol abuse than encouraging it, Beard's involvement in a Houston rehabilitation program, where he served as "big brother" to Carol Furnett's teenage daughter, Carrie Hamilton, is one way, he says, of "being able to give something back."

"In bad times," he adds, "I used to pray to be square. And by square I mean to be able to enjoy the simple things of life. Like my parents. I used to watch people get a charge out of sitting in the backyard at sunset and all that stuff had no value to me. I used to pray for that, and my prayers have been answered."

And what does Dusty Hill pray for? Good odds in Vegas. The man will bet on anything from the Super Bowl to how long it'll take the elevator to arrive or a card to fall from a 20-story window. He's been playing for almost 20 years with Frank Beard, since they dyed their hair blue in the Dallas-based American Blues, a band featuring Hill's older brother Rocky, one of those maniacal Texas pickers of whom legends, but not necessarily careers, are made. "Rocky," Beard explains, "is an animal. The kind of guy who'll throw up on-stage and just keep playing." Dusty is almost apologetic that he, and not his brother, whom he considers more talented, is the star.

A ruddy, quintessential Southern gent who sports high-heeled sneakers onstage and whose joviality is disturbed only when he hears himself described on TV as "having the shortest legs in show biz" (Don't worry, Dusty, Gary Coleman hasn't retired yet), Hill "always wanted to play for the most people I could. But I didn't have any burning ambitions. I wasn't one of these guys who'd kill himself if he didn't make it."

Hill's flowing white/gold beard, fondness for monster belt buckles, feather-banded cowboy hats, pink brothel creepers and Texas-shaped diamond rings hardly let him melt into the crowd (even in Texas, where everybody else is fond of such things). It takes about two hours to wade through autograph seekers just to pick up a couple of TV dinners at the store. As for finding someone to share the cooking, the recent divorcee confides, "I've had women

say to me, 'Look, I'm no groupie.' They're already setting up a barrier, as if they know where I'm coming from, and they don't. Most girls I wind up datin' more than once don't particularly care about the band, which is hard for me to deal with in a way, because it's a major part of my life. And then it's difficult on the girl. Her friends will say, 'Oh, goin' out with a rock musician, huh? How many orgies y'all been to this week?' That kind of stuff. It's tough on them, too. Consequently, I don't date that much."

But like the other ZZs, Hill doesn't really have much time for romance. The band is supposed to write and record a new album before hitting the road again this summer. And even Gibbons, whom one might expect to be as unconcerned with the de-

mands of the marketplace as he is regarding most of life's conventions, admits they're "under pressure" to produce a successful follow-up to *Eliminator*.

But what may be more confining than the pressure to re-create a hit-making formula is the hit-making image. Given how familiar they've become via the videos, does the band ever worry about being stuck with those beards forever?

"Well, they do have one very great advantage," says Gibbons, stroking his. "In the future, when we're practically ready to be carried out there in our rocking chairs, people'll come up and say, 'Y'know, I saw you guys 20 years ago and you look just the same as you did back in '84!'"

"And fortunately," he chuckles, "a new image is just a razorblade away." ○



PHOTO: RHP/IGI

**Gibbons, Beard and Hill:**  
Just a razorblade away from a new image



JOHN MENDELSSOHN

# TRACKING THE NEW INSPIRATIONALS

Or, Shutting  
Off the  
Alarm

**T**heir movement may be said to have been born on the smoggy Labor Day afternoon in 1983 when U2's Bono climbed to the top of the US Festival's stage scaffolding while a heretofore demoralized generation looked on in awe and Showtime's cameramen got nosebleeds just watching.

They have these things in common: Their hearts are in the right place; they

drumming. They are the New Inspirationals. In this case, they are the ones with the Ronettes-getting-electric-shocks hairdos, acoustic guitars, buckskin and cowboy boots; they are Wales' the Alarm (known to some old cynics as U3), with whose guitarists Mike Peters and Dave Sharp I rendezvous while they're in L.A. to warm up audiences for the Pretenders.

"I think a lot of people are missing out on

the humor in the Alarm," says Mike Peters when asked what he wants to talk about. "People seem

to think we're these four very serious young rock 'n' roll politician street commandoes or rock 'n' roll outlaws. But we're not any of those things. We're four ace mates who are having a brilliant time here in America." A warm, immensely likable 25-year-old who looks a little bit like Steve Martin in a fright wig, Peters beams at you as he speaks, and he seems to find nearly everything brilliant. "To us, politics is about divid-

ideas and living in a society is about the sharing of ideas," notes guitarist Dave Sharp, who won't come across here as quite the lethal combination of self-importance, longwindedness, and fuzzy articulation that he does in real life because I've edited him like mad. "At one point a few years ago, I don't think people wanted to share things through music. But then the dust-bowl of the world recession came down and nobody could see where they were going. People said, 'I'm going to survive this, and sod everybody.' People were trying to survive at other people's expense. It's exciting to be here now that people's eyes have got adjusted to the darkness and you can take somebody by the hand and say, 'This is the way out.'"

Aside from all their noble aspirations, I wonder if wealth, fame, and women weren't three *more* reasons Peters and Sharp had formed their group with bass guitarist Eddie MacDonald and drummer Twist, all of them chums from adolescence. "Those are things that everybody wants," Peters acknowledges, "but some people can't have wealth or lots of women. To be honest, we don't have time for that sort of thing. I'm not interested in all the parties and liggering that goes on after gigs anyway—I'd rather sit by the stage door and chat with the fans."

Sharp chimes in, metaphors poised: "You might think of success as being five Cadillacs, three million TVs and a wonderful, wonderful relationship with someone. Your own back yard might be sorted out, but there's still something left that you can contribute to other people's back yards. We're all capable of traveling our own particular roads and maybe helping giving a lift to someone else along the way instead of passing them and giving them V's (the British equivalent of the finger) out the back window."

"What people like us didn't realize when we first got out of school and found ourselves without any jobs or future," Sharp notes, "was that it wasn't the government's fault. There's a lot of people who live in real fear and experience real aggression. But in Britain and America and Western Europe we're lucky to be living under moderate governments that let you make your own future, just like we did when we started our own little club and a little magazine and a little clothes shop back in Rhyl."

I suggest that Sharp's attempt to browbeat the Pretenders' Universal Amphitheatre audience into responding more



The Alarm: Long on questions, short on answers?

spurn the synthesizers the New Romantics were so fond of in favor of good old-fashioned guitars; they don't want you to dance, necessarily, but to be moved, emboldened, given hope. Towards this end they write no mere songs, but rousing anthems, often with military cadences in the

ing people. Manifestos come from people who don't have any emotion or care about the people they're talking to. All they're interested in is getting an X on somebody's voting card. But we care about people—we're trying to *unite* people."

"Being in a band is about the sharing of



ocally to the Alarm betrayed the sort of egotism that the New Inspirationalists might be expected to keep under wraps. Sharp lets fly with some poppycock about having really been concerned about the audience's not being *allowed* to cheer as loudly as it wanted to, and Peters reveals, "We've been together as the Alarm for 2-1/2 years, but really we've been trying for ten years." In

1977, Twist joined Peters' band, the Toilets, who renamed themselves Seventeen when the former's next-door neighbor MacDonald joined soon thereafter. Sharp sat in between tours of duty in the merchant navy.

"We had *massive* egos then," Peters continues. "We'd go around to record companies and demand to know why they didn't want to sign us up when we were so brilliant. Record companies don't have the guts to tell you when your music stinks, but we were fortunate to meet some people who did, like Kevin Rowland," for whose Dexys Midnight Runners Seventeen briefly served as opening act.


"He came right up to us after the second date and went, 'Listen, you're a pile of rubbish. I don't want you on my tour. What you're doing doesn't count for nothin'. You're trying very hard to win the audience over, but they don't want to know you.' We'd been taken to the mountaintop. The group split up but the friendship didn't."

Peters refutes the notion that, like the faithful legatees of the Clash they are, they've disdained to write and sing about that without which there will be no future generations to embolden and inspire—love. "We just haven't done it in the typical sense," he asserts. "I'm not interested in writing about boy/girl things—I like to write from personal experience and I don't have time for that sort of relationship myself. But I am interested in love, what it is and why it drives people on. 'The Deceiver,' which people interpret as political, is in fact an attempt to explore 'the thin line between love and hate,' to quote Chrissie Hynde (*sic*). To write a song about how people can have fistfights and violently argue with each other without it detracting from their relationship."

As our time together nears its end, both Alarmists profess delight with the interviewer's adversary stance. "I hope that people question me as well as themselves," claims Peters. "Don't take what I say at face value, I may be talking a pack of lies. But if I don't put down what I think and then offer it to you to criticize, then I'm not going to learn anything myself."

"We ain't got the answer for everybody, you know. We've only got the answer for ourselves, for our own little piece of the world. We've got to have people questioning things and throwing them back at us. All we can really say is that we believe every individual—in the places that we go, at least—has the ability to shape the future with their own two hands. All we're trying to do is make people realize the power within themselves." ○

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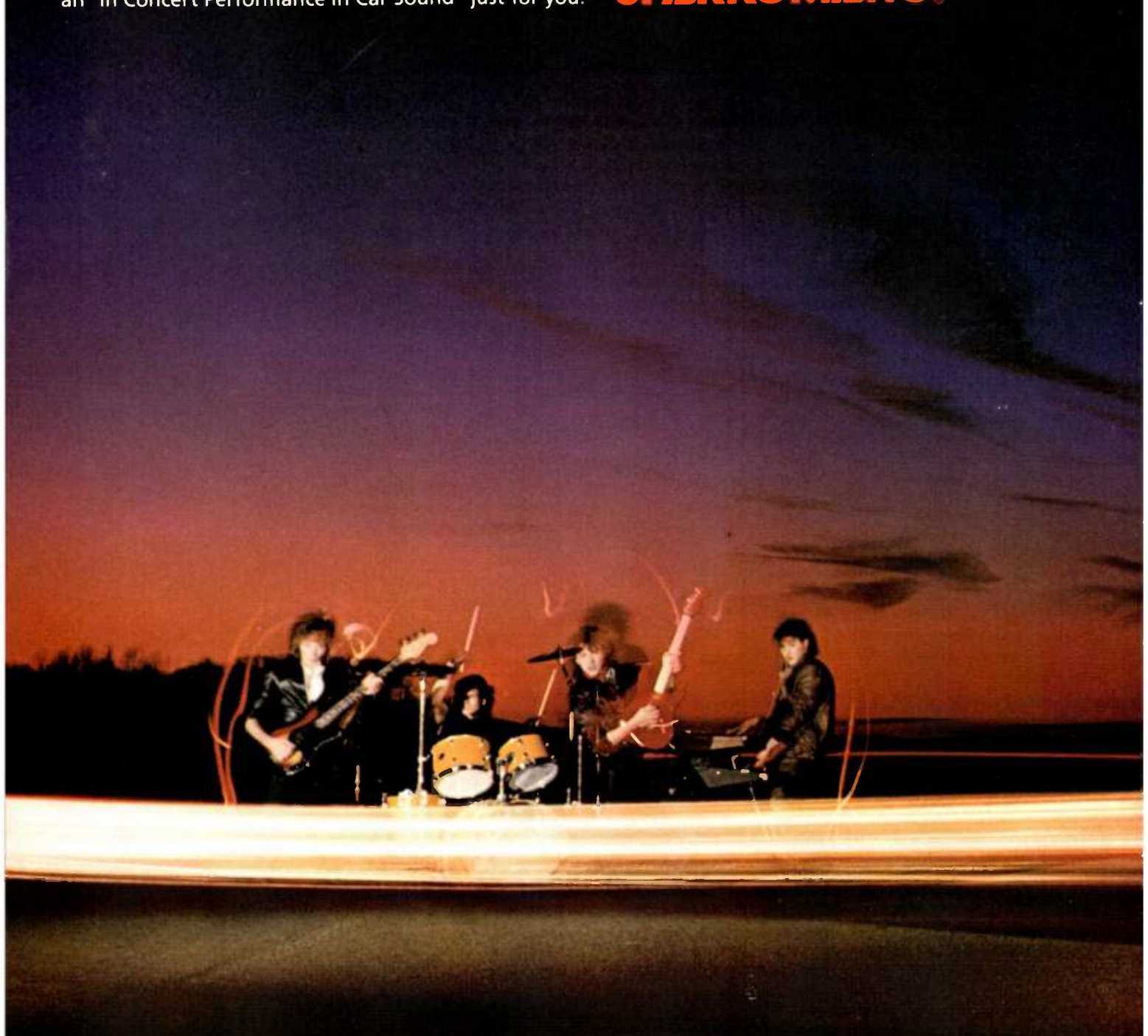
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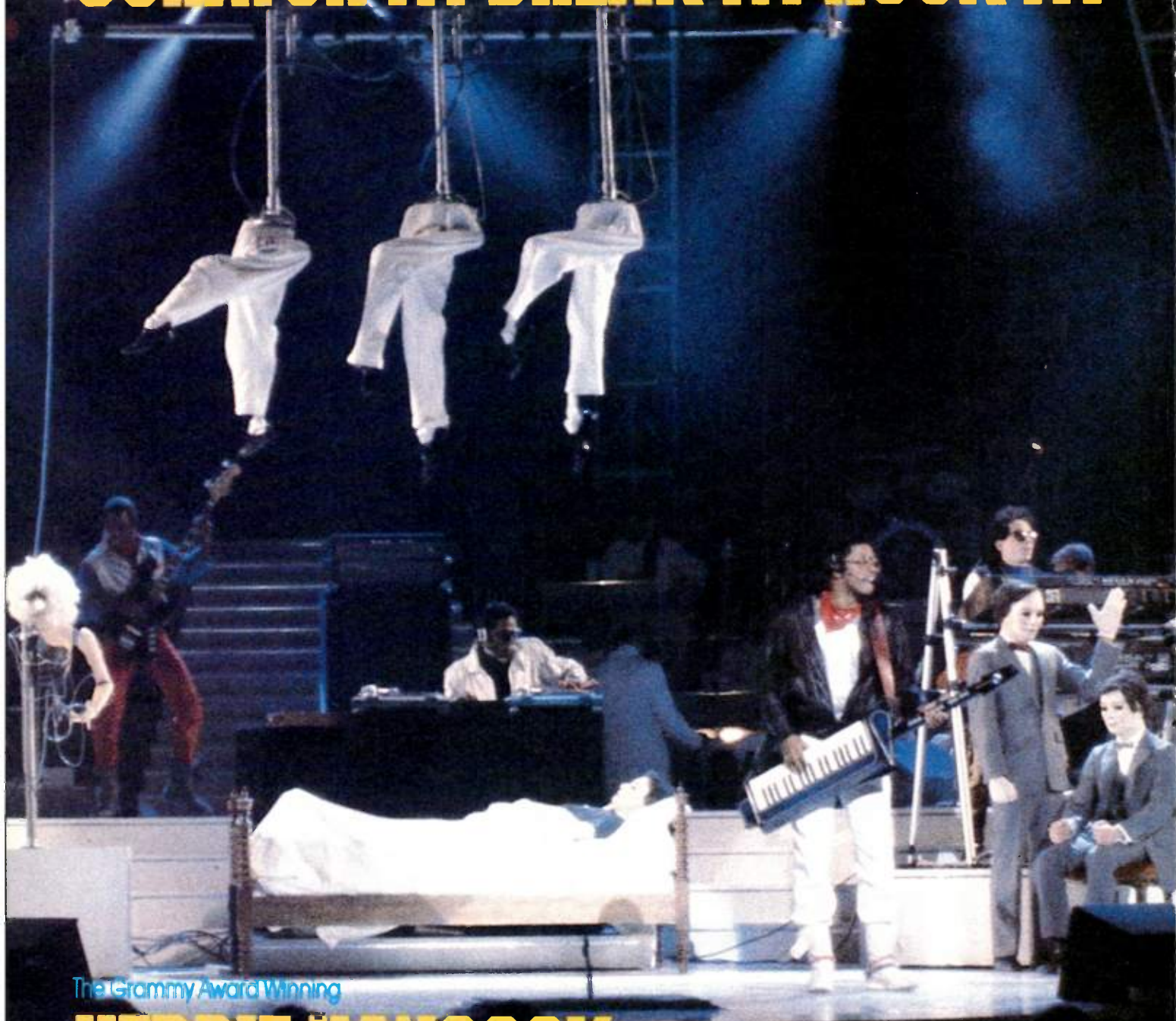


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# CONSUMER GUIDE TO ROCK VIDEOS

During the first half of 1984 more music videos were produced and sold than during the entire history of the art form. Though concert tapes remain in the majority, an ever-increasing variety of experimental, conceptual pieces is emerging. And now clips have begun to find their way to the marketplace via compilation packages and Sony Video 45s, and Hollywood has come up with a variation on the extended-length music video in the form of *Flashdance*, *Staying Alive*, et al., ad nauseum. This month's guide rounds up some of the newest releases available in all these categories.

