

THE THOMPSON TWINS: POP IMPERIALISTS IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

# RECORD

CHASING THE  
CARS



AUGUST 1984  
VOL.3 NO.10  
\$1.50 U.K. 80p.

DIRE  
STRAITS  
STRAIT TALK WITH  
MARK KNOPFLER

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SPRINGSTEEN  
BACK FROM  
THE RIVER





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# RECORD

AUGUST 1984 VOL. 3 NO.10

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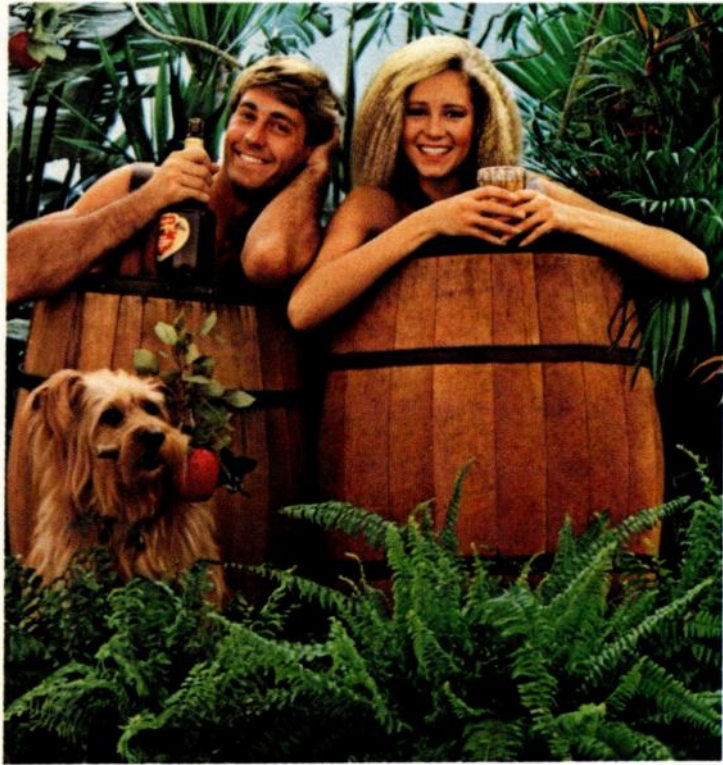
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# How to tempt your lover without wearing a fig leaf.



First there was light. Followed soon thereafter by man and woman, a.k.a. Adam and Eve. Then came the business with the apple, and before you could say "You snake in the grass," five zillion years went by. But all wasn't for naught, because that fateful faux pas not only altered the history of haberdashery but also inspired the creation

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## PRETENDERS

WAYNE KING'S DEFINITION of Chrissie Hynde and her music ("Chrissie Walks The Line," April RECORD) is one of the best I have read. Her bond with the people who admire her is "a covenant between performer and listener, which recognizes that the needs of both are one and the same," and her songs continually open our eyes to the reality of our lives. She is strong in her vision and that's why the Pretenders have been able not only to survive but to succeed. Learning to crawl? Hynde can stand proud knowing she will not be a victim of rock 'n' roll.

KATHY ABSHIRE  
Lafayette, LA

I CAN'T LET WAYNE King's discussion of The Pretenders in the May issue ("And Then You Walk") get by without saying something. King refers to the Pretenders' "unwillingness to examine the questions of freedom and power and responsibility [in the music industry] from all angles" and laments their "concern over matters of art only" as evidence of their somehow having lapsed into a mainstream normalcy, which he can't bear. Why, in the critical mind, is a band to be encouraged only until it produces a commercially successful album?

It's not stretching the issue to suggest that attitudes like King's frustrate artists and limit them in their quest to produce work of high quality, work that will endure. Demanding a credo of "punk"

upheaval and "reform" from an album as fully realized as *Learning to Crawl* is absurd. The record is itself a triumph over attitudes that seek to replace hard-won wisdom with regressive social cynicism.

Let Chrissie Hynde and the Pretenders grow up. It's only because they have that *Learning to Crawl* exists, and will continue to speak to those with their minds on change—change born of love. MARY KAY HAUBER  
Solana Beach, CA

## MICHAEL JACKSON

REGARDING DAVE MARSH's open letter to Michael Jackson in the June RECORD, I'd like to point out how hard it is to change things for and among a group of people. Even after years of trying, a person could come away frustrated because things seem never to change—indeed, many times they seem to be worse than when the effort began. I realize it takes money to set up a tour, but the money most artists are asking is outrageous. Fans should be shown some respect, and there are a lot of fans who would like to be part of the Jacksons' tour—to party out and hear some good music. But all we're hearing is talk of money, and more money. In that same issue the Clash talk about trying to get the US Festival to set up a fund to send disabled children to camp. To me that's respect. Michael Jackson and his brothers should be so concerned.

SANDRA WASHINGTON  
River Edge, NJ

## R.E.M.

ANTHONY DeCURTIS' article on R.E.M. in the June issue ("An Open Party") was excellent. If this band fails to gain the mass popularity given to less inspired groups like Culture Club, it won't, I think, be because they've been under-analyzed. So to DeCurtis' article I'd just like to add that the band still hasn't forgotten its Athens fans. They returned in March to play two sold-out shows and also pulled a surprise show with Warren Zevon behind up-and-coming local band Love Tractor. Earlier that week four bands did a benefit show for another band that had had \$3000 in equipment stolen. With that kind of cooperation, spirit and local fan support, don't be surprised if you see more Athens bands break the national scene in the future. But please don't analyze them to death. It can take the fun out of it.

RUSTY CARTMILL  
Athens, GA

## LAST WORD

I WAS ANGERED AND upset over Stuart Adamson's remarks about America and its artists. I'm not in the habit of letting musicians' tastes sway my opinion regarding another band's music, but in this case I've made an exception. Saying that America has produced nothing worth calling art was not only deeply insulting to many fine musicians, but also to many Americans who have

bought Big Country's records. Now, if that remark wasn't bad enough, Adamson's reply to Brian Setzer's wonderful letter offered no apology whatsoever; it was simply a weak attempt to justify his ridiculous comments. As for Brian Setzer's suggestion that we throw our Big Country albums out the window... well, I have much more respect for my lawn than that.

JILL HOOD  
Owasso, MI

HOPING THAT THE RIDICULOUS feud between Stuart Adamson and the Stray Cats has had its final say, I would like to commend Anthony DeCurtis for his fine article on R.E.M. ("An Open Party," June RECORD), a band that deserves every bit of attention it gets. After listening to R.E.M., it's amazing how banal most other rock bands sound in comparison. Perhaps we should all toss our Big Country and Stray Cats albums out the window and start paying attention to some real important American bands like R.E.M., Rank and File, X and Translator.

LAURA LOMBARDI  
Bethpage, NY

## CORRECTION

THE STORY ON ROCK-well in the June RECORD incorrectly reported that Jermaine Jackson was dropped by Motown Records last year. Jackson asked for and received his release from the label. He now records for Arista Records.

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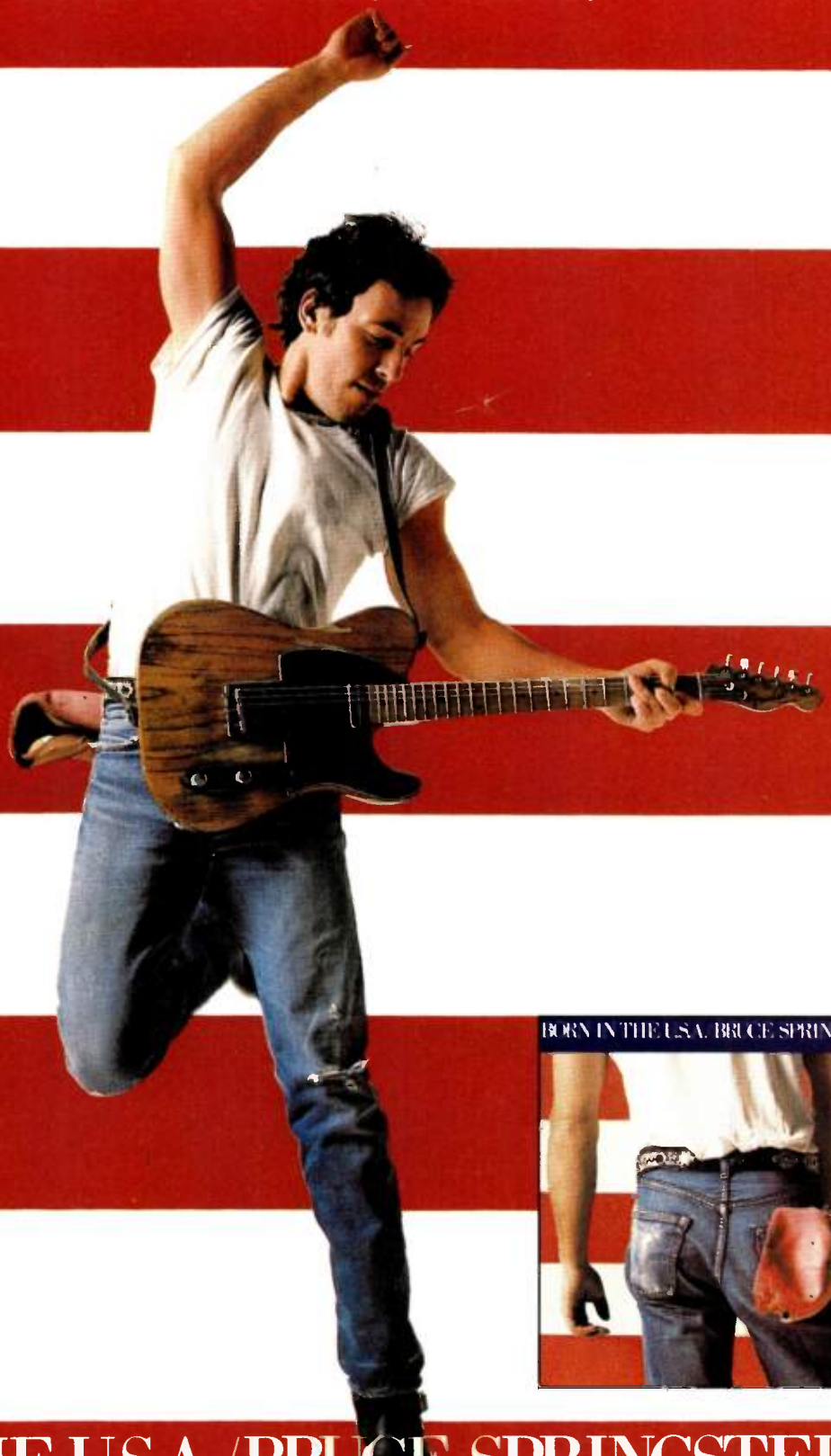
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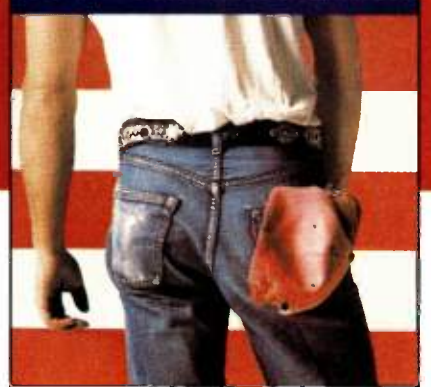
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**1 SOUNDTRACK**  
"Footloose" Columbia

**2 SPORTS**  
Huey Lewis and The News Chrysalis

**3 SHE'S SO UNUSUAL**  
Cyndi Lauper Portrait/CBS

**4 HEARTBEAT CITY**  
The Cars Elektra

**5 COLOUR BY NUMBERS**  
Culture Club Epic

**6 THRILLER**  
Michael Jackson Epic

**7 CAN'T SLOW DOWN**  
Lionel Richie Motown

**8 INTO THE GAP**  
Thompson Twins Arista

**9 1984**  
Van Halen Warner Bros.

**10 AN INNOCENT MAN**  
Billy Joel Columbia

**11 LEARNING TO CRAWL**  
The Pretenders Sire

**12 GRACE UNDER PRESSURE**  
Rush PolyGram

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

**14 TOUCH**  
Eurythmics RCA

**15 STREET TALK**  
Steve Perry Columbia

**16 TALK SHOW**  
The Go-Go's I.R.S.

**17 LOVE AT FIRST STING**  
The Scorpions Mercury

**18 SEVEN AND THE RAGGED TIGER**  
Duran Duran Capitol

**19 RECKONING**  
R.E.M. I.R.S.

**20 REBEL YELL**  
Billy Idol Chrysalis

**21 THE PROS AND CONS OF HITCH HIKING**  
Roger Waters Columbia

**22 MIRROR MOVES**  
Psychedelic Furs Columbia

**23 SOUNDTRACK**  
Against All Odds Atlantic

**24 UH-HUH**  
John Cougar Mellencamp Rive

**25 ALCHEMY**  
Dire Straits Warner Bros.

**26 JERMAINE JACKSON**  
Jermaine Jackson Arista

**27 ABOUT FACE**  
David Gilmour Columbia

**28 BREAK OUT**  
The Pointer Sisters Planet/RCA

**29 MIDNIGHT MADNESS**  
Night Ranger MCA

**30 SOUNDTRACK**  
Hard To Hold RCA

**31 ELIMINATOR**  
ZZ Top Warner Bros.

**32 CHICAGO XVII**  
Chicago Full Moon/Warner Bros.

**33 MADONNA**  
Madonna Warner Bros.

**34 LOVE LIFE**  
Berlin Geffen/Warner Bros.

**35 90125**  
Yes Atco

**36 AMMONIA AVENUE**  
The Alan Parsons Project Arista

**37 MISTER HEARTBREAK**  
Laurie Anderson Warner Bros.

**38 IT'S MY LIFE**  
Talk Talk EMI

**39 SHE'S STRANGE**  
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Ratt Atlantic

**41 SELF CONTROL**  
Laura Branigan Atlantic

**42 SOUNDTRACK**  
"The Big Chill" Motown

**43 THE SWING**  
INXS Atco

**44 RHYME & REASON**  
Missing Persons Capitol

**45 SHOUT AT THE DEVIL**  
Mötley Crüe Elektra

**46 FUTURE SHOCK**  
Herbie Hancock Columbia

**47 WINDOWS AND WALLS**  
Dan Fogelberg Full Moon/Epic

**48 KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF MY POWER SUPPLY**  
Slade CBS Associated

**49 MY EVER CHANGING MOODS**  
Style Council Geffen/Warner Bros.

**50 IN THE HEART**  
Kool & the Gang PolyGram

**51 SYNCHRONICITY**  
The Police A&M

**52 LABOUR OF LOVE**  
UB40 Virgin/A&M



**53 GENESIS**  
Genesis Atlantic

**54 POINTS ON THE CURVE**  
Wang Chung Geffen

**55 IN 3-D**  
Weird Al Yankovic Scotti Bros./Epic

**56 ROCK 'N' SOUL PT. 1**  
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**57 HALLOWED GROUND**  
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**58 CAUGHT IN THE ACT**  
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**59 THE FLAT EARTH**  
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**61 BUSY BODY**  
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**93 MODERN TIMES**  
Steps Ahead Elektra/Musician

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U2 Island

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"Flashdance" Casablanca

**96 LAMENT**  
Ultravox Chrysalis

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The Crusaders MCA

**98 THINK OF ONE**  
Wynton Marsalis Columbia

**99 BANANARAMA**  
Bananarama PolyGram

**100 SOMEBODY'S WATCHING ME**  
Rockwell Motown



## LEAVING THE FOLD

*The Temptations' 'rock man' goes solo*

OAKLAND, Ca.—For 17 years Dennis Edwards was the “rock man” in the Temptations. “I did all the hard, rough things,” he says. “That’s one of the reasons I left: I want to do more of a sensuous thing now. I want to sing with these girls!”

And so he does. The title track of Edwards’ debut solo album, *Don’t Look Any Further*, is a steamy duet with Siedah Garrett, a “cutie pie” Edwards discovered singing demos. The song fits in nicely with Edwards’ plan to expand beyond his role in the Temptations. “I love Teddy Pendergrass and Luther Vandross,” he says. “Those are the types of things I want to do, and I didn’t get around to doing them with the group.”

Produced by Dennis Lambert (who produced *Surface Thrills* for the Temptations), *Don’t Look Any Further* finds the big-voiced singer in in-



Edwards: Into a more sensuous thing

spired form even without his long-time mates. Edwards was a member of the Contours (“Do You Love Me”) when he joined the Temptations in 1968 as the replacement for David Ruffin, the first of the original group members to leave for a solo career. He proceeded to cut 30 albums with the Temptations, 14 of which have been certified either gold or platinum. And even though Edwards is pleased with his first solo venture, he admits to some ambivalence about leaving the fold. “There’s a lot of freedom in being a solo artist, and I don’t know whether that’s good or bad, because I miss the guys. But I had to make a decision.” Edwards had the option to do a solo album under the Temptations’ contract with Motown, but “I kept putting it off because we were so involved with the Temptations. Finally I decided I was going to do my album, and I couldn’t do both at the moment.”

“We still love one another, and we’ve both got hit records,” he concludes. “So everybody’s happy.”

—David Gans

## UP AGAINST THE WALL

*Linton Kwesi Johnson keeps the reggae faith*

NEW YORK—The four years since Linton Kwesi Johnson’s last LP release have seen an outpouring of militance among the British blacks who are his main constituents. Riots in 1981, sparked off by the arson which killed 13 blacks at a dance in London’s New Cross section, were a catalyzing factor. That tragedy and its aftermath are the central subjects of Johnson’s intriguing new album, *Making History*, on Mango.

“Not much has changed, but we’re more confident since the riots,” Johnson says. “We’ve seen what we can do if we’re pushed against the wall.”

LKJ, 31, is well-versed in the lives of people on the edge. Besides being reggae’s leading dub poet—he virtually created the genre—he’s a community organizer, reggae historian and lecturer, and leader of the cultural wing of Race Today, a London black activist collec-

tive. His three books and five albums are the work of a public poet, who lends his power of expression to those who might otherwise have no voice. “I want to give an accurate portrayal of working class life in black Britain,” he says, “but I also hope that other people will be interested, gain information from it, and maybe even draw some parallels to their own lives.”

Helping LKJ get the point across is the Dub Band. Led by bassist Dennis Bovell, their loose, jazzy reggae is just as powerful and innovative as Johnson’s angry but often caressing recitation. “People are just beginning to realize that reggae is not limited to the rasta thing as it’s been presented in the media,” Johnson says, “and I think dub poetry represents a way of keeping alive the protest element in reggae.”

—Stuart Cohn



“We’ve seen what we can do if we’re pushed against the wall”

PHOTO ANDY FREIBERG



## 'SKATER MENTALITY'

*Austin's Big Boys walk on the wild side*

AUSTIN—While his band is rapidly gaining one of the largest hardcore followings in the heartland, Big Boys guitarist Tim Kerr is taking things one day at a time. "We really got together to play once and all this stuff has been amazing us ever since. I mean we're serious about what we're doing, but it's not like, 'Okay, we're gonna do this and this and we'll get this big record deal.' If it ends tomorrow, I've done more than I thought I'd ever do; it's been well worth it."

Formed in Austin in 1977, the Big Boys—Kerr, vocalist Randy Turner, bassist Chris Gates, drummer Rey Washam—have released four records, including a critically-acclaimed EP, *Fun, Fun, Fun*, and an LP, *Lullabies Help the Brain Grow* (Moment Productions, 5400 Ave. H, Austin, TX, 78751). With what sounds like a cheering section singing along on some



**Big Boys (from left) Rey Washam, Tim Kerr, Randy Turner, Chris Gates: Free-for-alls and proper attitudes**

tracks, the *Fun, Fun, Fun* EP is most indicative of a Big Boys performance. "Our shows are pretty much a free-for-all," Kerr notes. "If you know the songs you can get up and sing. There are songs that as soon as you start into the first chord

the stage starts filling up."

And how does a band that plays convincing funk and whose influences range from heavy metal to jazz come to favor hardcore? Kerr explains that in Texas, "hardcore is more attitude than that 1-2-3

kind of music. We were always real 'skater mentality,'" a reference to the bond that exists between the skateboard and hard-core crowds. Adds Kerr: "We always stayed on the wilder side."

—Thomas Anderson

## ROLLING AND TUMBLING

*The Dice are looking to collect*

TORONTO—They say that a lucrative career in Canadian rock usually starts at the airport with a one-way ticket to New York. Of course, if you can't afford the fare, a van will do. That's how the Dice, a rough-and-tumble trio that had been kicking around the bar circuit for far too long, got their break.

"We were about to pack it in when our agent got us a showcase at the Ritz," says guitarist Gary Lima. "Polygram saw us and committed to an album right there."

Polygram hooked the band up with Rolling Stones' producer Chris Kimsey, and Mick Jagger gets credit on the band's self-titled debut album for "inspirational dancing" around the studio during ses-



**The Dice: Only in it for the money**

sions. Actually it was Jagger himself who discovered the band three years ago and wanted to sign the Dice to the Stones' label.

"We asked Mick if we could put his name on the album because we said it would get us more chicks," laughs Lima, who formed the band in 1975. The trio is rounded out by bassist Trevor Russell and drummer Hayden Vialva. A fourth member is being added on guitar.

"We were always into early Stones and Who and incorrectly thought that the original punk thing was the same kind of scene," recalls Lima. "But it was really self-destructive and the punks didn't like us because we wanted to make money."

"The problem with Canada is that its population is too small and there's not enough money in the business. In the U.S., I noticed that people expect you to at least try to be different. In Canada they want conformity."

—Jonathan Gross





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## "I FORGOT THE COMBINATION!"

Depending upon your choice of friends, forgetting the Combonation could ruin a party or land you in the state pen for 15 to 30. **Combonation's** self-titled debut LP was produced by **Ted Templeman**, whose credits include the entire **Van Halen** and **Doozie Brothers** catalogs. Combonation is a So. Cal. quintet with what is commonly referred to as 'diverse' musical influences. Cuts to listen for include **"Girls Like You," "Babble On"** and **"Nature Of The Beast."**

Vol. 84, No. 3

**"YOU SHOULD COME TO ONE OF MY EDITH PIAF PARTIES"**—flamenco dancing to the music and me playing the spoons. It's really funny." So says **Carmel**, the woman behind the name behind the band. Joined by upright bass player **Jimmy Paris** and drummer **Gerry Darby**, Carmel has lent her considerable vocal talents to **The Drum Is Everything**, the English group's U.S. debut LP. It's neither pazz nor jop.

**DEPECHE WE HAVE TO OFFER, AND ALL THAT YAZ...** **Vince Clarke**, formerly of **Yaz**, and **E. C. Radcliffe**, **Depeche Mode** engineer and **Yaz** producer, are **The Assembly**. The two men invite a different guest singer to participate on each of their records; on **"Never, Never,"** the band's first U.S. maxi-single, the guest vocalist is **Feargal Sharkey** of the late and lamented **Undertones**; **Humble Pie's** **Clem Clempson** handles guitars. Meanwhile, **Depeche Mode's** new record is **People Are People**. The record is a self-selected summation of the band's most recent work, including their current hit single. Both are on Sire...

**STOP MAKING SENSE** is the title of the new **Talking Heads** concert film and sound track album... **The Bluebell's** new album is due out momentarily... **David Van Tieghem** (**Laurie Anderson's** percussionist) has recorded both a new album and surprising performance video.

**THE BEES ARE BACK IN TOWN.** That's right, the **Killer B's** have returned. Our slightly mad director of publicity has culled yet another album of odd, strange and otherwise unavailable tracks by some of our favorite artists. **Revenge Of The Killer B's** features single B-sides and weird recordings by the likes of **Marshall Crenshaw**, **XTC**, **Tom Verlaine**, **Madonna**, and the **B-52's**. A honey of a record.

**THE BANSHEES' SIOUXSIE** has again been selected as best female rock vocalist by the readers of *New Musical Express*. (That's four years in a row, but who's counting?) **Siouxsie And The Banshees'** new album (their first for Geffen) is titled **Hyaena**; the first single is a remake of the Fab Four's **"Dear Prudence"**. Watch for the upcoming tour...

**IT'S NOT OUR FAULT.** We were in Nevada at the time. We didn't know anything about it. If you know anything about it, write to "This Is Advertising?," Dept. R, at P.O. Box 6868, Burbank, CA 91510, and we'll send you an arguably valuable, arguably beautiful and arguably useful collector's (cough, cough) item. Supplies are limited, so break out those crayons and write now! This offer is only good in the U.S. Sorry Canada. And keep the home fires burning.

**YOUR EARS ARE YOUR BEST SURVIVAL GEARS.** The proper music can enhance—and perhaps save—your life. With this in mind, Warner Bros. is pleased to announce the release of the **Survival Sampler**, subtitled **"Series SR-1A Sound Rations."** That olive drab can you've seen in your local record store contains one cassette, and 12 cuts of new music (one each) from the following bands: **The Smiths**, **The Church**, **China Crisis**, **Scritti Politti**, **Carmel**, **King Crimson**, **Aztec Camera**, **The Cure**, **The Bluebells**, **Modern English**, **The Assembly**, and **Depeche Mode**. Munch on.

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**Fraser: Free of Free and better off for it**

## FREE AT LAST

*Andy Fraser comes into his own*

NEW YORK—A few years ago, Andy Fraser was playing in a rock trio whose drummer he describes as a "19-year-old kid with a runny nose who was so poor I had to lend him bus fare to get home."

Years later the former bassist of Free ran into the drummer. "His name's Kim Turner," says Fraser. "He manages the Police . . . and now me. I guess it's a pretty small world, the music business."

Indeed it is. Perhaps too small for Andy Fraser, who has been struggling for a decade to escape the spectre of Free and its pioneering lead vocalist, Paul Rodgers. "For me to come out of Free and sing was a big step. I always

felt pressure to look good in his (Rodgers') light, and until recently I wasn't comfortable with that role."

As a solo artist in the '70s, Fraser's recording career never got going. He even tried session work. "I did a session with Donovan about 10 years ago and ended up attempting to rewrite his songs and tell him what to do. I knew I wasn't cut out for that job."

Nevertheless, even as a member of Free, Fraser felt his talents were mainly singing and writing, rather than bass playing. And he believes his first solo outing for Island, *Fine, Fine Line*, is proof-positive that he is at last out of Rodgers' shadow and fulfilling his potential in those areas.

"As a performer I'm giving 100 percent of myself to vocals. I like being out front, and I don't care as much how they compare me to Free."

