POLICE UPDATE: WALKING THE BEAT WITH ANDY SUMMERS

RECORD

PAGE 16

OCTOBER 1984
VOL. 3 NO. 12
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THE RECORD INTERVIEW

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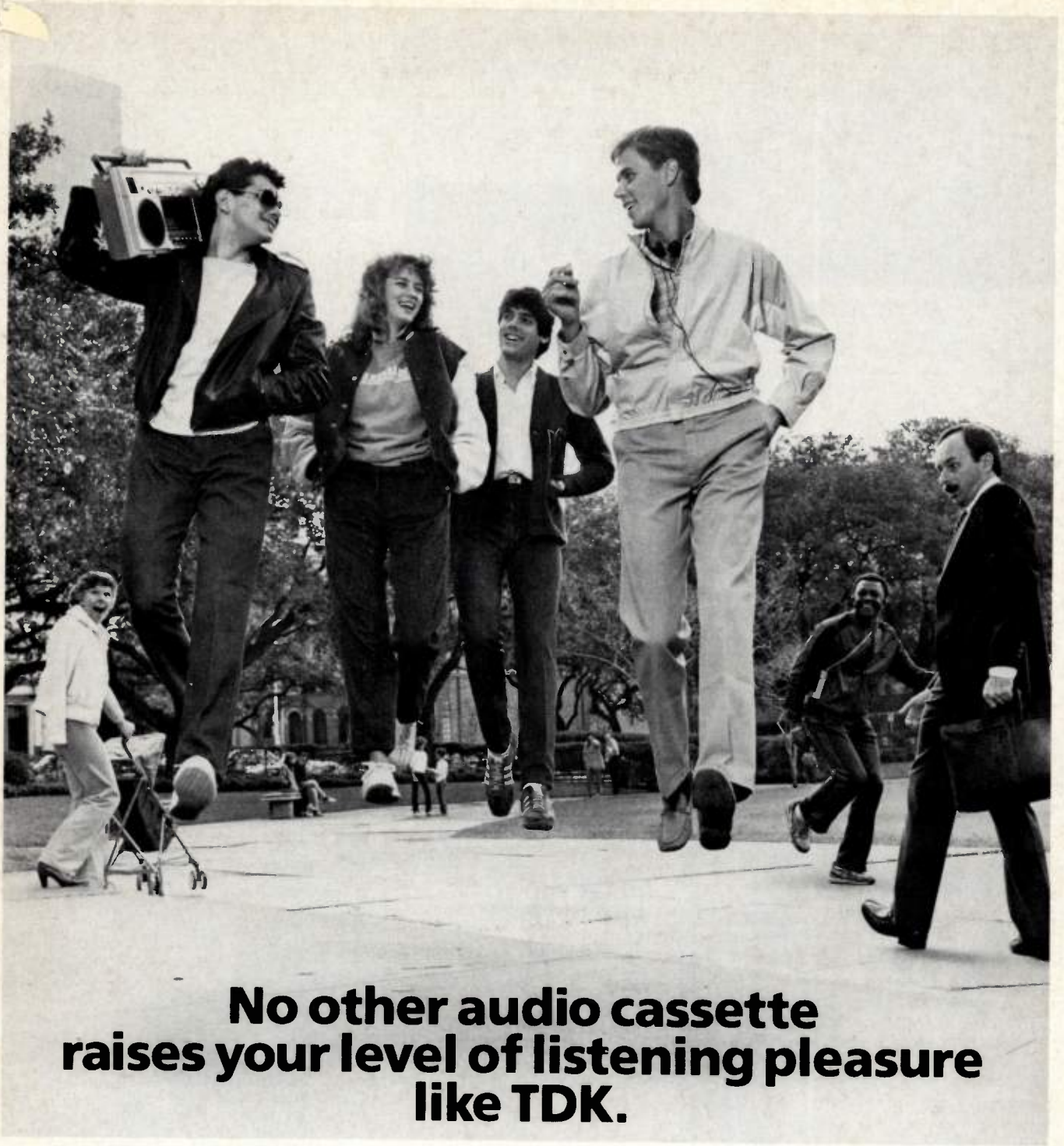

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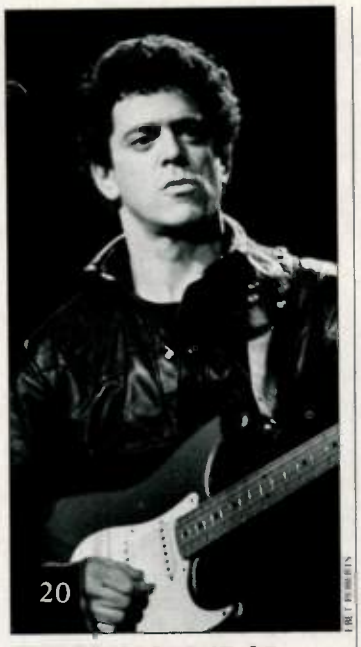

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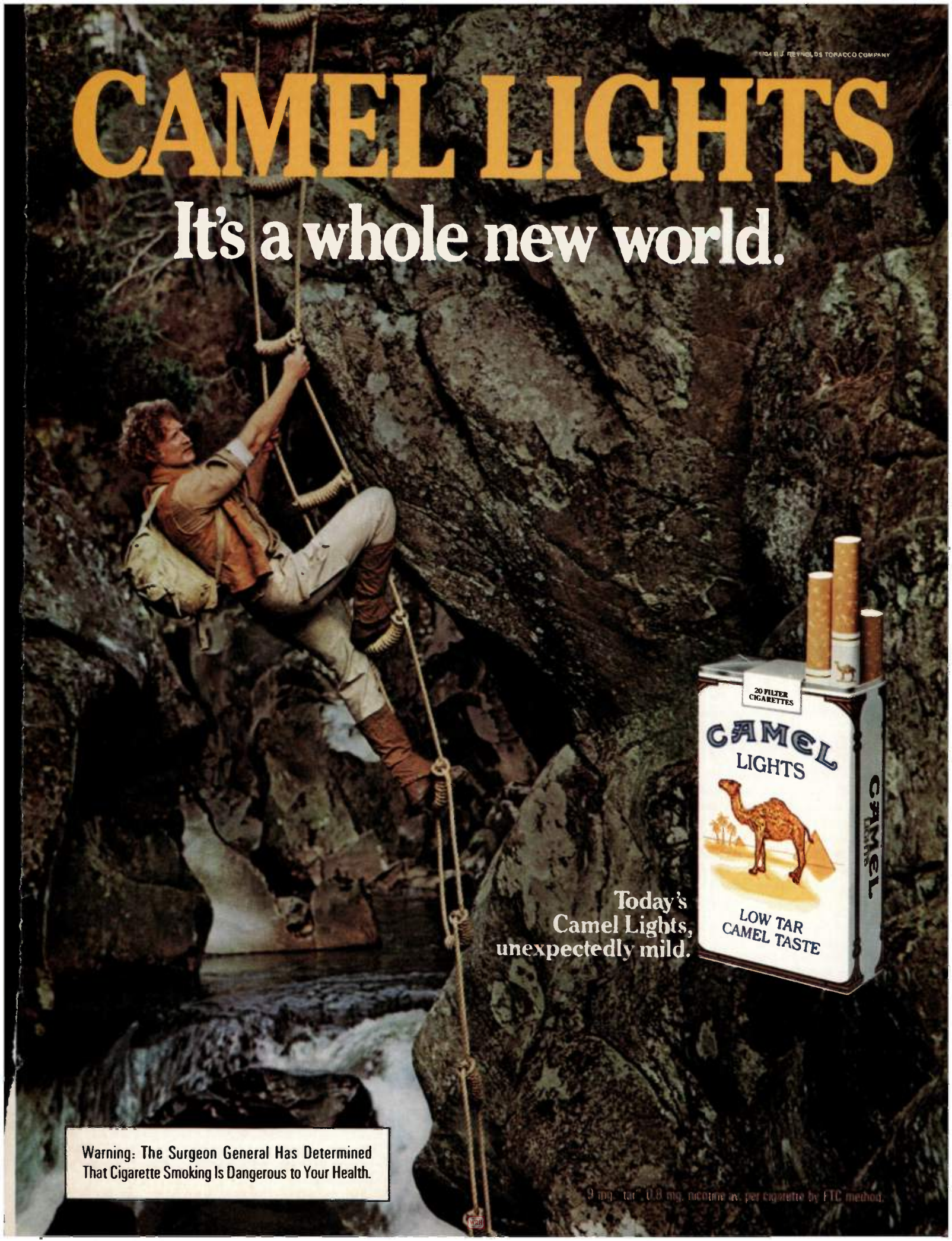

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LETTERS

OCASEK BEGS TO DIFFER

JONATHAN GROSS WAS obviously stumbling for a sensational angle for his story on the Cars ("Chasing the Cars," August RECORD), and he found one in my sarcastic, tongue-in-cheek comments on Elliot Easton. Elliot's playing and contribution to the Cars' sound should not be underrated. I only wish that the comments I made weren't taken out of context to otherwise supplement a writer's poor imagination.

RIC OCASEK
Boston, MA

Jonathan Gross replies: The truth is that I stumbled into the Cars' Pandora's Box with what seemed like, at the time of the interview, a very innocent approach: i.e., to do a story on the band as a whole. This was the "sensational angle" Ocasek refers to and of which he was advised (as it states very clearly in the story) before we began our interview. Throughout the story, Ocasek is quoted accurately and in context. And I have never underrated Elliot Easton's contribution to the Cars' sound.

STYLE COUNSEL

PAUL WELLER IS RIGHT. "Rock Culture" *is* a myth, and its values as purported by the American music media are hypocritical at best, if not simply ludicrous. Mick Talbot says Style Council's music is about "feel." But it seems that since Weller had the audacity to put the word "style" in his group's moniker and show versatility on his first LP, he's doomed to be forever labeled as insincere and calculating, regardless of whether his music sounds or feels good.

Wayne King, who reviewed *My Ever Changing Moods* in the July RECORD, seems determined, for some inexplicable reason, not to like Weller even though he apparently feels for the Council's music. Weller's singing can't be totally displeasing if King has to make a conscious effort not to enjoy "the strides Weller has made as a singer." And amid all the lamenting about the sorry state of rock as a social force, why are the "pointedly political lyrics of many of the numbers" undercut? As for King's statement that "the compassion and love evident in (other songs) is eviscerated by the emptiness at the heart of this music," I'd like to ask how a song can communicate "passion" and "love" while being empty at its heart?

The message I get from Weller and Talbot is that music, in whatever form it takes, can bring joy to life if it feels right. The music doesn't need explaining by critics and there's no law that says an album that doesn't present one repeated theme automatically loses an audience not entirely composed of first graders.

MICHELLE SYPERT
Shawnee, KS

TAPE TALK

IT APPEARS THAT MARTIN Porter's impression of XDR tape is that it is just hype or that XDR is simply some "noise reduction buzz word" (Audio, July RECORD). To the contrary, XDR is an established process which was developed by Capitol Records engineers over the last seven years in answer to consumers' increasing concern for quality in pre-recorded cassettes. The XDR process encompasses technical improvements from the mastering stage through the duplication process to the finished cassette.

In the mastering stage, the duplicating master is made directly from the original master tape or a digital interim master. This eliminates the common degradation found when making analog transfers. The duplicating master is prepared in the one-inch wide-track format rather than the industry common half-inch format. The one-inch wide-track format provides side-by-side tracking achieving maximum stereo image, wider frequency response and increased dynamic range. In addition, all XDR duplicating masters incorporate the Dolby B professional encoding system, minimizing tape hiss and increasing the overall signal-to-noise ratio.

At the mastering stage, a burst of frequencies, ranging from 63hz to 16Khz, are recorded at the beginning of side one and at the end of side two of the duplicating master. These tones are referred to in the article as "synthesizer tones used to give the impression of improved quality control"; in fact, they're used throughout the duplication process and in the finished cassettes as a quality control tool to assure faithful reproduction of the original master tape. The responses across the frequency band are within +/- 1dB. What this tells us is that as music is made up of the same frequency bands as our XDR tones, then the music has also been reproduced within +/- 1dB to the original master.

The XDR duplication process incorporates improvements in sophisticated high-peed duplicating electronics which ensures the integrity of the wide-track process providing high frequency clarity, greater bass response, lower distortion and expanded dynamics. The Cetec Gauss duplication hardware incorporates extensive modifications that improve every aspect of the duplication process. As with a finely-tuned high performance racing car, this equipment has been modified to outperform all manufacturers' published specifications. In addition, the XDR process incorporates the Dolby HX Pro Headroom Extension System which optimally biases for music content.

We at Capitol are proud of the quality reputation XDR cassettes have in the marketplace. I hope this explanation of our manufacturing process gives your readers a better understanding of what is involved in making an XDR cassette.

SANDY RICHMAN
Manager
XDR Adminstration
Capitol Records
Hollywood, CA

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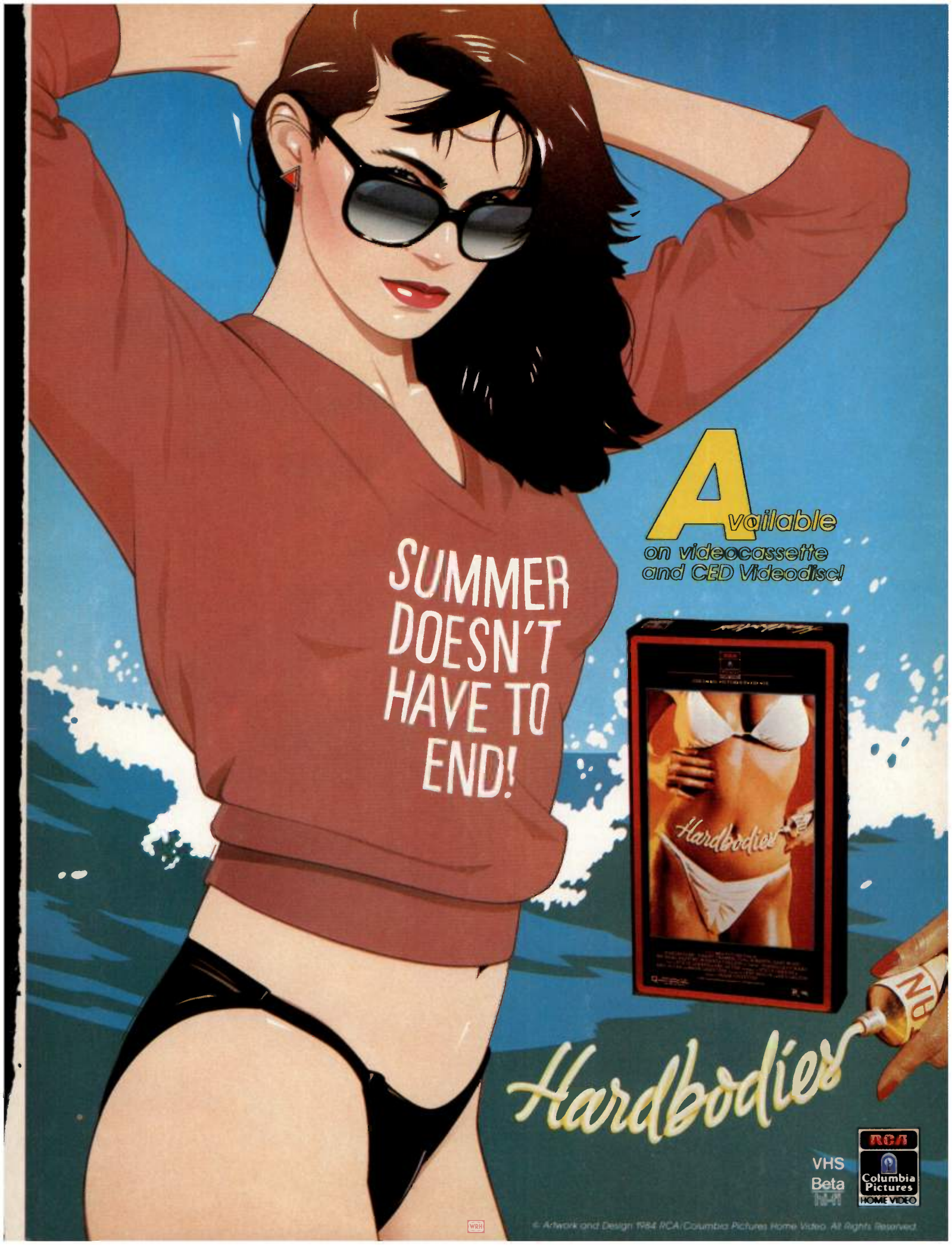
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TOP 100 ALBUMS

1 BORN IN THE U.S.A. — Bruce Springsteen Columbia
2 SPORTS — Huey Lewis & The News Chrysalis
3 PURPLE RAIN — Prince and the Revolution Warner Bros
4 HEARTBEAT CITY — The Cars Elektra/Asylum
5 SHE'S SO UNUSUAL — Cyndi Lauper Portrait/CBS
6 CAN'T SLOW DOWN — Lionel Richie Motown
7 1984 — Van Halen Warner Bros
8 SOUNDTRACK "Footloose" Columbia
9 PRIVATE DANCER — Tina Turner Capitol
10 CAMOUFLAGE — Rod Stewart Warner Bros
11 REBEL YELL — Billy Idol Chrysalis
12 BREAK OUT — The Pointer Sisters Planet/RCA
13 MADONNA — Madonna Warner Bros
14 SEVEN AND THE RAGGED TIGER — Duran Duran Capitol
15 INTO THE GAP — Thompson Twins Arista
16 AN INNOCENT MAN — Billy Joel Columbia
17 BODY AND SOUL — Joe Jackson A&M
18 SOUNDTRACK "Breakin'" Polydor
19 SELF CONTROL — Laura Branigan Atlantic
20 COULDN'T STAND THE WEATHER — Stevie Ray Vaughn Epic
21 THRILLER — Michael Jackson Epic
22 GOODBYE CRUEL WORLD — Elvis Costello and the Attractions Columbia
23 OUT OF THE CELLAR — Ratt Atlantic
24 ELIMINATOR — ZZ Top Warner Bros
25 LOVE AT FIRST STING — The Scorpions Mercury
26 POINTS ON THE CURVE — Wang Chung Geffen
27 COLOUR BY NUMBERS — Culture Club Epic
28 RECKONING — R.E.M. I.R.S
29 SOUNDTRACK "Ghostbusters" Arista
30 TALK SHOW — The Go-Go's I.R.S
31 CHICAGO XVII — Chicago Warner Bros
32 SOUNDTRACK "Beat Street" Atlantic
33 DIFFORD AND TILBROOK — Difford and Tilbrook A&M
34 NUCLEAR FURNITURE — Jefferson Starship RCA
35 TOUCH — Eurythmics RCA
36 STREET TALK — Steve Perry Columbia
37 MIDNIGHT MADNESS — Night Ranger MCA
38 LEARNING TO CRAWL — The Pretenders Sire
39 LOVE LANGUAGE — Eddy Pendergrass Elektra/Asylum
40 MIRROR MOVES — Psychedelic Furs Columbia
41 JERMAINE JACKSON — Jermaine Jackson Arista
42 GRACE UNDER PRESSURE — Rush PolyGram
43 LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE BOY — Deniece Williams Columbia
44 SHOUT AT THE DEVIL — Motley Crue Elektra
45 VICTORY — The Jacksons Epic
46 HYSTERIA — Human League A&M
47 THE PROS AND CONS OF HITCH HIKING — Roger Waters Columbia
48 NEW SENSATIONS — Lou Reed RCA
49 NOW — Patrice Rushen Elektra
50 SOUNDTRACK "Streets of Fire" MCA
51 VOICE OF AMERICA — Little Steven and the Disciples of Soul EMI-America
52 MY EVER CHANGING MOODS — Style Council Geffen/Warner Bros
53 THE SWING — INXS Atco
54 WHAT'S NEW — Linda Ronstadt Elektra/Asylum
55 LOVE LIFE — Berlin Geffen/Warner Bros
56 UH-HUH — John Cougar Mellencamp Riva
57 GOING FOR BROKE — Eddy Grant Portrait/Epic
58 ABOUT FACE — David Gilmour Columbia
59 AMMONIA AVENUE — The Alan Parsons Project Arista
60 SOUNDTRACK "The Big Chill" Motown
61 SLIDE IT IN — Whitesnake Geffen/Warner Bros
62 ICICLE WORKS — Icicle Works Arista
63 NO PARKING ON THE DANCE FLOOR — Midnight Star Elektra
64 STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART — Peabo Bryson Elektra
65 STAY HUNGRY — Twisted Sister Atlantic
66 BOX OF FROGS — Box of Frogs Epic
67 DON'T LOOK ANY FURTHER — Dennis Edwards Motown
68 IT'S MY LIFE — Talk Talk EMI-America
69 IN 3-D — "Weird Al" Yankovic Scotti Bros./Epic
70 KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF MY POWER SUPPLY — Slade CBS Assoc.
71 MORE SONGS FROM THE ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK "The Big Chill" Motown
72 NICK LOWE & HIS COWBOY OUTFIT — Nick Lowe Columbia
73 OCEAN RAIN — Echo & The Bunnymen Sire
74 SEND ME YOUR NAME — Kashif Arista
75 THE GLAMOROUS LIFE — Sheila E. Warner Bros
76 THE SAGA CONTINUES — Roger Warner Bros
77 RUN-D.M.C. — Run-D.M.C. Profile
78 SOUNDTRACK "Hard To Hold" RCA
79 NO BRAKES — John Waite EMI-America
80 HUMAN'S LIB — Howard Jones Elektra
81 SOUNDTRACK "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom" Polydor
82 (WHO'S AFRAID OF) THE ART OF NOISE — Art of Noise Island
83 WINDOWS AND WALLS — Dan Fogelberg Full Moon/Epic
84 ROLL ON — Alabama RCA
85 FAREWELL MY SUMMER LOVE — Michael Jackson Motown
86 BE MY LOVER — O'Bryan Capitol
87 DECEMBER — George Winston Windham Hill
88 FUTURE SHOCK — Herbie Hancock Columbia
89 SOUNDTRACK "Against All Odds" Atlantic
90 HYAENA — Siouxsie and the Banshees Geffen/Warner Bros
91 CAUGHT IN THE ACT LIVE — Styx A&M
92 MISTER HEARTBREAK — Laurie Anderson Warner Bros
93 ORION THE HUNTER — Orion the Hunter Epic
94 GENESIS — Genesis Atlantic
95 NO PARLEZ — Paul Young Columbia
96 ALCHEMY — Dire Straits Warner Bros
97 BON JOVI — Bon Jovi PolyGram
98 MORE THAN YOU KNOW — Tomi Tomville Atco
99 SHE'S STRANGE — Cameo PolyGram
100 JULIO — Julio Iglesias Columbia

THE OPEN DOOR POLICY

Pitching true love as a redeeming force

PHOTO: PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Wang Chung: Reflective, melancholic, wistful

NEW YORK—A band's reach should exceed its grasp, or what's a sequencer for?

"We are, to quote Aldous Huxley, opening the doors of perception," explains Nick Feldman of Wang Chung, with just enough of a grin to let everybody know he's only half, or maybe two-thirds, serious. "Our music is about true love as a redeeming force, as a feasible thing. Wagner's operas, for example, are all based on the theme of love and redemption. We try to write that way, without lapsing into nostalgia or sentimentality. We're reflective, melancholic and wistful."

Opening the doors of perception is a tall order, compared to, say, getting a video on MTV or showing up in time for a sound check, but Messrs. Feldman (bass, keyboards) and Jack Hues (lead vocals, guitar, keyboards) at least have some history behind them.

Their new LP, *Points on the Curve*, was recorded at Abbey Road Studios on "the same desk the Beatles used in 1962." The ghosts in the machine inspired the Wang Chung trio (drummer Darren Costin being the third) to search long and hard for "just the right quality of every sound."

"We were exhaustive about the whole process," says Hues, the major writer in the group. "We were in the studio about seven months. It was probably two or three months before we even began to develop enough experience to orchestrate individual sounds."

With a single that reached Top 10 earlier this year ("Dance Hall Days") and a high-visibility tour with the Cars, Wang Chung is experiencing the first fruits of its long labors. "A stabilizing relationship (with an audience) is very important," offers Feldman. "But they have to meet us half way. Everybody has the ability to reach full perception."

—Mark Mehler

WHAT'S BLACK AND WHITE?

INXS finds out the hard way

INXS: Bummed out, in black and white

NEW YORK—One advantage of being an artist is the ability to use art to objectify painful truths. In the case of INXS' hit single, "Original Sin," the universal truth in question is that adolescent dreams die hard. This time, however, outside forces converged to bring it all back home, and the members of INXS found their own youthful ideals taking a severe beating.

"It's a song about losing dreams, that's all," insists Tim Farriss, the bass player. "But it mentions 'white boy, black girl' in the same lyric, and there are people in this country who feel threatened any time you even say the words 'white and black' in the same breath."

In Illinois, a radio station received bomb threats when it played the single and Los Angeles' KROQ, according to Farriss, was threatened by far right-wing groups.

"This really hurts," Farriss states. "Not in terms of sales, but in terms of what it really means to lose your naivete, which as a child protects you from the pain. It's strange to see the theme of the song come to life like that. I wish it hadn't. I wish people could get beyond those things."

Having had their rose-colored glasses smudged a bit, the Australian sextet is now looks at the whole rock scene with a more jaundiced eye. On a recent tour in support of *The Swing*, the LP from whence "Original Sin" springs, INXS members were "angered" when exuberant fans rushed the stage. "They don't belong up there when we're trying to play," complains Farriss. "And I don't particularly like sloppy kisses and kids jumping on me. Playing live in this country is important to us."

—Mark Mehler

NO COWPUNK JOKES

The yin and yang of Rubber Rodeo

NEW YORK—"You know the rodeo," says lead singer/songwriter Bob Holmes of Rubber Rodeo. "The rubber, well, that can be a lot of things. Sexual (a contraceptive device), industrial (the band's from Ohio), financial (rubber checks), or musical (as in the Rubber City Sound). It's whatever you want it to be, I guess."

Submitted for your approval, another definition of rubber rodeo: the rubber band, something that stretches far but bounces back. The penultimate yin-yang mechanism.

"Sure," says Holmes, in town to promote the group's first major label effort, *Scenic Views* (on Polydor). "Thematically, we come at everything from two sides. Pop culture is important to us and we tend to see the light and dark. Take Las Vegas, the pop mecca. On the surface it looks great, glitzy, exciting. The other side is pain and sadness. Musically, we also try to come to terms with the duality of bittersweet country music and jubilant, celebratory rock 'n' roll. We're a yin-yang band, for sure."

Once those floodgates have been opened, paradox plunges forth. A band whose members were nurtured in the midwest and south, but which came together at the Rhode Island School of Design. A band that relishes the tacky and tawdry (miniature golf and white toast) but whose members read Sam Shepard plays and believe firmly in the American work ethic.

"We have fun with the roots we left behind us," says keyboardist Trish Milliken, "but there's something we need to make very clear: we don't condescend. We don't lack respect for people just because they sometimes pretend to understand things they shouldn't."

Adds Holmes: "The songs have to speak for themselves, and we have to stay a pop band. Once we become a cowpunk joke, it's over."

—Mark Mehler

PHOTO: GARY GERSHOFF/RETNA LTD.

Rubber Rodeo: A pop band, or no band

CAN'T BUST THE MUSIC

Hugh Masekela cuts it in South Africa

NEW YORK—In going home, Hugh Masekela has come back. Now settled in Botswana in his native South Africa, the noted jazz trumpeter has not only cut his first LP in six years (*Techno-Bush*, released Stateside on Arista/Jive-Afrika, and boasting a dance club hit in "Don't Go Lose It Baby"), but is also making an effort to bring more South African artists to a global audience.