—Alan Hecht, video editor.

## J. Geils Band

"FREEZE FRAME," "ANGEL IN BLUE," "CENTERFOLD" (D: Paul Justman)

Picture Music Intl./12:08/\$16.95—  
Sony Video 45

Superior execution on all levels: terrific songs, deeply-felt performances, intriguing concepts, imaginative use of special effects. "Angel in Blue" particularly has the look and feel of a certifiable classic rock video. It starts with one of the band's best songs, a story about a go-go dancer who's been "drained of her spirit," is incapable of loving or being loved and "never had dreams so they never came true." A powerful voice from Peter Wolf and a basic performance clip are augmented by newsreel inserts and special effects, most notably solarized images of the band and the fictional Angel in Blue. Most of the newsreel inserts are of Marilyn Monroe; and while the song isn't specifically about her, the video plays to our collective image of what Marilyn Monroe stands for—physical beauty, glamour,

style, sex and, not least of all, an innocent America. On this level the song maps right into the growing social conscience Peter Wolf displayed in interviews he gave during the J. Geils Band's "Freeze Frame" tour. Read as a straight love song and nothing more, the juxtaposition of the beautiful Angel image and the near-palpable pain in Wolf's vocal is breathtaking. This sort of video never goes stale because it taps real human emotions; it speaks directly to the heart. "Freeze Frame" and "Centerfold" have moments, but "Angel in Blue" is on another plane entirely.

—David McGee

## Naked Eyes

"WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT" (D: Marcello Aicardi); "PROMISES, PROMISES," "ALWAYS SOMETHING THERE TO REMIND ME" (D: Simon Milne); "VOICES IN MY HEAD" (D: Marek Kamiewski)

Picture Music Intl./14:25/\$16.95—  
Sony Video 45

These guys are on the fringe of the new MOR axis, but fall away from the pack on a couple of

counts: they're not pretty enough to get by on looks and their musical ambitions are grander than that of other bands in this category. Hence, the videos are short on flash but offer up ideas in interesting contexts. And they certainly get points for integrating beautiful women into the stories in a way that's neither sexist nor dehumanizing. One can sense character here, although it's not fully developed. Naked Eyes will either make pop fun again or bland out into nothingness. For an historical precedent to this phenomenon, consult the dossier of barefoot girl Sandie Shaw, whose '65 hit with Bacharach-David's "Always Something There To Remind Me" held out much the same promise. Who? you ask. Precisely.

—David McGee

## Thomas Dolby

"LIVE WIRELESS" (D: Thomas Dolby)

Thorn-EMI Home Video/58 minutes/\$29.95

If rock video is producing a group of audio-visual auteurs, Thomas Dolby stands tall among them. Not only does he direct his own video presentations, but his visual flair and panache are matched by his original and striking musical sensibilities. So it's no surprise that *Live Wireless* is an unusually intelligent and expressive concert tape, with the performance footage highlighted by a few typically in-

J. Geils' "Angel in Blue": Tapping into real human emotions, speaking straight to the heart



PHOTO LISA LEVITT

MUSIC  
VIDEO  
GUIDE



ventive Dolby touches. One concert scene, for instance, is framed by grainy, sepia-tinted shots of the artist himself tinkering with editing equipment, film projectors, tape recorders and cameras. On stage, the bespectacled Dolby is dressed in a white linen suit, while in the control room he's doffed the glasses and is sporting a sleeveless Stanley Kowalski t-shirt, doing his best Brando imitation.

As a performer, Dolby is strictly low-key, but nevertheless effective because his music is so full of rhythmic punch and his songs so ingeniously constructed. Lene Lovich spices up the show by lending her manic, zany stage presence to a rendition of her Dolby-produced single, "New Toy," but otherwise the cameras stay close-in on the musicians, minimizing theatrics. And while this approach may sound dull, Dolby's choices point up how thoughtful and vital rock music need not defer to nifty but otherwise vapid images. —Ed Levine

## Roxy Music

"THE HIGH ROAD"  
(D: uncredited/Producer: Robin Nash)  
RCA/Columbia Home Video/  
75 minutes/\$29.95

Shot at Frejus, France during Roxy Music's 1983 tour, *The High Road* has to be one of the most basic, straightforward concert videos of all time. There's not a single special effect used anywhere; nor is there any fancy-dan cutting of any sort. It's simply Roxy live onstage, caught from the minimum-requirement of camera angles and long/medium/close-up shots, and with gratifyingly few of the obligatory crowd shots. In a way, it's no wonder there's no director listing on the closing credit-crawl. That's not to say *The High Road* seems undirected: it's as easy on the eyes as the current Roxy's more subdued and introverted music is on the ear, and as smoothly professional as the session-heavies (drummer Andy Newmark, percussionist Jimmy Maelen, bassist Neil Hubbard, etc.) who back remaining Roxys Bryan Ferry, Phil Manzanera and Andy Mackay.

In a sense, this no-frills, just-the-facts-ma'm approach is a refreshing pause from

MTV-clip image-overload. On the other hand, this is far from the world's most visually exciting rock show. Ultimately, *The High Road* lives up to its name by being commendably honest—indeed, it's right in keeping with ex-fashion plate Ferry's shockingly dressed-down look on the tour—and letting the band stand or fall entirely on its own merits. If you love the current Roxy you'll probably love this video. Otherwise you may be bored silly. And maybe like me, you'll wish they were making more concert videos 10 years ago, back when Roxy Music was as delightfully outrageous visually as they were musically.

—Michael Shore

## Koyaanisqatsi

(D: Godfrey Reggio)  
Pacific Arts Video Records/  
87 minutes/\$59.95

A stimulating, visual stunner that gets a better with repeated viewings. Minus a traditional storyline, *Koyaanisqatsi* marries provocative landscapes to a sensitive instrumental soundtrack composed by Philip Glass. Godfrey Reggio's direction and Ron Fricke's cinematography combine Disney's visual technology with *National Geographic*-style shutter wizardry, while the synergy between Glass's music and the visuals is extraordinary. Natural phenomena (clouds, deserts, canyons) and urban cityscapes (highways, factories, commuters) float across the screen and have the texture and composition of a fine painting. Like a collection of poems or photographs, *Koyaanisqatsi* is work that can be enjoyed as a complete work or in isolated segments.

—Alan Hecht

## Devo

"WE'RE ALL DEVO" (D: Gerald Casale)  
Sony Video/54 minutes/\$29.95

This video LP of Devo's classic clips illustrates the development of the band's zany, unpredictable style. Despite limited budgets (never over \$50,000), director Gerald Casale, co-conceptualist Mark Mothersbaugh and producer/cinematographer Chuck Statler have always managed to come up with inventive visual

effects to complement their wicked sense of humor. "Love Without Anger" pits Barbie against Ken in a knock-down, drag-out living room fight (oops, there goes Ken's arms!); the banned-by-MTV "That's Good" features the infamous animated french fry penetrating a donut hole; "Beautiful World" is a stunning collage of found footage images; digital scene simulation (computer-generated backgrounds) and rear-screen projection turn "Peek-A-Boo" into a Dali cartoon.

The Devo cast of characters—Rod Rooter from Big Entertainment, an L.A. record company executive who's been rejecting Devo music since 1977; Rod's pregnant daughter Donut (Laraine Newman); the recombinant DNA engineer Dr. Byrthfood (Timothy Leary) and, of course, Boogie Boy and General Boy—lends continuity to the productions as well. A must-buy for Devo fans. —Alan Hecht

## Billy Joel

"BILLY JOEL LIVE FROM LONG ISLAND"  
(D: Jay Dubin)  
CBS/Fox Video/80 minutes/\$29.95

If you're looking for a concert video featuring Billy Joel's Top Ten hits "Tell Her About It" and "Uptown Girl," this ain't it. *Live From Long Island* was recorded at Joel's hometown arena before the release of his current album, *An Innocent Man*, and is therefore missing the current hits.

Coming from a guy who puts on such a terrific live show, *Live From Long Island* is also missing some atmosphere. This 80-minute edit concentrates almost exclusively on the songs, leaving out the fun Joel and his bandmates have between numbers. A guy is seen momentarily at the start of "Anthony's Song (Movin' Out)" carrying a bag of groceries, and the musicians play with a salami and hoist wine glasses at a pizzeria table while Joel plays the introduction to "Scenes from an Italian Restaurant." But not only are these bits of business not played up for the video cameras, they seem almost to have been included in the video by accident. Everything takes a back seat to the music.

Just as well. The performances are excellent, the musicianship tight and *simpati-*

Provocative landscapes in *Koyaanisqatsi* (left), memorable characters in *We're All Devo*





co. Joel and band recreate the vinyl versions faithfully, with the dynamics expanded to reach the folks in the cheap seats. There is no filler—no added instrumental solos, no endless reprises of hit choruses. Selections span Joel's career, including "Piano Man"; "Just The Way You Are" and four more songs from his breakthrough album, *The Stranger*; "You May Be Right" and two more from *Glass Houses*; the ambitious Beatles tribute from *The Nylon Curtain* plus, from the same album, "Scandinavian Skies," "Pressure" and "Allentown"; and more.

The songs are first-rate, the presentation clean and straightforward. If there's a complaint to be lodged here, it's that the *Billy Joel Live From Long Island* videotape is a little too musicianlike at the expense of the overall entertainment that is the attraction of a Billy Joel concert. —David Gans

## Kevin Rowland and Dexys *Midnight Runners*

"THE BRIDGE" (D: Steve Barron)  
RCA-Columbia Home Video/52 minutes

Shot at London's Shaftesbury Theatre in the fall of 1982, *The Bridge* is a solidly-paced concert video showcasing Kevin Rowland's most recent incarnation of his Dexys Midnight Runners. The eleven-piece ensemble's schtick—a mixture of

Irish folk exuberance and soul revue discipline—is finely tuned throughout, and justifies Rowland's combining the two forms. Sure, it's not a completely original concept—Dexys' soundalike cover of Van Morrison's "Jackie Wilson Said (I'm In Heaven When You Smile)" owns up to the inspiration for this music—but it works most of the time. The hooks imbedded in the songs and the group's liveliness carry the day, even overcoming Rowland's humorless delivery of the material.

The direction by Limelight Productions wizard Steve Barron, best known for the "Billie Jean" video, is crisp and intelligent; the camera cuts are well-paced, and the focus is spread evenly over the entire group. Close-ups are numerous and unsparing, but heighten the intensity of the performance. The only artificial element in the production is the sound, clearly re-cut in the studio (the whole show is virtually an epic-length "live or Memorex" ad). This deceit, common to most live videos, is made necessary here by the lineup, which supplements a basic quintet with three horns and three fiddles. If such a compromise leads Kevin Rowland further away from the grace of the Pure Passion he eternally strives for, it does make for a more precise and powerful video. Besides, it's been two years since the *Too-Rye-Aye* album introduced this music, and who knows what Dexys will sound like (they originally were a soul revival band) next

time around. If Rowland changes everything again, *The Bridge* will stand as a nice souvenir of Dexys #2. —Wayne King

## That Was Rock

(D: Steve Binder-T.A.M.I., Larry Peerce-TNT;  
Mus. D: Jack Nitzsche-T.A.M.I., Phil Spector-TNT)  
Media Home Entertainment/  
90 minutes/\$29.95

A compilation cassette of performances from 1964's legendary T.A.M.I. (Teens Age Music International) and '65's TNT shows is a must-have, although one could quibble with the concept here. Rather than running continuously, the performances are broken up by recently-filmed introductions by Chuck Berry, who appears in T.A.M.I. trading verses on "Maybellene" with Gerry and the Pacemakers and turtling in a rousing "Sweet Little Sixteen," and some are questionably truncated (we hear nothing more of the Pacemakers after their turn with Berry, while the original T.A.M.I. film shows their complete three-song set). Berry's introductions are convivial, if sometimes uninformed: introducing Jan and Dean's "Sidewalk Surfing" Berry proclaims, "This is how surf music began." Hey, Chuck, we love ya big guy, but drop back 10 and punt on that one! And if you've seen the T.A.M.I. show, you'll miss its breakneck momentum; few have ever seen TNT, Phil Spector's R&B answer to T.A.M.I., so *That Was Rock* at least helps fill an historical gap. Of note from the

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TNT segments are Bo Diddley's formidable presence and redoubtable beat on "Bo Diddley" and the Ronettes singing "Be My Baby." T.A.M.I. highlights include both Lesley Gore and Marvin Gaye checking in with rousing medleys of their hits, while Smokey and the Miracles crank it up for "Mickey's Monkey." Condensing James Brown's set is a mistake, though, since it reportedly had a young Mick Jagger shaking in his shoes backstage waiting to follow Soul Brother Number One on-stage. The Stones' five-song set is amazing nonetheless, not only because of its intensity but because of the visible maturing process Jagger undergoes as he senses his power over the audience.

*That Was Rock* is a powerful document. I would still prefer to see T.A.M.I. and TNT uncut and uninterrupted. But then, I like salt on watermelon, too.

—David McGee

## David Bowie

"LET'S DANCE," "CHINA GIRL" (D: David Mallet),  
"MODERN LOVE" (D: Jim Yukich)

Picture Music Intl./14 min./\$16.95—Sony Video 45

Three hits from *Let's Dance*, two in conceptual form, one a concert video. Of the two concept videos, "China Girl" is the most literal interpretation and the most controversial by dint of its nude *From Here To Eternity* beach scene ripoff (too hot for MTV), the latter best appreciated by those with scan and search functions on their VCRs. The oft-programmed "Let's Dance" is more abstract. Set in Australia, it shows men drinking in a tavern, playing children interrupted by a far-off atomic blast, a charwoman on hands and knees scrubbing the city's streets—in short, a macabre travelogue that appears to have nothing at all to do with the song. If anything, the images only diminish the ache of love so central to the intrigue of "Let's Dance." "Modern Love," though, is grade A Bowie in concert: the band pumping furiously behind him, Bowie leaning into the music, and sparring with the backup singers. Granted the songs are good and Bowie is intrinsically fascinating, but he's barely tapped his imagination on the conceptual videos. "Let's Dance" and "China Girl" have neither the abstract emotional pull of the "Ashes to Ashes" video nor the sardonic wit of the "DJ" video from years

past. He's simply marking time here.