—Mark Mehler

## THE FAT OF THE MATTER

*Mitchell Froom makes do with what's there*

SAN FRANCISCO—What do four large slabs of lard have to do with the synthesizer bebop and other recombinant musics on Mitchell Froom's album, *Key of Cool*? You might well ask. This was museum-quality shortening, you see, and along with other artworks Froom encountered in a visit of the Guggenheim Museum—coincident with the acquisition of his first polyphonic synthesizer—it "shook me out of a certain complacency in music and triggered the notion that perhaps I could do things completely different."

And so he did. *The Key of Cool*, the first solo album by the keyboardist-composer-producer whose most noteworthy efforts to date have been in the company of guitarist Ronnie Montrose, brings multifarious musical interests to bear on the rock which is Froom's main concern. "I wanted to keep rock's aggres-

sion—which is best personified in the way the drums are played [by fellow Gamma alumnus and current Heart drummer Denny Carmassi]—and the subversive quality of the lyrics," he explains.

"I disavowed preconceptions of harmony, how songs are put together, how vocals should be. One cut has Mexicans arguing, which has a much stronger emotional effect than screaming about partying down; on 'Miami Priests' I used coughing as an improvisational tool to rhythmically play off other instruments." On another track, lyricist Jerry Stahl plays his typewriter.

It's a far cry from the session work Froom does in Los Angeles to keep body and soul together. "I would love it if I could make this stuff self-supporting," he says, "because then I could just concern myself with trying to go further and further." —David Gans



**Froom: Using the cough as an improvisational tool**



## A ONE-HIT WONDER?

*Tracey Ullman is a rock star by accident*

NEW YORK—Though she's a hit recording artist in the United States, the folks in Tracey Ullman's native England prefer her as a dippy but earthy storyteller, wisecracker and bon vivant—in other words, the sort of 24-year-old who'd admit on national TV to forgetting to put on underwear under a dress before going dancing. "The man I was dancing with didn't know it and spun me around and I'm whispering into his ear, 'I have no knickers on,' but he doesn't hear me and the entire audience is in tears at this terrible sight. That's a true story and that's what I do onstage."

A chance meeting at the hairdressers with the wife of Stiff Records founder Dave

Robinson led to Ullman's being signed by the label, even though her previous vocal excursions had been confined to the London stage in shows such as *Grease*. Yet her debut LP, *You Broke My Heart In 17 Places* has gone Top 40 here and produced a hit single in "They Don't Know," and "Breakaway."

Still, acting is Ullman's main squeeze. She's got a part in Paul McCartney's *Give My Regards To Broad Street* film (Paul returned the favor by popping up in the video for "They Don't Know") and she's starring in a new U.K. television series, *Girls on Top*, about the travails of four girls living in one flat. "But please don't call it a sitcom," Ullman pleads. "When I hear that I get hot under the collar. I won't do anything that's so pat people see it as middle class. I hope I never do anything that's not fresh."

—Mark Mehler



Johnson: Striving for a romantic ideal



Ullman: 'I hope I never do anything that's not fresh'

## WE ARE NOT ALONE

*That is, The The's Matt Johnson is not alone*

NEW YORK—Matt Johnson is alone again, naturally.

"I outgrow people," explains the founder and now sole member of Britain's The The. "When we started (as a four-piece combo) five years ago, it seemed to make sense, but after awhile I was carrying all that load—writing, playing, performing—and others were grabbing credit. You know that people don't grow at the same rate. My ability was increasing and they couldn't keep up."

Some dare call that conceit. Johnson calls it confidence, and says it dates back to a strange experience at the age of 10, when his parents purchased a pub in London. "This one pub they bought was haunted," Johnson recalls.

"The first thing I remember is hearing music drift up from the bar to my room on the second floor. One day, a weird feeling came over me. I knew there was something in the room looking over my shoulder. Eventually, I began to feel whatever it was in that room was encouraging me. It took a little longer for me to see I was the one holding the reins, and that as long as I had enough faith, I could go on and be somebody. That's when I began taking music seriously."

The music on The The's debut LP, *Soul Mining*—rife with African rhythms and brooding lyrics—probes the relationship between happiness and ambition. Such conflicts have already come between the artist and his girlfriend, but Johnson continues to strive for "a more romantic ideal," all the while encouraged by the spirit of the pub. "I still have the feeling," he quips, "that there's something guiding me along."

—Mark Mehler



# Salem Spirit

# On the Beat



As the brashest, most politically aligned band to emerge from the British punk scene during the latter half of the 70s, the **Clash** initially pledged that Big Business Rock was something they wanted no part of. Times change, as do attitudes. With the chart success of **Combat Rock** in 1982, the Clash managed to sneak across the border into mainstream rock, even as friction within their ranks seemed to be pushing them toward premature self-destruction. Rather than let the whole concept that spawned LPs like the epic *Sandinista* and *London Calling* go down the tubes, however, founding members **Joe Strummer** and **Paul Simonon** opted to rev up again with a new personnel roster, and recruited drummer **Pete Howard** and guitarists **Nick Shepard** and **Vince White** to replace departing members. This new lineup spent most of this past spring on the road in America, and Epic Records reports that Britain's fiery five are now holed up in a Parisian recording studio, laying down tracks for a new LP. At least six of the songs (including "We Are the Clash," "This Is England," and "Sex Mad War") have already been given test runs before Stateside audiences, and their warm reception has the fiscal planners in Epic's marketing department hoping the release date will be sooner, rather than later—preferably in early autumn.

## THE VINYL WORD

With Genesis and his own solo career temporarily on the back burner, self-confessed workaholic **Phil Collins** is in London producing a new solo LP for Earth, Wind and Fire's **Philip Bailey**. Collins (who first hooked up with the EWF organization when he used its horn sections on his own solo albums, *Face Value* and *Hello, I Must Be Going*) was approached for the project by EWF leader **Maurice White's** Kalimba Productions. White, meanwhile, spent most of June and July producing a new album in L.A. for Barbra Streisand... Although Bruce Springsteen was sitting in the producer's chair last time

around, **Gary U.S. Bonds** is at the helm himself for his next album, producing eight of the LP's nine tracks at Long Island's Kingdom Studios. Like last time, however, **Little Steven Van Zandt** has also been lending a hand, serving as producer for that one remaining track... They might be just another name in the rock history books to a whole new generation of heavy-duty rock fans weaned on Quiet Riot and Motley Crue, but Britain's **Deep Purple** was among the earliest volume-oriented mega-bands to earn the tag "heavy metal"—largely thanks to power chord anthems such as "Smoke on the Water." Although the band's lineup shifted several times during a decade-long run that

began in 1968, the most well-known roster was led by ace guitarist **Ritchie Blackmore** and included **Jon Lord** (keyboards), **Ian Paice** (drums), **Roger Glover** (bass), and **Ian Gillian** (vocals). Although Blackmore has been fronting his own conglomerate, Rainbow, for several years now, and the others have been spotted lurking in bands ranging from Whitesnake to Black Sabbath, word's come down that the five have banded together to put Deep Purple back in the running, with a new studio album now in the recording stage, and a full-scale reunion tour tentatively set for early 1985.

## MISCELLANIA

Although quite a few eyebrows were raised over that recent *Esquire* feature on the fans of Motley Crue and what they would or wouldn't do to gain access to their heroes, a recent promotional campaign by a Seattle radio station harkened back to a simpler era when it posed the philosophical query, "What would you do for two **Van Halen** tickets?" One 41-year-old fan—it's reported—took the natural approach by swallowing a few dozen baby spiders, claiming afterward that they were "so small they didn't make much difference"... REO Speedwagon's Kevin Cronin and Gary Richrath have shelved their short-lived pipedream of becoming professional tennis stars. Court ace John McEnroe recently invited the two musicians—both part-time racket aficionados—to slug it out in front of 15,000 spectators in a half-time set at the L.A. Forum (the main bout on the evening's bill of fare was between McEnroe and Jimmy Connors). Apparently, the men from REO were paired up that night with Bruce Jenner and former USC football player and Heisman Trophy-winner Mike Garrett for a doubles match—and only proved the age-old maxim that music and big-time sports don't necessarily mix. Cronin's singular style set the pace when he bounced a serve off the line judge's head early in the conflict, and it was all downhill from there. When the dust cleared, all four players were miraculously still standing, the audience wandered back from the soft drink concession, and Jimmy Connors delivered his professional verdict. "As far as your tennis is concerned," he told REO's embarrassed Richrath and Cronin, "I love your music." The two musicians had only recently returned from separate soul-searching expeditions to points obscure, where they polished off several of the tunes that appear on REO Speedwagon's latest vinyl offering. Cronin's place of self-imposed exile was a remote jungle island in the Pacific—so remote that the





Cyndi Lauper's recent three-night stand at the Ritz in New York City may have broken the house record for how many ticket holders per square inch could fit into the former ballroom—a large turnout in the wake of her first solo LP, *She's So Unusual*. The New York City Fire Department, however, was less than enthralled. They turned up in force toward the tail end of the first night's show, responding to a phone call from a fan. The firefighters—some of them Lauper fans themselves—did, though, let the lady continue with her set... Speaking of things unusual, Miles Davis was spotted hard at work in a Manhattan recording studio recently, pouring over charts for a new tune he and his musicians were trying to pin down. The song in question? Cyndi Lauper and Rob Hyman's "Time After Time."

man claims he took to running through the jungles screaming at himself, "What am I doing here?" No slouch in the travel division either, bandmate Richrath—consuming with the Muse in an isolated district of Baja, Mexico—found himself jogging six miles to the nearest telephone every day to call his L.A. home, just to keep from going crazy... In the Art Meets Industry Department, Sunn amplifiers and Ted Nugent are putting their brains and his know-how together to design the Ted Nugent Penetrator amp, specially built for aspiring guitar heroes. The device will pump out a lethal 200 watts of power, and will come equipped with a switch to allow the faint of heart to tone it down to a tranquil 100 watts. "The volume knob on most amps stops at ten," Nugent explains. "The Penetrator amp will go all the way to 12. It'll have that special sound of mine—loud and powerful. When you're not using it for rock and roll, you can rent it out for urban renewal and heavy duty demolition"... As you might have noticed, many Album-Oriented Rock radio stations have been giving "Stairway to Heaven" the elbow and switching to something called the CHR (Contemporary Hit Radio—i.e. Top Forty) format—the result of a recent Arbitron survey that indicated widespread audience preference for the latter. In a survey of over 1,200 album and singles buyers shopping in record stores in New York, Los Angeles, Dallas, Atlanta, and Minneapolis, however, the

New York-based Street Pulse Group has reported findings that suggest AOR listeners are still clearly responsible for keeping recording artists, record companies, and retail chains afloat. Also, it seems, Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven" still cops first prize as the most requested radio track of all time...

## SCREENINGS

Although Irene Cara first came to public prominence for her role in the original film version of *Fame*, her screen skills have largely taken a back seat to the up-then-down-then-up-again fortunes of her dance-oriented recording career—which finally peaked again after a long dry spell with the theme from *Flashdance*. Now Cara's before the cameras again. She's playing a speakeasy jazz singer in 1930s Kansas City in *City Heat* opposite Clint Eastwood and Burt Reynolds. The film is set for Christmas release... Also, rumors emanating from Rome's Cinecittà Studios hint that Italy's premier film director, Federico Fellini, has expressed keen interest in directing a rock video for the omni-present Boy George and Culture Club.

## TRANSITIONS

For those still keeping count, Michael Jackson turned up at Kool and the Gang's recent concert at New York's Radio City Music Hall with Tatum O'Neal in tow. Jackson, disguised by a fake beard, moustache, tweed jacket, standard-issue sunglasses, and a few



The New York City Parks Department didn't get the joke when Spinal Tap allegedly requested a permit to do a free outdoor concert in front of Manhattan's posh Plaza Hotel. According to gum-chewing lead guitarist and resident sneer, Nigel Tufnel (a.k.a. actor Christopher Guest), "We wanted to play where the Beatles played." When someone in the band's entourage faintly recalled that the Fab Four had once stayed at the Plaza—not played there—Tufnel turned a shade sullen: "Does that mean we can't sleep in Shea Stadium?" Nevertheless, thanks to the surprise success of their "comeback" rockumentary (the Rob Reiner-directed *This Is Spinal Tap*), the band's recent one-night stand at New York's CBGB drew a standing-room-only crowd of rock critics and sundry music biz luminaries, many of whom—it seems—weren't totally sure why they were there.

hefty bodyguards, managed to slip in and out without anyone (apart from a few dozen members of the press) catching on.

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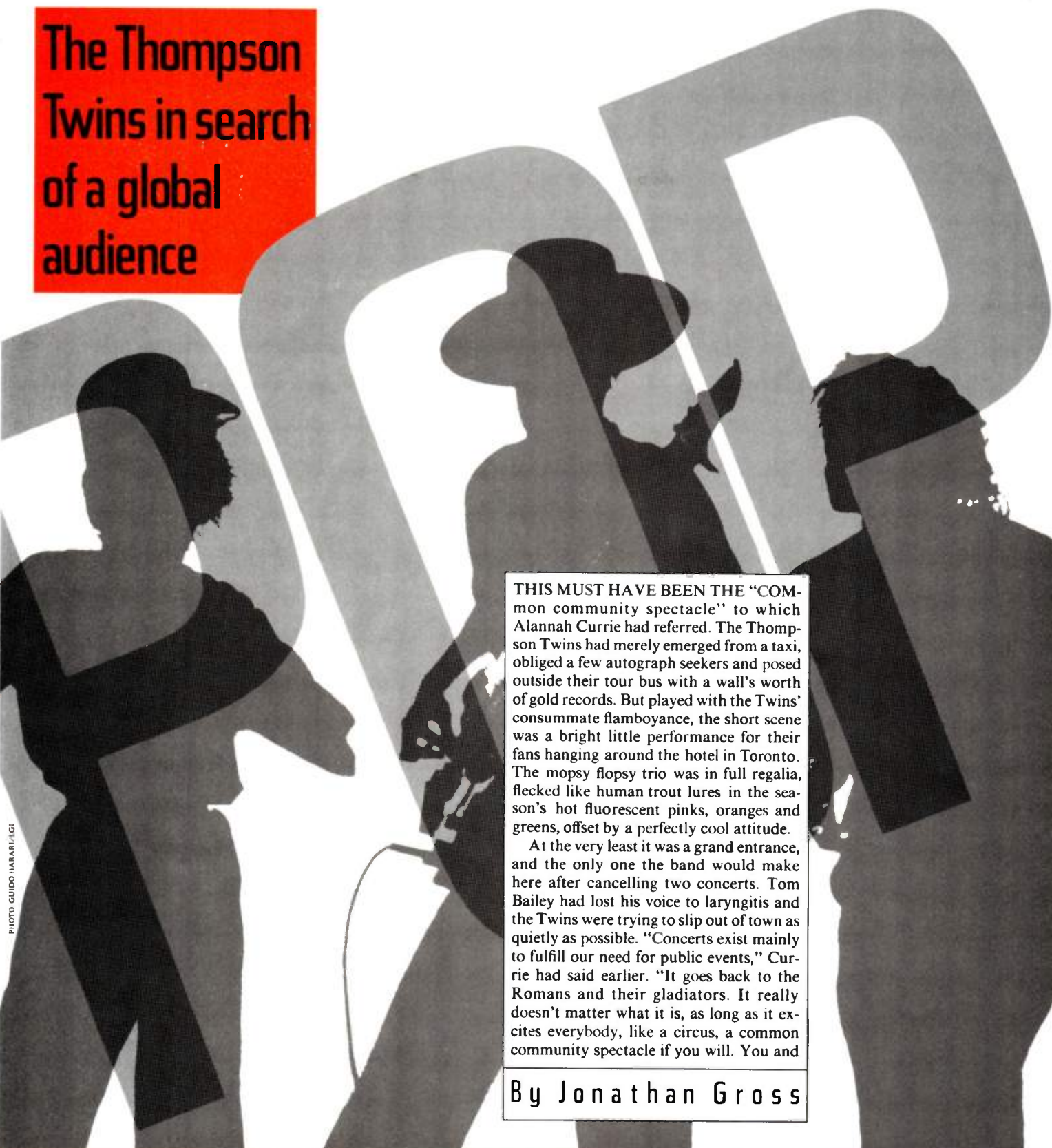
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The Thompson  
Twins in search  
of a global  
audience



THIS MUST HAVE BEEN THE "COMMON community spectacle" to which Alannah Currie had referred. The Thompson Twins had merely emerged from a taxi, obliged a few autograph seekers and posed outside their tour bus with a wall's worth of gold records. But played with the Twins' consummate flamboyance, the short scene was a bright little performance for their fans hanging around the hotel in Toronto. The mopsy flopsy trio was in full regalia, flecked like human trout lures in the season's hot fluorescent pinks, oranges and greens, offset by a perfectly cool attitude.

At the very least it was a grand entrance, and the only one the band would make here after cancelling two concerts. Tom Bailey had lost his voice to laryngitis and the Twins were trying to slip out of town as quietly as possible. "Concerts exist mainly to fulfill our need for public events," Currie had said earlier. "It goes back to the Romans and their gladiators. It really doesn't matter what it is, as long as it excites everybody, like a circus, a common community spectacle if you will. You and

By Jonathan Gross

IMPERIALISTS





PHOTO: ANASTASIA PANTSON/KALEIDOSCOPE

**Currie: 'When you're on stage you should be larger than life'**

your mates get excited about it and sometimes go just to be with all those people. You just can't put that on TV without the smell or the noise."

The Thompson Twins were reinventing the wheel for me in a private audience in the hotel coffee shop. Currie delivered the encyclical, seconded by the Rasta-locked professional sibling Joe Leeway with assistance from the incapacitated Bailey, who contributed the occasional croak. She spoke in big broad strokes of the Twins' brave new wave world, one liberated from the old rules and roles, where money is not an end but a means to an uncertain future, where thoughts of idle time and material goods are obstacles in the way of the collective drive.

Says Leeway: "This might sound really puerile but being sort of an only child I used to go and play with my friends who'd often say, 'We can't go out because M&P (mom and pop) are taking me and my sister to the seaside.' I'd say, 'Oh great, that would be fun!' and they'd say, 'No, it's

borin' and we'll see you tomorrow.'

"Being in the band is a lot like having a family all over again because a lot of the time you get into places and you want to go off and play but the 'family' has something else arranged."

This is the band that prides itself on not having taken time off in over two years, of touring nonstop, of almost forcing producer Alex Sadkin to work over Christmas during sessions for their new album, *Into The Gap*.

"They thought we were cruel," chuckles Leeway. "We were gonna call ourselves the Bermuda Triangle and disappear, but that would be like cutting off the engines of a rocket that's taking off. After a while you lose your momentum. The other curious thing is that with every level of success you reach you find out new things. Actually you find out what you already know so you want to keep going."

As to where and why, there are no specific details. They know what they don't want. "Fast cars and big houses have never

been us," says Currie, a proponent of the minimalist lifestyle so many of us can easily afford. "That stuff just clutters up your life." Neither are they into that professional status symbol, the requisite "solo project." They are one of few bands that treat videos as flat-out promotional tools. Bailey says his reported film venture is partly a media concoction: "Every time I say yes to something, somebody jacks up the budget another six figures."

Yet they are pop imperialists, craving a sustained global audience. That becomes clear when Bailey cuts short a discussion of England's up-and-coming acts: "They ain't communicating on any mass level and there's no indication whatsoever that they're going to be around in six months time, so we might as well not talk about it."

Bailey is correct. If the '80s continue on the current course there will be precious little room for the mid-range artists by the end of the decade. Be everywhere at once or nowhere at all. "When we became a three-piece and decided to make hits it was a completely conscious thing," says Bailey of the Twins' practical cynicism.

They had been middle-class punks and it didn't work. Bailey, son of a Sheffield physician, had been going for a music teacher's certificate at Cheshire College in Alsager before moving to London to form the original Thompson Twins (named after bumbling detectives in a British comic book), a pop quartet of constantly shifting personnel.

In 1980 Leeway came on board, first as a roadie, then as percussionist. His father a black Nigerian and his mother Irish, Leeway had been raised by English foster parents and met Bailey while studying acting at Cheshire. At about the same time Leeway gave up acting to join the Twins, Currie entered the picture. A working class New Zealander who lived off odd jobs after a three-month career as a radio journalist, she lived on the same street as Bailey.

"Everybody just played loud disgusting music in their front rooms," recalls Currie. "I had a band called the Unfuckables that never really rehearsed. It was the post-punk period when everyone thought they could play music."

At this point, the Twins began to rethink their whole approach. Living in the South London section with its heavy Jamaican population had exposed the trio to reggae, and that led them to African and Latin American music, and eventually to New York street funk. Two U.K. LPs, *A Product of Participation* and *Set*, received lukewarm reception, but things began to happen Stateside. Tracks from the two albums were combined into one U.S. release, *In The Name of Love*, and the title track received extensive dance club and radio play. At the same time, the line up was pared down to the current three-ring circus.

*Side Kicks*, the Twins' second album, brought the band to the verge of interna-





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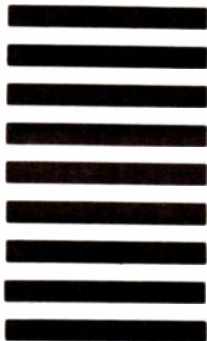
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**Currie, Bailey, Leeway: Idle time and material goods are obstacles in the way of the collective drive**

tional stardom. In England, the LP went to Number Two on the chart and spawned three hit singles; those same singles cracked the pop charts here and topped most dance charts. Add in the exposure they received opening for the Police, David Bowie and Peter Gabriel and the table was set for some sort of '84 breakthrough.

The key was songwriting. "With *Side Kicks* we laid down the grooves first," says Currie. "For *Into The Gap* we sat down at a piano with lyrics and worked the texture in afterwards."

Good strategy. The first single, "Hold Me Now," went to Number Three before falling, and the album has cracked the Top Ten, thus solidifying the groundwork laid by *Side Kicks*' success. Beyond that, however, there's little discussion on actual content, because, says Currie, "We just don't believe you can divide things up the way people do, in terms of black and white."

Nor will they admit to dividing things up among themselves. Songs are credited as being written by all three Twins, and Bailey will tell you that's as it should be. "Specific ownership of a song ceases to matter," he proclaims. "If we wrote a song together and in the end none of my specific ideas were used I'd still feel I was part of that song because I was part of the process that sorted out my ideas. When you're making a record you end up using what is most appropriate. You don't think, 'Well, those two guys have got their bit in there so I've got to get some of mine in there.' A lot

of groups operate that way."

"The best idea always wins," notes Currie. "It's not competitive really, because it's never a matter of ego. All three of us are involved. All three of us can play lots of different instruments, too, and there isn't one instrument we are especially linked to. I play percussion, but that's a wide range of things. We don't have a specific guitarist because a guitarist feels every song must have guitar on it or a sax player thinks there should be sax on every track. Even though Tom is front and center, this group has no leader. It's funny when people automatically assume that just because Tom is our axeman."

Currie is being overly assertive. The truth is that she is the band's only lyricist, which causes special problems. "Most of the music you hear on the radio is about men and women who are just objects," she says, being quick to point out that of the 30 people in the Twins' crew, five are female. "The songs don't even come from them. Ours is a very strange thing because I write the lyrics and Tom sings them. Often, I'd write something from my point of view as a woman and Tom would toss it back saying, 'I can't sing that.' I'll change it, but it's still what I think. The music's androgynous, even if we don't dress androgynously."

Okay, Alannah, but what about that hat? Protective coloring, you say? "Up front of the stage, men are either looking at your tits or your ass, so you wear a big hat or big hair as a diversion. A lot of

women do this without even thinking. It helps me perform better. We get obsessive about things—like covering myself with diamonds because people say we're big stars. If someone says, 'Oh, you must wear this,' then that's the first thing we avoid. If people say you can't wear red and green, then we'll push it as far as it goes."

The push included plucked eyebrows, shaved temples and costumes that cast them as Bozo's sidekicks. That's not far from the truth. Their exaggerated logo is the stuff of Saturday morning TV. "Cartoons are a universal language," states Currie. "We're using themes that are common to everybody, yet they'll cause us to look like we're over the top. But when you're on stage you should be a little larger than life."

And though *Into the Gap* is a comparatively sober effort, there's no denying the wit built into the Thompsons' presentation. The best example is the terribly smug insertion of the hook from "Stop! In The Name of Love" into "Love On Your Side" after the line "I played you all my favorite records . . ."

It was a move that raised the hackles of testy U.K. critics. But it was also a declaration of independence, a measure of self-satisfaction. If the Twins' brave new wave world casts grave doubts on the future of popular music, it's nonetheless comforting to know there's musicians who still enjoy their own music. ○



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J.C. COSTA

# STRAIT TALK

Checking  
in with  
Mark Knopfler

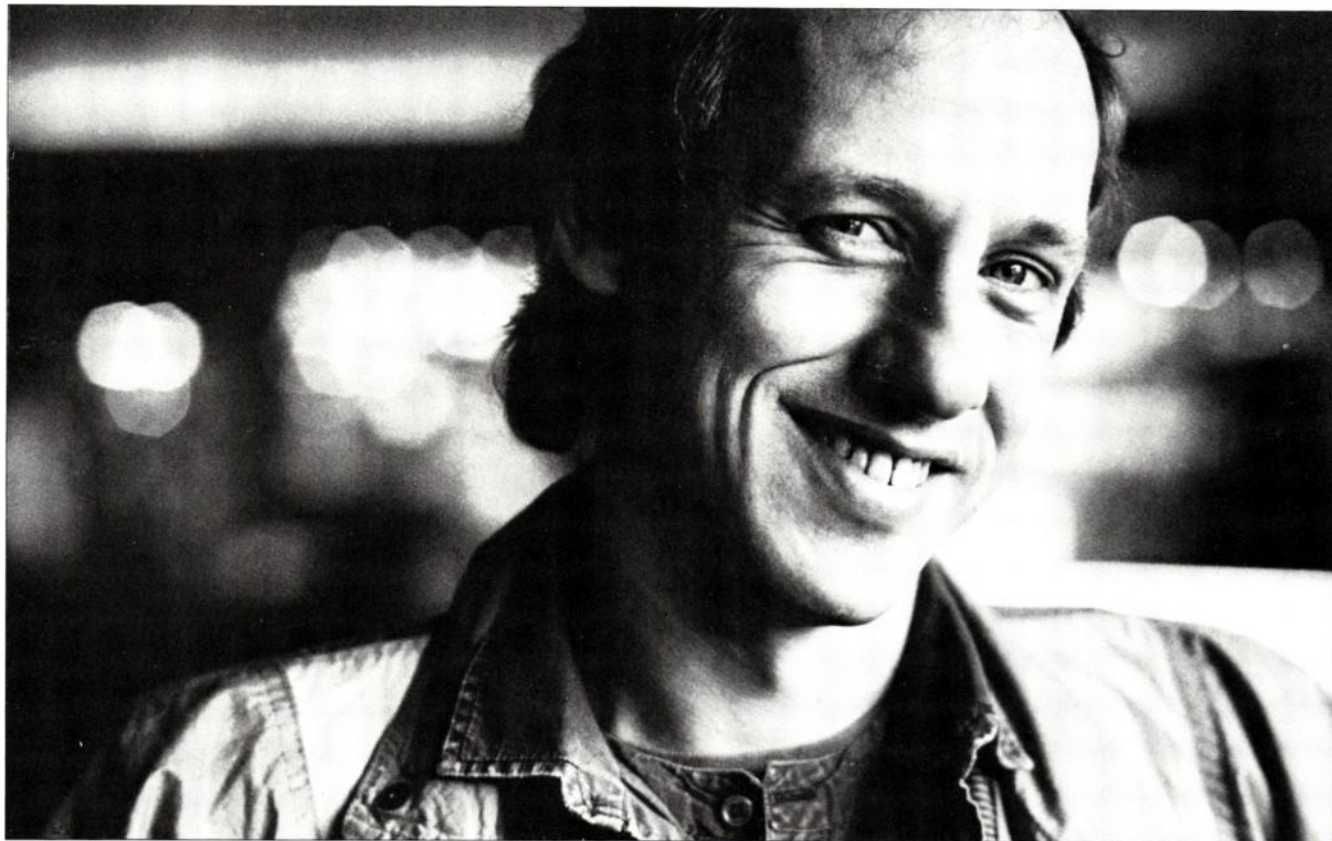


PHOTO KEES TABAK/RETNA LTD

**Knopfler: A style that's easy to recognize, difficult to analyze**

**M**ecca, as defined by Dire Straits' Mark Knopfler when in Manhattan, is on West 48th Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues, where one music store after another lines the block north and south. The Warner Bros.' conference room, where Knopfler is now, is considerably less inspiring to our guitar hero, who at least puts up a good front for the journalist who would dare put a damper on his good time.