"I've always wanted to get back home," says Masekela. "Originally I went to the States to go to school and I figured when I graduated I'd go back. But when I started at Manhattan School of Music, Harry Belafonte told me, 'Why do you want to leave? Why don't you stay and try to make a name for yourself? Then when you talk about what's going on in South Africa people will listen.'"

Masekela first made a name for himself here in 1968 with a chart-topping single, "Grazing in the Grass." But when his career hit a snag in the early '70s, he began considering his options. In 1974, after touring West Africa, he returned to his homeland and its flourishing music scene.

When he decided to record again, Masekela wanted to consolidate the personal and artistic gains he'd made since his return on what he calls "a South Africa's greatest hits record." Indeed, *Techno-Bush* is awash with darting dance music, gospel-like choral vocals and Masekela's own trumpet playing, often mixed to sound like a chorus of horns.

His most important project, though, is recording some of the local talent in the proper setting. Jive-Afrika has lent him a mobile studio for this purpose, and he's going to use it to make a political as well as an artistic statement. "Our strength is our music," he asserts. "They may try to take away our freedom and our rights in South Africa. But they can never take away our talents."

—Stuart Cohn

Masekela: 'They can take away our rights, but not our talents'

SWEET SOUL MUSIC

'Nowhere To Run' is a book of love

Gerry Hirshey's *Nowhere To Run* (Times Books, $17.95), a look at the people who taught the world just what "soul" was all about back in the '60s, is, like the best rock writing, fresh, fast and filled with a love for the music that soaks through each and every page. Her book is alive with the inner voices of the people—Aretha Franklin, Wilson Pickett, Irma Thomas, Levi Stubbs, Sam Moore, Diana Ross, Mary Wilson, Solomon Burke, James Brown, and dozens of others—whose singing voices opened up a space in the hearts of a generation and, not coincidentally, in the fabric of society. Starting with the opening chapter on Screamin' Jay Hawkins, who employs his mighty wail not in the grip of some voodoo spell but for the sake of justice in a country which will give him none, we hear their sound. It's mellower in many cases, but not without a familiar fervency, not quite tamed by the passing of time which threatens to render the performers irrelevant "oldies."

Hirshey's style allows the artists to speak, gives us the chance to hear their side of the story and not just history's. We learn that while Sam and Dave were cranking out their lusty Southern brand of double dynamite, Sam Moore was caught in a battle with the devil himself in the form of a fourteen year struggle with heroin addiction. We hear that Sweet Inspiration, Cissy Houston, speak of her love for her God, and fight off the idea that the mixture of heavenly aspiration and earthly desires that *was* soul was somehow sinful. Throughout, there are stories of love, happiness, money, and fame gained and lost a hundred times over. And best of all, there are the stories of just how the music always made it worthwhile, how when all else failed, the music played on.

This message, when set against the beat of the songs listed in the book's index—a virtual Dictionary of Soul—is an important one for these times of shallow, quick change music. For giving us that, Gerry Hirshey deserves our accolades, and, most especially, what Aretha, Lady Soul, sang about so well back then: R-E-S-P-E-C-T.

[illegible]yne King

R O C K O

Give Us A Break Dept.: First there was *Wild Style,* then came *Breakin',* followed quickly by *Beat Street.* If the saturation point hasn't already been reached for rap/breakdance films, it might soon be. **Sidney Poitier's** *Cry of the City,* starring **Sammy Davis, Jr., Leon Kennedy** and **Smokey Robinson,** has finished shooting in New York and Florida, but as of late July had found no distributor. Of course, there's always *Delivery Boys,* described by its director, Ken Handler, as "a wacko comedy, with no social overtones or ghetto aspects." Hmm—a hip-hop film with no social overtones or ghetto aspects? Sounds like Handler would be right at home working on the next Flintstones' cereal commercial, since the last one had ol' **Fred** and **Barney** doing a little spinning (those Bedrock boys always were hip—remember the Twitch?). And, oh yeah, we almost forgot: look for a sequel to *Breakin'* due out at Christmas time starring that well known street personality **Suzy Bono**.

IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE

"Darling Nikki" Does Dallas: If the PTA's got real clout, you might just start seeing ratings on your favorite records, cassettes and videotapes. At a national convention of state organizations held in late June, a resolution brought up by the California delegation seeking to protect children from product "containing questionable content" was adopted. The PTA convention voting to force its morality on you was held this year in Las Vegas...According to a recent telephone survey by the Gallup Poll, fewer teenagers are attending concerts. The survey contrasted its new findings—a mere 32% of American's future leaders showed up to rip the seats out of their local hockey arena last year—with the 1978 response to the question of concert attendance, when 42% of its respondents claimed to have checked out at least one performance in the previous twelve months. The whole thing sounds like a dirty Commie plot.

THE REEL WORLD

In a casting job worthy of *Ripley's Believe It Or Not,* **Tom Selleck's** co-star in his next movie, *The Runaway,* is none other than **Kiss' Gene Simmons**. The movie, directed by Michael (*The Andromeda Strain*) Crichton, has been filming all summer, with Simmons in the role of a homicidal maniac, which for some reason doesn't seem all that surprising...Or maybe that casting isn't so weird. How about pairing rock god **Sting** and *Flashdance*'s **Jennifer Beals** in a remake of *The Bride of Frankenstein?* Currently filming in France and England, *The Bride,* as this remake is known, has the former Gordon Sumner as the doctor and Ms. Beals as his bride—or is that the monster's bride? Regardless, it sounds like a positively frightful proposition...What do **Adam Ant, Josie Cotton** and actress **Mary Woronov** (Miss Evelyn Togar in **the Ramones'** *Rock 'N' Roll High School* movie) have in common? A movie currently lensing in Los Angeles called *The Nomads,* which—judging by the inspired idea of uniting those three pop icons—threatens to have a potentially hazardous schlock quotient...**Martha Coolidge,** director of *Valley Girl* (and currently suing the Atlantic Releasing Corp. for her share of the profits from that 1983 sleeper), is working on a screen treatment of **Otis Redding's** life story.

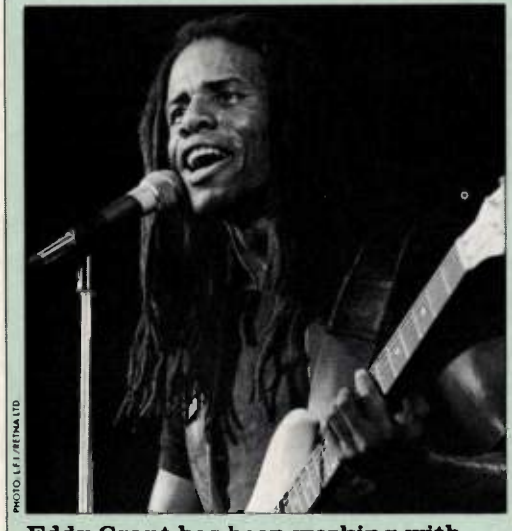


PHOTO: LFI / RETNA LTD

Eddy Grant has been working with Musical Youth in a studio in Barbados, but no info yet on the results of that promising collaboration.

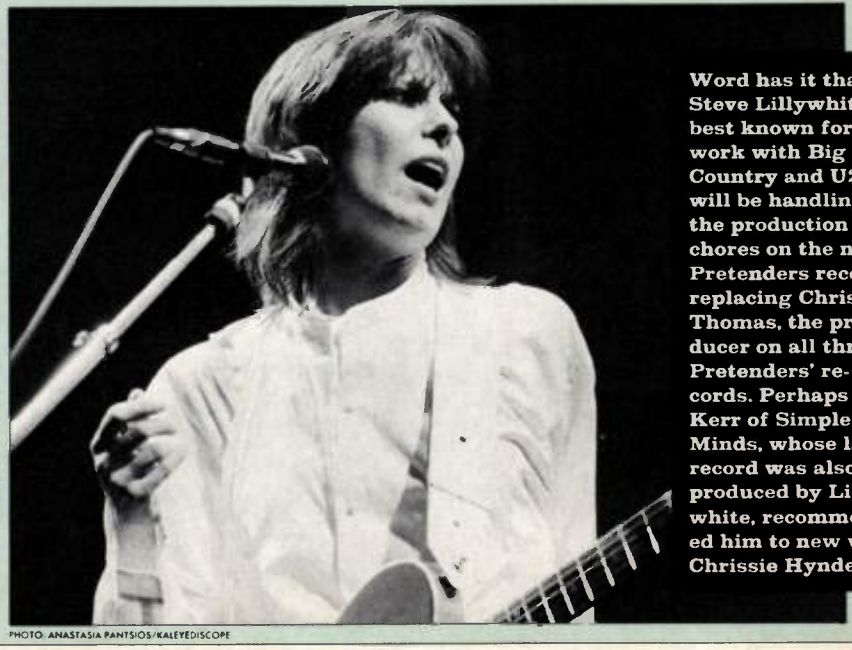


PHOTO: ANASTASIA PANTSIOS/KALEYEDISCOPE

Word has it that Steve Lillywhite, best known for his work with Big Country and U2, will be handling the production chores on the next Pretenders record, replacing Chris Thomas, the producer on all three Pretenders' records. Perhaps Jim Kerr of Simple Minds, whose last record was also produced by Lillywhite, recommended him to new wife Chrissie Hynde.

N

WAXWORKS

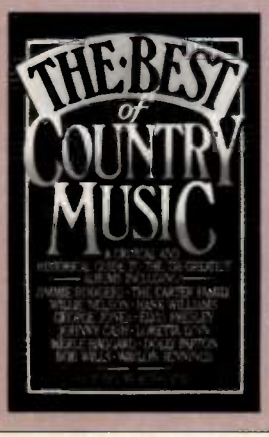
Helen Terry, Culture Club's golden-throated backup singer, is putting out a solo record in the fall; she's been working with Was (Not Was)'s **Don Fagenson** in Detroit this summer on the project. Ms. Terry also puts her pipes to use on a song for the next **Crusaders'** LP...**Ronnie Lane,** whose recording career has understandably been in mothballs since his ongoing bout with Multiple Sclerosis, has been signed to **Madness'** new British label, Zarjazz. The Nutty Boys themselves, having recently severed a long-term relationship with Stiff, are expected to get the label off to a rousing start with a new long player due out at year's end...Since **Phil Collins** has readily acknowledged the influence soul bands like **Earth, Wind and Fire** have had on his recent music (he's even appropriated EW&F's Phenix Horns on occasion), it was almost inevitable that the singer/drummer would be producing the second solo disc for EW&F singer **Philip Bailey.** Due out this month, the record will feature a duet by Phil B. and Phil C. called "Easy Lovers"...**Rhino Records** (1201 Olympic Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90404), those wild and crazy guys who insist on releasing some of the finest re-issues available of '50s and '60s rock, are at it again. Besides single volume "Bests Of" the **Troggs,** the **Nazz,** and the **Spencer Davis Group,** they're initiating their Rhino Anthology Series with two-record greatest hits packages of **Gene Pitney, Dionne Warwick,** and **The Shirelles**...Elektra, **Tom Waits'** label for his entire recorded career save last year's excellent *Swordfishtrombones,* is releasing a double album greatest hits collection...Atlantic has made *INXS* and *Underneath The Colours,* **INXS'** first two albums previously available only in their native Australia, part of its budget line Super Savers Series ...While **Bryan Ferry** works on his sixth solo record in New York, fellow **Roxy Music** members saxophonist **Andy Mackay** and guitarist **Phil Manzanera** are finishing up a record together under the group moniker the Explorers. The album is due any day now.

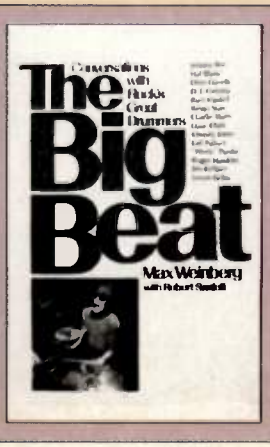
PHOTO: BRIAN ARIS

PHOTO: REPNA LTD.

In what will surely be considered a red letter day in music history, noted songstress Linda Ronstadt announced on June 27 that she is renouncing rock 'n' roll. After the success of *What's New,* the wildly successful album of standards she made last year with the Nelson Riddle Orchestra, Ms. Ronstadt said at a press conference, "I'd only make another rock record if I turned a corner one day and found 10 songs as good as a Gershwin song." Charles Hardin Holley (Buddy to us), still spinning in his grave from La Ronstadt's demolishing of his "That'll Be The Day" and "It's So Easy," must have spun a little faster at that statement.

Look for Vestron Video's attempt at a Compleat Beach Boys, entitled Good *Vibrations: The Story of An American Band,* to hit theaters nationwide prior to its release on videotape at Xmas. The project has great potential, assembled as it is by Malcolm (*This Is Elvis*) Leo.





BOOKS

Several new books are doing their darnedest to elbow their way past the innumerable Michael Jackson books clogging up the shelves everywhere. The best of these, John Morthland's *The Best of Country Music* (Doubleday Dolphin, $14.95), is an intelligent and impassioned guide to 750 essential country albums, neatly divided into categories—"Nashville," "Countrypolitan," Rockabilly," etc.—so's to make it all the easier to appreciate the rich tapestry that is country music. A sorely needed work in this day of "country" hits by people like Julio Iglesias...Max Weinberg, the drummer in Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band for the past ten years, has come out with a book on the greatest skinbeaters of the rock era. *The Big Beat* (Contemporary, $9.95), an appropriate enough title for anyone's who's had the pleasure of watching the Mighty Max work, contains interviews with such skilled luminaries as Charlie Watts, Elvis' longtime drummer D.J. Fontana, studio legend Hal Blaine and Ringo Starr. Highly recommended for non-percussionists, since Weinberg—a huge fan of great drumming—asks questions of the performers that the average listener would want answered.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JONATHAN GROSS

HANGING LOOSE WITH RUN-D.M.C.

Rhymin' and reasonin' and very little sleazin'

They call us ill
But we're all gettin' iller
We're not Michael Jackson
And this is not Thriller

Rapping with the emcees in Run-D.M.C. is just that. I mean, lay a beat box under their loopy limericks and dizzy dialect and we could go on the road as the Q-and-A Team. Check it out. Here's Joseph Simmons on his role:

I'm one def rapper, I know I can hang
I'm Run from Run-D.M.C.
Like Kool from Kool and the Gang.

Here's Darryl "D.M.C." McDaniels on his eyesight:

Well, I got prescription glasses
My eyes are correct
Two times every year I go and have them checked
Got the right to vote but not to elect
Not down with the quarter part of a sect
Just one def rapper out for respect
And if you don't get that I'll break your neck.

No need for violence. The Queens, New York, trio has already got plenty of respect as the "deffest" (as in "definitely," as in "cool," as per the unwritten hip hop dictionary) crew in rapdom. Not only have Run-D.M.C.'s singles "It's Like That," "Hard Times" and the brutal "Rock Box" each sold thousands of copies for the tiny Profile label, but their fast-selling self-titled debut album stands as the first major breakthrough for a market based primarily on the sale of 12-inch singles. Run-D.M.C.'s video for "Rock Box," featuring a guest appearance by that visual non-sequitur Professor Irwin Corey, was the first authentic rap clip to make it to MTV. Run-D.M.C.'s also a hit on the road. Simmons is well versed here too:

Party people I'm so happy I don't know what to do
Cause I'm the emcee with the song and then I'm down with the crew
Rock from Africa to France and then to Kalamazoo
And every place I play I hear 'yeah' not a 'boo.'

For these fellows, none of whom are older than 20, life is loose. Just rhyme and reason with very little sleazin'. If it all ended tomorrow Simmons, McDaniels and their one-man band, deejay Jam Master Jay Mizell, could calmly return to their not-so-distant past as college students. Run-D.M.C., see, did not rise from the ashes of any South Bronx slum but from the respectable black suburb of Hollis, Queens, where their parents were gainfully employed as nurses, teachers and engineers. With clothes on their backs and food in their mouths, Simmons and McDaniels rapped for parties, not polemics, and their fresh smiles stand in direct contrast to the jive gang menace of the original Grandmaster Flash. If Bill Cosby's kids had a rap group, it would be Run-D.M.C.

PHOTO STEVEN BROWN

"Run," Jam Master Jay, "D.M.C.": Loopy limericks, dizzy dialect

"The difference between those days and now is that back then there weren't any rap records," says Simmons, who used to go on the road as "The Son of Kurtis Blow." "The deejay would just scratch record after record and we'd just rap until we'd sweat and then someone else would pick up the mic. We'd just work over the breaks in songs, like Billy Squier's 'Beat Box.' "

Simmons, who turned McDaniels, a former spinner, onto rapping, has trouble elucidating on his craft. A lot of it is worked out in the studio. "Rock Box," possibly the heaviest rap record to date in terms of musical impact, marries Run-D.M.C.'s wit—"Calvin Klein's no friend of mine/Don't want his name on my behind"—with a crushing metal cadence.

But Simmons doesn't know exactly why Run-D.M.C. has outdistanced the rap pack. "Jay says we know what the people want. I feel it's the way we've handled our success. We work really hard to think what's gonna work and luck has gone our way. Right now there's only two types of rap records—the 'message' type where you're talking about how tough the world is or the party record where you're just saying how good you are and how bad everybody else is."

Run-D.M.C. has struck a healthy balance between the two with sobering takes like "Hard Times" and lighthearted, self-serving bombast on the order of its 1983 dance club hit, "Sucker M.C.'s." For all is not sweetness and stickball in Hollis. Their self-titled album is dedicated to one June Bug, a deejay friend of theirs who was killed in what they believe was a drug-related crime.

In some hard-core rap circles, however, the word is that Run-D.M.C. is not the real thing but Queens teen idols in it for a buck with little understanding of the form's socio/economic roots. Counters Simmons, who has little use for movements: "I can't say what's real and what isn't. People from the Bronx don't think Queens is normal. Whatever I feel is real. I didn't like the movie *Breakin'* because it didn't have anything to do with New York. But you can't simply say that. There are real things outside of New York."

As we're winding up, a member of the New York City Breakers, perhaps the hottest dance crew going, pays Simmons the ultimate backhanded compliment: "Hey, you all the best thing to come from Queens."

"I thought we was just the best thing," Simmons retorts.

He who raps last raps best? ○

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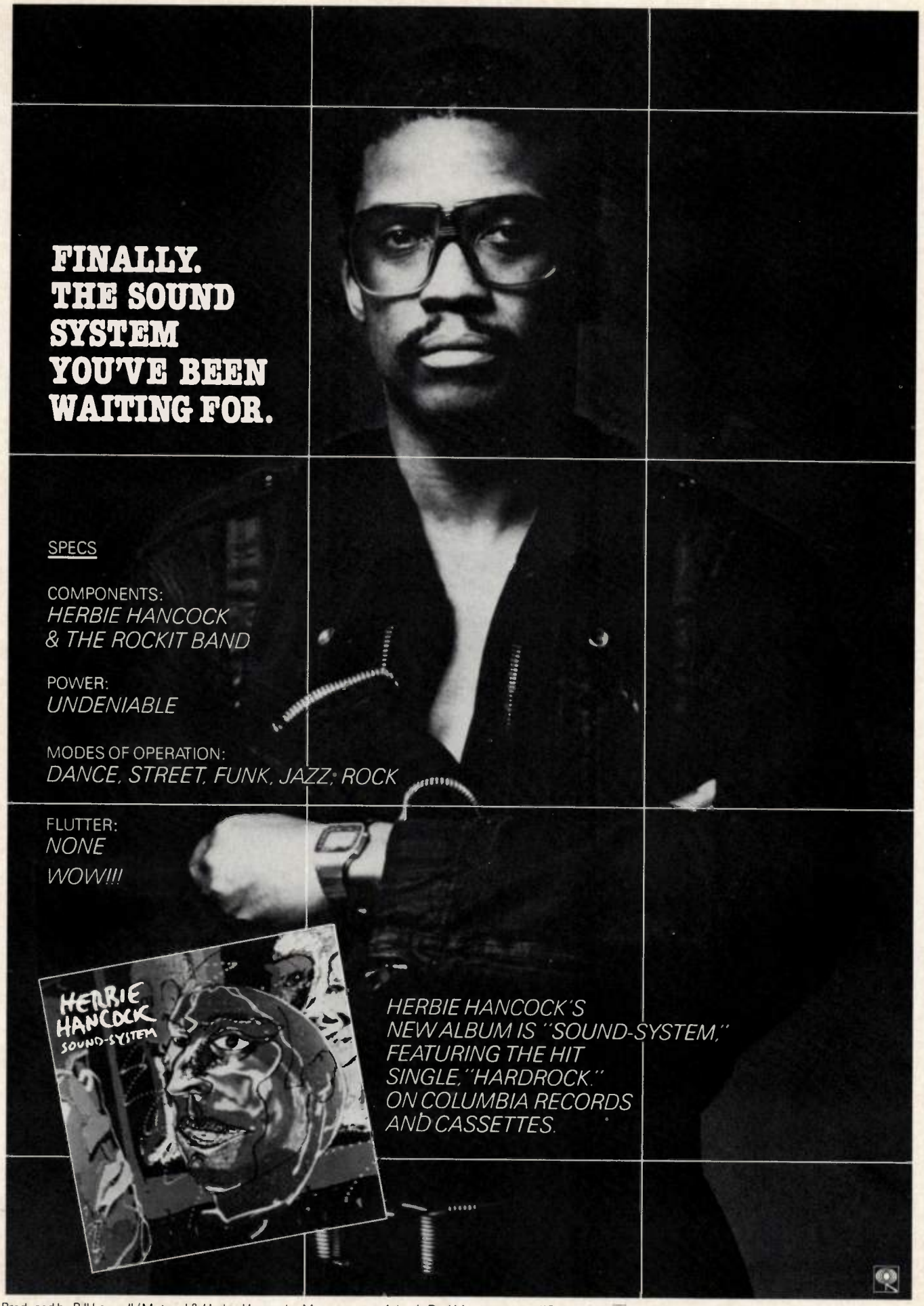

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MARK MEHLER

WALKING THE POLICE BEAT

New Summers-Fripp collaboration; Police live LP up next

"I'll tell you what I find so strange about this," says Andy Summers, thumbing absent-mindedly through his credit cards. "When people, journalists for example, talk to those of us in the Police, they speak of the band as 'they.' It happens to Sting, Stewart and myself all the time. It's like in a way they're trying to face you, yourself, with it, this thing, this phenomenon, this beast with a life of its own that we ride until we can't ride it anymore. They can't look you in the eye and confront who you are. They want to talk about how amazing 'they' are, how successful 'they' are. Isn't that strange?"

Not really, since Summers, whose rhythm guitar has propelled the Police in parallel ethnic (funk, reggae) and electronic directions, has just referred to the superstar trio as "it."

Catching his own *faux pas*, Summers lets out a nervous laugh. "What am I saying? I mean 'we.' Maybe I'm a little in awe myself. As much as we try to control everything, there's just so much going on without you doing it, without you even knowing about it, it's mind-boggling. And it does get out of hand. You grab onto the monster and hang on, and you have no idea where it's taking you. It's real nice, it's the best thing any of the three of us does with his life. We're joined at the hips, but the entity can overwhelm you."

Summers' ongoing guitar partnership with lord of discipline Robert Fripp—which thus far has yielded 1982's curiously fascinating *I Advance Masked* and the more recent, and more satisfying, *Bewitched*—can be seen, in part, as a reaction to "the miracle" of the Police. And as an attempt by Summers to find an identity that exists outside the Police, and can't be found in the credit cards in his wallet.

"I'm expanding, I'm in an expansive state," the 40-year-old guitarist crows, like Peter Pan would had he decided to grow into middle age and become a pop artist. "I'm going out and letting things grow, the balloon is filling up. I hope this is metaphorical enough for you. I'm trying myself out in situations to see how comfortable I feel, how good or bad I am."

This expansion encompasses photography (Summers has published *Throb*, a book of photographic essays), film (he studied acting for three years and is collaborating on a commercial screenplay), travel, literature, contemporary painting and fine furniture. And Robert Fripp, who in his inimitable, quiet way, can be as intimidating as a sold-out Police concert at Shea Stadium. Even Summers admits to the sometimes tentative nature of the guitar masters' first effort.

"On the last record," he explains, "Robert and I didn't blend quite as well as we could have, although we're both very proud of the album. Still, I was reluctant to force the issue, because it was Robert Fripp. We did mostly polyrhythmic things, with me just adding to them or fleshing them out a little. I was coming up against Robert Fripp and what he does, and perhaps I wasn't prepared for it."

Additionally, Summers came into the final 1982 sessions carrying heavy personal baggage, stemming primarily from the painful dissolution of his marriage. "It was a very rough period for me," he recounts, "and I couldn't concentrate on what was going on in the studio. I don't think people

Andy Summers checks out an extended Frippertronics solo from the audience

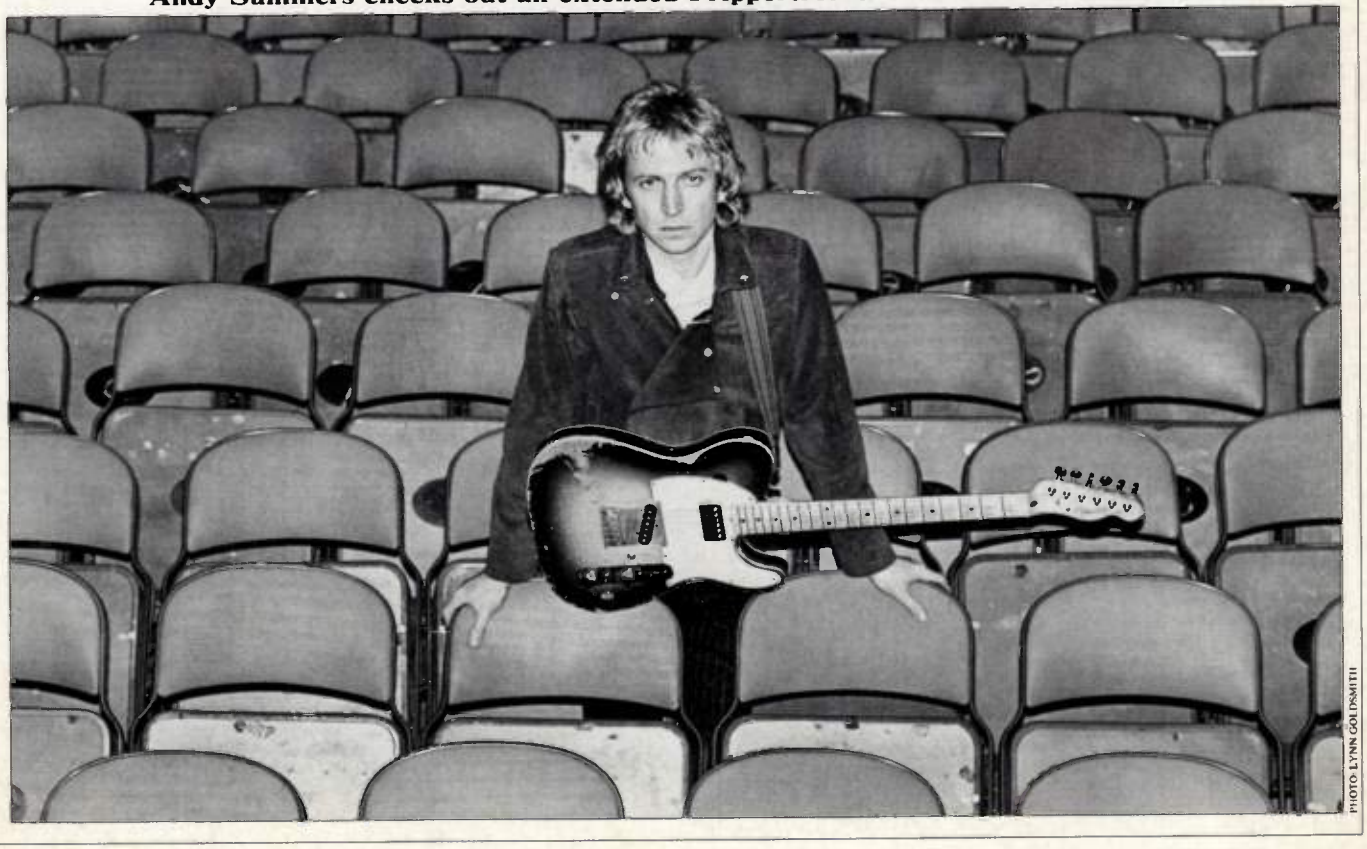


PHOTO: LYNN GOLDSMITH

work well when they're miserable. I don't, anyway."