—David McGee

## Phil Collins

"IN THE AIR TONIGHT," "I MISSED AGAIN,"  
"THROUGH THESE WALLS,"  
"YOU CAN'T HURRY LOVE" (D: Stuart Orme)

Picture Music Intl./17:07/\$16.95—Sony Video 45

In which the artist exorcises the ghosts of a failed marriage. When these videos are over you recall stark black and white photography, odd lighting, Collins' impassive facial expression, the visual representations of jealousy ("Through These Walls") and paranoia ("In The Air Tonight") and, finally, the emotional catharsis of "You Can't Hurry Love." The latter happens to serve as Collins' clear message to himself and thus broadens the song's meaning in an interesting way. The triumph of this video 45 is in its sequencing. Very unusual.

—David McGee

## Steve Miller Band

"STEVE MILLER BAND" (Producer: Steve Miller)

Thorn-EMI Home Video/45 minutes/\$29.95

As the rock video revolution has made painfully clear, some performers are better off heard and not seen. This eponymously titled, no-frills concert is little more than a video version of Steve Miller's recent live album, itself a redundant retrospective of his greatest hits.

The performance is shot with all the subtlety of a baseball game—one camera tenth row center, another in the wings, with the occasional shot from behind the drum kit, as well as the requisite isolated on the individual players. The single artistic touch is an introduction to the 12 songs in the set via spinning Quantel shapes and a series of superimposed images. I mean, how many times do we need to see Steve Miller's fingers running up and down the guitar neck juxtaposed with his earnest gaze?

A montage of stills during the rendition of "Living In The U.S.A." serves as a scrapbook of Miller's career, going back to his days as the space cowboy in the acid-rocking '60s. The snapshots accompanying "Jungle Love" not only illustrate the most clichéd aspects of touring but are unnervingly similar to the experience of sitting through a relative's summer vacation slides. Miller's only nod to theatricality himself is taking off his shades, but that doesn't stop the rest of the band members from the kind of rock 'n' roll mugging which almost completely overshadows their porcine leader.

All the hits are represented here, from "Gangster of Love," through "Rock 'n' Me," "Fly Like An Eagle," "The Joker," "Take the Money and Run," "Abracadabra," and "Jet Airliner." The roar of the crowd is mixed into the kind of dull din that's become as endemic to televised rock concerts as a laugh track is to a sitcom, and just as annoying. Only the hard-core fans need apply here.

—Roy Trakin

## MUSICVIDEO TOP TEN

- 1 MAKING MICHAEL JACKSON'S THRILLER**  
MICHAEL JACKSON  
Vestron Video
- 2 DURAN DURAN**  
DURAN DURAN  
Thorn-EMI Home Video
- 3 TWIST OF FATE**  
OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN  
MCA Home Video
- 4 BILLY JOEL LIVE ON LONG ISLAND\***  
BILLY JOEL  
CBS/Fox Home Video
- 5 THE COMPLETE BEATLES**  
THE BEATLES  
MGM/UA Home Video
- 6 THE WALL**  
PINK FLOYD  
MGM/UA Home Video
- 7 SWEET DREAMS\***  
EURYTHMICS  
RCA/Columbia Home Video
- 8 DAVID BOWIE\***  
DAVID BOWIE  
Sony Video 45
- 9 POLICE AROUND THE WORLD**  
THE POLICE  
I.R.S. Video
- 10 THE HIGH ROAD\***  
ROXY MUSIC  
RCA/Columbia 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 SOMEBODY'S WATCHING ME**  
ROCKWELL  
(Motown) D: Frances Delia
- 2 I WANNA NEW DRUG**  
HUEY LEWIS & THE NEWS  
(Chrysalis) D: Devendra Rethod
- 3 THRILLER**  
MICHAEL JACKSON  
(Epic) D: Jon Landis
- 4 99 LUFTBALLONS**  
NENA  
(Epic) D: Burt Van Der Veer
- 5 TALKING IN YOUR SLEEP**  
THE ROMANTICS  
(Nemperor) D: Bob Dyke
- 6 PARTY TRAIN**  
GAP BAND  
(Mercury) D: Don Letts
- 7 JUMP**  
VAN HALEN  
(Warner Bros.) D: Van Halen
- 8 GIRLS JUST WANT TO HAVE FUN**  
CYNDI LAUPER  
(Portrait) D: Ken Walz
- 9 RELAX (unedited version)**  
FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD  
(Island) D: Bernard Rose
- 10 REBEL YELL**  
BILLY IDOL  
(Chrysalis) D: Jeff Stein

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 April.



# AFFAIR OF THE CHARTS

Six chart topping songs from Rick Springfield's platinum selling albums together in one music video compilation...including:

- AFFAIR OF THE HEART
- JESSIE'S GIRL
- DON'T TALK TO STRANGERS
- WHAT KIND OF FOOL AM I
- HUMAN TOUCH
- SOULS

*Rick Springfield*  
PLATINUM VIDEOS

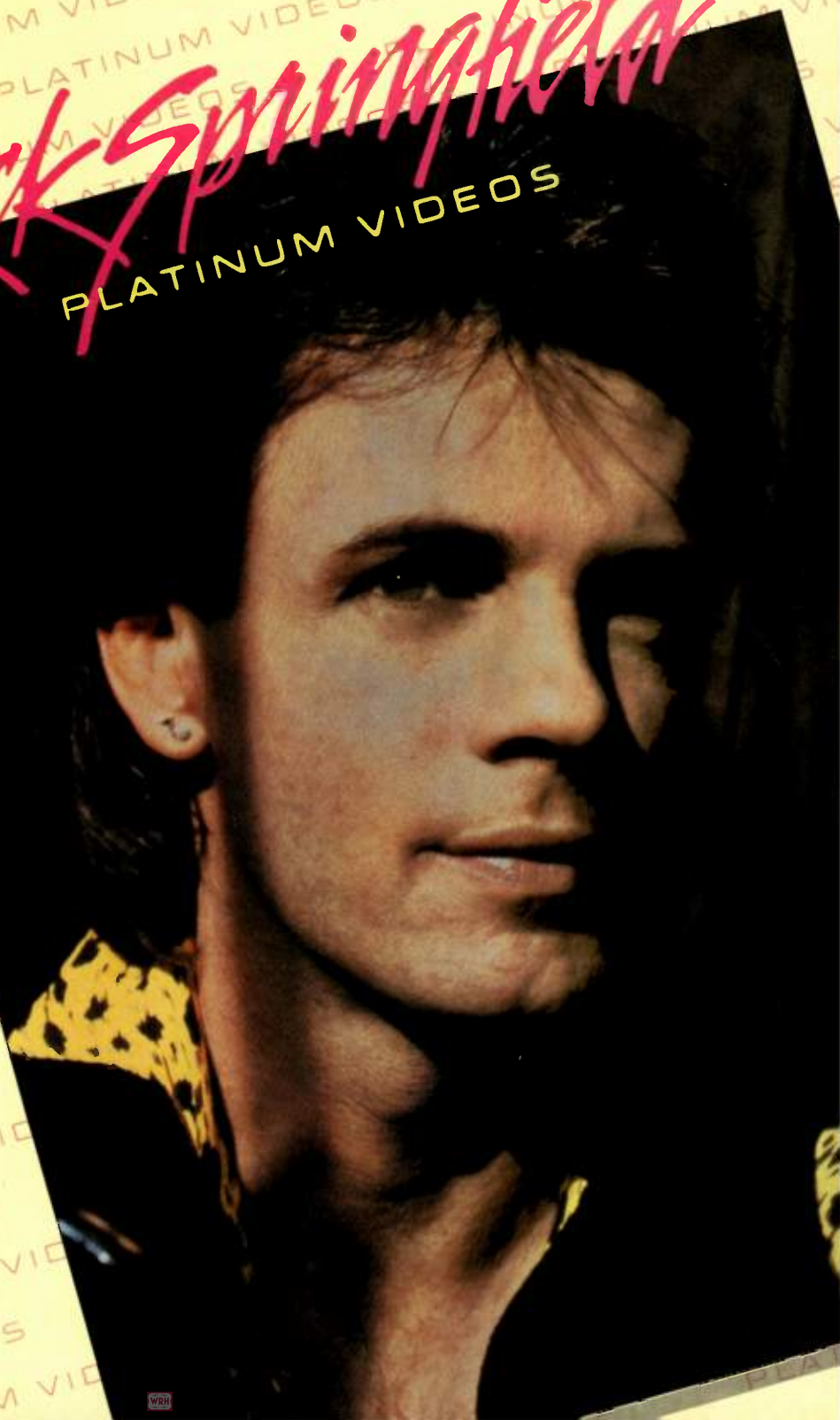
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# NOTES

By Merle Ginsberg

## The Cutting Room Floor

Yes, we know that a number of videos have had to be cut, or have even been scrapped (i.e., not show on MTV and other video music shows) because of controversial (usually sexual) material. Well, there's creeping censorship in other areas, too.

WABC's "N.Y. Hot Tracks," seen every Friday night in the New York viewing area, was scheduled to premier the video for the song "The Dominatrix Sleeps Tonight" back in March (music by Stuart Arbright, clip by New York

filmmaker Beth B.). However, shortly before air time a producer found out what "dominatrix" means (incredible, but true) and nixed it. The clip features some leather-clad women, as you might expect from its title, but if it's offensive at all it still ranks several notches below most heavy metal videos on the puke index.

Director Mick Haggerty had to edit a corn flakes box out of King Crimson's "Sleepless"—too much publicity for the product.

Frankie Goes To Hollywood made two versions of the controversial "Relax" video, one rife with laser effects (currently on the air), and a "naughty" one that takes place in a gay bar. They didn't even bother to try to air it in the States. Says lead singer Holly: "It was only meant to be a good laugh—like in a movie. There wasn't really anything offensive about it—except maybe the golden shower at the end!"

## Top Secret Video

Here's a good one. English band Wide Boy Awake (signed to RCA here) made a clip called "Billy Hyena," and used one of the design-

*Here come the jackboots: Mel Brooks' first music video, "The Hitler Rap," is hardly being shown anywhere, apparently because television producers don't find swastikas and Hitler parodies very amusing. But some even claim you can't tell the tape is a joke. To which Brooks responds: "What do they mean, it's not a joke? It's so obvious I'm ridiculing the Nazis. You must make fun of the Nazis. Ridicule is the most powerful weapon I know. And to think my film The Producers was aired on network TV!"*



The Thompson Twins' Tom Bailey is writing the screenplay for a movie. It's about his experience on a recent trip to India, and Bailey, modest chap that he is, plans to star in it, too.

ers from *Apocalypse Now* to help them get a similar bent ambience. Somehow or other, the crew and cast got onto a military base and shot the whole thing there—and were then confronted by a security guard who demanded he be given the tape. Seems it was a "top secret" locale that the U.K. government didn't want to be seen on any screen, big or small. So far, Wide Boy hasn't parted with the goods.

## Video Goes To The Movies

If rock video directors can grow up and become film directors, does that mean musicians can grow up and be actors? There are some who feel musicians had best concentrate on growing up and leave the acting to others, but that's neither here nor there. But as Jimmy Durante was wont to remark on occasion, "Everybody's gettin'





Director Julien Temple (Kinks' videos, ABC's "Poison Arrow," Dexys' "Come On, Eileen," the Stones' "Undercover" and "She Was Hot") has pulled back from the whole rock vid biz for the moment to work on a film called *Absolute Beginners*. It's adapted from a British novel about the dance hall days of the '50s (as portrayed in the Kinks' "Come Dancing"), and will star—now get this—Roy Davies and Keith Richards. Paul Weller, Elvis Costello and Tifford and Di'brook will supply the music. Shooting begins in July in London. By the way, this isn't Temple's first film: he directed *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle*, starring the Sex Pistols, while in film school. Meanwhile, word has it that this Fall may see the release of a compilation cassette of Stones videos. Now that's hot.

into the act." UB40 have written, produced and directed their own movie called *Labour of Love* (after the album of the same name). This isn't a music video, however; it's only got four songs. It's shot in black and white and has the look of British film noir of the '50s. It's also a bit violent (two men are seen fighting for the same woman), and the BBC doesn't like that. So the movie will either be released theatrically or for the home video market, or both... Jonathan Demme (Melvin and Howard) has directed a tour movie for Talking

Heads, due this summer... Roger Daltrey is going to direct a film about a pair of British gangsters called the Cray Brothers. And he wants Spandau Ballet's Kemp brothers, Gary and Martin, to star in it... Bob Geldof and Ian Dury are shooting a film together in England called *Number One*. It also features *Quadrophenia* star Phil Daniels. Geldof plays a hustler(!)... Some people are sticking to video: Supertramp is working on a 20-minute video for a song called "Brother Where You Bound" (which is precisely 20 minutes longer than any video or song from this band ought to be) from their upcoming LP. The story, they say, concerns "Reds, as in Communists."... Pink Floyd's David Gilmour is working on a 90-minute home video comprised of concert footage, clips from his solo LP and a look at his career with the Floyd. Which one is Pink, again... And MTV is working on a home video, too. The all-music channel has signed a deal with Vestron Video (best known for *Making Michael Jackson's Thriller*) for a series of home video projects, the first being MTV's *History of Videomusic*, in production now. No release date has been announced... U2 is going to release their *Red Rocks (Colorado)* concert as a home video... Ray Davies is wrapping up the surrealis-

tic thriller, *Return To Waterloo*, a video project he wrote and directed (the Kinks aren't involved in any way). It's a home video as well.

### Directors To Go

What's colloquially referred to as "the first wave" of (mostly British) music video directors is now so firmly established that most of its personnel are very much on their way to bigger and better.

Tim Pope (Cure videos, Neil Young's "Wonderin',"

Hall and Oates' "Adult Education") is now making a one-hour special with Style Councillor Paul Weller (Pope's also directed most of Weller's clips). Titled *Suedeheads*, the video is sort of Weller's personal rockumentary, centering on mod culture as seen through the artist's eyes. Pope is everywhere these days. He's just completed two *Psychedelic Furs* videos (he did their previous ones, too), and new ones for the Cure and Siouxsie and the Banshees. He's also signed a deal to make British Martini ads,

*Duran Duran's been giving director Brian Grant the ol' limp leg maneuver lately. Seems Grant directed the Fab Five's "New Moon on Monday" video in two versions—a short one, and a 16-minute version with plot and dialogue that hasn't been seen anywhere because the band's management doesn't feel like showing it to anyone. Grant contends it's among his finest work and wants an explanation as to why it's still in hiding—and to date he hasn't received one.*





MUSIC  
MEDIA presents

# David Bowie

## SERIOUS MOONLIGHT

Put on your red shoes and dance to 90 minutes of Live Bowie! The one hour HBO special with 30 more minutes of *Serious Moonlight*. 19 of his best-known songs filmed during his 1983 World Tour. **HEROES, FAME, FASHION. YOUNG AMERICANS, LET'S DANCE!**

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# notes

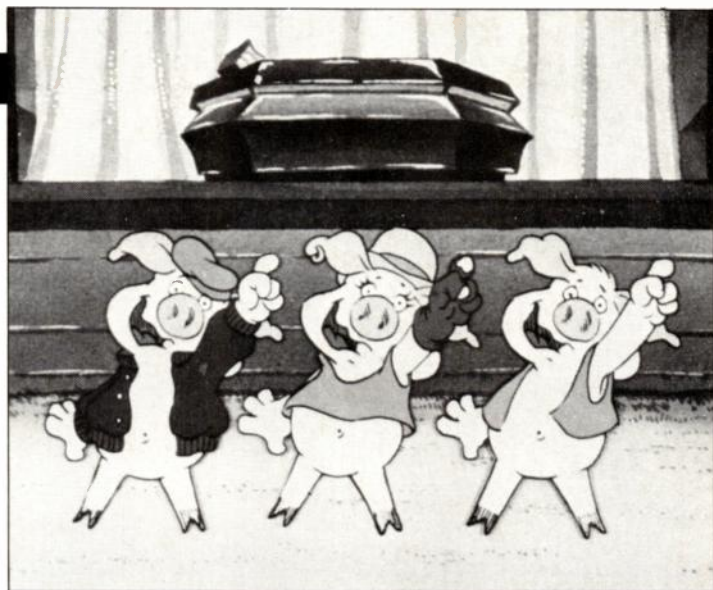
making him one of the first, if not the first, rock video directors to move into commercials (unless, of course, you think rock videos are commercials). When he's at home, Pope is ensconced with a lady named Neve, who's the sister of Siobhan of Banarama (so guess who directs their clips?)