"I'm happy in a guitar store," Knopfler says with a satisfied smile. "Just like the farmer is happy on his farm. My love affair began with three chords. My uncle Kingley played boogie woogie on the piano and he wasn't very good—it was C, F and G—but when I was eight or nine years old, those three chords were fantastically beautiful things to me. A pretentious analogy might be drawn to when an astronomer suddenly realizes something about the planets and everything just sails into place. On a more mundane level, I heard this boogie-woogie and everything fell into place for me. I was hooked from that point on, totally fascinated. It was just utterly and logically beautiful. You're just in love after that."

Knopfler's love affair has brought him full circle with Dire Straits now that the

band has released a live album, *Alchemy*, that documents its growth in the five years since *Dire Straits* and "Sultans of Swing" brought Knopfler and company (the company seems destined to be forever changing) to Americans' attention. Knopfler himself, though, sees *Alchemy* as less an overview than simply a state-of-the-band message. "To be quite honest, the show developed from hundreds and hundreds of shows. The album pretty much follows the pattern of the way we do it on stage, but it's not absolutely accurate in that it isn't two hours and ten minutes, or whatever our set is, but it's pretty much the live show the way it's developed after smashin' it 'round the world. It goes up and down. There's a certain dynamic to the way the numbers are segued."

The one constant in Dire Straits' history, of course, is Mark Knopfler. Original drummer Pick Withers is gone ("He has two kids now and he doesn't like rock music that much. He has more leaning toward jazz."), as is Knopfler's brother David (see accompanying story). And while Mark has a well-defined songwriting style—short, evocative lyrical fragments about typical life situations—his serpentine, impressionistic guitar lines remain his signature and thus the band's. Still, he tends to dismiss

much of the talk about his facility as a stylist with an "it's all music" disclaimer. Mention that "Badges, Posters, Stickers and T-Shirts," off the *Twisting By The Pool* EP, has a feel similar to Les Paul's classic "air-cooled" guitar sound, and he will tell you he only recently heard Les Paul for the first time, playing with Chet Atkins on the *Chester and Lester* LP lent him by a friend. Then he adds, "Talking about Les Paul and Chet Atkins, then talking about where I'm at, is like the difference between the launching pad and the moon. The only thing we have in common is that we like guitars and play with a certain amount of soul. I've got a good touch and I like music with a bit o' soul. Music that doesn't have any, I don't like, and that's essentially all that it is. Maybe in a few years time I'll be able to improve as a guitar player somewhat and eventually get somewhere remotely decent in terms of musicianship. That just happens from years and years of playing."

"I never waste time worrying about (comparisons). If I'm doing a session, I might be playing anything. For instance, I've been using a (Gibson) Chet Atkins nylon string guitar on a lot of things lately. I used it with Phil Everly, Scott Walker, Bryan Ferry and on Bob Dylan's stuff. Or I





PHOTO FRANK GRITIN

**'I just want to sit and play trumpet all day'**

might be playin' a National steel guitar. I could be doing anything and it won't come out sounding like 'Once Upon A Time In The West.' When you're doing a song, you might be playing a little rhythm part, but it's all *music*. Certain things in your style will come out because style is something that's easily recognized, but it's not something you can really analyze."

That style comes from many sources. Knopfler grew up playing "everything from jug band music to country blues, ragtime, western swing, folk music, urban blues, pop, the Everly Brothers, rockabilly, Elvis Presley—everything before and after Howlin' Wolf. Goin' back to the music of the '20s and then being heavily influenced by all the rock 'n' roll bands like the Stones, Beatles, Animals, Shadows, Duane Eddy and Jerry Lee Lewis." But it was Bob Dylan who clearly weighed in heaviest.

"He was a tremendous influence. Tremendous. I still remember sitting in girls' houses dressed in black, smokin' cigarettes and drinkin' coffee or beer and listening to *Blonde on Blonde* three hundred times a week. All of that becomes a part of you."

Indeed. In Knopfler's case, it became such a part of him that he wound up first playing with Dylan on the latter's *Slow Train Coming* LP, then producing his latest, *Infidels*. Dylan's idiosyncracies in the studio are well-documented and Knopfler, a disciplined player, says he steeled himself "for all sorts of eventualities just to make sure things are going to be properly recorded. Especially with someone who's as unprepared as Bob, you have to get the studio organized so that you can play at a second's notice. Having the guitars properly tuned and set up to sound good, bein' prepared in that sense."

Asked if he could be objective, given his regard for Dylan's music, Knopfler shrugs. "Oh yeah, I always say what the hell I think anyway. These things would probably come up when we were runnin' down the songs before recording. Same thing with *Slow Train*, Bob and I ran down a lot of those songs beforehand. And they might be in a very different form when he's just hittin' the piano and maybe I'd make suggestions about the tempo or whatever. Or I'd say, 'What about a 12-string?' On most songs, Bob would say, 'What about a Farfisa?' and I'd say, 'How about something else?' Each song has its own secret and needs teasin' out sometimes. Other times you might get it really quickly."

While Dire Straits tends to be seen as a vehicle for Knopfler's guitar stylings, it is in fact a band whose records are defined as much by their ambience as by their forceful playing. In this regard, Dylan remains a primary influence on Knopfler's writing, but less so on his sound. It shouldn't be surprising that the man who wrote a song called "Once Upon A Time In The West" would praise the work of Ennio Morricone, renowned for his haunting scores for director Sergio Leone's spaghetti westerns. In fact, when asked about his involvement with producer Jimmy Iovine on Dire Straits' third LP, *Making Movies*, where the sound was enlarged to enhance the dramatic impact of the instruments and vocals, Knopfler replies by saying the album "has more spaghetti in it, that's basically what it is. Until fairly recently, it's become more quasi-melodramatic, this sort of spaghetti music influenced by Ennio Morricone. Songs like 'Private Investigations' are almost tongue-in-cheek. I've taken that as far as I wanted to, which is one of the reasons why I wanted a record of the band at that stage. I'm not inclined to carry on with it that way now because it's been done, very successfully."

From New York Knopfler was heading home to England to produce Aztec Camera's next album. Men at Work have asked him to produce their next studio effort as well. Do these bands represent the sort of "new music" he likes to listen to?

"I listen to all sorts of music," he replies. "I like stuff that's *real*, that has soul in it. A bit of meaning and *belief* in it. Doesn't matter what kind it is at all. It's just more words in the vocabulary. Instead of saying 'Hello, how are you?' in Spanish, now I can say, 'Hello, how are you? It's raining today.' I'm staggering forward. I could be listening to the most ridiculous out-to-lunch piece of jazz music one minute and and 'Be Bop A Lula' the next. You get involved in the glue that sticks all those little pieces together and you learn what the connections actually *mean*. I'm just now looking for a guitar to interface with my Synclavier, that's the next thing on the agenda."

He laughs. "I just want to sit and play trumpet all day long." ○



# NOBODY'S STRAIT MAN ANYMORE

**I**N THE SUMMER OF 1980, while recording Dire Straits' *Making Movies* in New York, Mark and David Knopfler got into a studio argument that escalated to the point of "You can't fire me, I quit!" David packed his bags and returned to England. Mark wiped David's parts from the album.

Not much has been heard from David Knopfler since then, but not for lack of activity on his part. Determined to never again be a cog in someone else's machine, David started his own label, Paris Records, produced his own album and set up his own network of European distributors. Collecting separate advances from each different European label, he earned a substantial profit over his initial investments before the album, titled *Release*, hit the market. And now, after months of despairing over ever eliciting any Stateside interest in the LP, he's struck a deal with JEM Records for U.S. distribution. Despite the ongoing hassles of running one's own business, he's finally learned to enjoy his lot in life.

"Recording the album myself, with my own production company, meant that I could just present the finished album, get a better deal and get the kind of contract that wouldn't commit me to anything I didn't want," he explains. And the disadvantages? "I haven't slept an awful lot. I've been working 18 hours a day. But I'm actually enjoying all the negotiations far more than I ever could have expected."

As for the record, *Release* sounds not unlike a good Dire Straits record. David has the same sort of gruff-voiced vocal style as his older brother, with whom he also shares a lyrical penchant for urban romance of the sort depicted on *Making Movies*, though David's emphasis on keyboards in favor of stirring lead guitar lines puts some distance between *Release* and the Straits' sound. British radio embraced "Soul Kissing," a song some listeners probably

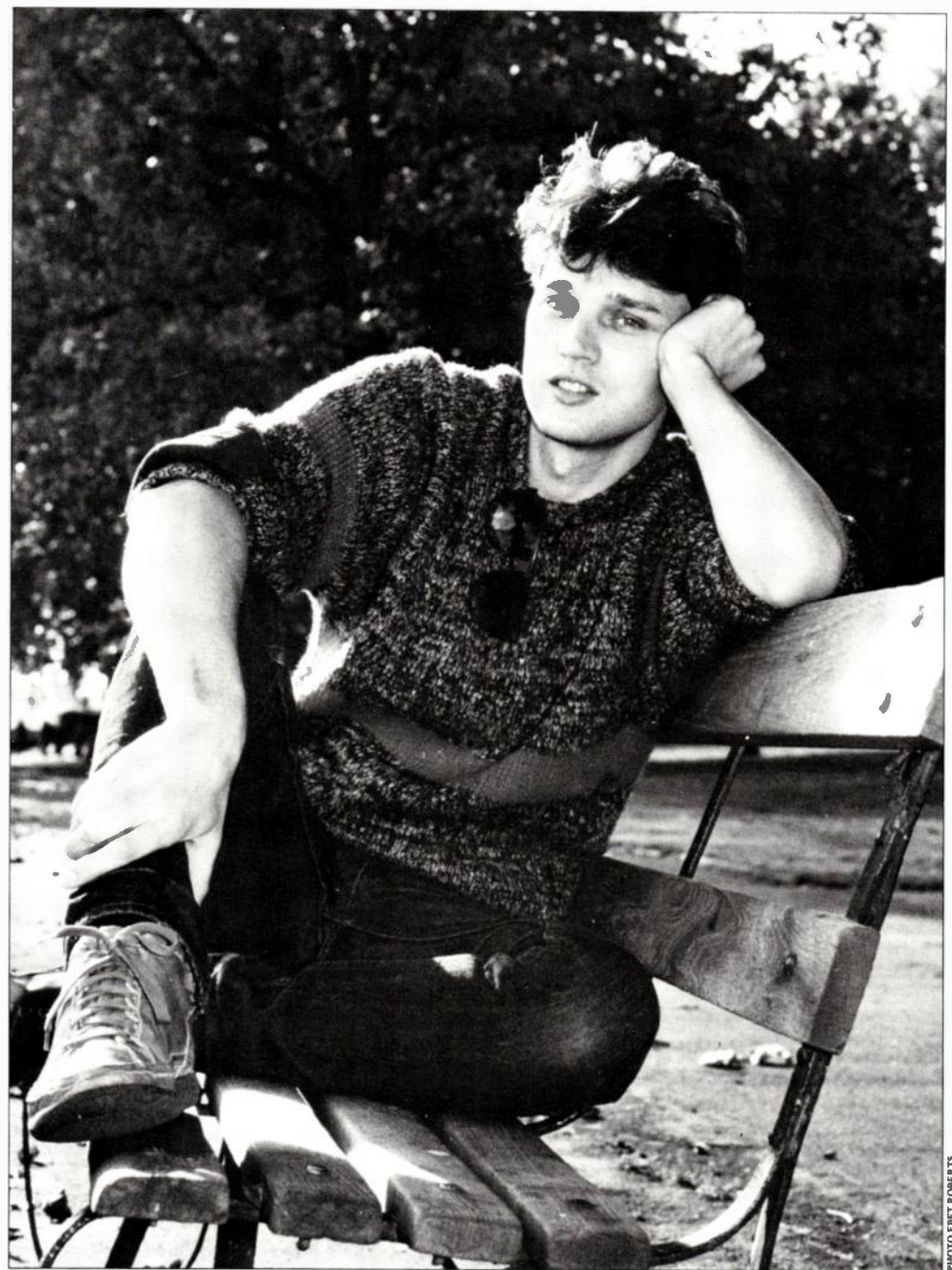


PHOTO ERET ROBERTS

## David Knopfler: The sheer weight of input was too much

mistook for a Mark Knopfler track, but the album stretches from jazzy sax and percussion-based numbers to modern dance-rock and a couple of Tom Waits-style ballads.

David's relationship with his brother has long since returned to normal. Mark contributed guitar to one track on *Release*, and Straits bassist John Illsley played on another. "It's nice being mates again," David says of the fraternal reunion. "I don't know if it has to do with getting this album out—if that's something I had to expiate. I don't think so, really. I think it was just a matter of needing time to re-

flect on the whole thing, to unwind from Dire Straits.

"I left after a fairly severe disagreement about some fairly petty details in the studio. But that wasn't really the relevant thing. There'd been a hell of a lot of pressure on both of us for a very long time. It was just a question of how soon something was going to give. The sheer weight of input was too much. We were overstimulated; there was no time to reflect on anything."

An afternoon visit to David's London home found him and Mark at leisure, watching sports on TV. All the while, though, David was peppering Mark with

questions about royalties, book-keeping and record audits.

"I don't *bother* with that stuff, Dave," Mark sighed with artistic disdain and an eye on the tube.

Quipped David: "You don't have to. I do."

As David drives back to the city, Robert Plant's "Big Log," with its Straits-like guitar, comes over the car radio. When the moody instrumental section uncurls, David sighs.

"Sounds like Mark, doesn't it?" he observes. "I sort of wish I *had* put a couple of good guitar things on my album." He cracks a smile. "I do quite like that sound."

—Bill Flanagan



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# CHASING





# THE CARS

## AND FINDING RIC OCASEK ON THE EXIT RANT

"I'll tell ya something," Ric Ocasek says, pausing at the sign in his mind that reads "Last Exit Before Rant." "Yeah . . . 95 percent of everything that happens in this band, I do. I don't care what anybody says in an interview situation, I not only write the songs, I do all the studio stuff, I arrange most of the stuff and, on top of it, I take all the praise or blame for it."

"AND AT A CERTAIN POINT IN TIME there's a lot of jealousy. I don't want it to be The Ric Ocasek Band. I don't stand at the center. People don't have to know that I can play all the instruments. I don't want that shit. But if there's one thing that irritates me is that I do all the shit—*all the shit*—and most of the time I only see the band is when there's an album to do or we're rehearsing for a tour. Otherwise they're in their houses in the country."

The outburst comes unsolicited and therefore is completely unexpected. Ocasek, normally an emotional popsicle in public, surprises even himself. He enters an hour late for the interview, a tall, shadowy blade slicing through the lobby of the Ritz-

Carlton in New York swinging a couple of Charivari bags behind him. In the suite he declines my suggestion that we send up for drinks. "I don't drink," he says impatiently. "Let's just do the interview." Ocasek is in town to oversee Arthur Baker's remix of "Hello Again." Having spoken to the other Cars the previous day in Boston, I mention that what I am after is not another Ric Ocasek story but an honest-to-goodness Cars feature. And the man goes out on me.

"Look, I'm here," he grouches. "Where are they? Who's watching this Arthur Baker thing? Where are the guys who are gonna give a damn what it sounds like? They're in their houses in the country. Good friends of mine, not one would I

BY JONATHAN GROSS



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trade. If one was gone there'd be no Cars. And considering all the bands that come and go, we do get along as a band.

"But it's just that when you make a comment like 'I don't want to do a Ric Ocasek story and this band is that and this,' I just have to flash in my mind that, 'Yeah, that's what you think and that's what everybody thinks, y'know. But I'm not the one who goes to the press and says, 'I don't understand Elliot Easton's guitar playing, y'know, but he plays anyway,' like he says to the press, 'I don't understand his lyrics, I just play.'"

"Well, nobody knows that everything he plays he's told to play and he plays exactly what he's told; and beyond that, if he didn't (play what he was told to play) all I'd hear would be blues licks and scales from the Berklee College of Music!"

So much for the big Cars story. Ocasek won't say what exactly had ticked him off, but it's clear that this kind of expurgation is uncommon. No tyrant he, Ocasek sounds more like a mother hen laying a guilt trip on her unappreciative brood. Imagine Aunt Bea at the end of her rope. Yet when he's done, Ocasek seconds my wish that this article maintain a somewhat positive outlook. So far we have one heluva subpoena.

**IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE NOT TO** feel good around the Cars, a group of civilized, good-natured, intelligent musicians and a musical entity of resurgent popularity six years after its stunning debut. While most of its graduating class of 1978 has long since bitten the dust, the Cars are suddenly as hip as ever, although Ocasek loathes such descriptions. There's also a certain endearing nostalgia surrounding the Cars, who come from a simpler, more gracious time in American rock. This is one of very few viable rock bands left on these shores, undoubtedly the last to have earned and maintained a loyal national audience on the strength of music rather than any pathetic multi-media propaganda campaigns.

"At least in 1978, there was a pretty healthy new band scene consisting of Teenage Jesus and the Jerks, Suicide and others that weren't listening to the radio," says a calmer Ocasek, whose taste in music can be seen in production credits for such commercially disenfranchised acts as Romeo Void, Peter Dinklage and Bad Brains. "Americans now think they have to have three hit singles to have a record deal, so every band is going for Top 40 formats, and that's why everything sounds the same. The Cars never thought of singles at the time of the first album.

"Today you're gonna watch MTV, you're gonna see all those bands, you're gonna see what they all look like, what they sound like, what their image is. So the guy in Kansas City who might have blindly put together some band that sounded different and looked different because he



**Ocasek: Head mechanic or fifth wheel?**

had his own ideas is so influenced by TV that he feels he has to fit into this.

"We're in the information age, but there's no way we're gonna turn back. Maybe the future is in people who have their own video cameras, don't know what they're doing and don't pay attention to anyone else."

Ocasek comes by his optimism honestly. It's based on the Cars experience, which has become something of a legend in the business. The sequence of events: Circa 1973, Ocasek, a songwriter since his early teens (he's now in his 30s, as are all the other Cars), slips into Boston via New York

by way of Ohio, where his father was a systems analyst for NASA. He had been in several bands, "always playing my songs or there was no band." He skulks around a pitiable New England music scene for a few years, all the time writing, writing, writing. Late in '76, he was joined by fellow Ohioan Ben Orr, who had once teamed with him in an acoustic duo. In short order they were joined by Easton, a New York native who had migrated to Boston to study at the Berklee School of Music; Hawkes, who had sat in with Ocasek and Orr from time to time; and ex-Modern Lover David Robinson, the

PHOTO PAUL NATAIN/PHOTO RESERVE





PHOTO PAUL NAKIN/PHOTOREALITY

**In concert: 'We don't prod the audiences like other bands'**

group's only Bostonian.

They rehearse, gig locally and lay down about 20 cuts on a two-track demo tape that everyone ignores except for WBCN, Boston's premier FM rock station. It not only plays "Just What I Needed," but elevates the song to hit status. That kind of break is unheard of in 1984 when virtually every program director of consequence in North America has to check with a consultant before going to the bathroom. Elektra proffers a contract, and the band's eponymous debut is recorded and mixed in three weeks by Roy Thomas Baker, the producer who helped define the Cars' trademark guitar sound—"the chickies," as he calls it. The LP slips into the streets just as innocently, the groundswell building in mere ripples. Ocasek recalls that it took Texas a full year from the time of release to discover the Cars' album.

Easton, a rock archivist of the first order, remembers those days as "a time for getting back to rock 'n' roll and away from Emerson, Lake and Palmer and Yes. We were the first serious generation profoundly affected by the British Invasion. But we avoided the New York scene because we didn't want to be lumped in with the whole punk deal there.

"And there was the whole concept of glamour. We were an American band that showed you didn't have to wear T-shirts and jeans and look like Springsteen and Johnny Cougar. You can't tell me that

groups like Duran Duran that have picked up on style-consciousness and certain treatments of aesthetic and female beauty never heard of the Cars."

Maybe I can. But there's some specific truth in Easton's vast generalizations, especially in regards to the Cars' distance from things mainstream. The Cars have always been more Americana than American. Lyrically, Ocasek trades in cynical twists on pop culture's most recognizable symbols, from the use of "Let The Good Times Roll" as a title to fooling around with "It's My Party" as a refrain in "Misfit Kid." Musically, listen to the Carl Perkins lick popping out of the chrome and glass of "My Best Friend's Girl" or, as John Lennon pointed out in one of his last interviews, the Hollyesque chorus in "Touch and Go."

While Ocasek doesn't approach his work clinically, he feels the Cars' arm's length relationship with American rock is not altogether undesirable. "I try as much as possible to keep that distance," he says, adding that he doesn't listen to much except local college radio stations. "I go over and over in my head every decision because I don't want to even appear to be selling out. I want to keep that integrity."

For example, the Cars were offered, according to Ocasek, enough sponsorship deals on the upcoming tour "to retire on." With a name like theirs, every car audio firm from here to Tokyo must have been

banging on the door. Everyone, of course, except those who have seen the Cars in concert, which is a lesson in passive persistence. These guys are to Van Halen what Parcheesi is to Dragon's Lair.

"I'm not into show business," proclaims Ocasek. "The thing that throws people is that we don't do the moves and we don't prod the audience like other bands. We are not show business characters. We're totally capable of playing our own instruments and material but, on the other hand, we don't want to be pretentious; so you get this feeling that the Cars are cold. What it really is is that the Cars don't want to teach the audience anything. We don't want to teach them how to react. We want to set up a mood on the set and, basically allow people to field it as they want without getting some fake show. Then again I realize that a lot of bands are really into that and do it really well. I don't and I don't have time to learn because I'd rather be writing songs, or books of prose or be working with new bands in the studio."

Notes Easton, who has mastered the art of understatement: "If it looks a bit teutonic, it's because that's where the song is coming from. I mean, it's hard to rock out to 'Moving In Stereo' or shake hands with the front row during 'Drive.'"

It's all part of the image, or lack thereof, like the catatonic expressions the quintet wear for their photo sessions. They were at it again in Boston, looking like ushers at a





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PHOTO PAUL NAIMEN/PHOTO REVEAL

### You might think it's Fay Wray and King Kong, but look again

George Romero film festival while a photographer assured them they were seducing the camera: "Beautiful guys. Keep it up, this is a great shot! Will someone check Ric's vital signs? More smoke! Incredible!"

And it's all so European in concert with the irreverence in the translations and transgressions of Ocasek's tunes. "You'd be surprised how many people think we're from England," Hawks says, laughing.

"The kids eat it up," adds Easton, himself cultivating a mod look, complete with tab collar shirts and Beatle boots. "I love things that are cool. I could stare at a picture of Brian Jones with a white teardrop guitar for three hours without getting bored. Would you rather see Billy Joel in his Nike sneakers and a pot belly?"

The irony here is that the Cars can't get arrested in Europe. A snippet of conversation on this topic:

Do you plan to tour Europe?"

Hawkes: "No plans to."

Do you sell any records over there?

Easton: "No plans to."

IF ANYTHING HAS PROPELLED the Cars into cocktail conversation in both teen and trend circles, it's the quintet's headlong plunge into the mucky waters of music video. After pretty well missing the first boat, the band is playing catchup with five clips off *Heartbeat City* featuring such high profile directors as Andy Warhol ("Hello Again"), Tim Pope ("Magic") and Timothy Hutton ("Drive"). The Cars and director Jeff Stein have been cited as visionary for "You Might Think," a tape that not only explores the image-processing capabilities of video technology but in-

jects a welcome playfulness into the Cars' austere milieu. "Video gives fans a chance to see the Cars in a different situation," says Ocasek. "With 'You Might Think' we had only allotted a standard budget [under \$50,000], but we ran out of money because of all the effects. However, the people at Charlex, the company that executed a lot of Jeff's ideas, eventually said, 'Look, forget the money. This project is good for our reputation and is too much fun to stop.' If they hadn't done that, it would have cost something like \$300,000."

Seeking out Warhol would appear to be an already cliched affectation, since business seems to be Warhol's art these days. (How else to explain his portrait of Billy Squier?) Yet Ocasek was no stranger to the man. "I knew Andy, because he had done my portrait a few years back," Ocasek explains, "and I respect him as one of the great American pop artists. The Cars are an American band after the same kind of expression. It seemed kind of logical and I was interested in some of the work Andy had done in 8-millimeter film."

The "Hello Again" clips, a send-up of the formula schlock that's currently polluting the medium, give the band an edge it has never been able to achieve through those lemon-sucking poses. Warhol was also contracted to add R-rated footage on an extended version to be included on a home video compilation of Cars cuts.