Recorded last spring, *Bewitched* found Summers with a sunnier disposition and a considerably clearer idea of how best to blend his skills with the idiosyncratic genius of Fripp. "I knew how far I could push him toward my direction. We're still pretty much polar opposites in our playing. Robert over the years has gone down one line, the polyrhythmic single-line approach, and he's brought it to a degree of perfection where he can improvise on it and play it like no other guitarist in the world. His strengths are playing the sort of fuzz solo, very quirky and very rhythmic. I'm classically-trained, came up playing pop and blues (Zoot Money's Big Roll Band, Soft Machine, Animals, etc.), a regular rock soloist in many ways. It's hard, but it clicks. Robert gives the music a spine, he's the masculine element, and I probably represent the feminine side of the duo, but out of it a whole new personality emerges. It's a beautiful form of alchemy."

The chemical reaction, kicked off by Summers—who spent a week in the studio setting the stage while Fripp was finishing up a tour with King Crimson—resulted in more of a pop-sounding record, if such a thing is possible with these two. The "dance" side of *Bewitched* is Summers' bid to capture the"kitschy spirit of the old-time guitar instrumentals, only updated, of course, with perhaps a somewhat higher than usual quirk factor." Opposite this is the "dream" side, an interpretive excercise in sound and mood evocation. This dichotomy aside, the best way to describe several of the album's tunes is simple and funky. Which is precisely what Summers was after.

"I guess what I'm best known for in the Police is the clipped rhythm playing, which I did some of here. On 'What Kind of Man Reads Playboy,' I remember sitting there just playing against a rhythm box and suddenly this James Brown song from years ago, 'Mashed Potatoes USA,' hit me, and I just started playing that. It's 'Mashed Potatoes,' pure and simple."

On the other hand, "Maquillage" finds Fripp moving from a 4/4 to a 7/4 backing figure that Summers describes as "suddenly giving the tune a whole new Andalusian flavor. I played across it and put a Gil Evansy horn part on it and that was it."

In short, insists Summers, this time it was two highly-skilled and educated guitarists "meeting on a different mountain and learning how to work together. So much of guitar playing in this sort of situation is human psychology. How do I get the very best out of Robert Fripp in the studio? And we did it. It's a balanced record. You could call Bewitched more of an Andy Summers album than the last one, but it's as much Robert's sensibility as it is mine."

Incidentally, for those who find side two's dream theme a bit obtuse, Summers

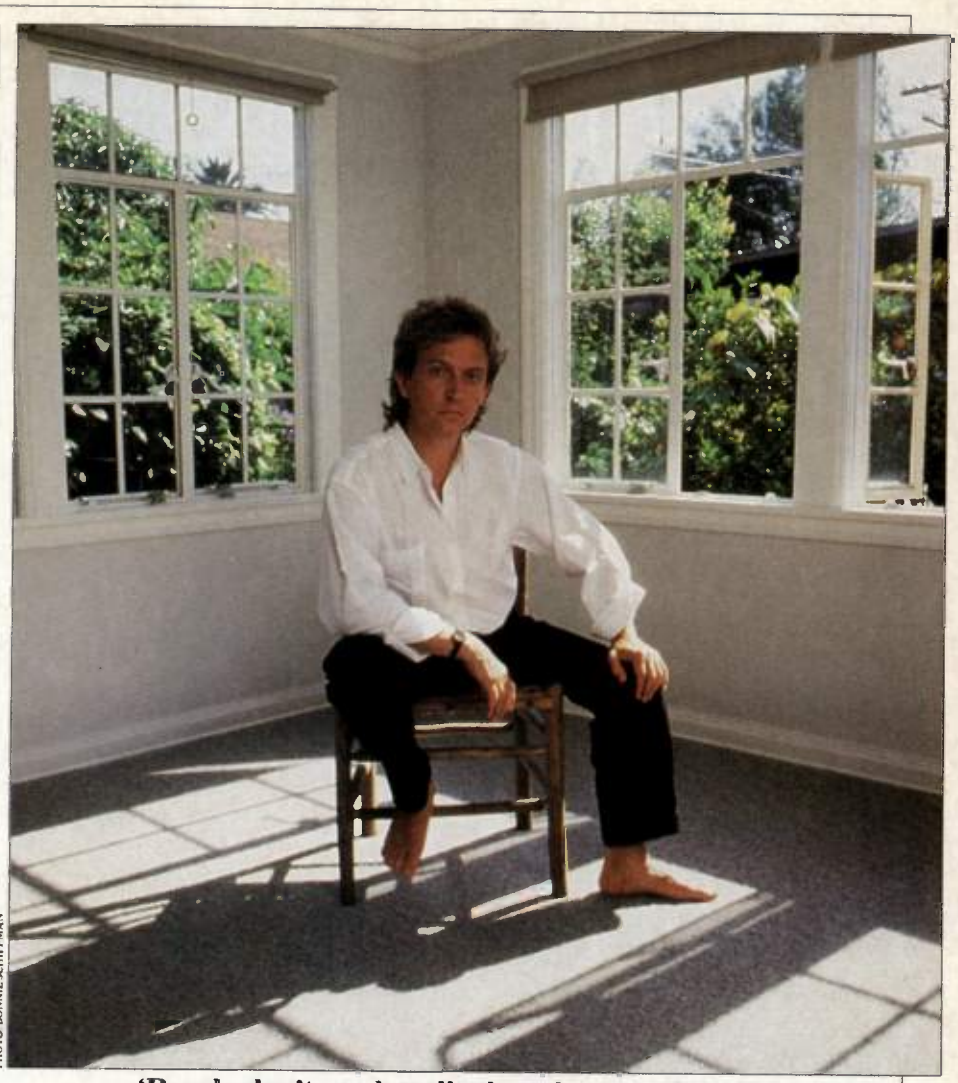


PHOTO BONNIE SCHIFFMAN

'People don't work well when they're miserable'

hints at some of the "wild" stuff that never made vinyl, i.e., "a calypso thing I started playing off this wonderful patch on the Roland synthesizer that Robert really got into." And on a more bizarre front, "a kind of Tex-Mex thing that has to be heard to be believed. If you can imagine Fripp playing Tex-Mex, this is very, very weird."

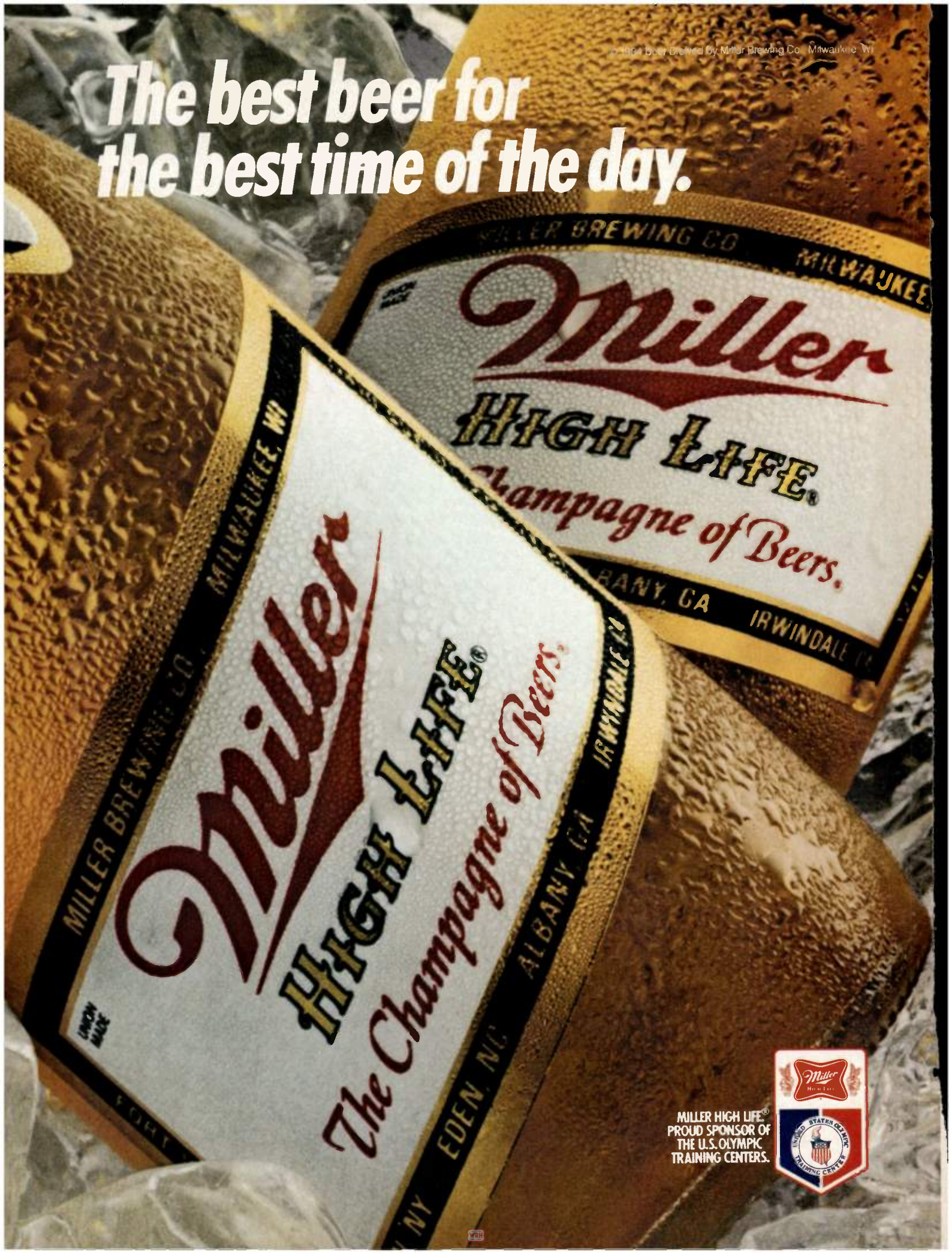
The duo shelved this material in order that *Bewitched* retain a basic European sensibility. "I don't want to sound patriotic," Summers says, "but I'm not Ry Cooder. I like the overriding English-ness of our music, and American sounding guitars don't fit the image Robert and I are looking for. Besides, the dream stuff was getting a little out there already."

On the Police beat, Summers, Copeland and Sting have tentatively pencilled in a visit to Montserrat later this year to select cuts for the first Police live album. The group apparently sees this as an opportunity to expose listeners to more expanded, free-form versions of Police standards. Whether they support the live album with another tour remains an open question. "I've got to get together and talk to Sting and see where he's been. Coming off the road after seven months (on the *Synchronicity* tour)—that was the longest we'd ever been out—you need a break. But I think we're all looking forward to being back together. It's a family thing, really. And after five albums, it's definitely time for a live record. We've earned it."

Summers also expects to dive headlong into his screenplay this fall, although a recent trip to Hollywood to raise funds for the project left him "depressed as hell" over the impact of greed on the movie industry. "If that's the process," he states, "I wouldn't want to spend the rest of my life in films, at least not in this country. But the work interests me; the industry kicks up a pile of shit, but the work is good.

"I need to have a go at everything," Summers continues. "I couldn't rest if I didn't. The best art, real art, never stops revealing itself in a new light, and the artist can't stop either. The process is always open-ended. Robert and I, I don't know what will happen. I'd like to tour with it someday. The Police was conceived as an open-ended project. Whatever any of us brings to the collaboration makes it better, or at least it always has. I know that Sting's image as an actor influences the image of the Police, but it certainly doesn't hurt us. It always has to be like that."

It does. They do. ○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PETE BUCK

THE TRUE SPIRIT OF AMERICAN ROCK

R.E.M.'s guitarist stands up for "real music"

This article by R.E.M. guitarist Peter Buck inaugurates Americana, a new RECORD *feature focusing on the people, places and events that make this country's rock scene unique. Buck's observations stem from a spring trip to England, when his defense of American rock was greeted "with shocked laughter," as he writes here. He goes on to discuss his own feelings about bands attempting to maintain some integrity while battling in the marketplace, and maps these thoughts into his own experiences with R.E.M.* —*Ed.*

The music business tends to judge the importance of records or bands totally by sales. Although money makes the wheels of industry go round, it seems to me that the most important and influential music being made at any specific time has often been neglected.

Whole generations of musicians have been inspired by Muddy Waters, whose records sold 50,000 copies at most; and as Brian Eno has pointed out, every single one of the 20,000 people who bought the Velvet Underground's first album eventually formed a band.

The punk scene that started up in 1976-77 went down in flames, but the ideals it inspired are still motivating an alternative music scene that's very vital in America right now. The growth of college radio, the proliferation of fanzines, the impact of independent labels and distributors, and the development of local clubs and audiences are all aspects of a burgeoning underground scene that's as exciting as anything that's happening at the top of the charts.

I was spurred to write this article after visiting England and encountering the incredible complacency of the music business there. Everyone assumes that the American success of groups like Spandau Ballet, Culture Club and the Eurythmics points up the bankruptcy of American music. Shocked laugher greeted my assertions that there are plenty of good bands making exciting music in America and that, basically, there's nothing much important going on in England.

My point was that even though British bands are selling millions of records, that doesn't tell the whole story about what's happening musically in the States. There's deeply heart-felt music being made by American bands that most people in this country are ignoring and that the British don't even get to hear. I gave tapes of bands like Husker Du, Mission of Burma and the Replacements to English journalists to show them that something's going on in America that's not reflected on the charts.

A lot of British records that are big in this country take the passion and spirit of American soul music and turn it into supper-club, MOR slush that's the rock 'n' roll equivalent of Las Vegas. Words like "passion" and "spirit" are the flavor of the month these days; they get tossed around so often that they've lost much of their meaning. Still, the music I like most is done by people who convey a sense of self, a feeling that they'd continue making music even if they weren't making records. Music is a part of their lives, not just a vehicle to stardom. I can't define it exactly—good music can run the gamut from Hank Williams to Black Flag—other than to say that I'm moved by music made by real people for real reasons.

In our own case, R.E.M. is always trying to figure out where the line is between "commerce" and what we do because it means something to us. We tend to bend over backwards to avoid commercial moves because we're afraid of diluting the essence of the band, but we also realize that we're part of the machine. Like many other bands, we started out doing something we love, learned that it could be something that makes money, and now we have to decide what the difference is between doing it for its own sake and doing it because it's a potentially profitable career.

Although our record company, I.R.S., is distributed by A&M, it's still an independent label, similar to other small labels around the country like SST, Slash, dB, Twin-Tone, 415, and Ace of Hearts. As a result we have fewer problems with creative interference than do many bands on major labels. But the problems that do arise affect the most elemental decisions a band has to make.

For instance, when you write a song, do you consciously strive to write a hit? Or when you go into the studio and some big producer or your record company tells you to remix a song because it won't get air play, do you do it? Do you do what people tell you about videos, how you dress, what you should say to the press and how you live your personal life?

Hell, no! Everyone in the business has advice about what to do to be successful, and the bands that follow that advice all end up sounding and looking the same. Anyway, if the advice was fool-proof, every greed-crazed group would have hits. I don't want to say that it's bad to be popular, but you do have to think about where you're simply taking good advice and

Continued on page 62

Buck salutes America: 'You have to be willing to make mistakes'

PHOTO: LAURA LEVINE

The Record Interview

A rock 'n' roll animal grows up in public

By Bill Flanagan

ON THE PROWL WITH LOU REED

IN THE TITLE SONG FROM HIS LATEST ALBUM, *NEW SENSATIONS*, Lou Reed declares, "I want to eradicate my negative views." It's a significant announcement from a songwriter whose explorations of life's dark moments have shaped the direction of modern pop music. In the late '60s Reed's Velvet Underground took the flower power out of the drug scene with songs like "Waiting For My Man" and "Heroin." At the same time Reed laid the groundwork for new wave rock with stripped-down pop classics like "Sweet Jane" and "Rock 'n' Roll."

After leaving the Velvets Reed teamed up with producer David Bowie to record *Transformer*, a glitter-era exploration of the gay subculture that included the hit "Walk on the Wild Side." The live LP *Rock 'n' Roll Animal* made him a full-fledged rock star with a dangerous image to boot.

Reed spent most of the '70s refining, amending, denying and playing off that image. He could be romantic ("Coney Island Baby"), incomprehensible (*Metal Machine Music*), funny ("The Power of Positive Drinking"), nasty (*Take No Prisoners*) or frightening (*Street Hassle*). But whatever else he was, Reed's image remained that of a man outside society's conventions, a rebel.

In 1980 Reed married for the second time and the three albums he's released since have displayed renewed creative vitality. *The Blue Mask* and *Legendary Hearts* explore marriage not as happiness ever after, but as a convention that imbues familiar emotions (love and jealousy, optimism and anger) with new intensity. Lately Reed has been producing a rare commodity: rock 'n' roll for grown-ups.

***New Sensations* takes the themes of its two moody predecessors and sets them to hot rock music. Here is rock 'n' roll romanticism with both eyes opened. Reed, the quintessential New Yorker, praises the joys of Manhattan while advising to arm yourself against attackers. Reed the street kid runs into an old pal, in "My Friend George," and realizes his buddy's a dangerous bully. Reed the brother artist praises the plays of Sam Shepard and the films of Martin Scorsese. Reed writes a simple pop song called "I Love You Suzanne" and follows it with "Endlessly Jealous," in which a raging husband tries to stop himself from breaking his wife's arm.**

***New Sensations* has the nerve to go beyond rock's usual subjects, the brains to pull it off and the heart to keep it honest. It may well be the best album Lou Reed's ever made.**

In "Doin' the Things That We Want To" you say, "There's not much you hear on the radio today/But you can still see a movie or a play." Do you think there are any subjects rock 'n' roll can deal with better than film and theatre?

Dancing (laughs). I think rock 'n' roll has unlimited potential to talk about anything it wants to. That's my opinion. It can do something movies and plays can't do because it's so short. They're different. It's apples and oranges. You can't compare them. Each has its strengths. All three are something great to do.

You've been responsible for expanding rock's vocabulary at a time when not many people seem interested in doing that.

I want to be the rock 'n' roll Kurt Weill. My interest—all the way back with the Velvets—has been in one really simple guiding light idea: take rock 'n' roll, the pop format, and make it for adults. With subject matter for adults written so adults, like myself, could listen to it. I don't mean like taking "Mack the Knife" and making it into a hokey thing like Bobby Darin did. I thought that was just grotesque. It should be rock 'n' roll in the first place. Right from the top it should be a real rock 'n' roll song. It's not *grafted*, it's not some weirded-out mutation. Its heart and soul must be rooted right in there, in bass and drums

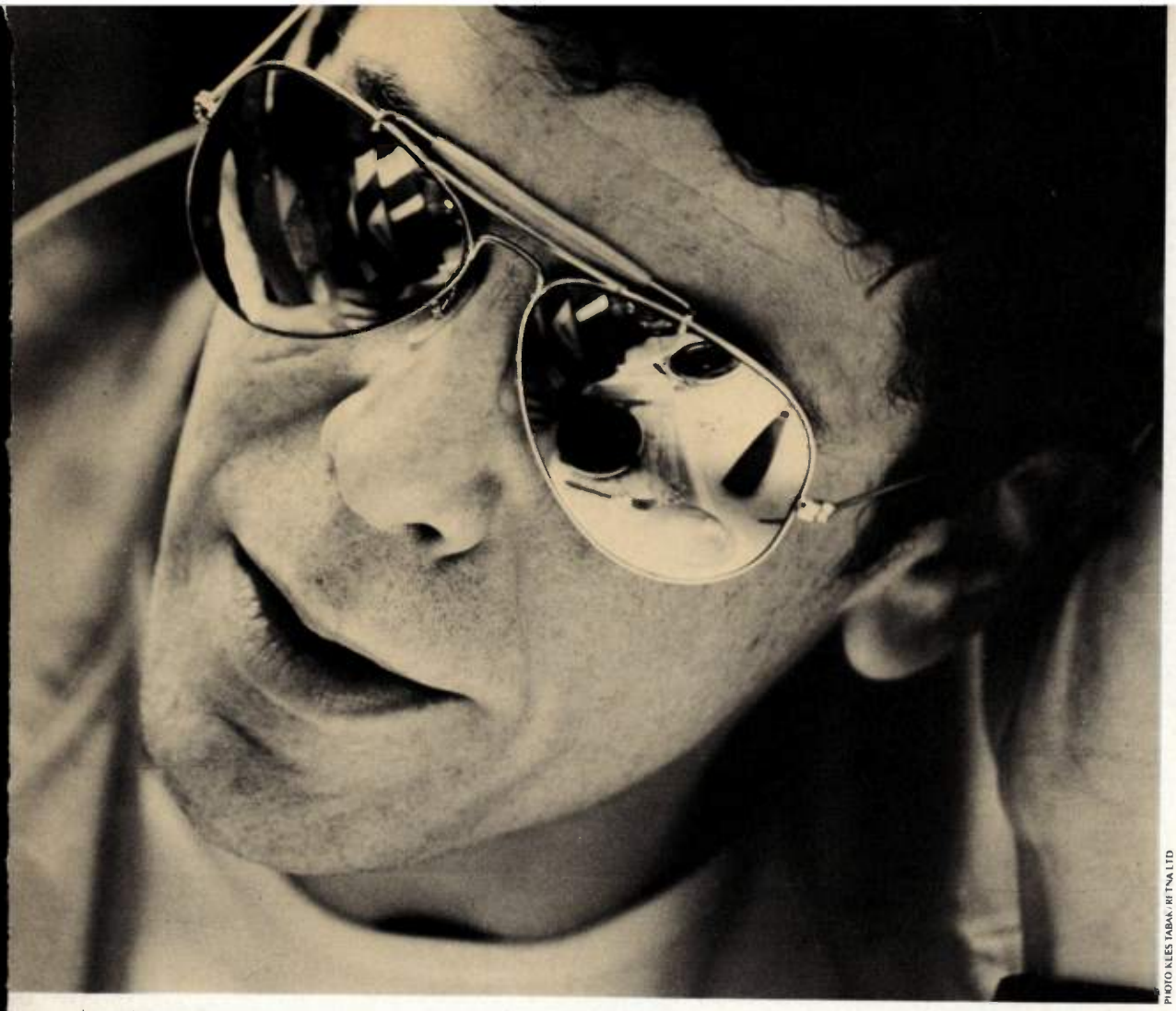

PHOTO KEES TABAK: RETNA LTD

rock 'n' roll.

There's a theory that really good rock 'n' roll is all below the waist. The theory continues—if I understand it right—that as you introduce any other kind of thought to it it starts to stutter and become less rock 'n' roll, less danceable, less everything. Until it's no fun at all. There is that point of view.

Then there's *my* point of view that says if you do it right you should be able to have everything you had before *and*—if you want it—you should be able to have these other levels. You can have a plot, you can have a whole mess of things going on for the people who want to hear it. Other people don't have to. But it should still be in there as a rock 'n' roll thing—i.e., not get too wordy, not get bogged down in anything that takes away from the basic fun of a rock record. I've been trying this for *years* now. To find a way around the problem. Some of my records are ones you have to sit down and listen to. Others you can stand up and listen, talk and listen, dance and listen. I'm trying to resolve that problem of how to keep it a rock 'n' roll record. That's my primary interest.

From listening to your new album, I thought of "Red Joystick" as just a rockin' rave-up. But I just saw the lyrics to it and realized there's a whole other thing happening there.

Oh yeah. You can have a whole bigger time with it. There's laughs in there, there's some real fun rhymes, there's a whole little morality play going on. If you want it, it's there. I always try to supply it. On everything I've ever done, if you want that other stuff I really try to give it to you. Even on what I call my "stupid songs."

Give me an example of a stupid song.

"I Love You, Suzanne" is a stupid song.

Well, I know what you mean—but it's real good.

Yeah, *I* can call it stupid. I call that a circle song. It goes in a real circle. There's one very graspable idea in it. It just builds itself. It stays on that idea and doesn't move from it. In that song the idea is, "I love you when you're good/I love you when you're bad." It stays there. I say "stupid" in the way I would call "Earth Angel" stupid.

Simple.

Not simple-minded. Just simple. It's not easy to do, by the by. As things get increasingly complex, all the possibilities available in recording and instrumentation offer even more alternative ways of doing something. Keeping something simple is not a simple thing to do. You have to really believe it should be that way and stick to it.

I've always thought of myself as a writer. I work in a rock 'n' roll format because I really like rock 'n' roll and I really like playing the guitar and wouldn't it be great if I could combine these three things I really like. I'm just trying to get off like everybody else. And avoid working. If I can do something that I'd be doing *anyway*—and not have to have a job—well, that to me is really getting through this world pretty well. And if I could have a wife, too . . . My God, who could ask for anything more?

I'm a happy person. And I would hope somebody like me would be. You *ought* to be happy. I'm happy I'm walking around alive. Which is not to say I'm happy about the state of the world. I'm just happy about my own personal situation. And from there I look out.

For a long time rock writers seemed unable to deal with marriage except with dumb hippie bliss: "We love each other and life is groovy." Your last three albums have made great leaps by dealing with the subject in an adult way, demonstrating that marriage isn't like finding Jesus.

I'll tell ya, it's funny. In the past I've run up against resentment in the press about this. Everybody is obviously welcome to their own view. But getting married, if

PHOTO LYNN GOLDSMITH

Reed at 40: Seeking the common ground between rock 'n' roll and adult sensibilities

you're in rock 'n' roll, seems to strike these people as if you'd been put out to pasture somewhere in the suburbs and stripped bare of any vital organs, any kind of spirit, any kind of interest. That's the end of you. You are dismissed. There is a really hard core feeling that runs this way. Whereas another point of view might be that marriage could revitalize you. It could help you, make you stronger, more insightful, more perceptive, have even more ability to go about doing what you want to do in writing and all that. And make you a better person for it. As opposed to a gelded bimbo. Which seems to be how marriage is viewed from that side of the press.

I have a place in Jersey so I read these things now: "He's a suburbanite." With the negativity implied when these people say "suburban." I have a place in Jersey and I have a place in New York. So what? Is that bad? Apparently it seems to be bad. As though if you widen your experience it's bad. It's really just incredible. It's as though I donated my brain to science and I was now making rock 'n' roll totally on a shallow field: "Memories of the dark underbelly of New York from before." Wow. That's really grotesque. I certainly thought there was more to relationships than that. I've been writing about relationships all the time. I'm happy to hear you say it's an adult view of marriage and relationships on the records.

It makes one feel there's something to look forward to beyond age 21.

Well, yeah. I'm part of the baby boom generation. The first generation that grew up on rock. Right out of the '50s, that's me. Along with that, for better or worse, comes a lot of '50s attitudes—which to my mind, as I've gotten older, has not been a good thing. I mention in "New Sensations" that it's something I'm trying to work past. I want to get past that '50s view that I really have been in, either by manifesting it or going in the other direction and rebelling against it. What I want to do is go *past* it. I would hate to have to live with those tacky kinds of attitudes. I want more out of life.