Godley and Creme (Herbie Hancock's "Rockit," recent Police clips, Duran Duran's "Girls on Film") are involved with some longer-

Alton High School in Alton, Illinois, will be the first one with a video yearbook when theirs comes out this June. "I'll have all the sights and sounds (a snippet of everybody's favorite song) of high school life, and don't be surprised if it looks like Porky's or the Stray Cats' "Sexy + 17." Instead of graduation photos, the "book" will have interviews with the graduating class. It'll go for \$40, and threatens to make a lost art of yearbook signing ("I really don't know you very well, out...")

than-four-minute projects. The dynamic duo shot, directed and edited the Police's upcoming home video of the "Synchronicity" tour—which had to be re-edited several times because the band couldn't decide just what songs to include—and they're also making two more "Rebellious Jukebox" hour-long specials. The first (financed by Miles Copeland) was a parody of the music business and was aired here on MTV and Showtime. The next two are specifically for Showtime and will air in the next few months, with Iggy Pop as host. G&C are also developing a movie project and trying to get themselves an American record deal and—**whew!**—are negotiating with producer Trevor Horn to make the accompanying clips for artist's on Horn's new ZTT label (Propaganda, Art of Noise, etc.)

Brian Grant (Peter Gabriel's "Shock The Monkey," Donna Summer's "She



The Raccoons? Ralph and Bert? You mean, of course, Ralph Kramden and Bert Wedemeyer and the lodge famous for its big convention at which grown men parade around in bulging eyeballs, toss paper bags filled with water out of hotel windows and eat rubber marshmallows? Wrong, oh ancient ones! Get set for the animated Raccoons—Ralph, Bert and Melissa, that is—to be featured in a videocassette being touted by its manufacturer, Embassy Home Entertainment, as "the first original music home video for kids." The Raccoons—Let's Dance, scheduled to hit the market this month, is a 30-minute program (price: \$24.95) starring the aforementioned marsupials and their friends (such as the "porkers," shown here cutting a mean rug) performing six original songs sung by Rita Coolidge, Leo Sayer, John Schneider and Dottie West (hey, it's a living!). Robin Montgomery, Embassy's director of marketing, says the look of the video "will be totally contemporary down to the 'new wave' Bears complete with bright blue and orange hair, sunglasses and dance steps that rival Michael Jackson's." They have come for our children.

Works Hard For The Money" and dozens of others—see Brian Grant interview in RECORD's March issue) is talking to Paramount about making a short—something, in their minds, that could qualify in the Academy Awards short subject category. (Who's goal oriented?)

"Russell Mulcahy, come home!" you can hear Duran Duran crying. The man who put them on the map was too busy all winter, with his film *Razorback* (his first, shot in Australia) to make any exotic clips for them. Then, they coerced him out of the outback to shoot one live clip for them—of "Reflex," in Toronto. After flying all the way from Sydney to Toronto to do it, Mulcahy got called from the set to return to *Razorback*. *Quel dommage!* What's a one-man band supposed to do?

FYI: Zelda Barron, who's directed "I'll Tumble 4 Ya," "It's a Miracle" and "Miss Me Blind" for Culture Club is the mother of video director Steve Barron ("Billie Jean," etc. and the movie *Electric Dreams*, opening in April). Zelda's no novice, though. She was the asso-

ciate producer of *Coal Miner's Daughter* and *Continental Divide*, and has just finished making her own first feature film, *Secret Places*, scheduled to be in theaters this summer.

## Vid Bits

Toronto radio station CFNY has decided to "time capsule" some of the best rock clips. They're going to store the chosen ones in a vault at the station, to be opened 50 years hence. If you've got any suggestions for clips to be included in this timeless collection, send them to: CFNY-FM, 83 Kennedy Road South, Brampton, Ontario, LGW 3P3 Canada... A rock video dance company? Yes! It lives! The New Breed Dance Theater and its members have danced in "Beat It," "She Works Hard For The Money" and "Rappin' Rodney." They formed the dance troupe after making the clips, and are now touring, doing "video dances" to "video favorites." They even show video clips while they're performing! What a concept!



PAULETTE BEMBA  
Secretary  
Teacher



NINA OLIVIA DUBOIS  
Bandier  
Child Psychologist



MARIE BOËLLE DESTOUCHES  
Secretary



ELLIS DEVINE



Mr. Ray Fish  
Industrial Arts



LEONARD L. DEWAR  
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Basketball Team  
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Language Teacher



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Communication Arts



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Senior Representative  
Bismacchio & Bismacchio



ARTHUR BRADSH



By Jonathan Gross

# THE ULTIMATE MUSIC VIDEO CHANNEL

Dream  
On

**I**T WAS NOT A STRANGE dream considering how it began. I had dozed off in front of the TV, MTV in fact, while Martha Quinn was reciting Scorpions dates for cities that don't even get MTV. Suddenly I had enough money and clout to program my own music video channel—JGTV, appropriately enough—and it was going to air a couple of minutes a day, every few weeks, on months with the letter "r" in them, most years, through every other decade.

And what, I asked myself, would this dream music video channel have that you can't find anywhere else...?

The *VJ* could only be the man who start-



Joe Jackson's  
"Breaking Us In Two,"

ed it all, SCTV's legendary Gerry Todd, the dulcet voice of candlelight video. Todd (aka Rick Moranis) is the compleat vidiot, having met his mate through video dating and claiming as one of his most notable achievements the development of the "Video Dinner": Godfather I (ravioli), and Godfather II (linguini and meatballs). Todd is also the champion of middle-of-the-road video, including Tom Munro's version of, as Todd calls it, "Turning Japanesee."

In the area of *Programming* it has yet to be proven that clips can be effectively sequenced as "music video." The best sets concentrate on either the music or

video component. For example, a good evocative lyrical set would start with Elton John's sensitive homosexual crisis, "Elton's Song," continue with Joe Jackson's "Breaking Us In Two" and close with Billy Joel's mournful "Allentown." Visual provocation is exemplified by the rash of clips using found footage from old newsreels and other sources. Try frontloading Queen's "Radio Ga Ga," which exploits Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, and follow with The Group's new Wallish "Technology," then close with Pink Floyd's misty-eyed remembrance, "The Final Cut."

And let's not forget *Oldies*, a crucial ingredient in the hip video mix. For a short time last year, a Toronto station was packaging vintage *Top of the Pops* and *Old Grey Whistle Test* clips featuring everything from Pink Floyd's first television appearance, in 1967, to the early thrashings of Blondie and Talking Heads. However, no one is taking the lead in restoring some of the great rock moments in film and TV. Although the legal hassles probably preclude it, I'd love to see Elvis Presley's penultimate moment, "Jailhouse Rock," blow away the schlock choreography in most modern video. Right now, I'd settle for the Seeds doing "Pushin' Too Hard" on *The Mothers In Law*.

Interviews remain a problem for music video shows. *Friday Night Videos* "Private

and Elton John's study in sensitivity, "Elton's Song"



An evocative, lyrical JGTV  
set: Billy Joel's mournful  
"Allentown,"

Reel" is an energetic feature, modelled partly on the style of Video West's fast-paced profiles seen in the good old days of *Nightflight*. There's no reason why rock interviews have to look like *Meet The Press* and Video West realized this, taking the subject's voice off-camera while good documen-

tary footage provided a stimulating veneer. And what isn't seen anywhere—though we keep hearing rumors that something like it is in the works here or there—is a good Ebert and Siskel-type critical package featuring a couple of bright, enthusiastic writers passing judgment and raising questions about records, concerts and videos.

How about some *Music News*? *Entertainment Tonight* is the model of a tight, lightning-quick package that balances fluff with hard facts. Though just one small component of its coverage, *ET*'s rock features embarrass MTV's stale hourly "music news" bits. If *ET*'s correspondents aren't the most knowledgeable, their shortcomings are at least dressed up by the slick production.

*The Look*: Say what you will about MTV—and you will—but the channel's margins are often more entertaining than the text. The bumpers and segues are the best and brightest on television, succeeding where the bulk of MTV video fails in capturing a youthful spirit. The contest promos are the best hype I've seen. Clearly, anyone planning their own music video channel would have to steal as many of these ideas as is ethically possible.

Just as I had all the elements in place and was about to hire a gaggle of publicists, the dream was shattered by the gleeful squeal of Alan Hunter. When I awoke nothing had changed. In 30 minutes Hunter, who would probably benefit from a swift kick in the pants, was going to break the news on a big Great White tour. Right now, however, MTV was going to bring me Thomas Dolby's self-interview, a strategy Dolby opted for after being interviewed by an MTV VJ, who allegedly asked him how long he'd been playing guitar in the Fixx. But Al didn't mention that. ○



PHOTOS: JESSE LEVITT



# VIDEO NEW PRODUCTS



A full line of video components from the Audio Dynamics Corp. At top left is the V-100 Video Stabilizer, at top right is the V-200 Video Enhancer; below these units are the V-300 Color Video Processor, the VSS-1 and the VSS-2 Video Sound Shapers

## ENHANCED VIDEO

**BSR (USA) Ltd.** has introduced a series of video components from Audio Dynamics Corp. (ADC) designed to expand and enhance the performance of quality video systems. The model V-300 Color Video Processor renders total color correction resulting in improved picture quality from VCRs, disc players, computers, satellite receivers and broadcast television. The unit offers two selectable video inputs, special effects applications, chroma, hue, burst and intensity controls and a mode switch. Suggested retail price of the V-300 is \$129.95. Model V-200 is a video enhancer engineered to eliminate picture distortion and image ghosting, and the unit includes a special video noise reduction knob built to eliminate tape graininess and other video noise. It also serves to eliminate "roll and jitter," and features a built-in RF modulator, fade con-

trol and dubbing capacity. Suggested retail price is \$129.95. Model V-100 is a Video Stabilizer that receives signals from video cameras, computers and VSRs and features a built-in RF modulator. The V-100 is designed to remove "roll and jitter" from video monitors. Model V-100 has a suggested retail price of \$79.95.

## VIDEOTAPE

Previously available only as an accessory and only in regular grade, Panasonic videotape will now be sold in video specialty stores. Four VHS-format tapes will be offered: NV-T60 (\$8), NV-T120 (\$12), NV-T120HG (\$16) and NV-T160 (\$16). (Panasonic, One Panasonic Way, Secaucus, NJ 07094)

(left) JVC's Video Head Cleaner (right) Panasonic VHS Video Tape



## HEAD CLEANER

JVC Tape's new video head cleaner model TCL-2 employs a low abrasion formula that lifts particles off head surfaces without damaging them in any way. Used like a regular video cassette, the TCL-2 thoroughly cleans clogged video heads in 15 seconds, preventing dropouts, noise, reduced brightness and poor sound quality. The TCL-2 head cleaning cassette can be used up to 200 times to maintain video heads in near new condition. Suggested retail price is \$19.95. (JVC Company of America, 41 Slater Drive, Elmwood Park, NJ 07407; tel. 201-794-3900)

## NEW BETA

Sony's SL-2300 Betamax videocassette recorder features full front-loading operation and front-mounted controls. A fluorescent multi-display indicates time, timer settings and whether the cassette is in or out. A 14-pushbutton Express Tuning receiver gives single-touch access to the preferred channel. The unit has a broad array of playback conveniences including Betascan/BetaSkipScan high-speed picture search. BetaSkipScan, in combination with BetaScan, permits the viewer to

Sony's SL-2300: Slim-line styling, basic features (\$500)



switch instantly from high-speed fast forward or rewind (50x normal speed in Beta III without picture) to BetaScan search (15x in Beta III normal speed) to see a picture without sound on the television screen. The SL-2300 also features a three-day/one event timer and five-hour recording capability for automatic recording. A wired Remote Commander remote control unit permits armchair operation of pause/free-frame, BetaScan forward and reverse and play functions. Other features include connections for an optional Sony Trinitron color camera as well as audio and video line inputs and outputs for complete integration of the customer's home entertainment center. The unit measure 17 inches wide x 3 3/8 inches high x 15 1/4 inches deep. Suggested retail price is \$500. ○



MARTIN PORTER ●

# EVERYTHING YOU NEED IN STEREO-TO-GO (AND MORE)

**W**hen the Who first sang about "going mobile," the idea of taking tunes out on the road was more of a burden than a brainstorm. Remember 8-track car stereo? That was the outer limit of stereo-to-go through most of the '70s.

Then along came the Sony Walkman to give new meaning to hi-fi portability. No other audio product has made such a swift and prominent impact on the contemporary music scene—not even the vaunted digital audio Compact Disc.

But while much attention has been placed on making these cassette machines smaller and cheaper, a less obvious development has occurred: personal portable cassette machines are improving in every way and becoming feature-packed to boot. The selection and options available boggle the mind.

Sony, for instance, made it big recently with the Super Walkman. The name, though, is a bit deceptive: despite its impressive miniaturization to the size of an audio cassette, the product is pretty much a stripped-down version of the earlier Walkman machines, which can't hold a spec sheet to higher-end examples of the Sony product line designed to handle tape chores on the road or while jury-rigged to a home hi-fi.

The WM-D6 (approx. \$350), otherwise known as the Walkman Professional, is geared to accept normal, metal or chromium dioxide tapes,

and comes complete with Dolby noise reduction. The unit can accommodate an external microphone as well as two pairs of headphone inputs. The specs are dazzling, with a wow and flutter rating of less than .04 percent, thanks to a quartz-locked capstan

another. And with summer on its way, personal portables will be back in the sun...and sometimes in the water. Pioneer's pocketable stereo "All Weather" series come in flat, black, water-, dust- and shock-resistant cases. They'll take a dunking at the seashore and should be able to handle a tumble or two on cement. The PK-5AW features auto-reverse playback with Dolby noise reduction, will accept any commercially-available tape, can search for your favorite selection and even comes with water resistant mini-earphones (approx. \$170). It can be upgraded with a detachable, waterproof microphone (model PK-R7AW) for about \$190.

The goal in audio-to-go is to make the process as fumble-free as possible. Auto reverse is one step in that direction; separating the FM tuner from the cassette deck for easy access is another. The Panasonic RQ-R3 (approx. \$180) has them both. You can keep your portable

hooked onto your belt and still slip the standard FM tuner from a side case without disconnecting it. Another nice touch is the placement of the forward and reverse controls by the cassette compartment door for easy handling, while the volume control and the power switch are one and the same knob. The unit can accommodate both metal and normal tape, and two heads (human, that is) can share the machine's music, though only one stereo headphone is provided.

Toshiba's answer to this problem is perhaps less convenient than Pana-



servo system that offers rock steady and consistent cassette movement. The frequency response peaks at 15,000 Hz and the unit boasts a standard signal-to-noise ratio of up to 58 dB with metal tape. All of this is accomplished in a still-diminutive package the size of the original Walkman, weighing one-and-a-quarter pounds. The headphones (MDR-50L), meanwhile, are featherweights, and kick out a frequency response between 18-22,000 Hz.