But while video has pumped some air into the Cars' wheels, the band's motivation remains in the right place: playing the music for all it's worth. Easton, like Hawkes, has used his role in the band as leverage for a solo deal. His first album, co-

written with Jules Shear, should be out in the fall. Robinson dabbles in production at the band's Synchro Sound studio in Boston. Orr, he of the quintessential rock star face, engages in a little session work and is working up his own repertoire as well.

But Ocasek remains the Cars' meal-ticket. As a writer, his sensitivity to modern strains of urban alienation combined with his spare tightly-coiled charts equipped him for the '80s. Although the other Cars, like most of us, tend to chuckle at some of his more obtuse word groups ("I like 'chicken counters fill your bowls,'" jokes Hawkes), Ocasek's catalogue has stood the test of time. Witness "You Might Think," written in '78, or look at the charts and notice *Candy-O* climbing up again.

"Take what makes sense and leave the rest to someone else," instructs Ocasek, who maintains that the tenor of his work is not unlike that of beat poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti or of French visionary poet Baudelaire. "In a lot of modern relationships, people still wonder why they can't function in society. Well, it's because so many relationships are based on economics and not on love. They then sublimate their real needs just to prolong things. But there's always hope in what I write."

And because he writes without compromise but still to the commercial mainstream, Ocasek's approach to music engenders its own sort of hope in other struggling rockers. "You have to be a fool wise in your folly," he says of his hubris. "I never had any intention of giving up anything I was doing. Never, ever do covers. You know yourself best. That's where style comes from, and the deeper you get into yourself the less you are yourself."

"That's why I believe that Alan Vega [ex of Suicide, with two Ocasek-produced solo albums to his credit] is a true artist. I just know the guy doesn't know the difference between what he's doing and art. His view is totally left, but he thinks he's right."

And Ocasek *knows* he's right; he's got no problem with that. As for the rest of the Cars, they know who's in the driver's seat. From his perspective in the trunk Eliot Easton declares: "There's definitely a magic when all five of us get together to play. Whatever category they try and put us in, there's still nobody else who sounds like us. Look, we're all guys who write songs, but at this stage of the game, to try and write a Cars number is to try and write a Ric Ocasek song and I personally don't write Ric Ocasek songs. But we're still scratching the surface. And we have problems but we solve them. You won't see any drunken guy storming out of the studio because his part isn't loud enough. All those stupid things in *Spinal Tap* are things we avoid whether it's just staying in separate hotel rooms or flying from gig to gig. We give each other space." Even if it's not always enough to park their problems. ○



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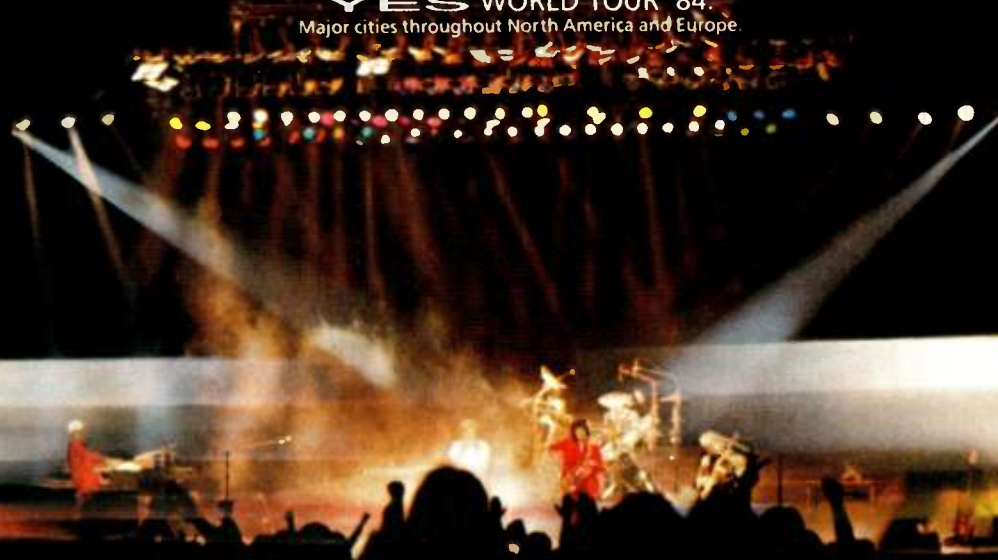
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MARK MEHLER

# GOT LOVE IF YOU WANT IT

Cooling out  
with Womack  
and Womack

**W**hile her parents, Cecil and Linda Womack, expound earnestly on their first album, *Love Wars*, tiny Sameya Womack lies in her mother's arms gurgling gently. At the tender age of 48 hours she's not ready to contribute to the conversation, but her mere presence in the room speaks volumes. Besides being one of the best soul-styled records in years, *Love Wars* is a stark and moving plea for an end to the killings, maimings and assaults that have become a family tradition in this country. And two-day-old Sameya, named after Linda Womack's father, the late singer Sam Cooke, is testimony to what American family life can be.

"This album is about our life and everybody's life," says Linda. "The time when people can afford to pick up guns is gone. 'Please, people,' we're saying, 'learn to get along.' Look what happened to Marvin Gaye... we're all so tired of hate."

Actually, the Womack and Cooke family histories are riddled with violence. Sam Cooke was gunned down in a Hollywood motel; Cecil's brother, Harry, was stabbed by his wife and, according to Cecil, bled to death when paramedics administered the wrong treatment.

"We're writing and recording for an adult audience," Linda adds. "Love wars are serious business. Songs like 'Love TKO' and 'Express Myself' offer a way for people to understand each other a little better. But Cecil and I don't have any answers; we just look at the statistics on divorce, the death and the misery, and we realize how lucky we are."

The Womacks, Jehovah's Witnesses who have been married 10 years and have seven children (three of their own, four by previous marriages), have managed to turn their self-contained universe into a loving and peaceful one without, thank you, professional assistance. Sameya, for example, was born in the Womack's bedroom with only Cecil in attendance.

"Sameya was our third baby born at home, but she was the first without a midwife," Cecil explains. "Basically, we had it pretty well planned out. When the time came, I had all the equipment laid out on the bed. I've gotten to be experienced at this thing, and it was no problem."

"We don't even think about what could go wrong," asserts Linda. "We like to have our babies the way people used to before the whole thing was commercialized and all the joy and the beauty were taken out of it. I guess you could call us pioneer people."

The Womacks say they have seen



Linda and Cecil Womack: 'We're all so tired of hate'

enough butchery in hospitals to convince them that nobody could do it better than they. In the case of Sameya, at least, they're correct. Following an uneventful delivery at seven a.m. on a Monday morning in California, mother, father and daughter boarded an evening flight for New York. Three days and a bevy of interviews and photo sessions later, the Womacks—mom and pop, that is—were performing six live shows in two nights. Pioneer people, indeed.

The Womack brothers, including Harry, began their professional careers in the early '50s as a mainstream gospel quartet recording for Mercury Records. Later they signed to Sam Cooke's SAR label and because Friendly Womack, Sr. admired Cooke, he allowed his sons to mix traditional gospel with rock 'n' roll. In the early '60s, under the name Valentinos, they were part of the early R&B/pop scene that included the Drifters, the Olympics and others.

At that time, 13-year-old Cecil was introduced to seven-year-old Linda. They began dating when Linda was a teenager, and at one point Cecil announced that marriage was their destiny. Some water passed under the bridge, but the prophecy eventually came true.

Both as individuals and as a couple, Cecil and Linda have earned substantial reputations for their songwriting. Linda, in fact, was only 14 when she received her first gold record, for Wilson Pickett's single of "I'm In Love." Another of Linda's songs, "A Woman's Gotta Have It," yielded gold for both James Taylor and future in-law Bobby Womack. With Cecil she's written for Millie Jackson, the Dramatics, Blondie, Chaka Khan, Billy Paul, Johnny Taylor and Teddy Pendergrass. Cecil then branched into production, manning the board for Pendergrass' *T.P.* and *It's Time For Love* albums, as well as long-players by the O'Jays, Patti LaBelle and Bobby Womack.

"Until now we never had any desire to do a record ourselves," states Cecil. "We were perfectly content writing and producing. But we started seeing ways to do the srrin our own way. We figured it would probably give us even more time together, which is always nice. After all, all things follow in time..."

Furthermore, Cecil suggests that no artistic endeavor is beyond their grasp. "If we can deliver babies in the bedroom," he chuckles, "we can do anything."

Sameya, the living proof, gurgles approvingly. ○

PHOTO: ERIC WATSON



DAN FORTE

# WAY DOWN YONDER IN NEW ORLEANS

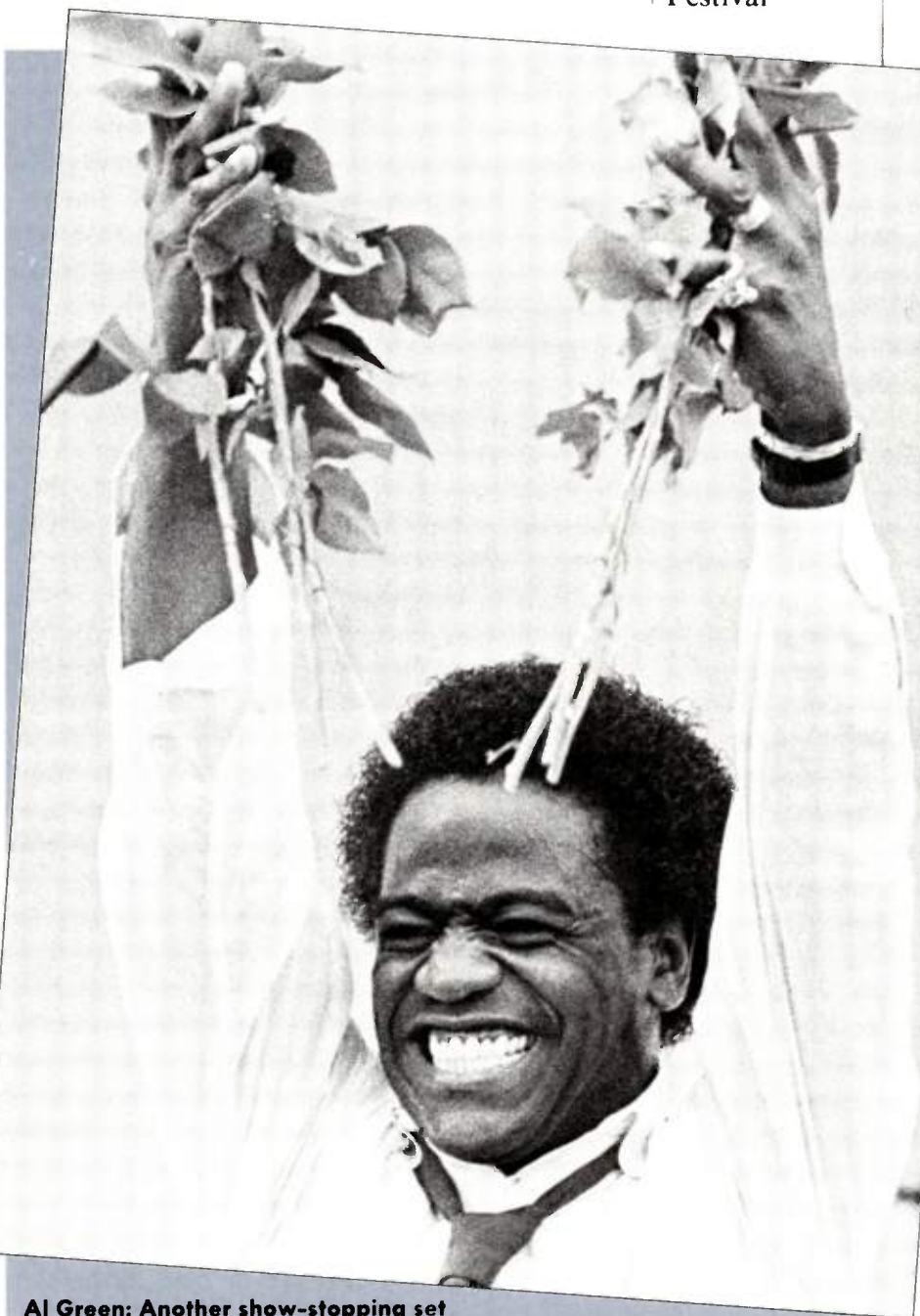
Hot Times and Hushpuppies at the 15th Annual Jazz & Heritage Festival

**N**EW YORK, NEW YORK, claims to be the "city that knows how." The obvious question that comes to mind is, "Knows how to what?" Because when it comes to having a good time, you don't go north-east, you go south, then take a right and get off in New Orleans, Louisiana, where having a good time seems to be an everyday concern.

Imagine, if you will, a festival that is as much cultural as it is musical. With five eight-hour afternoons, spanning two weekends, featuring over 300 performances by musicians of almost every conceivable—from Jerry Lee Lewis to Steel Pulse, from Mose Allison to John Lee Hooker—on six outdoor stages and in four tents, all operating simultaneously. Add to that more than 100 artists and craftsmen displaying their work, and locals cooking up family recipes for such culinary wonders as blackened redfish, jambalaya, alligator piquante, crawfish tamales and red beans and rice. Best of all, imagine such an event being affordable enough that an entire family could escape the ghetto for an afternoon and hear music of this caliber.

This is exactly the type of thing that has taken place for the past 15 years in the Crescent City. It's called the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, and there is nothing like it anywhere else on earth. Price of admission: five dollars a day for all the culture you can sop up with a handful of hushpuppies.

What makes New Orleans unique is that many of its musicians seldom, if ever, travel outside the Louisiana border. Also, these artists-in-residence are held in as high or higher esteem than the national Top 10. (Fortunately, a great number of these local heroes truly merit such respect.) Example: April 27, the opening night of the festival, a concert/cruise was held on the Riverboat President featuring Fats Domino, Dr. John and the Neville Brothers (typical price of night-time festival shows with limited seating is \$16). The Nevilles are justifiably referred to as the First Family of New Orleans R&B, but in recent years they have strayed from their second-line roots, drifting dangerously close to run-of-the-mill funk. With the departure of Ivan Neville, however, brothers Art, Cyril, Charles and Aaron (Ivan's father) dug a groove and stayed there—cranking out classics such as "Hey Pocky



**Al Green: Another show-stopping set**

Way," "Brother John," "Iko, Iko" and "Fire on the Bayou." There were still a few funk numbers, and a couple of beautiful ballads by Aaron, but these blended well with, rather than detracted from, the infectious, carnival-like R&B tunes.

After an impressive set by Mac "Dr. John" Rebennack, playing solo acoustic

piano in the tradition of Professor Longhair, James Booker, Huey Piano Smith and Tuts Washington, New Orleans' best-known ambassador, Fats Domino, took the stage. For anyone who has paid good money recently to see Chuck Berry or Bo Diddley desecrate their own legacies, rest assured, Fats is still the Fat Man of old.

PHOTO: RICK OLIVER





**Fats Domino: Proud man, proud legacy**

Backed by a top-notch, 10-piece band in matching white jackets, Fats—sounding and even looking much the same as the rotund rocker who recorded “Ain’t That A Shame” nearly 30 years ago—pumped out hit after hit, beginning with “I’m Walkin’” and ending with “Let The Four Winds Blow.” Second only to Elvis Presley in record sales in the ‘50s, Domino did right by his proud legacy, romping and stomping through “Blue Monday,” “Valley of Tears,” “I’m In Love Again,” “I’m In the Mood for Love,” and “I Hear You Knockin’.” Easily one of the most accommodating major stars of rock ‘n’ roll, Fats chatted with the audience, played requests and even signed autographs in the middle of his set (while tenor saxophonist Herb Hardesty took chorus after exhausting chorus). After numerous requests, Domino complied with a killer rendition of “The Fat Man,” his first recording from 1949 and one cited by many as the first rock ‘n’ roll record. The biggest responses, though, came from “Walking To New Orleans” (which one might suspect is still in the Top 40, judging by its inclusion on the juke boxes in every dive and greasy spoon in town) and an impromptu singalong on “Blueberry Hill” (which Fats dedicated to Presley, because “it was one of his favorites”). “I’m ready, I’m willing, and I’m able to rock ‘n’ roll all night,” Fats sang during his set, and proved it by playing for nearly two hours straight and then repeating his performance for a midnight cruise.

The sleeper of the first weekend’s lineup was a solo set by Lloyd Glenn, possibly the best living example of Texas blues piano. Oddly enough, some of the bigger name acts provided the festival with some of its low points. A much-anticipated set by soul crooner Jerry Butler fell flat on its face.—As expected, Bo Diddley shucked and

jived and barely resembled the innovative guitarist who penned “I’m a Man,” “Mona,” “Who Do You Love” and other early rock classics. Gatemouth Brown, always a favorite, played a comparatively lifeless set, and Ray Charles hit rock bottom. Topping a bill that included Al Green, Charles and his orchestra were about as soulful as Doc Severinsen and the *Tonight Show* band. Not so with “warm up” act Green, though, who screamed, sweated, danced, burst into laughter and offered up an occasional buck dance. With sizzling support from his five-piece combo, the Rev. Al easily matched his show-stopping set from last year’s fest.

For the most part, the local acts were first-rate, although a few too many of the younger bands relied on Lionel Richie and Michael Jackson for the bulk of their repertoires. Whereas last year one could stroll from one stage to the next and hear “Ooh Poopah Doo” segueing into “Jambalaya,” this year it was sometimes “Billie Jean” fading out as “All Night Long” faded in. The only band of this ilk to rise above nondescript lounge funk was the Aubrey Twins & Fresh Air, whose vocal tradeoffs gave a new twist to otherwise standard fare. The gospel tent offered fewer highlights than in past years, although Helen Brock and the New Gospellettes brought things to a fever pitch, and the McDonough High School Gospel Choir gave a preview of future candidates for the R&B charts.

Sunday’s highlight was Papa John Creach’s set with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band. The fiddler of Hot Tuna and Jefferson Starship fame was complemented perfectly by the clarinet and trumpet of Willie and Percy Humphrey on Dixieland standards like “Muskrat Ramble.” Unfortunately, one had to be in two places at the same time to also catch the antics of the

inimitable Clarence “Frogman” Henry, whose personal appearances always guarantee a rousing evening in his own French Quarter club. Famous for singing like both a girl and a frog on his hit of 25 years ago, “Ain’t Got No Home,” Frogman offered up credible versions of “Blueberry Hill,” “What’d I Say” and his own “But I Do.”

During the first week of May, of course, the festival is but one of this city’s hot attractions, and most of the local clubs seize the opportunity to either book some of the out-of-town stars or fill the house with local favorites. The most amazing show I encountered was one put on by Snooks Eaglin at Snug Harbor. Easily one of the most unique, and accomplished, electric guitarists currently playing rhythm ‘n’ blues, the blind singer gave what amounted to a one-man New Orleans heritage festival, covering virtually every major R&B star to come out of the city and then some. Backed by the Meters’ original rhythm section of drummer Zig Modeliste and bassist George Porter, Snooks did justice and then some to Earl King’s “Let The Good Times Roll,” Lee Dorsey’s “Ride Your Pony,” Guitar Slim’s “The Things That I Used To Do,” and Irma Thomas’ “I Done Got Over.” Even after breaking a string on his cheapo Kay Truetone, he covered a staggering range of guitar and vocal styles in an extended set that also included Hank Williams’ “Lovesick Blues,” Wilson Pickett’s “Mustang Sally,” a funky instrumental treatment of “Ode To Billy Joe,” and a wallowing version of “Satisfaction.” Smiling afterwards, Porter, one of

**Lloyd Glenn: A powerhouse performance by the master of Texas blues piano**

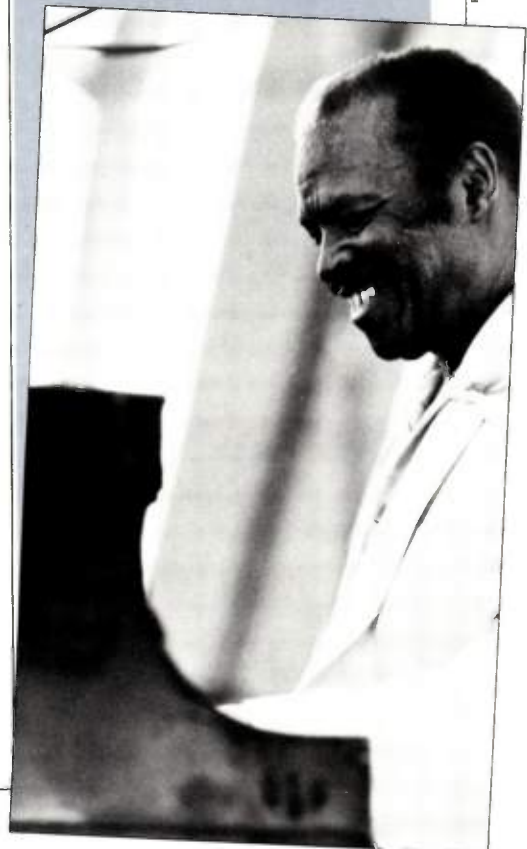


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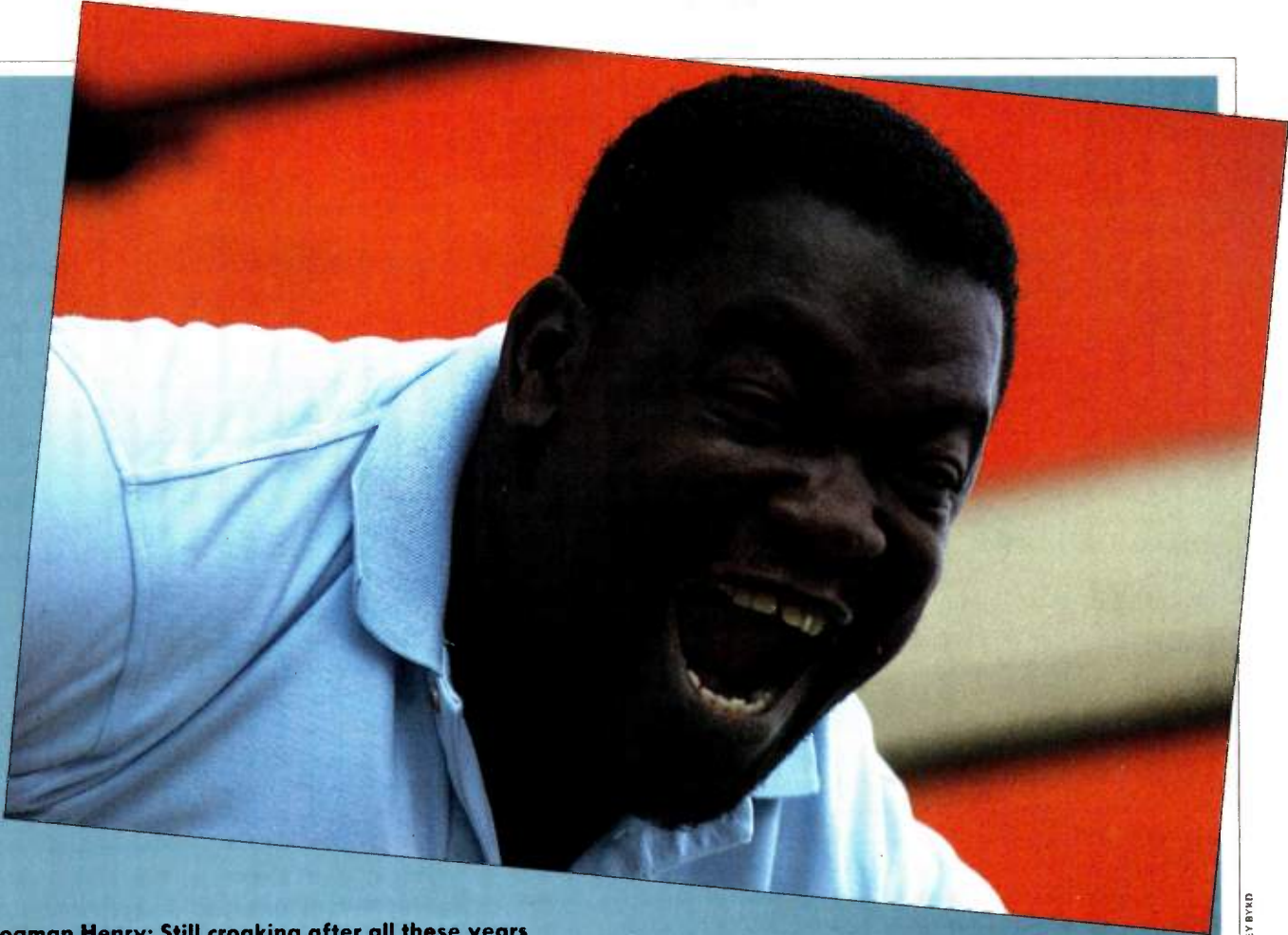
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**Frogman Henry: Still croaking after all these years**

the seminal funk/R&B bass players, admitted, "I really had to use my ear tonight."

In New Orleans, only a deadbeat would head home after attending one club, and the end of Eaglin's set left just enough time to catch the last set by the Dirty Dozen Brass Band at their regular Monday night haunt, the Glass House, an establishment located in what must be the city's war zone, with all manner of unsavory-looking characters hanging around outside. Any apprehensions brought about by the neighborhood and its stone-faced welcome wagon were quickly dispelled after paying the dollar cover charge and stepping inside. The Glass House is about the size of the average suburban living room and is decorated like a Mexican restaurant at Christmas. Across the room from the well-lit bar is the Dirty Dozen Brass Band, with no lights, no stage, no PA system, and representing everything that is New Orleans—an innovative blend of old and new, of roots and originality. As tireless dancers pounded the concrete floor, the band churned out a nonstop instrumental medley that included "Caravan," "Kansas City," "Dolphin Dance," "Billie Jean" and "When The Saints Go Marching In"—all done with traditional "walking band" instrumentation (sax, trumpet, trombone, tuba, bass, drum and snare).

Wednesday night's Tribute to Muddy Waters, aboard the Riverboat President, was promising and well-intended, but

turned out rather disappointing. The usually dynamic James Cotton checked in with a perfunctory, lukewarm set, then Taj Mahal played an astonishingly ill-considered solo set that had very little to do with Muddy Waters or any other type of blues for that matter (Taj even played a Howard Roberts electric guitar—a model virtually never associated with blues players—through a raft of delays, chorus units and phase shifters). The Fabulous Thunderbirds mustered the only energy of the evening during their workmanlike 45 minute set. The quartet was then joined onstage by Etta James, who sang "Hootchie Kootchie Man," "I Just Want To Make Love To You" and other songs associated with Waters, including "Got My Mojo Working," where the aggregation was joined by Cotton, Mahal and guitarist Bob Margolin and pianist Pinetop Perkins (the latter two alumni from one of Waters' more mediocre groups).

