



QUIET RIOT'S KEVIN DUBROW: REVENGE OF THE NERD

RECORD

PAGE 30

NOVEMBER 1984
VOL. 4 NO. 1
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**LINDSEY
BUCKING-
HAM**

TAP CITY FOR
ROMANCE



PAGE 16

**ROMEO
VOID**

VALID AGAIN

**BRUCE
SPRINGSTEEN**

A REPORT FROM THE ROAD

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HEY, GOOBER!

ONE OF MY GRADUATE students brought me a copy of **RECORD** to show me that in Anthony DeCurtis' article about R.E.M. ("An Open Party," June), Peter Buck states that he is reading and discussing with his friends Thomas Pynchon's *V* and the story of *The Andy Griffith Show*. As the author of *The Andy Griffith Show* (John Blair Publisher, Winston-Salem, N.C.), I wanted to let your readers know that if rock groups can enjoy Andy of Mayberry, then the world is not yet lost!

I might add that Mayberry was a very musical place itself, and perhaps one day you will feature an essay on the Dillards, that wonderful bluegrass group who played the Darling Boys on Andy's show. And you might also pass on to Buck and other Mayberry fans that a new and expanded version of my book will appear this fall. Say "Hey" to Goober!

RICHARD KELLY
Professor of English and
Mayberry Freak
University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN

DEAR JOE...

"EVERY AMERICAN IS responsible for what their government does. If it ain't being done in your name, then whose name is it being done in?" Remember that fatuous generalization made by Joe Strummer in the June issue of **RECORD** ("The Mouth That Roared")?

I dare say that remark angered many Americans and rightly so.

Any government that's elected doesn't get put there by a 100 percent vote of the populace, so how can all of the people be blamed for its actions? I fail to understand how Strummer can comment on the American public when he doesn't even understand his own countrymen. "People in England are asleep," he says. "They don't realize what a fascist, racist press and police and government we've got." Is that so? Well, I know four million people on the dole who might disagree with Strummer on that point. I marked my X against Maggie at the last election (and the one before that) and so did many other working class people.

As for the British press, indeed, one particular paper is racist and filled with warmongering, anti-working class Tory piffle, but against that we also have a paper that is non-racist and pro-working class. As with any police force, there are a few rotten eggs, but many British policemen are not racists and do a good job with little thanks.

Politics is not Strummer's forte. How can he comment on Nicaragua when the closest he's probably been to that country is a visit to the local cinema, feet up, eating popcorn while watching *Under Fire*? If I want factual information on the politics involved, I'd rather listen to the common sense of someone like John Pilger, who's risked his life on many occasions to bring home the truth, than to some

jumped up little squirt who doesn't know his arse from his elbow.

TERENCE REEN
Basingstoke, Hants, England

MARTINIZING

YOUR AUGUST ISSUE story about my first Anniversary party ("Party Heart," Music Video Notes) contains the following: "Asked what the secret of his success is, Kahan had a simple answer: 'Good looking women. I love to work with them and they're all over my clips.'"

Well, not only did I not make such a moronic remark, I was never even asked the question. Had I been asked, however, I would have provided your writer with a very simple answer. Any success I've had is due to the efforts of the people who work with me. After 21 videos, made on budgets averaging \$45,000 and never exceeding \$60,000, we remain a team and continue to work the 24-hour shoots for the modest financial rewards that those budgets entail. There is no way I could execute the ambitious concepts I do without the support they provide. Not only is that the "secret" of my success, it is the reason why any piece of film is successful.

MARTIN KAHAN
New York, NY

ELVIS VIDEO

ALTHOUGH WE CONSIDER Martin Kahan to be one of

the top directors in the field, as of the printing of your article in the September issue of **RECORD** ("On the Set," Music Video Notes), neither RCA Video Productions nor the Elvis Presley Estate had made a selection among several submissions for the Elvis Presley video on "Blue Suede Shoes."

CHARLES J. MITCHELL
Vice President,
Program Production,
RCA Video Productions, Inc.
New York, NY

CAR SICKNESS

AFTER READING THE article on the Cars in the August **RECORD** ("Chasing the Cars"), I was furious at Ric Ocasek for his blatant remarks about his fellow band members. It sounds like Ric believes all the other Cars are inept musicians who are blessed by God to be in a band with the Supreme Ocasek and that they would be nothing if they did not have this great privilege. If Mr. Big Shot does "all the shit," as he says, then why did he bother to bring the band along with him on tour? Being so multi-talented, Ocasek should start the one-man band he is very capable of being and let the Cars use Ben Orr on all the vocals. The Cars would be better off, and neither they nor the fans would have to hear any more of Ocasek's obnoxious insults.

DAWN RACKLEY
Nashville, NC

See the October Letters for Ocasek's rebuttal—Ed.

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MILLER HIGH LIFE® PRESENTS

TOP 100 ALBUMS



1 PURPLE RAIN
Prince and The New Power Generation
Warner Bros.

2 BORN IN THE U.S.A.
Bruce Springsteen
Columbia

3 PRIVATE DANCER
Tina Turner
Capitol

4 SPORTS
Huntley Lewis & The News Chrysalis

5 HEARTBEAT CITY
The Cars
Elektra/Asylum

6 SHE'S SO UNUSUAL
Cyndi Lauper
Portrait CBS

7 CAN'T SLOW DOWN
Lionel Richie
Motown

8 NO BRAKES
John Waite
EMI-America

9 1100 BEL AIR PLACE
Julio Iglesias
Columbia

10 BREAKING HEARTS
Elton John
Geffen

11 BREAK OUT
The Pointer Sisters
A&M

12 MADONNA
Madonna
Warner Bros.

13 SOUNDTRACK
"Ghostbusters"
Arista

14 VICTORY
The Jacksons
Epic

15 SIGNS OF LIFE
Billy Squier
Capitol

16 OUT OF THE CELLAR
Ratt
Atlantic

17 REBEL YELL
Billy Idol
Chrysalis

18 THE WARRIOR
Scandal
Columbia

19 ELIMINATOR
ZZ Top
Warner Bros.

20 SOUNDTRACK
"Eddie and the Cruisers"
Scotti Bros. Epic

21 PHANTOMS
The Fixx
MCA

22 AN INNOCENT MAN
Billy Joel
Columbia

23 ICE CREAM CASTLE
The Time
Warner Bros.

24 STAY HUNGRY
Twisted Sister
Atlantic

25 LIGHTS OUT
Peter Wolf
EMI-America

26 THE LAST IN LINE
Dio
Warner Bros.

27 1984
Van Halen
Warner Bros.

28 CAMOUFLAGE
Rod Stewart
Warner Bros.

29 NEW SENSATIONS
Lou Reed
RCA

30 CHICAGO XVII
Chicago
Full Moon/Warner Bros.

31 METAL HEALTH
Quiet Riot
Pasha CBS

32 THE GLAMOROUS LIFE
Sheila E.
Warner Bros.

33 COULDN'T STAND THE WEATHER
Stevie Ray Vaughan
Epic

34 SELF CONTROL
Laura Branigan
Atlantic

35 PRIMITIVE
Neil Diamond
CBS

36 INTO THE GAP
Thompson Twins
Arista

37 LOVE LANGUAGE
Teddy Pendergrass
Elektra/Asylum

38 LOVE AT FIRST STING
The Scorpions
Mercury

39 LEGEND
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Island

40 MIDNIGHT MADNESS
Night Ranger
MCA

41 GO INSANE
Lindsey Buckingham
Elektra

42 SLIDE IT IN
Whitesnake
Geffen/Warner Bros.

43 BANANARAMA
Bananarama
Polygram

44 SOUNDTRACK
"Footloose"
Columbia

45 GOODBYE CRUEL WORLD
Elvis Costello
Columbia

46 THE BLITZ
Krokus
Arista

47 FIRST OFFENSE
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EMI-America

48 VOA
Sammy Hagar
Geffen

49 REFLECTIONS
Rick James
Motown

50 JUST THE WAY YOU
LIKE IT
The S.O.S. Band
Tabu

51 TOUCH
Eurythmics
RCA

52 TALK SHOW
The Go-Go's
I.R.S.



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59 BOX OF FROGS
Box of Frogs
Epic

60 DIFFORD AND TILBROOK
Difford and Tilbrook
A&M

61 BODY AND SOUL
Joe Jackson
A&M

62 RIGHT BY YOU
Steven Stills
Columbia

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HEART
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MCA

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Columbia

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Lakeside
Solar

78 STEALING FIRE
Bruce Cockburn
Gold Mountain/A&M

79 ALL FIRED UP
Fastway
Columbia

80 IN THE HEAT
Southside Johnny & The
Jukes
Mimco

81 OUT OF CONTROL
The Brothers Johnson
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82 IN ROCK WE TRUST
Y&T
A&M

83 THE ALLNIGHTER
Glen Frey
MCA

84 SEND ME YOUR LOVE
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85 WHAT'S NEW
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Asylum

86 SEVEN AND THE RAGGED TIGER
Duran Duran
Capitol

87 GRACE UNDER PRESSURE
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88 JAM ON REVENGE
Newcleus
Bachar

89 INSTINCTS
Romeo Void
Columbia

90 SUDDENLY
Billy Ocean
Jive/Arista

91 HONEYMOON SUITE
Honeymoon Suite
Warner Bros.

92 ALL OVER THE PLACE
Bangles
Columbia

93 NOW
Patrice Rushen
Elektra

94 MIRROR MOVES
Psychadelic Furs
Columbia

95 THE INTRODUCTION
Steve Morse
Band Elektra

96 MY EVER CHANGING MOODS
Style Council
Geffen/Warner Bros.

97 COLOUR BY NUMBERS
Culture Club
Epic

98 POINTS ON THE CURVE
Wang Chung
Geffen

99 VOICE OF AMERICA
Little Steven and the
Disciples of Soul
EMI-America

100 OCEAN RAIN
Echo & The Bunnymen
Sire

A man with curly hair, wearing a dark jacket, cargo pants, and boots, stands on a rocky shore. He is holding a cigarette in his right hand and a small object in his left. He is leaning against a rope that is part of a tent structure. In the background, there is a calm lake and a range of snow-capped mountains under a hazy sky. The overall tone is rugged and adventurous.

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R O C K O



Jettmania, anyone? Joan Jett, America's own ambassador of rock 'n' roll, established a beachhead in another country recently. Jett and her Blackhearts, who a few years back became the first U.S. rock band to play East Ger-

many, recently took Panama by storm. When a TV station gave out the address of her hotel, both hotel and station found themselves besieged by an estimated 5000 people. Jett and company escaped with the aid of the

National Guard and later got their chance to rock the South American republic. She's pictured above opening the locks to the Panama Canal (the equivalent of getting the key to the city here, one supposes), a rare honor for a for-

eigner; the last American to be accorded the privilege was another JJ, Jesse Jackson. The high-flying Jett then came back to the States to play a secret gig for the American athletes at the Los Angeles Olympic Village.



BOOKS

With so many of rock and roll's original practitioners going off to that big jukebox in the sky, the timing on three new book releases is merely exquisite. First up is Nick Tosches' *The Unsung Heroes of Rock 'N' Roll* (Scribner's, \$8.95). If Tosches' stories about such delectably obscure performers as Wanda Jackson, Cecil Gant, Jimmy Logsdon, etc., along with the better known pioneers like Big Joe Turner, Screamin' Jay Hawkins, Roy Brown aren't 100% accurate—and it's impossible to see how they could be—well, he's still captured the spirit, the stone cold craziness of rock that did a number, for better or worse, on everybody written about here...Add to this the oral history/biography, *The Life And Times of Little Richard* (Harmony, \$15.95), compiled by Charles White. With quotes from many of Richard's contemporaries and compatriots acting as a much needed reality factor, the currently Right Rev. Penniman lets us in on a life filled with enough sex and drugs and rock and roll to last the *Enquirer* 'til Doomsday...And Pantheon Books has just issued an updated version of Charlie Gillett's *The Sound of The City* (\$7.95). Gillett's massive research job into the earliest days of American rock was the first full length effort to treat the music legitimately when it appeared in the late '60s, and it remains one of the more informative.



Veteran Roxies Phil Manzanera and Andy Mackay recently announced on British TV that they've irrevocably split with co-founder, lounge lizard Bryan Ferry. So all systems are go for their new project, the Explorers, and their LP with Liverpool newcomer James Waith on vocals. Ferry, on the other hand, is keeping a low profile in New York as work proceeds on his solo record. But, according to his London spokesman, Ferry has nothing to say on the band's alleged split because there is none. The representative claims the band members are working on solo projects, something they've always done in the past.



WAXWORKS

Head gendarme Sting goes to work on a solo record following his appearance in the remake of *The Bride of Frankenstein* currently wrapping in Europe. The album, due after the first of the year, will be produced by I.R.S. recording act **Torch Song** (I.R.S., you'll recall, is the label run by Police manager Miles Copeland, hence the connection)... **Afrika Bambaataa**, fresh off his remarkable collaboration with **James Brown** on "Unity," has teamed up with **Public Image, Ltd.'s John Lydon**, on a record which will probably see the light of day under the name of **Time Zone**. Meanwhile, the status of **Bambaataa's Soul Sonic Force** is questionable at this time, following the late August arraignments of members **M.C. G.I.O.B.E.** and **Pow Wow** on federal bank robbery charges stemming from a 1981 hold-up... In an apparently successful attempt to knock *Chicago IV-Live at Carnegie Hall* off the record books, performance art-



A recent issue of *Sovetskaya Kultura*, a weekly published by the Communist Party Central Committee, noted that Michael Jackson abstains from drugs, drink and meat, is apolitical, sentimental, a devout Jehovah's Witness, and adores children. They ask: "Is that somebody to be imitated?" As for Jackson's political stance, the paper asserts he acknowledges the need to be "an honest Negro (who) respects his true masters and serves them adoringly." And, say the Bolsheviks, by undergoing plastic surgery in order to appear "100%

white," Jackson is better able to become "a fully entitled member of the consumer society." Meanwhile, many Jehovah's Witnesses are said to be less than thrilled with their fellow worshipper's fame, since the seeking of personal popularity is one of the religion's no-no's. And while Michael renounced the *Thriller* video in a recent issue of *Awake, a Witness* publication, church elders are confronted by a newer problem: a growing belief, especially among some younger followers, that Michael is the Messiah returned.

ist **Laurie Anderson** has a five-disc recording of her *USA* performances this year due out momentarily. For those who didn't get a chance to see the shows, you can follow the proceedings in *USA* (the book),

published by Harper and Row for \$19.95. Didn't realize how expensive it was to be an Anderson aficionado... Five of Philly's finest, the **Hooters**, have been signed by Columbia, no doubt on the strength of their recent

Antenna Records release, *Amore* (see *Vinyl Exams*, August RECORD)... In a nice bit of cross-cultural exchange, reggae artists **Black Uhuru** cover Little Steven's "Solidarity" on their new Island album, *Anthem*.



John Cafferty and the Beaver Brown Band tried unsuccessfully for years to beat a rap as Springsteen soundalikes. Since no label would touch them, they signed to do the music for a rock movie about a fictional band, *Eddie and the Cruisers*, but the picture stiffed upon release last year and dragged their soundtrack down with it. Then some cable channels showed the film this summer and the soundtrack took off, going gold as it reached the Top 20. It's still so hot, in fact, that their first real record, *Tough All Over*, due back in July, won't come out 'til '85. Having beat the comparisons to Bruce, Cafferty and company will now only have to compete with the Cruisers, a group that's never even existed.

YOU NAME IT...

The Del Fuegos call it rock 'n' roll

BOSTON—"Not too drunk. Not too sober. Just drunk enough." That's the way Del Fuegos guitarist and songwriter Dan Zanes described his quartet's onstage success formula.

For three years the Del Fuegos have been playing every club, bar, party and benefit within a 25-mile radius of Boston. Now that the band's debut Slash album, *The Longest Day*, has been released, the Del Fuegos are ready to take on the rest of the world.

The Del Fuegos play sprawling, crawling, grinding rock 'n' roll in the tradition of Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley and the early Stones. But there's also a generous dollop of Presley, rockabilly and Everly Brothers harmonies thrown in for good measure. "It's rock 'n' roll," says Zanes. "That's



Del Fuegos: A stroke for entertainment

all I can ever call it."

Zanes moved to Boston to form the band after he met bass player Tom Lloyd at breakfast during their first day at Oberlin College. College lasted one year: "Playing in a band is what I always wanted

to do," explains Zanes. "The only reason I went to college was to form a band." The rest of the group consists of drummer Woody Geissman, and Zanes' younger brother Warren, on lead guitar.

As for the larger meaning of

their mission, Dan Zanes is straightforward in announcing that "rock 'n' roll is not an art form. It's just a good form of entertainment." Some might disagree, but for the Del Fuegos, that's good enough.

—Dean Johnson

PHOTO: LAURA LEVINE



PHOTO: GLENN BEWLEY

The Q's: An American Big Country?

THE BIG COUNTRY...

As sought by the Swimming Pool Q's

ATLANTA—"The structure of a lot of our songs is really unorthodox for pop hits," explains Swimming Pool Q's guitarist/songwriter Jeff Calder. "And the trick to making those things work is to do it with as much authority as possible."

Six years of stomping the Southeast club circuit with moving twin-guitar tales of breakdown and hope have earned the Q's the right to authority. The Atlanta quintet's just-released major label debut LP, *The Swimming Pool Q's*, on A&M, roars with a Gothic rock aspiration suggestive of an American Big Country.

Propelled by bassist J.E. Garnett and drummer Billy Burton and ornamented by guitarists Calder and Bob Elsey, the Q's' sound finds its purest expression in the fullness and bell-clarity of Anne Boston's vocals. Calder, who studied with novelist Harry Crews and wrote fiction before forming the

Q's, finds challenge in putting "words in a woman's mouth and making them seem convincing. It's a dangerous subject because you get in a lot of hot water with women about this, but there are just songs that men can sing and songs women can sing."

A response to the "chops school of Southern rock," the Q's' 1981 indie LP, *The Deep End*, brought the band attention as purveyors of what one wag termed "Flannery O'Connor rock"; charged, edgy, claustrophobic explorations of redneck violence and redemption. On the new LP, Calder kicked down the door of his regionalism and saw new vistas: "When we started out, we toured the South a lot and tried to get a grass-roots populist thing going. Now it's the big picture we're struggling to get a grip on. We've got to establish a connection with America."

—Anthony DeCurtis

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KEEPERS OF THE FLAME

The Lyres tap into '60s energy

BOSTON—Jeff Conolly has this rock star stuff all wrong. His band the Lyres released their debut album on Boston's Ace of Hearts label this spring, and it became a critics' favorite. But singer/songwriter/organist Conolly doesn't want to talk about that. He'd rather discuss the Remains, show off his autographed Wilson Pickett album or spin a rare 45 by the Cobras.

Conolly, you see, is a music junkie, and his drug is '60s music, especially the British Invasion and American garage band variety. The Lyres' own album is testimony to Conolly's fixation (in this town he's known as "Mono Man"). Half of its 10 tunes are reworked covers, including a pair of Kinks tunes and an obscure Pete Best number (really). Even Conolly's originals, such as "Don't Give It Up Now" and "Help You Ann," have a '60s feel to them.



PHOTO JANNIE DOUCETTE

Lyres: Plugging into '60s energy

Yet this isn't any sort of revivalist trip. There are no granny glasses, Prince Valiant haircuts or dickies to be seen onstage. "We're more interested in the '60s' energy, not its sounds or looks," Conolly asserts. "I'm not trying to revive anything, but just trying to keep that energy flame alive."

"We're not elitists. What I'm trying to do is please the garage band purists as best I can and get played on the radio. That's the whole point of the Lyres."

The six-year-old quartet has experienced extensive personnel reshufflings in its life, but Conolly remains the glue that

holds everything together. He expects to begin work on new material once the Lyres finish their first real tour outside of New England. He's in a hurry to record again. "I'll be 29 next year," he says, laughing. "I still have two years left in me."

—Dean Johnson

HOLDING OUT PROMISE

The continuing saga of True West

LOS ANGELES—So you've been annointed by the rock press as one of 1984's Hot New Bands. Now put up or shut up.

True West has at least lived up to its billing by delivering a solid debut album, *Drifters* (PVC Records). One of its key virtues is its range. Guitarists Richard McGrath and Russ Tolman soar past their influences toward interplay that's both fresh and forceful. Which isn't to suggest for a moment that *Drifters* is likely to generate a great deal of chart-climbing horsepower. "We're not expecting much commercial airplay," Tolman concedes.

The Sacramento-based band hopes college radio will continue to champion the True

West cause. And a major tour, beginning this month, will surely win additional supporters. At the Music Machine here recently, the group turned in a typically fiery, no-

frills set, despite Tolman's equipment troubles.

In the next several months True West's status could well shift. Between the keen mind and rock 'n' roll heart in *Drift-*

ers' grooves, and the subtle power displayed onstage, it won't be surprising if True West is declared one of 1985's Hot Not-So-New bands.

—Duncan Strauss

True West: Fresh, forceful interplay



PHOTO RICHARD MCCAFFREY



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Taylor: Temporal frontiers

NO QUEENLY POSTURING

Roger Taylor gets topical

LOS ANGELES—Roger Taylor must have asked himself how noted his anti-nuclear album would be, released this past summer to a world of nations giddy with post-Olympics optimism. Must've been his drummer's sense of timing—as long as presidents of nuclear powers can joke that "we begin bombing in five minutes," its timeliness would endure until we are disarmed or turned to dust.