Impressive specs are one thing, convenience and super features yet







to recall up to eight stations (four AM, four FM) with a touch of a button. The model 7-1900 (approx. \$70) also lets you scan the length of the frequency range in seconds and gives an LCD readout of the frequency tuned. It's a radio-only device but still weighs less than eight ounces.

Though another GE portable might not quite fit the definition of a pocket portable music box, the company offers the latest evolution of the walkie talkie, the Voice I (\$40), which allows two-way, voice-activated communications. The unit comes complete with a whip antenna mounted on the

headset along with the microphone, and a built-in squelch control.

## THE KOSS SOLUTION

PORTABLE MUSIC CAN GIVE you an emotional lift, to be sure, but it may also damage your ears. This is what worries medical researchers, who fear extended exposure to high volume music can cause long-term hearing problems. Stereo-to-go manufacturers tend to do a little side-step when it comes to this issue, since their products usually offer power and volume controls capable of jacking up the

sound to arena rock levels.

In audio, as in heavy metal, power is half the marketing plan; consequently, you're not about to find a manufacturer limiting their portables' degree of amplification. In at least one case, however, preserving the ears of tomorrow has become part of the sales pitch of today. Koss Corporation, a company long-recognized for its quality stereophones, has installed in its latest portable sets a Koss Safe Lite that illuminates a warning whenever the sound pressure levels (SPL) reach 95 dB or greater.

"Our real concern is that the damage to young people may not show up until they're much further along in age, say mid-life," explains company founder John Koss. He points out that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the government's health hazard watchdog, has determined that listening to music above 95 dB SPL for four hours a day can lead to hearing impairment. As a result, three new Koss units feature a yellow light-emitting diode that glows a warning when the level is surpassed; of particular note is the Music Box (approx. \$130), which combines an AM/FM tuner with switchable tape equalization for chromium dioxide and metal tapes, Dolby B and a heavy duty flywheel that reduces wow and flutter.

sonic's but no less effective: put all the necessary electronics into a plastic shell the size and shape of a standard audio cassette. The company's super-slim KT-VS2 personal stereo (approx. \$120) features metal tape capability and two stereo headphone jacks in addition to the radio cassette.

It's not necessary to buy a high-end machine in order to get the auto-reverse feature. Sharp has given joggers and others on the run automatic reverse in a mini-package, model QT-41 (approx. \$90). An anti-rolling mechanism with two flywheels assures smooth tape play even when the unit's taking a jolt, and the entire package weighs under half a pound.

General Electric, meanwhile, has put some interesting twists in the already tried-and-true personal portable formula. Packing a mini-tuner in a tiny package is a fairly routine procedure these days, but GE has given the to-go generation electronic tuning as well. ETS, as they call it, allows you



## AND THE OTHERS

THE PERSONAL PORTABLE HAS revolutionized headphone design as much as it has tape technology. Easy-to-get plug adaptors make these lightweight units as versatile as they are affordable. Besides, new sound reproduction technologies translate to an earful of low distortion, extended dynamic range and bass response often greater than what your living room speakers produce under the best conditions. You may well find yourself using them as much indoors as outdoors, giving repeated exposure to their wonders.

Pioneer has also emphasized comfort with its SE-L90 Lite Phones (approx. \$80), which can also do double-duty on the road or at home. Two-thirds of the pressure is diverted to the temple region in front of your ears; as a result, the fit is snug and the headphones shouldn't fall off even when you're jogging up a storm. The package is high-end and sturdy, and, mean-

Micro Fidelity's Mi-Fi portable speakers (approx. \$70/pair) turn your personal stereo into a mini-component system; the supercompact Olympus SR66 (approx. \$350) comes complete with a sleep timer switch in a fat, black and sassy package; Sparkomatic's model 4010 Amplidyne speakers offer 120 watts of added power to the car stereo system, minimizing power loss and improving control of the speaker performance (approx. \$250/pair); Sanyo's MSP5 portable stereo speakers fold down to the size of an audio cassette case (approx. \$40).







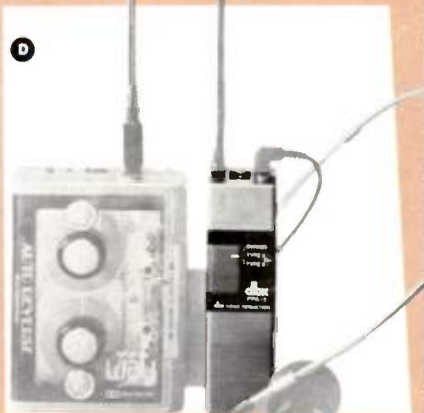
while, due to the sound's proximity to your ear cavity, the bass gets down to 10Hz and the high end peaks at a range of about 22,000 Hz.

Mura may not be known for the highest quality headphones but the top-of-the-line of its Red Set Series (model 12) is a simple and affordable folding headband entry (approx. \$35). Its four-foot cord is just about the ideal length and it comes with a portable machine standard mini plug, though the package also includes an eight-foot adaptor extension cord with a 1/4-inch plug that allows the headphone to handle audio intimacy opportunities at home for those inclined.

## PORTABLE SPEAKERS

ENJOYING MUSIC ALONE DOES have its introspective merits, but if you're the partying type you'll need to hook up your portable hardware to a loudspeaker to get decent results.

Fortunately, mini-speakers are available for your personal portable rig and Micro Fidelity has packed a maxi-sound into a mini-package with its Mi-Fi portable speakers, which can plug into any 120 volt AC outlet and turn your personal stereo into a mini-component system. Each MFS-6300 speaker (approx. \$70/pair) has



a built-in 3.5 watt amplifier and a maximum power handling of 20 watts per channel. With a plug adaptor they'll plug into any home tape player, tuner or receiver headphone jack, serving as a second set of remote speakers. They weigh in at a pound-and-a-half each and are only 3.5 inches high. A carrying case for hipside lugging is available for about \$28.

Sanyo has put portable stereo speakers into one self-contained system that conveniently folds to the size of an audio cassette case. The model MSP5 (approx. \$40) is a two-way, three-speaker arrangement with a built-in amplifier directly connected to the standard mini-headphone jack of any personal stereo. It needs its own battery source (four AA), but for the price it'll broaden your personal audio horizon and let some friends in on the melodies, too.

## SUPERCOMPACT SOUND

IF A MINI-PORTABLE ISN'T small enough for your taste, ears or pockets there are alternatives available utilizing the down-sized microcassette packets (one-quarter the size of standard cassettes) usually reserved for dictation or answering machines.

Historically, the problem with this format has been its lousy sound. The sound is still not quite up to mini-cassette snuff, but it has come a long way, baby.

The supercompact Olympus SR66 (approx. \$350) comes with everything you need from a portable, including two speakers, built-in AM/FM radio, metal tape compatibility, even a sleep timer switch (a long overdue development) to turn off the tape or radio after you've snoozed into music-induced oblivion. The unit is run by four AA batteries, though an AC adaptor is also included, as is a headphone jack. As a recording plus, two stereo microphones are placed at either end of the flat, black and sassy configuration.

Sony may have given you a handful of music with its Walkman series, but a palmful was what it was after with the M-80 Soundabout (approx. \$200), which also uses a microcassette for up to two hours of playing time from one cassette. An AM/FM tuner is also aboard, metal tape is





okay and with its telescopic FM antenna, batteries and two-inch internal speaker the M-80 still weighs only 13 ounces.

## LOW NOISE

**dbx NOISE REDUCTION MAY BE** spelled in all lower case, but it packs enough punch to take the rattlesnake hiss out of even the most poorly recorded tape. The tape noise reduction encode/decode scheme has been successfully promoted among the home component set, but in terms of noise reduction to-go the unit choices are few and far between.

Since every personal portable sporting noise reduction utilizes Dolby B, dbx has

should play in reducing home taping continues to bedevil the record industry here and abroad. The question is, with sales increasing on blank tape and dubbing decks, should audio makers design and promote taping products that make record copying and tape duplication easy for record pirates?

Case in point: Aiwa, a noted Japanese hi-fi manufacturer (majority owned by Sony), was recently pressured by the British Parliament and the British Phonogram Institute (BPI) to stop selling several of its double-headed cassette decks in the United Kingdom. The units in question, the ADWX 110 and 220, can copy two sides of an audio tape simultaneously and accomplish this feat at twice the normal taping speed.

For those interested Stateside, the banned units still exist and are readily available, at least until the record industry here gets wind of their popularity and attempts a strongarm maneuver.

The ADWX 110 (approx. \$395) offers cassette dubbing at double speed, which cuts recording time to a quarter of conventional models; a continuous playback (auto-reverse) function; and Dolby C and B noise reduction. Wow and flutter specs out at .045 percent. The ADWX 220 (approx. \$460) also offers quarter-time dubbing as well as a 10-selection memory. There's also Dolby B and C noise reduction, a microphone mixing facility and an automatic tape selector.

ponents increase the impedance, resulting in a significant power loss along the route. The answer to this common problem, some companies believe, is to put the power where it can do its job best—at the speaker itself, so the woofers and tweeters become the direct slave of the amplifier, keeping the impedance comparatively small.

**Sparkomatic**—a company noted in rock circles for sponsoring Supertramp's 1983 tour and Yes's 100-city world tour—has taken this approach with its new series of Amplidyne speakers.

Each system uses separate amplifiers for the woofers and tweeters, with the pair offering 120 watts of added power to the car stereo system. The end result is minimum power loss and improved control of speaker performance.

Series models include: the ASK 4000 (approx. \$200/pair), a coaxial speaker designed with a four-inch woofer and soft dome tweeter, adding 120 watts to the system; the ASK 4010 (approx. \$250/pair), designed with similar components but fitting into only a four-and-a-half inch space and featuring two four-inch woofers; the ASK 4020 (approx. \$300/pair), designed with a six-inch woofer and wide dispersion soft dome tweeter; and the ASK 4030 (approx. \$200), a four-speaker subwoofer engineered to extend the low frequency response of the other Amplidyne speakers or any other existing speaker system, adding 80 watts of power.



worked its way around the problem with the Silencer PPa-1 (approx. \$50), which will decode and thus reduce the noise on any dbx-encoded cassette or on tape recorded on competitive systems. The unit is compatible with nearly all personal portable cassette players and connects by way of the headphone jack. The Silencer offers a dynamic range in near-digital proportions (about 90 dB) and low harmonic distortion as well.

## TWO-HEADED MONSTER

THE QUESTION OF WHAT ROLE, IF any, audio equipment manufacturers

**A** Toshiba's KT-V52 (approx. \$120) packs an AM/FM tuner in a cassette-size shell, will accept metal tape, has two stereo headphone jacks and a radio cassette; **B** General Electric's Voice-1 walkie talkie (approx. \$40) offers "hands free" communication in a compact package and comes with a whip antenna mounted on the headset along with the microphone and a built-in squelch control; **C** Sharp's half-pound QT-41 (approx. \$90) is the jogger's best friend, thanks to an anti-rolling mechanism with two flywheels to assure smooth tape play even when the unit's taking a jolt; **D** dbx's Silencer PPa-1 (approx. \$50) will decode and reduce the noise on any dbx-encoded cassette or on tape recorded on competitive systems. Connected via headphone jack, the Silencer offers a dynamic range in near-digital proportions and low harmonic distortion too; **E** Panasonic's RQ-R3 (approx. \$180) has auto-reverse and easy-access FM tuner and fumble-free volume, power, forward and reverse controls; **F** Pioneer's high end, sturdy and versatile SE-L90 Lite Phones (approx. \$80) can do double-duty on the road or at home; **G** Pioneer's PK-5AW-YL all-weather personal portable stereo, with music search capability, comes with water-resistant mini-earphones (approx. \$170).

## CAR SPEAKERS

IS YOUR CAR STEREO SOUNDING sickly? Are you worried that the dashboard unit can't deliver the power to take the tedium out of rush hour traffic? The answer to your autophonic woes might not be in the dashboard at all, but at the other end of your car hi-fi—the speakers.

In an imperfect audio environment, such as a car interior, the amplifier-to-speaker relationship is crucial. Since most car speakers are far from perfect audio devices, it's usually the role of the amp to ensure peak performance. However, the long, thin wires connecting the two com-





LARRY TRITTEN ●

# I CAN'T HEAR YOU, I'VE GOT A SONG IN MY EAR

A humorist's  
close encounter  
with stereo-to-go

**T**he Walkman lay on my roommate's dresser for weeks before I so much as touched it. "Use this any time you want," he had said, but I hadn't been much tempted because it had the look of the kind of machinery one sees on benches in garage workshops (silvery tape deck plus the serpentine paraphernalia of headphones and

ed to *wonder* about this little unit that has so enthralled otherwise normal folk.

And so, finally, one night when my roommate was out and I was more or less watching and/or listening to MTV and reflecting on how a television speaker flattens out the sound of music, I found myself wandering into my roommate's room and slipping on the Walkman headphones.

The First Time. Everyone waxes nostalgic about the first time they partook of this or that fundamental life experience. The first taste of ambrosia lingers in our memory with a special sweetness. So let it be with Walkman. Within moments of sampling the Walkman sound, I was off in some concert hall of my mind, at 10 on the dial, getting an intra-aural charge from Nena, herself a 10.

Cut to: a day or two later, with some errant visitors coming up the front steps and myself flying down to meet them, brandishing the Walkman headphones like an acolyte with an icon. "Listen to this!" And the headphones proffered, like benediction, or more precisely, revelation...to fill one visitor's head with the sweet deep song

of one or another of the Sirens—Debbie Harry, Linda Ronstadt or whomever.

But that was a while back. Lately I've been on a redhead binge, with much time logged veering back and forth between the antithetical allure of Annie Lennox's pure and euphonious voice and Cyndi Lauper's rich and raucous one.

A veteran Walkman listener now, I can put the Walkman experience into some kind of perspective. What follows are five

essential facts about stereo-to-go, designed with the prospective purchaser in mind. Careful scrutiny of these critical insights is guaranteed to make an educated consumer of the thoughtful reader.

1. In terms of expense, a Walkman is an excellent alternative to a stereo system, which can cost you as much as the national debt of small nation.

2. A Walkman makes you a cyborg, part man and part machine. This is not necessarily bad under the circumstances, but it should be pointed out that some people regard those who wear a Walkman in public as a sort of techno-zombie and consider it a breach of social etiquette, just as they might frown on someone who would eat a hot dog on a bus.

3. For the most part, you don't get liner notes or lyric sheets with a cassette. With a tape cassette you can wear yourself thin replaying a specific part of a song in order to pin down an elusive lyric. Was that "You got my love on a leash" or "You dropped my glove in the quiche"?

4. People and things can sneak up on you while you're listening. Lost in the music of the spheres, you should always remember to keep a certain portion of your consciousness aware of the kind of danger that premonitory noise can warn you of—the footfalls of a friend creeping up to poke you in the ribs, the squeal of brakes, the buzzing of a hornet, etc.

5. Since the Walkman is effectively a portable stereo, you can take the music with you wherever you go. You can take Beethoven, Willie Nelson or the Police along while you're jogging, roller-skating, wandering aimlessly, riding a horse, typing up forms, working out in a gym, hanging upside down in gravity inversion boots, hang-gliding, playing tennis, climbing a mountain, making love, playing a slot machine, or descending in a parachute.

With the Walkman you are your own dee jay and can play whatever you want to hear, whether it be Ludwig Van or Culture Club. No doubt the Walkman will one day be as antique as the Victrola is today (maybe albums will be replaced by little pills that melt the music in your brain like cheese on a burger), but in the meantime the headphones will do nicely, thank you. ○

*Larry Tritten is a San Francisco-based humor writer whose work has appeared in the Los Angeles Times, Playboy, Penthouse and other national publications*



jack), and I've never had an even tenuous interest in playing with machinery—cars, stereos, guns, any of it. The on/off switch is the far frontier of my interest in that direction.