It's always a little frustrating reviewing a show several weeks after the fact; by that time, if you have to read about it, it's too late—the circus is already in another town. So for everyone who asked me why I was flying to New Orleans two months after Mardi Gras—as well as everyone who asked, "Have you been putting on weight?" upon my return—start planning now. The 16th annual Heritage Fest will take place the last weekend of April and first week of May, 1985. Your vacation in the Bahamas can wait. ○



**Snooks Eaglin: A one-man New Orleans heritage festival**

PHOTO: SUNDY BYRD



# notes

## party hearty

Back in the good old days before the bottom fell out of the music industry, record release parties were major events: Not

bold face in the gossip columns (or Music Video Notes, as it were).

So let's get to it. A recent big bash in Manhattan honored director **Martin Kahan** on the occasion of his first anniversary in the video biz. Kahan's credits include clips for

Shop talk was minimal, although Difford and Tilbrook consented to an on-the-spot MTV interview about—what else?—video. "We're basically

video-shy," said Difford. "We're a bit afraid of making them. That's why we're going to have **Zelda Barron** direct our clips for the new album. She's a



*Ian Hunter and his favorite vidiot, Martin Kahan, at a soiree celebrating (?) director Kahan's first year in the musvid biz; (inset) Motley Crue pug ugly Tommy Lee gets down with his favorite video star, ex-Penthouse Pet of the Year Cheryl Rixon, in the Kahan-directed Crue cut, "Too Young To Fall In Love."*

only could executives, writers and artists congregate in one place ostensibly to hobnob with one another, but these soirees offered the added treat (well, not always a treat) of previewing someone's latest new disc.

Not that such gatherings have gone the way of the dinosaur, mind you, just that they've evolved (as the dinosaur couldn't) into something more *au courant*, namely the **video party**, an excuse for screening someone's new clip. Otherwise the cast of characters remains pretty much the same, and you can round up the usual suspects to put into

Motley Crue, Kiss, Loverboy, Ian Hunter (whose idea this party was), Kool and the Gang and others, and representatives of all these groups were in attendance, along with other star guests such as **Rod Stewart**, **Martin Briley**, **Captain Haggerty** (not a music artist but an actor whose most memorable turn was his portrayal of the butler in Ian Hunter's "All of the Good Ones Are Taken" video) and **Glenn Tilbrook** and **Chris Difford**.

Asked what the secret of his success is, Kahan had a simple answer: "Good looking women. I love to work with them, and they're all over my clips."



*In the wonderful world of music video, apparently anything goes. Case in point: **Jermaine Jackson** starring with **Pia Zadora** in director **Bob ("Beat It") Giraldi's** latest epic, "When The Rain Begins To Fall," a Jackson-Zadora duet from the soundtrack of the film *Voyage of the Rock Alien*. In the film (directed by **James The Enforcer Fargo**), Jackson plays the leader of a black gang charged with protecting a post-nuclear village from a marauding gang of white motorcyclists, whose leader calls Zadora his main squeeze. Original production design, futuristic costumes and on-location shooting in Italy pushed the budget for the clip to around \$350,000, making it one of the most expensive music videos ever produced. "When The Rain Begins To Fall" will premiere this summer as a movie short. Next up for Giraldi, seen here on the set with Zadora and Jackson, is a **Billy Squier** clip, which the director is thinking of shooting in 16-millimeter, "or maybe even 8-millimeter." No matter the format, the ugly truth remains: it is still a Billy Squier clip.*





"A Rock & Roll Fable"? Better the ad for director Walter Hill's *Streets of Fire* should have said "A Rock & Roll Fiasco," for this is truly one of the worst movies ever made, rock or otherwise. What the world needs now is one more film using rock as background music in multitudinous scenes of sex and violence, supporting the thinnest and most banal of plots. Part of the exquisitely bad soundtrack is by Jim Steinman—no stranger to exquisitely bad rock—but music coordinator Jimmy Iovine had heretofore been considered a man with some taste and judgment. Oh, well, even the good die young. But for those who just can't get enough of Diane Lane (although a little goes a long, long way), MCA Home Video has released a video EP called *Music Video from 'Streets of Fire.'* Carrying a suggested list price of \$19.95, the cassette contains three complete music videos from the movie, plus a featurette titled *Inside Streets of Fire*, about the making of the film. The three songs on the tape are "I Can Dream About You" (written by Dan Hartman), "Nowhere Fast" and "Tonight Is What It Means To Be Young." You gotta be hurtin' to go for this one, though. FYI: Those looking for a ray of hope here should note that a New York audience, viewing the trailer for *Streets of Fire* prior to a showing of *The Natural* at a Times Square theater, booed lustily throughout the video.

film veteran, and she understands our fear." For those who may have missed the June installment of this column, Zelda Barron is the woman who directed Culture Club's "I'll

Tumble 4 Ya," "Miss Me Blind" and "It's A Miracle" videos. She's also the mother of video director Steve Barron (best known, one supposes, for "Billie Jean").

## people

If you don't think **Michael Jackson's** "Thriller" video is scary, then you and Michael Jackson disagree. In an interview with *Awake!*, the official magazine of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Jackson said he'll "never make another video like 'Thriller.' A lot of people were offended by it. I don't want to scare people or do anything bad. I realize now that it wasn't a good idea." Jackson went on to say he would try to stop the release of "Thriller" in some foreign countries... the Thompson Twins' **Alannah Currie** nearly lost a lot more than the sides of her hair when the Twins were shooting their "You Take Me Up" video in Portugal this spring. That explosion at the end of the clip—when the whole side of a mountain blows apart—was the result of real TNT being set off, sending part of the mountain-side flying in Currie's direction. Hey, anything for art, right? Isn't it about time to employ stunt people in these clips? In addition to Currie, the disabled list includes **Ozzy Osbourne** (glass lodged in his

throat), **Billy Idol** (temporarily blinded by chemicals during the filming of "Eyes Without a Face") and **Michael Jackson** (in a word, Pepsi). And now word comes that those scratches on **Joan Jett's** face in her new clip, "I Need Someone," are the result of the artist doing all the strenuous stunts herself. **Indiana Jones** these people ain't... before we leave **Jeff Stein** (see caption), let us note that he's also directed **Little Steven's** "Out of the Darkness" clip. The shoot itself was fairly uneventful until the arrival of some unexpected guests, name-



**Kevin Godley and Lol Creme** are directing their first feature film, a musical called *Hooverville* set in 1929 at the time of the stock market crash. **G&C**, founding members of **10cc**, have also finished their first record in some time, *Hit the Box*, produced by **Yes's Trevor Horn**. Naturally, **G&C** shot the video—which is an hour long, was mixed at the same time as the music and will also be released as a home video. Talk about synchronicity.



**Billy Idol** and director **Jeff Stein** (who directed Idol's "Rebel Yell" clip and co-directed the Cars' "You Might Think") are working on a documentary about the life and times of one Billy Idol. Cameramen are currently tracking Idol's every move, from recording studio to video shoots to parties, etc. Plans are for a one-hour film, due for release this fall.





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# n o t e s

## MUSIC VIDEO

ly Peter Wolf, Gary U.S. Bonds and Bryan Adams. Talk about video parties! Wolf was there to check out Stein's work, but word has it now that Wolf is passing on using Stein . . . **Joe Jackson** hasn't actually started his *Body and Soul* tour yet, but when he does (this fall), it'll be taped and released as an hour-long home video . . . more film directors getting into rock video: **David Cronenberg** (*Scanners*, *The Dead Zone*, *Videodrome*) is working with **Siouxsie and the Banshees**, and Polish filmmaker **Zbigniew Rybicki** (who directed *Tango*, 1983's best foreign film) is making a clip for the British band **Art of Noise**. The Art of Noise will not appear in the clip—in fact, this band isn't likely to appear anywhere ever. They're what's known as a "studio act."

## vid bits

**The Police**, the **Motels**, the **Cars**, **Berlin**, **UB40**, **Blondie** and the **Clash** in the same video? Well, yes and no. Music by these bands and some others will be featured in—now get this—the first tennis music video, due out this summer. According to producer Rob

Walker (who's worked with Russell Mulcahy, Brian Grant and David Mallett), the music will somehow make it easier for prospective tennis players to study the styles of John McEnroe and Ivan Lendl, who'll be the on-screen attractions . . . **Mark Robinson**, who directed **Bob Dylan's** "What's a Sweetheart Like You" video, is now at work on his first feature, titled *Mock Turtle's Lament*. The script is by Los Angeles session bassist Les Boheme . . . **Madonna** has a role in a film about a wrestler, *Vision Quest*, and also sings the title song . . . video director **Tim Pope** (who's directed clips by the Cure, the Psychedelic Furs, Style Council and Neil Young) is so tall and skinny he looks like a tree—even he thinks so. He recorded a song called "I Want To Be A Tree," and got the Cure to produce it. It was all a big joke, but Pope has now wound up with a UK record contract. This summer he's shooting and starring in his own video, and it's reported that he'll do a nude scene in it, just prove how tree-like he really is . . . CBS/Fox Video is preparing to release music videos for the hearing impaired. First up is a compilation package featuring "close



The DTV logo: Music video as it was meant to be (?)

captioned" clips of **Cyndi Lauper**, **Quiet Riot**, and the **Romantics**.

## it's academic

A mother in Malibu, California, got sick of her college-bound kids rocking out to MTV. Fearing her children would never get into a decent school, Charlotte Dial invented the SAT College Entrance prep video, *Video SAT Review*, at a cost of \$38,000. Now she's working on one for the American College Test (ACT). These titles, however, are expected to be less popular than, say, "Cum On Feel The Noize," for reasons yet to be determined.

—Merle Ginsberg

## more kid vid

In the continuing saga of music video designed for the younger generation (see June and July Music Video Notes), the Disney Channel has come up with its own takeoff on MTV. DTV, as it's called, consists at present of 60 15-minute music videos that match vintage Disney cartoon segments, live action footage and animated short subjects with rock, classical, country and jazz songs. And what a playlist: Elvis Presley's "Stuck On You" provides the score for a scene from "Donald and Pluto" depicting the woe-begone canine's struggles after swallowing a magnet; Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti" superenergizes Donald Duck's night on the town, "Mr. Duck Steps Out," while Hall and Oates'

"Private Eyes" offers an appropriate commentary on scenes from the bumbling Goofy's "How To Be A Detective." Michael Jackson's in there, too, with "Beat It" accompanying scenes from the classic "Pecos Bill" and "Two Gun Goofy." And in a truly inspired choice, animated characters from Disney's 1942 "Symphony Hour" cavort to Spike Jones' immortal interpretation of "Blue Danube."

DTV is the brainchild of producer Chuck Braverman, a veteran in the fields of music video (he's worked with David Bowie, Bob Seger and Paul McCartney, among others), advertising and television and is perhaps most renown for perfecting "kinestasis," the blending and animation of still photos and graphics. Braverman and his staff at Braverman Productions Inc. in Santa Monica, California, pored over 300 titles in the Disney library in compiling 60 four-clip DTV packages. "We looked for literal and artistic interpretations of the songs selected," says Braverman, "but the main objective was to work with the lyrics and visuals so that viewers would have fun with DTV."

Disney has marketed an extensive number of movie and cartoon titles as home videos, and there's plans to release the DTV videos for home consumption. But that day, according to a channel spokesperson, is "somewhere down the line." So for the moment Braverman and his staff sit at the ready to produce more should demand warrant it. And how does Braverman regard his leap from David Bowie to Mickey Mouse? "I feel," he says with a straight face, "as if I've come full circle."

—David Manners



Yes, the same girl Greg Kinnear didn't marry (Elizabeth Rollins) in his "Jeopardy" ties the knot with him in the sequel, "Reunited." FYI: the "munchkins" in the clip were cast from the San Francisco Little People's Society, and Romeo Void vocalist Deborah Lyall designed much of the Wizard of Oz-style set.





The once and future Thin White Duke: As detached on tape as he was live

## David Bowie

SERIOUS MOONLIGHT D: David Mallet

Music Media/90 minutes/\$39.95

Actor and international trendsetter David Bowie did a little moonlighting—serious moonlighting—last year, picking up some extra bucks by inviting tens of thousands of people at a time to attend the taping of his outdoor concert series, wherein he revisited some of his previous incarnations as a singer and songwriter of note.

Billing himself this time around as the “real” David Bowie, he bleached and curled his hair, dressed in upscale, conservative togs, and tossed off a couple of hours’ worth of his history. An hour of this material, recorded at Vancouver’s PNE Grandstand, was shown on HBO; the home video version includes all of that plus another half hour.

Each of the 20 numbers is preceded by a photo of Bowie taken at the time the song was originally recorded. The number of strikingly different Bowies depicted merely points out the sameness of the songs presented here. From “Heroes” to “Let’s Dance,” “Sorrow” to “Fame,” “Golden Years” to “Station to Station” and points in between, the towns all look the same. I

thought at the concert that Bowie and band were playing it for the cameras; that proves not to have been the case, because *Serious Moonlight* is just as detached on tape as it was live. —David Gans

## Culture Club

A KISS ACROSS THE OCEAN D: Keef

CBS Fox Video Music/57 min./\$29.98

To say that a live performance videotape of Culture Club is not the best way to appreciate their musical attributes would be eminently fair, and a tribute to the superb pop records they’ve made in the last two years. To then say that *A Kiss Across The Ocean*, taped at London’s Hammer-smith Odeon at Christmas time last year and seen on HBO this spring, is—like almost all live video—not worth the time would be to make a grave miscalculation. What *Kiss* delivers within the static limitations of a concert video is nothing less than Pop Event. And when the focus of the intense adolescent adulation chronicled here is no one but the ol’ gender bender himself, Boy George, then it’s necessary to sit up and take notice.

This is not to say that the music need be ignored. The Club is awful confident



sounding, and why not? How many other bands can boast enough hits on just two long players to pull off a legitimate greatest hits show? The addition of a three piece horn section and singer Helen Terry boosts their sound tremendously, and while none of the songs are created anew, the solid grooves are played for all their worth and then some.

But the revelations contained in this program have to do with the audience, which includes a sizable number of kids dressing just like the Boy. No boys, mind you—only girls go for that O’Dowd look, and that’s fairly amazing. What does it mean, exactly, when pubescent females want to dress up like a self-described drag queen? What is going on when these same girls scream as if the Boy was Simon Le-Bon or something, and vault on stage for the last number to dance with him and take their turn in the spotlight? Alas, the mysteries of Pop Events are known only to the young believers, but what us older types—and the younger types, when they get a little perspective on their youthful heart throbs—need is the documentation of such moments. *A Kiss Across The Ocean* is precisely that, and, as these things go (*The Beatles At Shea*, *D.O.A.*), stands as a pretty lively artifact. —Wayne King

## Thomas Dolby

D: Thomas Dolby; D: Daniel Kleinman

Picture Music International/16 minutes /\$16.95/ Sony Video 45

Here’s an artist who knows how to express himself in music video. Witty, spirited and imaginative, Thomas Dolby establishes his presence as a leading creative force in video with the release of this four-clip 45.

His biggest hit, “She Blinded Me With Science,” finds Dolby in his favorite role as a psychotherapy patient. Set in an asylum, Dolby lusts after an Oriental nurse, while his scientific lament is echoed by an hysterical shrink and some looney inmates. The burlesque performances are superb and the old timey serial graphics accentuate the clip’s cartoon logic.

“Hyperactive” drives music video technique to a higher level—i.e., visualization





The Boy at work, delivering nothing less than Pop Event, as documented on *A Kiss Across The Ocean*

of the beat. Again on the shrink's couch, Dolby tears off his face, blows his body apart and turns his mind inside out in a series of stunning video effects keyed to his childhood recollections. Just as Godley-Creme did in Herbie Hancock's "Rockit," Dolby and director Daniel Kleinman translate the beat into visual puns.

The other two clips are earlier efforts from the *Golden Age of Wireless LP*, and both have the feel of video B-sides. Kinky and inconsistent, "Europa and the Pirates" is the more successful of the two, featuring Dolby in his second favorite persona—a communications operator in the post-telegraph age. The artist experiments gamely with a mix of color, black and white and stock footage on both film and video in an effort to evoke the multiple moods of his radio signals, but the clip doesn't connect. Nonetheless, this 45 captures a music video star on the rise, and "Science" and "Hyperactive" represent two of the finest clips ever produced.

—Alan Hecht

## The Beast of I.R.S.

Various Artists and Directors  
I.R.S. Video/38:32/\$29.95

A real breakthrough in compilation videos, mostly because the bulk of the songs seen and heard here is good. This despite the inclusion of the woeful Flesh-tones' "Hexbreaker." But one bad apple can't spoil the bunch. The English Beat's "I Confess," R.E.M.'s enigmatic "Radio Free Europe," the Go-Go's vibrant "Head Over Heels," the Alarm's rousing "The Stand" are first-rate efforts wherein visual conception maps into the music in memorable ways, some wildly amusing, some provocative. Best of all—one man's opinion, you understand—is the late, lamented Wall of Voodoo's "Mexican Radio." I can get into that guy poking his head through the vat of beans, and Stan Ridgway's diseased vocals are simply the stuff of legend. Suffice it to say that even a skeptic could be forced to admit, after viewing this collection, that music video is an idea whose time might one day come. Maybe.

—David McGee

## Hall and Oates

ROCK 'N' SOUL LIVE D: Marty Callner  
RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video/90 minutes/\$29.95

Anyone looking for all the Hall and Oates hits in a smooth concert video can find it in this live recording shot at the Montreal Forum during the duo's 1983 H2O tour. Another in a long line of re-packaged pay cable specials (with no new footage, as some have had), *Rock 'n' Soul Live* is a solid, accurate reproduction of Hall and Oates' live show.

Actually this concert tape is immeasurably more successful than the Hall and Oates conceptual videos, which always seem to find them walking through pseudo-soulful scenes that bear no relation whatsoever to their songs. In concert, though, Daryl Hall delivers flawless vocal performances of their greatest hits, including "Kiss On My List," "She's Gone" and "Maneater," while Oates and guitarist G.E. Smith rock out on their instruments.

Recorded and mixed by Police co-producer Hugh Padgham, the stereo sound retains the impeccable clarity of Hall and Oates' records, a rare quality in a concert tape. Even "set 'em and forget 'em" director Marty Callner contributes to the video's high production values with his seamless, straightforward presentation. Only the lighting, which depends on a standard concert design for mood, is subpar. All in all, a fine party tape. Now about those video clips, guys . . .

—Alan Hecht

## Wildstyle

D: Charlie Ahearn  
Program Hunters/82 minutes/\$59.95

By night he is a graffiti artist, leaving his wild style mark on the tenements and subway trains in the South Bronx, signing his work "Zoro" and becoming a borough legend in the process. By day "Zoro" is known simply as Raymond and he would be nobody were it not for the self-esteem given him by his art. For Raymond and the assorted rappers and breakers in his neighborhood, art is salvation, a ticket out of the ghetto, the only means of communication. One day Raymond finds himself being

pressured by his peers to join other graffiti artists in a "union," decorating storefronts as a collective rather than expressing themselves independently and on their own terms. Eventually the monied class discovers these artists and holds a museum showing of their work. A wealthy patroness attempts to seduce Raymond with both her checkbook and her body. But Raymond's strength and inspiration comes from the street, not from institutionally-funded projects, and in the end his fellow artists come around to his point of view. In celebration, they join together for a rapping-breaking-scratching-wild style blow-out of mythic proportions in its intensity. And they all live happily ever after.

Maybe, maybe not. *Wild Style* isn't about happy endings: it's about the struggle for dignity in a hostile environment. As surely as the wealthy patronesses' taste for street chic will soon dissipate, so will Raymond go on drawing, so will the rappers go on rapping, so will the breakers go on breaking. Writer-producer-director Charlie Ahearn (whose previous work, if there is any, I'm not familiar with) has approached this scene with a compassion foreign to most of today's so-called "street" films; and while *Wild Style* is clearly a low-budget project, it has more heart, soul and integrity than a lifetime's worth of *Flashdance*, *Footloose* and *Breakin'*. Ahearn's script lets the music and art speak for itself: nothing could be more powerful than sim-





ply training a camera on Chief Rocker Busy Bee or the Fantastic Five and letting their messages be heard; nothing could be more exhilarating than a bird's-eye view of the anatomically-impossible breaking of the Rock Steady Crew.

*Wild Style* is doubtless bound for the midnight movie circuit, but readers with VCRs, or access to VCRs, ought to have it in their archives. This is the real deal, Jack, and the forthrightness of these pioneers will shine as a beacon in years to come, long after Hollywood's trend-devouring ceases to produce a satisfactory bottom line and Tinsel Town finally leaves the do to those who can do.

—David McGee

## Say Amen, Somebody

D: George T. Nierenberg

Pacific Arts Video/100 min./\$59.95

To the uninitiated or uncaring, *Say Amen, Somebody* may seem like just another boring low-budget *verite* look at some half-forgotten slice of Americana, in this case the world of southern black gospel. But to those who want to learn anything about rock and its roots, the film is a revelation. Following around two of the most vital pioneers of the form, Mother Willie Mae Ford Smith and Rev. Thomas Dorsey, we're allowed to see where the music fits into their lives. By capturing their dedication and intensity, the film manages to say quite a bit about just how music fits into ours.

Forget, for the moment, that the call and response fervor of the singers and the assemblies filmed here continues to mirror the relationship between the star and the audience in rock. Forget that the rhythms are still prevalent in music that surrounds us more than thirty years after the secularization of sanctified music begat what the world calls soul. Forget that the music was initially ignored and condemned by the church as "devil's music," the same trap still sprung on any new perspective, any new way of using newer methods to vital-

ize old forms. And simply keep in mind the dedication of the people through whom the music surges, and match it against the belief many have in the secular religion Rock has become.

At one point that hammy old showman, Rev. Dorsey, turns to the camera and informs us: "I'm gonna keep on doing it, ladies and gentlemen, until the lady I worked with (his wife) makes another appearance, and she's been dead a long, long time. So that means what?" he asks with the patience of a dedicated schoolteacher. "I intend to live on the Lord's shoulder a long time." Baby, that is rock 'n' roll.

—Wayne King

## James Brown

LIVE IN CONCERT D: Barrie McLean

Media Music/48 minutes/\$29.95

I make no claim to having seen every music video on the market, or even a high percentage of them. I don't have to be that well-read on the subject, though, to know that *James Brown Live in Concert*, shot at the 1979 Toronto Summer Festival, represents a new low in the presentation of a major artist on video. This is not a concert in toto, but snippets of a longer set, cut without regard for the pacing so critical to the emotional thrust of a James Brown performance. The first 10 minutes or so are not even JB, but his band, the JB's, warming up the crowd for the Godfather of Soul with two inconsequential numbers, one being the totally lame "Boogie Wonderland." They fade out and we see the title card "The Forum presents James Brown" for the second time as Brown enters stage right we are to see it three more times as songs end and the editor cuts to another portion of the show. We get not one but three takes of "Too Funky," one to open up Brown's show, one in the middle, and one as an encore. In between there's "Nature," "Georgia," a truly bizarre rendition of "Please Please Please" that's all riff and precious little vocal and "Too Funky"—oh, but I mentioned that last one already. Once in a while we even get to see some of those famous JB splits and spins, but the



camera stays mostly tight on the face, as is appropriate when you're shooting an artist renowned for his moves. Even Danny Ray, Brown's long-time flamboyant emcee, gets short shrift here, as his fire-and-brimstone introduction is trimmed to "Jaaaayames Brown!!! Jaaaayames Brown!!!" It goes on, but you shouldn't. *Live in Concert* has the effect of rendering JB unrecognizable to those who grew up with him, inconsequential to those who are only now discovering him. Hate to think how future generations might judge the man if they have nothing more to go on than this patchwork quilt. If you really want to know what all the fuss is about, dig up *That Was Rock* or, better yet, a copy of the entire T.A.M.I. show, featuring one of Brown's most incendiary sets. Your search will be rewarded manifold.

—David McGee

## Richard Tee Steve Gadd

RICHARD TEE: CONTEMPORARY PIANO

DCI Music Video/60 min./\$69.95

STEVE GADD: UP CLOSE

DCI Music Video/60 min./\$69.95

DCI Music Video is an outgrowth of Drummers Collective, a New York school whose faculty includes many of the Apple's premier studio players. Video tapes of the school's clinics served as a springboard into this more intimate for-

The Go-Go's vibrant "Head Over Heels" video is one of several first-rate efforts on *The Beast of I.R.S.* cassette







**Say Amen, Somebody: Revelations.**

mat, an interview with the musician at his instrument.

Richard Tee, whose joyous presence brightened Paul Simon's *One-Trick Pony*, shows similar *joie de vivre* in *Contemporary Piano*. Neither a personality profile nor a dry, "instructional" video, this 60-minute tape puts across both information and personality. Tee is seen in a relaxed studio setting, seated at a grand piano and talking

about his gig, which he clearly loves. He describes his early classical training, but confesses, "I've loved boogie-woogie since I could crawl up on a piano," and explains how Bach "makes you use every finger you've got." He uses the most famil-

iar melody around—"Happy Birthday"—to illustrate the myriad rhythmic approaches, chord substitutions and melodic embellishments that can be used to interpret a piece of music.

Both Tee and drummer Steve Gadd offer convincing explanations of why economy of style is one of the most important traits of a session player. Gadd: "Play the least you can and still have it full. That way, if

they want it to build (the track has) seto go." Tee: "You can't make a real soulful fill when someone's singing it real dainty—don't throw a garbage can over a tweety bird." These are priceless insights from the players who set the styles for the rest of us.

Gadd is less engaging, but no less informative, than Tee. His delivery is low key and unsmiling, but I suspect that's due to the overly serious questioning technique of interviewer/producer Rob Wallis. Gadd tells how his experiences in the Rochester Crusaders drum corps taught him how to play with others as well as to read and arrange music. In the course of *Up Close*, he demonstrates the unique parts he played on Paul Simon's classic "50 Ways To Leave Your Lover" and "Late In The Evening," and analyzes several different rhythms. At one point interrogator Wallace observes Gadd holding his breath at irregular intervals while playing; Gadd remarks that it probably would be better if he breathed evenly throughout. This is something a non-drummer probably wouldn't have noticed, and it's the kind of thing every drummer from tyro to aging pro will gain from.