Faulkner wrote only about the swamp, James Jones wrote only about the war. But I didn't want to write just about dope and New York. "I'll do a heroin song, I can do a cocaine song and a speed song, I'll do an angel dust song and then a quaalude song." I did my drug songs. That's it. I don't want to make that my war, my swamp, my city. That's not what I'm primarily interested in. I'm interested in emotions, things that happen to people. When I'm writing I make up a person who's a composite of, like, eight people. Then I take two incidents, change them a little, make them one. Like that song "My Friend George." There is no George. I hadn't even thought about that until John Janzen, who co-produced and engineered the album, said to me, "Is there a George?" And then it suddenly dawned on me—"No, of course not." But I should have said, "Sure, of course there is." There might as well be. If there wasn't there is now. It's just a combination of things.

I try to present it as though it's real. It's always real to a greater or lesser extent. I'm a writer. When I was in college I took creative writing, I studied with Delmore Schwartz. That's what I was always interested in. "George" is my favorite track on the new album. There's an emotional kick in there for me. It's about . . . not betrayed friendship but idolizing this person and then suddenly seeing it for what it is. *Unmistakably*. So there's no way to turn away and say, "Well, this was just a bad day" or "He's tired." There's no way of missing where his friend has gone. No way. But he can still turn around and say to the other people, "That's my friend George."

Was it coincidence that just before your work started dealing with being a husband you dealt—on *Growing Up In Public*—with being a son?

I never thought of that. I've found very often that I write past my own knowledge of the time. A year or two later I can look back and see that I said things that were enormously insightful, perceptive, wise and all this stuff—but in no way anything that I knew consciously at the time. Tapping into this interior knowledge is a very interesting thing. Obviously the son is father to the man. I hadn't thought about that—but since my albums work chronologically, obviously that would be true. The only other point would be that I've been married and divorced before. Before I wrote *Growing Up In Public*. The idea of growing up in public brings up the idea of growing up, period. Which introduces the idea of family.

If you play my albums all in a row—which would take some time; you'd have to be a real big fan to do that—one of the things that I think is fun about me, or interesting if nothing else, is that if you follow them, in each and every way from day one up till now, you're following a person. A real person I've tried to make really exist for you—Lou Reed. And all the things I wrote about as I was passing through.

You should believe it's true, that it really happens. I should be able to push these people around through the persona of Lou Reed who you're now aware of. I'm not a person making an album for the first time. If someone's listening to me they have this background knowledge of me which is, I suppose, a combination of the public persona and the albums. And the albums are the real key to everything. And then whatever kind of private gossip or news they think is true. They come to an album with that. So I think when I write something a little positive certain people get something from that.

Like you said before, there's life after 21. In my case, there's life after 40.

The negative side of that is that the initial image people had of you can be so strong they never shake it.

Yeah, I'm aware of that. That's something you learn when you're recording and have a really rough mix. I've learned the hard way to never, never play rough mixes for anybody. Even if people say, "I know it's a rough mix," even if they're experienced. No matter *what*, the first time they hear it is the way they'll always remember it. What you're talking about as a possible negative by now shouldn't be anymore. Because I've had a lot of time and a lot of albums to demonstrate that there's more to me than that. People who are still hung up

Continued on page 47


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Victory On The

Road

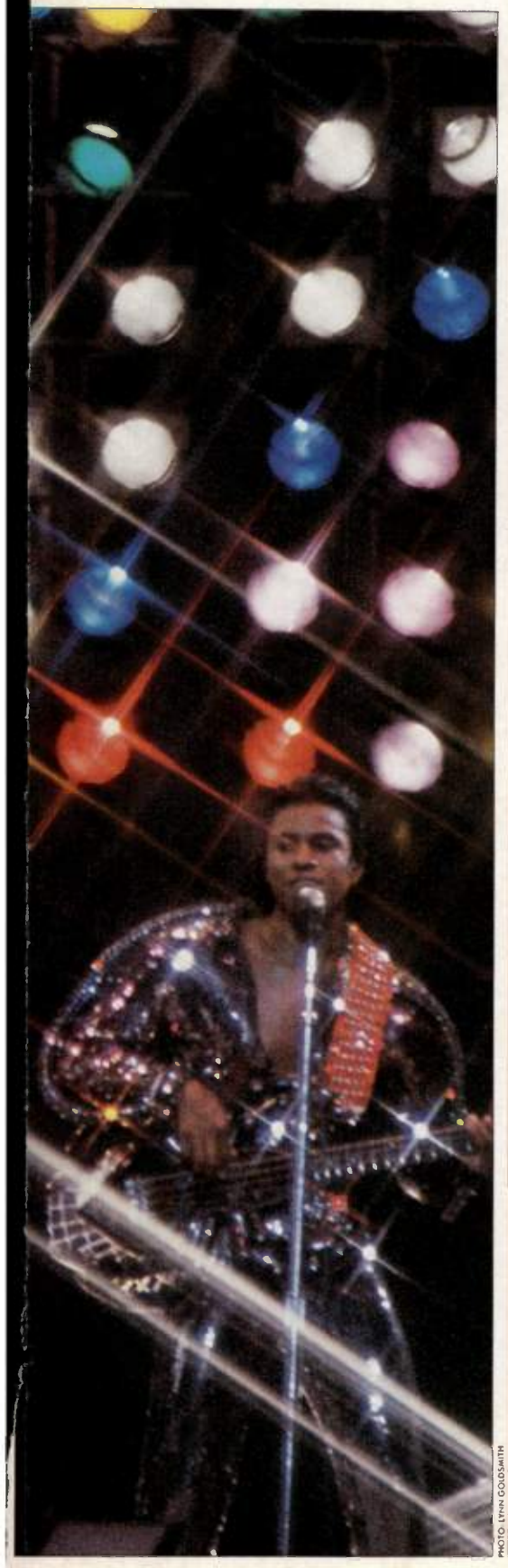

PHOTO: LYNN GOLDSMITH

When it was star time for the Jacksons, Michael's bumps, jabs, spins and sneers spat 'in your face' to all who had doubted...

By Anthony DeCurtis

"MAN, I BEEN LOSING TOO MUCH weight," cackles an obviously pumped up Marlon Jackson as he cavorts around a hotel corridor under the amused—and ever watchful—eyes of a battery of security guards. While the nuttiness of the next few weeks will seed a cloudburst of concern over the weight of Marlon's rather well-known wisp of a brother, Michael—including a *National Enquirer* report that he's anorexic and an anguished plaint from buddy Brooke Shields that "I try to tell him to eat right, but he won't listen"—the running-shorts-and-sneakered Marlon looks firmer, fitter and more compact than anyone who isn't a full-time athlete has a right to.

Moreover, his ebullience seems contagious on this Saturday afternoon in early July, less than 24 hours after the rumor-plagued, second-guessed, patched-and-glued Jacksons Victory Tour finally got launched without the slightest hitch—and without inspiring the soul-state of revelatory wonder many had hoped for—on a steamy Friday night in Kansas City. Marlon shoots the breeze with visitors and jokes with the guards, while a few feet away at a security desk set up in an upper floor hallway of the Alameda Plaza Hotel, Jacksons tour publicist Howard Bloom fields his five-hundredth phone call of the day with a composure comprised of equal parts patience, resignation, exhilaration and despair.

Bloom's easy-going concentration blinds him to Marlon's stealthy approach, but he glances up just in time to see the wildly grinning Jackson pitch the contents of a decanter full of orange juice toward his head. Only the clear cellophane stretched across the decanter's lip forestalls a citrus shampoo for Bloom. Marlon collapses in hysterics, while Bloom, who blinked and flinched slightly, maintains the steady beat of his urbane biz talk and smiles with a composure comprised of equal parts patience, resignation . . .

An orange juice slop in the puss is perhaps the only indignity Bloom hasn't suffered in the weeks prior to the road shows of the Jacksons' traveling circus. While greed-junkies, power brokers and the odd honest person schemed with Machiavellian frenzy behind the scenes of the Victory Tour, Bloom was the man who had to meet the press—the hip critics who greeted all tour-related phenomena with bemused noblesse oblige and the hick writers angling to outrage ma and pa reader back home with hack exposés—and pretend that everything was going along just fine, thank you.

The bad publicity sparked by the absurd (and soon aborted) four-ticket/$120 mail order scheme and the tour organization's outlandish attempts to gouge local promoters and host cities (see story on page 28) hardly abated after the first show, despite Michael's announcement that he would donate his personal profits from the tour to charity. And all the questions bounced off Bloom: Why was the show only an hour and forty-five minutes—it had been publicized as running for two-and-a-half hours? Bruce Springsteen was doing twice the show for half the jack, wasn't he? Why didn't the set include "Thriller"? Why no songs from *Victory*? Why was the sound so muddy? Why wasn't the staging more dramatic, the effects more spectacular? What was the point of the science fiction vignettes?

Most of these questions either weren't important, missed the point, or revealed a subtle, unsettling racial bias—the length of the show, for example, never seemed a useful measure of any performance I'd ever seen by a black band, and, for well or ill, very few people ever worried what Mick Jagger, Sting or David Bowie did with the profits from their grossly successful tours.

This isn't to say that the shows in Kansas City were flawless, but they got hotter every night, and by the time I saw the brothers in Jacksonville two weeks later they were burning. The significant problems that persisted in the show through the first two weeks of the tour were neither technical (is the mix too high-ended?), judgmental (why didn't they do "Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough"?), nor musical (none of the six sets I caught was at any point worse than competent).

Strangely for what is still essentially a highly polished pop-funk combo with a hot front man, the real issue was purely conceptual: What did the Jacksons think they were doing in putting together this incredibly confused production, and what do the disparate elements of this crazy-quilt show reveal about the nature of Michael Jackson's unprecedented popularity?

K.C.'s Arrowhead Stadium was chosen as the tour's opening site for security reasons ($50-$60,000 was spent on security *per night*, five times more than for a football game), though the solidly white, midwestern, family-oriented thriller-seekers who turned out for the three shows could only have been incited to violence by an unexpected property tax hike or the cancellation of their favorite sit-com.

Scheduled to start at "nearly dark," the show kicked off at 9:45 as five Michael-designed pastel-colored creatures (all resem-

A joyous, sweaty, funk-hungry mob high-stepping, skittering and wriggling through exciting ensemble turns . . .

PHOTO: JOHN BELLISMO/RETNA LTD

bling the sheepish, dopey-looking Snuffelopagus of *Sesame Street*) shambled onto the huge stage (90' high x 140' wide x 90' deep), which was festooned on both sides with phenomenally garish scrims depicting Tolkienesque, enchanted forest landscapes. These "Kreetons," a voice of dread informs the howling audience, had enslaved mankind, which could not free itself until someone (I swear) pulled "the sword from the stone."

Three would-be Arthurian heroes make half-hearted, failed attempts to un-stone the blade, and then a Knight in armor (Randy Jackson) wrenches it free in a blaze of fireworks. "Destroy him!" the narrator commands, while four Kreetons inexplicably shuffle off, leaving one for Randy to waste in an effects-laden, very fake-seeming battle. Randy plants his foot on the slain Kreeton's carcass, holds up his sword in "Victory," and declaims: "Arise all the world and behold the Kingdom!"

Smoke envelopes the darkened stage, and "the Kingdom" suddenly appears in a burst of brilliant white light as the Jacksons and their tour band (three keyboardists, two guitarists, a drummer, and brothers Tito on guitar and Jermaine on bass) rise from beneath the stage on five elevators. Bedecked in sequins, shades and spandex, the brothers descend from their prominence—dispensing light with each of their downward steps—and tear into a funk-snapped take on *Thriller*'s opening cut, "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'."

From the very instant of his appearance Michael carried the weight, gathering not only the whole show but all the controversy surrounding the framing of this tour (which he reportedly did not want to do) into himself and igniting the bundle of preconceptions and expectations with his fierce inner flame. However earnest and high-minded the doubters, every one of Michael's bumps, jabs, spins and sneers spat "in your face" to those who doubted. After all the months of business and bullshit, it was finally star-time and Michael was a supernova exploding again and again, more convulsively and radiantly every night.

At each show, Michael defined the performing self—the individual who assembles coherence amid the artificial constructs of the stage, whose essence seizes shape in motion's fury, whose being is an ongoing formal creation. Because of this, his much-vaunted privacy and reclusiveness are absolutely of no consequence: there is nothing Michael has that he can hide from us. He is invented in our gaze, and what we see is all he is.

As for the meaning of the show, conceived in large part by Michael, the space-age sword-and-sorceror medievalism of the opening—as well as the *Watchtower* millenarianism of the later paranoid vignette in which Michael is attacked and "killed" (for no apparent reason) by two robotic spider monsters and magically resurrected by Randy—is Michael's way of substituting one religious/mythological tradition for another and targeting a huge white audience in the process.

The spiritual underpinning of the Motown pop-soul tradition that initially propelled the Jacksons to international stardom was the gospel sound of the black Southern Baptist service. By far the churchiest moment of the Jacksons' tour set comes at the end of the Motown medley, when Michael chills every spine in the house with a squealing, melismatic, a cappella workout to shut down "I'll Be There."

But for all its choreographed fun, the Motown sequence is in the show merely as a nod to the past, as all of Michael's transparently nostalgic patter about doing the "old songs" makes clear. Despite the band's playful force, Michael walks through the truncated versions of "I Want You Back" and "The Love You Save," this alleged embodiment of childhood innocence displaying in his scowls, stares and jagged gestures a marked inability to connect with the jaunty sweetness of these tunes. The full-scale treatment of "I'll Be There"—significantly a ballad, the only type of song on which Michael is any longer able to touch his softer side—was as much a concession to crowd reaction as anything else. In K.C. the tune was presented as just another spot in the show and provoked an unexpectedly strong response. In Jacksonsville—where the black turn-out for the dates was up to about 30 percent in contrast to K.C.'s 10—that song repeatedly triggered as tumultuous an audience storm as "Beat It" or "Billie Jean."

The media-spun blending of Disney, medieval romance, high-tech inter-galactic fairy tale movies and Peter Pan wistful-

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The Rolling Stones Rewind (1971-1984)

Produced by The Glimmer Twins

On Rolling Stones Records and Cassettes

Distributed by Atlantic Recording Corporation

'THEY THOUGHT THEY COULD GET AWAY WITH IT'

For that hour and a half, we try to show there is hope and goodness. It's only when you step back outside the building that you see all the craziness.

—Michael Jackson, from an interview conducted during the Jacksons' 1981 U.S. tour

PHOTO: JOHN BELL ISSMO/RETNA

The Jacksons and *Victory* tour promoter Chuck Sullivan (inset): Milking the community?

CRAZINESS, INDEED. CRAZINESS may be the perfect word to describe the long series of announcements, bits of misinformation, rumours and hard negotiations that have become part and parcel of the Jacksons' Victory Tour. Even as this story's late July deadline nears, the key words behind-the-scenes are negotiation, disorganization, rumor and speculation.

Speculation that the tour will never play the 43 dates the Jacksons have promised simply because Michael will either lose his voice—as he almost did on opening night in Kansas City—or become too physically exhausted to continue, given the rigorousness of his performances.

Rumors that the $100 million the Jacksons camp expected to make from the tour has been whittled down to a measly $25 million on a show that, as nearly as can be figured, cost somewhere in the area of $15 million to produce. This, with tickets costing $30 each, about twice what other arena and stadium dates cost these days.

Negotiation and disorganization. As this story goes to press, a series of concerts at the Los Angeles Forum, the last of only three indoor arenas on the latest official itinerary of 12 cities and 33 shows, is still up in the air, as are shows in Buffalo, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Cleveland and Anaheim. Contracts for shows at Madison Square Garden were signed little more than two weeks in advance of appearances there on August 4 and 5. First word was that the Jacksons would appear at the Garden from August 2 through 5, but those dates were halved when the 75,000-seat Giants Stadium, across the Hudson in New Jersey, became available in late July. There were no advertisements for the Jacksons' New York shows, only radio announcements on the day tickets went on sale.

This haphazard *modus operandi* has been the norm since the brothers' intention to tour was announced last November. But all along, the various factions in the Jacksons' camp—and there are many—have insisted that the details *would* be worked out and the shows *would* happen, and they've been right. For those dealing with the Jacksons' business representatives, though, the Victory Tour is a story of controversy, unprecedented demands, and endless negotiation—in short, an attempt to alter the way the concert business is run in this country.

Last May came the announcement that the tour would start June 22 at the 23,000 seat Rupp Arena in Lexington, Kentucky. Bill Pickett, vice president for operations at Rupp, promptly replied that he could not confirm any concert until he had a contract, and added that the hall certainly would not bow to demands for a nationally-operated "ticket lottery." It never did, and to date there are no Jacksons shows scheduled for Rupp Arena.

The cast of characters speaking for the Jacksons seemed to change weekly. First, boxing promoter Don King, with no prior experience in the concert business, was hired to promote the Jacksons tour. He was subsequently ousted when the Jacksons brought in as promoter Chuck Sullivan, owner of Stadium Management Corp. and also a stranger to the music business. (Sullivan entered the picture shortly after a Rhode Island-based promoter, Frank J. Russo, filed suits claiming $40 million against the Jacksons, King and MCA Records president Irv Azoff, charging they reneged on an agreement for him to promote the tour). Otherwise, the beat went on. Even as he was announcing the tour's opening dates in Kansas City, Sullivan was negotiating with New Orleans Superdome manager Clifford Wallace to open the tour in the Crescent City. He announced Kansas City's three dates as well as shows in Irving, Texas, and Jacksonville, Florida, only two weeks beforehand. The day before the tour opened, Michael Jackson announced that the ticket lottery would be dumped and that he would give all his earnings from the tour to an as-yet-unnamed charity. And in K.C. and Irving, the Jacksons' most outrageous demands—free hotel rooms, free use of the stadium, tax exemptions and percentages of concessions and parking—were turned down flat.

What will all this mean when it comes time for other major acts to tour stadiums and arenas? Very little, according to several participants in the Victory saga.

Robert Franklin, vice president for booking at Madison Square Garden, said "(the Jacksons) wanted to do things a little differently, and we tried our best, frankly under trying circumstances, to keep them the way they normally are. The only change that's come about is that now we require a signed contract before we confirm a date."

In Indianapolis, Hoosier Dome executive vice president Dean Phillips was still negotiating for shows on August 17-19 at press time and said he couldn't be sure he'd ever see the Jacksons. But he was buoyed by talk at the July 21-23 convention of the International Association of Auditorium Managers (IAMM) in Montreal, where the Victory Tour was the hot topic in formal sessions and in the hallways.

"There's no question this tour would have changed the business drastically and overnight if some of the hall managers had acquiesced to the demands," Phillips asserts. "But we want to be certain that we maintain control of our business. After all, this is a phenomenon, and that's the reason we're doing as much (negotiating) as we're doing. Normally, we wouldn't go to this trouble, but I think the negotiations in the end will curb other performers from asking for these same concessions. After all," Phillips adds, "there's no reason ever to pay a performer for the privilege of coming to your town."

New Orleans Superdome manager Wallace puts it more bluntly. "Sullivan simply blew it," he says, "and we are encouraged as an association to see that some of these things did blow up in their faces. But I'm also convinced that they thought they could get away with it; Sullivan actually thought he was right, because of the fantastic public demand.

"Initially, all these concessions that they wanted were designed to milk the community and it was all so blatant. The fact that they've been so ridiculous actually helped in the end. But we think there will be a gradual but continual return to the standards of the industry. And Sullivan—not to mention Michael Jackson—could have done himself a favor if he'd given a little more a little earlier. That's where I'd look for the negative long-range (impact)."

Jacksons representatives were unavailable for comment. ○

—Laurice Niemtus

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

PHOTO: DAVE HUGAN, DEBRA TREBITZ/LGI

The individual who assembles coherence amid the artificial constructs of the stage, whose essence seizes shape in motion's fury . . .

ness that comprises Michael's emotional life and fuels the thematic thrust of the Jacksons' tour set replaces the (black) flesh and blood of the country or store-front church with the predominant cultural mythologies of (white) mainstream suburban America. This substitution wasn't conscious but instinctive on Michael's part. Both a child and creation of the media, Michael never has to think about the aptest show-biz move. And anyone who believes Michael Jackson sold tens of millions of records to young whites simply because he got Eddie Van Halen to play the solo on "Beat It" has no idea how powerful and deep the forces are that must be tapped to forge such unparallelled mega-stardom.

With pretentious, overreaching album titles like *Destiny*, *Triumph* and *Victory* and their vapid peacock/rainbow imagery, the latter-phase Jacksons have portrayed themselves as leading America, the world, the universe to a unity that surpasseth all racial, political and economic distinctions. But Michael's devastating might as an entertainer—and despite their gifts, the other brothers hardly demand such serious consideration—resides squarely in his unnerving ability (and need) to dramatize, not resolve, contradictions both within himself and the culture at large.

Within a culture that reveres youth, Michael was the ultimate wonder child—but always with the dash, flair and knowingness of a much more seasoned adult performer, the unfailing panache that made his club circuit competitors wonder if he weren't a 30-year-old midget in disguise. Now that he is a grown-up with the stage command of a deity, he affects the innocence of childhood, speaking in an otherworldly pre-adolescent register and endlessly cooing about love, Disneyland and his favorite animals.

In a country with a profoundly compromised racial heritage, Michael has simultaneously honed himself into a positive and highly worshipped model for black street kids, while identifying himself almost exclusively with white figures from the white-dominated entertainment industry. Whether or not he ever underwent plastic surgery, his white appeal was carved out in less obvious, though no less effective ways.

The toughness and ferocity of his stage moves radiate masculine authority and sexuality, but the segment in the show's closer, "Shake Your Body (Down to the Ground)," where he admires and writhes in rhythm with Marlon's squirming body and then strips Randy of his shirt would tear the roof off any waterfront bar in Manhattan. All this hot stuff spurts from an avowed Jehovah's Witness who still makes his Saturday rounds and regards homosexuality and premarital hetero-sex as abominations.

Such wild oppositions could only find unified expression in a culture that exploits sex in every imaginable way to lubricate the wheels of its desire-driven consumer economy, but which still insists on the sanctity of its puritan roots and its adolescent national innocence. And like America itself and every heralded "innocent" in its social and literary history, Michael may seem the coyly erotic naive on the surface, but underneath he's all business. This lonely, painfully shy man-child who is regularly moved to tears by his own studio performances is no patsy in the boardroom: he has struck the hardest deals in the music industry, a setting where idealists and philanthropists often find more than melodies to make them cry.

Michael's perfectionism and consummate control derive much less from his demanding artistry (or from his being a "poet," as Bloom suggested at one press conference) than from the enormous balance required to keep these tense contradictions from exploding off the wall into fragments. The songs and especially the videos for "Billie Jean," "Beat It" and "Thriller" disclose the netherworld of violence, sex and paranoia that lies just outside the gates of Michael's parent-protected pristine Encino enclave, the Gary, Indiana, past repressed by and returning to haunt the Hollywood present, the guilt and hostility that constitute the price tag for upward mobility.

PHOTO DAVE HOGAN/LGI

Image-laden, video-inspired, show-stopping: Michael and Marlon reinvent 'Beat It' for the stage

"Well, I think the one thing that Michael really wanted the most in 'Thriller,'" reports Michael's monster-maker in *Making Michael Jackson's Thriller*, "is to do the transformation. He wanted to change into a monster. I actually was trying to talk him out of it, and he just wants to go through that. And I don't know why." The video makes clear the extraordinary discomfort Michael willingly endured to make the change, and makes explicit the buried horrors that rise from down below and burst off the movie screen to terrorize our hero and his Playmate date, Ola Ray.

Michael's simultaneous fascination with and fear of the impulses churning within him fuel the charge of his on-stage tours de force. The viewer's conviction that Michael is gripped by forces he does not fully understand and is laboring fiercely to contain within aesthetic bounds lends a high-wire edginess to his performances, rendering them endlessly riveting. The performance is the very point at which all the dangerous elements within him find their fullest expression and their final limit. That the same oppositions stretching and straining Michael struggle in less compelling ways within every member of his audience only strengthens the pull of attraction—this is the real "magic" of Michael Jackson—and hardens the kick.

In conversation a day after the K.C. opener, 30-year-old brother Tito offered a somewhat less elaborate explanation for Michael's astronomical success: "Well, Michael's a very hard worker and he's always thinking show business. Michael's great. I knew that his day was due. Whether it was with the Jacksons or without the Jacksons, I knew his day was due, 'cause he works hard at it. All the brothers work hard at it."

Tito's point about the Jacksons' hard work is well taken. Understandably, the high points of the tour shows were all Michael's—"I'll Be There" and image-laden, video-inspired, show-stopping set-pieces on "Beat It" and "Billie Jean." But the parts of the show I most *enjoyed*—as opposed to *was transfixed by*—occurred when the brothers and the band became a joyous, sweaty, funk-hungry mob, giving it up and grabbing it back during groove-grinding romps through "Things I Do For You," "Lovely One," "Working Day and Night" and "Shake Your Body (Down to the Ground)." On these numbers, Michael, Marlon and Randy high-stepped, skittered and wriggled through terrifically exciting ensemble turns that drilled home the integrity the Jacksons had earned as world-class team performers before Michael's apotheosis made such knowledge an historical footnote.

As for the Jacksons' post-tour plans, nobody's saying much that's definitive. In discussing the making of *Victory*, Tito indicates what seems a significant change in the brothers' recording habits. "Well, it was a little different," he reports. "Each brother sorta went in and did his thing: presented a song for the album, sang a song for the album. There were songs we collaborated together on, but the majority of the album was done individually. On past albums, we all got together and, like carpenters, just nailed it right out."

Did he miss working that way this time? "I know we'll work that way again," he asserts, "so it's not a matter of missing it. It was just a matter of painting a different picture with *Victory*." Tito even dangles the prospect of another Jacksons tour some time down the road: "I just plan to keep on making music with my brothers and, who knows, maybe another three years from now—or four—we'll be doing this again."

But don't count on it, kids, at least as far as Michael is concerned. Having consented to do this tour against his better judgment, he's probably cancelled all outstanding debts to family loyalty, and it's impossible to imagine what else could motivate him to undertake another extravaganza of this nature. As he did this time, he would have a great deal to lose and almost nothing to gain. Tito's expressed hope that *Victory* will do as well as *Thriller* is ridiculous, and, consequently, Michael has nothing to prevent him from pursuing his own profoundly idiosyncratic personal and artistic vision.

So, the only question really worth thinking about is what will Michael do after 1984. He has already succeeded beyond any conceivable dream—and well beyond even his considerable talents. As the cultural tides shift, his wise child persona—at once too innocent and too highly evolved to be soiled by reality's strife—will be increasingly unseemly and difficult to keep whole. It's not that Michael is uncharitable or unsympathetic to the downtrodden, as some have charged—that's a superficial issue, and it doesn't seem to be true anyway. It's that he might disappear if we stop looking at him, and if he stops reflecting us. That's too great a responsibility for him and us to bear. ○

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Salem Spirit On the Beat

You'll probably remember the "MTV Party House" contest which the music channel held this summer. The prize, a pink house in Bloomington, Indiana (along with a pink jeep, a stereo system, a widescreen TV, five hundred cases of Hawaiian Punch, and a housewarming barbecue hosted by handsome Bloomington native **John Cougar Mellencamp** and his band) went to 22-year-old Susan Miles of Bellvue, Washington. Since then, some viewers have been wondering what Monroe County and the State of Indiana are going to present to Ms. Miles in the form of prize taxes, real estate taxes, sky taxes, or whatever. Ever mindful of those hidden strings over which quiz show contestants and car raffle winners have been tripping over for decades, MTV is thoughtfully picking up the tab. The pink party house, by the way, is said to be a second choice. Apparently, MTV originally had its heart set on another house. When surveys revealed it had been built on chemically-contaminated land, the music channel quickly backed out of the deal.