Taylor's *Strong Frontier* (Capitol) is a temporal one where the consequences of our tap dance at the abyss are manifold. "It's difficult to write about the nuclear threat, though, without being naive and stating the obvious," he notes. Solo venture number two for the Queen drummer and co-founder and composer of that band's chartbusting single, "Radio Ga Ga," from *The Works*, comes between Queen's *The Works* and the band's fall tour of England and Europe, and at a point of optimum disgust in Taylor's

life.

"Politicians are all basically criminals," says Taylor. Judging too from his slam at dubious right-wing journalism ("It's An Illusion," co-written with Status Quo guitarist Rick Parfitt), he figures the mass media could use some more integrity as well. "That's how people have come to learn to live with the bomb. The 'balance of power' and all that crap that's been fed to people—they just come to believe it. It's like a nice little pill."

Will Queen's music take a similar issue-oriented turn in the future? Taylor demurs. "We don't want to be too political as a band," he replies. "One, because there's four of us and we all have different views. Two, we've always wanted to make music to entertain people, for people to enjoy. I believe that's why we've had such tremendous international success. But that allows me to say a few things I want to say on my own albums." —Susanne Whatley

PHOTO: JOE BANGAY/PIX/INTL

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LOW-KEY BEE GEE

*Robin Gibb,
after the tumult*

NEW YORK—"I'm not selling the Bee Gees. I'm selling Robin Gibb as an urban street musician, a singer who makes dance music for kids. No overdressing, no having my face on the side of a lunchbox, no more high-power hype. I've had quite enough of that."

Indeed, he has. Whether or not the public ultimately accepts Robin Gibb as the next big thing on Beat Street, at least this member of the Bee Gees will sleep at night.

"I guess a lot of people think it's great to be, say, Michael Jackson," says Gibb. "Frankly, I feel sorry for him. How do you maintain street sense when you can't walk on the street? Everybody expects you to be something you may not want to be all the time. It isn't very nice when you become an image instead of an artist."

The overwhelming success of *Saturday Night Fever* made Gibb a richer man but it cost

him peace of mind and contributed to the breakup of his family. "It's a simple story," he observes. "My wife ran off with another guy. I don't really have any answers for the way things are. You just have to stay in touch with yourself."

With his debut Mirage solo album, *Secret Agent*, and single "Boys Do Fall In Love," Gibb says he's fulfilled his desire to "take a refreshing stance." He rejects out of hand the suggestion that sections of the solo LP are anchored in '60s-like harmony. "I'm very much in the '80s," he declares. Indeed, on *Secret Agent* Gibb displays a far gutsier vocal style than one would have expected given the Gibb brothers' MOR bent of late.

And finally, he rejects the notion that he is competing with the solo efforts of brother Barry, who's more of a middle-of-the-roader. "It's not a competition, and even if it was a race, I wouldn't mind not winning as long as I could be in the running."

"After all," he advises, "I'm a bloody good runner."

—Mark Mehler



Gibb: No more hype

PHOTO: ERET ROBERTS



SIMPLICITY AS A WAY OF LIFE

ONE OF THE GREAT THINGS ABOUT ROCK star Lindsey Buckingham is that he acts nothing at all like a rock star. A member of Fleetwood Mac for the past decade, the singer-songwriter-guitarist is a rock 'n' roll curveball:

—In conversation, rock stars tend to rely too heavily on a certain word ("man") or phrase ("you know"). Buckingham overuses the word *microcosm*.

—For a lot of handsome rock stars, "romance" means never having to wake up with the same woman. Buckingham has been involved in two lengthy romances: five years with Fleetwood Mac's celestial caped crusader Stevie Nicks, and six with a woman named Carol Ann Harris—a relationship that unravels before your very ears on his impressive new album, *Go Insane*.

Although in the world of rock the prevailing attitude is "nothing succeeds like excess," the low-key Buckingham says "I don't go out a lot; I like to stay home. I read, see films, do laps in the pools." He thought flying over to England so producer Roy Thomas Baker could hear rough tapes of *Insane* was "overly theatrical."

—As part of the Big Mac operation, he played a major role in crafting *Rumours*, one of pop's biggest-selling albums in the pre-*Thriller* era. Yet he maintains "I didn't get the sense that I achieved that much" with *Rumours*, adding "the reason to create isn't necessarily to sell albums—on a philosophical level, the reason to create is to experience the process of creating."

At this point it wouldn't be too surprising if Dave Lee Hedonism wanted to grab Buckingham by the lapels, give him the Moe Howard treatment across the chops and scream "Lindsey, Lindsey! What are you trying to do, give rock 'n' roll a good name?! I mean, 'the reason to create is to experience the process of creating.' Come on, man—have you gone insane?"

Well, in a manner of speaking, Lindsey Buckingham did indeed go insane. His insanity was the kind that accompanies the shattering of a serious relationship, that disquieting emotional blackout that is always more crippling for an avowed romantic like Buckingham.

In a display of the most admirable heavy mettle, he exorcised those emotional demons by meeting them head on and transferring them onto *Insane*, which takes some basic pop conventions—both lyrical and musical—and neatly turns them over, under, sideways, down.

Two things, then, are clear and significant upon meeting Buckingham in the cozy cottage attached to his manager's Hollywood office. First, he went through hell before, during and after the split from Harris. (Nationally inquiring minds wanting to know *exactly* what happened to the relationship will no doubt latch onto such lines as "surprised to find someone willing to lose/Just to keep herself from falling apart" and "I just can't seem to get through/Hey little girl leave that little drug alone" and decide they understand the roles and twisted plots in this drama.)

Second, it's clear that Lindsey is fine now, or at least much better. Dressed in grey t-shirt, jeans and boots, he looks fit and relaxed. He also appears to be quite pleased. Pleased with his life. Pleased with his album. Pleased with his emergence as a songwriting and studio maestro *a la* long-time hero Brian Wilson.

Comfortable and recovered as he is now, Buckingham knows that his personal crises supplied *Insane*'s emotional core. "A lot of the album was derived from things that were going on in my personal life," he explains. "My girlfriend moved out several months ago, so I'm a bachelor for the first time in six years. Without getting into specifics, I experienced some situations where everything became grey—the blacks and whites totally dropped out. My sense of re-

PHOTO: AARON RAPAPORT

Lindsey Buckingham seeks peace of mind

BY DUNCAN STRAUSS



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of the album is that if you make a commitment to a relationship, and one side of that relationship goes haywire, you're going to go haywire with it. At some point, altruism can become a form of self-destruction."

Of course, Buckingham doesn't think he has the corner on the temporary insanity market. "I think everyone goes insane from time to time," he observes, "but usually you can reel yourself back in, usually you have a handle on what the context is. In other words, insanity is pretty relative: the acceptable or even expected behavior for people in a rock band or that kind of microcosm would, I imagine, probably be grounds for committal (sic) if you were working in a bank."

It was yet another kind of "insanity" within the rock microcosm that prompted Buckingham to co-produce *Go Insane* with an engineer he'd never met rather than with Richard Dashut. Dashut shared production credit with Lindsey on such Mac albums as *Rumours*, *Tusk*, and *Mirage*, and co-produced his 1981 solo debut *Law and Order*. Originally, Buckingham had every intention of continuing the association.

He had assembled some rough tracks at L.B.'s Garage, his 24-track home studio, then stopped working on them and waited for Dashut to complete Mick Fleetwood's *I'm Not Me* LP. Work on that project "drew out interminably," and finally when it was finished, so was Dashut, who told close friend "I am so burned that I just cannot bring myself to go back into the studio."

So, at his manager's suggestion, Buckingham called Roy Thomas Baker, who seemed like a logical solution to the dilemma, as much for his connection to Lindsey's label (Elektra, where Baker serves as senior VP of worldwide production) as for his production credits (Queen, Cars, etc.). At the time, Baker was in England up to his eyeballs in projects, which required Buckingham to make the "overly theatrical" move of flying overseas with his tapes.

Of the 12 tunes presented to Baker, he tossed out eight, leaving "Play in the Rain" (probably *Insane*'s most experimental track) and "Go Insane" (the first single and, not surprisingly, the most accessible, dressed-up tune), as well as "I Want You" and "I Must Go" (which land somewhere in between). Now acting as executive producer, Baker paired Buckingham (who, as on *Law and Order*, played all the instruments on almost every cut) with engineer Gordon Fordyce to complete the record.

Buckingham and Fordyce hit it off, and the artist soon locked into a new creative groove. The upshot? Buckingham began developing a sense of excitement about the work he could do entirely outside the Mac machine. "I punched my way out of the microcosm that I had been locked into for 10 years, which was quite an accomplishment, because for whatever talent I have, it was very difficult to separate what I was

from what everyone else in the band was. So it was a very constructive transition to have made.

"Working on the album," he continues, "was one of those fateful things where you're being pulled alone without really having control over it—which are the times when the best work is done. I can remember feeling that way toward the end of *Rumours*, sort of 'God, something is going on here.' Which isn't to suggest the end result will be similar in any way. But the feeling is there."

That feeling stands in sharp contrast to his attitude about Fleetwood Mac, an ambivalence surely influenced by *Insane* heralding his arrival as a pop innovator. Of course, it's possible to advance a convincing argument that Buckingham's arrival came much earlier: say, in '79, when he almost singlehandedly constructed *Tusk*, Fleetwood Mac's most adventurous, least saccharine offering; or in '81, when his idiosyncratic *Law and Order* LP had critics comparing him to Harry Nilsson, John Lennon and the early Beach Boys.

The difference now is that, without being arrogant or smug, Buckingham himself knows he's arrived. The obvious question, then, is what happens to Fleetwood Mac? Does Lindsey Buckingham need 'em? In the course of a two-hour interview, the response shifted considerably.

As the conversation periodically drifted back to Fleetwood Mac, his comments moved from "speaking hypothetically, if there were no more Fleetwood Mac, the ideal thing would be to go right back in the studio and start another record," to "all the magic is gone" to (laughing in response to a rather flip question) "I don't know if I want to go on record as saying we're 'beating a semi-dead horse,' but in a sense that would seem to be the case."

Just the same, when Buckingham discusses his plans, both short- and long-term, nearly every possibility hinges on what becomes of the nebulous Fleetwood Mac game plan. At the moment, he's most certain of things he won't do. He's opting not to tour behind *Go Insane*, feeling he's probably one album shy of enough solo material to make both a strong statement and a well-defined musical departure from the band. And he probably won't contribute individual songs to movie soundtracks. He's more interested in



Buckingham: 'Altruism can become a form of self-destruction'

composing an entire film score, and *Insane* may well thrust him into demand as a jack-of-all-musical-trades, particularly in the studio.

In the meantime, he's waiting to see what happens with Fleetwood Mac, and indulging in those noted rock star pursuits like reading a lot, seeing films, swimming laps in the pool. He simply wants to keep matters simple. And solitary.

"Things are simplified right now, partly because I'm a bachelor again. And I don't even want to see anyone in the sense that if you make a decision to be alone, and sort of bind your heart up, I think it allows your spirit a few more liberties.

"That's not necessarily an answer to anything," Buckingham smiles, "but for the time being that kind of simplicity is quite attractive." ○

PHOTO: MATTHEW ROBINSON

DERK RICHARDSON

A TIME FOR RENEWAL

On the rebound with Romeo Void



PHOTO MICHELE CLEMENT

The revitalized Voids: Energy, intensity, maturity

A band in trouble is a temporary thing. That's not to say that Romeo Void, San Francisco's premier post-punk rock 'n' roll band, has been in dire straits for the past two years. But the quartet, led by lyricist/lead vocalist Debora Iyall, did suffer something of a sophomore slump when its second album, *Benefactor*, failed to live up to the promise of either its independent 415 label debut, *It's A Condition*, or the jolting followup LP, *Never Say Never*, whose dance club hit title track turned on the provocative and memorable line, "I might like you better if we slept together." The initial flood of critical acclaim ebbed considerably and the group stalled momentarily while reassessing its direction.

Now, with a new album, *Instincts*, marked by a reunion with Romeo Void's first producer, David Kahne, and a seductive single in "A Girl In Trouble," complemented by a visually stunning video

produced and directed by Julia "Burning Down The House" Hayward, the band has renewed its collective self-confidence. Sitting in her small, modest apartment in San Francisco's upper Mission District with saxophonist Benjamin Bossi, Iyall looks back on Romeo Void's recent history as "all these different stages when you start out, you're like a gangly colt and don't know what you're doing and you keep falling down. Then you get to be a little studly and, after awhile, that doesn't last and then there's a lot of self-doubt."

Translating her metaphor in Romeo specifics, Iyall explains how on *Condition* "we didn't know if we could be satisfied or not because it was such a new thing. Then *Never Say Never* came out per—"she interrupts herself, biting on a forbidden adjective—"the way we wanted it, sort of perfect in a way. I don't think any of us had any second thoughts about it; it was happening for us. And then *Benefactor*—we

were all just a little disappointed that we hadn't gotten what we really wanted out of making a whole album."

Rather than follow Gang of Four into post-punk, pseudo-funk oblivion, Romeo Void took three months off after touring in support of *Benefactor*, seeing each other only occasionally in social situations. Iyall explains: "I think the reason for that, although maybe not articulated at the time, was so we could become the people again that had something to give to the band—which you *do* lose after being on the road a long, long time."

When they were ready to record their third album, the four Romeos, joined by drummer Aaron Smith, approached the project with new aims. "We wanted to go back to writing songs again," Iyall says, and they chose producer David Kahne "because that's really his forte—helping you with your arrangements and dynamics."

Indeed, where Romeo Void once seemed pressed to keep up with its own urgency, *Instincts* has an easier feel, starting with Iyall's warm vocals and Bossi's more musical horn solos, sifting down through echoey keyboard touches, the lush harmonic interplay of Woods' perpetual motion guitar and Zinacavage's sonorous bass, to Smith's restrained, even spacious drumming. "That's the thing about this record," Bossi offers, "it's got a real calmness. There's energy and intensity there, but there's not an adrenaline rush of playing out of fear. It's very mature, if that's the word. When you're back in the studio, it's like none of that other stuff ever happened. You're in there for the first time, in one sense, and you're naked. It's a constant renewal."

At the core of Romeo Void's confident outlook is Iyall's strong self-image and her hard-nosed point of view about appearances, relationships and romance. Her lyrics on *Instincts* bristle with observations on the transitory nature of images, feelings and words themselves, shaped by Iyall's deep-seated concerns with fundamental truths and by her perception of her ample self in a world of slinky, glamorous and vacuous female rock singers. "I've always been proud of myself," she says. "I know that the people who are just attractive never had to develop a lot of their other skills. I'm proud of my other skills and yet I feel like I have my own attractiveness. I have a confidence that is kind of like, 'Well, get this, this is it!' And," she laughs, "I don't have too many apologies about myself."

Nor, with instincts intact and worry behind, does Romeo Void. ○



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MARK MEHLER

THROUGH A CHILD'S EYES

Patrice Rushen breaks down barriers the easy way

I'm black, I'm a woman and I'm short," says five-foot-tall Patrice Rushen, delivering strikes like Nolan Ryan. "I'd say it was a disadvantage."

Indeed, just substitute Jewish for woman, and you've got Sammy Davis Jr., who hasn't been a pop star since Richard Nixon left the White House. Still, after 11 years as a recording artist—half of those as a jazz pianist—Rushen may be on the verge of a substantial R&B/pop crossover, in the manner of Lionel Richie or Jeffrey Osborne. Her latest album, *Now*, is a major

fusion at the label. "Nobody at Elektra really understood who or what I was as a black artist, and they had their own internal struggles with that, so what it meant was I was left alone to develop my own skills as a songwriter, arranger and producer, without any business interference."

—As a 15-year-old female playing music with a group of all-male peers, Rushen could easily have been relegated early on to a secondary role, but instead found within that group a safe place for her talent to grow. "I'm no dummy, I knew that to be

protected and pampered wasn't going to help me develop musically, but the way it worked out, the boys at that age hadn't really gotten into the heavy male ego trip yet, and because I could play the parts as well as a man, I just got sort of adopted into this group and kind of eased slowly into a competitive situation."

Out of this early band of cohorts came Charles Mims, Jr., co-producer of Rushen's last four albums and still a close friend. "Somehow," Rushen reflects, "I manage to land on my feet."

Born nearly 30 years ago in Los Angeles, Rushen, daughter of a computer systems analyst father and government worker mother, was enrolled in a music preparatory program at the University of Southern California at

19, Rushen discovered she had been wrong. Suddenly it was all neatly broken down into categories and she was JAZZ.

She accepted it, but began to bristle. "It was never my intention to get pigeonholed that way," says Rushen, who has worked with Donald Byrd, Jean-Luc Ponty, Harvey Mason and Hubert Laws, among others. "What I originally set out to do was be a session player, to do every kind of music. You know that wasn't the way it was in this business in the '70s. For a long time, the question was, what radio station will play it, what chart does it go on and what color is the person who comes in and buys it? But people don't buy because of what you are, they buy because they like your music. What is 'crossing over'? What they used to call crossover is really nothing, having to get to a certain point on the black chart before making your way to pop. I don't want to have to go back on my next record and go through the same climb all over again. I don't want a situation where there's two marketing strategies. To me, a real crossover is a black record that's pop out of the box."

"If I didn't continue to look at music in the same way I did when I was a child," she sighs, "I would have become jaded and bitter a long time ago."

Rushen's first bona-fide "crossover" hit was "Forget Me Not," off 1982's *Straight From The Heart*. *Now* follows an almost year-long recording period at her new 24-track facility, the Crib ("it's on the same property as my house. When I can't sleep at night because there's a synthesizer sound in my head that I can't make a notation for, I can walk to the studio in my bathrobe and lay it down.").

"I'd been on the road nearly all of 1982 with *Straight From The Heart* and I needed time to myself," explains Rushen, who's now on an extensive tour with Jeffrey Osborne in support of her new LP.

Since taking up singing several years ago at the urging of Charles Mims and long-time tutor Reggie Andrews, Rushen has gained enough confidence to tackle just about anything. She co-writes all of her material, plays most of the instruments (including guitar, keyboards and drums), does all rhythm, synthesizer and vocal arrangements, co-produces and co-manages herself. As satisfying as these achievements are, though, it's something else that keeps the artist running. To wit: "I got two Grammy nominations a couple of years ago, one for R&B vocal and one for R&B instrumental, I knew people were finally seeing me as I was. That was a thrill."

Not bad for a musician who's young, gifted, black and short. And lucky. ○



Rushen: Making the most of all 12 notes

black pop effort, similar in some respects to Jeffrey Osborne's *Stay With Me Tonight* in that it comes complete with memorable songs, lively playing (not the least being Rushen's own keyboard contributions) and a brightness to the performances that's positively engaging. She attributes her recent success and staying power, oddly enough, to good old-fashioned American karma.

A couple of examples:

—Signed as one of the first three R&B artists at Elektra in 1978 (Donald Byrd and Lenny White were the others), Rushen was the surprised beneficiary of mass con-

fusion at the label. "Nobody at Elektra really understood who or what I was as a black artist, and they had their own internal struggles with that, so what it meant was I was left alone to develop my own skills as a songwriter, arranger and producer, without any business interference."