These people are on to something here. DCI Music Video has videos in the works with guitarists John Scofield and Adrian Belew, drummer Louie Bellson, pianist Chick Corea and others. This series shows the educational potential of home video as it applies to specific disciplines. Music students from Seattle to St. Pete will now be able to learn from New York players without having to go to New York. (DCI Music Video, 541 6th Ave., NY, NY 10001.)

—David Gans

## MUSICVIDEO TOP TEN

- 1 **MAKING MICHAEL JACKSON'S THRILLER**  
MICHAEL JACKSON  
Vestron Video
- 2 **DURAN DURAN**  
DURAN DURAN  
Thorn-EMI Home Video
- 3 **DAVID BOWIE: SERIOUS MOONLIGHT\***  
DAVID BOWIE  
Music Media
- 4 **COOL CATS**  
VARIOUS ARTISTS  
MGM/UA Home Video
- 5 **NEIL DIAMOND: LIVE AT THE GREEK\***  
NEIL DIAMOND  
Vestron Video
- 6 **PHIL COLLINS**  
PHIL COLLINS  
Sony Video 45
- 7 **THE CONCERT FOR BANGLADESH\***  
VARIOUS ARTISTS  
Picture Music Intl.
- 8 **PICTURE MUSIC\***  
VARIOUS ARTISTS  
Picture Music Intl.
- 9 **A HOT SUMMER NIGHT WITH DONNA\***  
DONNA SUMMER  
RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video
- 10 **POLICE AROUND THE WORLD**  
THE POLICE  
I.R.S. 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 **BORDERLINE**  
MADONNA  
(Sire) D: Mary Lambert
- 2 **TONIGHT**  
KOOL AND THE GANG  
(De-Lite) D: Martin Kahan
- 3 **THE DOMINATRIX SLEEPS TONIGHT**  
DOMINATRIX  
(Uproar/Streetwise) D: Beth B.
- 4 **HELLO**  
LIONEL RITCHIE  
(Motown) D: Bob Giraldo
- 5 **AGAINST ALL ODDS**  
PHIL COLLINS  
(Atlantic) D: Taylor Hackford
- 6 **GIVE IT UP**  
KC  
(Meca) D: Bob Small
- 7 **SHE'S STRANGE**  
CAMEO  
(Atlanta Artists/Polygram) D: Dee Tractman
- 8 **NO MORE WORDS**  
BERLIN  
(Geffen) D: English and Goldman
- 9 **NO PARKING ON THE DANCE FLOOR**  
MIDNIGHT STAR  
(Elektra) D: Peter Allen
- 10 **PARTY TRAIN**  
THE GAP BAND  
(Total Experience/Polygram) D: Don Letts

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 June.

## Bette Midler

**THE BETTE MIDLER SHOW** D: Tom Trbovich  
Embassy Home Entertainment/84 min./\$69.95

Can I boogie? What kind of asshole question is that?" Indeed. *The Bette Midler Show*, taped in 1976 for HBO, accurately captures the manic range of the Divine Miss M in all her onstage glory. Shifting crazily from vamped-up renditions of '40s swing standards (with the help of her three Harlettes) to delightfully vulgar quips (an appendectomy was not all she had taken care of in a hospital stay: "I've donated my tits," she proclaims, pausing three beats, "to Cher") through sentimental readings of assorted ballads, Midler proves to be one of a kind. So much so, of course, that she's had to tone down much of her *schtick* over the years to try and fit into the entertainment mainstream. And that's a shame; what other performer would sing a song while in the clutches of a life-size King Kong prop, cheerlead an entire audience through one of her legendarily dirty Sophie Tucker jokes and then introduce a song with a story about a 450-pound woman walking down 42nd Street with a fried egg on her head and have it come out sweet?

—Wayne King



MARTIN PORTER ●

## SIGHT AND SOUND

### BLACK POWER

WHILE THE MORE CONVENTIONAL silver finish is still a popular choice for some buyers, the black power amp is quickly becoming as chic as designer jeans among the vast majority of audio consumers who are eager to pay more for the difference. Two recent additions to the *noir* trend are the Integra A-8019 integrated amp from Onkyo and Yamaha's aptly

simultaneously, or in any combination. Amp and speakers both are protected from overload by a built-in safety circuit.

### CX COMPLEX

LAST YEAR, CBS RECORDS introduced a special noise reduction system known as CX encoding. It was their answer to Dolby and dbx and was viewed as the record industry's

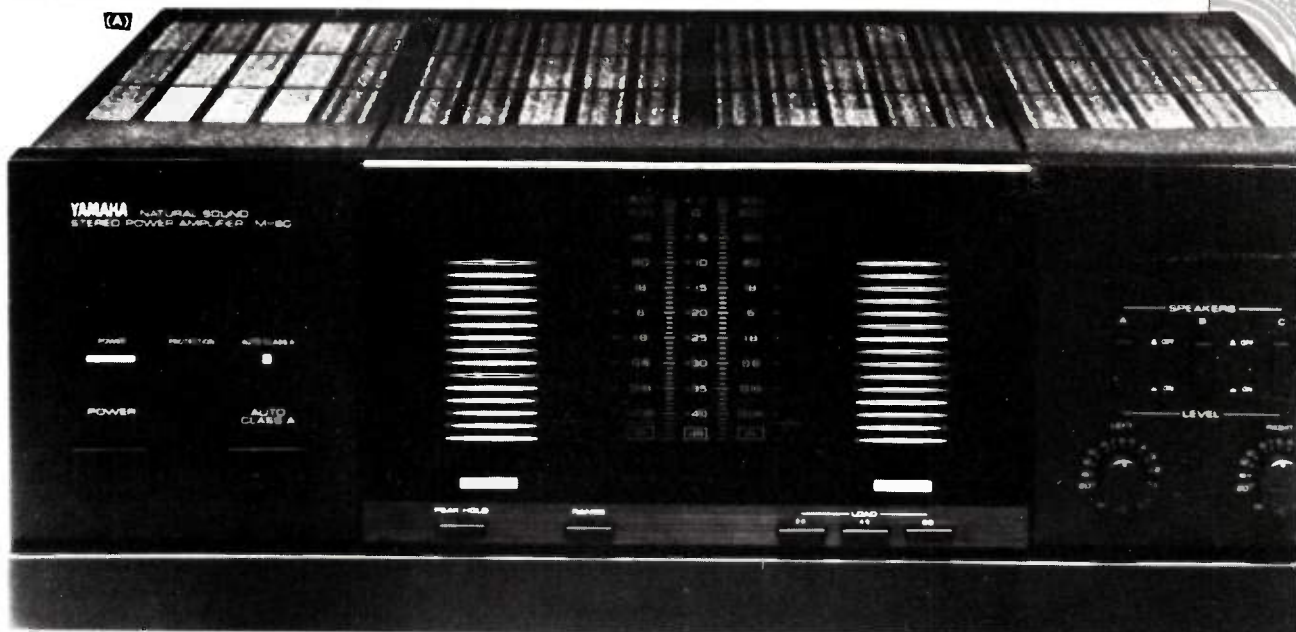
cently bit the dust, leaving Pioneer as the sole CX standardbearer.

"It was never intended to be used with only one medium," says a CBS spokesman.

And it's a good thing, too.

### REEL LIFE

THE CASSETTE DECK IS CLEARLY the dominant species in home recorders these days, but that doesn't



named powderkeg, the M-80.

The Integra A-8019 (approx. \$495) puts out 100 watts per channel and features the exclusive delta power supply system for digital-ready dynamic range and a phono equalizer circuit for user-selectable gain with the MC or MM type cartridges. Another Onkyo exclusive here is the direct tone circuitry, which provides passive equalization of bass and treble ranges without added noise and distortion. There is also an independent recording selector that allows the user to record from one source while listening to another.

As its name implies, Yamaha's top-of-the-line M-80 amplifier is bursting with power—340 watts per channel worth with four-ohm speakers. It too is described as being "digital ready" for use with a Compact Disc machine. Independent level controls permit output adjustments for left and right channels and can drive up to three pairs of speakers independently,

last ditch attempt to stave off the Compact Disc for a couple more years.

The system required special decoding hardware, which was manufactured by some half a dozen companies. Record masters grumbled about poor sound quality, but CBS stuck behind its invention and even tried to talk the rest of the record industry into joining along.

However, after putting CX encoding on approximately 100 album releases, CBS has quietly decided to discontinue the practice—primarily because no other record companies picked up on the idea.

CX hasn't vanished from the Earth, though. It was a contender in the noise reduction sweepstakes (won by dbx) for stereo TV. Earlier it turned up as the preferred method of noise reduction for most stereo video-disc players, and was incorporated into machines manufactured by Pioneer and RCA. RCA's disc player re-

necessarily mean that the trusty old reel-to-reel has gone the way of the brontosaurus—or the eight-track for that matter.

The truth is that while cassettes are more convenient to use, sound quality reel-to-reel's is generally superior. Yet, there are high-end cassette deck exceptions and cassette machines are getting better and cheaper all the time. And try schlepping a reel-to-reeler on your back with a pair of headphones.

But even in an age when survival of the smallest seems to be the law of the consumer electronics jungle, these giant reel-to-reel forebearers of the pint-size Super Walkman cling to their rightful turf on the audio shelves.

Pioneer's RT-909 (approx. \$900) incorporates all of the expected features such as LED displays and auto-reverse, plus reverse play, repeat play, pitch control, four-digit electronic tape counter, and left and right moni-



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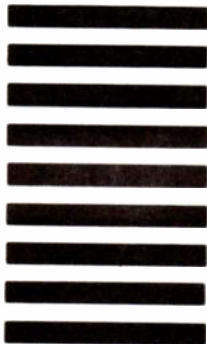
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toring. This rack-mountable machine has been a staple in Pioneer's consumer audio line for more than six years—its longevity is based on impressive specs such as a signal-to-noise ratio of more than 60 dB (at 7-1/2 ips) and a frequency range of 20Hz to 28Hz. The RT-909 offers superior stereo recording and playback capabilities with its four-head (two for playback, one each for recording and erasing) configuration. It can even handle professional-size 10-1/2-inch reels.

Teac, a company long associated with quality open-reel machines, has a comparable two-channel deck, the X-300R (approx. \$690). While it doesn't have all the deluxe features, it has the specs, claimed on paper to be 65dB signal-to-noise. Recording and playback are handled by three permalloy heads; other features include: auto-reverse/repeat, bi-directional playback, timer-activated record and playback.

If glad tracking is your thing, then the GX-4000D from Akai (approx. \$400) has a reel for you. The three-head system doesn't carry any of the special playback features found in the other two decks, but it is capable of sound-on-sound recording—which, depending on your needs, can make all the difference in the world.

## SIGHT & SOUND

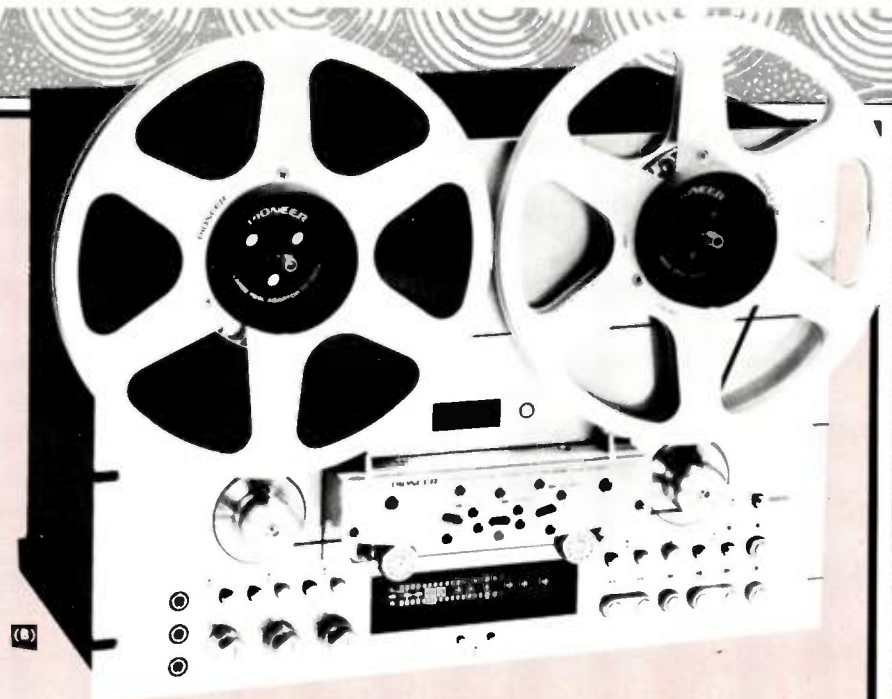
NETWORK TELEVISION WILL BE rocking 'n' rolling next fall like it never did in the days when TV music meant Lawrence Welk. Rather than being spurred by the success of video music video, though, this trend's impetus comes from the long-missing link in television, i.e., audio. Yes, stereo television is on its way.

On March 29, the FCC opened the door for a de facto stereo television standard by protecting the system recommended by the Electronics Industries Association (EIA). In short, this decision means broadcasters, rather than the federal government, will determine the fate of network stereo TV.

EIA's chosen stereo system—consisting of Zenith's dual channel sound and dbx noise reduction—will allow broadcasters to transmit both primo-quality stereo and a simultaneous second-language channel, for bilingual broadcasts. Which will come first is anyone's guess. It is, though, a safe bet that there will be more music on TV than ever before once the technology is in place.

This could translate into some serious competition for MTV, since the all-music channel has no intention of changing its format to be compatible with future stereo TV receivers (it's presently cablecast in stereo, via an optional hook-up to the user's hi-fi system). The entire cable industry is caught in the same technical bind.

Meanwhile, most manufacturers expect to have stereo TVs on the shelves by next fall; stereo decoders for "stereo-ready" receivers are expected to sell for between \$100 and \$200. Stay tuned. ○



(B)



(D)

**(A)** Black power: Yamaha's aptly named M-80 amplifier boasts 340 watts per channel with four-ohm speakers (approx. \$900); **(B)** Pioneer's RT-909: A four-head configuration offers superior stereo recording and playback capabilities (approx. \$900); **(C)** Teac's X-300R: Two-channels with high end features (approx. \$690); **(D)** Akai's GX-4000D: Sound-on-sound recording (approx. \$400).



(C)



CRAIG ANDERTON ●

# PERSONAL COMPUTERS BECOME PERSONAL COMPOSERS

Part II: Music Software for the Commodore-64

**A**s noted in last month's **MUSICAL ELECTRONICS**, the Commodore-64 has become the music industry's de facto standard computer thanks to its sophisticated sound generating capabilities. However, it takes good software (the programs that control the computer) to exploit the C-64's sound generator to its fullest potential.

The programs covered in this column are representative of the newer generation of C-64 music software. They're generally easy to use, include good graphics, and have decent documentation. While learning these programs may be somewhat difficult initially, their operation becomes second-nature in a fairly short time (sort of like learning to drive a stick-shift car). One complication is that all programs require you to create your compositions via the computer keyboard (except for Music Construction Set, which can use a joystick); and since the keyboard doesn't have keys like "quarter note," you have to learn which letter keys control which musical parameters. Unfortunately, none of these programs include any kind of keyboard overlay or replacement keytops for the C-64 keyboard, so until you learn a program you'll find yourself going back and forth between the manual, the computer key-

board and the TV or monitor display.

Nonetheless, considering the cost of a C-64 music system (under \$500 for computer, disk drive and software), these programs deliver a lot for the money. I can think of no better way to brush up on music reading skills or ear training; and since the C-64 has three individual voices, you can easily experiment with harmony lines and counterpoint. Best of all, these programs are fun, and go for as low as \$20 (with the most expensive nearing \$60).

**Music Construction Set** (Electronic Arts, 2755 Campus Drive, San Mateo, CA 94403) is a somewhat deceptive program: although it's simple to learn and has a "fun and games" ambience about it, hidden within is a remarkably sophisticated compositional tool. Unlike keyboard entry systems, MCS displays "icons" (pictures) on the screen that represent different functions. A joystick-controlled hand points at the desired icon; pressing the "fire" button initiates the chosen function (for example, point at the piano icon, and the composition plays). The hand also drags notes onto the standard-notation staff, pulls notes from the staff for editing, and so on. (MCS does allow for keyboard entry of some functions if using the joystick isn't fast enough for you.) Unfortunately, users are limited to preset sounds, thus throwing

away much of the C-64 sound generator's potential. It remains, however, a very flexible program that can even print out scores. If you're just getting into music composition via computer, MCS is probably the place to start.

**Music Writer 64** (M'Soft Inc., 12027 Pacific Street, Omaha, NE 68154) allows for entering notes and displaying them on a standard staff; however, you may also "multitrack" up to three different voices (with any previously programmed voices playing in the background) by typing notes in real-time on the C-64 keyboard. A click track helps you keep your timing straight. You may also display entered or "multitracked" music in standard notation—great for those who aren't too proficient at writing music yet need to write out an occasional part or lead sheet.

The C-64's built-in BASIC language gives you access to the C-64's music capabilities, but making any kind of decent music is an extremely tedious process that requires entering scores of multi-digit numbers. **Synthy-64** (Abacus Software, PO Box 7211, Grand Rapids, MI 49510) greatly streamlines this process by creating a "music language" that works just like BASIC, but is far easier to use for musical applications. This unpretentious, surprisingly easy-to-use, and cost-effective program seems like a logical bridge for those who want to branch out from computer programming into music programming.

**MusiCalc** (Waveform Inc., 1912 Bonita Way, Berkeley, CA 94704) is a serious program that is generally considered the professional musician's software of choice for the C-64. It comes the closest to turning your TV into a mini-moog, down to creating a graphic "front panel" where you move "sliders" for different functions up and down by typing on different keys. The graphics are superb, the manual is comprehensive and you can either create compositions a note at a time or do live multitrack "recording." MusiCalc also offers several options, including a MIDI interface for driving MIDI-compatible equipment, MusiCalc 2 accessory diskette for displaying or printing out notes in standard notation, and a soon-to-be-introduced organ-style keyboard accessory designed to make entering music far easier. ○

**MusiCalc: Software that can turn your TV into a mini-moog**





MIKE SHEA ●

# SQUIRING A WINNER

Fender's  
Squier Bullet  
is a beginning  
guitarist's dream

Up to this point HANDS ON has dealt with instruments that incorporate the latest in electronic technology and are as accessible to the new musician as they are to trained amateurs and professionals. Unfortunately, this standard can't be applied to acoustical instruments (grand pianos, violins, horns and guitars), because there's been no new developments in terms of ease of playing and learning. In other words, beginning guitarists still get blisters on their fingers.

That said, it seems an appropriate time to check out a new guitar from Fender that offers a wealth of advantages for the aspiring axeman on a limited budget. Historically, inexpensive guitars have required constant upgrading, because no matter how skilled the player, the instrument's sound left much to be desired.

With a suggested list price of \$169, the **Squier Bullet** is a reasonable investment in an instrument that sounds good, provided the player knows how to use its three pickups and five position switch. While playing chords, the far left position renders a full, chunky sound, while the far right position accentuates the high end and gives miniscule lead lines (especially the note bending) a screaming, long sustain. A friend who has been playing guitar for about six months had a little trouble getting used to the Bullet, but felt that the guitar's light weight was a big plus. Another player who's been at it for about a year-and-a-half worked out with the instrument for nearly an hour and then wouldn't give it up. As I fought it out of his hands, he exclaimed "I love it! I love it!"

It's all fine and dandy that you can learn on this guitar fairly easily and that it sounds very good. Still, would this \$169 axe hold its own in a recording studio when being played by professional session musicians? I did a guitar overdub session with a well-known studio player named Jim McAllister, whose axe of choice is a vintage Fender Strat that's in mint condition and is probably worth close to a thousand dollars today. Once we had the kind of guitar sound we needed for the session, I pulled out the Bullet and asked McAllister to try it out. This cat made the guitar sing—and in its natural state, meaning without reword pickups, a fancy new neck or any other modifications. It didn't sound the same as the Strat, of course, but it was amazingly close. And when I revealed its price, mouths fell open.

One point worth mentioning, however,

is that the Bullet's body size is small in comparison to other guitars', but don't be misled: This is no toy, but a full-scale professional instrument, well worth its price and then some.

I've received a number of letters asking the same question, so I'll take the liberty of answering them all in one shot. Many readers are interested in recording engineering as a career but don't know how to get started. This is hardly surprising since most high school guidance counselors either don't know anything about the field or will advise that "there are only a handful of people in the world actually doing this type of work for a living, so forget about it" (as I was told way back when). There are essentially two ways to get started as a recording engineer: become an apprentice in a studio, where you can learn by watching, possibly make some contacts and pick up a few bucks while you're at it (make that very few bucks). Take whatever sort of position is available, and augment your on-the-job training with self-study and formal instruction in a school. Three types of schools teach recording: studio schools, technical or trade schools and universities. Studios offer anywhere from a two-week to a four-month program. Technical schools range from one to two years of study, while universities have a four-year program. I'm not a big believer in the studio-turned-school method because most are expensive and are weak in hands-on training and basic fundamentals. As for technical schools, they're great for fundamentals but are usually deficient in the hands-on area. Universities usually offer recording as a minor subject along with a music major. Whichever route you choose, be sure you know up front how much hands-on training you'll receive.

Recording engineering is in fact a full-time job for very few people, myself included. But I also teach, write and do repairs.



**Fender's Squier Bullet: A full-scale professional instrument, perfect for beginners and priced right at \$169**

So I'd suggest getting some training in either electronics or music as well as recording. Many engineers are also players or electronic technicians. When times get tough financially, they always have something to fall back on. Persistence, determination and a little bit of luck are as important in this field as they are in any other, so don't get discouraged trying to get your foot in the door. In the meantime, start immediately doing home recording with any equipment you can get your hands on. ○

*Mike Shea is a graduate instructor at the Institute of Audio Research in New York City. Readers are invited to submit questions concerning audio, video or recording to Mike Shea/Hands On, RECORD 745 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10151.*





## THE DREAM FADES

**BORN IN THE U.S.A.  
Bruce Springsteen**

Columbia

By  
**Anthony  
DeCurtis**



An original product of counter-culture aspiration and a boom economy that proffered better times for workers, Bruce Springsteen has watched two hopes wither and die in the last decade. Since *Greetings From Asbury Park* he has chronicled the translation of a dream into a memory; the "glory days" that once seemed to glisten before us are now a dimly recollected image of unfulfilled desire. *Born in the U.S.A.* finds the Springsteen pantheon of virtues—work, strive, endure, remember—still revered. What has disappeared is the promised land he once believed those virtues could earn.

Over pile-driving snare slams and a mournful, majestic synth theme that would do Aaron Copland proud, Springsteen wails about being "Born in a dead man's town" in the opening line of this LP's first (and title) track. "Born in the U.S.A." hits all the stops along the lost highway of the American death trip: Vietnam, unemployment, imprisonment, class oppression, alienation, the fading of the dream. "Nowhere to run, ain't got nowhere to go," this number's "cool rocking daddy in the U.S.A." concludes, despair becoming more bearable when you quote Martha and the Vandellas to evoke it.

Through the eleven years of his career, Springsteen's American landscape has darkened so much that it's hard not to see the flag he faces on *Born in the U.S.A.*'s cover as an immovable, unscalable wall. Earlier Springsteen anthems like "Born to Run" and "Badlands" depicted the culturally enforced dead-ends of working-class life as the everyday setting for epic heroism. People could shape their souls in the rise against social adversity, and redemption was an engine rev or a power chord away.

But the economically blasted family "talking about getting out/Packing up our bags, maybe heading south" in this album's last song, "My Hometown," has no vision of gas-powered paradise to fuel their hopes, no rock 'n' roll manifest destiny to achieve. They're leaving a grim hometown past for a sunbelt future that's both alien and uncertain.

Even the hell-raising rockers on *Born in the U.S.A.* are squeezed by the grip of their

PHOTO: ANNE LUBAVITZ



characters' circumstances. The "Cadillac Ranch"-styled guitar romp, "Darlington County," with its rollicking "sha la la" chorus, climaxes with the image of the narrator's buddy "handcuffed to the bumper of a state trooper's Ford." The love-hungry hero of the Buddy Holly-ish raver "Working on the Highway" ends up "swinging on the Charlotte County road gang." The raunchy, jaunty hand-clapped choruses of "I'm Goin' Down" endlessly reprise that song's title in an obsessive litany of decline.

More personally, "No Surrender" and "Bobbie Jean" on *Born in the U.S.A.*'s second side seem Springsteen's two-part tribute to departed E Street Band guitarist, Steve Van Zandt. Two young groovers swear a rock-based bond of blood-brotherhood in "No Surrender," but "young faces grow sad and old/And hearts of fire grow cold." The song ends with Springsteen echoing Dylan and offering a complementary vision to Van Zandt's new-found political fervor: "There's a war outside still raging/You say it ain't ours anymore to win/I want to sleep beneath peaceful skies in my lover's bed/With a wide open country in my eyes/And these romantic dreams in my head." In "Bobbie Jean" the farewell is even more direct and plain-spoken: "Maybe you'll be out there on that road somewhere . . . In some motel room there'll be a radio playing and you'll hear me sing this song/ . . . You'll know I'm thinking of you."

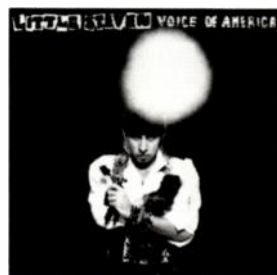
Especially for a disc that credits four board men (Springsteen, Van Zandt, Jon Landau, and Chuck Plotkin), *Born in the U.S.A.* is a consistent, controlled, focused production that ably renders the full range of Springsteen's reach—from folksy spareness to full-blown street orchestra romanticism. Musically, the more ambitious numbers on the album update Springsteen's sound without damaging its signature qualities. Pianist Roy Bittan's synthesizer parts are fully worked into the arrangements, avoiding both trendiness and excess. Drummer Max Weinberg is foregrounded in the virtual dance mixes of the LP's rock-outs, but a softer cut like "I'm On Fire" features him ticking out a stark and steady clockwork rhythm. Saxman Clarence Clemons tears off his patented screeching solos, but also takes a mellower turn in his sweet closing break to "Dancing in the Dark," reminiscent of Sonny Rollins' lovely fade-out on the Stones' "Waiting on a Friend."

But despite its musical heart and studio-craft, *Born in the U.S.A.*'s ultimate power resides in Springsteen's tough, cramped social vision. If Woody Guthrie was the Dust Bowl laureate, Springsteen has emerged as the brave voice of workers in modern America's sunset industries. Many rock performers have spoken for one subculture or another, but none has ever defined the works and days of an entire class as their subject. Until now.