But after weeks of seeing my roommate slip on the Walkman headphones with the cool *elan* of a pilot readying for a mission, and subsequently bouncing and twirling around the house while singing along in accompaniment with unheard voices, I start-



# CAMEL LIGHTS

It's a whole new world.



Today's  
Camel Lights,  
unexpectedly mild.

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

9 mg. "tar", 0.8 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method



CRAIG ANDERTON

# THE ART OF FREEZE-DRIED SOUND

Surveying digital sampling devices



**Y**ou sit down in a listening room, close your eyes, and hear the sound of a \$35,000 grand piano. Not a sound that *resembles* a grand piano, but a sound with all the timbral and dynamic nuances of the finest concert instruments. Only then do you notice that there's no grand piano in sight—simply a musician with a keyboard device about the size of a Fender Rhodes.

Even musicians used to technological miracles can't believe it when they hear a small electronic instrument creating such an accurate piano sound. But this is no ordinary synthesizer; the remarkable piano sound is being produced by an entirely new class of instrument, the digital sampling device. These instruments take a "sample" of any sound (even a \$35,000 grand piano), store it, and let you play the sound back polyphonically at any pitch from a conventional piano-style keyboard.

The idea of sampling a sound for later playback is not new. The Mellotron, one of the more popular upscale keyboards of the late '60s and early '70s, had a miniature playback-only tape player hooked up to each key. Upon pressing a key, the tape would play back whatever sound had been previously recorded. The Mellotron was a big part of the sound of early progressive-rock bands like the Moody Blues, but this bulky instrument was somewhat of a mechanical nightmare and faded into obscurity during the mid-'70s.

The sampling story didn't end there, though. As computer memory prices continued to drop, several companies started producing devices that store sounds in non-moving-parts computer memory rather than miniature tape recorders. The first of these instruments, the Fairlight CMI and E-mu Emulator, were expensive and had some significant limitations. Still, many technologically aware musicians, such as Peter Dinklage, and film sound designers, such as Frank Serafine, whose credits in-

## DeltaLab's Echotron can synchronize a recorded sound "loop" to most digital drum machines

clude *Star Trek II* and *Tron*, used sampling devices to great effect in their work.

As memory prices dropped even lower, sampling and digital sound recording became commonplace. One popular application was sampling the sounds of acoustic drums and placing these sounds under computer control. The result? A rhythm unit with all the advantages of computer programming, but with the sounds of a real drum set. Without sampling techniques, these devices would never have been economically feasible.

Even signal processors have embraced sampling techniques. Several years ago, a small company called Imagineering Audio introduced the "Echo/Digital Recorder" (used by groups such as Missing Persons and Devo), which allows you to record over 16 seconds of sound. Once recorded, the sample sound can be played forwards or backwards, "looped" (put into continuous play, either forwards or backwards), transposed, or even edited to a limited degree. Then last year DeltaLab (known primarily for its family of low-cost delay lines) introduced a device called the "Echotron," which records up to four seconds of sound with excellent fidelity. In addition to offering transposition functions, the Echotron can synchronize the recorded sound "loop" to most digital drum machines.

Electro-Harmonix took sampling functions one step further with the "Instant Replay." This inexpensive floor box lets you record up to four seconds of sound (the fidelity is not exceptional, though), and loop, single-play or transpose this sound. One very useful feature not found on most other sampling devices is an auxiliary touch-sensitive trigger, which, when hit harder, produces a louder sound.

You can even use an Apple II computer for audio sampling, thanks to a new pro-

gram from Decillionix. Although the sound quality is not as good as more expensive devices, for those already owning an Apple II the price is certainly right (\$239 list). Decillionix even offers a library of sampled sounds on diskette, such as "Sounds Around the House" (one retailer with a self-admitted warped sense of humor said that this one diskette is "probably worth the price of the entire system").

The big news in sampling, though, arrived early this year with the Kurzweil 250 and Emulator II keyboards. The Kurzweil is almost twice as expensive as the Emulator II, but includes artificial intelligence technology to create an exceptionally realistic instrument sound. The Kurzweil analyzes multiple samples from one instrument—samples of notes being played loudly, played softly, played at medium intensity, and played at various pitches—and uses this data to construct a computerized model of the instrument (Kurzweil refers to this as "freeze-dried sound"). The Emulator II uses a more economical (but nonetheless extremely effective) approach that samples at several points across the keyboard. The sound quality is excellent, and there are a number of other innovative features, such as SMPTE, as well as MIDI, compatibility.

Clearly, sampling's time has come. Yet many see sampling with a sense of déjà vu—after all, electronic music got much of its initial impetus from people sampling sounds onto bits and pieces of magnetic tape, then splicing and editing these sounds into compositions ("musique concrète"). It remains to be seen whether present-day musicians will use these new machines with the same sense of vision as the early electronic music pioneers, but in any case, sampling devices now offer a powerful new tool in the quest for creating virtually unlimited sounds. ○



MIKE SHEA

# IT'S REAL, IT'S GOT THAT FEEL'

Electro Harmonix'  
EH 0400 Mini-Synth

**T**here's only one basic qualification an instrument has to meet in order to be termed a synthesizer: it must allow the user to create, shape and change the sound to some degree.

The keyboards reviewed in the April and May HANDS ON columns (Casio's PT-50 and Yamaha's MP-1) both offer synthesized or non-acoustically-based sounds, but neither can be termed a synthesizer since each machine's tones are pre-set by the manufacturer.

When you get into real honest-to-God synthesizers specs tend to become overly complicated. It's perfectly righteous for a manufacturer involved in this highly competitive field to specify his instrument as coming complete with, say, 16 VCOs, eight LFOs, four WCAs, switchable waveform selection, complex filtering and dual modulation circuitry; but for the average Joe this might as well be a Martian formula for a new soft drink. As professional synthesizer players became more aware of the vast possibilities offered by state of the art music synthesis, player and manufacturer alike took off into the sunset (often to the tune of \$50,000 a system), leaving the layman in the dark. Nevertheless, there's one slim hope for the practicing nonprofessional musician in the form of Electro-Harmonix' model EH 0400 mini synthesizer, the last available low-priced, simple and, therefore, fun synthesizer on the market.

Instead of the conventional mechanical type keyboard, the EH 0400 has a 25-note touch-sensitive plastic strip with a keyboard layout printed on it. Big-time keyboard players may scoff, but the full scale key size allows for easier playing than that of the mini- and micro-sized ones so prevalent today. Encased in plastic housing (12" wide x 10" deep x 1 1/2" high) with a rigid cardboard underbelly, the unit provides battery operated amplification and puts out professional recording quality sounds. And the price is right: for \$179 you get an easy-to-operate, full-functioned synthesizer, albeit one with limited sound shaping (processing) capabilities.

The starting point of synthesis is the oscillator, or the sound source. The frequency or pitch of this sound is con-

trolled by a voltage, hence the designation Voltage Controlled Oscillator (VCO). You don't actually apply different voltages to the oscillator to change the pitch, but instead vary the amount of a pre-set voltage by adding resistance between it and the oscillator. This can be accomplished with variable resistors like those used for "pitch bending" wheels or, in this case, a pitch-bending fader (much like those on mixing boards) or fixed resistors like a switch or a key with a set resistance value.

Next you select the type of waveform. "Sine" has a smooth sound due to its characteristic rolling type of change from positive to negative (AC) voltage. "Triangle" has a sharper rise and fall, while "pulse" and "square" jump up and down, yielding a harsher sound. In between these are "ramps" that can either jump up and glide down or glide up and dive down. Describing these different sounds in words is frustrating because there's so many options available—you got to hear 'em to believe 'em.

The oscillator's basic waveform (triangle to sine) and pitch are varied by the "pitch bending" fader. The basic shape is rather rough, but switching in a "2X" filter smooths it out. Even though this device utilizes a single oscillator, the user can add in a variable amount of sub-harmonic

sound one octave lower in pitch. An "octave" switch moves the now-complex sound up and down two octaves.

Further processing or shaping is via a filter selection that includes much more than the aforementioned smoothing out switch. You can adjust not only tone and sharpness, but also tremelo or amplitude modulation (that is, the sound automatically varies in loudness). With the 0400 you control both the amount of this level change and the speed (or rate) of rise and fall.

The EH Mini Synth comes with batteries and a small, easy-to-follow instruction manual, plus eight setting diagrams to help the novice get started. The unit also has an AC power adaptor input and a quarter-inch phone output jack for hookup to instrument amplifiers.

If anyone who purchases this unit would like specifications for 16 of my own 0400 pre-sets, as well as a blank for your own pre-sets, write to me in care of RECORD. For more information on the 0400 Mini Synth contact Electro Harmonix, 27 West 23 St., New York, NY 10010. But hurry—there aren't many of these instruments left and they're too much fun to pass up. ○

*Readers are invited to submit questions concerning audio, video, music or computers to: Mike Shea/Hands On, RECORD, 745 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10151.*

**Electro-Harmonix' EH 0400 mini-synth is low-priced (\$179), easy to operate and full-functioned—a real synthesizer in a compact package**







## TECHNICOLOR DREAMS

**BODY AND SOUL**  
Joe Jackson  
A&M

**MIKE'S MURDER  
SOUNDTRACK**  
Joe Jackson  
A&M

By  
Derk  
Richardson

**J**oe Jackson nearly lost it at the movies. The identity he's been striving to establish ever since he was tagged an Elvis Costello/Graham Parker soundalike with his 1979 debut, *Look Sharp!*, was almost left on the cutting room floor last year when the film *Mike's Murder* was shelved. Jackson's soundtrack album, his sixth U.S. release, drifted out of earshot when the reportedly violence-drenched movie was



yanked from theaters.

Now that the James Bridges film has been edited and re-released, perhaps the *Mike's Murder* soundtrack album will get a fair hearing. It's not a great "lost" Joe Jackson record but it is an interesting missing link between the urban-sophisticate Jackson of 1982's *Night And Day* and the full-fledged and oft-confused movie-goer Jackson of *Body And Soul*. On *Night And Day*, with its sardonic view of modern city life and its New York Latin jazz-fusion musical influences, the English-born Jackson seemed to be emerging as an angry Noel Coward for the '80s (too bad he was one-upped again by Costello's imperial bedding-down). He held onto the same core band—basically keyboards, bass and percussion—for *Mike's Murder*, refocused his jaundiced eye on the urban landscape and psyche ("Cosmopolitan," "1-2-3-Go," and "Laundromat Monday"), borrowed a little Stax/Volt soul via Spencer Davis/Stevie

Winwood ("Memphis") and extended his reach into quasi-jazz impressionism ("Moonlight" and a whole side of evocative instrumentals). It makes for a decent album but one that is marked "soundtrack" by the space, to be filled in by film images, between the music and its subjects.

*Body And Soul* is yet a different story. Indeed, it's practically an anthology of screenplays. Yes, there are a million stories in the naked city, but Joe Jackson can't make up his mind which ones he wants to tell. The title, "Body And Soul," for example, is the title of the jazz standard with which Coleman Hawkins became eternally identified by virtue of his definitive tenor saxophone solo in 1939. It is also the name of the 1947 movie starring John Garfield as a boxer struggling between his raw ambition to escape poverty and his revulsion toward the fight game where humans are turned into "money machines."

Joe Jackson wants to have his



# IF YOU'VE GOT THE WATTS, WE'VE GOT THE TAPE.



To get the most out of today's high performance stereos, you need a high performance tape.

Maybe that's why so many manufacturers of top-rated tape decks recommend Maxell. Our tape is designed to help good equipment live up to its specifications.

Unlike ordinary tape, Maxell can handle sudden bursts of power without any distortion. And it can deliver the extreme highs and lows that sometimes get left behind.

So if you'd like to get the most out of your sound system, try Maxell.

But a word of caution. Always keep your seat belt securely fastened.



## IT'S WORTH IT.

© 1983 Maxell Corporation of America, 60 Oxford Drive, Moonachie, N.J. 07074



*Body And Soul* both ways. The album cover is a faithful recreation of the Blue Note jazz label record jackets of the early 1960s—from the sepia/orange and black front photo of Jackson holding his tenor and a cigarette and staring wistfully off into space like any jazzman you choose, down to the typeface, layout and “how-this-album-came-to-be” liner notes on the back (maybe he’s going to change his name to *Milt Jackson*). But the nine songs inside, despite a new horn-oriented instrumentation, owe far more to Jackson’s filmic preoccupation than to the music of Hawkins or any of the Blue Note giants like Miles Davis, Wayne Shorter, Art Blakey, Horace Silver, *et al.*

The mask of jazz is held on by the glue of Jackson’s arrangements for his seven-piece band, plus vocalist Ellen Foley and Elaine Caswell (bassist Graham Maby is the only holdover from previous Jackson bands). The anthemic brass fanfares of “The Verdict,” the ersatz cha-cha of “Cha Cha Loco,” the fusion instrumental “Loisaida” and the long, atmospheric lead into the minimal lyric of “Heart of Ice” derive from Weather Report, John Klemmer and Al DiMeola at best, Bill Conti and Maynard Ferguson at worst.

The man behind the transparent black-face mask has evolved into part Norman Vincent Peale, part Sylvester Stallone. Where on *Mike’s Murder* Jackson could still sing “I’m okay, you’re okay” with acid on his tongue, all he seems to taste now is the sweet narcotic nectar of the power of positive thinking. The album opens up promisingly with “The Verdict,” an overweening yet effective composition which contrasts explosive, martial choruses with frightened, vulnerable verses and jumbles its metaphors awkwardly and engagingly. Jackson takes the theme of waiting for justice (or injustice) from the film that inspired the song and applies it to romance (the lover’s judgment) and performing (“wonder what the critics have to say”).

The movie allusions reappear throughout, often ironically: “they don’t shoot horses” in *Cha Cha Loco*; “you don’t want to make a scene” in “Not Here, Not Now”; the *Rocky* inspiration of “Go For It”; “I’m in a movie where boy meets girl” in “Happy Ending.” The music—keyboards, bass, guitar, violin, saxes, flute, trumpet, flugelhorn and drums, enhanced by crystalline digital production—aspires to a cinemascopic effect in technicolor, but the sentiments are in black and white. It goes beyond Jackson identifying his heroes as Ray Charles and Babe Ruth. Even where his impassioned yowling—and he is one of the best yowlers around in the Van Morrison/Graham Parker school—conveys a sense of anguish, or where the body and soul dilemma (treated here as head vs. heart) stands in the way of happiness, Jackson reduces his difficulty to “it’s only in your mind” and prescribes the simplistic formula “try harder...go for it.”

When he gets mired down too deep in

self-torment, as in the lugubrious “Be My Number Two,” in which there is “Not much left of me,” Jackson adopts the *auteur* theory of filmmaking to relationships. He’ll find a leading lady whom he can mold into a supporting actress—“Every time I look at you/You’ll be who I want you to.” If he’s feeling even lower, he simply fashions a long instrumental build-up to the melodramatic image of “Take a knife/Cut out this heart of ice/Hold it high/Walk into the sun.” Now, that ought to make a great video.

In fact, as enjoyable as Jackson’s plucky musical amalgams are, with a bit of Motown here, a little salsa there, *Body And Soul* works best as a movie: MTV for the ears. A neat, half-satisfying reversal of the contemporary pop trend. At 28, he’s too old to be going through an adolescent identity crisis and too young for the mid-life version, but he’s come up with a thoroughly modern solution for them in the ‘80s. If you can’t find yourself in real life, go to the movies. And if you don’t like what’s playing, make one of your own.

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## TALK SHOW The Go-Go’s

I.R.S.