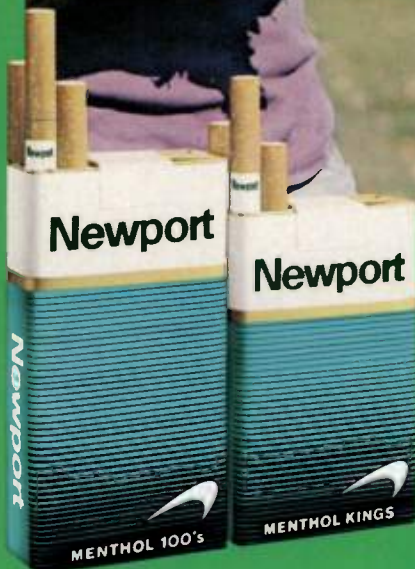
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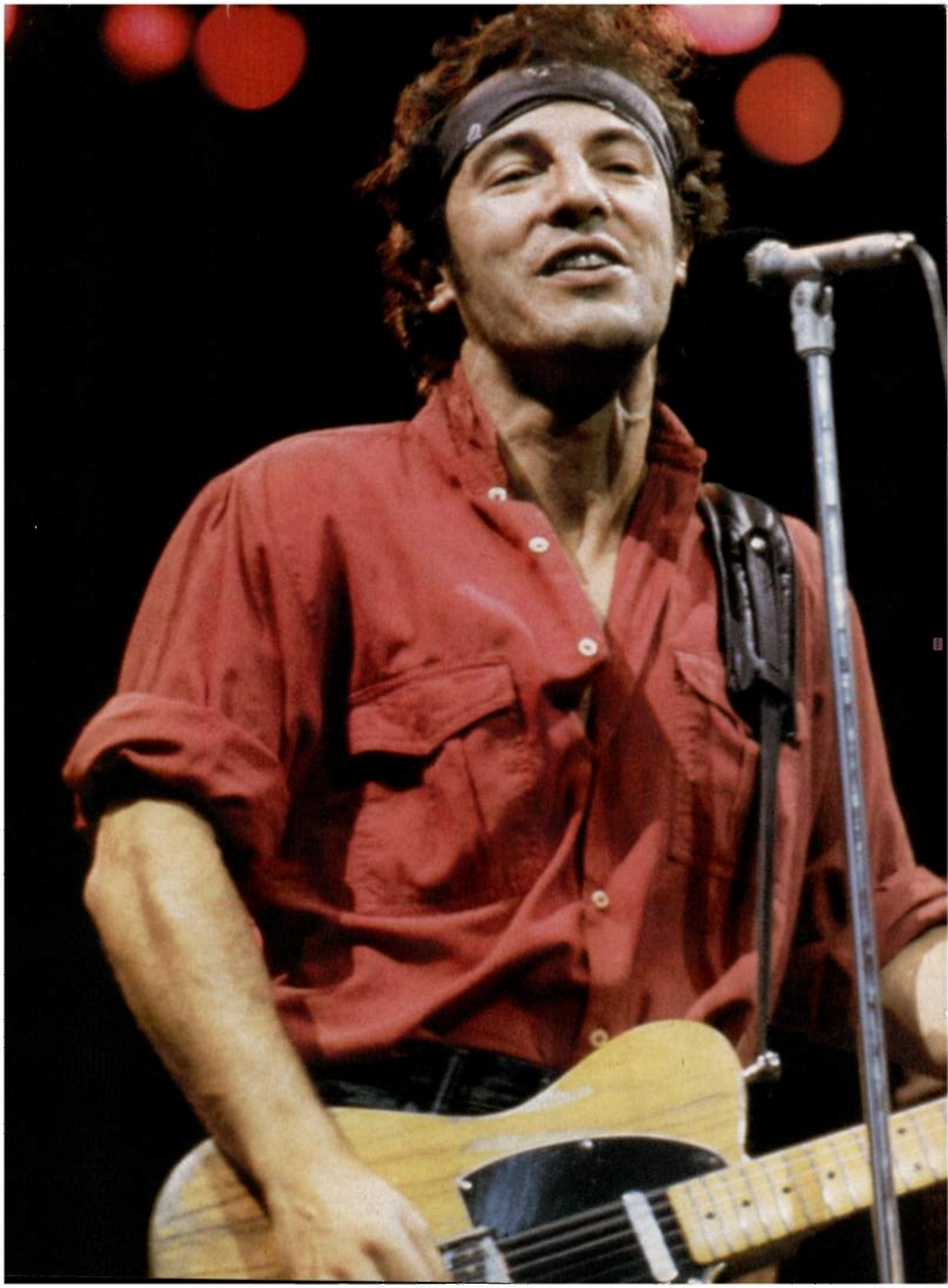
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'It's a Real Human Experience'

Bruce Springsteen and the Greatest

THE SCENE IN the parking lots of New Jersey's Meadowlands Sports Complex is not an unfamiliar one: hundreds of tailgate parties going full tilt, impromptu friendships being struck up over cold six-packs. The tableau is usually witnessed in autumn, when the hapless New York Giants stumble through another losing NFL campaign. But it's only mid-August, and the people gathering this evening are here for a different ritual of faith, one less painful than rooting for a mediocre football team and distinctly more profound. Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band are about to play the final night of a mammoth 10-show homecoming stand at the Brendan Byrne Arena, a

venue they had inaugurated in 1981.

The Fan is there, but he's not alone—he's brought The Critic along with him. He hadn't wanted to, but this is business. And The Critic, despite the evidence of the *Born In The U.S.A.* album and shows in Saratoga and Detroit, is getting tough now.


It's been three years, he says, since Springsteen has been out there, and much has changed. The shape of the entire market, for one, and the prevailing musical climate for another. The people making music, listening to it, living it, they're all much younger now. Pop and dance now dominate like never before, and rock is not the sound of young America anymore. The mixture of black and white—musically, at least—was the spark that set off the latest music explosion. Rock's response has been as predictable as the ostrich's: it's run off and stuck its head in the sand, retreating

Show on Earth • By Wayne King

"I don't worry about too sad, or too happy, I just worry about real, authentic emotion. If something's real sad, and it's real, then it's good. I meet a lot of people who say *Nebraska's* their favorite record. I think if you listen to it, it's the kind of thing where it really rang true to me; it's kind of the way I made it, real casual. It just sounded real true to me, and that was my basic take on it, why it was sad. There was always hope. It's not copping out for a kind of false hope, it's seeing the cards the way they're dealt. If it's real, it's never depressing, because that communication you establish with whoever the listener is, that's really the thing that's important. Whether you find this, this brotherhood, what you find through common sad experience or common happy experience—the main thing is that it's a real human experience."

—Bruce Springsteen, backstage at the Philadelphia Spectrum, 1984





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behind the comic book excesses of heavy metal and a mainstream mouthing cliché it has no feeling for anymore. Where does all this leave a man whose only output prior to the newest record had been a folkie album that sounds like some Library of Congress field recording c. 1938, and who had purged his music of the time-honored elements of black music that once dominated his style? Sure, *Born In The U.S.A.* is a great sounding record, and it hit Number One. But so had retro-rockers Huey Lewis and the News, so what the hell did any of this mean?

Besides, maybe it's about time for Springsteen to own up to some of the humanistic politics evoked by the stories of lost souls on *Nebraska* and come out of the closet politically. After all, The Critic chides, there is at least one New Jersey musician willing to take a stand in the most divisive election year since 1964, and it's indirectly led to his no longer being with the E Street Band: Little Steven, formerly Miami Steve Van Zandt. Sure, Van Zandt's bludgeoning call to arms called *Voice of America* died an unnatural death on the charts, but wasn't it still worth the effort? Could Springsteen present a similar challenge to his audience, or were both he and they beyond it?

The Fan is no longer listening; he's heard all this before, and is getting more than a little tired of it. Still, he admits, even with the underrated Nils Lofgren filling in admirably for Van Zandt, there is something missing. It's right there on the record—both "No Surrender" and "Bobby Jean" are about Steve's departure, and there seems an emptiness, an exhaustion at the bottom of those songs somewhere that's not present on any other Springsteen record. In fact, the whole thing is shot through with an air of loss both puzzling and worrisome. More than ever before, the songs on *Born In The U.S.A.* seem to be about Springsteen, so just what is this sadness?

THE LIGHTS dim, and the convulsive thunder of a solitary drum beat fills the hall. Twenty thousand rise to meet the sight and sound of "Born In The U.S.A." The opening number at any Springsteen concert has always been crucial; it serves as statement of purpose, an expression of the man's faith that says, simply, there's good rockin' tonight. The first song at the opening show of *The River* tour in 1980 was "Born To Run"; when nerves caused him to forget the words, the crowd sang them to him.

There's no chance Bruce will forget the words tonight; it's obvious that after a month and a half on the road, he and the band are in mid-tour form. Max Wein-



'Right now I feel the deepest connection with my band, my audience that I ever felt—I think I can see things in a way that makes what I do useful, not just to me but to other people'

berg's drumming rings out through the Byrne, and the vocal rips through the troubled tale of a Vietnam vet unable to find peace in his own country. If the dark underside of the number gets lost amidst the post-Olympics flag-waving and general air of celebration that greets any opening song, so be it, The Critic figures. Surely some of the pain and isolation felt by the "cool rockin' daddy in the U.S.A." must filter through, or so many in the audience couldn't sing along so fervently. Anyway, along with "Out In The Street" and "Spirit In The Night," it's a good place to start, The Fan contends. All three songs are about different ways of fitting in, or at least trying to, and what better way to begin again the process of constructing and renewing a community that will exist for the next four hours (and a lot longer)?

Perhaps, ultimately, the opening selections are there because they belong to the audience, and afterwards Springsteen can settle down to brass tacks and have *his* say for awhile. At least, that's the way it seems as the commotion dies down and he commences a *Nebraska* trilogy with "Atlantic City." "The *Nebraska* record," Springsteen confesses in the Philadelphia interview, "sounds a lot like me, in the sense of the feeling. I don't mean in the particular details of the stories, but the emotional feeling feels a lot like my childhood felt to me, a lot of the people I grew up with, the tone . . . The whole thing is, when you tell a story, a story is only good if it's your story in some fashion. Even *Nebraska*, which is extreme emotionally, the thing that makes it real is knowing what that feels like. In a funny way I feel it's my most personal album."

The reason for the homemade album's existence in the first place was that its songs couldn't be translated from their old-fashioned stylings to fit the full-bore power of the E Street Band. Well, it doesn't show in the metallic backing given "Atlan-

tic City" onstage that transforms the loser in that Jersey resort town from a down-on-his-luck character to a man possessed with rage at a world that's done him wrong. His anger makes him step over a line that the next guy we hear from, "Johnny 99," jumps clear across. Both men have "debts that no honest man could pay," and that motivation spurs these songs for the new depression. In fact, the final voice heard from belongs to Joe Roberts, a highway patrolman, and the moral choices faced by the others also stare him in the face. For Roberts, being on the "right" side of the law means no more than when Jimmy Cagney switched over from playing hoods to portraying G-men. Cagney's persona shone through clearly in either role, and the movie-going audience, faced with the grimmest reality the 20th Century has handed this country of dreams, understood that the lines were becoming more indistinct as decent people did what was *necessary* to survive. Which is precisely what renders *Nebraska* the timeliest "40-year-old" record maybe ever made.

YEAH MAN, I hear all that, The Fan sputters, but it looks like the natives are getting a little restless, know what I mean? Well, points out The Critic, looks like your man heard you.

Now it's *Born In The U.S.A.*'s turn. First up is "I'm Going Down," which sets two records: it's one of the most resigned tunes anyone's ever cut without putting a bullet through their head, and the LP version wipes the floor with the live one, something Springsteen fans have been waiting on for years. That tune cuts into "Darlington County," probably the worst thing on the album, and rendered com-

PHOTO: NICK ELGARAGI

pletely redundant by its '60s-rockin' soundalike, "Glory Days," appearing right after it. If "Going Down" and "Darlington" transfer the futility of *Nebraska*'s folks to Springsteen's own persona, "Glory Days" shows that just maybe the guy knows the absurd upside of his own situation. 34-years-old and still rockin' out? I mean, Elvis was already popping the pills that put him under, John Lennon was retiring, Pete Townshend ready to disintegrate, Mick Jagger was black and blue and washed up—you get the picture. But here's this purported nostalgist dedicating the number to "everybody who hated high school," while acknowledging that even he'll sit around talking about the "good old days" that never did exist. At the end of what has to be just about the *bounciest* damn song anybody ever's come up with, Bruce hears the clock tickin' off those years: "30...31...32...33...34...30...30..." and he just laughs off the inevitable. There's a joke somewhere and he knows it's on him. Even The Critic cackles at that one; it looks like it's on *all* of us.

G O STRAIGHT through "The Promised Land," take a right past "My Hometown," and you may end up near the "Darkness on the Edge of Town." The title cut from Springsteen's least appreciated record sums up the attitude of his 1978 primer of idealism with the promise to "Be on that hill 'cause I can't stop/Be on that hill with everything that I got/Lives on the line where dreams are found and lost/I'll be there on time and I'll pay the cost." As the last note fades, The Fan witnesses a marvelous feat. The band kicks into "Badlands," *Darkness*' opening song, and it becomes clear how the entire progress of the characters on the album comes full circle. The guy who makes that covenant at the end of "Darkness" is now the same joe who's "Gotta go out tonight/Gotta find out what I got." The Fan had noticed this what-goes-'round-comes-'round effect first at one of the Detroit shows, when "My Hometown" was followed by "Born In The U.S.A.," and suddenly *that* record seemed to be made whole.

(Springsteen admits: "I haven't exactly been able to get my fingers on what it is—but the songs probably feel more personal than they ever have. I think that if you look at ("Born To Run"), it really contains all the elements right through *Nebraska*, like it's a song that can open up and let all those things inside it—it can contain those kind of complexities real naturally.")

Maybe this is why Springsteen takes so damn long on those records. Maybe it really *is* all one story, and only a fool can't see how good that is, how right, that somehow

someone can still take the purest rock vision and try to live it out, even knowing that death and decay are never more than two steps behind.

H E KNOWS IT'S coming, but there's nothing he can do about it. The Critic used the half-hour break to catch his second wind, and is set to start taking shots again. And even The Fan has to admit that the second set gives him ample opportunity.

The operative word, The Critic pontificates, is *schtick*. We'll roughly define it as a tried-and-true piece of stage business, generally comedic, used to milk an audience. And just like the other shows we saw on the road, there's too much of it here. It starts right at the beginning with "Hungry Heart." Sure, it's a good song, but what's this bit of having the audience sing the first verse by itself, just like on *The River* tour? Made some sense then, you know, it was a Top Ten hit. But this is four years later, and it seems a little, uh, *conceited*, to do it again. And then there's the bit during "Cadillac Ranch," where everybody swings their bodies back and forth in unison and does the Cadillac walk up to the front of the stage. I mean, it sure looks good, and some of the goofier movements show a self-deprecating humor that's refreshing. But why are we getting *four-year-old* schtick? Not to mention the nights with "Sherry Darling" and "Fire" and their old hat routines.

Yeah, enough already. The Fan turns away; it's all true, but damn it, it's just good clean American fun. You'd haveta be a damn *Commie* or something, not to enjoy the stuff. Still, the second set is hardly a complete washout. How could it be with the great biblical rap which introduces "Dancing"'s B-side, "Pink Cadillac," and takes in the creation of the world, the cheeseburger, Caddies and rock 'n' roll itself? Or a tall tale in the middle of "Growin' Up" straight from the old days of impoverishment, one where (an otherwise rather neglected) Clarence Clemons and Bruce are driving in the middle of a forest on a spooky night, get a flat, meet a bear and discover the instruments by which their lives will be forever transformed (two guesses only as to what those instruments are)?

The indisputable highlight of the set comes immediately after the cornball rockers. Bruce is left alone on the stage, and he slips on a harmonica rack and picks up an acoustic guitar. With a brief introduction, he slides into "No Surrender," the *Born In The U.S.A.* song clearly about Van Zandt. The spare acoustic rendering emphasizes the words more than the full band version does, and even though he changes a few

lines near the end, the emotion etched in his vocal reaches to the upper tier of the structure: "Blood brothers in the stormy night/With a vow to defend/No retreat, baby, no surrender." Its effect on Springsteen, however, does not appear cathartic; "Bobby Jean," the other ode to his departed friend, shows up soon after, and the middle portion of "Backstreets" sounds like more commentary on that relationship. For The Fan, this emotional residue puts a damper on the high-spirited hi-jinx of "Rosalita," and the traditional appearance of "Jungleland" in the encore doesn't stir him much further, despite the always astonishing Clemons sax solo.

"I do the job I love," Springsteen observes. "The people that I'm fortunate enough to have around me have been there since I was young, they're the same guys, and that makes me happy, seeing them on stage makes me happy... It's hard to last. Not even thinking about the record business, but just holding onto relationships."

"But being happy is a mixture of a lot of emotions—there can be a big sadness inside of happiness, and that's fine, that's life. If you grow older with your eyes open, and you're interested in seeing who's around, and what's around, and the way the world is, there's no way you can escape a certain amount of sorrow."

T HERE'S SOMETHING happening here. In the second half, the old Asbury Jukes/Disciples of Soul horn section, the Miami Horns, comes out for "10th Avenue Freezeout," recalling their stint with the E Streeters on a couple of tours back in '76 and '77. This type of "reclaiming" of old relationships is not something new to this Jersey homecoming—earlier in the lengthy stand, Gary U.S. Bonds had shown up, and another night Southside Johnny was coaxed out of the audience to duet with Bruce on "Havin' A Party." And there is a definite buzz in the place tonight that Critic and Fan ascribe to closing night hysteria.

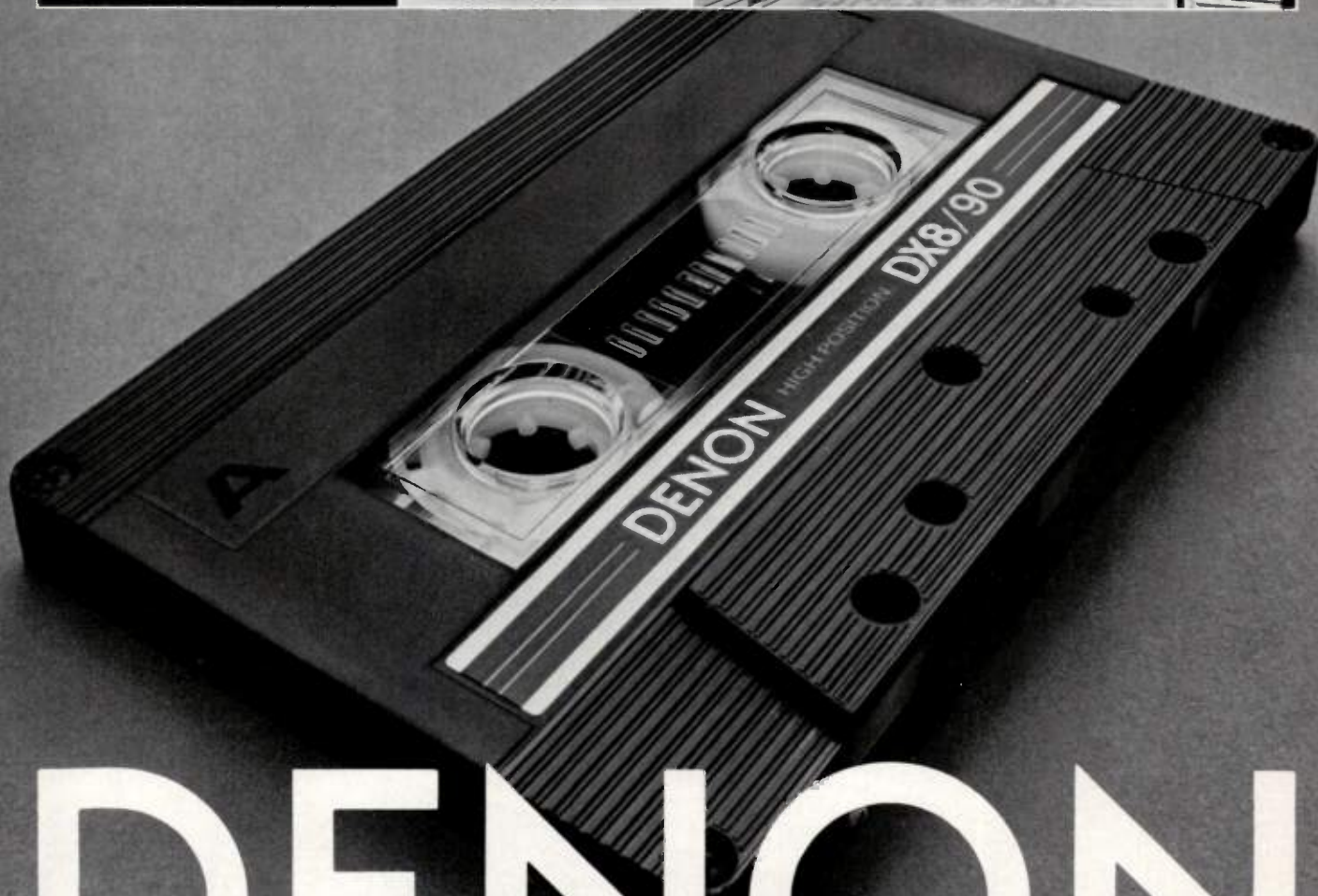
And then the group walks out for the second encore, and Springsteen is introducing Little Steven to the crowd. He and Bruce hug, and Van Zandt responds to the crowd's cheers and each band member's greeting. Going over to plug in his guitar, he makes sure to embrace Lofgren, his replacement, acknowledging the change in status between them. But the first selection thrusts Little Steven front and center. It's "Two Hearts," a duet between he and Bruce from *The River* whose words go a long way toward filling up that empty space in The Fan's heart: "Once I spent my time/Playing tough guy scenes/But I was living in a world of childish dreams/Some-

Continued on page 51

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Confessions of a

Kevin

Dubrow

gets all

he wants,

and more

IT IS JUST BEFORE NOON AS KEVIN Dubrow of Quiet Riot hunkers down for his third meal of the morning. He's already had a go at the breakfast buffet and returned, unsated, from a Greenwich Village pizzeria.

"My old nickname was Arnold Ziffel, you know, the pig from *Green Acres*," he admits while scarfing away like mad. "Life for me is a never-ending series of meals."