## VOICE OF AMERICA Little Steven and the Disciples of Soul

EMI America

By  
Christopher  
Hill



There's something very appealing about the excited raving that Steve Van Zandt offers up almost non-stop on *Voice of America*, the second outing with his Disciples of Soul. While his political/spiritual convictions are not deeply thought out, it's all so right-headed and right-hearted—so innocent, if you will—that the songs almost always score their points in the end. Yes, Little Steven is Springsteen's innocent angel, the one who speaks into the ear not taken by the devil of self-conscious ambition. If Van Zandt lacks the grand conceptual ability of his friend, he undeniably has the overriding, naive confidence that this kind of world-bettering rock calls for. To use a Springsteenian word, Steve Van Zandt has *faith*.

Despite Van Zandt's primary loyalty to straightforward rock 'n' roll, he embraces a tropical profusion of rhythms on this record. "Justice" rolls along on a monster-metallic dance floor groove; "Checkpoint Charlie" belies its overtly political theme with a dreamily seductive pulse like a Princely come-on. "Among the Believers" struts out as smoothly exultant and richly funky as the Spinners.

Van Zandt has natural gifts as a performer that turns his brawny, open-armed populist vision into a living, breathing presence. "Los Desaparecidos" is a perfect example: In the midst of crashing martial menace, Van Zandt evokes the fatalism and quiet courage of the widows of Argentina's "disappeared ones." But where such material would tempt a band such as the Clash to cold abstraction and conventionalized outrage, Van Zandt brings his story home by staying chillingly personal, as the mother whispers to her child of "the dark road no one speaks of...that runs from the Playa del Mayo to the Rio Sumpul."

In "Solidarity," Van Zandt rousingly catalogs the common aspirations of common men, then gives the song a poignant specificity with a lilt of Polish accordian at each verse. "I Am A Patriot" floats in on fumes of righteous Rasta utopianism, but it turns potential jingoism into a hymn to the human dream of a homeland as something older and stronger than ideology.

Because of Van Zandt's inspirational approach, and because he's chosen to unify his diverse styles with a crashy, echoey sort of mix, comparisons inevitably pop up to "anthem bands" like U2, the Alarm, and

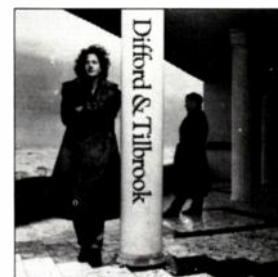
Big Country. But if these bands are the Cecil B. DeMilles of the trade, striking heroic poses and invoking Biblical images of millennial strife, Steve Van Zandt and his cohorts are the Frank Capras, finding epic themes in the hearts of ordinary people. Where the others show us the golden, hazy horizon, Little Steven and his Disciples show us real faces.

## DIFFORD AND TILBROOK

Difford and Tilbrook

A&M

By  
Crispin  
Sartwell



Squeeze was the kind of band that could be counted on to produce small pleasures and minor hits. Over five LPs, they were charming and inconsistent, thus accounting for their enthusiastic critical and commercial receptions, respectively. Squeeze has passed beyond the pale, but its on again/off again nature lives on in Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook's debut as a duo.

In truth, it's hardly a debut. Despite the presence in the band of other fine musicians, including Jools Holland and Paul Carrack, Squeeze was essentially Difford and Tilbrook's operation: they wrote and sang the songs and provided the dominant instrumental voices with their guitars. So, aside from some half-hearted attempts to update their sound and a different list of personnel, *Difford and Tilbrook* is a Squeeze album. There are the same slightly complicated melodies, the same tendency to hover around mid-tempo, the same almost-profound literary allusions. And above all, there is Tilbrook's gentle, engaging singing, which, despite the presence of Difford's deeper, more textural voice, was Squeeze's hallmark.

It's precisely the attempt to update the sound that makes *Difford and Tilbrook* more problematic than your typical Squeeze record. "Action Speaks Faster" launches the album with a thumping funk intro, but the song soon proves to possess such a thoroughly caucasoid melody that all the R&B histrionics are totally incongruous. In other cases, like "Hope Fell Down," the blue-eyed soul is so slickly produced by Tony Visconti that it seems insincere; on this and other songs Difford and Tilbrook threaten to metamorphose into a second rate Hall and Oates. And the prospective purchaser is hereby warned that the album contains a horrifying Culture Club imitation called "Tears for At-



tention." If that doesn't sound like the title to one of the Boy's songs, nothing does, but George never unleashed anything this lame. And then there's the compulsory McCartney-like dirge, "The Apple Tree," which can charitably be described as agonizing.

On the other hand, the duo continues to produce those self-same Squeezian small pleasures, and, if all goes well, minor hits. In "Hurt the Girl," Difford and Tilbrook have come up with their crispest pop song to date, and one that is reminiscent of no one but themselves.

## JERMAINE JACKSON

Arista

By  
Craig  
Zeller



What we have here is yet another defector from the ranks of Motown and Berry Gordy (this one a son-in-law to boot). I'm sure Jermaine's new label would have no objections if he happened to follow in the selling power tradition of his younger brother—you know, the guy who hawks cola when he's not busy being king of the known universe. *Jermaine Jackson* (how do they think of these titles?) may or may not go through the roof, but at the risk of starting any sibling rivalry I've just gotta tell it like it is—there's not a thriller in the bunch.

Jermaine does ignite on three occasions. On "Take Good Care of My Heart," he engages in some believably affectionate vocal interplay with Whitney Houston (not always an easy feat when you're a happily married man). He takes some swift musical cues from Minneapolis' favorite satyr on "Some Things Are Private"; Princely fervor is in abundance. And "Sweetest Sweetest" is the sharpest sharpest he's ever been—Jermaine can barely restrain himself and the rocket in his pocket from leaving the launching pad. "Sweetest Sweetest" could have been a great cut if the band had burned a little brighter and the chorus had a few more ounces of urgency in it.

Those are minor but crucial flaws that could be applied to most of what remains on this record. The fact that a lot of the songs sound either second-hand or pointlessly assembled doesn't help matters any. "Escape From the Planet of the Ant Men" is a fiasco of a novelty number; "Do What You Do" comes off like some half-assed Stevie Wonder outtake. And something as sentimental as "Oh Mother" should've been for mom's ears only. But the biggest

letdown of all is "Tell Me I'm Not Dreamin' (Too Good To Be True)," a duet with Michael on which neither brother seems to be overly excited. All we get from this meeting of the minds is idle chit-chat.

So that's it: mediocre in the long run. Too much weak outside material and by-the-book musicianship will do it every time. Can't say my fancy was all that tickled.

## NEW SENSATIONS

Lou Reed

RCA

## LOU REED LIVE IN ITALY

Lou Reed

RCA Import

By  
Rico  
Mitchell



From the first days of the Velvet Underground, Lou Reed's songwriting could be viewed as an attempt to reconcile his aesthete's literary ambition with his punk's passion for basic, street level rock 'n' roll. The usual escapist joyrides hold little or no interest for Reed—to him, the music remains a battlefield in the lifelong struggle for spiritual redemption.

*New Sensations* strikes a mature balance between the high drama of *The Blue Mask* (his post-Velvets masterpiece) and the low-key autobiography of last year's *Legendary Hearts*. Nothing here approaches the extreme alienation of the former's title track, or the morbid self-pity of the latter's "The Last Shot." Instead, Reed offers a fatalistic resolve to take one's pleasures where one finds them—at the movies, alone on a motorcycle, down at the arcade—because people are going to "do what they want to do" anyway. Relationships end. Friends die. Life goes on.

This coming to grips with day-to-day reality could be why *New Sensations* is the most *listenable* album Lou Reed ever made. The melodies bounce along easily on top of Fernando Saunders' elastic, marvelously expressive bass lines and Fred Maher's punchy drums. Guitarist Robert Quine, whose metal-edged textures contributed so tellingly to the most recent Reed records, has left the band. But Reed, who at times has been accused of being inept, proves he can hold his own without him, and his singing has never been more relaxed and conversational, either. Even when he's contemplating nuclear holocaust on "Fly Into The Sun," he comes across like the guy sitting next to you at the bar. Only on "Legend," a portrait of the aging rock star as aging diva, does he begin

to sound self-consciously arty.

Still, the carefree mood induced by the opening tune, "I Love You, Suzanne," is deceptive. In "Endlessly Jealous," the singer apologizes for hitting his wife, and tells her on the next track she can take everything he owns but his "Red Joystick." "My Friend George" speaks fondly of a hold-up artist, while the prospective party people in "High In The City" arm themselves with knives and mace before heading out the door; beneath it all, the author is searching for salvation. He finds it, temporarily, on "Turn To Me," a paean to the enduring power of Rock and Roll that recalls a fine morning long ago when Jenny turned on a New York City radio station and "couldn't believe what she heard at all." Of course, the feeling doesn't last, but Reed is wise enough by now to believe that it will come again, possibly when he least expects it. Until that day, this honest and soulful album will help him, and us, to keep the musical ends and means in moral perspective.

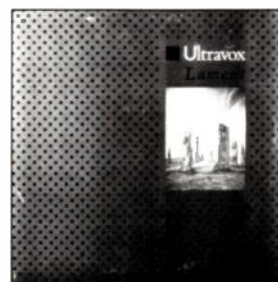
*Live In Italy* is a double album recorded last fall in Verona and Rome with Quine, Saunders and Maher. This is a potentially explosive unit, but Reed reins them in through most of three sides before finally kicking down the doors on the Velvet's opuses "Sister Ray," "Heroin" and "Rock And Roll." There is little of the technical flash that, in retrospect, robbed Reed's best-known live effort, *Rock And Roll Animal*, of much of its emotional content—when this band peaks, you'll know why. Yet intense as the playing gets, one senses that they never quite deliver up to their full potential, which could account for Quine's subsequent departure (then again, it might not...). At any rate, the album, available only as an import, serves as an important bridge between Reed's early and more recent material by bringing the older songs into a contemporary musical and emotional context.

## LAMENT

Ultravox

Chrysalis

By  
Nick  
Burton



With albums like *Ha! Ha! Ha!* and *Systems of Romance*, Ultravox were the most genuinely creative exponents of Eno-esque electronic rock during the late '70s.

Unfortunately, when the group's enigmatic vocalist/songwriter John Foxx was replaced by Midge Ure in 1979, the band's once sparkling, imaginative sound took a precipitous turn for the worse. Despite



Ure's fine vocal talents, his presence simply wasn't strong enough to overcome the turgid, overly synthesized direction the band took. Consequently, Ultravox's post-Foxx work—*Vienna*, *Rage In Eden* and the George Martin-produced *Quartet*—has yielded few noteworthy moments.

With *Lament*, however, Ultravox have finally found a balance between the technological aspects of their recent work with the inventive, sophisticated songwriting of their early LPs, resulting in the most satisfying music they've recorded since Foxx's departure. Tracks such as "White China," "When The Time Comes" and "Man of Two Worlds" echo the rich melodic textures of the band's *Systems of Romance* period.

The real standout here is "One Small Day," a haunting rocker that beautifully illustrates Ultravox's rediscovered strengths. Warren Cann's drums and Chris Cross' bass provide a rock-solid beat, with Ure's spidery guitar work outlining the soaring melody line. It's a stunning piece, with the band's sense of dynamics in rare form, highlighted by a shining vocal performance by Ure.

A couple of cuts here—particularly the title track and "A Friend I Call Desire"—could benefit from some editing, but that's a minor quibble. Post-Foxx 'Vox have never sounded as cohesively self-assured and as technologically sound as they do here. Still, one question arises: what took so long?

Must we endure another *Rage In Eden* or *Quartet* before we get another gem like *Lament*? Time will tell, but let's hope not.

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## THE PROS AND CONS OF HITCH HIKING Roger Waters

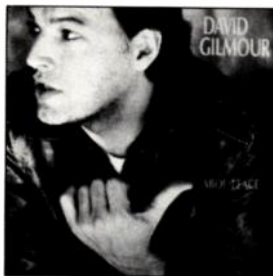
Columbia

## ABOUT FACE David Gilmour

Columbia

By  
Ira  
Robbins

When Pink Floyd stopped creating cabin music for space craft, the group entered an extremely fruitful three album period that remains the pinnacle of their post-Syd Barrett career. *Dark Side of the Moon*, inexplicably their most popular record (still going strong after ten years on *Billboard*'s Top 200 chart), brought Floyd down to Earth, relatively, by adding a strong—and much needed—dose of reality and intensity to their previously dull meanderings. With



purpose and power, the following LPs, *Wish You Were Here* and *Animals*, balanced starkly wrought music with pristine production and Roger Waters' intelligent if unrepentantly venomous lyrics.

But Floyd's last two albums, *The Wall* and *The Final Cut*, are repellent self-parody—imbalanced, poorly-put verbiage and self-indulgent music, rounded out with stupid production tactics. As bassist Waters gained power within the group—going from sole lyricist to co-producer to becoming total mastermind—Floyd's appeal shrank. Now, thanks to Waters' first avowed solo record, we understand why.

*The Pros and Cons of Hitch Hiking* sounds a lot like *The Wall* without the children's chorus, except that its dumb conceptual framework rivals only Frank Zappa for wretched, ungainly excess. Waters has surrounded himself with the same players as guested on *The Final Cut*—keyboardist/co-producer Michael Kamen, Andy Bown, Andy Newmark, Ray Cooper, along with Eric Clapton—and fleshed his musical play out with underwhelming, underwritten two chord songs that wander aimlessly, allowing him ample room to quote verse from *Winnie The Pooh* or prattle lines like "Hey girl/Take out the dagger/And let's have a stab at the sexual revolution." Is this guy for real?

Lines of spoken dialogue are interspersed to carry on the story of American discovery, human alienation and sexual

# THE PSYCHEDELIC FURS "MIRROR MOVES" IT'S A SMASH!

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# A BASIE OVERVIEW

By John Swenson

**T**hough Count Basie's death brings down the final curtain on Big Band jazz of his era, the great pianist and bandleader left an impressive recorded legacy that will keep his music alive for generations to come. The bulk of the material here covers most of the available sides made by Basie's historic late-Thirties band. When the

er Swing," and you can hear her shouting encouragement to the players on the instrumental "Shout And Feel It." Jimmy Rushing delivers a great vocal on "The Me And You That Used To Be"; the battling Lester Young and Herschel Evans play inspired tenor saxophone solos throughout; and the monster rhythm section of Basie at the piano, guitarist Freddie Green, bassist Walter Page and Jo Jones on drums levitates the band with its relentless swing.

This band's revolutionary playing style changed the face of American popular music in

blues theorists, Basie always believed that feeling was at least as important as technique, if not more so, and his sparse, economical piano playing set a model for pianists in every form of music.

Perhaps the most dramatically recognizable characteristic of the Basie band for rock audiences is the powerful riffs phrased by his horn section, big-voiced unison passages which create a musical excitement in the arrangement that power chord guitarists in heavy metal bands still rely on. Basie's rhythms almost literally define the concept of rock 'n' roll—you can feel the forward propulsion of the band as well as the swaying motion of the soloist playing around and through the main framework. Saxophonist Lester Young virtually invented a new style of playing to bring off this effect, disdaining the then-common practice of playing the notes on the beat with relatively equal emphasis in favor of a more supple, expressive approach that sliced against the beat and chose certain notes to emphasize. This innovation of Young's can be directly traced to the early rock 'n' roll saxophone style of players like King Curtis fifteen years later.

The Best of Count Basie (MCA) and Good Morning Blues (MCA) collect the classic Decca studio recordings Basie made from 1937 to early 1939. *Best Of* features the original recordings of Basie classics like "One O'Clock Jump," "Jumpin' At The Woodside," "Jive At Five," "Texas Shuffle" and "Swinging The Blues." *Good Morning Blues* concentrates on Basie's blues book and includes a number of fine small group recordings.

Despite losing many of his great soloists, Basie's band continued to flourish through

the '40s, but by 1950 economic pressures forced him to break up the group in favor of a smaller unit. In late 1953 Basie was able to organize his second Big Band, an organization he kept going, despite numerous personnel changes, until his death. This group was not as spontaneous sounding as the classic lineup but still played beautifully expressive music. *Sixteen Swinging Men* (Verve) documents this new lineup's first recordings in December of '53 and June of '54. The differences between this aggregation and the older band are immediately apparent—the group still has the relaxed manner that characterizes Basie's easy swing, but solos are de-emphasized in favor of ensemble playing. Where Lester Young and Herschel Evans took such galvanizing solos in such different styles that people took them for bitter rivals, tenor players Frank Foster and Frank Wess in the new band eschewed cutting sessions in favor of smoothly phrased unison passages.

The 1955 album *April In Paris* (Verve) was the commercial high point of Basie's post-war career. Though this set still shows the Basie band's instrumental side—the title track, a lively instrumental, was a huge hit—the live recording from Newport in 1957 also reissued on Verve features Joe Williams' best recorded vocal performance with Basie on "Roll 'Em Pete."

In the '70s and '80s, Basie made quite a few large and small group recordings with a wide variety of accompanists. Even when he was in his seventies Count Basie had a band with a far from retiring sound. *The Live At Montreux '77* (Pablo) set is an exhilarating rush of powerfully phrased riffs and driving rhythms, climaxed by frenzied renditions of "Jumpin' At The Woodside" and "One O'Clock Jump." It's amazing that Basie could bring such fresh energy to material he had first recorded forty years before, especially when you consider that very few rock 'n' roll artists—the Who, for example—could sustain interest in their own material for more than a decade. ○



Count Basie: An impressive recorded legacy

Count came to New York from Kansas City in 1936, he brought one of the greatest collection of musicians assembled in this century. The power this 17 piece group generated in live performance can be heard today on the sizzling June 30, 1937 aircheck *Count Basie At The Savoy Ballroom* (Everest). Billie Holiday gives electrifying performances on "They Can't Take That Away From Me" and "Swing Broth-

dramatic ways that can still be heard in rock 'n' roll. Everything Basie did was rooted in the relentless, pounding beat laid down by the rhythm section. The MC at the Savoy Ballroom show described the group's sound as "ultra modern rhythm," and this adherence to propulsion, whether you call it swinging, jumping or hard rocking, has been a cornerstone of vibrant music ever since. One of the great

1937 to early 1939. *Best Of* features the original recordings of Basie classics like "One O'Clock Jump," "Jumpin' At The Woodside," "Jive At Five," "Texas Shuffle" and "Swinging The Blues." *Good Morning Blues* concentrates on Basie's blues book and includes a number of fine small group recordings.

Despite losing many of his great soloists, Basie's band continued to flourish through



engagements; at no point does any of this make reasonable sense. Waters' singing style—a whisper one phrase, a bellow the next—doesn't work as dramatic device, it only makes it hard to set the volume control at a comfortable level.

With co-producer Bob Ezrin and a batch of heavy sessioners (Jeff Porcaro, Ian Kewley, Steve Winwood, Jon Lord), David Gilmour has firmly rebutted Waters' gloomy post-*Animals* vision with *About Face*, a strong record with several outstanding numbers and a couple of intriguing digressions. Pete Townshend wrote the words to two songs ("All Lovers Are Deranged" and "Love on the Air"), which adds a modicum of intellectualism to the proceedings; otherwise, Gilmour's songs are adequate if unexceptional. His guitar work is typically strong, employing intelligent musicianship rather than high-tech flash. The cleverly titled instrumental, "Let's Get Metaphysical," sets his piercing Telecaster sound against the National Philharmonic Orchestra (in a manner unfortunately reminiscent of Procol Harum at its worst), showing that his instincts are decidedly old hat, but the overall openness of *About Face* survives even such an exercise.

Neither of these albums is a satisfying substitute for a Pink Floyd classic, but at least Gilmour is mining fertile ground. The misanthropic Waters has put himself into an artistic cul-de-sac that can only contin-

ue to become more pretentious and vapid unless he takes his former partner's advice and does an About Face into the real world.

By  
Anthony  
DeCurtis

When caterwauling Echo vocalist Ian McCulloch wailed "Is this the blues I'm singing?" on 1980's "Rescue," he pinpointed the dilemma of both his band and the other "new romantic" combo worth talking about, the Psychedelic Furs. These highly self-conscious groups drenched themselves in the music of rock's modernists—the Doors, the psychedelic Beatles, Bowie, Ferry—but had only the vaguest notions of the sources that had inspired their idols. So when in the same tune McCulloch wondered, "Things are wrong/Can you tell that in a song?" it appeared he really didn't know.

## OCEAN RAIN Echo and the Bunnymen

Sire Records



But not being afraid to ask is what separated the Bunnymen from many of their style-struck contemporaries, who, far from being curious about where they came from and could go, were too stupid to care. By the time the Bunnymen achieved the fierce command of last year's *Porcupine*, they were able to acknowledge, manipulate and transcend influences in ways that suggested another major band had arrived on the scene.

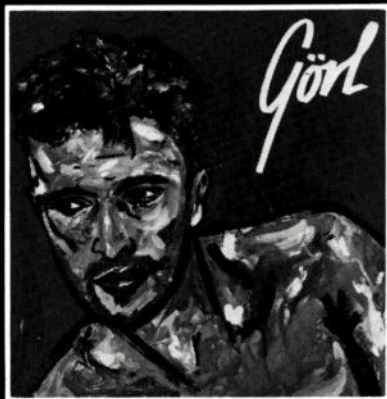
The new Echo LP neither disappoints nor fully delivers on this expectation. *Ocean Rain*, like the band's three previous albums, is more compelling in terms of sound than statement. Recorded in Paris—an homage, a press release informs us, to the last burg to shelter the Bunnymen's most powerful influence, Jim Morrison—*Ocean Rain* features consistently elegant, high-ended arrangements that primarily rely on interwoven acoustic and electric guitars, subtle keyboard embellishments, and unabashedly romantic string overlays.

Strangely, McCulloch seems more in thrall to Morrison's shade on *Ocean Rain* than ever before; this record sometimes seems like a test of how many mannerisms of his master's voice he could render with uncanny precision over nine tracks. And like the Lizard King, McCulloch too often stretches clumsily for poetic effect. "I've decided to wear my thorn of crowns," he sonorously declaims in one song, as if this


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dopey inversion shimmered with metaphoric meaning. On "Nocturnal Life" he urges a lover to "Take me internally," apparently trying to convince her that his love prescription is just what Dr. Feelgood ordered.

Still, *Ocean Rain* is an accomplished, ambitious album—the sunny opening cut "Silver" and the emotionally charged single "Killing Moon" are especially strong. But McCulloch must exorcise the ghost in him if this band is ever to be more than an intriguing, greatly talented echo.

## RAINDANCE David Lasley

EMI America

By  
James  
Hunter



Michigan-born David Lasley sings like Robin Gibb baptized in the grace-giving waters of soul. As a songwriter his compositions often rank with the best of current pop; his work manages a trenchant tunefulness, analyzing love with a lucid unpretentiousness. As someone whose session-singing credits range from Barbra Streisand to the Ramones, his pop sense is anything but narrow.

*Raindance* is his second solo record that, despite some unevenness, can boast some astonishing cuts. The first was *Mis-sin' Twenty Grand*, his 1982 debut that contained the single triumph "If I Had My Wish Tonight," one of the most transcendent declarations of passion to make Top 40 since the invention of desire. While nothing on *Raindance* quite reaches that sumptuous peak, a praiseworthy groove song, "Saved By Love," the hymn-like ballad "Oh," and sexy synth-popper "Afterglow" come close enough.

*Raindance* is produced by Don Was of Was (Not Was); his wit complements Lasley's playfulness, and his up-to-the-minute savvy enlivens catchy but fairly ordinary songs like "It's A Crying Shame (Sha La La La La)" and "Raindance." But Was and Lasley are much less crafty with "Don't Smile At Me...I Already Know," a rap number for which Run-D.M.C. should receive a writing credit, and "Euripides Meets the Shangri-Las"—their inclusion is a mystery.

With the clear-toned sincerity of his spry falsetto Lasley celebrates love, experiences it, questions it on tracks that sound as romantically artful as classic Motown, as spontaneously eloquent as the finest doo wop. And on half-serious romps like "Johnny Where Did Your Girlfriend Go" and "Where Does That Boy Hang Out,"

he's just a deft white guy updating the Crystals. For David Lasley, the concerns of moody but ultimately uplifting pop-soul seem indistinguishable from the knotty concerns of love. He wants his music just as concisely relaxed as his lyrics, and with his best work it is.

## SCENE BEYOND DREAMS The Call

Mercury

By  
Jonathan  
Gregg



This is the kind of self-righteous excess British bands usually get slammed for, but the Call are American, and judging from this, their third LP, they'd be much better off not taking themselves so damn seriously. This record is full of the same dubious bombastic anguish that used to inhabit the songs of Neil Diamond; the titles alone promise a grim feast: "Tremble," "The Burden," "Promise and Threat." Try out lyrics like: "We hold darkness and light/Where they meet/In a scene beyond dreams/And a mother cries." Or howabout: "Apocalypse is now, mankind/The time has come to die."

These songs are rendered with industrial subtlety by a thick mesh of synthesizers and guitars with few distinguishing features. Although several—"The Burden," "Notified," the lovely acoustic "Apocalypse"—show some melodic possibilities, they are so relentlessly dour and moralistic and delivered with so little reserve that listening to *Scene Beyond Dreams* becomes a vaguely oppressive experience. A quick listen to titles like "Flesh and Steel," "Unbearable" and "Violent Times" from previous albums indicates that *Scenes* is just the tip of the iceberg, only part of the chronology of songwriter Michael Been's ongoing bummer. There's nothing fun here, and that ain't rock 'n' roll.

## LONG GONE DEAD Rank And File

Slash/Warner Bros.

By  
Jonathan  
Gregg



Long Gone Dead continues Rank and File's request for the Great American

Song, and while some of the material seems a little too self-consciously country oriented, the more propitious mixture of pop and country influences on most of the album suggests that the songwriting duo of Chip and Tony Kinman could make Rank and File an '80s version of the Everly Brothers or the Kingston Trio. Here, as on their debut LP, the singing is one of their strongest assets, as Chip's spirited tenor and Tony's Big Bad John baritone lend both authenticity and variety to a batch of straight-ahead tunes. "Long Gone Dead," although not as snappy as "Amanda Ruth" on their first album, announces this one with some strong harmonies and a wider variety of instrumentation. The Kinmans are the only remaining members from that first LP, but with help of several session players, they have largely preserved its clean, unadorned sound. "Sound of the Rain" and "Timeless Love" are both excellent ballads (with some fine harmonica by Chip on the former), and "Saddest Girl in the World" is an engaging little rocker.