TRANSITIONS

It's taken them long enough, considering the caliber of the act, but the **Rolling Stones** have finally made it into Madison Square Garden's Hall of Fame. The band, credited with 13 sell-out Garden performances since it first played the arena back in 1969, joins a roster of 116 luminaries, primarily sports and music figures—Elton John, for example, who picked up his award in 1977... John Cougar Mellencamp's solo acoustic gig before 1,000 fans at Cleveland's Agora apparently was a rousing success. Mellencamp (following his platinum success with *Uh-Huh* on PolyGram) admirably turned down the opportunity to rake in the big bucks by playing hockey arenas and mega-festivals this year—he considers such environments insulting to his fans. However, he is said to have enjoyed the low-key event so much that he's considering doing more... Although Quiet Riot has been cleaning up in this country lately with *Metal Health* and its newest album on Pasha Records, *Condition Critical*, the band is apparently an equally hot item south of the border. Just before the release of *Condition Critical*, Quiet Riot journeyed to Mexico for a four-day promotional tour. According to eyewitnesses, guitarist Carlos Cavazo and bassist Rudy Sarzo won the esteem of the locals during appearances on Mexican TV by answering interview questions in Spanish... Although Quiet Riot is doing brisk chart business with its cover of the old **Slade** number, "Mama Weer All Crazee Now," it seems to be getting some competition from an Arista Records band called Mama's Boys. During a recent gig at the Marquee in London, the latter group dedicated its own rendition of "Mama" to honored guest and co-author of the song, Slade lead singer **Noddy Holder**, dubbing him "the greatest songwriter in British history"... Also in the louder-than-life department, **Def Leppard** has been voted Most Popular Group in America, according to the Gallup Youth Poll. Although heavy rock is traditionally an all-male stronghold, the band supposedly got the nod from a roughly equal number of guys and gals ... Members of an earlier generation will remember Sandie Shaw, the lanky, barefoot British chanteuse who had a string of Top 40 hits such as "Always Something There to Remind Me" during the mid-60s. With pipes intact, Shaw is back in business in England. Backed by the **Smiths**, she's got a snappy single out on Rough Trade Records called "Hand In Glove"—which should be available in more discriminating import shops in this country... NRBQ is still getting maximum mileage out of the Abbott and Costello "Who's On First" routine that got them into

Blue-eyed Philly Soul plugs into Motor City backing this month when **Daryl Hall** and **John Oates** take to the road on their 1984-85 North American tour. The Pontiac Motor Division of General Motors is sponsoring the trek as part of a major marketing effort to attract potential young customers—particularly to the two-seater Fiero. In the meantime, Hall and Oates' newest studio project for RCA, *Big Bam Boom*, is heading up the charts, and their recent greatest hits collection, *Rock & Soul Part One*, has already cruised beyond double platinum status—making Hall and Oates (according to RIAA figures) rock's all-time best-selling duo. The tour is expected to run at least into April of 1985.

hot water with an upstate New York college awhile back. During the band's recent stand at the Bottom Line in Manhattan, bassist **Joey Spampinato** and **Tom Ardolino** stood onstage and blandly recited the lengthy routine to a captive audience that included **Jonathan Richman** and **Phoebe Snow**. At the same time, **Professor Irwin Corey** (who'd earlier gotten up and "explained" NRBQ to the assembled throng) stood to one side, index finger raised as he silently lectured the bar, while pianist **Terry Adams** (doubling on trumpet), the infamous Whole Wheat Horns, and **Sun Ra**'s sax player, **Pat Patrick** honked their way through "The Volga Boatman" from backstage... Meanwhile, on the other side of the real Volga, the Soviet Union's crackdown on rock music continues. The purge, initiated last year by party chief Konstantin Chernenko (who finds Western pop music "ideologically dangerous and banal") has reportedly led the Kremlin to forcibly break up numerous Russian rock bands. One American group with whom the Soviets seem to have a particular ax to grind is **Kiss**, accusing the band of decorating its album sleeves with "fascist symbols" (to which Kiss' **Paul Stanley** replies, "Well, that's the *last* time we'll party with the Bolshoi Ballet"). The situation has been further fueled by a Moscow radio interview in which a leading Soviet doctor told horror stories of Western rock concerts where "excited fans display hysteria and have convulsions" ... In yet another set of findings generated for use by an increasingly statistic-happy and market-conscious music business, the Street Pulse Group has determined that, as far as rock audiences are concerned, girls aren't the endangered species they once were. During the 70s and early 80s, research figures showed that males accounted for a full 80% of the album sales credited to mainstream rock acts. Over the last two years, however, that 20% worth of female support has shot up to a hefty 41%—which the surveyors feel might signal an impending industry shift back to softer, more melodic rock, along with an increase in the number of those All Hit radio stations that are beginning to clog the airwaves (which young women are, by and large, said to prefer). Then again, while two-thirds of the males who are rifling through the record bins down at the local mall are over 18, more than half of the females there are under that age—a statistic which is also expected to influence the types of acts that record labels may be signing in the near future. ■

SCREENINGS

If **Pat Travers** has anything to say about it, his latest video extravaganza, *Just Another Killer Day*, will mark the beginning of a trend. Dubbed the first "modular video," the screen opus features three Travers tracks—"Killer," "Women On the Edge" and "Hot Shot." Although the tunes are encased within the framework of the video's ongoing "plot," they can be viewed on their own as individual works of Genuine TV Art. The "plot," by the way, features extensive participation by several "Sirens from Zorgon"—a planet (and we quote) "where rock and roll is repressed" while some other activities are not. ■

Missing Persons seems to be raking a strange path to success lately. In case you've missed it, the band has scored a brief cameo appearance in the "first-ever music video" by **Frank Sinatra**. Produced by **Quincy Jones** for Sinatra's new signature tune, "L.A. Is My Lady," the video has Missing Persons cruising down to Venice Beach in a flash convertible, then carting diminutive blonde singer **Dale Bozzio**—who's primly decked out in a Plexiglas Olympic bathing suit and spiked heels—down to the Pacific on a surfboard. The rest of the video, needless to say, features all the Frank you're ever likely to need.

DAN HEDGES

BANANARAMA UNDER SEIGE

R-e-s-p-e-c-t, find out what it means to three

PHOTO EA/RETNA LTD

Dallin, Fahey, Woodward: Plagued by lingering timidity and loss of control in a world run by men

"People keep saying to us, 'For God's sake, *smile*, be *happy*!,'" Bananarama's Sarah Dallin says, massaging her forehead after a photo session with Andy Warhol's boys in New York.

But nobody's smiling. Not Dallin. Not Siobhan Fahey. Not Keren Woodward, sprawled in a coma moments ago on Polygram's board room carpet, and now poking at a cold New York pizza she's too tired to eat.

The three apologize for "moaning." But with their second album out and the single "Robert DeNiro's Waiting" on the radio, there's no rest for the weary. See, America knows Bananarama as heroines of goofy bits of video fluff on MTV; by the "washing our hair/singing along to the radio" unison vocals of "Really Saying Something" and "Shy Boy" from 1983's *Deep Sea Skiving*. Familiar, perhaps, but hardly household names.

Thanks to a run of hit singles and relentless media blitzing, however, England's favorite girls-down-the-street (Woodward's an ex-BBC secretary, the others ex-fashion journalism students) are Public Domain throughout Europe. The Japanese starred them in a huge ad campaign for Honda Mo-peds. Fyffes (the U.K. equivalent of Chiquita bananas) scored tons of free advertising thanks to the group's use of the fruit as a visual prop. And when the group quietly attended the 1983 funeral of old friend Tom Rielly (brother of Red Rockers drummer Jim Riley, Tom was killed by a British soldier in Belfast in August of last year), church-crashing photographers, Dallin recalls with disgust, "tried to herd us together for a three-shot in front of the coffin."

So after months of media hustling, Woodward admits Bananarama are "totally depressed." By the workload Polygram's piled on. By a sudden change in mood back home, where the critics who once praised them have declared open season.

"They *loved* us at the start," Fahey says. "We couldn't play instruments, but felt we had something to offer. They loved our cheek. They loved us upturning the whole fashion thing. But *now*, they can't see why we deserve success because we didn't slog around for years and can't play guitar like Jimi Hendrix. They think we're talentless fools, despite the fact that we make good records. They imply it's somebody's else's doing. 'Jolley and Swain have done a great job with these shitty singers.'"

Steve Jolley and Tony Swain (who scored recently with Spandau Ballet) produced half of *Deep Sea Skiving* before the gents' dictatorial flair forced the trio to turn to '70s glam rocker Barry Blue. "Like everybody else, they presumed we were three little girls who could be manipulated," Fahey says. "But Blue was the same. Total lack of respect. Total incomprehension as to what we're about."

Still, the LP—silly enough to cure the foulest mood—was musically strong. So while the three swore they'd learned a lesson, *Bananarama* sees them back with Jolley and Swain—this time, Fahey stresses, "in a complete and utter socialist setup. Everybody gets equal share."

"We had a long struggle because Steve and Tony are renowned for their bass synth and Linn drum tracks," Fahey says. "They wanted to keep it that way." She feels the tried-and-true Bananarama style works in places, but some tracks suffer because of the unison vocals. "That wasn't our choice. When the crunch came, it was 'This could be a single, girls.' There was no way, if I did lead vocal, that it would sound like a Bananarama record."

Troubled by this lingering timidity, Fahey senses resentment "because we don't sell ourselves sexually in a 'girlie' way." When it's pointed out that Bananarama are not exactly trudging around in Army fatigues and combat boots, she shrugs. "If we were, maybe we'd get a bit of respect. We'd be this big butch feminist band making a statement for women. But we *are* really successful on our own terms in a world run totally by men. We managed ourselves until recently. We write all our lyrics and most of the melodies."

So it's Bananarama Under Siege. Nobody claims to be the new Aretha Franklin, Fahey says, but they'd like some respect, "the same as any male group."

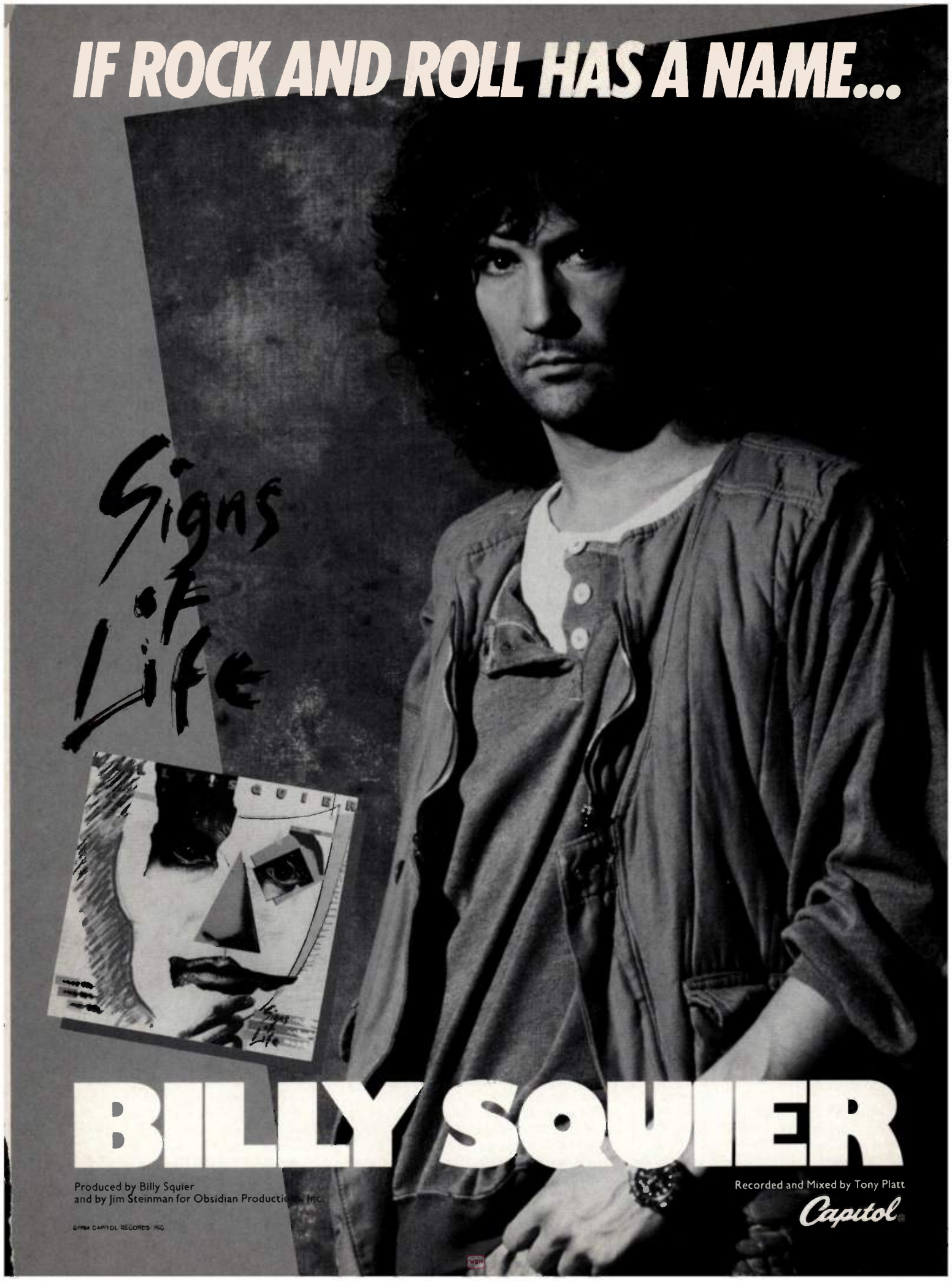
"We've lost control," Woodward says. "Like in that John Lennon book—I don't remember the name of it, but I read it over and over. He was doing things he *hated*, having to smile and shake hands and talk about things that bored him sick, shunted from city to city and stuck on planes. To a lesser extent, that's happening to us."

When Polygram's p.r. lady steams in to say they have several TV spots to do before the company unlocks the handcuffs, all three wither.

"Can't we do one each, then?" Fahey asks, the hope in her plea nearly palpable.

No can do. Bananarama, it seems, are strictly a package deal. ○

IF ROCK AND ROLL HAS A NAME...



BILLY SQUIER

Produced by Billy Squier
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Recorded and Mixed by Tony Platt

Capitol

STAN MIESES

BALANCING THAT THANG

Nona Hendryx on an even keel

If we can be so open about sex in music—especially in black music—then we also need to be explicit about our feelings," says Nona Hendryx, whose experience in this particular art dates most dramatically to her days in Labelle, when she was part of the unison chorus asking the provocative question, "Voulez-vous couchez avec moi, ce soir?" Being a solo artist hasn't tempered the thrust, so to speak, of her *raison d'etre*. "Expressions of feeling don't exclude the idea of partying, having a good time. It doesn't have to be depressing—but it should be real."

That, in essence, is what Nona Hendryx is all about these days. A far cry from the frivolous disco days of Labelle, and a major refinement of her previous solo efforts, Hendryx's new album, *The Art of Defense*, co-produced by herself and Material, is headstrong, heartstrung and streetwise all at once. As much as Material's Bill Laswell and Michael Beinhorn have contributed musically to this effort, they have managed an almost seamless merger of their contributions with the headliner's, the upshot being that in the midst of every surging number the producers always find the artist's true voice.

It's a relationship that has built up steadily and surely since 1981, when Material invited Nona to sing "Bustin' Out" with them on a Ze Records sampler that is a classic of urban funk. At the time, Hendryx was playing new wave clubs with a band called Zero Cool, and one supposes that the sight of Hendryx unleashing her tremendous firepower onstage minus Patti Labelle and Sarah Dash, and minus the space-age camp costumes, might have been the first inspiration for "Bustin' Out." *The Art of Defense* is real proof that she has delivered on the promise of that song.

In teaming up with Material, Hendryx found a partner for her rough-hewn ideas. "I needed a more musical counterpart," she says. "I'm much more developed as a lyricist and I've always looked towards other people for help with the music. The guys (Material) are great arrangers and interpreters of song ideas and I knew that when I first heard 'Bustin' Out.'

"I know what I want," she declared. "I don't need direction for what I want to say. But when I write it, the song is never really finished. So I'm open to suggestion. And when they come up with a song idea, they want to be open to my contribution. I think it works out."

Having matters pretty much to herself both lyrically and thematically, Hendryx the lyricist explores "heavy" subjects such as self-actualization, relationships, obsessional love and tension in modern life. Coupled to rhythms that are at once listenable and danceable, her unpretentious, unambiguous stories approach a universality that Labelle wasn't even aware of.

PHOTO ANNE FISHBEIN PHOTO RESERVE

Nona Hendryx in full regalia: 'Sex is not all there is. Your balance is important.'

"I can't write any other way," says Hendryx. "I tried, but superficial ideas and experiences ring false when I write them into a song. Some people do that very well, like Marvin Gaye did on 'Sexual Healing.' " Quoting a lyric from her song "Is Your Life Like My Life" ("I'm always diving in the deep end, whistling in the dark"), she adds: "I can't write about sex without feeling. It's given too many people a lot of trouble. I'm convinced that I can put together music that people can dance to that also contains thought-provoking ideas. It's either been dance music with mindless thoughts behind it, or thoughtful words connected to an endless stream of sounds and squawks. In either case, to me, they're both disposable, kind of like edible undies. Variety and balance—uplifting and nourishing—these are the goals of my music."

Those are the goals now because life becomes different when you're on your own. In Labelle, Hendryx had "a group identity. I really wasn't thinking for myself until long after the breakup. There were people I didn't like because Patti or Sarah didn't like them.

"On my own, I found the subways, the buses, the smaller clubs where I met people I now work with. I might not have gone there were I still with Labelle. They didn't do it to me—I did it. We were a group and we were a group attraction. It wasn't necessary for me to think for me. Having to make decisions on my own was the biggest problem I've had since then. It took me awhile to learn that I wasn't so fashion-campy conscious, and that I was less attracted by the glitter than by substance. Labelle dressed that way to attract attention, and it worked."

And worked terrifically for awhile. "Lady Marmalade's" compelling come-on seemed to be on the charts and on the radio forever in those disco days, and Labelle—dressed to the nines, tens and elevens—in all the magazines. Today a no less flashy but more confident Nona Hendryx casts a sharp eye on the past in order to bring the present into focus. The message in *The Art of Defense*? Better to bust out and assert yourself than to take it on the chin.

"Sometimes I look at the old photographs and I can't imagine what possessed me to put those clothes on," Hendryx adds. "But it was a time of learning, and it was great exposure. Now I want to turn to self-exposing music, but I'm not going backwards to the '60s. I just want to say that sex is not all there is. Your balance is important." ○

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PRINCE'S SPAGHETTI MUSICAL

WAYNE KING

Prince is a genius.

No, I'm not talking about the man's musical talents, fully documented by 1982's triple platinum *1999* and the soundtrack to his big-screen debut, *Purple Rain*. It's true those records represent the most challenging work being done by any artist shooting for, and attaining, platinum status in the '80s—but that's not the genius to which I'm referring. His genius is demonstrated by what he's accomplished with *Purple Rain* (the movie); that is, nothing less than a complete makeover of his recognized persona—that of sleazemaster supreme—into a tortured, misunderstood but ultimately triumphant figure. Not too shabby a transformation, achieved as it is in 104 minutes of film directed by a former editor, Albert Magnoli, who didn't even want to know about the thing in the first place.

The crown Prince in *Purple Rain*: Is this man a genius or what?

But the credit here (despite the essential collaborative nature of film, blah, blah, blah) goes to Mr. Prince Rogers Nelson. That's because it's not merely the quality of the music—and it's uniformly excellent, if you haven't already discovered that from the soundtrack—that celebrates, mythifies, ties together, tears down, labors over the construction of the "new" Prince, which is at the heart of *Purple Rain*. No, it is the extent to which Prince allows us glimpses into his mysterious past that makes the movie something more than merely a star vehicle.

The story is simple enough: a talented musician lets constant conflict at home between his mom and dad, frustrated musicians both, ruin his two most important relationships. The first is with a new girl (Appollonia, played by Prince discovery Patti Kotero) trying to make it big on the scene that Prince rules, and with whom The Kid—as Prince is called throughout the movie—is compelled to act out a like-father-like-son relationship of love and violence. The other is with his band, the Revolution, where his dictatorial and chauvinistic attitudes keep him from listening to the two female members' requests to contribute their music to the group. The two relationships reach their culmination after an intense scene in which his father puts a gun to his own head, and The Kid foresees his future as being literally at the end of a rope. During a cathartic rage against his seemingly inevitable fate, he comes across reams of sheet music filled with his father's compositions. The Kid takes one of his dad's pieces, adds the rhythm track from the tune the girls gave him and debuts the results at a hushed nightclub the next night. Dedicating the number, "Purple Rain," to his father, Prince leaves nary a dry eye in the house with the soaring guitar hymn. When the crowd calls him back onto the stage, he tears the roof down with "I Would Die 4 U" and "Baby, I'm A Star." And everyone lives happily ever after.

The extent to which one believes the changes that occur in the character of The Kid is limited by just how credible the dramatic scenes are taken to be. Unsure of how to react, the preview audience I saw it with laughed at a few of the brutal domestic exchanges, but were rivetted by the time of the climactic scene. While neither Prince nor the other musicians in the cast (the only crucial roles taken by professional actors are that of the mother and father) can pull off their roles completely, the *Hill St. Blues*-styled urban realism strikes fairly deep. The key is Prince's hearfelt acting, which comes from some kind of reckoning with the aspects of his personal life that are mirrored by the role of The Kid. Like his film character, he seems to have come from a multiracial background, and a broken home; a piano piece we hear his screen father playing was written by his real father; the struggle to attain supremacy on a local scene while keeping an experimental edge to his music rings true; and certainly no one will have trouble believing that the sexism shown the Revolution women, Wendy and Lisa, and to Appollonia, are anything but the essence of the man who created *Dirty Mind*.

Whether or not the growth we see by *Purple Rain*'s end are true to Prince and not just his character will remain unanswered until his next project. It is troubling that during scenes cut into "I Would Die 4 U" we see him and Appollonia back together again, but he's not shown helping her with her music. It's also not reassuring that he ends the film with the boasting "Baby, I'm A Star," a performance piece full of the usual Prince leers and devoid of any of this new found maturity.

If the change is fleeting, though, it's not surprising, because most of rock's passions and pledges only last the night on which they are uttered and not beyond. As absolutely stirring as this movie is, or as uplifting as, let's say, a Bruce Springsteen show is, the next morning invariably finds dog shit on the rug, the garbage strike still on, unrest in foreign lands, etc., etc. It should be kept in mind that *Purple Rain* is first and last a rock film, a genre piece, like a spaghetti western, its character and conclusion based on the music that moves it. Which is not to say that the movie doesn't earn both its tearjerking climax and its rockin' out superclimax, just that it will take more than a rather glib finale to let us feel Prince has really grown up. But if the news reports of a "new Prince" are premature, this very fresh take on the old one will do just fine. ○

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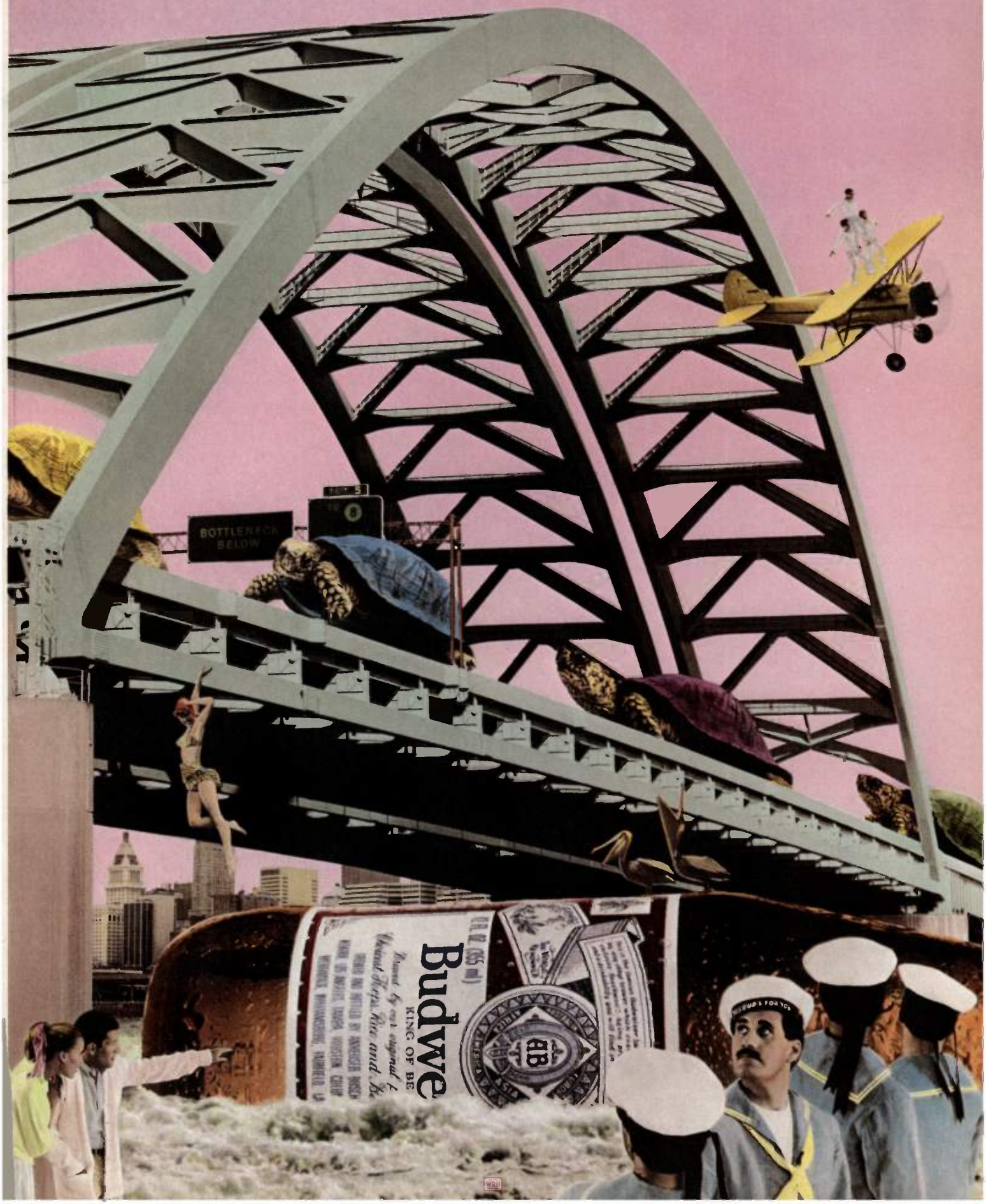

notes

locked in, locked out

After insisting all along that the music video is a viable artistic adjunct to a song rather than simply a promotional tool or, indeed, a profit center, several record companies have finally shot themselves in their figurative feet by signing exclusivity agreements with MTV in exchange for cash and free advertising.

In June MTV disclosed that it had cut deals with four major labels, identified in various trade reports as RCA, Geffen, MCA and CBS, which together provided nearly 35 percent of MTV's videos last year. (Neither MTV nor the labels in question would confirm the deal, however, apparently due to confidentiality clauses in their contracts.) The agreements give MTV the right to select up to 20 percent of each label's output for exclusive showing, while the labels are granted the right to place another 10 percent of their videos in light or medium rotation, which should ensure exposure for new acts. Exclusivity rights extend anywhere from one week to one month, depending on the act.

As expected, the advent of play-for-pay video has drawn the ire of competing music television outlets and those labels that believe that locking into one network will stifle the growth of music video, since MTV's "white, middle class" demographic inherently limits accessibility of the affected videos.

Likewise, some artists and their attorneys, who have battled over the negotiating table for the accounting of video production costs as promotional expenses, are hardly thrilled with the latest turn of events, especially since there are no provisions for artists to share in the exclusivity payments.

For the individual labels and MTV, the benefits are obvious (more money, and guaranteed supply of hit product, respectively). For artists, as a class, benefits appear to be fewer. If, as critics suggest, the MTV agreements help drive competitive video programs off the air, label production budgets may drop and fewer artists will be given the opportunity to show their visual wares.