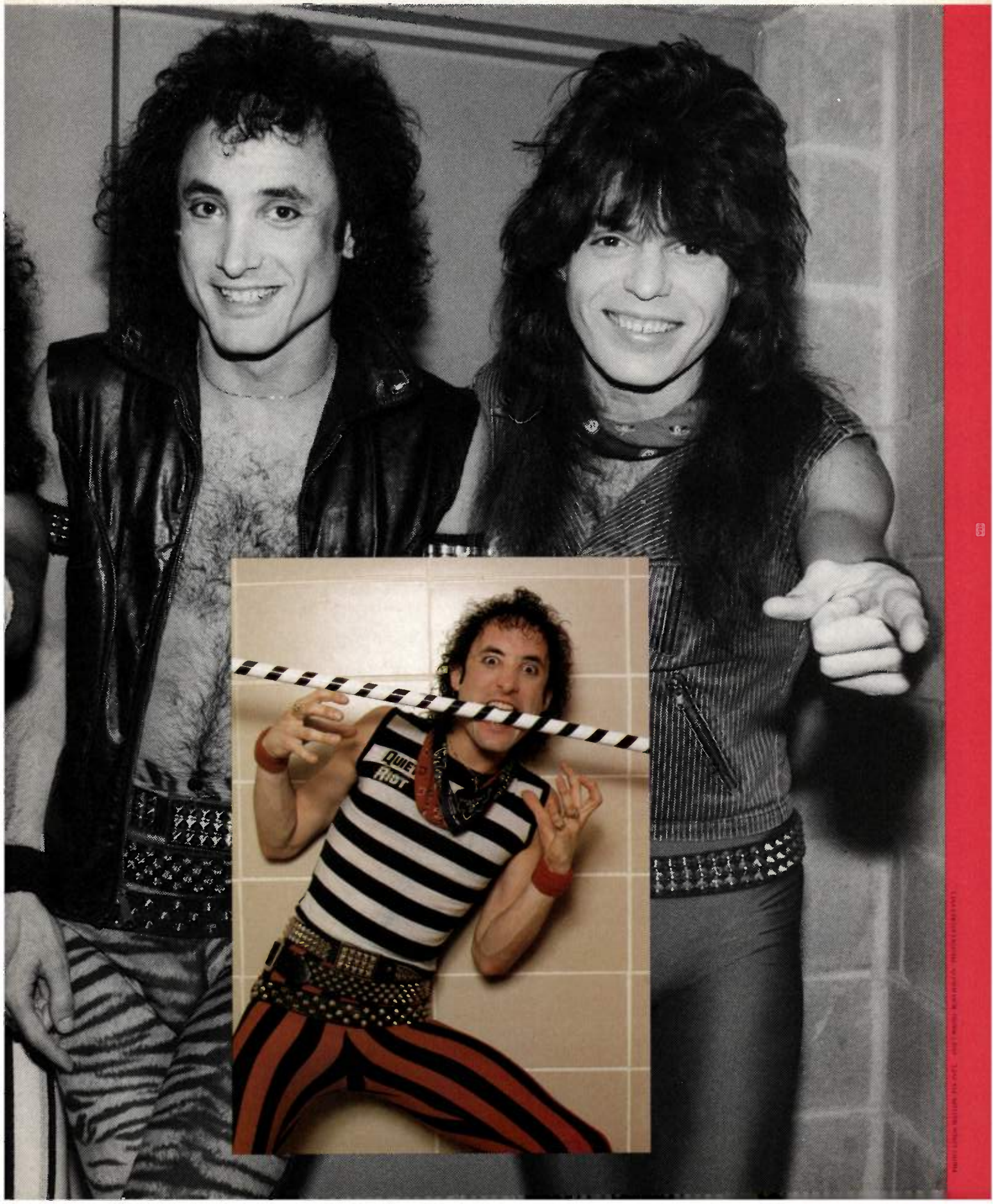
Dubrow's meal ticket, of course, is heavy metal rock 'n' roll. Mostly Slade cover songs, to be more precise. Quiet Riot's cover of Slade's "Cum On Feel The Noize" was the centerpiece of '83's multi-platinum, Number One charting *Metal Health* LP, and the hit single off the Riot's new album, *Condition Critical*, is, yes, a cover of Slade's "Mama Weer All Crazee Now."

Citizen Kane's second wife got better reviews for her opera singing than Quiet Riot gets for its work, but Dubrow seems to be having the last laugh. After kicking around the fringes of the Los Angeles rock scene for almost a decade, he's now a rock superstar, and that entitles him, in his view, to all the wine, women and song ... and women ... he can get.

While Dubrow helps himself to Brunch III, a tall brunette slides elegantly out of the hotel bathroom and into my dreams. She mutters something offhandedly to Dubrow and departs. Dubrow thinks her name is Barbara. He will find out for sure, though, because she's left behind several hundred feet of leather straps and chains and a copy of Beth Henley's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Crimes of the Heart*. Du-

By Mark Mehler

Rock 'n' Roll Nerd



Salem Spirit

On the Beat



The ever-industrious **Phil Collins** and true love **Jill Tavelman** finally tied the knot August 4th at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin in Shalford, England. Among those renting tuxedos for the occasion: Genesis mates **Michael Rutherford** and **Tony Banks**, Peter Gabriel, Atlantic Records boss **Ahmet Ertegun**, Steven Bishop, Robert Plant, and Eric Clapton. At the post-nuptials reception at Phil and Jill's house (where the guest list was further swelled by the arrival of Beatles' producer **George Martin** and **Julian Lennon**), an impromptu jam session erupted before night's end with the groom on drums, Plant on vocals, and Clapton on guitar. Rumors that Phil booked studio time for the honeymoon night were apparently unfounded.

MISCELLANEA

During the shooting for **Gary U.S. Bonds'** "Standing in the Line of Fire" video in New York's Washington Square Park, one of the thousands who'd gathered to ogle suddenly emerged from the mob, whipped out a switchblade—and asked the singer to autograph the knife's business end. Said Mr. Bonds, very politely, "Couldn't you find something else? My pen won't write on this." ... If you're a musician thinking of hocking all your synths, biting the bullet, and investing in a shag haircut and studs-and-leather after all, hold on. In another of their ongoing surveys, the Street Pulse Group has found that interest in music loosely described as "new wave" is skyrocketing, while the much-vaunted heavy

metal explosion is showing signs of tapering off. For those into statistics, over thirty percent of record buyers surveyed recently said that new wave was their "favorite form of music" (a ten percent increase over a year ago). Infatuation with heavy metal, meanwhile, has dropped from roughly nineteen percent of those surveyed to seventeen percent. On the visual end of things, meanwhile, Street Pulse has found that—contrary to initial skepticism on the part of many critics—people are actually forking over the bucks in a major way for rock videos. Nearly forty percent of the nation's record buyers have VCRs, and over a quarter of them buy commercially produced tapes by their faves, while more than half claim to rent pre-recorded music programming. It's estimated that by 1988 over a billion dollars' worth of music videos will be sold each year—though exactly how many times the Average American can sit and watch the same Motley Crue tape is, of course, still open for scientific study... From the same survey, Street Pulse has also compiled a standard profile of the heavy record buyer—i.e., someone who buys at least 12 records and tapes per year. Contrary to popular myth, it's neither the 14-year-old with the well-worn Scott Baio poster on her wall, nor the heavy metal Neanderthal who was barely a twinkle in his parents' eyes when the Beatles blew the socks off Ed Sullivan. Supposedly, the really dedicated vinyl aficionado is older (between 19 and 30), male, primarily a fan of New Wave and sundry forms of New Music—and prone to reach casually for the plastic when the cashier says, "Cash or charge?"... **Berlin** is used to setting the house on fire in the figurative sense, but the figurative became reality during a recent gig in Memphis. The band was serving up an encore of "Dancing in Berlin" when they got a whiff of smoke, then saw that a lighting cable alongside the stage had burst into six-foot-high flames, setting the wooden stage ablaze. Berlin, troupers all (but no fools), cut the tune in mid-chorus and exited from the smoke-filled scene, while the road crew phoned the fire department and the local power company. It took over a dozen Tennessee firefighters and technicians two hours to set things straight so that the next band on the bill, **The Romantics**, could take the stage... In the Truth Is Stranger Than Fiction department, **John Denver** recently joined **Chuck Berry** on stage in St. Louis for a stint of impromptu rocking out. The duo followed up "Maybellene" with an instrumental version of "Roll Over Beethoven." When asked how he felt afterwards, Denver replied, "Proud." Next stop, Jerry Lee Lewis... Also



The Canadian band **Helix**, while not yet household names, had at least a preliminary Brush With Greatness a while back. During the band's show-opening set for **Heart** in Louisville, Kentucky, spotlight guitarist **Brent Doerner** was riffing up a storm of a solo in front of the packed arena crowd, when a grinning **Eddie Van Halen** suddenly jumped on stage from out of nowhere, played air guitar for a few seconds, then jumped off again. Doerner, so wrapped up in his solo that he apparently didn't notice the guitar hero's surprise appearance, lit up like a Christmas tree when the crowd went berserk—obviously sure his moment had finally arrived.

on the strange side, Britain's **Iron Maiden** recently became the first heavy metal band to play in Poland. Maiden has recently opted for an Egyptian motif in its stage presentation. However, with a P.A. rig loud enough to wake the dead and an eight-foot rotting corpse named "Eddie" as the cornerstones of Maiden's show, there's a suspicion that the Polish authorities didn't know quite what they were letting themselves in for when they rubber-stamped the necessary visas. As the band strutted and roared on stage, sweating profusely over the first ten rows of fans, the collective expression on the faces of the middle-aged Communist officials in attendance is said to have been summed up in a word: "horrified." While we're still on the Iron Maiden beat, cynics who are under the impression that true rock fandom is a dying art can take heart, perhaps, from the activities of Iron Maiden's number one fan. Not content with buying the occasional T-shirt and shelling out 15 bucks for a concert ticket

once a year, one Scott McGuire went the creative route, constructing a 20-foot-tall replica of "Eddie" on the roof of his parents' house in suburban Mt. Prospect, Illinois. ■

GARAGE BANDS

As every garage band with platinum daydreams knows, getting your stuff heard by persons other than the next-door neighbors or your high school senior class is easier said than done. The major labels continue to cut artist rosters. A local band billed as the best thing since the Fab Four can be a big deal in its home town, yet totally unknown 50 miles up the Interstate. Journeying to New York or L.A. with demo tape in hand worked once-upon-a-time, but nowadays you'll never make it past the record company's receptionist. Even if your tape gets in the door, chances are slim it'll be listened to all the way through, let alone be your passport to a million dollar deal and an arena full of enraptured fans. Many bands go the independent route—recording, pressing, and distributing their own discs in hopes of attracting big label interest—but that has drawbacks. It's not cheap. And getting your record onto the turntables of people other than friends and relatives is no mean trick. With that in mind, former *Trouser Press* publisher Ira Robbins and the New York-based promotion firm, Thirsty Ear Communications, have come up with SCREAM (Sampler Containing Really Exciting American Music). The concept is simple: every six weeks, they put together an album containing one track each from 10 independent (*i.e.*, unsigned) American bands. The album is shipped to nearly 200 college and commercial new music radio stations across the country, as well as big labels and select independents both here and in Europe, music publishers, managers, venues, and denizens of the music press. The recipients are asked to return a survey form and comment on each tune, and they often request more information on some of the bands. Getting your band included on SCREAM isn't free, but the total fee of \$350 is far less than it costs in many places to press and distribute your own single, and SCREAM goes directly to the People Who Matter. With hundreds of tapes arriving at Thirsty Ear's office each month, Robbins and Company admit that an epic (and difficult) "weeding out" process takes place to whittling it down to 10 bands. But SCREAM increases the chances of unknown musicians getting through to people in a position to actually *do* something for them. For details, contact Thirsty Ear Communications, 310 Madison Avenue, Suite 1506, New York, NY 10017, (212) 697-7800. . . Bands who have already put their money where their mouths are, pressed their own independent discs, and don't know how to move them out of the garage might check out another service offered by Thirsty Ear. Called Street Vinyl, the service is tailor-made for performers who are all dressed, know where they want to go, but don't know how to get there. Street Vinyl mails your album to 200 college radio stations across the country, keeps after the stations to play it, supplies you with a tracking report so you know how well you're doing,

and will supply bands with marketplace profiles (club, radio station, and local record store contacts) in areas where airplay is heavy. While there's no guarantee of cruising around in a Ferrari by year's end, Street Vi-

nyl—performing the same promotional service that Thirsty Ear provides for many of the country's major labels—up the chances of actually getting played. Contact Street Vinyl via Thirsty Ear at the above address. ■



80s funk connoisseurs who'd like to find out just who is copying their riffs from whom should check out PolyGram's two re-issues of rare **James Brown** classics. The first, *Ain't That a Groove*, spotlights tracks the Godfather laid down between 1966 and 1970, while *Doing It To Death* covers 1970 to 1973. Neither LP duplicates any of the cuts appearing on the numerous Brown reissues that have appeared over the last few years.

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brow has neither read nor seen the play. "I'm just a typical semi-intelligent rock star," he states without shame. "I can use my brain, but all I read is my own notices."

In New York to do some promotion for *Condition Critical*, Dubrow was tireless in his pursuit of both press and prurience. He seemed to find ample amounts of both. Here he speaks of his enduring passions—Quiet Riot and Loud Sex—his benighted childhood as a rock 'n' roll nerd, his days of wine and cirrhosis, and his firm belief that everything bad ever written about heavy metal is merely a nightmare in search of a reality.

In short, Kevin Dubrow might not bite the head off a bird, but he'd hype it to death.

The song "Party All Night" on the new album contains the lyrics "Driving right way on the wrong side/A bit too much to drink/women in the back seat/They don't know what to think." Could those and other lyrics on the LP be construed as encouraging dangerous and stupid behavior?

I'll tell you why we put the lyrics on the inner sleeve in the first place: to give you people ammunition. If we hadn't, nobody could have understood the words. We knew by putting them on we were leaving ourselves wide open for you to say, "What the hell's the matter with you guys, don't you have any social responsibility?" It's really funny you should ask, because it was done for you. Now I'll tell you the difference between how journalists see it and how Quiet Riot sees it. I wrote "Party All Night" as a joke, totally tongue-in-cheek; we're very funny people, you know, that's how we've lasted so long. Maybe parents could interpret the lyrics as serious, but it's not written for parents. I can't be responsible for all that goes on in this world. Because if I was that careful it wouldn't be rock 'n' roll. Rock isn't about being careful. My responsibility is to entertain an audience.

You seem to be assuming a strong anti-Quiet Riot bias on the part of the media.

Of course. We put the lyrics on this album for the same reason we did "Mama Weer All Crazee Now": because the media says, "You guys are under all this pressure to do something big, you can't possibly do another Slade song." And we say, "Why? You're going to trash us anyway, you want some trash, here's some ammunition, so shove it up your ass." That's why the lyrics and the Slade covers and the whole thing. Anyway, it doesn't matter, because nothing we say will make a difference. Hell, if I tell a kid not to do something, man, he'll really go for it. When they throw things on stage and we ask them not to, all hell breaks loose. We make music our audience can relate to, music that is close to our lives. "Party All Night" is nothing but a true story of my life.

A recent story?



PHOTO: ROBIN KAPLAN/RETNA LTD.

'Who's left? Us and Van Halen! Leather studs are history.'

Very recent. This year, actually. I've got a friend, Peter, people think we go out together, we're gonna kill ourselves. I had just come off the last tour, 220 dates, and when I get off the road and have no more work, no more having to entertain people who paid \$12.50 for the privilege, it's time to party. There's a place called the Rainbow Bar & Grill in L.A., and we go there and announce a party at Kevin Dubrow's house. Kevin Dubrow's got 10 imaginary houses all over town, because I don't want my home broken up. So we pile women in the back, but I never drink and drive. I won't screw up everything I've worked for all these years, but Peter is driving and he's fucked out of his brain, and, well, it was a typical rock 'n' roll story from then on.

Is all this in answer to the critic who once dubbed Quiet Riot the milk and cookies band of heavy metal?

That's a load of bullshit. But there are differences between us and other (heavy metal) groups. We're more talented than your average headbanger, and we're energetic, not guys who get up and say, "Look at me, I'm a sexy drone rocker!" Also, we don't abuse women, we don't worship the devil and we never trashed a hotel room. We manage to get publicity anyway, without raping and pillaging.

When were you first attracted to the music and the lifestyle?

Seeing the Beatles on Ed Sullivan was my first exposure of any kind to rock music. I was, maybe, seven- or eight-years-old and I had a tennis racket long before I had a guitar. I started out wanting to be Paul McCartney, a Beatle; then I moved on to wanting to be Rod Stewart, a superstar; then Steve Marriott, the greatest singer ever. I was a kid and I had the same fantasies as everyone else: that rock stars stay in bed all day and party all night, do a show for an hour-and-a-half, get mobbed by beautiful women and have a great time. But I had one thing nobody else in school had: I had the *hunger*. In elementary school I came in with boots and long hair like the Beatles, and they thought I was a fairy. In high school, I dressed and acted like Rod Stewart. We had two other rock stars come out of my high school, Grant High in Los Angeles, Steve Lukather and Jeff Porcaro of Toto. They were great musicians, real musicians, and they dressed like normal guys. Me, I dressed like Rod Stewart and couldn't do shit. I was completely ostracized. I was an asshole by choice.

When did you cease being an asshole by choice?

When I finally started getting laid, in 10th grade or thereabouts. Then they started leaving me alone.

How did that come about, so to speak?



PHOTO: CHRIS WALTER/RETNA LTD.

DuBrow: 'I started rebelling in school, and I'm still rebelling because there's a cause. And the cause is entertainment.'

You mean my first? I was maybe 15, it was on the floor of somebody's house, not mine. It was a party, three of us. You could say two very nice ladies, local neighborhood, you know, loose girls, they gave me my introduction.

You were de-flowered in a menage-a-trois?

Well, no, not exactly. It was one at a time, of course. I only have one thing to use, after all. I guess that night could have a lot to do with why I have such interesting desires now, appetites for that sort of thing. But we're getting pretty far away from Quiet Riot, aren't we?

You seem to enjoy discussing the subject.

Yeah, but I don't want to brag. When we go on the road, women who I might sleep with, well, I don't want them to think I'll just go ahead and talk about them. You know *no* woman wants to hear that you go to bed with other women. It's a little thing in their heads, they know it's bullshit.

They also don't like to be hustled.

Couldn't your self-described actions be considered hustling?

No way—I don't hustle women anymore. In the past year, my life in that regard has changed a lot. I was getting laid very nicely, thank you, before I was ever in a real rock band, so I know if I'm successful with women now, it's not *just* because I'm a star. If I go to bed with somebody, she has to be very good looking and very nice, because I don't have to do it anymore. I'm not some ugly mug who's been on a desert island for five years. My appetites haven't mellowed at all, though; it's just that I've reached the point where the only thing I'll hustle for is Quiet Riot.

Okay, let's move away from sex for awhile. Quiet Riot may be taking a critical slagging but your vocals are starting to get some praise. Have you any idea why?

I've heard myself compared to Robert

Plant, and that's very nice. Meeting Randy Rhoads made me want to be a real musician. I wanted to be able to know enough to talk to musicians about their music, because singers aren't usually considered musicians. Now I think, with the exception of myself, only David Coverdale and Ronnie Dio are good singers from the new heavy metal school. Paul Rodgers and Robert Plant are great also, from the old guard.

You mentioned Randy Rhoads. His spectre does seem to follow, if not haunt, the group.

I just read somewhere that a writer said Quiet Riot is still living off Randy. Hey, the guy was great, why not remember him? He was also my best friend. You know the night we met I was coming home from a Rod Stewart concert. It was fate. The incredible thing was here was this real musician, and here was I, who only *looked* like a rock star but couldn't sing worth shit, and he wanted to play with me, maybe because every other rock singer in town was a pain in the ass. At least I wasn't a total pain in the ass all the time. What I had was the hunger and Randy must have recognized that early on.

How did his death affect you?

How would you feel if your best friend died? For one thing, I detest flying more than I used to. And it showed me something about priorities. Before Randy's death, rock was everything to me. My mom and brother and friends, you finally realize their lives mean more than anything else. I would hope every other rock 'n' roller in the world feels the same way, or he or she's really messed up.

At what point in working with Randy Rhoads did you find yourself metamorphosing from nerd to singer?

When I began playing clubs at 19, and I found myself on stage with nothing but my dick hanging out. Before that, you put the radio on to Rod Stewart and preened in front of the mirror, and hey, what do you know, you sound just like Rod. Then you come home after playing a club, turn on the recorder and the tape sounds like shit, and you just can't tell yourself, like a lot of singers do, that the recorder's broken. In 1981, when I met Spencer Proffer, that's when I started sounding really good. When Randy went off to join Ozzy and Quiet Riot-1 ended and I formed my own band, DuBrow, that was sink or swim time. I didn't have Randy to hide behind anymore, so I started working a lot harder at my singing and at everything else.

How would you rate Quiet Riot-1 against DuBrow and its successor, Quiet Riot-2?

Well, as I said, as DuBrow from 1980 to 1982 we existed as a shifting group of people, with me having to go it alone, hiring and firing. The band had my name, I need-

ed people who liked to work with me and could see things my way, and if not, screw it, they were gone. I was paying the bills, I had the responsibility, it was my name and my music, if they didn't like it they needn't stay. Quiet Riot-I was mainly a lot of posing. Randy played tasty guitar, nobody was out-and-out masturbating on his instrument, but the musicianship was only fair. With DuBrow and the current Quiet Riot, I knew we had to go further than putting me up in a leopard suit and having me jump around for two hours like an idiot.

With the zebra stripes and mask and the heavy acrobatic thrust, you tried to imprint a fresh image on the band. But doesn't it, in the end, come back to a very basic thing—that kids with big rock dreams and few skills feel closer to a group whose act is not that far above their own garage shenanigans?