Still, half of these songs are relatively old in the Kinmans' repertoire, and the best rocking comes on a cover of Lefty Frizzell's "I'm An Old, Old Man," which suggests that the county/pop/rock 'n' roll fusion of their songwriting is not completely developed. While "Last Night I Dreamed" and "It Don't Matter" clearly demonstrate an affinity for country music, they hardly transcend it, and it seems they'd be better off if they concentrated a little more on form instead of on content. However, regardless of style, these boys can sing, and that's reason enough to give them a listen.

## MEDICINE SHOW The Dream Syndicate

A&M

By  
Anthony  
DeCurtis



The Dream Syndicate's 1982 Slash debut, *The Days of Wine and Roses*, transformed murk into meaning, with Steve Wynn's vocals dramatizing a struggle for human definition amid the suffocating density of the band's double-churning guitars. On *Medicine Show*, the big brightness of Sandy Pearlman's production burns away the Syndicate's suggestive mist and leaves the band uncomfortably exposed in the glare.

*Medicine Show* finds the Syndicate sounding like a bizarre, unresolved combination of the road-house Doors ("Daddy's Girl," "Armed With an Empty Gun") and the E Street Band in the earnest grips of street melodrama ("Merrittville"). Mean-

while, I think they think they're sounding like the Velvet Underground.

"Armed With an Empty Gun," "Bullet with My Name on It," and "John Coltrane Stereo Blues" wrap overblown, studio jams around what never become more than mere notions for songs. "Merrittville" constructs a moral fable of an apparent spiritual crisis precipitated by banging the sister of "Matthew (with the pugnose)." Here and elsewhere, guitarist Karl Precoda seems incapable of restraint, firing off an endless series of spiring rock 'n' roll animal leads without much concern for how appropriate these pyrotechnics are to the setting of the song.

Yet, some of the Syndicate's virtues survive intact on this record. *Medicine Show's* best tracks are "Still Holding on to You," a confession of love with enough instrumental crunch to counter-balance its lyricism, and the title track, a sinister walk on the wild side of America's rural margin.

Having lost a band member (former bassist Kendra Smith) as well as a sense of direction, the Dream Syndicate need to search their psychedelized souls. Main man Steve Wynn didn't come up with an album's worth of tunes for *Medicine Show* and producer Pearlman (Clash, Blue Oyster Cult) overwhelmed the band rather than guided it. The resulting big-time production of unfinished, unfocused songs makes you wonder what it will take for this still promising band to realize its vision.

## HOT SPOT The Nighthawks

Varrick

## SOULFUL DRESS Marcia Ball

Rounder

## SLIPPIN' AND SLIDIN' J.B. Hutto and the New Hawks

Varrick

By  
Jody  
Denberg

**I**f mainstream rockers like Huey Lewis and

Z.Z. Top can grace the upper echelons of the pop charts with music indebted to America's rich rhythm and blues heritage, hopefully their audience will be motivated to seek out artists closer to the source, just as countless kids in the '60s scurried to find out who Robert Johnson and Willie Dixon were after hearing Cream's renditions of "Crossroads" and "Spoonful." A good place for the uninitiated to start catching up in the '80s would be with the latest releases from Rounder Records, the Boston-



based independent label, and its subsidiary Varrick.

The Nighthawks—a Washington, D.C., quartet with a resume that includes stints backing such blues greats as Muddy Waters and B.B. King—have solidified their mixture of blues, rockabilly and rock 'n' roll into a less derivative sound on their eleventh vinyl outing, *Hot Spot*. Fewer and shorter solos by ace harmonica Mark Wenner and guitarist Jimmy Thackery shift the listener's focus to the songs here. Unfortunately, for the most part the material is either not up to snuff ("Hot Stuff") or poorly interpreted ("Heartbreak Radio"). When the band does take flight, though, as on the steamy "Crash Course In Love" and the catchy "Big Time," the Hawks hint at a sound of their own that may win them the broader audience they seem to be making a bid for.

Those who remember Austin's Marcia Ball as the progressive country "Circuit Queen"—whose 1978 debut album of the same featured Albert Lee and Rodney Crowell—will be pleasantly surprised to find out that this lady now wears a "Soulful Dress" and sings the blues. Wonderfully.

On her second album, Ball emotes with sophisticated yet unaffected phrasing, mature yet raw inflections and tones that alternate between rocky earthiness and fluid soulfulness. Ball's vocalizing is only rivaled here by her piano playing, which recalls such greats from her native Louisiana

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as Professor Longhair and Huey Smith. Like those originators of New Orleans rhythm and blues, Ball includes touches of jazz (on her own "My Mind's Made Up"), swing ("A Thousand Times") and boogie-woogie in her repertoire.

As he has done in the past for Fabulous Thunderbirds and the Leroi Brothers, producer Denny Bruce provides the bare essential mix for the proceedings, leaving Ball and her crack band to cook Cajun style as unadorned as they do along the crawfish circuit. From the humorous version of Dave Bartholomew's "Jailbird" to the bop of the title cut (which features Stevie Ray Vaughan), you can get closer to the heart of New Orleans with this record than by travelling to this year's World Fair.

Miles from the Gulf Coast and Washington, D.C., in the blue city of Chicago, the fiercest slide guitar this side of Elmore James had been played for thirty years by J.B. Hutto before his death in June of last year. *Slippin' And Slidin'*, a posthumously released final collection of songs, is a tour de force. Hutto's lyrics visit the topical concerns of the blues while avoiding its clichés; the scowl in his voice emanates from a place deep within that takes years just to reach, and his guitar playing and arrangements drive it all home in top gear.

Hutto's slide weeps and moans during the album's opener—a cover of Junior Parker's "Pretty Baby"—and is punctuated mournfully by the Roomful of Blues reed section on B.B. King's "Why Do Things Happen To Me." Though Hutto's previous record, *Slideslinger*, was consistently pleasing, *Slippin' And Slidin'* eclipses its predecessor's pleasures by offering even greater precision in the solos—each note Hutto sends out emerges pur-

posefully, even when he spits and splatters them like a centrifuge against the steady backing of the New Hawks. Still, any recording of the blues, like any discussion of the music, cannot fully relate the magic of the moment; it takes the sweat and stench of a good club to really convey the feeling. J.B. Hutto may not be out on the road anymore, but the Nighthawks, Marcia Ball and countless others are out there nightly, working for a living. And seeing is believing.

By  
Steve  
Bloom

Since it arrived with virtually no advance warning, *Standing In The Light* may already have been dismissed as just another "electro-pop" offering from the U.K. But Level 42 is too good for that sort of idle appraisal; this is a smart, soulful group whose music grows on you with each listen.

In some respects Level is reminiscent of the Average White Band: all the songs are danceable and there is a certain sexiness in both the vocals (keyboardist Mike Lindup and bassist Mark King share the leads) and the jivestepping arrangements. But Level's funk is not as rich as AWB's was, and there

## STANDING IN THE LIGHT Level 42

A&M

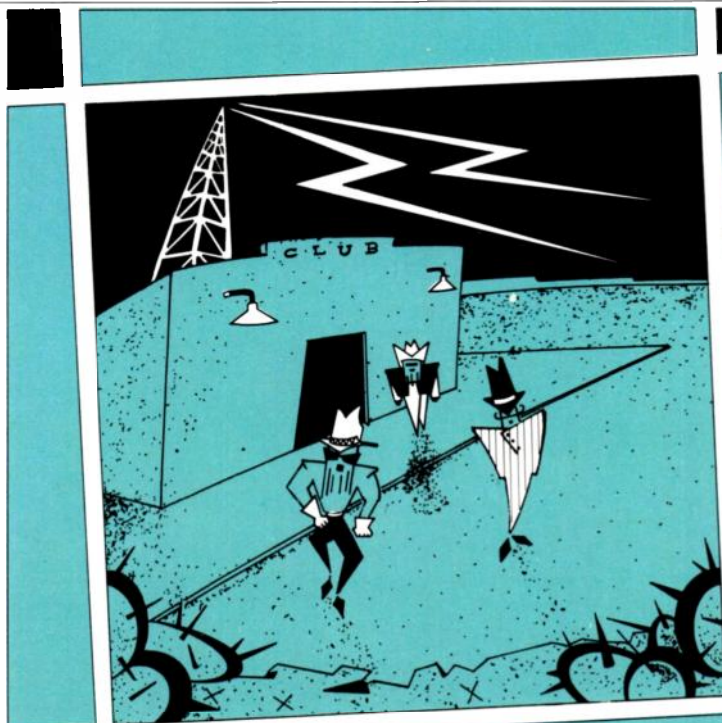


are no horns to ice the cake. Level 42 is more of a synthesized '80s confection: less calories, yet as sweet as can be.

If there's a hit single on this album, the album-opening "Micro-Kid" is it. An anthem for the whiz-kids of the world, "Micro-Kid" is catchy, peppy, hooky—all the adjectives that usually apply to singles in this genre. Where micro-kids can escape the real world through their computers, the rest of the population might consider dancing its troubles away, as suggested in "Dance on Heavy Weather." When Level urges us to "take a chance and dance," you'll probably laugh out loud at the hackneyed sentiment—but isn't this more or less what most dance songs are saying these days?

"I Want Eyes," a haunting ballad with an inscrutable punch line, also attempts to deal with our contemporary crisis: "I saw it in the news today/A thousand lives just blown away/I want eyes." Say what? (Of course, I must confess to not understanding the meaning of "miss me blind," either). But credit should at least be given to Level for trying to say something, and the dream-like setting for the song justifies its ambiguity. It should be noted that *Standing In The Light* is impeccably produced, thanks to Earth, Wind and Fire veterans Verdine White and Larry Dunn, who "discovered" the band in England last year. Surprisingly, there are no hallmark Earth, Wind and Fire touches on the record, and only EW&F sax man Andrew Woolfolk makes a brief appearance. Otherwise, Lindup, King and the Gould Brothers—Phil on drums and Boon on guitar—do all the work. And to be perfectly honest, they don't need much help. Level 42 works on their own.

*Continued on page 62*



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# VINYL EXAMS ▼

## BLUE ANGEL Blue Angel/Polydor

Why would a major label reissue an LP which lightheartedly spoofs '60s girl group records when said LP sunk like the proverbial lead zep on the charts four years back? Three guesses, and first correct answer wins a copy of *Michael Jackson: Farewell My Summer Love 1984*. The '80s star earning the record industry's version of the *Celebrity Skin* treatment this time is Cyndi Lauper, who won't be embarrassed by this, and not just because she seems beyond such a feeling. While it's hard to tell how far such affectionate abuse of an earlier pop form might have carried anyone interested in making either a statement or a buck, it must be noted that Blue Angel surpasses Blondie's efforts at turning the same trick in roughly the same proportion by which the pre-voice lesson Lauper vocal style surpasses Debbie "I'm Not A Group" Harry's.

—Wayne King

## JOHN CALE Caribbean Sunset /ze

This disc's nine tracks sustain better than most Cale collections, despite the hard times that have obviously befallen our violist on desolation row. In fact, given the vagaries of Lou Reed's solo career, Cale's dread chops may well be the truest Velvets legacy. *Caribbean Sunset* delivers the usual dubious, opaque politics ("Modern Beirut Recital"), and mad John's current economics apparently necessitated his preserving the chord cues and mix instructions on the vocal track of "Experiment Number 1." Yet reduced circumstances compelled Cale to work with greater concision and less pretense here than he's prone to when blessed with a decent advance. And the haunting title track remains among his best efforts.

—Anthony DeCurtis

## RAY CHARLES

### Do I Ever Cross Your Mind /Columbia

Knocking Ray Charles is akin to slandering the mighty Himalayas; Ray, like the snow-clad peaks, is a permanent part of the landscape and indifferent to mortal criticism. Even so, he deserves to be knocked for his recent return to country music. Like on last year's *Wish You Were Here*, all the songs are excruciatingly slow, and none has an authentic C&W twang—"([All I Wanna Do Is) Lay Around and Love on You" pretty much sums up the approach. The album provides the disheartening spectacle of an interpretive genius with few skills left to him but those so ingrained by habit that they are all but automatic.

—Crispin Sartwell

## FACE TO FACE Face To Face /Epic

This Boston band's version of dance rock might just be the response that AOR has been searching for: the synths and funk rhythms kept to a minimum, the guitars, surging cymbals and driving drums emphasized at every turn. Although the hookup of the disparate production styles of AOR kingpin Jimmy Iovine and dance wiz Arthur Baker probably won't be the ultimate synthesis of contemporary white and black sounds, we could put up with a lot worse—and undoubtedly will have to—than this quintet's engaging mix. And for those keeping track of such things, the ballads ain't bad, either.

—W.K.

## NONA HENDRYX The Art of Defense /RCA

If you're looking for something adventurous out of Nona, who's played with some adventurous musicians in her time, you'll be disappointed by what's offered here. On the other hand, if you're in the market for clean, classy funk, Nona's the wholesale outlet. "Sweat" is a typical disco workout, but though it's a hit, it's the least interesting thing about the album. Hendryx, despite her pedigree, is better suited for pure soul than funk, and "I Want You" gives her a chance to test the considerable capacity of her pipes. Everything here, however, is worth booking to and worth listening to.

—C.S.

## THE HOOTERS Amore /Antenna

This almost LP (eight songs, 24 minutes) doesn't always escape the obvious: female moans on "Amore," an only half-joking chorus of "Don't you want to be my concubine?" on "Concubine," an indictment of apathy addressed to "All You Zombies." But on the ebullient "Blood From A Stone" and "Fighting On The Same Side" this punchy, versatile quintet kicks with bar band vigor and heart. With a little less musical "ambition"—keep the arrangements simple, guys—and a little more lyrical savvy, these Hooters will be comers. (Antenna Records, 23 E. Lancaster Ave., Ardmore, PA 19003.)

—A.D.

## THE ISLEY BROTHERS

### Isley's Greatest Hits, Vol. 1 /T-Neck

For a group whose career spans virtually the entire rock era, from the gospel screamer "Shout" in 1959 to last year's pillow talk primer, "Between The Sheets," these guys don't get nearly enough credit. This collection picks up in 1969 with their first post-Motown hit, "It's Your Thing," and marches on through the '70s funk-rock anthems "That Lady" (featuring Brother Ernie's sizzling, Hendrixian guitar), "Fight The Power" and "Live It Up" to the contemporary doo wop ballads "Groove With You," "For The Love of You" and "Footsteps in the Dark." True—none of these songs is as cosmic as Stevie Wonder's, as romantic as Smokey Robinson's or as sanctified as Aretha Franklin's. But any album that puts "Between The Sheets" back to back with "It's Your Thing" is bound to come in handy sooner or later.

—Rico Mitchell

## NIK KERSHAW Human Racing /MCA

Like Jon Gibson, Nik Kershaw is at times a dead ringer for Stevie Wonder vocally, especially on the slow album closers here, "I Won't Let The Sun Go Down On Me" and "Human Racing." Of course, trying to find your own voice while brewing a natural distillation of tribal rhythms and synthesizer technology isn't a simple matter, as Kershaw demonstrates on the rest of the disc. And maybe that's not the direction he should be looking in anyway: "Wouldn't It Be

Good," a curious but delightfully appealing mix of chugging guitar, slo-mo keyboards and majestic synth/horn riffs, sounds like one of the year's best singles so far.

—W.K.

## PAT METHENY Rejoicing /ECM

This album finds the popular fusion-jazz guitarist moonlighting in the company of long-time Ornette Coleman collaborators Charlie Haden on bass and Billy Higgins on drums. While one must applaud Metheny's continuing willingness to take chances with his commercial appeal, the material here (three Coleman compositions, one by Horace Silver and three originals) tends to downplay his strengths as a composer and arranger of cinematographic melodies and ingenious textures, while exposing his shortcomings as an improviser of blues and post-bop lines. Put on *Travels or As Falls Wichita, So Falls Wichita Falls* to hear Pat at his best. And go back to Coleman himself to hear these tunes at their best.

—R.M.

## BOB MOSES

### Visit With The Great Spirit /Gramavision

Moses' 1983 LP, *When Elephants Dream Of Music*, contained some of the most rejuvenating big band jazz in decades—ethereal and funky, experimental and accessible, it was, as the great arranger Gil Evans put it, "a party with a purpose." *Visit* proves the drummer's stunning debut as a big band leader to be no fluke. To a stylistic palette that already encompasses off-the-wall swing, Milesian electric funk vamps and percussive Third World trance dances, Moses adds steamy Brazilian samba and beat poetry. The orchestral blend never succumbs to its own abstraction, more than living up to Moses' credo: "I want to play loud, powerful people's music you can play for your next door neighbor." Try it. They might like it.

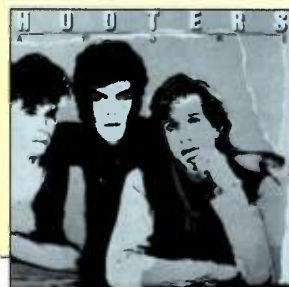
—R.M.

## THE VIOLENT FEMMES

### Hallowed Ground /Slash

Flannery O'Connor might have been the Violent Femmes if she grew up in the soul-chilling cold of the Midwest, worshipped Lou Reed, Jonathan Richman and the acoustic Dylan, and wasn't a genius. Fortunately, she didn't, didn't and was. As a result, she produced world-class fiction and not records like this. The title cut on *Hallowed Ground* comes closest to capturing the groove of sanctified despair this combo strives for. But by mistaking archness for edge and cleverness for vision, the Femmes can't resist ironizing sincerity ("Jesus"), and hawking rustic violence, as in "Country Death," a "Ballad of Hollis Brown" rip, without motive or redemption. These kids believe they've found a friend in Jesus, but theologians have determined beyond moral doubt that He thinks they're pretentious twerps.

—A.D.





## TEXAS TWISTER Johnny Copeland

Rounder

By  
John  
Swenson



**T**exas Twister is the most musically varied of bluesman Johnny Copeland's three albums. The 1981 debut, *Copeland Special*, was careful to establish his credentials as a singer, songwriter and guitarist. The 1982 followup, *Make My Home Where I Hang My Hat*, showcased the dynamic sound that Copeland had developed with his band at the time.

That band, except for keyboardist/arranger Ken Vangel, has changed here; Copeland's performance, however, is just as dynamic. He starts out strong on "Midnight Fantasy," a powerful Texas blues shuffle rhythm reminiscent of Johnny Otis' "Hand Jive" or Buddy Holly's "Not Fade Away." After the homesick blues of "North Carolina," Copeland surges into the autobiographical "Don't Stop By The Creek Son." His collaboration with Texas guitar phenom Stevie Ray Vaughan is totally appropriate here, Vaughan's lightning runs and Copeland's meaty, efficient lines working together spectacularly.

"Excuses" features a slick vocal from Copeland and a soulful, Bobby Bland style horn chart with a fantastic saxophone exchange as Sam Furnace and Bert McGowan trade fours. The solo break seems to whip Copeland into a frenzy as he comes into the last verse with some supercharged vocal swoops and dives. "Houston" is a trademark strutting blues raveup that gives Copeland another chance to reel off a series of throat-stretching vibrato shouts. And the artist's dramatic ballad style has never been better recorded than on the bone-chilling "I De Go Now," a mournful but celebratory account of the singer's love for a Louisiana bayou woman. *Texas Twister* closes on the upbeat, though, with a lively rendition of Louis Jordan's "Early in the Morning," featuring Vangel's tasty Longhair/Rebennack-style soloing.

Copeland is fast establishing himself as the foremost living exponent of Texas blues, but he points outward to the future rather than simply recreating a classic form. Unlike the older blues players who were contemporary with the big band era, Copeland grew up listening to rock 'n' roll and R&B, influences which flourish in his music. This is why he is one of the few musicians who can infuse the blues with a totally contemporary feeling, and why he is the musician most likely to bring that music to its next evolutionary leap.

## KEEP IT COMIN' The Jones Girls

Philadelphia International

By  
James  
Hunter



**K**eept It Comin', the Jones Girls' latest album, is black pop in the year 2 A.T. (*After Thriller*), which means craft and consistency are givens. Still, the record represents light-hearted girl-groupdom at some smooth new peak in Philadelphia. More loose-limbed and spirited than the Pointer Sisters, for example, the three Jones Girls' singing is terribly seductive stuff—when they harmonize they can, seemingly at will, energize your heart or take bits of it apart.

"Is this the right time," Brenda wonders in parched breath in a lusciously asked question tucked away in "Ah, Ah, Ah, Ah" on the second side, "for lovin'?" "So I tell him no," she eventually decides, smacking these five words into the album's most intense declaration. As the music, a tough confection of glistening top and syn-copated bottom, swirls around her, the tentativeness of this refusal—sure she's cautious, but she's still tempted by passionate possibilities—is supplemented by Valorie and Shirley, who enter on wings with choruses of—what else—"ah, ah, ah, ah."

Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff and a host of other writers, producers and arrangers from their ever-healthy Philly International stable provide the Jones Girls with meticulously-made settings as resonant as they are flattering. Other standouts include the perky title cut, built around a burly-toned Narada Michael Walden-style synth that seems to have the world and all within its grasp, and the more angular, Chic-like "You Can't Have My Love." Then there's the slow, bluesy "Why You Wanna Do That To Me," on which the same songwriting team of Cynthia Biggs/Kenny Gamble/Dexter Wansel that recently sent Patti Labelle to the top of the R&B charts with the magnificent "If Only You Knew" coax the most deliberate, technique-tamed wails out of the Girls. And on "Better Things To Do," Gamble and Huff, old masters that they are, wash in the taut strings over the big beats as the trio waxes winningly independent and flirtatiously flip. Just as intended, this record is durable fluff that keeps on comin'. And comin'. People prone to nostalgic reminiscences about the Golden Age of Girl Groups should check this out, because both the record and the Jones Girls are just too good to be discovered twenty years down the line.

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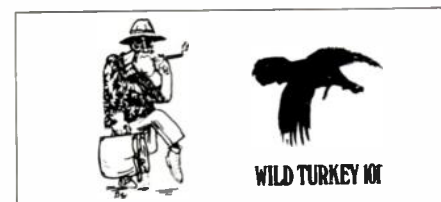
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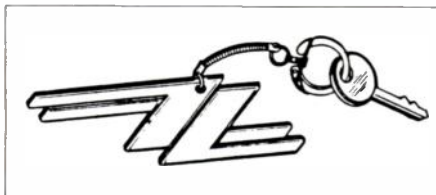
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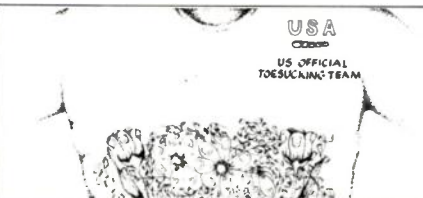
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ANTHONY DECURTIS

CELLULOID  
ZEROES

**T**he movies, like certain types of safe jazz, have long been perceived as the art form that rock fans would turn to when they grew up and dutifully assumed the responsibilities of adulthood. And just as most fusion music is bad both as rock and as jazz, most rock movies damage both the musical and visual arts. But while the relationship between rock and film is primal—extending back nearly 30 years to the rise of the independent youth culture in the '50s that forged rock itself—it's also far from comfortable.

The tension between the two forms has never been greater than it is in 1984, when whatever vestiges remain of rock's insurgent character threaten to be entirely overwhelmed by the visual media. Along with a host of movies that for the last decade have subverted rock's adversarial stance, videos have come along to transform even great songs into self-indulgent advertisements.

Today's musicians must either discover ways to translate their music in visual terms that don't compromise their art, or be content to become grist for the consumption-based show-biz mill. Nothing less than the vision and integrity of rock music as an independent medium is at stake in this choice.

Because movies quickly became an entertainment industry and did not evolve out of indigenous folk cultures as rock did from the blues and country music, they historically pandered to the political and social status quo and traded on fantasies and dreams that encouraged acquiescence, not rebellion. Thus, rock's mutinous impulses are often simply a temporary source of narrative tension or visual titillation in films, before the plots are resolved in ways that make rock seem safe as milk.

Even the greatest rock performers seldom combat this tendency successfully. Elvis Presley reeled through a host of films that stripped him completely of threat. The '60s mega-stars whose performances are the heart of Martin Scorsese's elegiac documentary, *The Last Waltz* (1978), lent witless credence to the notion that rock had reached its end at the very moment that punk was pumping fresh blood into the music. Motown's energetic brilliance was insulted by the reactionary nostalgia-mongering of *The Big Chill*.

Meanwhile, *Flashdance*, *Fame*, *Saturday Night Fever* and *Staying Alive* all use rock and disco soundtracks to cheer-lead the urgent desire to leave everyday life behind and achieve the great Hollywood goal: stardom. And *Footloose*, with a theme by



**Spinal Tap: Affectionate but knowing jokes about the music**

Mr. Rock himself, Kenny Loggins, appropriates the images of '60s-styled student revolt to tell the triumphant tale of high school renegades who organize against their town's conservative elders and seize the right to . . . have a senior dance.

The best rock movies—the ones truest to the music—are those that take the world of the music and its performers as their subject—or pretend to. Fake documentaries all, *Spinal Tap*, *The Rutles* and *A Hard Day's Night* are successful because they take the music seriously enough to joke about it fondly and knowingly. These movies gleefully explode many of rock's pretensions, while assuming that the music has enough integrity and intelligence to withstand this treatment. Actual documentaries like *Don't Look Back*, *Gimme Shelter*, *Janis*, *Monterey Pop* and *Jimi Hendrix* work because they take the music and the performers seriously enough to examine them with thought and care. None of these movies undermine rock by setting it in a context that sucks the strength from the music's essential thrust.

Unlike the tender trap that Hollywood has set for rock, the video threat has been engineered from within the music industry itself. Now that every single—regardless of

subject or style—must have a video, the ability of the rock audience to experience music in a direct, unmediated way has been dramatically limited. This wouldn't be so bad if every video were made for artistic reasons and had a creative center independent of its song. But videos are pernicious to the degree that they both interpret and advertise. They create visual meanings for songs from the first time they're heard—pre-empting the imaginative work/play of fans and critics—and consequently are the perfect sales device.

So what? On the literary front, books are made into movies and, these days, movies are often "novelized," or made into books. But books are permitted to establish their independent life before the filming begins, movies are not advertisements, and no one takes "novelizations" seriously except as a subway read.

Only rock songs are translated into another medium before they reach their audience. The implications of this for the future independence of rock 'n' roll, especially given the conservative undercutting of rock's force in most of today's music movies, are far-reaching. What we see (and, oh, right, *hear*) will be exactly what we get, and we'll be far worse for it. ○

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...and me, Edgar.

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