But what about the fans? In areas of the country not yet wired for MTV, will exclusivity wipe out local video programming? Probably not. Programmers around the country are concerned, but most echo the opinion of Turner Broadcasting's production executive Scott Sassa, who says "we can work around" a lack of timely product. And since TBS reaches numerous areas that don't have MTV, Sassa has gone on record claiming the deal could hurt the labels during MTV's exclusivity period. Pay-for-play, however, might well drive a few local outlets out of business.

Critics of the MTV-labels pact score it as a dollars-and-cents move, with no concern for improving clips' production values or the music. The deal, in fact, is widely regarded as merely reinforcing the status quo. In a recent *Billboard* Commentary on the subject, Stephanie Shepherd, president of Telegenics, Inc., a New York-based music video distribution service and editor of Dance Music Report, wrote that these developments indicate that "executive decisions are strictly motivated by the most easily obtainable dollar figures. The accountants who run the record business have little concern for the hype and poor quality forced on the public. As a result, little of today's music has lasting value.

"Consumers are no longer ignorant," states Shepherd. "They are shopping for quality and longevity in clothing and appliances. Why not in music?"

—Mark Mehler

The Music Box logo: 'We'll have them jumping from Helsinki to Madrid'

continental cable rock

If Europeans want their MTV, then they've got it. Well, what they've really got is Music Box, a joint effort at cable rock by

Just when you thought it was safe . . . The Doors (Ray Manzarek, Robby Krieger and John Densmore) and director Jerry Kramer (The Making of Michael Jackson's Thriller) are at work on a feature-length video project utilizing rare footage from the Doors' private archives. Contained in the video will be never-before-seen footage from the Doors' 1968 summer tour of the States, as well as newly discovered clips from the band's only European tour. Rare promotional clips of "Break On Through" and "The Unknown Soldier" round out the package, scheduled for release in early '85.

PHOTO: RETNA LTD

Rolling Stones bassist Bill Wyman will have to manage more than his tri-annual begrudging smile if he expects to host his own TV show. Earlier this year Wyman acquired world TV and home video rights to over 30 hours of footage from a European pop show that flourished between the years 1965 and 1972. Wyman's camp wouldn't reveal the name of the show, but all indications are it's The Beat Club, *the German show that pioneered many of today's video techniques without the benefit of today's technology (see "The Beat Club: Big Daddy of Rock Video," March RECORD). Wyman, a rock archivist himself (he's reputed to own the world's largest collection of Stones memorabilia-wonder how that happened?), plans to re-organize the library into tightly-focussed half-hour programs. Tentatively titled* Those Were The Years That Rocked, *the show should be ready for syndication in early '85.*

Thorn-EMI, the Virgin Group and Yorkshire (U.K.) Television, and a boast from executive director Charles Levinson that MB will "have them jumping in their living rooms from Helsinki to Madrid."

Levinson is clearly an optimist. On July 11, the day of its first independent transmission, only 600,000 homes in Western Europe (200,000 in Holland alone) had cable TV hookups. Because of governmental opposition, suspicion and intricate regulations in most Western European countries, cable has been slow to make inroads into European life, and Music Box can anticipate of maximum of only 400,000 subscribers by mid-'85.

And just as MTV was once hurting for advertising, so is Music Box. Advertised products must be available in all 13 of the channel's subscribing countries and must be geared to a 15-25-year-old audience—regulations that quickly narrow the field to Coke, Pepsi and Levis.

As for its broadcast fare, Music Box offers little that's new and different from Stateside shows or MTV. Video clips are linked by presenters (Euro-talk for VJs). Special features include news bulletins, quizzes, live concerts and "interviews with the megastars of the pop world." The programming has a definite British slant: the studio is in London, all the presenters are British, all advertising is in English, as are the interviews, news bulletins and station IDs. Of note is one projected feature, TEM (Trans European Music Show), which will apparently concentrate on the continental music scene, while a Eurochart show will count down the first all-European Top 40.

Eddie Pumer, Music Box programming director, is quick to stress that the channel will not adopt MTV's strict formatting practices. A channel representative observed that since Music Box reflects the eclecticism of the British music scene, "in any given hour you'll be likely to see more black music than white." The other difference is in the choice of presenters. Of the four-member, all-British crew, two have been music journalists and the other two disc jockeys. In fact, one of the criteria used in picking the VJs was musical knowledge because "over here you *have* to know about music or no one will listen to you."

Music Box will be broadcasting all video music for 16 hours a day until January, when it hopes to go to a 24-hour-a-day schedule. **—Debbie Geller**

PHOTO: LISA LEAVITT

John Lyon (left) and director Adam Friedman on the set of Southside's "New Romeo" video: The clappers were retired.

PHOTO: LISA LEAVITT

Lacking a daily outlet for his anti-Reagan editorials while Doonesbury *is on sabbatical, cartoonist Garry Trudeau is waxing witty with a little ditty called "Rap Master Ron," as performed by Reathel Bean and the Doonesbury Break Crew. In the accompanying low-budget video, one of the better Reagan look-alikes (Robert Shmidt) lip syncs Bean's voice in a funky campaign pitch to the nation's underclasses. Could also be called "Streets For Hire." And Garry, stick to newsprint. But Bean could be the Vaughan Meader of the '80s.*

the biz

The planned expansion of USA Network's popular *Radio 1990* information package from a half-hour to an hour has been put on hold. Why? Says executive producer Stuart Shapiro, "Let's just say it's on hold." That explains it . . . Meanwhile Shapiro is

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working on a feature film compilation of the best in videos that are too fleshy for MTV. He had originally commissioned **Motley Crue** to produce a suitably raunchy centerpiece for the project, but that was scrapped for financial reasons. Something that is happening on Shapiro's *Nightflight* is the new edition of the *Some Bizarre* half-hour video program that explores the outer reaches of music video, courtesy the British label of the same name. Is this a reaction to MTV's fringe consolation, *The Cutting Edge*? "Absolutely not," contends Shapiro, never the yes man . . . Pioneer makes the great leap of faith to short-form software this month with the release of its first 8" Laser Disc titles from **David Bowie**, **Motels** and the **J. Geils Band**, all of which will be or have been already released by Sony. Pioneer sees its advantage in a nice price—$10.99 list for up to 14 minutes of music . . . Polygram will start tyingup compilation packages for TV and home video with thematic narratives. The first videoflick will be titled *The Taking of Channel M*, directed by the ubiquitous **Martin Kahan**. The plot involves a youthful coup of a local TV station whereupon the programming is replaced by an all-metal format. Adjust your sets accordingly.

say it ain't so, joe

If there's no video backlash among recording artists, don't blame **Joe Jackson**. Never at a loss for words, Jackson scored some direct hits in his RECORD Interview in the July issue ("Most videos are an insult to people's intelligence . . . Rock 'n' roll is degenerating into a big circus, and videos and MTV are very much a part of that."), then followed that with a few more salvos in a *Billboard* guest editoral. Denouncing clips as "a shallow, tasteless and formulized way of selling music," the artist went on to declare that not one bar of music from his latest album, *Body and Soul*, would be translated to music. In Jackson's corner on this issue is video pioneer **Todd Rundgren**, who told a Chicago audience that to make another music video would constitute "guilt by association." Added Rundgren: "I don't want to be seen in the same half-hour as **Billy Idol**." Bill, I'd take that as a slap in the face. And Queen's **Brian May** recently opined that music video "may be reaching the end already." Kind of an open-ended comment there, Brian.

PHOTO: LISA LEAVITT

"Panama": Who'da thunk David Lee would ever open for the Nerds?

coming distractions

About 10 percent of the nation's first-run movie theatres are now featuring music videos as part of their coming attractions package. "Eventually we'd like to expand to full-length concert features to play the cities where the big groups don't normally go," says Robert Kardashian, president of R&R Entertainment, which conceived the idea. R&R is financed in part by O.J. Simpson.

Theatres have the option of either paying for the clips—35-millimeter with Dolby sound videos by **Van Halen**, **Police**, and **Styx** are currently available—at a monthly rental of $200, or take them for free accompanied by a short soft-sell commercial for Pierre Cardin. Kardashian says about 700 theatres are running the clips with success, although a few patrons have complained of not being able to escape from the video miasma. The videos are intended to be paired with films that would attract a similar audience profile. Thus, Van Halen's "Panama" is booked with such cinematic landmarks as *Bachelor Party* and *Revenge of the Nerds*, while the Police have been seen warming up thrill-seekers at *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* and *Ghostbusters*.

production posits

To commemorate the first video to be shot in New York's hot Hard Rock Cafe, the clappers (those jobbies used to mark sound at the top of a shot) used in the making of **Southside Johnny**'s "New Romeo" have been ceremoniously hung on the bar's famed walls right next to guitars once played by **Jeff Beck** and **Jackson Browne**. Guest stars in the video include actor **Vincent Spano** (*Baby It's You*) and socialite **Cornelia Guest** . . . **Rick Springfield**'s new video, "Bop Till You Drop," is taken from the soundtrack of *Hard To Hold*, but you wouldn't know it from the sci-fi scenario directed by **David Fincher**, who mastered the miniatures on *Return of the Jedi*. Several other former employees of Industrial Light and Magic, George Lucas' special effects factory, worked on this big budget epic. According to Springfield's management, "Rick has always wanted to do something involving bio-mechanics." But what about the human touch? . . . **Federico Fellini** is rumored to be interested in working with **Boy George** on a new video from the next Culture Club album, *Waking Up In A Burning House* . . . **Michelangelo Antonioni** has directed a video for the Italian Pat Benatar, **Gianna Nannini** . . . **Supertramp** is up to something big. Stay tuned.—**Jonathan Gross**

A still from what will soon be referred to as "a rare Joe Jackson video." Next up on the video backlash bandwagon: Todd Rundgren (see Notes).

PHOTO: LISA LEAVITT

Allman Brothers

"BROTHERS OF THE ROAD"
(D: Len Dell'Amico)

RCA/Columbia Home Video/112 minutes/$29.95

They are all history now, the original Marshall Tucker Band, Wet Willie, Lynyrd Skynyrd, the Allman Brothers Band, and from the vantage point of 1984 it's hard to tell they were even here, so fleeting was their impact. But when they were good, they were very good, and it's unfortunate that there's no visual record—or at least none in release—of these groups at their peak. If anything, this brand of southern rock would be ideal for an *Other Side of Nashville* (see review in September RECORD) exploration of the reasons for its demise. And such a project might well start with *Brothers of the Road*, a concert film of the reunited Allman Brothers, circa 1982, on stage at the Capitol Theatre in Passaic, New Jersey, and at an outdoor show in Gainesville, Florida.

The Brothers, of course, had a few lives, post-Duane; but post-Duane their story was anything but uplifting. By the mid-'70s, the Brothers were a wheezing dinosaur of a band, minus inspiration and barely able to sustain any enthusiasm throughout a set. After disbanding in the wake of Gregg Allman's well-chronicled drug problems, the Brothers came back strong in '79 with a sterling LP, *Enlightened Rogues*, and a tour that justifiably rekindled a lot of good memories. It was tap city after that, though, when the band moved to Arista Records and went out not with a bang but with a rather resounding whimper behind a couple of albums that found them playing *pop* music, for Chrissakes.

The latter-day version of the Brothers seen here includes charter members Gregg Allman, Dicky Betts and Butch Trucks, supplemented by three members from Betts' post-Allmans band, Great Southern, two backup singers and a synthesizer player. The repertoire is an unsurprising collection of Allmans standards ("In Memory of Elizabeth Reed," "Blue Sky," "Statesboro Blues," "Southbound" and of course "Whipping Post") and the performances, while hardly robust, at least have a bit of the old spark. Allman remains in fine voice, and the years and the adventures have given his singing added emotional resonance.

But this is only a moment in time; a group of solid professionals hitting all the right notes and injecting some personality in the affair. There is no vision at work, no sense that this is a band on its way to better things. Indeed, shortly after these shows, the Brothers hit the skids again. This too shall pass. There will be other nights, in other towns, when these musicians cross paths again. And there will be a camera there to record the event, if only for old time's sake. And someday they will all understand the sound of one hand clapping.

—David McGee

Herbie Hancock

HERBIE HANCOCK AND THE ROCKIT BAND
(D: Ken O'Neil)

CBS/Fox Video/73 min./$29.98

Herbie Hancock and his band of robot dummies fall short of a successful bid by schluffing off too many losing concert tricks before getting back to trump, in this case the legendary Godley-Creme-directed "Rockit" and "Autodrive" videos, included here in truncated form.

Sorry to belabor the bridge metaphor, but Hancock is one of many artists trying to finesse their way around the fact that home video buyers will soon demand real content for their $30. Hancock's tape is merely an inventory closeout, the sum of spare parts from two London concerts adding up to something somewhat less than a whole.

Director Ken O'Neil never makes it quite clear why he used mismatched footage shot at the Camden Palace and Hammersmith Odeon. The passable break dancing footage from the Camden show is offset by muddy production values that grate against the Hammersmith takes. And the disembodied robots just hang around (literally).

Hancock and his band acquit themselves with icy, high-tech perfection. Actually, it's all too slick and the audience response, as recorded, is chilly. The star of the show is scratch deejay Grandmixer D. St., who scratches up a storm during the climactic "Wild Style" funk fugue. But skittish editing and shoddy camera work blunt his savage thrusts.

Kevin Godley and Lol Creme's cybernetic videos remain the best illustration of Hancock's current pose. Sadder still is that none of *Herbie Hancock and the Rockit Band* compares to Hancock's brilliant one-off at this year's Grammy Awards, when real break dancers stood in for the video robots.

—Jonathan Gross

MUSICVIDEO TOP TEN

1 **A KISS ACROSS THE OCEAN***
CULTURE CLUB
CBS/Fox Home Video

2 **DURAN DURAN**
DURAN DURAN
Thorn-EMI Home Video

3 **MAKING MICHAEL JACKSON'S THRILLER**
MICHAEL JACKSON
Vestron Video

4 **DAVID BOWIE: SERIOUS MOONLIGHT**
DAVID BOWIE
Media Music

5 **RICK SPRINGFIELD PLATINUM VIDEOS***
RICK SPRINGFIELD
RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video

6 **MUSICVIDEO FROM STREETS OF FIRE***
VARIOUS ARTISTS
MCA Home Video

7 **EURYTHMICS SWEET DREAMS***
EURYTHMICS
RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video

8 **A HOT SUMMER NIGHT WITH DONNA**
DONNA SUMMER
RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video

9 **JOURNEY: FRONTIERS AND BEYOND***
JOURNEY
Media Music

10 **STRAY CATS**
STRAY CATS
Sony Video 45

*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 **WHEN DOVES CRY**
PRINCE
(WB) D: Larry Williams

2 **GHOSTBUSTERS***
RAY PARKER JR.
(Arista) D: Ivan Reitman

3 **JUMP***
POINTER SISTERS
(RCA) D: Richard Perry

4 **SELF CONTROL**
LAURA BRANIGAN
(Atlantic) D: William Friedkin

5 **BORDERLINE**
MADONNA
(WB) D: Mary Lambert

6 **LEGS**
ZZ TOP
(WB) D: Tim Newman

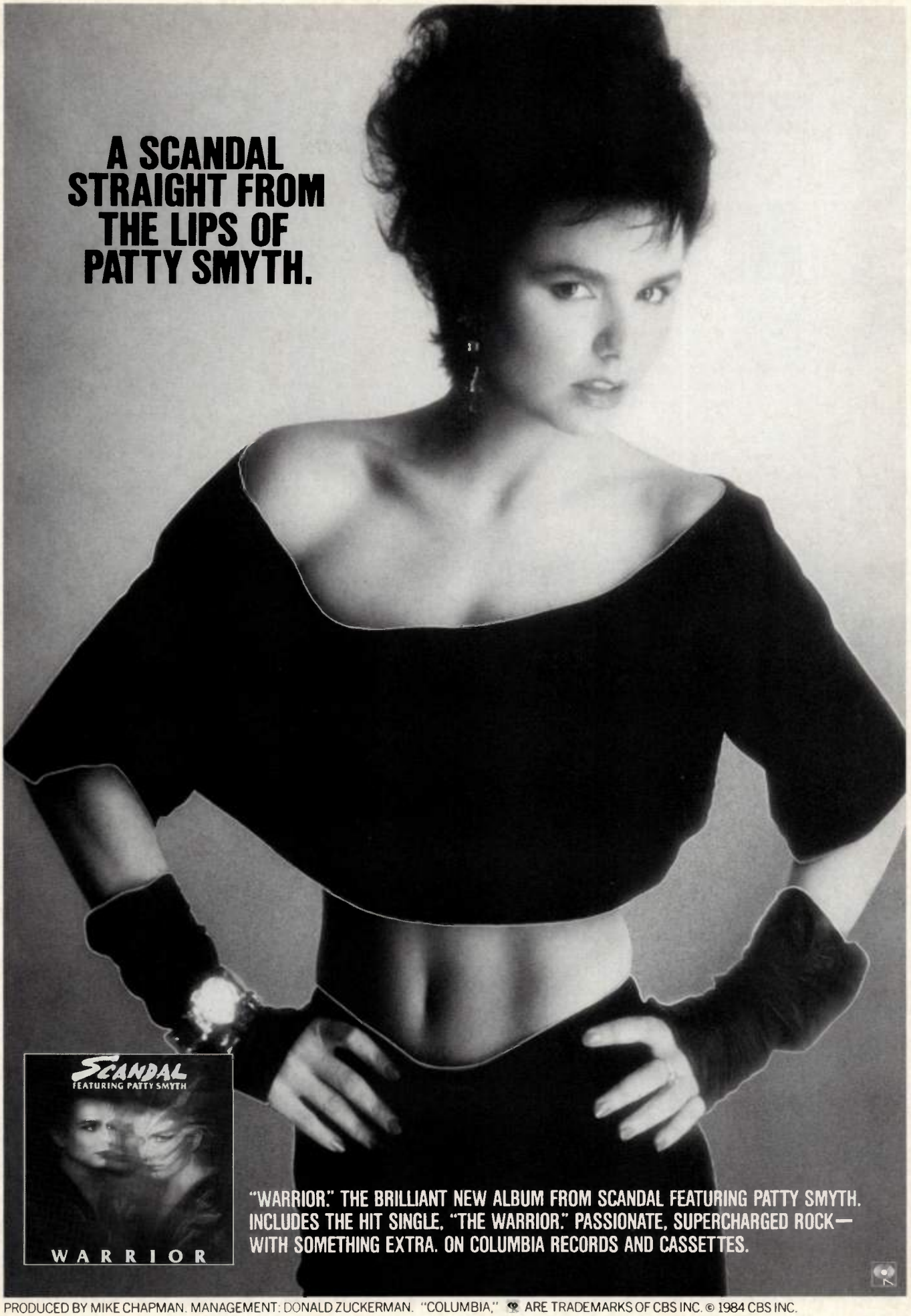
7 **HEART OF ROCK 'N' ROLL**
HUEY LEWIS & THE NEWS
(Chrysalis) D: Ed Griles

8 **THE REFLEX**
DURAN DURAN
(Capitol) D: Russell Mulcahy

9 **AIN'T NO STOPPING US NOW**
OLLIE & JERRY
(Polygram) D: Joel Silberg

10 **INFATUATION***
ROD STEWART
(WB) D: Jonathan Kaplan

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 August.



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CRAIG ANDERTON

MIDI: TOO MUCH TOO SOON?

MIDI, an acronym for Musical Instrument Digital Interface, is the current hot buzzword in musical electronics. Instruments equipped with the MIDI interface can send out information reflecting the status of the instrument, such as what notes are being played, what synthesizer patch is currently selected, data on dynamics, whether the player is adding pitch bend, and so on—or receive the same data from other instruments. MIDI instruments use this information in various ways. As one example, when "slaving" two keyboards together, the slaved instrument (the "receiver") will follow the notes being played on the master instrument (the "transmitter"). Thus, by setting the keyboards to different sounds, you can create an extremely thick sound while only having to play one keyboard. Or, if you're about to play a particular song, sending data that identifies the song through the MIDI interface can select all the programs for that song on various instruments (i.e. a drum machine's rhythm pattern, a sequencer's sequenced bass line, a particular keyboard synthesizer patch, etc.).

Perhaps even more exciting than what MIDI does now is MIDI's potential. By using a computer to "massage" the data sent out by MIDI--equipped instruments, all sorts of options are possible—score printouts, one-person orchestras, and a whole lot more. But the key word here is "potential"; while much has been promised for MIDI, those promises have yet to be fully realized. What's more, although instruments with MIDI interfaces should be able to communicate in a consistent, predictable fashion, this has not been the case due to differences between instruments that MIDI is not currently capable of resolving. As a result, many musicians who enthusiastically embraced MIDI upon its introduction now seem ready to condemn it as a failure.

But this current pessimism is as unjustified as the over-optimism that occurred initially. MIDI is a sound idea; the concept of a standardized interface has already proven its worth in the computer and communications industries. Some, however, expect MIDI to do things that are impossible. Suppose you have two keyboards with touch sensitivity (i.e. playing harder produces a louder sound). However, let's further suppose that one instrument has polyphonic touch sensitivity (where each *individual* note will react dynamically) while the other instrument has monophonic touch sensitivity (where the dynamics are proportional to the *average* of all notes being played). Connecting these two keyboards via MIDI and expecting the monophonic instrument to react polyphonically is simply unrealistic, since the mono instrument does not have the hardware required to implement polyphonic operation.

Another problem involves interfacing equipment from different manufacturers. At the present time, musicians who use MIDI components produced by a single company will experience little, if any, difficulty hooking these devices together into a system. This is because the engineers working on the company's drum machines communicate with the engineers working on the keyboards, who communicate with the software designers writing software for the complete system. However, there is virtually no communication between different companies during the developmental stage of a product, primarily because manufacturers are playing a high-stakes poker game in a very competitive industry and don't want to show their hand. As a result, companies have to wait until products are introduced and *then* try to resolve any incompatibilities.

Considering these difficulties, does MIDI have a future? In my mind, there's no doubt that the answer is yes, especially if the experience of the personal computer industry has any relevance. Back in 1975, the first of the modern-day personal computers (the Altair 8800, manufactured by MITS) used a particular bus structure over which the various peripherals (memory, disk drive, etc.) communicated. This computer became such a runaway success that MITS couldn't turn out peripherals that used the same bus structure . . . and the so-called "S-100 bus" de facto specification was born. As time went on, manufacturers started offering "enhancements" to the bus, which greatly improved the performance, but also created incompatibility problems between products from different manufacturers. Realizing how seriously this could impact the market, concerned manufacturers worked together to resolve incompatibilities, eventually producing an S-100 bus spec that improved upon the original spec. MIDI should follow the same pattern; now that the instruments are out in the field and now that manufacturers are starting to get some feedback on what works and what doesn't, problems can be solved and evolutionary changes can be made to the MIDI specification. Meanwhile, even in its present state, MIDI offers enough to justify its existence. And if the companies involved with MIDI show the determination and maturity to communicate and work together, the promise of MIDI will be fulfilled in its entirety—at which point musicians will have access to some of the most powerful musical tools ever devised. ○

Next month in Musical Electronics: Will new techniques in computers eliminate the tape recorder as we know it today?

Midi: Living down the hype

LOU REED

Continued from page 22
over there are hopeless. So be it.

Some people are so firmly fixed on your early "decadent" image that they perceive anything you do or say that doesn't fit in with that image as ironic. The other day I read a review of *New Sensations* commenting on how ironic it was. This goes all the way back to *Coney Island Baby*. Some people heard that song and said, "Lou Reed wanted to play football? What a laugh! That guy's funny!"

I wasn't trying to be funny. For sure. I do have ironic moments. The song "So Alone" is an example of me being ironic. "Turn to Me" goes past being ironic. It's just out and out funny. Nobody found that song funny in the studio except me. One of the things that bothered me about it was that I thought my vocal was a shade out of tune. Everybody else says it's not, but it just drove me crazy. It was like hearing a nail scraping on a blackboard. I tried other vocals that were technically a lot better, but the only vocal that had the right feel was that out of tune one. I kept that vocal because when I listened to the track it was the one that made me feel better. It made me laugh. "When your father is freebasing and your mother's turning tricks/That's still no reason you should have a rip." I would fall down laughing. But only on that vocal. When I listen to the track I still get a real big kick out of it. I listen to him singing that and I know he understands and is just running this friendly riff down for me and making it livable. When he says, "If your friend dies of something that you can't pronounce," I know exactly what he means. And there it is in a *song*, with drums and nice "ooo"s in back of it, obviously.

Do you consider how some of these violent images are received by less sophisticated listeners? A song like "The Gun," which speaks in the voice of a sadistic rapist, might inspire identification in some mental case. Just as Scorsese's films have inspired the likes of John Hinckley.

I don't think about it *at all*. I've had that question asked me a million times, starting with the song "Heroin." Which is the supreme example. "The Gun" is actually a very good example of it. No, I absolutely do not concern myself with that. I really, really don't and I don't feel I have any responsibility to those people. They can get it off the daily news. I don't think they bother sitting around listening to me, and even if they were, that's not what's going to cause it.

Since "Heroin" people have come up to me and said, "Don't you feel responsible for turning people onto drugs and glamorizing violence?" My answer to that is, That's not what I was doing. I've not been glamorizing anything. "The Gun" was a very disturbing track in the studio for all of us. There was one arrangement we had that pushed it too far. None of us could even listen to it. The one that's on the album went far enough. The vocal is really a disturbed person talking. The way he "tawks." I didn't like being in that mode. Acting is fun for me. I get off on it. But I wouldn't want to stay there. Particularly not *that* one.

The feel in "The Gun" is real disturbing, neurotic. You go to a movie sometimes and see characters like that, then you go home and it still stays in your head. I occasionally put these people in my records. So you're bringing it right home with you. Of course, now you can bring a movie home on videocassette. I wonder which has more potential power: a movie you bring home or a record listened to on headphones? I think probably the record, because it's not visual. You're going to fill in what he looks like, which will probably be a lot worse than any actor.

In the last verse of "Heroin," the singer imagines he's back in time on an old sailing ship. "The Heroine" is set on an old sailing ship. Did it occur to you that the two songs could be taken as one long piece?

No.

Ah—I had a theory that it meant that the woman's love in "The Heroine" was more potent than the drug.

Continued on page 62

MIKE SHEA

A STIRRING SAGA

The do-it-yourself bass guitar

How would you like to be able to purchase a high-quality copy of a Fender Strat or Precision bass guitar for one-third the going rate for either of these deluxe instruments? You can, but there's one hitch: it's up to the player to assemble and finish the instrument. Too much work? Not at these prices.

In guitar manufacturing, the basic shaping and routing of the wood is all done by machine, while final sanding, finishing and assembly are done by hand. The latter process takes up most of the production time and accounts for two-thirds of the wholesale cost. About five years ago a San Francisco-based company called Saga figured industrious guitar and bass players on low budgets might cotton to a kit that would allow them to own decent knockoffs of the more expensive axes noted above.