Obviously there's a lot of that. We play the three basic chords—E, D, A or E, D, G or whatever, and the kids all do that too. Sure, we're very basic; it's a little like looking in a mirror for a lot of kids. But I still see a world of difference between what we're doing and the rest of heavy metal. Listen, the whole hard rock thing is history. Look around. There's no Bad Company, no Led Zeppelin, no Humble Pie, Deep Purple's only just coming back. What's left? Us and Van Halen! Leather studs are history. I can't even listen to Ozzy and Motley Crue. Maybe the same people listen to all of us, but I won't accept that we're the same basic thing.

Other than entertaining people, having a great time and occasionally mouthing off about the state of rock music, is there any genuine rebelliousness to be found in Quiet Riot?

We wrote a song—unfortunately it didn't make it to this album—called "Rebels With A Cause," which, I think, summed it all up. Yes, I'm still a rebel, but I say if you're gonna get up and fight, make it for *something*. To rise up and throw an M-80 at a concert is not rebellion, it's a release, a stupid form of release, and it's not going to get you anywhere. I started rebelling in school because they (teachers, classmates, parents, etc.) wouldn't let me do what I wanted, which is to be a rock 'n' roller. Later I rebelled because the record companies wouldn't give me a contract. And I'm still rebelling because there's a cause, and the cause is entertainment, and the vehicle is Quiet Riot.

It sounds like you've carefully thought out this rebellion motif.

Yeah, I've been thinking about it all my life. I never wanted to be a heavy metal Bob Dylan or anything, never believed in any great message, just work hard and sing your heart out. And be the biggest damn hustler in the world for my band. If I sound callous, well, okay . . . ○



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JONATHAN GROSS

BUT WHY?

The Talking Heads' concert film lays an egg

Imagine you're in an art gallery, standing dumbfounded before a big whack of liquid laughter and, knowing full well the work was hung correctly, tilting your head hoping it might make more sense from a different perspective. So it is with the Talking Heads-Jonathan Demme collaboration, *Stop Making Sense*, a work that never really answers the musical question "Why?"

Yet this dry, self-contained concert film is being championed as a piece of art, much like Robert Rauschenberg's limited edition cover for the Heads' *Speaking In Tongues* LP. And like that record it is less an experience than a collectible, a piece for the mantle like that guitar in the arsenal of Spinal Tap's Nigel Tufnel that can never be touched, let alone played.

Shot in near-laboratory conditions at the Pantages Theatre in Hollywood last year, *Stop Making Sense* is technically exquisite. The sound is great, every Dolby direct-to-digital byte of it. The lighting textures are as serene as the six-camera shoot is crisp. So pristine is the overall feel that director Demme (*Swing Shift*, *Melvin and Howard*) could use a reel to pitch for the next Royal Wedding assignment. But his reverence for the Heads practically suffocates with false significance a pop group that was remembered as being a heck of a lot of fun on its '83 tour.

The live show was a keeper. In building the set and band piece-by-piece, musician-by-musician, starting with David Byrne's stark solo raveup of "Psycho Killer," the Heads traced its own evolution while functioning as its own opening act. Contained within the two-part, two-hour spectacle were several climaxes including side excursions into the world of the Tom Tom Club and Byrne's solo work.

But Demme fails to capture the intimacy of the evening. Byrne plays neither to the cameras nor to the audience, which is

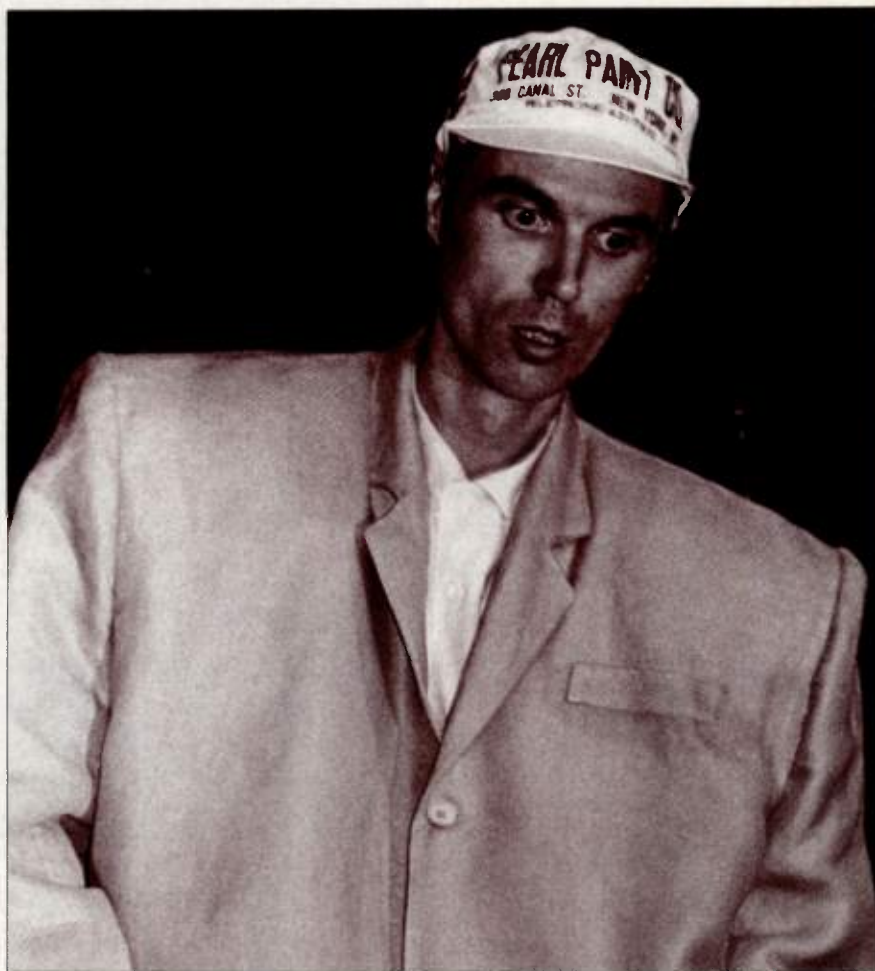


PHOTO: LYNN GOR ISMAITHI

***Stop Making Sense*: A collectible, a piece for the mantle**

cast as a mere prop cluttering Demme's smooth pans. The natural pulse of a live concert is broken by the tight sequencing and the complete lack of banter. There just isn't enough visual information and insight; and although *Stop Making Sense* has been lauded for eschewing offstage and backstage footage, it is surprising that the

Heads, one of the more creative groups in America, would deliver such a one-dimensional package.

Perhaps there's more to it. The film is described by critic Michael Sragow of *Film Comment* as "a call to rock and roll faith." For the serious Talking Heads fan this just might be the revelation to be enshrined for eternity in midnight repertory houses across the country. But for the casual *auteur*, *Stop Making Sense* is an experience teetering on the edge of boredom. If anything, Demme's closeups amplify the band's shaky musicianship and uneasiness before large audiences. The smiles are forced and the movements wooden, like those of children squirming in front of the folks' Betamovie.

And maybe it's just conditioning, but this movie lacks the context of most theatrical releases. The Beatles met a demand, the Sex Pistols met their maker. For \$800,000 the Talking Heads got a very fancy HBO special.

FILM NOTES

Will Michael Jackson play Peter Pan in Steven Spielberg's upcoming production of that Disney cartoon? Everybody knows Jackson sees Pan as the ultimate fantasy, but Spielberg has stated publicly that he'd like to use someone very young in the lead role... David Byrne is reportedly planning a dramatic film project to follow *Stop Making Sense*... Kevin Godley and Lol Creme, the hot video producers, follow video director Steve Barron ("Billie Jean" to *Electric Dreams*) into the feature ring with a property called *Hooverville*, a story set during Depression-era America... Everybody's favorite cleaning lady, Madonna, is going to star as a housewife who becomes a rock star at night in the film *Desperately Seeking Susan* directed by Susan Seidelman, who made her mark a couple of years ago with the downscale punk tragedy *Smithereens*... Madonna's boyfriend, John "Jellybean" Benitez, was to have been the subject of a feature on a deejay, but that project is now on hold.



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MUSIC VIDEO S

nix on t & a

Lost amidst all the hubub over the various challenges to MTV cropping up has been the admirable stand against sex and violence in video programming being taken by representatives of Atlanta media monster **Ted Turner's** new national music channel.

"Some of it is as bad as *Playboy*," says TBS vice-president Robert Wussler, referring to the proliferation of erotica and bloodlust in many videos, particularly those aimed at North American hard rock audiences. "I'm not going to name names, but *that* kind of video will not be seen on our channel. That's not what we're about."

To be sure, Turner's service is not actually confronting the issue but merely adopting a format similar to Contemporary Hit Radio for a 25-49-year-old audience: Laura Branigan over Lords of the New Church. MTV, no longer an AOR window, sees its eclectic format reaching a 12-34-year-old demographic. And Turner's selling point to the cable operators across the country is not his righteous programming but his right-on price point: he's offering the service for free, as opposed to MTV's per-subscriber fee.

Predictably, Turner's brinksmanship drew an immediate response from MTV, which quickly announced plans for a second all-music channel starting January 1. Like Turner's, the new MTV (it has no name yet) will be aimed at an older demographic and will be offered free to operators already taking MTV. This small token of MTV's arrogance stems in part from the exclusivity contracts (see Music Video Notes, October RECORD) that are designed to cripple competition from 24-hour music channels.

So the real issue is who can get there firstest with the mostest. Most of the truly offensive material is produced by a small group of desperadoes and bit players like Canadian heavy



A Turner Broadcasting exec says the company's new all-music channel won't press the flesh

metal heathens Helix who took an extra few thousand dollars from the Playboy Channel to whip out an R-rated version of "Rock You." Nothing to lose, a little to gain. Same goes for Cheap Trick and its three versions—G, PG, R—of the title song from *Up The Creek*. An increasingly competitive home video market is not going to drive these people out of business—that's why artists like the Cars have cut special fleshy versions of their popular clips for cassette compilations.

Can Turner's music channel, a low budget affair sans veejays, survive on a mellow note? And how mellow will that note be? As always, the watchword (no pun intended) is Stay Tuned.

out of control

"I can't believe this country's first impression of Frankie Goes To Hollywood is that piece of crap," complains former arch-critic **Paul Morley**, now a partner with Trevor Horn and his wife Jill Sinclair in ZTT, England's hottest record label. Morley is referring

to the edited version of Frankie's "Relax" that received substantial MTV airplay after the all-music channel request-

ed it be toned down. The original, shot by **Bernard Rose** in a gay leather bar, was banned everywhere and fueled the Frankie sensation, which threatens to eclipse Beatlemania in Europe. "This is what happens when things slip out of your

Frankie Goes to Hollywood in "Relax" and label chief Morley (inset):

MTV backs off





Everybody's favorite polka parodists, Stan and Yosh Shmenge, are closing a deal for their own HBO special. Look for Stan and Yosh in their real-life guises as John Candy and Eugene Levy, along with other SCTV alumni, in HBO's 25th Anniversary of Second City special, due to air in late '84.

control," adds Morley, whose disgust with the presentation of ZTT's acts to the American public extends to the widely-acclaimed video for the **Art of Noise's** "Close to the Edit," directed by Oscar-winning Polish director Zbigniew Rybczynski at the request of ZTT's U.S. distributor, Island Records. "For one thing, there's people in it, which makes it dated," says the visionary Morley, himself a member of the faceless group. "Second, it's too destructive, which is not what the band is about." Morley plans to have animation added to soften the clip's abrasive edges.

punt

NFL Films, the football highlight factory, is blitzing the music video industry with a new \$10 million production facility and enough clients for a rock pro bowl. In quick order, the company moved this year from the production of **Fastway's** "All Fired Up" to a clutch of promos for **Billy Squier's** new album and plans for long-form takes of **Hall & Oates** and **Squier**. There's also talk of a new **Scandal** video, for those who enjoy painful experiences. Says **Al Saperstein**, head of NFL Films' entertainment division: "We're here to stay. Everybody here is full time, which keeps costs in order. For the groups I think our crews, particularly our camera people, have the advantage of knowing how to anticipate and capture action." This may finally be the big break for **John Facenda**,

who has laid on the narration thick and heavy for NFL Films since time immemorial. Imagine Facenda doing voice-over for a rock video: "Against the icy backdrop of a steel-gray December day at Three Rivers Stadium, the Steel Curtain came down on Billy Squier's tour." . . . **John McEnroe** and his old buddies **The Pretenders** have teamed up for a new wave tennis instructional video. Using music by Hynde

& Co. plus other rock notables (e.g. the Police) as a soundtrack, **Big Mac** and arch-rival **Ivan Lendl** strut their stuff in super-slo-mo. Close-up shot for \$750,000 under optimum conditions at New York's Kaufman Astoria Studios, the tape will be released to the home market late this year.

comedy capers

Ex-Monkee **Mike Nesmith** (maybe it's time to drop that prefix) is taking the spirit of his Grammy-winning **Elephant Parts** video to network television this fall with **Television Parts**, a comedy clip show that NBC says will be the '84-'85 season's first replacement series. Nesmith is keeping quiet on the project, but the concept allows stars and hopefuls to develop their own video shorts. Could be a savior in the prime-time wasteland. . . everybody's favorite polka parodists, **Stan and Yosh Shmenge** of SCTV (John Candy and Eugene Levy), are said to be closing a deal for their own HBO special, which could include more stuff like their hilarious "Power to the Punk People." Levy, Candy and other SCTV greats will appear later this year in another special, HBO's 25th Anniversary of Second City. . . released by Embassy

Home Video this month on home video is a special version of **This Is Spinal Tap**, the rock event of 1984. The tape includes a video for "Hellhole" and "Heavy Metal Memories," a greatest hits commercial featuring the band in full flower.

noted

RECORD columnist **Craig Anderton** is host of **Summer '84 NAMM-On-Video**, a one-hour VHS videotape of highlights from the largest music convention in the United States. In addition to demonstrations of the latest musical devices (including the highly-touted MIDI and SMPTE synchronization units), the tape includes interviews with prominent music industry figures and analysis of how changes in the industry will affect musicians. In addition to penning this magazine's Musical Electronics column, Anderton edits **Polyphony** magazine, contributes to several other publications and has written three books on musical electronics (**Electronic Projects for Musicians**, **Home Recording for Musicians**, and **Guitar Gadgets**). The tape in question is available in VHS-format only for \$49.95 (plus \$2.50 postage and handling) from Notch Productions, P.O. Box 580, Langhorne, PA 19047-0580.

Jonathan Gross

Drop back 10 and punt: NFL Films is producing clips for Billy Squier's new album. Narration by John Facenda?



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Graham Parker

LIVE CONCERT (D: Jay Dubin)

Sony Video Software/60 min./\$29.95

Some boost other than the usual failed industry clichés is needed to give Graham Parker a one-way ticket out of obscurity, but rest assured, this videotape ain't it. Although Parker is often a riveting performer in concert, you'd never know it from this show recorded in Chicago for MTV in 1982. It's not director Jay Dubin's fault; the man does what he can with the standard camera setups that plague most live videos. And it's not just that Parker has given livelier performances, although he most definitely has, or that the band, his first post-Rumour never really takes off. Almost half the material is from just one LP, '82's *Another Grey Area*, which makes this an unbalanced set for someone's first full-length video. The sound is typically flat and one-dimensional, and at one point laughably redone: during "Jolie Jolie," the camera shows the drummer playing a sim-

ple fill while we hear some complex bashing.

The problem with this and so much other live video is that there's no sense of being there, of the event which a live rock show can be. At least half the fun of going to see a performer is the anticipation, that gut feeling that, yeah, tonight we'll see someone who's gonna rock. And the camaraderie, the close feelings you share with your friends and the other people at the show, can't be captured by watching a television re-creation. But without trying to sound 1984-paranoid about it, the thing that video takes away most is perspective, your focus on the show. If you choose to keep an eye on, say, the lunatic drummer all evening, you can't do it if the camera won't allow you, and that's necessary to feel the heat of the performance. For an artist like Graham Parker, whose visual appeal is slight but whose presence is a fierce, untamable entity, that's the crucial element lost in the transfer to tape. Maybe next time, buddy.

—Wayne King

Rick Springfield

RICK SPRINGFIELD PLATINUM VIDEOS D: Rick Springfield ("Jessie's Girl"), Paul Justman ("Don't Talk to Strangers," "What Kind of Fool Am I"), Doug Dowdle ("Affair of the Heart," "Human Touch," "Souls")

RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video/24 minutes/\$19.95

Ever feel like jumping around in the streets, alleyways and parking lots, waving your electric guitar at a bevy of lost loves? Pretty dynamite idea, huh? These and other pseudo-anarchistic rock fantasies are played out over the course of this six-clip compilation from teen heartthrob Rick Springfield, whose favorite color may well be black (for mourning, if you get where I'm coming from).

The self-directed clip for "Jessie's Girl," an MTV favorite (kiss of death, anyone?), remains Springfield's most effective work. Here Springfield and his band's alleyway performance is intercut with a few choice romantic vignettes. One of these includes a classic rock video cliché—a frustrated singer smashes a mirror with his guitar. Hey, take a cigarette break, Rick! Still, "Jessie's Girl" has a raw feeling about it that works; unfortunately, this same quality decreases exponentially as the other five videos rumble across the screen with all the subtlety of a Sherman tank.

Collaborating with director Paul Justman (J. Geils' "Freeze Frame") on two clips, Springfield manages to expand his video pose. "Don't Talk To Strangers" finds him rocking out in front of a police car, while "What Kind of Fool Am I" puts him square in the middle of a drive-in theatre. Both scripts cast Springfield as a voyeur singing his song while spying on the women he desires and/or has lost. There is no empirical evidence to prove, however, that voyeurs sing, or even whistle, while they work. I know I don't. Anyway, "Human Touch" ditches the titillation in favor of a science fiction scenario in which Springfield awakes from a state of suspended animation and bounces straight into the obligatory rock dance number. Now this I believe. Many's the time in my life when I've been completely zoned out for days on end—not knowing who I am, what I do for a living, or who that strange woman is in my house—only to wake up cutting a mean rug on the floor of the Paradise Garage or some other Godforsaken venue in Manhattan. "Human Touch" has credibility. I tell ya, when that Rick Springfield finds a groove, he plays it for all it's worth. Hell of an artist; hell of an artist!—Alan Hecht

Repo Man

D: Alex Cox

MCA Home Video/93 min./\$59.95

In the lingo, a repo man is one who repossesses cars from those who fail to pay their bills. As some sage once said of oral sex, it's a dark and lonely job, but some-

MUSICVIDEO TOP TEN

- 1 **A KISS ACROSS THE OCEAN***
CULTURE CLUB
CBS/Fox Home Video
- 2 **MAKING MICHAEL JACKSON'S THRILLER**
MICHAEL JACKSON
Vestron Video
- 3 **PRIME CUTS***
VARIOUS ARTISTS
CBS/Fox Video
- 4 **DURAN DURAN**
DURAN DURAN
Thorn-EMI Home Video
- 5 **PAT BENATAR—HIT VIDEOS**
PAT BENATAR
RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video
- 6 **LINDA RONSTADT: WHAT'S NEW**
LINDA RONSTADT
Vestron Video
- 7 **DAVID BOWIE: SERIOUS MOONLIGHT**
DAVID BOWIE
Media Music
- 8 **RICK SPRINGFIELD PLATINUM VIDEOS**
RICK SPRINGFIELD
RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video
- 9 **MUSICVIDEO FROM STREETS OF FIRE**
VARIOUS ARTISTS
MCA Home Video
- 10 **JOURNEY: FRONTIERS AND BEYOND**
JOURNEY
Media Music

*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 **JUMP**
POINTER SISTERS
(RCA) D: Richard Perry
- 3 **GHOSTBUSTERS**
RAY PARKER JR.
(Arista) D: Ivan Reitman
- 4 **LET'S GO CRAZY***
PRINCE
(WB) D: Albert Magnoli
- 5 **THE GLAMOROUS LIFE***
SHEILA E.
(WB) D: Mary Lambert
- 6 **WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT***
TINA TURNER
(Capitol) D: Mark Robinson
- 7 **LUCKY STAR***
MADONNA
(Sire) D: Arthur Pierson
- 8 **INFATUATION**
ROD STEWART
(WB) D: Jonathan Kaplan
- 9 **LEGS**
ZZ TOP
(WB) D: Tim Newman
- 10 **PANAMA***
VAN HALEN
(WB) D: Van Halen

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.

one's got to do it. Critics have waxed enthusiastic over this odd little film written and directed by Alex Cox, himself a former repo man; and for the most part, the kudos are deserved. Ace character actor Harry Dean Stanton gives the performance of his life as the chief repo man, and Emilio Estevez (son of Ramon Estevez, better known as Martin Sheen) checks in with a solid portrayal of a young punk who is a reluctant initiate into the repo world. This all sounds fairly straightforward, but be advised that *Repo Man* is one of the more bizarre movies around. In the course of his work, Estevez encounters all manner of ne'er-do-wells, including, most prominently, a lobotomized nuclear scientist who's driving a sought-after 1964 Chevy bearing in its trunk this film's version of 2001's monolith. The secret won't be revealed here, though—suffice it to say that a couple of unfortunate Joes are liquidated upon attempting to examine the source from which all energy flows. Is it a comedy or tragedy, this *Repo Man*? There's enough evidence to support both sides; let's say the characters are all unforgettable and bent in peculiar ways, and that the dialogue is rich in off-the-wall one-liners—but you have to listen hard. The soundtrack (available on San Andreas Records, distributed by MCA) that plays quietly in the background features music by Black Flag, the Circle Jerks, the Plugz and other Los Angeles-based bands. The title track is by Iggy Pop.