By  
Anthony  
DeCurtis

**F**or the past two years no one’s lips have been

sealed about the Go-Go’s’ problems traveling the road from glad rags to riches, and *Talk Show*, to its credit, hits this point head on. “Been running so long/I’ve nearly lost all track of time...I couldn’t see the warning signs” begins the album-opening “Head Over Heels,” and the nine tracks that follow all explore the complex relation between how much one can legitimately demand from the world and other people and how much one must be willing to offer and accept.

Musically, *Talk Show* brandishes a harnessed power that struts instrumental skill while at the same time exposing the Go-Go’s’ punky Los Angeles roots. Guitarists Charlotte Caffey and Jane Wiedlin are the heroines of producer Martin Rushent’s bright, rough mix. Though Caffey’s leads are sometimes feather-weight and predictable, the two girls flex double-muscle rhythms on “I’m the Only One” (co-written by Carlene Carter), “Head Over Heels,” “Turn To You” and “Forget That Day” (a love lament in which one apt riff stingingly quotes both “And Then He Kissed Me” and “Love Will Tear Us Apart”), pumping the band with a force and sureness they’ve never shown before.



Despite being one of the album’s less distinctive tunes, “Beneath The Blue Sky” closes with a compassionate vision of the common human struggle (“In the end there’s no privileged few/Everybody wants to live their lives through”), while in the folkish “Mercenary” a tender-voiced Belinda Carlisle flips the gender coin to skewer the soul-less posturing of a macho-female faithless lover: “She says: I just wanted to make you/I never meant to break you/He says: have some mercy on me/Do you have to such a mercenary?”

In its authority, thematic breadth and the hip irony of its title—mere entertainers may go the talk show route to justify lengthy creative dry spells; the Go-Go’s just deliver the goods—*Talk Show* represents a clear bid for top-clearance rock ‘n’ roll credentials and critical weight. Why, then, does such a formidable record appear in a package more appropriate to “Gidget Goes New Wave”?

In a welcome departure from previous album and magazine covers, the girls are fully clothed this time, though the five (counting promo pic) separate sets of duds per Go-Go suggest the flat, interchangeable identities of cut-out dolls rather than (dare it be said) real-life adult women. But dolls sell well, and sometimes even very good rock ‘n’ roll albums don’t. So why not hedge your bets, even on seriousness and integrity? These girls, though, will stick around and, what’s more, they don’t just want to have fun. What they do want—to have it both ways, apparently—is another issue, one this now-serious band will need to address both personally and professionally in time to come. For now, *Talk Show* explodes any doubts that *Vacation*’s lameness and 20 months of no product may have triggered about the Go-Go’s’ staying power.

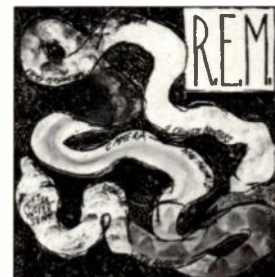
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## RECKONING R.E.M.

I.R.S.

By  
Christopher  
Hill

**T**he issue here is vision: where *Murmur* suggested it, *Reckoning* confirms it. The odd rightness with which R.E.M.’s eccentric elements mesh has little to do with standard musicality. Those ordinary forms of which R.E.M.’s music teasingly reminds us—even the very syntax of their lyrics—have been shattered from the inside out and rearranged by a force that precedes the conscious making of music. Their piercingly lovely, unsettling brand of pop music comes of no desire to create prettiness for





ts own sake. Rather, it's just when R.E.M.'s music is at its loveliest that you feel it's all about to burn off like mist to reveal some enormous and infinitely strange presence.

"Time After Time (Annelise)" is as suggestive an evocation of the timeless moment as any of the work of the Velvet Underground. Michael Stipe's vocal leads gently up note by note until it falls off the highest step in a corruscating crash, in a moment of pure guitar grace and drama from Pete Buck, like the billowing of silken tapestries in the hall of some ancient priest-king. In such moments, one accepts that Stipe's habitual incoherence is an attempt to express the inexpressible, that he does not write lyrics so much as perform incantations, as again and again the drone leads to ecstasy, and back to the drone again.

Loss and longing haunt this album. The one word chorus of "S. Central Rain" ("...sorry...") is flung out by Buck's poignant guitar to some gray horizon where regret is both constant and futile. In "Harborcoat," the confused interaction of the double-tracked vocals lifts with natural grace to a farewell at the chorus—"Bye-bye, my harborcoat/Can't go outside without it"—the melody sailing over a harbor that can now never be left. Producer Mitch Easter, while keeping the clattery, minimal sound of *Murmur*, has filled this album with space and echoes—not big long echoes, but sligher, more ethereal ones that disappear before you're sure you've heard them. It's like being inside an old and long-deserted house.

If, psychically, R.E.M. are headed further into the mystic, musically they are clearly defining themselves in a '60s garage/folk rock idiom. Listen to how things ring and chime here—the guitar figure that opens "Pretty Persuasion" sounds like Santa Claus descending from heaven in a sleigh full of golden bells. And on that cut and others, producer Easter has the drums thunder and boom like on a U2 record. Big, wide-open showpiece rockers dominate throughout the album. In "Second Guessing," the band even comes on a little surly and self-righteous, like angry young Stones, asking with a sneer, "Who will be your book this season?/Who will be your look this season?" as the chords grind and fly all around.

The elements of R.E.M.—the musician-ship, Stipe's lyrics—often flirt with familiarity, but in the end slip out of reach, defy definition. And yet the organic unity of these elements finally does produce a kind of meaning, on the unspoken level of the heart. Whether this mysticism is self-referential, absurd, perverse in its refusal to communicate straightforwardly, or a tongue-tied glimpse of the beauty and terror at the center of all things—which it mostly is—this fact is true: there is no richer pop music being made today.

Whether you buy it or not, *Reckoning* already belongs to you.

## HEARTBEAT CITY

The Cars

Elektra

By  
Anthony  
DeCurtis



The first sound on *Heartbeat City* is front Car Ric Ocasek's voice announcing amid a synthetic gust "Hello, hello again." The greeting is apt, given that aside from a couple of solo projects, it's been a long time between vinyl for the Cars.

In fact, the most interesting question *Heartbeat City* raises is why 30 months were necessary to write, record and release it. While this disc does command a respectable place in the Cars' oeuvre—less bold and dark than the debut; not as cartoonishly perverse as *Candy-O*; more accessible than *Panorama*; more substantial than *Shake It Up*—it will surprise no one with even a radio-educated ear for the band's sound and subjects.

Hoping to take a new turn, the Cars didn't do *Heartbeat City* with producer Roy Thomas Baker, who worked on their four previous albums. Instead, the Boston-based quintet opted to record in London with Robert John "Mutt" Lange, who's handled the board for Def Leppard, Graham Parker and AC/DC. But despite the fresh talent and shift in locale, this album trades on a familiar mix of quirky/catchy pop melodies; slick production; a diluted Velvets/Roxy/Iggy ambience; rich synthetic textures; potent guitars; lyrics that alternate voyeuristic distance with twitches of genuine feeling; and quiver-filled vocals that merge fear, fascination and erotic excitement into a blend that's sometimes edgy, sometimes silly.

*Heartbeat City* hardly lacks the potential smash singles that will ensure this band's characteristic platinum sales. The current release, "You Might Think," though not in the highest rank of Cars hits, is harmlessly appealing, while "Magic" fuses the recurrent Ocasek theme of kinky sensual obsession ("I see you under the midnight, all shackles and bows") with a stately, unobtrusively intricate arrangement burned into memory by an infectious chorus. The record's most fully realized cut is "Why Can't I Have You?," a yearning ballad set in the landscape of controlled emotional torment that Ocasek has carved out as his own.

Despite its virtues, *Heartbeat City* finds the Cars and songwriter Ocasek backed into a creative corner. While they've consistently produced strong work, their past three albums have failed to convey the rush of their first two. In this world no one should be faulted merely for falling short

R.E.M.'s *MURMUR*  
"Album of the Year  
and Best New Artist 1983"  
—Rolling Stone Magazine  
Critic's Poll

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## RECKONING

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of greatness. But when the skill, the means, the desire and past performance all argue that greatness is within reach, there's good reason for anyone who cares to wonder why it hasn't been achieved.

## LET THE MUSIC PLAY Shannon

Mirage

By  
James  
Hunter



Shannon's "Let The Music Play" is the kind of out-of-the-blue single sensation that often presages an album of material that can't begin to touch it. But such is definitely not the case with the *Let The Music Play* album. Three of its other four dance-floor-directed tracks—the sternly skippy "Sweet Somebody," the sternly clenching "My Heart's Divided," the sternly grand "Give Me Tonight"—deserve to be on the same record with "Let The Music Play," which is to say they're catchy to the point of being ornery, efficient to the point of being powerful.

Power, anyway, is the real subject of "Let The Music Play," and not the "he went away/will he come back?" song lyric Shannon sings with her winningly wound-up pleasantness. The single doesn't make its huge impression (and this track can pulverize a floor of dancers) with any one element of Mark Ligetti and Chris Barbosa's undistracted production. It's not the bubbling ten- and eleven-note electronic bass figures tirelessly repeating themselves and building the beat; it's not the synths, first reckless and chirpy, then grave and telescoping; and it's not Shannon, guileless and spirited as she is. Precisely, it's the way the whole turbocharged thing demonstrates its ability to channel some inaudible force into audible behavior. "Let The Music Play" inflicts form upon frenzy. And you dance.

So what kind of ballads belong on a record like this, a devastatingly modern dance album that's still somehow old-fashioned enough to insist upon having a couple of them? "Someone Waiting Home," which Shannon sings with suitably soulful Herley Johnson, Jr., for one—the electronic beats suddenly going oddly cozy, domestic, calm. Even better is the extravagant "It's You," where Shannon, heartbroken but forever unshy, has you sit still and listen to her true confessions.

Such moments of quiet pleasure aside, this is really an album of "Let The Music Play" and three other serious dance head-bangers. Play them loud. Turn it up. You will dance.

## THE FLAT EARTH Thomas Dolby

Capitol

By  
James  
Hunter



On the title track of *The Flat Earth*, his second album, Thomas Dolby insists that "the earth can be any shape you want it/Any shape at all." Substitute "technopop" for "earth" and you have a statement of how Dolby's music unfolds with a passion uncommon to a genre noted for encouraging cramped responses and measured emotions, stunted vocals and dispassionate lyrics. With his uncommon songwriting and producing talents, and his romantic but witty literary/cinematic sensibility (which feels unforced, as if he never stayed up nights trying to seem "passionate" or "sophisticated"), Thomas Dolby's music—founded in computer rhythms, electronic sound effects, and synthesizers—incur few if any formal liabilities. With *The Flat Earth*, his technopop becomes the standard for compositional richness and emotional breadth.

On the now-deleted 1982 version of *The Golden Age of Wireless*, Dolby's gifted but busy and hollow-sounding debut, a ballad as involving as "Airwaves" indicated his intense command of melody and media-world meditations. With a personal cosmopolitan elegy as briskly perceived and rhythmized as "Europa and the Pirate Twins," he suggested an unpretentious flair for the dramatic, his heavy taste for romantic memory. And the headstrong "Radio Silence" declared he'd sometimes rock, and *hard*. But Dolby's work was further finessed by the wild funk he stalked with a determined white person's zeal on *Blinded By Science*, his less harried and denser-toned 1983 EP. When *Wireless* was reprogrammed and repackaged last year to include the EP's "She Blinded Me With Science" smash single, as well as four other knobby, percolating gems, it was a much firmer and more persuasive record.

Above all, *The Flat Earth* is firm and persuasive; the songs demonstrate that technopop can be anything Dolby wants it to be. "Hyperactive" is danceable and wacky and outfitted with a mad trombone, yet still evocative of the dangers of diagnosing energy as insanity. "Dissidents" is shadowy, suspensefully funky, and driven as hard by its narrative threat of art officially condemned as by the high-*angst* guitars and cathartic singing. And, with its deliberate and rapt melodies, "Screen Kiss" brilliantly weaves an intricate passion play of homeless, lovesick Britons in Los Angeles.

Elsewhere, the album raves with driven guitars and beat machines on "White City, and muses perhaps too earnestly on "Mulu the Rain Forrest." But it then turns right around and gracefully arranges Dan Hicks' "I Scare Myself" into a mysterious song-poem of love and its special terrors. Like *The Flat Earth* in general, this is progress.

## DECLARATION The Alarm

I.R.S.

By  
J.D.  
Considine



It's very easy for the cynic in me to dismiss the Alarm as idealistic poseurs, and that bothers me. Not that this Welsh quartet, who, along with Big Country, rode into the American rock consciousness on the coat-tails of U2's youthful uplift, should turn out to be essentially shallow—indeed, repeated listenings to *Declaration* leave such a conclusion inevitable. Rather, what bugs me is that the whole thing should be so obvious, that the veneer on their allegedly militant stance should prove so thin. The notion that idealism can be sold as easily as a new hairstyle strikes me as basically repugnant, but that's exactly what the Alarm are selling: Generic Youth Idealism.

Start with their sound, and you'll have a pretty good idea of what I mean. With their combination of acoustic guitars and electric aggression, the Alarm manage to simultaneously cop licks from two of the most fervently ideological musical movements, folk and punk. Cue up "We Are The Light," and it's hard not to have the description "Dylan-esque" occur to you. Similarly, the vocals on "Where Were You Hiding When The Storm Broke?" could easily be mistaken for the Clash. But these are superficial resemblances at best—more often, the Alarm sound like mere imitators. And with good reason: the Alarm is a band whose identity is built from undigested influence and an almost touchingly naive belief that imitating greatness is the same thing as possessing it.

In a nutshell, the Alarm believe in the uncorrupt idealism of youth as the saving balm for humanity, believe that only through the purifying quest for TRUTH, BEAUTY, JUSTICE and LOVE can mankind be delivered from the festering sink-hole of injustice and abuse that their elders have created. Never mind that throughout history the only difference between Idealistic Youth and Corrupt Elders has been at most a couple of decades. Never mind that



It's more the nature of the beast than any particular generation that should be at issue here. These are important problems that need addressing, and the Alarm want us to know that they FEEL VERY STRONGLY about the whole thing.

But not so strongly that they're able to do more than play soldiers to their ideas, dressing up in uniforms of righteousness to slip at the unfaithful. That's not mere rhetoric on my part, either; guns and battles turn up with surprising regularity in these songs, so much so that one begins to wonder whether the Alarm's ideas don't really amount to the flip side of the very attitudes they decry. Consider: Both "Declaration" and "Marching On" apply the image of "we'll go marching on" in the sort of context generally reserved for conquering armies; "Third Light" is about a sniper attack; "Sixty-Eight Guns" is full of such stuff as "they're trying to take my life away" and "sixty-eight guns is our battle cry." And that's just side one.

Yeah, but I'm a cynic, and the Alarm have words for the likes of me: "It's funny how they shoot you down... When you open up your heart and soul/ But that's not enough for most." Maybe so, but I'd be a lot more enthusiastic if, when the Alarm open their hearts and souls, they had something more to show than self-aggrandizement and second hand slogans. As it is, *Declaration* has precious little to declare.

## POSITIVE POWER Steve Arrington's Hall of Fame

Atlantic

By  
Rico  
Mitchell

Steve Arrington's *Hall of Fame*: I was one of



1983's essential dance/party records. A former drummer and lead singer with the Ohio-based funk band Slave, Arrington is obviously hip to the current laws of funk—no parking on the dancefloor—yet his jazzy vocals and subtly sophisticated arrangements lent his debut LP a lasting listenability beyond the three-month shelf life of routine black pop.