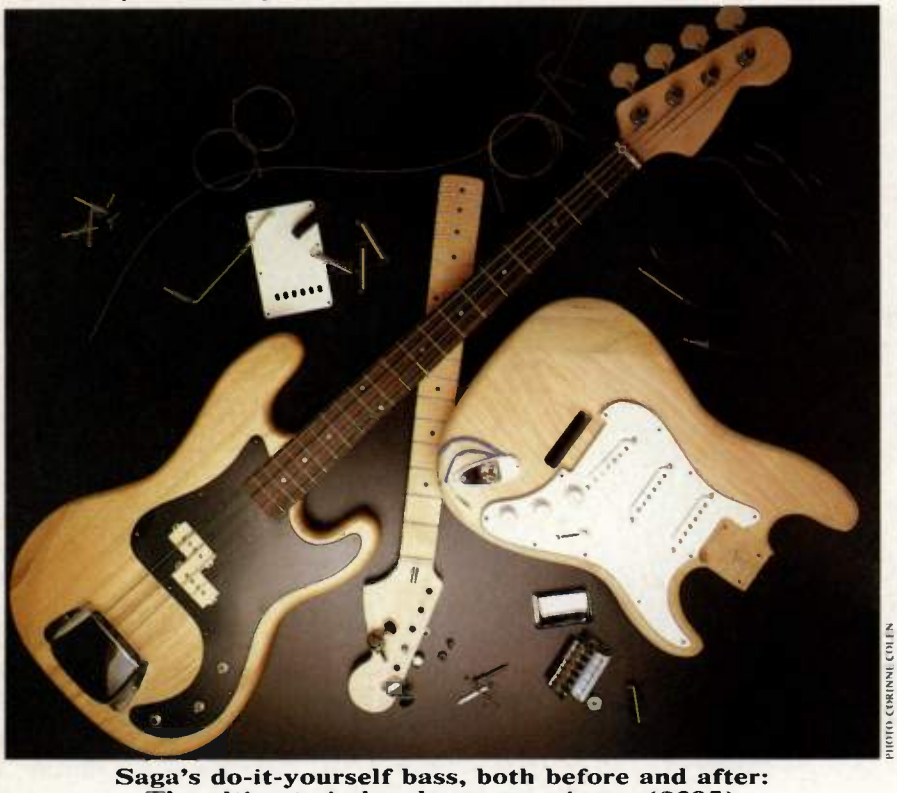

PHOTO CORINNE COHEN

Saga's do-it-yourself bass, both before and after: The ultimate in hands on experience ($295)

The work required to complete a Saga guitar or bass is fairly routine. Assembly requires no soldering and no special tools, and all electronics come complete with the kit. The neck needs only a slight amount of sanding. The truss rod, which is adjustable and thus aids in both holding and re-adjusting the neck's straightness, is pre-installed. The finger board is also factory-finished, with all frets mounted (file these down to facilitate smoother hand-sliding) and inlays inserted. On the other hand, the body is a bit rougher and requires additional sanding to get a smooth surface. Check it out: so far sandpaper and a file have done the job.

Now comes the best part of building a Saga instrument: individualizing the axe by giving it a distinctive finish. Simple staining will bring out the wood grain, but that Eddie Van Halen or hot-rod style finish requires several coats of paint; drying time and hand sanding turns this into a two-week undertaking. Saga's manual is a great help here, though, with its step-by-step details of the finishing process, as well as recommendations for types of fillers, lacquers, rubbing and polishing compounds that help even the novice get a professional quality finish.

Once the neck and body are complete, it's time to attach the hardware. Unfortunately, the kits Saga provided me did not have all the hardware's screw holes pre-drilled, save those most important to the instrument's sound. For example, the tuning peg's post holes were pre-drilled in the neck's headstock, while the mounting screws were only factory marked. The same goes for the body—all the bridge assembly mounting holes were pre-drilled but the strap button's hole wasn't. Don't get me wrong: all in all, attaching the hardware is no problem. I chose to go with screws a quarter of an inch shorter than those provided, because I felt the latter, which attach the neck to the body, might pass through the neck and into (but not through) the finger board. The electronics are all pre-mounted on the pick guard, which comes paper-coated to guard against scratches. Two wires plug into the instrument's output jack, while a third is screwed to the bridge assembly. The pick guard is then mounted; peel off the paper and the task is complete. It's impossible to detail every step of construction in this space, but be advised that the process doesn't require one to be a mechanical genius.

Saga not only takes the hard work out of building a guitar, but also provides high-quality parts that are at the very least equal to those used on finished instruments costing three times the price of these kits. The difference between Saga's standard and deluxe kits is the use in the body of solid ash as opposed to laminated birch and mahogany; rosewood with mother of pearl inlaid as opposed to maple with black inlaid fingerboards; different tuning pegs and pickups. And anyone who sticks with guitars will understand a lot more about their workings than somebody who buys one completely assembled. Saga also has an extensive line of custom parts for further modification of their kits. Problems with setting string heights and intonation can be easily corrected by the pros at your local guitar shop.

Apart from minor problems with screw sizing and lack of pre-drilled holes, only the instruction manual proved troublesome. More pictures would help a builder get a better idea of what was supposed to be done at each stage of assembly. The good news is that when I called Saga about this I was told that an improved instruction manual is in the works and, indeed, could be out by the time this column reaches print. Saga also advised me that they're now going to include in their standard kits, at no extra charge, solid ash bodies and deluxe necks. The deluxe bass kit, PB-20, is priced at $295, while the standard guitar kit, ST-10, goes for $225. For further information, contact Saga at P.O. Box 2841, South San Francisco, CA. 94080. ○

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 computers to: Mike Shea/Hands On, RECORD, 745 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10151. Include your phone number if you want a personal reply from the author.

MARTIN PORTER

QUALITY CONTROL AND COMPACT DISCS

It's not every day that a piece of technology makes me chuckle, but when it occurs it usually has to do with some oddball juxtaposition of technology and marketing. Some executive somewhere has a bright idea along the lines of: "Hey! Let's match our hottest product with out brightest newcomer and watch the sales figures fly." The recent pairing of Willie Nelson and Julio Iglesias is a prime example of such selling savvy.

In this case, it was Bruce Springsteen's *Nebraska* on Compact Disc that was the source of my mirth. What's so funny about the Boss's solo effort on the latest digital playback technology? Doesn't his plaintive home-recorded effort rank digital plastic preservation?

Being one of a few people who plays that album more than they do the studio-polished *Back In The USA* LP, the answer to both queries is "sure." But there's plenty wrong with the implication that anyone who buys *Nebraska* on CD will be able to sonically enhance what was originally nothing more than some basement tapes.

Nebraska was recorded on an inexpensive, four channel 1/4-inch analog tape recorder—a machine by TASCAM called a PortaStudio—that was never designed for professional recording. It's a terrific songwriter's tool, and, in the hands of an artist of Springsteen's calibre, it proved that great songs are great songs even if they aren't recorded in a $200 per hour recording studio.

However, there's no way they'll ever sound as good as they would in that studio. You can barely take advantage of the CD's increased dBs with ordinary two-inch, professional tape machines, let alone a 1/4-inch variety. In fact, the vinyl version of *Nebraska* had its fair share of mastering problems, too—trying to transfer a noisy and inferior recording onto vinyl is no easy task. The CD, in this case, only enhances the sonic headaches.

There is a prevailing attitude among CD buyers that these new mini discs always sound better. They don't. There are pop, jazz and classical CDs that are absolutely breathtaking. However, especially with pop recordings, you'll find that most CDs were originally recorded on analog machines, sent through analog mixers and sometimes even mastered to stereo on analog two track machines. What this means is that the CD is nothing more than an analog record in disguise. How are listeners to know if they're going to get their money's worth of sound, without having to slit open the package and slide the CD into a machine?

Polygram has taken the initiative when it comes to honesty in Compact Disc packaging. As of July 1, all of Polygram's CDs were rated by a two-letter, three-part code: "A" stands for analog, "D" for digital, and each represents a part in the record making process. There are three possible ratings: "AAD," "ADD" and "DDD." The first position indicates the way the disc was recorded, the second how it was mastered and the third (which is "D" in all cases), that it is a digital product. Hence, "ADD" translates out to a digital disc that was recorded in analog and digitally mastered.

Another point of concern about CDs was recently expressed by Steely Dan engineer and digital authority Roger Nichols. Nichols maintains that, in some cases, CDs are made from fourth or fifth generation masters, while their digitally recorded vinyl counterparts may be made from second or third generation masters. In other words, it's possible to shell out $12 to $15 for a CD that actually sounds inferior to its vinyl equivalent.

Still, I've been playing the *Nebraska* CD a lot lately. It still sounds awful. But I still love the music.

MIX AND MATCH AUDIO SYSTEMS

THE EMPHASIS OF LATE has been so heavily concentrated on one-brand systems that I figured it was time to do some mixing and matching again. I kept the budget to $750 and opted only for the basics (i.e., turntable, receiver, speakers). I assumed the space was also a limitation and that you'd be able to beg, borrow or buy a cartridge from somewhere else, as well. (You'll probably want to add on a cassette deck at some later date or you may substi-

Akai's AP-M33S turntable features all the automatic must-haves (approx. $200)

Kenwood's KVR-A50 quartz-synthesized receiver features two sets of A-to-B inputs for tape and video sources (approx. $305)

Bose's 201 Series II bookshelf speakers project sound in all directions for a wider and clearer stereo image (approx. $240/pair)

Dual's CS 530 turntable features a special suspension system that safeguards against vibrations and acoustic feedback ($150)

Harmon Kardon's hk490i digital synthesized quartz-locked receiver features auto/manual station scan, 16 station presets and two tape monitor switches ($425)

Wharfdale Diamond's bookshelf speakrs pack a giant sound into a tiny package (approx. $180/pair)

tute a similarly priced tape machine in place of turntables I've suggested.)

System #1:

What do all lazy listeners want from their turntable? They want to lay back and let it do all the work. The **Akai AP-M33S** turntable (approx. $200) features all the automatic must-haves including auto start/stop, linear tracking, and repeat function. A memory for making your own program schedules is missing, but that's a sacrifice worth the price. Besides, this model adds a microcomputer-controlled DC servo motor, automatic record size-speed selector, and a "quick repeat" function for replay of up to 15 selections. And, the entire unit is no bigger than an album jacket.

Match this with **Kenwood's KVR-A50** quartz-synthesized receiver (approx. $305), which kicks out a potent 45 watts per channel and claims a signal-to-noise ration of 78 dB. It also combines a high-tech black panel with some truly advanced features such as two sets of A-to-B inputs for tape and video sources with two-way monitoring and dubbing, LED function displays, automatic seek and manual tuning, and 16 AM/FM presets.

Top the system off with some bookshelf speakers designed to keep your floor and desktops clean—the **Bose 201 Series II** "direct/reflecting" bookshelf speakers (approx. $240/pair). These mini-loudspeakers employ a unique "free field" tweeter that projects sound in all directions, so the result is a wider—and clearer—stereo image. Not a bad trick for something that can fit almost anywhere. And not bad for a system listing for $745.

System #2:

This system begins with an old and faithful name in turntables, **Dual**, and their new **CS 530** (approx. $150). It's a fully automatic, belt-driven model with a special suspension system that safeguards against vibrations and acoustic feedback (which cause mistracking and even scratches). This is accomplished by four independent shock absorbers that isolate the tonearm, platter and drive system from the unit base. The tonearm is also a low resonance model, and at seven grams it's less than half the weight of most conventional systems.

On the receiving end is the **Harmon Kardon hk490i** digital synthesized quartz-locked receiver (approx. $425) with an "ultra-wide band" frequency response of 0.2 Hz to 150 kHz and a total power output of 30 watts per channel. The receiver also features a DC-driven LED display, auto/manual station scan, 16 station presets, and two tape monitor switches with copy capability and subsonic filter.

Completing this system are the **Wharfdale Diamond** bookshelf speakers (approx. $180/pair). These compact two-way speakers pack a giant sound into a tiny package (10" high, 7-1/2" wide) and are capable of handling more power than the Harmon Kardon unit provides (up to 75 watts). They have a normal impedance of 8 ohms and work at mazimum efficiency when mounted up to six inches from a wall with an inward tilt of not more than 30 degrees.

Total cost: $755.00. Oops—a little over budget! But then, these are only suggested retail prices, so the actual cost of either system should land well within your spending range—and probably leave enough over for a pretty decent cartidge, too. (Recommend is **Shure's M104E**, approx. $70, which has an elliptical diamond stylus and aluminum alloy shank and can be used with either P-mount models or standard 1/2-inch tonearm configurations.)

ROCK 'N' RHYTHM

WHO IS TOM SNYDER AND WHY IS he packaging an audio cassette of his band along with his latest computer software product?

No, he's not the old *Tomorrow* show host. But when it comes to computer software sales, the name Tom Snyder carries the clout of a Michael Jackson. He's got a track record of software hits aimed at kids eager to explore either whodunit adventures or spy encounters.

However, before Snyder ever touched a computer keyboard he was working the musical variety for Capitol Records. His music career didn't go very far, though, and by the late '70s he had opted for a career as a schoolteacher. It was then that he learned how to program a computer and began creating computer worlds for kids (and adults) to explore.

But Snyder is still intrigued by his past as a recording artist, and his latest product, *Rock And Rhythm* (Spinnaker Software, about $39; for the Atari and Commodore 64), is designed to allow anyone to write music on a computer keyboard. The setting on screen is a recording studio and you can flick back and forth between the computer graphic control room and the studio where a drummer can be programmed to lay down a rhythm track while you tickle out the melody. Three tracks (two, if used on the Atari) can be overdubbed and your songs can either be erased or saved.

It's a great introduction to writing music and the music-making process, and, like Snyder's other software hits, it's deceptively simple to use and highly entertaining. Don't be surprised to see his name and *Rock 'N' Rhythm* on the *Billboard* charts—but you'll have to look under "Computer Software" and not under the "Hot 100." (By the way, *My Room Is A Studio*, the software's accompanying four-song tape of Snyder and his band The Personals isn't half bad, either—sort of Silicon Beach music.)

FYI: For a more extensive treatise on music software, see Craig Anderton's Musical Electronics columns in the July and August issues of RECORD. ○

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PHOTO: A CHURCH

BROTHERS ON THE ONE

VICTORY
The Jacksons
Epic

By Rico Mitchell

With Michael Jackson's *Thriller* entered in the Guinness Book of World Records as the most successful LP of all time, and Jermaine Jackson's latest solo effort a recent black chart-topper, *Victory*, along with the extravagantly hyped summer tour supporting it, could be viewed as a last chance attempt by brothers Jackie, Tito, Marlon and Randy to cash in on the family name before their fantastically popular sibling flies off to Never Never Land forever. Yet it is the contributions of those "other" Jacksons that gives *Victory* its punch and bouyancy.

According to Randy, the youngest brother and likely favorite to follow Michael and Jermaine into a successful solo career, *Victory* is designed to show the world how much talent there is in the family. Of course, we've known they could sing like the Temptations and move like James Brown since their first album back in 1969. But Motown discouraged its acts from writing and producing their own material, especially acts whose oldest member was all of 16 and whose youngest was a precocious 10.

In 1978, three years after they'd left Motown for Epic, the Jacksons finally assumed creative control of their recordings on *Destiny*, which contained their biggest hit in years, "Shake Your Body (Down To The Ground.)" 1980's *Triumph* revealed their increasing confidence and maturity as songwriters and producers, though Michael still sang lead on almost every track and the album was overshadowed by his skyrocketing solo success with the Quincy Jones-produced *Off The Wall*. And then came *Thriller*, currently soaring above 35 million copies sold worldwide.

So it's understandable that the other brothers feel they have something to prove on *Victory*. Everyone gets a chance to step out front on a lead vocal, everyone is represented by at least one original song except Jermaine (who presumably used his up on his own record), everyone produces his own material (with occasional assistance from David Paich and Steve Porcaro of Toto), everyone except Jackie plays an instrument and pipes in on backup vocals.

The album's most inspired moments belong to Jackie, at 33 the senior Jackson brother. "Torture," written by Jackie with Kathy Wakefield and sung as a duet by Michael and Jermaine, should become a dance floor staple with its requisite electronic effects, a stalking, synthesized bass pattern and those high, tremulous voices that seem to imply infinite yearning. "Wait," cowritten by Jackie with Paich, is even better, with a sublime hook worthy of Holland/Dozier/Holland and a ricocheting guitar solo a la Eddie Van Halen in "Beat It" supplied by Steve Lukather. The song is ostensibly about a woman, but when Jackie cries, "You pushed my heart around/Tore me up inside/You made me feel so bad/Took away my pride/I can't wait for a hundred years/Can't hold back my tears any longer...," the pain he expresses maps neatly into the experience of black people in America. By the time Michael enters near the end of the tune with the plea, "I'm down on my knees, baby," he carries the emotion-

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

Milds Kings, 11 mg. "tar", 0 .8 mg. nicotine; Filter Kings, 17 mg. "tar", 1.1 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette, FTC Report Mar. '84.

al weight not simply of hopeless romance, but of a prayer for long promised freedom. Victory, indeed.

Most of the remaining tunes are less climactic, but scarcely less engaging. Randy's ballad "One More Chance" features his pretty keyboard playing and could be a sleeper in the manner of "Human Nature" on *Thriller*. "The Hurt," also by Randy, lopes along in an easy groove reminiscent of the S.O.S. Band's seductive "Just Be Good To Me," although his falsetto is so wispy that the melody tends to drift out of focus even upon repeated listenings. Tito is probably the least distinctive singer in the group, but his reggae-ish "We Can Change The World" possesses a tough, political edge to it that balances the album's lighter material. Marlon's "Body" (as in "Girl, I want your...") most closely recaptures the boyish exuberance of the J5, albeit with more salacious lyrics and a rhythm copped from Michael's "Wanna Be Startin' Something."

Ironically, it is with Michael's compositions, counted to carry the baton on the last leg of this family relay team, where *Victory* fails to bring home the gold. The duet with Mick Jagger, "State of Shock," is Michael's crack at a Stones-like rocker. But guitarist David Williams and a Linn drum machine are no substitute for Keith and Charlie, and the combination of Michael's girlish squealing and Jagger's geriatric grunting about his need for "mouth to mouth resuscitation" (so help him, Michael) is just silly. CBS may feel the need to increase Jagger's hipness quotient somewhat before releasing his solo album this fall, but there's at least four other cuts on *Victory* far superior to "State of Shock" and, indeed, more representative of the *Jacksons'* work than this.

The less said about "Be Not Always," Michael's most embarrassing episode on vinyl, the better. "Faces, did you see their faces/Did they touch you?" he declaims, while the violins rise like weeds in the spring behind him. The image one is left with is that of a rich, lonely man cruising around in the back of a limo trying to imagine how hard life must be for those out in the street. Well, you're right, *brotha*, it's hard, and thanks for the poignant pause so's we can get out our handkerchiefs after your voice cracks with sympathy. We'd invite you down to the corner, but we wouldn't want you to get your glove dirty . . . Hey, we loves ya, baby, but next time you want to get *serious* on us, check with Quincy first.

Marlon has said that this will be the last Jacksons tour with Michael, but that they will continue to record together. The cost of nose jobs aside, *Victory* demonstrates that the talent is here to go it alone if necessary, and to meet any dark and ignoble backlash down in the street head on. Without the knockout blow only Michael could have provided, however, the best they could hope for is a split decision.

RUN-DMC
Run-D.M.C.

Profile

By Greg Tate

Punk might be dead, but like rock 'n' roll, the hip-hop revolution (meaning breakdancing, rapping, graffiti and scratch deejaying) is here to stay, having brough with it more fresh ideas and energy than modern pop has heard since Sid Vicious and the Summer of Hate. While the death of rap has been predicted as often as the death of rock was back in its early days, the music's innate vitality, borne of stylized improvisation and repressed black urban energy, makes it capable of continual regeneration and innovation. Just when we think rap has exhausted itself, some brand new twist on this urban scatological form finds its way onto vinyl, dispelling once again the death chants frequently hurled hip-hop's way. Good case in point being Run-D.M.C.'s hit of last summer, "Sucker MC/ It's Like That," which *ruled* the beat boxes held by the B-boys in my Brooklyn neighborhood. Fusing the unrelenting drum machine bombast of Afrika Bambaataa and the Soulsonic Force's "Planet Rock" with more inventive wordplay than had been heard since "The Message," Run-D.M.C. and musical director Krush brought a new synthesis of sound and statement to rap: brash, semi-socially conscious, very street wise and almost viciously verbal. "Sucker MC," in particular, with its sendup of the internecine class superiority black folks sometimes run on each other, reminded me of playground days when working class kids would ridicule those who came from homes subsisting on welfare.

Run-D.M.C.'s debut LP proves them not to be a rap version of the One Hit Johnnies of the world; it is, in fact, perhaps the most consistent and daring rap album ever released, with the possible exception of Flash's *The Message*. As with the single, the jams on the album divvy up equal time between Run-D.M.C.'s superbad variations on rap's boasting and toasting tradition and pieces more in the area of sociopolitical commentary. Whichever form they use, however, Run-D.M.C. impress for their hardcore B-boy attitude and arrogance. They might want to make it big but they aren't about to give up an inch of turf or roots to do it (you want to deal with them, you got to do it on their terms, dig it?).

Known in rap lingo as a twoman crew, Run-D.M.C. makes effective use of a distinctive style that finds them constantly trading off or re-emphasizing lines in a staggered, staccato manner; the effect gives their rapping a booming, echoey kind of quality. Significantly, their gifts at eccentric rapidfire eleocution are matched by ones for startling, satirical and sharp phrasemaking. My favorite line from the boastful side of their work comes in the current hit, "Rockbox": "Calvin Klein is no friend of mine/Don't want nobody's name on my behind." Of the socially relevant stuff the most pointed and poignant is "Wake Up," whose refrain of "It was a dream" plays off a detailed utopian vision of the world: "Everyone had an occupation/Because we all worked together to fight starvation/Everyone was treated on an equal basis/No matter what color, religions or races/We weren't afraid to show our faces/It was cool to chill in foreign places."

The record's stellar track, though, is the previously mentioned "Rockbox," which is nothing less than a staged confrontation between hip-hop and heavy metal. In it, guest guitarist Eddie Martinez's grunge powerchords and heroic riffs lock horns with deejay Jazzy Jay's scratch methods and Krush's synth and beat box percussion hooks. The duo's macho rap attack over top of this post-"Rockit" meltdown of hard rock and hip-hop bears down heavy and damn near buries the metal with its exuberant braggadocio, especially when the bloods shout how their deejay is baaadder than all those bands out there (giving Jazzy

Jay his cue to cut, strut and scratch his stuff). Last I'd heard the single had sold over 800,000 copies, with as many going to white kids as to black. Excepting "The Message" no other rap record had made as deep a penetration into mainstream pop culture, but given a followup as hardhitting and innovative as their debut, Run-D.M.C. look to be the homeboys who'll forge hip-hop's next big breakthrough into the American pop consciousness without considering compromise or giving quarter.

ICE CREAM CASTLE
The Time
Warner Bros.

THE GLAMOROUS LIFE
Sheila E.
Warner Bros.

By Craig Zeller

Besides knowing how to look sharp for the camera, what else do Sheila E. and the Time have in common? Well, they're both managed by Cavallo, Ruffalo and Fargnoli, and both of their albums were produced by the Starr Company. Translated into English, this means they've both been blessed with what we music biz insiders like to call the Prince connection (see, Minneapolis's main man is managed by the same team as the others, and it seems as if he *is* the Starr Company).

The good news about the Time is that on each album they get a little more interesting and leave behind a little more bullshit. The bad news is that with *Ice Cream Castle,* their third LP, they still come off as slavish disciples to the sound of Mr. 1999, with none of his vision and about half as many urges. The group (basically a showcase for lead singer-songwriter Morris "Gangster of Lust" Day) continually sounds like a hosed-down outtake from *Dirty Mind* or *Controversy*. For them, that's probably a left-handed compliment; for you and me it's shoulder-shrugging time.

I'll admit that "The Bird" may shake a few tail feathers on the dance floor. I'll also come clean and tell you that the title cut is one of the coolest things they've ever pulled off, rocking you back and forth very smoothly. But the rest is strictly small-time stuff. "Chili Sauce" epitomizes their dorked-out seduction fantasies, and worse still is "If The Kid Can't Make You Come" (probably a reference to Prince's lead character in *Purple Rain*,where Morris and Co. make a lasting impression), a dim-witted slow grind extravaganza that—ahem—takes ages to reach a climax. The main problem with this bunch isn't getting it up—it's keeping it up.

Much more to my liking is Sheila E.'s *The Glamorous Life*. When I first saw her staring at me in a most provocative way on the cover, I naturally assumed the E. stood for Erotic. Actually, she's the daughter of West Coast percussion whiz Pete Escovedo, and it turns out she's a chip off the old block in that department.

Sheila's recorded a pair of albums with her dad but this is the first time she's on her own. The Prince influence is there but not in a way that's imitative or overt. The six songs she unveils on this EP (she wrote or co-wrote everything) are most impressive. "The Belle of St. Mark" is an exciting head-over-high-heels opener in which Sheila, with her devil-or-angel vocals, lets loose with some unabashed passion. "Oliver's House" is as bizarrely enticing as "Next Time Wipe You Lipstick Off Your Collar" is tingingly sultry (love the way she lasciviously lectures on the latter cut).

Not surprisingly, the head-and-shoulders standout here is the title cut wherein Sheila goes after high living with an exuberant lunge that'll have you racing your engines. It's the kind of heel-clicking thrill seeker that makes you wanna take the curve on two wheels. And, brother, does she raise some thunder on those drums! Ever see that video where she's whacking out the rhythm in a gleeful frenzy? I just did and it's time for another cold shower. All in all, I'm not sure I'd give you the Time of Day, because it's the glamorous life for me.

CAMOUFLAGE
Rod Stewart
Warner Bros.

By Jonathan Gregg

Rod Stewart has for a long time managed to strike a balance between canny and crass that, while hardly earning him points for artistic merit, has until recently produced a fair string of hits. Even as he mired himself deeper and deeper into the Rodeo Drive set of rock and rollers like a spandex Tom Jones, a song like "Young Turks" at least showed a certain shrewdness and flair for combining contemporary styles into a vehicle for himself.

This is not the case with *Camouflage*, however. From the formulaic I'm-hot-let's-boogie randiness of "Infatuation" through the atrocious misinterpretation of Free's "All Right Now" to the bald-faced Prince rip-off of the title track, this is for the most part a hollow and uninspired record. The badder and more modern Stewart tries to sound, the flatter he falls on his face, and although Jeff Beck lends a fiery hand to three cuts, good guitar solos do not good songs make. The other musicians provide heavy-handed synth-oriented support under the guidance of producer Michael Omartian, a born again Christian whose printed disclaimer of the lyrical content of the song "Bad For You" is easily the album's most self-serving, hypocritical—and thus perfectly appropriate—moment. (I just hope his bank account is sanctified as well, being full as it is with the money made from the Devil's music.)

In spite of these aberrations, Stewart remains one of the best singers around, one of the few rockers capable of actually singing on a ballad. That, along with a relatively subdued production, makes "Hearts On The Line" and Todd Rundgren's "Can We Still Be Friends" quite enjoyable. Of the rockers, only the Stewart-produced "Bad For You" manages to work up a little sweat, at least alluding to the kind of vocal/harmonica/guitar raveup that spawned both him and Beck way back when. And although "Trouble," the closing number, is somewhat sappy, the heartfelt reading given it makes the tune infinitely preferable to the shallowness of the get-down posturing that is so poorly disguised elsewhere on *Camouflage*.

IN THE STUDIO WITH THE SPECIAL AKA
The Special AKA
Chrysalis

By Crispin Sartwell

This record is both rivetting and heartfelt, which is meant to convey that you should buy it. Jerry Dammers, who founded the Specials, here proves himself to be one of the most spectacularly sensible people in pop. Every noise on *In The Studio With...* is there for a good reason, and the result is an album that simultaneously charms and challenges, delights and disturbs.

From simple love songs to sophisticated political anthems, Dammers and his crew create music that's utterly assured and profoundly innovative. And though this is obviously a smart band, they're not too smart to make simple pop, or too proud to employ the traditional strategies of soul, reggae and jazz.

Typical in this regard is "Bright Lights," which opens the album. The song clearly falls into the 2 Tone ska style that Dammers helped create, and on that level it possessed as much beat and as much bite as anything the Specials ever recorded. But

there is a smoky soulfulness in Dammers' organ and Rhoda Dakar's voice that breaks new ground for the ska movement. Songs like "Alcohol" and "Night On The Tiles" are even more startling: they effortlessly blend ska with swing to create a coherent, joyful new dance music. Dammers is so completely at ease in so many idioms that he hears and exploits generic connections that are not audible to the rest of us until he makes them so.