—David McGee

Starship

(D: Stanley Dorfman)

RCA-Columbia Home Video/90 min./\$29.95

The 'Ship hits the fans pretty low to the ground here, interspersing live footage shot at Vancouver's Queen Elizabeth Theatre with idiotic visits to a "pirate" studio where a character called Shortwave Mike yammers about the "Copyright Police" shutting him down before the end of his broadcast. He's lucky the Art Police didn't get there first.

All of the Starship's recent hits are covered here, as well as the Airplane's great "White Rabbit" and "Someone To Love"—performed, alas, without the wild abandon of the originals. The band's appeal, apparently, is defined by the heavy metal excesses of guitarist Craig Chaquico and the sweet, if only marginally thrilling, vocals of Mickey Thomas. Grace Slick, still a charismatic performer and one of rock's all-time great characters, is underutilized in the current lineup. And Paul Kantner, the father figure of the space hippies, has virtually no part of the Starship's sonic flavor, stage presentation and—most important of all—its personality. The Shortwave Mike stuff in this video is a token nod to Kantner's sci-fi sensibility; No wonder he recently left the band for a "sabbatical" of undetermined length.

—David Gans

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MARTIN PORTER

WHEN SIZE COUNTS

Components for a cramped room

BOTTOMS UP

REAL ESTATE IS GETTING expensive. The more room you give up to your stereo the more rent you'll have to shell out to the landlord. In light of these economic realities, the selection of a stereo has as much to do with the amount of room you can spare as it does with what you can spend. Let's say all you can allow is some shelf space

four inches smaller than an LP.

And what should you look for when budget and floor space is hard to spare? JVC has put together the "dream" system of the month with its model XM-900AV "Crossmedia" component system that marries all your home entertainment needs into a couple of convenient racks.

The center of attraction here is a video component—the 19-inch,

dio Processor, which turns that video unit into a digital tape recorder, giving you eight hours worth of the "highest-fi" music on a single cassette.

Making the audio-video connection is the Super Dynamic A-G90B, an 80-watt integrated amplifier with inputs for a turntable, tuner, CD player, and two inputs each for tape and auxiliary (video) sources. Otherwise a quick rundown of the system's audio inventory finds: a programmable digital synthesized tuner that is capable of automatically turning the entire system on and off 16 times per week with 16 programmable AM/FM presets; a linear-tracking turntable with random programming for a maximum of eight tracks for up to 15 plays in any order, plus "SKIP" and "INDEX" (which plays the first 10 seconds of each cut); a front-loading CD player with 12-track programmability; a double-sided (dubbing) cassette deck with auto-reverse, automatic tape type selection, and



Sony's top-of-the-line microcomponent system, the FH-7mKII, offers flexibility and decent specifications in a compact package (\$600)

next to your school yearbook and your swimming trophies—how much of a stereo can you fit there?

Quite a lot, thanks to Sony. Its top-of-the-line microcomponent system, the FH-7mKII (approx. \$600), offers flexibility and decent specifications in a micropackage that can easily be bundled under your arms for an audio change of scenery. The system is built around the TA-78II integrated amplifier, which has its own five-band graphic equalizer and can pump 22 watts to both channels. An auto-reverse cassette deck with both Dolby B and C and a quartz synthesis tuner with five presets for both the AM and FM bands comes with the package. Speakers are a two-way pair that can be stacked on a shelf or hung on the wall. But it's the optional turntable (approx. \$150) that documents the unit's down-scaled size (8 1/2 inches wide). This fully automatic record spinner leaves most of the LP exposed outside the dust cover while it's in operation—but that's a common problem with a turntable that's nearly

134-channel, cable-ready remote control TV that will handle three input sources as well as its own external speaker terminals. Complementing the video portion of the Crossmedia system is JVC's VHS Hi-Fi unit with its near-digital dynamic range of over 80 dB, 139-channel tuner, 14-day/8 event programmability, and 12-function infrared remote control. Also included is the VP-100B Digital Au-

JVC's XM-900AV Crossmedia component system features: 19-inch, 134-channel, cable ready, remote control TV; JVC's VHS Hi-Fi unit; VP-100B Digital Audio Processor; Super Dynamic A-G90B, 80-watt integrated amplifier; programmable digital synthesized tuner; linear-tracking turntable; front-loading Compact Disc player; double-sided (dubbing) cassette deck; a sound effect amplifier/graphic equalizer; magnetically shielded, three-way bass reflex speakers; an audio/video graphic synthesizer. The system shown here goes for \$6000 complete.



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Coupled to a quality cassette deck, Sanyo's ULTRX R-100 digital synthesizer receiver will double the high fidelity of most recordings with high calibre signal-to-noise ratios (\$600)

Dolby B and C; and a sound effect amplifier/graphic equalizer that provides 12 frequency controls per channel and three deck connections with dubbing, four line outputs and LED indicators that form an illuminated equalization curve. Rounding out the system's audio hardware is a pair of magnetically shielded, three-way bass reflex speakers with a maximum peak input level of 220 watts.

There's more—particularly the Cross-media's audio/video graphic synthesizer, model VS-1B, which, when connected to a TV or monitor, turns your melodies into pictures. It is capable of displaying various audio display patterns (e.g., VU levels, spectrum analysis) and will even produce on-screen musical scaling—which displays the notes in a melody line on a simulated music sheet, while a keyboard display shows each note as it is played. There's also the optional JX-AV1B (\$200), which is recommended for routing the system's various connections.

It's a lot of equipment to take in (let alone connect) in one shot, but some of it is sold separately as well—so it's possible to piece together a dream system of your own. Besides, what do you expect for \$6000?

UTTERLY ULTRA

WHILE SANYO HAS BUILT ITS reputation upon its readily affordable equipment, it has recently spawned a high-tech offspring—the ULTRX line of high-performance audio gear, which made its shelf debut in late summer.

Included in the new line are home audio receivers, cassette decks, a Compact Disc player and car cassette decks with AM/FM receivers. The equipment's specifications are standard quality component fare; but instead of trying to blow people away with "the numbers," the engineering emphasis has gone after user-friendly features and overall convenience.

A major component in the line is the R100 digital synthesizer receiver (approx. \$600), a 100-watt per channel unit that has a built-in dbx chip with both encoding and decoding capabilities. Together with a quality cassette deck, this unit claims to double the high fidelity of most recordings with high caliber signal-to-noise ratio.

The receiver has other sound-enhancement features that cover all the important audio convenience bases. A stereo synthe-

sizer circuit converts TV and VCR signals into near-stereo quality sound; a switchable subsonic filter removes rumble and record warp noises in the low frequencies; and Sanyo's own dynamic noise reduction (DNR) system improves the sound of old, noisy or worn LPs.

The unit's operation is overseen and controlled by an on-board microcomputer that lets you automatically scan the radio dial, as well as select 20 AM/FM station presets. The receiver is a lazy man's special—featuring an infrared wireless remote control that controls volume, scanning functions, accesses any radio station preset, and turns the unit on or off.

HI-FI ANXIETY

EVEN HARD-CORE AUDIOPHILES have been known to crack under the strain of the audio component mix 'n' match process—not to mention the hard-sell of pushy salespersons.

So where is someone to go? Linn Products Ltd., the renowned U.K.-based manufacturer of audiophile turntables, cartridges and tonearms, is noted for its component-picking tips; Their stuff sounds pretty legit to me.

The company's keynote theory: "The Hi-Fi Hierarchy" maintains that quality sound reproduction is determined at the source (i.e., turntable and related parts).

High-end speakers, meanwhile (which Linn also manufactures), will not improve the sound of just *any* system; but they will amplify the shortcomings of a lousy one. They say that audio equipment buys should follow in this pecking order: (1) turntable; (2) tonearm; (3) cartridge; (4) preamplifier; (5) power amp; (6) speakers.

Where does that leave you if you can't afford audiophile equipment? These rules hold true for any budget buy even if the music-playing essentials are packed into one package (e.g. preamp and power amp; turntable and tonearm). Here are a few more tips to keep in mind:

Only buy from a reputable dealer and manufacturer who will be around to service your equipment in later years. Let your ears be the judge of a component's quality—and don't be afraid to disagree with the "experts." Once you're ready to set up your equipment, remember to put the amplifier as far away from the turntable as possible to minimize hum and feedback. Don't jam your speakers into corners, either—give them at least a little room on all sides, and be sure to connect them to the amp with quality heavy-gauge copper wire.

ROLLING IN STYLE

IF YOU'RE TIRED OF HEARING the "Interface Blues" every time you switch on your autosound system, there's good news: Sparkomatic has added three noise filters to its car stereo lineup; all are designed to suppress radio frequency noise caused by the gadgets under the hood, and elsewhere in the car. The NF-100 (approx. \$17) and NF-22 (approx. \$20) both operate with any system up to 10 amps; the deluxe, high-current NF-500 (approx. \$38) combines filtering action with high-power handling for 12-20 amps. Happy—and quiet—motoring. ○

Sparkomatic's new line of noise filters can help take the anguish out of car stereo. The NF-100 (left, \$17) and the NF-200 (right, \$20) both operate with any system up to 10 amps; the deluxe, high-current NF-500 (top center, \$38) combines filtering action with high-power handling for 12-20 amps.



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CRAIG ANDERTON

TAPS FOR TAPE?

Phasing out tape recorders

Just as the industrial revolution changed the entire fabric of society from within, computers are now radically re-shaping society in a similarly dramatic manner. The most striking aspect of all this, though, is that the computer revolution is *just beginning*. And if the music industry's Summer '84 NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants) trade show is any indication, computerization is about to spur some drastic changes in music in the years ahead.

For example, some musicians are using computers to cut the cost of studio time through a technique called "pyramiding." Suppose someone wants to record a 24-track album, but only has a limited budget and an 8-track at home. Pyramiding involves putting a SMPTE (Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers) synchronization track on one track of the 8-track recorder, then filling up the remaining seven tracks at home. The next step is to take the tape to a 24-track studio, put a synchronization track on the 24-track machine, and lock the two recorders together. The audio tracks could then be transferred from the 8-track to the 24-track, where they would be temporarily mixed back on to one of the 8-track's channels as a rough mono premix.

After that the musician returns home, works out other parts on the 8-track while listening to the track containing the premix of the previously recorded tracks, then books some more studio time to transfer additional parts from the 8-track to the 24-track machine. Using this technique fills up a 24-track recorder without taking up much studio time at all, thus leaving mix-down as the only major studio expense.

Other techniques may actually eliminate the tape recorder as we know it today, or at least make it a far less important part of the recording process. This is because of the development of "virtual track," a relatively recent concept combining computers and a new type of recording.

A "virtual track" is a track of music or sound that has all the characteristics of an audio tape track—yet is not recorded on tape but instead in computer memory. For example, if you program a drum part on a rhythm box and synchronize this part to a tape's sync track, the drums will play in time with whatever else is recorded on the tape—just as if it were another tape track. But note that *this track does not need to be recorded on tape*, since it plays along in perfect sync with the other tracks anyway.



**Synchronous Technologies' SMPL System:
Computerizing the standard analog tape recorder**

So, during mixdown or playback, the drum unit (or any other unit capable of sync) can be synched to tape and mixed down directly into the stereo master. Going directly to the master from the instrument gives extremely high sound quality by preserving "punch" and cutting out one generation of tape hiss. As a bonus, since many electronic units provide for programmable volume, the virtual track can sometimes do its own pseudo-automated mixdown.

But what if you want to record virtual tracks of acoustic, not electronic, instruments? With sampling keyboards like the Emulator II, these acoustic sounds can be "sampled" (recorded) in the instrument's memory and played back via the instrument's built-in sequencer. Some instrument sequencers are quite complex, and can provide eight or sometimes more virtual tracks of sound. Synching an eight-voice sequencer to an 8-track recorder produces the equivalent of 15 tracks to work with (eight tape tracks and eight virtual tracks, less one tape synchronization track).

Meanwhile, other companies are working on computerizing existing analog tape recorders, still the dominant recording medium. Akai showed its "Micro Studio System" for the first time in the USA at the Summer '84 NAMM show. This combination recorder/mixer computerizes punch-in and punch-out, provides programmable

mute, and includes memory search (auto-location) functions as well. It uses 1/2" tape cartridges (not standard VCR cartridges, however) and provides 12 usable channels for audio with two other tracks used for control and sync purposes. Another company, Synchronous Technologies, makes a hardware/software package called the SMPL System. SMPL records a SMPTE time code track on one track of a multi-track recorder, then reads that data during playback to perform such functions as automatic punch-in, punch-out, search-to-cue, autolocation and the like. It also provides a programmable metronome and sync track (for driving virtual track generators such as electronic drums, sequencers, and similar programmable devices), as well as programmable logic outputs suitable for automatic channel muting or stepping programmable synthesizers through programs. SMPL works with virtually any existing tape deck since it feeds signals from the computer into the machine's remote control port to control fast forward, rewind, play, record, etc.

Recording has already gone through a number of upheavals in the past few years, but it seems that the rate of change we've experienced over the last 10 years will seem gradual compared to what's coming in the next 10. Strap on your headphones; there's a revolution in progress. ○

day these childish dreams must end/To become a man and grow up to dream again...Two hearts are better than one/Two hearts get the job done."

After the song and the tumultuous applause end, the Miami Horns reappear. Van Zandt cues them, and they take off on an uplifting riff. He heads back to the front of the stage, and Bruce starts in on Dobie Gray's classic "Drift Away." He trades off verses with Steve, but it is the chorus, which everyone in the place is now adding their voice to, that ties up all the loose ends, all those ties that bind: "Give me the beat, boy/And free my soul/I wanna get lost/In your rock 'n' roll/And drift away." It's possible, thinks *The Critic*, that there is no finer way of putting into words the sheer joy of the music.

IT IS THEN that he and The Fan share the same thought. This *is* what it's all about, they realize. The music is big enough to handle the apparent contradictions in Springsteen's and Van Zandt's perspectives, or in their own, or in anyone's—it is, in fact, big enough to swallow up just about anything, to free the soul. It can handle the sadness in Rudy Lewis' voice in "Up On The Roof," and the anger and despair and hope of *Born In The U.S.A.* and *Voice of America*, and anything else anyone throws into it. Because, ultimately, there are no real contradictions. No reconciliation is beyond the music's limits, simply because there are no limits. And it is that understanding that bonds Springsteen and Van Zandt together for all time, and brings together anyone fortunate enough to be present when that realization occurs.

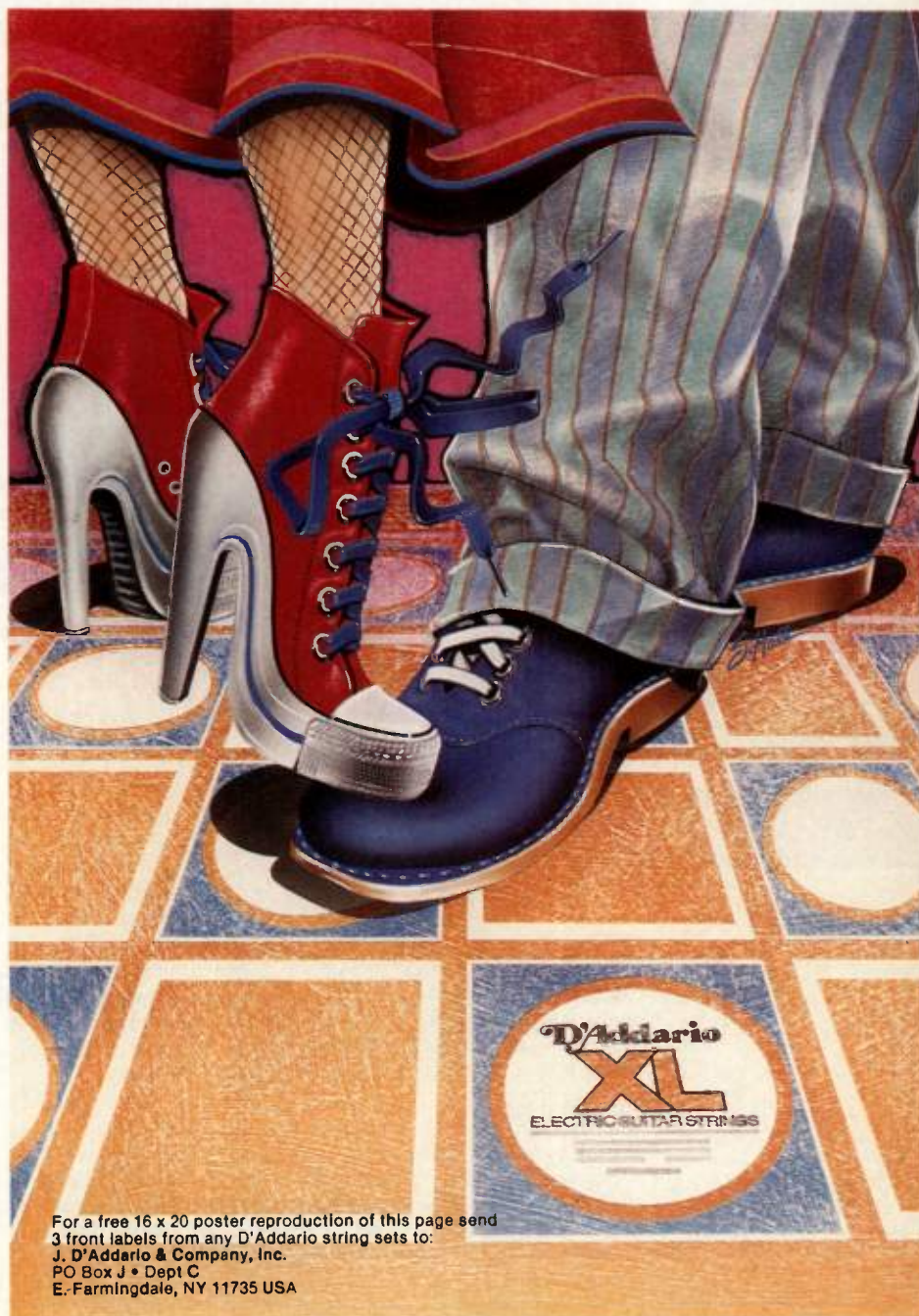
"Born To Run," which sounds more like Springsteen's best song each time it's played, follows after "Drift Away," and then the grab-bag "Detroit Medley," which closes out things with a nice slow groove on "Twist And Shout." Because of this last choice, both Fan and Critic are reminded of Springsteen's response that dark night in Philadelphia four years ago when we were all trying to cope with the incomprehensible loss of John Lennon the night before. "If it wasn't for John Lennon," he said from the stage, "a lot of us would be in some place much different tonight. It's a hard world that makes you live with a lot of things that are unlivable. And it's hard to come out here and play tonight, but there's nothing else to do."

CUT TO PHILLY

again, four years later: "When I walk off the stage, I feel a real sense of satisfaction, a real sense of pride. I'm proud of my band that we set off to do something a long time ago, when we were eighteen, nineteen, and a lot of it we did. Not just the fact that, Gee, we wanna be like the Beatles, we wanna be like the Rolling Stones, or Elvis, that we wanted hit records—it was an idea that you can have these things and not lose the connections with your audience or band members or friends.

"You don't lose the sense of continuity—it's a promise you make to yourself." The determination evident onstage rises again, filling the deserted locker room. "It doesn't mean you won't change—you change all the time. I think one of the

worst things somebody could say is you didn't change (laughs). Hopefully you did change. But right now, I feel the deepest connection with my band, my audience, that I ever felt—I think I got a sense of things, I think I can see things in a way that makes what I do useful and valuable, not only to myself but to other people too. And that's all I want to do. So the whole happy thing, that's what it is, it's a question of an overall balance of emotions. I'm happy—but I don't define happiness as feeling good or feeling real up all the time. That's not being happy. When I was doing *Nebraska*, people would come up to me and say, 'Don't be so bummed out!' Sometimes I'd start thinking maybe I was, but I realized I was just growing up." ○



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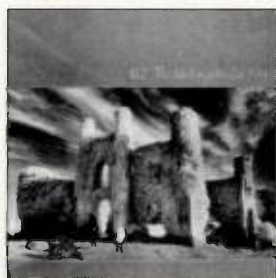
THE UNFORGETTABLE
FIRE
U2

Island

By
Anthony
DeCurtis

Dense, detailed, poetic and insistently transcendent, U2's fourth LP, *The Unforgettable Fire*, may well be the most stunning outing to date by these always ambitious Celtic soul brothers. And while the band's songs bear their full share of the weight, Brian Eno's inspired production creates a significant part of this album's achievement.

Assured enough about the distinctiveness of their sound to be open to direction,



U2 has always worked with *auteur* producers. Both Steve Lillywhite (*Boy*, *October and War*), and Jimmy Iovine, who handled the board for last year's live mini-LP, *Under a Blood Red Sky*, played to U2's obvious strengths: drama, fury, urgency, force. These records whammed home with a sonic power that obscured the openendedness—less sympathetic critics might say vagueness or imprecision—of the group's songs, making them seem more pointed and direct than their lyrics ever warranted.