His newest, *Positive Power*, is almost as groovalistic, and the mix is superior, but for some reason, these songs aren't nearly as much fun. Perhaps a clue as to why can be found in the liner notes, where our Hall-of-Famer declares, "Brothers and sisters, in the middle of this album a change came over me. I found God. So this album shows where I've been and where I'm going." No longer content to espouse funk's usual easy-going hedonism cut with the implicit

political awareness every thinking black person in America shares, Arrington now aspires to the role of spiritual cheerleader. Don't worry, he's still got his head on straight—the album is dedicated to Martin Luther King, Earth, Wind and Fire, James Brown, Stevie Wonder, Charlie Parker and Mahalia Jackson, among others. The problem is, little of the timeless spirit evoked by those inspirational figures filters its way through the considerable calculated commerciality of these grooves.

Most of the tunes were apparently written B.C. "15 Rounds" and "Hump To The Bump" are standard party fare, while "Money On It" features some scat singing superficially reminiscent of Al Jarreau before that singer's metaphorical move to the suburbs. "Sugar Momma Baby" and "Mellow As A Cello" are pleasant enough ballads as long as you don't pay to hear lyrics such as "You are the softer side of life/ You are God's orchestration of a female/ Mellow as a cello..." However, for all of his vocal gymnastics as demonstrated here, one wonders if Arrington is just going through the motions until the title track, which tells the story of his conversion, and "Young And Ready," a funk-pumped pep rally for inner city teenagers—"What's my name? YOUNG AND READY!/ Gonna keep my mind/ STRONG AND STEADY!"—catchy enough to interest those not easily distracted from lifestyles of dissipation.

*Positive Power* is not a bad album, just an inconclusive one. Of course, there is no reason (at least as far as this non-practicing Buddhist is concerned) why a man can't choose to sing about the joys of sex and the power of the Holy Ghost on the same twelve inches of vinyl. Marving Gaye did it purposefully and brilliantly on his 1981 *In Our Lifetime* album, and reggae singers do it as matter of course. Perhaps we'll learn more about the exact nature of Steve Arrington's calling next time out.

## GREATEST MESSAGES Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five Sugarhill

"JESSE"  
Grandmaster  
Melle Mel  
Sugarhill

By  
J.D.  
Considine

Records had messages before "The Message" exploded across the airwaves in 1982, but it remains extremely tempting to



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# GREED & CONTEMPT



## ELVIS: THE FIRST LIVE RECORDINGS

Elvis Presley  
The Music Works

## ELVIS—A LEGENDARY PERFORMER, VOL. 4

Elvis Presley  
RCA

## ELVIS' GOLD RECORDS, VOL. 5

Elvis Presley  
RCA

By David McGee

In the February issue of *Forbes*, Joseph Rascoff, a New York attorney currently overseeing the new merchandising of Elvis Presley (the first blast being Presley dolls, now available in fine toy stores everywhere), states the business community's conventional wisdom regarding the King of Rock 'n' Roll: "Elvis is a creative entity, a character, like Mickey Mouse," Rascoff says. "It doesn't matter that he was once a performer. That is rapidly becoming irrelevant."

Joseph Rascoff, meet Kevin Eggers, a man who stands small in the history of rock 'n' roll. An ex-booking agent, Eggers' claim to fame is his eagerness in recent years to spit upon Elvis Presley's grave, beginning with his pivotal role in assembling noted rockhater Albert Goldman's no-holds-barred biography, *Elvis*, a book based on the premise that Presley's music was irrelevant.

Eggers has resurfaced with a new label, The Music Works, established for the express purpose of releasing some ancient live tapes of Presley's appearances on *The Louisiana Hayride* radio show

in the mid-'50s, shortly before and immediately after his initial salvos on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. However, *Elvis: The First Live Recordings* does not represent the King's complete *Hayride* appearances: those are to be found on a Swedish import titled *The Louisiana Hayride*. In a classic scumbag move reeking of greed and contempt, Eggers has chosen to release, at \$6.98 a pop, only half of the tracks available to him (less than 12 minutes of music), with the rest of the tracks comprising a companion volume to this one.

RCA Records has been roundly, and sometimes justifiably criticized for its handling of Presley's recorded legacy (and the label will have to shoulder some of the responsibility for Eggers' monstrosity since it will release the record internationally and receive a royalty on U.S. sales), but nothing RCA has done compares to the shoddiness of *Elvis: The First Live Recordings*. Each volume of the *Legendary Per-*

*former* series contains a wealth of music (Vol. 4 has 11 previously unavailable tracks), as does the *Gold Records* series, while each *Legendary Performer* package comes with a booklet filled with rare Presley photos and succinct background information on each song. On the other hand, Richard Goldstein's liner notes for *Elvis: The First Live Recordings* are utterly useless, so numerous are the factual errors therein.

Ultimately, do these performances justify anyone shelling out seven bucks? No, not when *The Sun Sessions* and all of Presley's early albums are still in print, as well as any number of fine retrospectives. Suffice it to say that "I Wanna Play House," "Maybelline" and

"Tweedle Dee" are appropriately exuberant; "That's All Right," after a couple of false starts, makes it to the ozone; and "Hound Dog" burns righteously, despite Scotty Moore's dodgy guitar solo.

• *Legendary Performer, Vol. 4* offers an overview of Elvis at his best and near-worst (we could live without "The Lady Loves Me," a duet with Ann-Margret from *Viva Las Vegas*), but several moments of transcendent artistry make this record an essential buy. In addition to a feisty gospel rave-up on "Swing Down Sweet Chariot," Elvis checks in on

life and, indeed, spurs Presley to a deeper performance. This is an artist caught in the act of rediscovering himself, finding a missing piece of the jigsaw puzzle that was his personality. "I'll Remember You," an unreleased live track from the 1972 Madison Square Garden concert (originally recorded as a bonus song on the *Spinout* soundtrack in 1960), takes its place as one of Presley's finest love songs. It's all here: a measured but passionate vocal, sensitive band support, strings swelling ever so gently in the background as Elvis sings "I'll remember too/your voice as



Presley: The King as Mickey Mouse

the blues front with a sneering live version of Lowell Fulson's "Reconsider Baby" (although the songwriting credit is "L. Felson," an all-too-typical RCA gaffe) that's sparked by a stinging James Burton solo almost as electrifying as the one he would later contribute to the definitive treatment of "Merry Christmas, Baby" on *Elvis Sings The Wonderful World of Christmas*. The version of "That's All Right" included here, an unreleased track from Elvis's '68 comeback TV special, ranks with Presley's most important recordings, simply for what it reveals of the man. As remarkable as Elvis's vocal is, it's the incredible comradery between him and the other musicians that brings this track to

soft as a warm summer breeze..." His choices, his decisions on which words to emphasize, which ones to go once over tightly, are breathtaking.

Toss in *Gold Records, Vol. 5's* assemblage of exemplary tracks from Presley's latter years (including "Suspicious Minds," "Burning Love," "If I Can Dream" and "In The Ghetto") and you have another worthy alternative to *The First Live Recordings*. Ever the optimist, I hold out hope that rock fans will find a way to grind their boot heels in the face of Kevin Eggers and his ilk. But fools such as these are not easily dissuaded. For the moment, then, we beat on, as the expression goes, boats against the current.

PHOTO: BETTMAN ARCHIVES



argue that it was Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five who first elevated rap from mere boasting to the beat. So much so, in fact, that many of the fans who first picked up on the group with "The Message" will be surprised to find that the first side of this greatest hits-styled package is devoted to standard party-time jive. But then, this retrospective view of Flash and the Five's work is full of surprises.

Actually, the biggest surprise has more to do with what's missing, namely Grandmaster Flash's turntable *tour de force*, "The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel." Although genteel in comparison to the work of Grandmaster D. ST, Fab Five Freddie Braithwaite or Jam Master Jay, "Wheels of Steel" merits inclusion as the first scratch hit. More to the point, adding it would have better represented the creative balance of the band, for without it, *Greatest Messages* indicates that the group's best brain belongs to Melle Mel.

Not that such billing is wholly undeserved. After all, it was Melle Mel's aggressive, angry delivery that dominated "The Message." But you shouldn't allow the cutting social criticisms of Melle Mel's rap rhetoric sucker you into making more of his politics than is really there; underneath the righteous indignation over the way America's (white) system abuses blacks and the poor lies a mainstream Christian morality augmented by a vision of modern society more appropriate to that primer of yellow journalism, the *New York Post*.

All of which brings us to "Jesse." Credited to "Grandmaster Melle Mel," it follows the similarly listed "White Lines (Don't Do It)" in suggesting that the Furious Five are no more—which is ironic, given the extent to which "Jesse" is indebted to previous GF & FF singles, from the "He's comin'!" lick copped from "It's Nasty" to the post-message diatribe that makes up the bulk of this endorsement of the Reverend Jesse Jackson's Presidential campaign. That doesn't blunt the record's effectiveness much, but it is a tip-off that it was put together in a hurry, much like the Rev. Jackson's campaign. Personally, I expect better efforts from both next time.

## WILD STYLE Various Artists

Animal/Jem

By  
Rico  
Mitchell

**W**ild Style is a buoyant little movie set in the South Bronx hip-hop culture of graffiti



artists, rap M.C.'s, scratchmix d.j.'s and break dancers. Produced on a tiny budget by Charlie Ahearn, with musical direction by Fred Braithwaite (better known as Fab Five Freddy), the film offers a street level view of the new urban folk art forms that have rapidly captured the imagination of much of the nation, and of the young, ghetto-born blacks and Puerto Ricans who create them (there are no professional actors in the cast).

The soundtrack album was taped, for the most part, live on location, which gives it some of the raw, natural flavor of a Folkways or Nonesuch Explorer field recording. The raps and deejay turntable mixing are less polished than what you might expect to hear on, say, a Sugarhill 12", but the genuine enthusiasm of the participants pulls the listener along (although it may help if you've seen the movie first).

The artists' favorite topic is, of course, sex (what'd you expect?), followed closely by money and fame, along with a lot of good-natured boasting as to who can rock the house the hardest. Through all the loose-lipping and ego-tripping, however, one is struck by the young artists' determination to affirm life even in the most miserable of social conditions. As one of the participants, Grandmaster Caz, declares in his "Subway Rap": "I'm a warrior, art is my sword/A place in society is my reward..." Let's hope so.

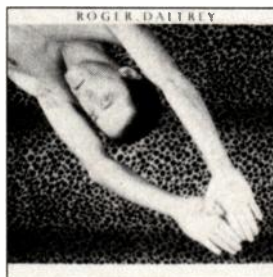
## PARTING SHOULD BE PAINLESS Roger Daltrey

Atlantic

By  
Wayne  
King

**R**oger Daltrey's previous solo excursions were all minor affairs, and deliberately intended so. Despite some modest success with his earliest efforts, the records were really only vocal exercises to keep his throat limber and his name prominent during the lengthy breaks in the Who's last ten years together. But *Parting Should Be Painless*, his first real project since 1977's *One Of The Boys* (the 1980 *McVicar* album was the soundtrack to the prison film he starred in), is the first time he's stepped out since the Who's demise, and necessity dictates that he establish some sort of individual recording personality. Unfortunately, his performance on *Parting* simply isn't equal to the task.

The basic backing group, which includes guitarist Chris Spedding and former Blockheads Norman Watt Roy and Mickey Gallagher, and the production by Mike



Thorne are adequate. But Daltrey demonstrates no commitment to the tunes, doesn't get behind them in any convincing way. He's never been a great interpreter—the years spent being only Townshend's mouthpiece have seen to that—but that doesn't excuse the distance separating his voice from the music here. Perhaps having to scream above the amped-up attack of the Who has left him unable to hear what a song should sound like.

What's more likely, though, is that his heart is simply not in it. The most surprising aspect of the Who's farewell tour was Daltrey's admission that it was all over for him; he was the one band member always able and willing to supply the necessary energy to keep the Who rolling on. With a satisfactory lifestyle as actor, family man and country squire already established, one has to wonder about the man's willingness to commit himself to a solo pop career. On the basis of *Parting Should Be Painless*, it's time for Roger Daltrey to ask himself just how badly he wants to continue.

## THE SMITHS The Smiths

Sire

By  
Jonathan  
Gregg



**T**he Smiths are a British quartet voted the Best New Band of 1983 by readers of Britain's trend-setting weekly, *New Musical Express*, and if nothing else they are evidence that the classic guitar band configuration has a few good years left, regardless of what new toys technology has to offer. Strongly reminiscent of the Byrds or Television, the Smiths' instrumental sound—a jangling symbiosis of guitars outlining some lovely chord progressions—is their strongest asset. Over this sympathetic background, vocalist/lyricist Morrissey sings in a languorous, Joy Division-inflected voice, and though several songs are impressive enough ("Pretty Girls Make Graves," "What Difference Does It Make," "Suffer Little Children"), as a whole they suffer from a shortage of variation in the melodies, and general lack of rhythmic cohesion between the singing and the song, as Morrissey often seems to talk over the music. The lyrics are definitely a cut above the usual fodder, and the overall sound is different enough to be considered unique. But you'd have to get to know these songs pretty well to tell them apart, and even the best ones, while agreeably atmospheric, lack the real hooks needed to capture the American imagination.



# R.E.M.

Continued from page 22

end Howard Finster, an extraordinarily eccentric religious visionary and Georgia folk artist.

But R.E.M.'s deep grounding in a specific local scene has not made them hick snobs, but ardent supporters of local scenes everywhere. "I guarantee that I have more records from 1983 in my collection than any other year," Buck says. "I mostly buy independent records by American bands, and there's a lot of good ones. All over the country we go, and every town has at least one really top-notch group. Maybe they're too uncompromising or maybe they're all not pretty boys, or maybe they're just weird. From Los Angeles that has a million good bands now—Dream Syndicate, Rain Parade, Black Flag, Channel 3, Minutemen—to the Replacements and Husker Du from Minneapolis, Charlie Burton and the Cut-outs from Nebraska, Charlie Pickett and the Eggs from Ft. Lauderdale, Jason and the Scorchers from Nashville. Good bands all over America doing exciting things, and no one really hears them. Hopefully things will pick up."

Back at Reflection, after a week of 15-hour days doing final mixes, it's Friday night and party time. An ice-storm has slammed the lid on whatever Charlotte's night life normally consists of, so the combo and friends are relaxing and throwing back the brew in the studio itself. Jefferson Holt, R.E.M.'s manager, motors in from Athens, bringing word that an Atlanta high school has invited the band to discuss their profession on "Career Day."

Buck, a frustrated teacher who accepted an offer earlier in the day to address an English class at Emory University, leaps at the news. "We've gotta do it!" he exclaims, grinning maniacally. "I'll tell 'em, 'Look, there's no such thing in the real world as algebra, so don't worry about it!'"

Everyone laughs, but Bill Berry grows serious for a moment: "I'd like to do it. I want to tell them about how hard we really have to work and how we don't really make any money. They should know that it's not like what they read about."

"Aw, c'mon Bill," Buck counters with a speed and gentleness almost saintly in a man whose annual income has yet to crack five figures. "We live like rich people. We get to travel all over, and our meals and hotel bills are paid for. We sleep late and get to be creative and do what we want. It's a privilege to do what we do."

Two hard-working energetic musicians, one naive avant-gardist and one young man gripped by the vision of rock 'n' roll promise, all striving to make music that is both popular and deserving of its popularity. If that's not the rapid eye movement of some hip American dream, who cares to think about what we'll have to wake up to? ○

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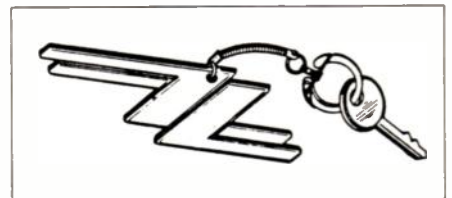
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