The centerpiece of the album is "Free Nelson Mandela," a plea for the release of a black leader who has been held for over twenty years in a South African prison. The song (produced by Elvis Costello, and featuring backing vocals by Lynval Golding, Dave Waheling, and Ranking Roger, went Top Ten in Britain) can be heard as the summation of the British ska style; it is also perhaps the first song produced by any of the exponents of that style which embodies an absolutely authentic reading of the original Jamaican ska form. And it perfectly reflects the political aspirations that motivated the 2 Tone artists—the British bands wanted music to *matter*, and "Free Nelson Mandela" matters as much as anything they ever produced.

In The Studio With The Special AKA is an important album. It celebrates a marvelous tradition even as it establishes a new one. And it demonstrates conclusively that there are musicians out there whose brains are matched by their guts.

BEAT STREET
Various Artists
Atlantic

BREAKIN'
Various Artists
Polydor

By Laurice Niemtus

Being a critic is a tough life. When you take a hard-and-fast opinion, no matter how well-reasoned, the outpouring of scorn is immediate and ugly. And yet when your opinion is softer and less certain, the masses sneer at your equivocating.

That's the position I find myself in with *Breakin'* and *Beat Street*, two excellent soundtracks from summer movies whose purpose is to explain a foreign culture called hip-hop to the mainstream millions. Hip-hop—also called the Zulu Nation by its practitioners—is about break dancing, rapping, spinning and mixing. It is about the streets and the sounds they've been generating lately.

If that's so, then *Beat Street* has to be the better record here, since even a white girl like me can feel the foreign vibes and funky fury of Grandmaster Melle Mel and the Furious Five's opening "Beat Street Breakdown." The whole philosophy is right there, if you've got the courage: "Search for justice, what do you find?/ You find just us in the unemployment line." And by the time side one closes with Afrika Bambaataa and the Soulsonic Force's "Frantic Situation," that's exactly how we feel.

We have been shown and shown good that life in 1984 is not all Sunday brunch and sunny beach trips. No siree, we're talking deprivation and discrimination here, poverty and even protest! That's not to mention the strange things engineers can do to songs in the studios nowadays.

Take those drums on Athur Baker's "Breaker's Revenge," for instance. After kicking you in the gut, they start slip-sliding all around the beat, which then becomes defined by scratching sounds while over the top, a funky, jazzed-up honky tonk piano knocks out the tune, punctuated by hefty male chants and occasional screaming saxes. If you don't feel like dancing to this, you may be suffering from the dreaded white man's disease and you'd better check with the family physician. But if you *do* feel like dancing, you'd better check on what you're dancing *about*, too.

Ditto for that dangerously slinky "Beat Street Strut" from Juicy that opens side two. In fact, only Ruben Blades' 'Tu Car-

ino/Carmen's Theme" cools things down at all, and just when you're starting to think things aren't all that foreign, you notice Ruben's native tongue is Spanish.

Breakin', to its detriment here, doesn't do any of this; white girls and white boys will hardly ever feel left out. In fact, there's familiar old Chaka Khan belting out "Ain't Nobody" in possibly her most transcendent performance yet. And there's the Bar-Kays' "Freakshow On The Dance Floor," which is to real hip-hop what Anne Murray is to country music, and the smoothed out "Breakin...There's No Stoppping Us," which is nothing more than an "Flashdance" clone.

When it comes to hip-hop, any record that's more concerned about potential Grammy nominees than explaining the scene has to fall short. But "Heart of the Beat" (mixed by John "Jellybean" Benitez), Chaka's piece and "Reckless," all on side two, can get you up and moving fast. But while *Breakin'* has more "hits," it's also too safe, too recognizable, too *non-foreign* to teach you anything. And that's a shame.

PARADE
Spandau Ballet
Chrysalis

By Laura Fissinger

Next to rich and respected, most rock musicians dream of being review-proof. By making music equal in its plusses and minuses, Spandau Ballet come close. Their fourth LP, *Parade*, is too deft to pan, too bloodless to praise. If head honcho/songwriter/guitarist/keyboard player Gary Kemp is as ambitious and clever as his interviews suggest, this must be no small victory. You can get on these guys for their costume changes, their "we make old rock look old" raps, but you can't get on them for their music.

Parade's strongest cuts—"Only When I Leave," "Fly," "Round and Round," "With The Pride"—renew their membership in the ranks of rock's stealthiest scavengers. The heisting is harder to spot than on last year's *True* (paradoxically, the better LP of the two), and done with more affability, but done all the same. The plus to cancel the minus is Kemp's clever conceit of borrowing in increments too small and numerous to form a solid body of incriminating evidence: a ringing Merseybeat chord here, a blue-eyed soul rhythm guitar riff there, a quick cascade of undeniably tasty jazz piano. The heavy rock drumming and Tony Hadley's crooning keep you distracted with grand gestures while Kemp craftily manipulates the details. While breaking down a soul/AOR/art rock/dance rock mosaic like "Nature of the Beast" becomes a game for puzzle freaks only, no one can argue that the pieces fit.

Spandau's glibness still makes for good target practice, but not as good as before. Lyrics are inching away from mock profundity; Tony Hadley's singing is a little less Vegas; Kemp is not quite as insolent in

NOISE TO GO

By Ira Robbins

The American underground continues to thrive (creatively, if not financially) as bands from coast to coast produce and issue independent records that cover a veritable universe of styles. With the assistance of budding small labels and cooperative distributors, independent music is making a significant contribution to the world of rock 'n' roll; still, the challenge is to bring together musicmakers and audiences. In that pursuit, here's a sampling of recent albums that merit notice.

Meat Puppets II (SST Records, Box 1, Lawndale, CA 90260.) finds the California trio forging a unique mixture of country and punk, skidding past the genteel sweetness of Rank and File to balance the aggression of speedrock with the melodic subtlety of Southwestern folk music. Sometimes combining the two, sometimes alternating screaming guitar distortion on one track with pretty acoustic balladry on the next, the Meat Puppets have crafted an album of rare range and power. An odd wrinkle, to be sure, but an ace effort from a talented and developing band not content with any one genre.

From the land of Paul Revere and the Raiders comes a clever rocking pop album, *The Fabulous Sounds of the Pacific Northwest* (Popllama Product, Box 95364, Seattle, WA 98145), by **The Young Fresh Fellows**, a sharp quartet with substantial instrumental skill, singing ability and songwriting imagination. On fifteen cuts with titles like "Teenage Dogs In Trouble" and "Rock 'N' Roll Pest Control," the Fellows skirt past cuteness and comedy with convincing melodies and upbeat playing. With a between-song mock narrative on the joys of their area, this is a clever pop-rock treat with that certain something to distinguish it from the competition.

Despite an unnervingly English sound, tuneful synth and guitar foursome **Ten Ten** hails from Richmond, VA. The exuberance and sophistication of their *Ordinary Thinking* LP (Generic Records, Box 7054, Richmond, VA 23221), belies the band's youth and indie status—any major label should be thrilled to have an LP this impressive, both technically and musically. Falling somewhere between U2 and Ultravox without being really derivative of either, Ten Ten sounds like a band primed for its push into the big time. Any takers?

Minimal Man, another San Francisco band, tests the edge of rock on *Safari* (CD Presents, 1230 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94133), a noisy assemblage of throaty rock and melodramatic vocals with extraneous electronic effects adding to the confusion. There's enough in the way of songs to keep things in check, but some of the sounds are not for the fussy or faint-hearted. This is an album for seriously strange people who like their music to roar.

Chicago's **Effigies** also pull no punches on their first LP, *For Ever Grounded* (Enigma Records, Box 2896, Torrance, CA 90509). Artless, loud (but not fast) guitar rock supports intelligent lyrics that stay just this side of pretentious—you wouldn't call this musical, but neither is it blurry or indistinguishable like so much bad hardcore. The Effigies are earnest and energetic, honest punks with thoughts that extend way beyond the usual fare.

The Raffeys are—or at least claim to be—New Orleans' leading independent band, and their strange album, *Eep Snorpsh Now!* (Weams Records, Box 15546, New Orleans, LA 70175), is impressive evidence of their quirky charm. Unpredictable shards of musical influences lunge out of generally poppy rock tunes; loopy vocals and occasionally deranged lyrics suggest XTC, but that wouldn't quite cover their madness, either. This is one fine album you have to hear for yourself.

After one excellent but overlooked album released on A&M in 1982, **Willie Phoenix** is back in Ohio, going the do-it-yourself route. His low-budget release, *We Love Noise* (Shadow Records, Box 151521, Columbus, OH 43215), again showcases a great if unpolished singer/songwriter/guitarist/producer who deserves a better chance than the one he got. Straight ahead rock 'n' roll that recalls both the Stones and Graham Parker, this is believable, sincere and gutsy rock with lyrics to match. Not on the cutting edge, Willie Phoenix is nonetheless a talented guy gone indie as a means to accomplish what major label inattention couldn't.

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his display of skill. We don't get any new classics like "Chant #1" or the couch-passioned "True"—what we get is a small but imperceptible helping of ingenuous enthusiasm, an adolescent looseness and fun that Spandau never offered during their New Romantic phase. And what could silence doubters faster than the charm of reclaimed youth? Even critics have a hard time picking on kids.

SHUT UP AND KISS ME
Whamarama
Flipside

GUEST OF THE STAPHS
The Wind
Cheft

FURTHERMORE WHAT
Oh-OK
dB

By Christopher Hill

When music is described as playful, it's often taken to mean simply lightweight. But take away the sense of play, and you take the heart out of not only pop music, but just about any kind of folk music, rock 'n' roll most definitely included. These three EPs by three southern bands are linked not only by their notion of pop music as a giant playground, but by their producer, the very hot Mitch Easter of North Carolina.

Whamarama's contemporary R&B revival is the least successful of the lot. You can see what attracted Easter—their lightheartedness and almost abstract instrumental sparsity mirror his own predilections. But that like-mindedness hasn't really served Whamarama well. Their Motownisms cry out for a punched-up rhythm section, thumping bass and crashing snares. Without it, they can go through all the proper motions on a song like "One Good Deed" and still sound oddly rote and cheerless. Still, "Shut Me Out" gets to be more fun because it's hyper in a Van Morrison sort of way, and "Some Kind of Clue" even catches an echo of Booker T.

Superficially, the Winds appear constructed along the same lines, but these guys are out and out popsters, and "Sureshot" will show you that pure pop can also mean high energy. Easter weaves a magic circle of sound around the band—a net of vibrating bass and sharp hand-clap explosions—until the sounds get almost as dense as the Knickerbockers' "Lies." These guys claim Big Star as their role model; where they might lack Alex Chilton's crazy originality, a song like "House On Fire" will surely get your feet moving more than that band ever did.

Oh-OK won't be going to anybody's sock hop—maybe to some Gothic high tea on the lawn of an antebellum mansion gone to seed. These Georgia musicians (one of them the sister of R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe) sing with the affectless flatness of the questionably sane, like Moe Tucker did with the Velvets. But southern spookiness is only one of the notes they play; "Chouboutien," drifty and dreamy, sounds like soundtrack music for some black and white English movie from 1966. And "Elaine's Song" crystallizes their moody archaism with a minor key drone out of English balladry. It's all a little bit like being invited to some secret room where young girls solemnly play out a cryptic game without giggling, even once.

At a moment in rock music when a lot of performers feel they've got to have a flag to wave to justify their existence, the influence of producer Easter and this new vein of talent from the south is a reminder of the rich breadth and depth inside the simple notion of playfulness. (Flipside Records, 105 Ventura Dr., Sanford, FL 32771; Cheft Records, 211-15 50th Avenue, Bayside, NY 11364; dB Records, 432 Moreland Ave. NE, Atlanta, GA 30307.)

VINYL EXAMS

GRAPHIC SHADOWS
For Altars And Firesides /Explicit

Graphic Shadows is actually Greg Lief, a one-man band who plays striking, commercially oriented new wave on various synthesizers and keyboards. This guy clearly wants to give you your money's worth; *For Altar and Firesides*, recorded on a portable four-track studio, is over forty minutes long, and a message on the cover tells the buyer that "if you paid more than $3.99 for this record, you paid too much." And that's clearly no commentary on the quality of the music therein contained. (Explicit Records, 1500 Massachusetts Ave. NW #305, Washington, D.C. 20005.) —**Crispin Sartwell**

HANOI ROCKS
Back To Mystery City /PVC-Jem

Come with me to the land of lead singers. Of pouts and high heels, tight pants and long hair. Where it always 1973, "fun" still seems like a political stance, and heavy metal and nascent punk are united in the aesthetic of energy. Comparisons are made to the Dolls; unfortunately, Hanoi Rocks' general plod will remind you more of Aerosmith. Still, "Malibu Beach Nightmare" and the title cut are at least good enough to evoke the sassy songcraft, jubilant chaos and total cool of the lonely planet boys who were, for a season, the world's greatest rock 'n' roll band —**Christopher Hill**

ENNIO MORRICONE
Once Upon A Time In America (soundtrack) /Mercury

Sergio Leone's 1960s' spaghetti westerns became cult items not just because of their bloody, tight-lipped style, but because Ennio Morricone's evocative music for them was itself startling and moving. Those familiar with the soundtrack to *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly* will be surprised by the more restrained, traditional music created for Leone's gangster epic. But the lush, romantic classical style dominating the score is not only appropriate to the Old World background of the movie's characters, it serves as lyrical counterpoint to Leone's orchestrated violence. If the jury is still out on the film, pending projected autumn screenings of the full-length, uncut version, there's no question as to the credit which should be directed Morricone's way —**Wayne King**

THE OJAYS
Greatest Hits /Philadelphia International

The O'Jays Greatest Hits, though somewhat haphazardly compiled, is the story of the O'Jays at Philly International, the label where they continue to do fine work (check out this year's *Love And More* for proof). It would help us to understand their seminal '70s style better if the sequencing were chronological instead of random, but the O'Jays, like most harmony groups, didn't flourish during the disco era. Of course, even under the best of circumstances, it would have proven hard to follow up a new beginning (they'd been recording since the early '60s before hooking up with Gamble and Huff) that started with "Backstabbers," a thrilling record important to the socially conscious black pop cycle that began with Sly Stone earlier in the decade. —**W.K.**

PLASTICLAND
Color Appreciation /Lolita (import)

The inherent silliness of the early psychedelic fops-in-wonderland style is getting a lot more obvious as it's forced through its paces eighteen years on. Plasticland, though, is somehow more convincing than most of L.A.'s paisley brigade. Perhaps it's because they seem to acknowledge the implicit ridiculousness of their pseudo-genre ("Grooving on every flake in your scalp/'Cause it's you"), or maybe they because they try to inject some non-campy rock 'n' roll power into their performances. None of that, of course, answers the central question of why anyone would choose to do so in the first place. —**C.H.**

ELVIS PRESLEY
The Hillbilly Cat /The Music Works-JEM

Oddly, the liner notes and narration to this second EP of vintage *Louisiana Hayride* performances take a sort of adversary stance towards Presley. The question of just how special this "hillbilly cat" was is posed and left unanswered; it's suggested that Elvis stopped growing when he left live performance, and that Tom Parker's guts, gifts and skill made Elvis a legend. It's a strange undercurrent, maybe a fluke, but, along with the fact that this record is overpriced by about 100%—$5.98 list for 8 minutes of music!—it begins to give you the creeps. Too bad, since some of these tracks, especially the take of Ray Charles' "I Got A Woman," capture a performer just starting to sense the ferocious power of his own charisma. —**C.H.**

RUBBER RODEO
Scenic Views /Mercury

We've heard several versions of the punk/country synthesis since first we slammed to Rubber Rodeo's version of "Tumblin' Tumbleweeds," but these guys remain by far the best band working the field. Bands like Rank and File and the Meat Puppets sound positively inept when stacked up against these alumni of the Rhod Island School of Design. They lay twanging guitar over propulsive, dance-oriented rhythm tracks, and the approach has never been more coherent and effective than on this album. With *Scenic Views*, Rubber Rodeo demonstrates that its project is much more than a joke or gimmick. —**C.S.**

PATRICE RUSHEN
Now /Elektra

Patrice Rushen is one of the most pleasing performers in black pop, and here she surpasses herself. As usual, Patrice arranges, produces, writes most of the songs and plays most of the instruments. That gives her complete control, which she employs to make music of glowing simplicity. She's that rare creature, a classical- and jazz-trained musician who can create pop that's absolutely bare of pretensions. And she has never done so as beautifully as she does here on a song like "Feels So Real," the gentle funk hit which opens the album. —**C.S.**

SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY
In The Heat /Mirage

John Lyon s career has suffered already from being first in Bruce Springsteen's shadow, then Steve Van Zandt's. Worse yet has been the too-little-too-late syndrome: the last record for Epic, *Hearts of Stone*, was an unacknowledged classic, the final studio album for Mercury a low-key gem. On the heel's of '83's Nile Rogers' produced fiasco, *Trash It Up*, comes a record that could serve as fond farewell. The sense of space crucial to the Jukes' soul band roots is evident here in the light synth backing and tasty horn charts, and the final track, a cover of Tom Waits' "New Coat of Paint," fittingly closes out matters with a harmonica/piano/horns sound that harks back to their first great song, Springsteen's "The Fever." If it's three strikes and out in this ball game, too, Johnny, at least you went down swinging. —**W.K.**

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
"Dancing in the Dark" (Blaster Mix) /"Pink Cadillac"/CBS Import

This British 12" neatly places two songs together that raise some pertinent questions about Bruce "Don't Call Me Boss" Springsteen. The "Dancing" remix, one of three given *Born in the U.S.A.*'s first single, caused all sorts of consternation among Bruce die-hards, who couldn't handle the usual Arthur Baker effects. Of course, with "Cover Me" due next for the remix treatment, it makes one wonder whether or not Bruce now considers some of the songs it takes years to get in their album arrangements to be commodities eligible for whatever promotional/commercial reconfiguration is necessary to sell them. "Pink Cadillac" simply reworks a longer standing problem: why does a tune superior to at least a few of the LP's not make it onto the final product? —**W.K.**

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Bachelor Party (soundtrack) /I.R.S.

Generally, soundtracks to movies like *Bachelor Party* bite the big one, to use the proper lingo, but this LP proves to be a minor exception. While no soundtrack could be considered great that relies on the normally unflammable Fleshtones kick off matters, it must be noted that they come up with what qualifies as their hottest track ever in the proud rocker, "American Beat." Otherwise, R.E.M.'s "Wind Out" is nearly worth theprice of admission for its throbbing pulse, and any slab of vinyl with Darlene Love's name on it—even one which has her fighting off a synthed-up backing on the old comic book epic "Alley Oop"—is worth owning. —**W.K.**

AMERICAN ROCK

Continued from page 19

where you're selling your soul. We let I.R.S. pick our latest single, "So. Central Rain," because they have to sell the damn thing. But we'd never let them tell us how to record the song. It's a thin line, and I can imagine someone saying that the band should pick its own single.

The attitude that you have to make your own decisions out of what you feel means that you have to be willing to make mistakes. And bands that aren't afraid to make mistakes can find support. I think there is a core of about a quarter of a million people in America who are genuinely interested in music and have a wide range of tastes. They buy a lot of independent label records and look for interesting things that don't have to be the coolest new trend.

Music simply doesn't mean that much to most of the people who buy records. I'm 27, and I own one piece of furniture, a ratty old couch given to me out of of pity by R.E.M's manager, Jefferson Holt. I'm sure there are people who'd be shocked by the way I live, just as I'm shocked when I got to someone's house and see nothing but John Denver, Barry Manilow and Chicago records. How could they listen to that? Well they *don't*. That's their version of my crummy couch.

I like to think it makes a difference when somebody listens to R.E.M., just as it makes a difference to me when I listen to the dB's, Jason and the Scorchers, the Minutemen or any number of contemporary bands. These bands may eventually appeal to a larger audience that responds differently, but I think people would be missing the point if they listened to this music in an entirely superficial way.

Bands on the alternative scene who are pursuing their individual visions—sometimes at the expense of monetary rewards—are interrelated, even if they don't sound remotely alike. The relationship among these groups isn't exclusively, or even primarily, musical. What connects them is their attitude, their belief that to follow their heart is more important than to follow trends. On a more practical level, they help each other get dates, find places to stay, and so on. This word-of-mouth network has helped R.E.M. a great deal and helps these bands feel a sense of shared purpose.

I don't know if any or all of these bands will eventually be famous, rich or even remembered, but as a movement they're inspiring kids to pick up instruments and work in ways that aren't prescribed. I talk to kids all the time who are excited by bands like R.E.M. because, first of all, they like our music; but mostly because we show that you don't have to knuckle under to the dictates of the music business to be successful. They're excited by the fact that what we've done is possible. If these kids form bands, they'll probably make music that sounds nothing like us, but I feel that in attitude and approach we'll have made a lasting impression.

The best motive for new bands is to want to play the music that means the most to them. No one can be wholly original, but you can try to approach music from your own perspective, from the heart.

Part of the premise of the punk movement was the idea that anyone could do it. When I started listening to rock 'n' roll as a kid, it was like I had formed a secret club of one. I spent all those years, in a way, rehearsing for R.E.M. If R.E.M. or any of the other bands I mentioned can ever affect kids today like I was affected by the music I listened to, that's as worthy a survival as we could want. ○

LOU REED

Continued from page 47

I was very aware of something close to that. Obviously I said, "I'm going to call this by the same title as 'Heroin,' but it's a different word." And by that I meant exactly what you just said. The heroine was the most potent thing. Absolutely. There's no way somebody who listens to my records won't see that "The Heroine"—and it's done, again, with just one guitar and voice—brings it back to "Heroin." It's inescapable. But it's nice that there's over 10 years between them.

"The Day John Kennedy Died" is a great song, very moving.

It took me a long time to even write it. That's one of those songs of mine that's verbatim true. And it's me talking. That's not a character. That's me.

It reminds me of your line, "Why can't anyone shed one tear for the things that never happen?"

Oh, from "All Through The Night." I like the words to that. That's more or less about playing in a band. It's just one of those rhetorical questions. And later on, in the John Kennedy song, I did shed a tear. One little tear.

I've said this before: what if Raymond Chandler approached rock 'n' roll? Well, you might get *Street Hassle*. What if a real writer came in? Just like they brought real writers like Faulkner out to Hollywood to write screenplays. That's what I wanted to do in a rock 'n' roll format. I'm still at it. It's like sitting and listening to Brecht and Weill's "Song for the Seven Deadly Sins"; there's a song for every sin out there. There's endless things to write about. You could do that with rock, too. That's what I want to do. ○

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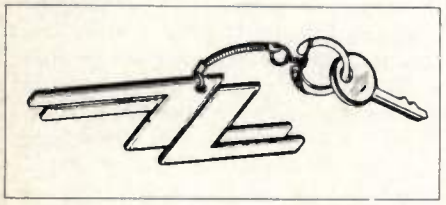

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SOMETHIN' HAPPENIN' HERE

ANTHONY DECURTIS

Except for the Brit-punk detonation, the '70s and early '80s offered little to listeners who like social significance to spike their sounds. The surreal remoteness of huge stadium and arena shows by demigod pop stars publicly dramatized the chasm of alienation those years cracked between bands and their audience, between the world of millionaire entertainers and the everyday concerns of working people.

While that chasm has in no way been fully bridged, politically conscious music has resurged in the last few years from many (sometimes surprising) sources and for many reasons. If this trend continues, the conviction that the music *matters*—the renewed belief that rock 'n' roll must speak to public issues—could spark the most intense work of this decade's second half.

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U2: Land-mining synth-cult cynicism

Despite an ideological confusion that makes it tough to determine exactly what "causes" they're advancing, the guitar-fired triumvirate of U2, Big Country and the Alarm land-mined the synth-cult cynicism that threatened to become this decade's musical keynote. With their emphasis on emotion and exaltation rather than issues, these bands are less strictly political than humanistic. Their songs extol freedom, individual self-worth, community and the importance of realizing that each person's actions make a difference.

In singing about the state of our souls, however, these groups create a moral context in which it's easier to examine the condition of our society and know the values we should be striving to instill. That U2 is currently recording with producer Brian Eno, whose pan-culturalism helped transform the whiter-than-you'll-ever-be Talking Heads into a funky rainbow coalition, promises continued positive developments in this sector.

Still on the British front, the reformed Clash stormed America this year, while ex-Jam-man Paul Weller's new duo, the Style Council, released a politically-charged debut LP, *My Ever Changing Moods*. Both Weller and Clash point man Joe Strummer have said and done dumb things in the recent past and been soundly castigated for them. But the Clash's excesses are largely symptomatic of the gargantuan pressures—exerted by "progressive" rock critics as much as anyone—that squeeze any group seeking to maintain an insurgent identity within Rock Music, Inc. The Style Council's Brechtian disc is extremely subversive and the Clash's live show (with an LP allegedly on the way) is incendiary; both deserve fairer hearings than they've gotten.

Meanwhile, on our fair shores, Bruce Springsteen's *Born in the U.S.A.* sharpens and makes contemporary the social vision defined on 1982's stark treatise, *Nebraska*. On *Nebraska*, Springsteen harkened back to the earlier folk tradition that eventually brought rock 'n' roll its public conscience in the folk-rock "protest" movement of the 1960s. This ominous blast from the past was especially dramatic at a time when President Reagan was encouraging the myth of an idyllic American golden age summarily disrupted when minorities, women and other upstarts began their incessant, infuriatingly puzzling whine.

On *Born in the U.S.A.*, Springsteen chronicles American working-class life in the wake of Vietnam, an economic "recovery" that benefits the managerial class almost exclusively, and external conditions that turn the patriotic fervor working people have always felt into a humiliating ironic joke. The triumph of *Born in the U.S.A.* is Springsteen's ability to depict the human cost of oppression without condescending to, sentimentalizing, or caricaturing the people whose lives form his subject.

Springsteen's sympathetic treatment of the American underclass doubtless inspired the tales of the ravaged urban and rural heartland on John Cougar's *Uh-Huh* and Tony Carey's *Some Tough City*. More surprisingly, former E Street Band guitarist Steve Van Zandt fixed his soulful gaze on the international scene and rocked out *Voice of America*, a virulent indictment of imperialism. Van Zandt's horror at the extent to which the American Dream has fostered nightmare realities in many foreign countries occasionally makes him yield subtlety to the sledge-hammer. But as a passionate document of one good man's harsh political awakening, *Voice* is a moving, bracing achievement.

With a focus on the Third World, radical dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson forges the links of *Making History* between the young blacks and Asians standing up for their rights in England's urban ghettos and the West Indian insurgents struggling for freedom half a world away. Panamanian Ruben Blades and his elegantly rhythmic Latin pop/rock combo, Seis del Solar, embark on an urgent poetic search for our hemisphere's moral center on *Buscando America (Looking for America)*, an album that captures musically the soul-charged "magical realism" of Colombian novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Rap took a political turn in 1982 with Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five's "The Message," a fierce minority report on the state of the streets, and Grand Master Melle Mel from that same group has followed up in 1984 with "Beat Street Breakdown," a politicized hymn to hip-hop culture. And even party-time funksters have gotten in on the political fun, with Cameo's "Talkin' Out the Side of Your Neck" unleashing a powerhouse election-year rant.

In the 1960s, the so-called counterculture became a consumer market almost as soon as it became a movement, so even Motown felt compelled to push its artists toward socially significant themes in order to meet the age's hipness quotient. (Not that the label was exactly thrilled when Marvin Gaye actually sang the inner city blues not as a marketing ploy but out of personal conviction.)

The range of developments I've noted here, however, have sprung up independent of any industry perception that politics is a hot seller. This may mean that something's really in the air—and nearly 20 years later you still know that it's right. ○

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