Eno's production is characteristically more subversive, and to these ears, more satisfying. He encourages melodic variety, shifts rhythmic emphases, and in general liberates the tunes' arrangements, smoothing out the jagged edges of the band's careening guitar-charged assaults and

loosening the rhythm section's grip on the musical momentum. "If I could, I would let it go," vocalist Bono Vox declaims on one of *Fire*'s cuts, and Eno frees the band to do just that.

Eno's layering of sound here—including some evocative synthesizer parts—is simultaneously more playful and exact than Lillywhite's murky storm of sound. Identifiable, if almost arbitrary, instrumental and vocal touches scurry in and out of the carefully ordered but ever permeable mix.

Still, Eno's aim isn't always true; *Fire*'s hokiest moment belongs exclusively to him. Masters of atmospherics, U2 attempts a drifting, Enoesque, ambient instrumental called "Fourth of July," and the result is laughable. Portentous haunted-house guitar echo effects and other off-the-shelf

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IT'S WORTH IT.

weirdnesses make the tune sound like the background for a high school anti-drug flick rather than the resonantly indirect political statement it's apparently meant to be.

Despite its failure, "Fourth of July" is part of this record's moving American suite—along with "In The Name of Love (Pride)," "Elvis Presley and America," and "M.L.K." In fact, the spirit of the slain Martin Luther King—whose staunch political idealism, passivism, and Christian aspirations make him a highly suitable idol for Bono Vox—informs the heart and soul of *Fire*.

King is first evoked when Bono howls over the Edge's scratch chord surge in "In The Name of Love (Pride)," "April 4th, a shot rings out in the Memphis sky/Free at last/They took your life, they could not take your pride." Then, on "M.L.K.," the record's soothing, discreetly brief closing track, Bono intones a gospelly prayer for his song's martyred subject amid an ominous, otherworldly instrumental drone: "Sleep, sleep tonight/ and may your dreams be realized/If the thundercloud passes rain/So let it rain, rain on he."

Rain signals spiritual replenishment and serves as a heartening answer to the images of dryness, sterility and aridity that pervade the record. Such images summon both the Bible and T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and express Bono's ongoing obsession with human deliverance, renewal and salvation. All this fits in nicely with Eno, who's gone on his own quest for the fertility of another green world, and who helped put Talking Heads in contact with regenerative visions of nature on tracks like "The Great Curve" and "Once in A Lifetime."

Eno's ancient/modern willingness to let things float lends a shaping joy to *The Unforgettable Fire*'s "dream landscape," to cop a phrase from the album's opener, "A Sort of Homecoming." But this roaring, metal-crazed U2 combo harbors some nervous boys, as Bono makes clear when he rips himself from the shimmering lyricism of "Bad" to scream, "I'm wide awake, I'm not sleeping!" Dreams and visions give us hope, but there's still a war going on in the real world—and U2 is still there to help us fight and win it.

CATS WITHOUT CLAWS Donna Summer

Geffen

By
Laura
Fissinger

For her last three LPs, Donna Summer has



been going through a rebirth, both spiritually and musically. Generally it's been very interesting to witness, especially in light of her status eight years ago as a breathy-voiced studio creation making sonic sketches of male sexual daydreams. Now she's a real live singer, ranking with the best that popular music offers. And instead of portraits of pleasure, she's showing us a married woman and mother working to fulfill the precepts of fundamentalist Christianity. Musically, *Cats Without Claws* is excellent and fully realized. As for the religious text one might expect, nine of the ten tracks are almost completely secular; somehow that seems strange.

Not that *Cats*' lyrics are prurient in the slightest—all are devoid of anything approaching sex, drugs or violence. Then again, so are the songs on Air Supply albums. But it would seem after the religious rhetoric which dominates *She Works Hard For The Money* that Summer would want to reveal that much more of how one lives and grows in such a demanding belief system. In interviews and onstage Summer's made no bones about her strong disapproval of gays and "liberated women," two groups which indisputably made her career. Most of those people are probably still listening, and Summer is probably quite conscious of that. So why the silence on *Cats*? Is she respecting their right to believe in something else? Is she simply expressing a different part of herself? Is she just trying to sell records?

As for this last consideration: she should sell a lot of records with *Cats*—it's one of the most beautiful and seamless meldings of dance music and pop/rock to come along since those genres started keeping company. Producer Michael Omartian, drummer Michael Baird and famed percussionist Paulinho da Costa have conjured up real dance music, galvanized at the bottom by a huge Syndrum sound and finished off nearly at the top with crystal-clear detailing from da Costa. On top of that, Omartian lays on two other major components: fat, inviting keyboard chords with harmonic voicings far more adventurous than those on the last LP; and Michael Landau's gristly, intense rock guitar. True enough that the sum total is fairly generic high-gloss dance pop, but it's the best that generic could probably be. More importantly, the sound serves Summer's voice very well indeed.

Ah, that voice—on *Cats* it's just beginning to unfurl an incredible wing span. Summer shows its dusky lower register and melodic agility on "It's Not The Way"; its gospel intensity on "There Goes My Baby" and "Forgive Me"; its newly found texture on "Eyes," "Suzanna" and the title track; and its soprano high-note superpower on the emotional abandon of "Oh Billy Please." She also avoids the pitfalls of contemporary pop singers in any genre, managing the expression of full vol-

ume passion without full volume singing. All this skill doubles the gut level force of the melodies, some of the best Summer's ever worked with.

So it's the lyrics, then, that represent the lapse of faith on *Cats*. The writing simply doesn't support the parables and lessons that lurk in a line here or a word there. In "Eyes" it seems Summer is warning us not to let our minds be "poisoned" by TV, yet that isn't clear until a final verse that only appears on the lyric sheet. "I'm Free" might well be a paean to the jubilation of believers, but Summer calls the song's object "baby" in one verse and muddles the message. "Suzanna" has some kind of problem with a foul mouth, but it's too hard to tell what Summer is trying to say about the character or what she's supposed to do to change. The cats that don't have claws are ostensibly lost soul non-believers, but we get almost no sense of their pain nor the route they might take to its end.

What we've got, then, are ordinary pop lyrics about romantic pain. Nothing very wrong with that, but nothing riveting, and certainly nothing very revealing. The gentle plea of "Forgive Me" closes the album where, perhaps, it should have been cut one, side one—with an explicit and incendiary moment coming from the source-point of what Summer believes and the passion she feels about it. No matter what her listeners believe themselves, how could they help but be challenged or moved by that kind of disclosure? Summer may think that fundamentalist Christians are the only people that will get to heaven. But when writing the next album, she might do well to remember that almost everyone is trying to get there one way or another.

.....

STOP MAKING SENSE Talking Heads

Sire

By
Craig
Zeller



And so you may ask yourself: why are the Talking Heads releasing another souvenir concert album a mere two years and one studio album after *The Name of This Band Is Talking Heads*? I'll tell you why (you knew I would)—because this one's also functioning as a celluloid soundtrack. Matter of fact, *Stop Making Sense* (the film) will probably be enjoying midnight movie status as you read this unenthusiastic review.

Now don't get me wrong. I'm a stand-up Talking Heads fan and have been ever since they startled me out of my seat at CBGB's some nine years ago. Since then

C O R E Y H A R T

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Features

"S U N G L A S S E S A T N I G H T"

"I T A I N ' T E N O U G H"

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WHAT YOU HAVE HERE IS AN INAUGURAL EXPERIMENT IN COVERING that most voluminous and fast-moving of American pop rackets: the singles market. If you're at all into black pop you know that's where the action is and always has been, *Thriller* and *Purple Rain* notwithstanding. Hip-hop of course can't be covered without covering 12-inches and seeing as how the beatbox ethic is beginning to dominate the remixing of yer name stars for the club circuit (e.g. Bruce Springsteen, Billy Squier, Eurythmics), yon editors and I figure we'll take a stab at staying on top of all the action moving up and down the charts these days. Not to mention as well whatever thrash, rap and other independently released singles come this way. Though the focus will primarily be on black pop, given my own predilections that way, the coverage will probably end up being as broad as modern pop itself: I've got ears for anything that sounds good, dig? Nevertheless for this first column I thought I'd stay close to home and review a slew of varied tracks from the world of the beat box, namely hip-hop, plus a few other eccentricities much to my liking. -Greg Tate

GRANDMASTER MELLE MEL AND THE FURIOUS FIVE

"We Work For The Money" (SUGAR HILL)

Taken from their upcoming and, according to scuttlebutt, surprisingly poppy next album, this track is so Princely you might think it's a throw-away number from *Purple Rain*. Where Melle Mel just sorta happens to pop up every other chorus or so, I don't know who's doing the crooning otherwise, but whoever it be got His Royal Badness' mess down to a P—by which I mean his girlgroup bomb and Little Richard falsetto routines. Always the savviest rap act around when it came to having a versatility thang happening (in no small measure thanx to the killer Sugar Hill band) Mel and crew only reaffirm that here—albeit a bit bizarrely, as you might imagine would occur on any track that attempts to bed down Bronx B-boys and Minnesota androgynes.

JAMES BROWN AND AFRIKA BAMBAATAA

"Unity" (TOMMYBOY)

In which the Godfather of Soul and the Godfather of hip-hop team up with the Sugar Hill band (well, part of it) to celebrate soul brother number one and contribute some positive vibes to the cause of world peace, love and understanding, with Bambaataa playing Bobby Byrd to J.B.'s J.B. and the band reprising every Godfather groove you've been doing to death since funk began. And on that note I'll add that this isn't so much a great record as a friendly handshake between two generations of funkateers, whose next teamup oughta find them coming out their respective corners bobbing and weaving with something a bit more *fresh*.

CHUCK BROWN AND THE SOUL SEARCHERS

"We Got To Have Money" (T.T.E.D.)

If Bambaataa is the Godfather of hip-hop, then Chuck Brown is the soul papa of hip-hop's Chocolate City counterpart, D.C. go-go style, which burst into nationwide prominence with Trouble Funk's Sugar Hill debut of two years ago. Back in 1980 Brown cut a jam called "Bustin' Loose" that inspired a new wave of self-contained funk bands in the nation's capital. Go-go style is epitomized by this record's

search-and-destroy synth sweeps, staggered percussion, party-hearty rapattack vocals and the post-Maceo tenor of a blood who on every record Chuck Brown has ever cut answers to the call of "Hey, Leroy, gimme summa that horn now!" Like all great antipoverty go-go records, this one is for those dancing fools in your circle who find no contradiction between getting on the good foot and de big payoff.

NEWCLEUS

"Jam On It" (SUNNYVIEW)

Nobody's made a record as unabashedly juvenile as this rap satire since Bootsy. Parodying every sucker M.C. conceit that's come down the tubes since the Sugarhill Gang, this beatbox permutation is a cartoon for the ears—featuring as it does a recount of the day Superman battled Cozmo D on the wheels of steel and a chorus of hip-hop munchkins who chant "wikki-wikki-wikki" before losing track of their friend Mergatroid. All over a metallic lockstep of a beatbox track that just might make Kraftwerk realize that the ghost in the machine can sometimes be Casper instead of the Gestapo.

TLA ROCK/JAZZY JAY

"It's Yours" (DEF JAM)

Complete with yer radio mix, yer instrumental mix, yer instrumental party mix and yer scratch party death mix, this epic EP is a textbook exercise in what you must do to be a scratch deejay, demonstrated by Run-D.M.C.'s wheels of steel driving man Jazzy Jay and rapmaster TLA Rock whose delivery reminds me one helluva lot of The Last Poets' Jilal Naruddin, though you may find his content lacking in as high degree of black nationalist consciousness if you don't consider scratch and rap cultural treasures of the Afro-American masses.

LIGHTNIN' ROD/ JIMI HENDRIX

"Doriella du Fontaine" (CELLULOID)

Speaking of The Last Poets (nice tie-in, huh?), this legendary studio jam

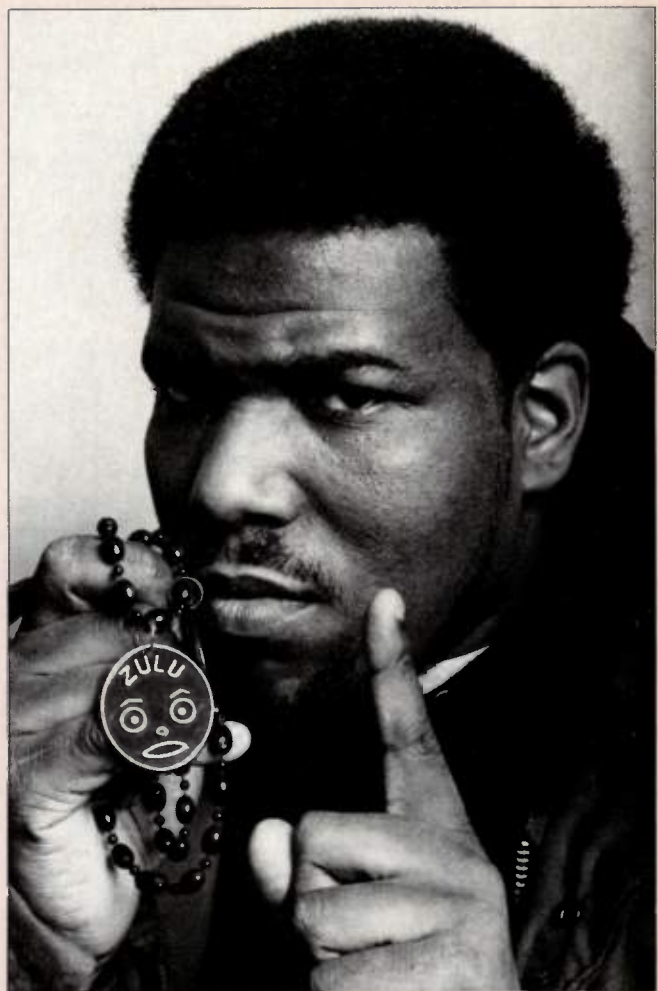


PHOTO LAURA LEVINE

Bambaataa: The Godfather of Hip-hop meets the Godfather of Soul.

between Jimi and Jilal (under a pseudonym here probably so as to absolve him of morals charges at the Mosque) is in the tradition of those black jailhouse toasts that serve as the precedent for rap in the Afro-American oral tradition. Such scholarly considerations aside, what we get is Jilal's sardonic tale of a doomed love between a pimp and his number one girl, and Jimi's funky guitar and bass riffing. All in all it simmers with a vibe not unlike what you'd imagine goes down nightly in the organ dives of Harlem U.S.A.

DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE

"Fast Lane" b/w "AM-PM" (PROFILE)

Jekyll and Hyde are a two-man crew I remember for a crass, trashy and funny rap version of Tom Tom Club's "Genius of Love." The first cut here is a bid in the socially relevant rap sweepstakes put in for them by composers Kurtis Blow and producer Russel Simmons. These guys, however, got such a brash, tacky way of deliv-

ering their lines that you kinda get the feeling their hearts just ain't in this cautionary message for all those youths in the ghetto on their way to an early grave. "AM-PM," though, is a rambling goof over a leftover Lindrum track wherein these two clowns doofusly boast, toast and cajole each other with a nutty comradery that, if nothing else, explains why they keep each other's company.

THE WORLD FAMOUS SUPREME TEAM

"Hey DJ" (ISLAND)

An easygoing, singalong, praise-song to the guys and gals who keep the party rocking, brought to you by the same crew that brought you "Buffalo Gals." Probably my rave-fave rap jam of the year (though it vies for that title with Double Trouble's number on the *Wild Style* soundtrack and the Furious Five's "Beat Street Breakdown") it also has one of this year's best videos out on it, in which the connections between graffiti, rapping, scratch deejaying, B-boys, breaking and fresh fashions are so graphically literalized it could be used in schools as a hip-hop primer.

I've stayed in their corner and followed them through their various musical directions knowing full well that they have yet to make a truly *great* record (despite many memorable moments, every Heads album has been flawed in one way or another).

Stop Making Sense (the soundtrack) is flawed in too many ways. The most crucial hitch in the proceedings is the inescapable fact that the band neither surpasses nor equals the original studio versions of any of these numbers. The most interesting interpretation is a bare-boned take of "Psycho Killer" where David Byrne opts for shifting about in the straitjacket when he should be shredding it.

Another big drawback is the inclusion of too much predictable, overly familiar material. Half the choices come from their latest LP, *Speaking In Tongues*. And we don't need any more versions of "Psycho Killer," "Life During Wartime" and most especially "Take Me To The River," which here sounds like a parody of pseudo-gospel histrionics. (It would have been a lot more adventurous of them to tackle a cover from their early days like the Tymes' "So Much In Love" or the Troggs' "I Can't Control Myself.")

Maybe this stuff comes off more interesting in conjunction with what takes place on the screen, but spinning there on the turntable it's blatantly so-so. Time for another new direction.

EVERY MAN HAS A WOMAN Various Artists

Polydor

By
Christopher Hill

That Yoko Ono has more of a talent for

self-expression than most people is evident by now. But talent of what sort, to what degree? That's still the question. She's shown that she can be clever in many different roles—avant-garde artist, poet, pop songstress, interviewee, businesswoman—but she's never shown beyond doubt that she could carry off any really weighty and consistent bit of artistry.

It's Yoko as songstress that we're concerned with here. John Lennon must have begun this project—a collection of her songs interpreted by various artists—with the thought of making a solid case for the talent that he had proclaimed for so long. That almost every member of this odd troupe—including Elvis Costello, Eddie Money, Rosanne Cash, Trio, Lennon himself—finds something to sink their teeth into argues in itself that Yoko has at least

learned how to write real songs, self-contained pieces with distinct identities rich enough to bear others' interpretations. Costello's TKO Horns find a place in "Walking On Thin Ice" for a hot, chopping groove; Trio's distorted organ figure in "Wake Up" lends a tart conviction to the happy-face lyrics.

But despite the music being unexpectedly interesting, the songs never quite sustain interest. Yoko is describing real feelings, but she doesn't have a real songwriter's gift of phrasing them so that they may be immediately felt.

I've never doubted that Yoko Ono is an extraordinary woman. But I now believe that, in the end, her greatest creation is simply her own career.

JUST THE WAY YOU LIKE IT S.O.S. Band

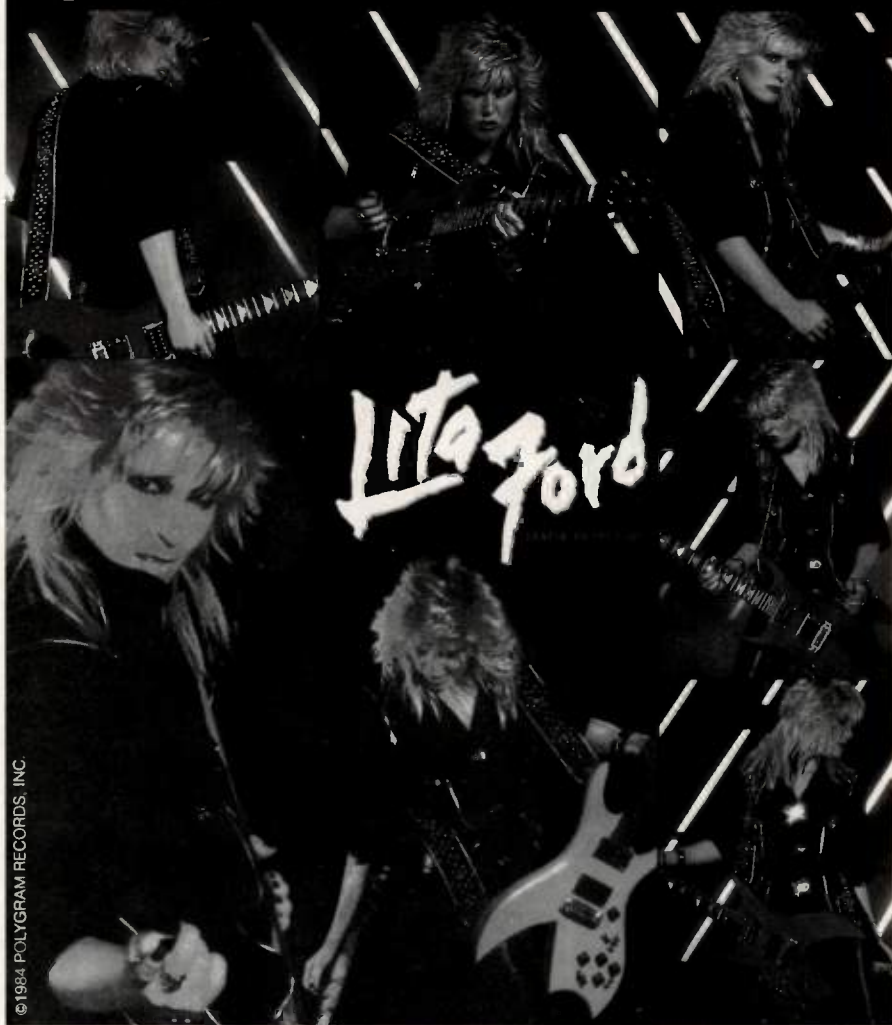
Tabu/CBS

By
Crispin Sartwell

I don't demand that pop artists jump the Snake River Canyon on a moped, or explore Jupiter with a hang glider, but a band that wants to take no risks at all should



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stay out of the recording studio. After all, with all that sophisticated circuitry, there's always a possibility that the smiling star of today could be the charred husk of tomorrow.

The S.O.S. Band's new album is offensively inoffensive, nocuously innocuous. In truth, *Just The Way You Like It* is by no means unpleasant, but it adheres to its title a mite too closely: it appears to have been constructed by slavish application of a formula.

Over the past five years, S.O.S. has consistently produced fine songs that placed them high on the black charts. Never precisely distinctive, they at least conveyed a discernible personality. Here, the personality is gone, and the charts seem to occupy the entire horizon. This record is perfectly tailored for radio play, but is so safe as to be insipid.

Songs dominating black charts today are heavily syncopated, slightly jazzy, mid-tempo, static structures aimed at dancefloor and drivetime. That's precisely the formula S.O.S. delivers six times on this album. On the seventh and last song, "Body Break," they attempt—like everyone else—to cash in on breakdancing, but the tune is so repetitive that it inflicts genuine pain.

The title cut is the album's best; it typifies S.O.S., and thus black pop at the moment. But typicality is simply not a valuable commodity. Maybe their next

outing won't find them gliding over Jupiter, but with luck it will find them doing something more exciting than this.

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STREET BEATS Various Artists

Sugar Hill Records

By
Anthony
DeCurtis

Exactly how and why politics kicked in the door of street music's non-stop party and made rap the most socially conscious sound of the '80s escapes easy theorizing. As even large segments of the oppressed scurry to the right, mutterings about the "Age of Reagan" explain nothing. Yet, as this excellent Sugarhill compilation testifies, very few raps worth a breath these days don't at least allude to unemployment, street violence, drug abuse, and the destruction of black youth.

The definitive work in the diatribe rap mode—a genre that owes more to the Last Poets and Gil Scott-Heron than often gets acknowledged—is, of course, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's "The

STREET BEATS



Message." Strangely, this track does not appear on *Street Beats*, but its riveting union of haunting synth riffs, throbbing bottom and staccato vocal waves of surreal urban nightmare imagery is approximated on nearly half of this double LP's twelve cuts.

But half the cuts only tell half the tale. No apparent political concerns blunt Kevie Kev's "Touch it, why doncha" urgings or his warm-hearted invitation to "Meet me at the waterbed tonight" on the hilariously sexy "All Night Long." Similarly, the updated ghetto corner harmonies of Crash Crew's "We Are Known As Emcees (We Turn The Party's Out)," the inexorable rhythmic rush of the scratch masterpiece "The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel," the groove-grinding funk of the Sugar Hill Gang's "Kick It Live From Nine To Five," and the seductive disc swirl of Fine Quality's "Aah Dance" express nothing more (and nothing less) than the politics of dancing.

Still, despite their fire-eyed realism and generally right on lines, *Streets Beats'* heavyweight sociological raps fall far short of ideological purity. The stunning counter-Sinatra netherworld of Flash and the Five's "New York, New York" accommodates child support whines (after all, "The bitch left him without a second thought...So much for women's lib") along with sneers at gays because "You can't tell

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STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN AND DOUBLE TROUBLE COULDN'T STAND THE WEATHER

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the women from the men sometimes." Be-nighted folk who "Believe in everything but God" take knocks in Melle Mel and Duke Bootee's "Message II," and even Grandmaster and Melle Mel's harrowing anti-coke epic, "White Lines (Don't Do It)," comes perilously close to further glamorizing its subject.

These complaints, however, touch nothing essential about what the political rappers are striving for. Perhaps because of the music's inevitably limited range—tip it this way, it becomes funk; that way, it becomes disco; turn the music down, you've got folk poetry—rap has grabbed the whole wide social whirl of protest, sex and fun for its word bag. Until more popsters get half as bold, let the street beats go on.

WORLD BEAT
Dan Del Santo
Pleasure

TEN FROM TEXAS:
HERD IT THROUGH
THE GRAPEVINE
Various Artists
Elektra

By
Jody
Denberg

Yessir-ree, folks, Texas does have plenty of barroom bluesers and honky-tonk heroes. But throw a quarter into the Lone Star jukebox these days, and you're likely to hear sounds influenced by the musical communities of Africa, London and the Bronx, as well as Lubbock and Austin. Hot damn—global village, here we come!

Take this here band leader and guitarist Dan Del Santo, for instance. Sure you can hear traces of Texas pickers like Albert Collins and Freddie King during his solos on *World Beat*. More than likely, though, attuned ears will notice a global grab bag of goodies: Del Santo tunes like "Why Don't You Open Your Eyes?" and "It Don't Matter Where You Run" incorporate the Soukous sound of Zaire and the Congo (criss-crossing percussive grooves, horns, blunted guitar lines and Cuban, Latin and Brazilian rhythms), as well as touches of reggae and jazz. And since Del Santo and his nine-piece Professors of Pleasure encase his exotic musical blend within standard verse/chorus/verse song structures, pop-oriented listeners will be able to get a handle on his world beat.

That is, if the vocals don't scare them away. Del Santo's husky, bellowing voice seems at home on the aforementioned tunes, bitter diatribes that recall Frank



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Zappa at his hipper-than-thouest. But on tender ballads like "Marianne" and "Love So Sweet," a lighter touch is called for, and Del Santo can't deliver.

Two *World Beat* songs also appear on *Ten From Texas: Herd It Through The Grapevine*, a compilation of Texas bands assembled by Liam Sternberg, who put together a similar sampler of Akron artists, including Rachel Sweet and the Waitresses, for Stiff Records in 1977. Although *Grapevine* does acknowledge, albeit briefly, traditional Texas fare—there are nods to Buddy Holly, rhythm and blues, and country—most of the tracks here are off the beaten, armadillo-strewn path.

David Bean, formerly a member of Houston cult favorites the Judys, contributes "My Imagination," a dance-pop song that recalls Jonathan Richman in its innocence. And Random Culture jump into the hip-hop sweepstakes with "Fame," a composition with lyrical concerns that have been heard before, but never in this context. The duo's synthesized framework includes scratching and drum machines enlivened by the contrast of acoustic piano and electric guitar. What's next, break dancing at Gilley's?

Or maybe no dancing at all. "No More Weekends In Warsaw," a dramatically executed tale by Austin's Secret Six about the effects of oppression on the social lives of Polish citizens, almost steals the show here. With its bright acoustic 12-string gui-

tar work, booming bass and swaying vocals, "Weekends" is a political statement made in human terms. No sloganeering or pity here—just the facts, ma'am.

And the facts are: Judging from these records, there's a lot of inventive, modern music being made in Texas these days, and these good old boys just can't keep it under their cowboy hats any longer. (Pleasure Records, 10607 FM RD 969, Austin, TX 78724.)

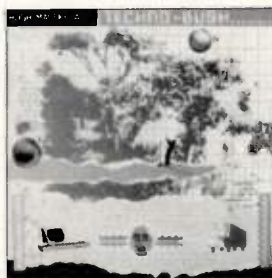
By
Laurice
Niemtus

If you're old enough to remember the fascinating summer of 1968, you may recall a catchy hit called "Grazing In The Grass," which sailed to Number One in the wake of Afro-Americanism and black pride. It was the work of South African Hugh Masekela, then protege of Harry Belafonte and husband to folk singer Miriam Makeba.

Well, that song is back this year on a

TECHNO-BUSH Hugh Masekela

Jive Africa/Arista



new Masekela album called *Techno-Bush*, but it's vastly overshadowed by the chunky, tight musical world tour offered on the rest of the album. You get bottomless talking drums, West African guitar leads that sound a lot like King Sunny Ade's Juju and lofty, wondrous washes of voices, singing (mostly) African syllables in lush layers.

It's a thick slice, this "Africa's Greatest Hits" package, which the titles alone tell us. I mean, how epic must a piece be to be called "The Seven Riffs of Africa," incorporating the Tokens' "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" (which sounds uncannily like something Malcolm McLaren might have copped for *Duck Rock*), with a mechanical, disco-perfect version of "Grazing"?

Yet the hit "Don't Go Lose It Baby" has easily nestled up to the Earons' gritty "Land of Hunger" and Grandmaster Melle Mel's angry rap on black radio this summer. And side two offers even better stuff—specifically "Pula Ea Na (It's Raining)," which is exotic yet hypnotic enough to be a mainstream AM hit.

All of which says, more emphatically than ever, that Africa is at least as diverse as America when it comes to musical roots and directions. Furthermore, it says that there's a lot of stuff we have yet to learn about what's pop and what's not. For my money, having Masekela back in the forefront of Afro-fusion music is good news for American music (and listeners), which is

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HYAENA
Siouxsie and the
Banshees

By
Nick
Burton

Having recently released the entire XTC catalog, Geffen Records has now performed the same admirable service for England's Siouxsie and the Banshees. While half the band's albums prior to *Hyaena* (the Banshee's first LP for Geffen) were released domestically, their previous label,



PVC/Polydor, did little to promote the band on these shores. With luck, Geffen's major league distribution and the relative popularity of *Hyaena* will provide a broader audience for Siouxsie and the Banshees' wildly creative (if maddeningly inconsistent) music.

With the initial lineup of vocalist Siouxsie Sioux, bassist Steve Severin, drummer Kenny Morris and guitarist John McKay, Siouxsie and the Banshees had their beginnings in the British punk movement. On their first two albums—1978's *The Scream* and *Join Hands*—the group's sound was raw and undeveloped, marked by Siouxsie's monotone singing and McKay's neo-metal guitar work. While both records come off now as punk curios (*Join Hands* featured a wicked version of "The Lord's Prayer"), the band did show signs of strength and intelligence, particularly on *The Scream*'s "Hong Kong Garden," a wonderful blend of punk and pop sensibilities.

After *Join Hands*, Morris and McKay split from the group. A new drummer, Budgie, joined in, and for *Kaleidoscope*, Magazine's John McGeoch and ex-Sex Pistol Steve Jones filled McKay's spot. *Kaleidoscope* found the band in a pivotal state of transition: Budgie and McGeoch added a more precise musicality, while Siouxsie and Severin's songwriting turned from punk towards a terse psychedelia. "Happy House" and "Christine" displayed their

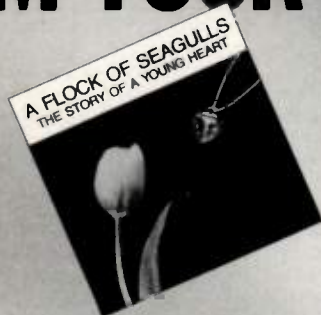
penchant for macabre lyrical imagery, which found full flowering on 1981's nightmarish *JuJu*, one of the great shock rock albums of all time.

With 1982's *A Kiss in the Dreamhouse*, Siouxsie's vocals began to take on a new expressiveness, and the group continued to expand and refine their musical resources by adding strings and keyboards, resulting in their most cohesive and musically challenging record thus far. Tracks like "Green Fingers," "She's A Carnival" and "Circle" pointed the band in a more sophisticated direction.

Continuing the Banshees' constant personnel shuffling, McGeoch was replaced by Robert Smith (moonlighting from the Cure), and the new lineup was represented by *Nocturne*, a double live set featuring excellent performances of their best material from the *Kaleidoscope/JuJu* period.

Unfortunately, *Hyaena*, the Banshees' latest, fails to deliver the goods as promised by *Dreamhouse*. It's an ambitious, experimental album, but it ultimately has more to offer in its stylish, other-worldly production than its incoherent songwriting. "Dazzle," "Belladonna" and "Take Me Back" are somewhat satisfying extensions of the *Dreamhouse* sound, but most of the album is rambling and disappointingly confused in its execution. "Pointing Bone," "Blow The House Down" and a plodding cover of the Beatles' "Dear Prudence" are the most pointless tracks the

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band has put to vinyl.

While Siouxsie and the Banshees' body of work shows a marked inconsistency, it also reveals a tremendous musical evolution. Perhaps the best place to start for the uninitiated is the compilation, *Once Upon A Time/The Singles*. In the meantime, Banshees fans will have to hope that the group's next move is represented by something more compelling than *Hyaena*.

**THIS IS WHAT YOU
WANT... THIS IS
WHAT YOU GET
Public Image Ltd.**

Elektra

By
Craig
Zeller

Once upon a time there was a young lad named John Lydon. Upon reaching manhood, he changed his name to Johnny Rotten and fronted a musical combo known as the Sex Pistols. They were raw, unnerving, pissed-off, fed up, and brutally frank. They were a great rock 'n' roll band. Their debut LP was one of the landmark albums of the last decade, a staggering onslaught of brilliantly enraged fury from start to finish.

When the Pistols blew apart, Rotten went back to being Lydon and formed Public Image Ltd. In the ensuing six years only one PIL recording ("Public Image," their debut single) has come within shouting distance of the Pistols' magnificence. Their second album (*Second Edition*) was hailed as a masterpiece in many critical circles; while I appreciate its convincing, desecrated-into-unholy-hell atmosphere, I rarely feel the need to play it. After that came the *Flowers of Romance* (which nobody, to my knowledge, hailed as a masterpiece) and a pair of import-only live releases that sounded pretty tired.

And now at long last, we have a new PIL studio LP. Or rather, the stores have it. I just threw mine out a fourth-story window and watched it shatter on a Volkswagen.

This Is What You Want... This Is What You Get is garbage. It's not punk, it's not new wave, it's not avant-punk, it's not a blazing descent into hell... it's just garbage. PIL is finished. Through. Washed up. John Lydon is a has-been. An also-ran. A pitiful pathetic poseur who once sounded righteously angry and now sounds pathetically drained. On every one of these miserably conceived eight "songs," Lydon whimpers, whines and wanks off at great boring lengths.

I don't know why I ever referred to this band in the plural. It's really John Lydon Ltd. and whoever else is unfortunate

enough to come along for the ride. Drone-meister guitarist Keith Levene is long gone but he did co-write five of these yammering ditties. He knew when to desert a sinking ship. Lydon's going down for the third time and he's too numbskulled to know it.

I repeat: this record is dead, stinking garbage—the most worthless album I've heard all year. Screw John Lydon. Long live Johnny Rotten.

**BOX OF FROGS
Box Of Frogs**

Epic

By
Steve
Futterman

It's been a nostalgic year for former Yardbirds members. First there was the onstage get-together of Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page at the ARMS benefits for Ronnie Lane. Now we have Box of Frogs, the decidedly less prestigious reunion of the band's original rhythm section: guitarist Chris Dreja, bassist Paul Samwell-Smith and drummer Jim McCarty. While this sounds like a perverse insider's joke—the Yardbirds' lasting contributions owing almost exclusively to their legendary triumvirate of lead guitarists and the late Keith Relf—Box of Frogs seems to be taking itself quite seriously. They've enlisted the help of singer John Fiddler, and summoned Beck, Rory Gallagher and a chap by the name of Dzal to add the appropriate guitar noises.

To their credit, Box of Frogs don't resurrect anything from the Yardbirds' repertoire, but that doesn't make them sound any less dated. Instead of opting for a predictable mid-'60s first wave British blues feel, Box of Frogs aims for a third wave British blues feel, c. 1972. This is just what the rock 'n' roll doctor didn't order; a few minutes of Box of Frogs is enough to convince anyone that workman-like British Blooze sounds far more antiquated than the brash explosiveness of the Yardbirds ever could.

Dreja, Samwell-Smith and McCarty are still a quite respectable team, but Fiddler and the Frogs' original material are both lackluster. The hot shot guest spots aren't much to write home about, either; if Dzal is either Clapton or Page, one can understand their hiding behind a pseudonym. Only Beck with his gargantuan tone and "look ma, four hands" technique can breathe life into the band's best tunes, "Two Steps Ahead" and "Poor Boy." It's typical of this out-of-step project to fade Beck out on the latter cut just as he's beginning to really crank it up and wail.



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CALLING MR. DYNAMITE

By J.D. Considine

When James Brown first took to being called The Godfather of Soul, it was more to play upon the faddish success of Francis Ford Coppola's hit film than anything else. But the appropriateness of the tag went well beyond its novelty value, especially in the era after disco, for as funk became the rhythmic standard by which dance music, black or white, was judged, Brown's

though his hitmaking powers waned in the mid-'70s, the fact that George Clinton's Parliament/Funkadelic made its charge up the charts with the assistance of Brown vets Bootsy Collins, Maceo Parker and Fred Wesley suggests that Brown's success was almost continued by proxy.

In and of itself, that would be enough to guarantee James Brown a sizable niche in rock history. As it happens, though, "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag" was released nine

three of his albums available in this country, none of them on a major label.

That's beginning to change. Although a fan desperate for *Sex Machine* or *The Popcorn* is still doomed to prowl the local used record shops, a respectable amount of classic Brown has become available in recent months, both through domestic releases and easily-obtainable imports. Still, the hard-core is bound to be at least a little frustrated until the vaults at Polydor have been thoroughly rifled.

Well, maybe that's overstating it a bit. Certainly, those who hanker for the best of Brown's pre-"Brand New Bag" days (his *old bag*?) have little to complain about. Not only did Solid Smoke, a San Francisco-based oldies label, make the heroic gesture of reissuing the 1962 *Live at the Apollo* classic three years ago, but now they've gone a step further by unleashing the two-volume *The Federal Years*, a compendium of Brown's best with the Famous Flames.

This was a crucial period, not only for Brown but also for the evolution of R&B. Although "Please, Please, Please" offered an electrifying recapitulation of gospel's transformation to pop, it made its point more through the mighty power of Brown's screaming, pleading lead vocal. But as time went on and Brown sharpened his ideas, he restructured his influences into something new and strikingly fresh. Even in something as early as "I'll Go Crazy," Brown had already managed to reshuffle the components of "Please, Please, Please" so that they applied the vocal and the beat to maximum impact.

While both volumes of *The Federal Years* provide enough diversity to demonstrate this evolution, compilers Rico Tee and Marty Arbunich seem more interested in the harmony numbers than the groove tunes. Fair enough. But the uninitiated may question their insistence on omitting "Please, Please, Please" because it's already available on *Can Your Heart Stand It!*, the label's version of Brown's greatest hits. And it does seem odd to include "Think" with-

out "Night Train."

But rather than complain, perhaps it would be better simply to mention that Polygram Special Imports, the foreign product division of Polygram, has made an eight-volume series of King re-issues available Stateside. Not only are these albums—Mr. Dynamite; Prisoner of Love; The Unbeatable James Brown; Please, Please, Please; Papa's Got A Brand New Bag; I Got You; It's a Man's Man's Man's World; and Cold Sweat—available with original covers and track order, but they're as affordable as imports get.

Of course, they'd be even more affordable if Polydor released them over here, but in lieu of that, the label has begun a small-scale reissue program of its own, *The James Brown Story*. Although the first two volumes, *Ain't That a Groove* and *Doing It to Death*, avoid the hits in favor of lesser-known efforts, they manage to convey a vivid sense of what the Godfather's music was about during the late '60s and early '70s. Not only is there groovemanship par excellence, but there's Brown's political input, too, from "I Don't Want Nobody to Give Me Nothing (Open the Door, I'll Get It Myself)" to the "Watergate Interlude" from *Reality*. Not for nothing was Brown the only R&B artist in history to have liner notes written by Hubert Humphrey.

Lest all this leave you with the impression that Brown has become merely a denizen of the archives, there's "Unity, Pts. I-VI," a new Tommy Boy single featuring Brown with Afrika Bambaataa, which handily proves that Brown is still making history. Despite some canny nods to the Godfather's back catalogue, this single is solidly contemporary, and one of the hottest performances of either performer's career. Should it earn the sales it deserves, we may be on the verge of seeing James Brown enter yet another era in his prodigious career.

Personally, I can't wait. (Solid Smoke, P.O. Box 22372, San Francisco, CA 94122; Tommy Boy, 1747 First Avenue, New York, NY 10128.)



James Brown: Cold sweat and groovemanship par excellence

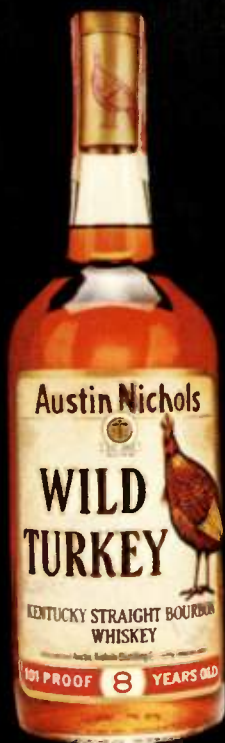
contribution was unmistakable. Indeed, it's arguable that funk as we know it simply wouldn't exist had James Brown not been on hand to act as its musical midwife.

Brown pioneered the monolithic, single-chord groove with "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag" in 1965; "Brother Rapp" anticipated much of the rap revolution by almost a decade. Brown wasn't simply ahead of his time, either, for he turned out R&B chart-toppers throughout the '60s, and still holds the record for having charted more singles than any other act in history. And

years into a career that had already substantially expanded upon the gospel-based harmony of Brown's million-selling debut single, "Please, Please, Please." Yet for all that, finding the recordings with which Brown made musical history has been absurdly difficult since the early '70s. His early recordings for the King label slipped out of print without a trace, and his work for Polydor was remaindered almost as quickly as it fell off the charts. Although Brown has recorded and released over 60 albums since 1961, as little as a year ago there were only

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