

DAVID BYRNE: THE RECORD INTERVIEW

RECORD



PAGE 12

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**HALL &
OATES**
MOVING ON

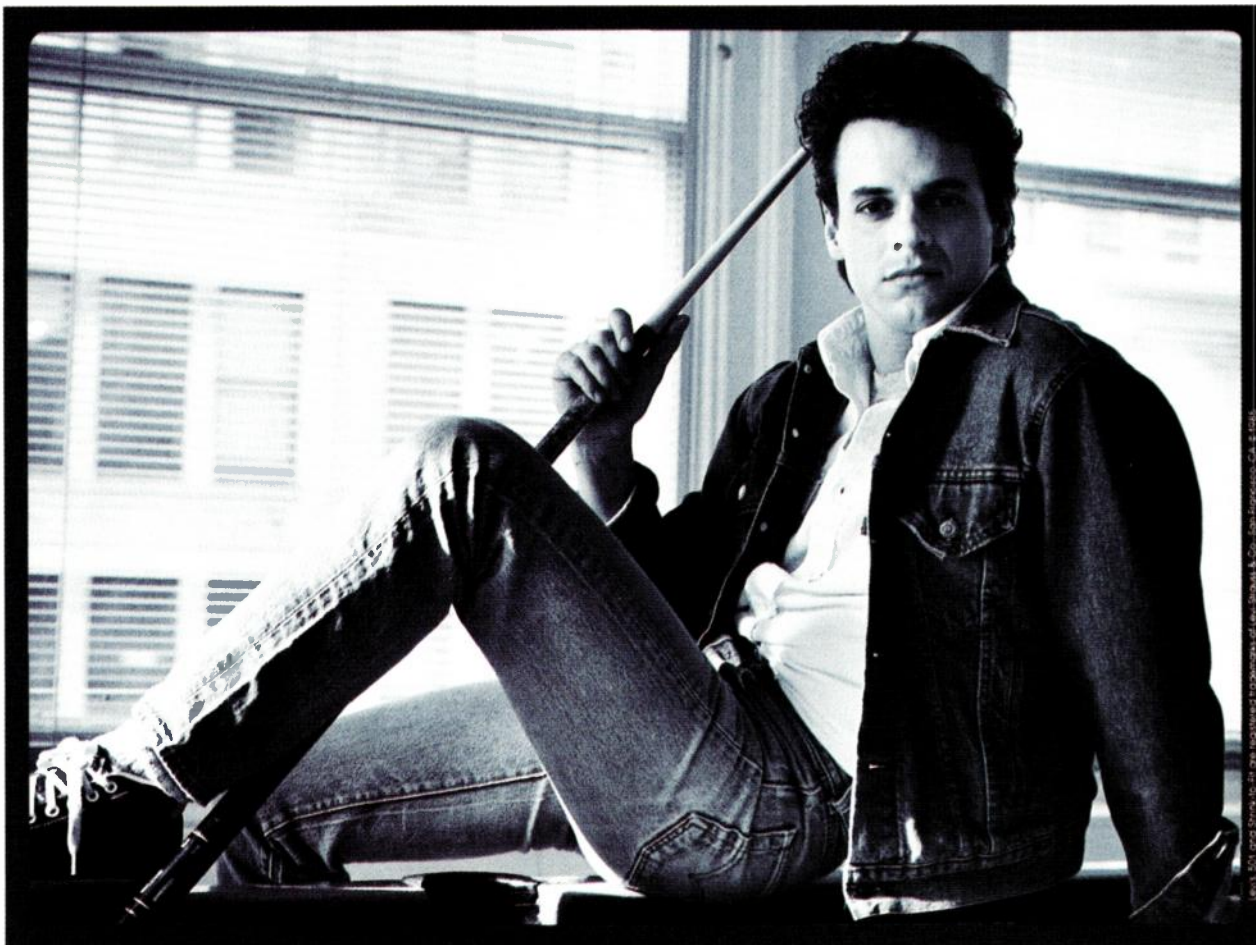
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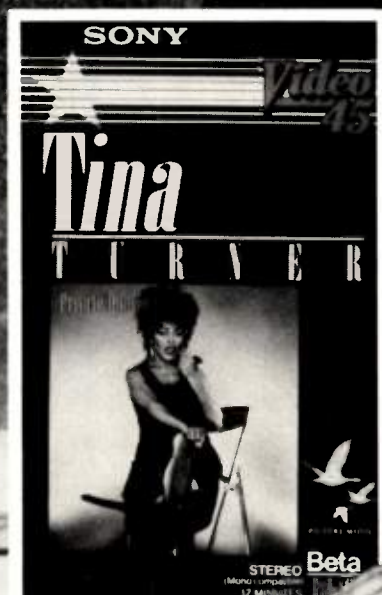
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RECORD

JUNE 1985

VOL. 4 NO. 8

ROCK ON 6

The Firm's U.S. tour got underway in Dallas and our reporter was there to witness a fairly dull beginning; he went back for a second time, though, when the tour returned to Texas, and found that a few things had changed. But for better or worse? . . . in the midst of his mammoth U.S. tour, Prince is also preparing for his second film role; Billy Joel's trying to get into pictures too, reportedly negotiating a deal that would allow him to direct as well as star; and the first pics are out of Tina Turner's movie de-



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but in *Road Warrior* and she looks mah-velous . . . on the home front, Pat Benatar's a mommy now, and Keith Richards is a daddy . . . Sheena Easton may be singing that naughty Prince song, but she says her image hasn't changed . . . Simple Minds are planning an extended assault on these shores in '85 . . . Jenny Burton learns a new discipline and it pays off on her new record.

THE RECORD INTERVIEW

DAVID BYRNE

By Anthony DeCurtis . 12
More than a talking head, David Byrne continues to venture into unusual realms of American music, this time with the release of an album of recordings intended as a score for experimental playwright Robert Wilson's *Knee Plays*. Associate editor Anthony DeCurtis, author of our February '84 cover story on Byrne, catches up with the chief Head again to discuss this latest venture and to get the hot skinny on the next Talking Heads project.

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An All-American band looks for a breakthrough.

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By Anthony DeCurtis . 22
In the wake of their monumental success of late, Hall and Oates are contemplating new solo projects and new directions for their brand of double dynamite. Says Daryl Hall: "Breaking the rules is the best thing we could do now."

THE FERVOR OF RURAL MYSTICS

By Christopher Hill . . . 30
Stardom flared fitfully over Jason and the Scorchers' horizon in 1984, and now these Nashville cats have consolidated their strengths on an exciting new album, *Lost and Found*. Contributing editor Christopher Hill sat in on some of the sessions and filed this report on a band that has a firm grasp on its mission.

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COVER PHOTO BY ANDY FREEBERG
TOP INSET BY STEVEN MARK NEEDHAM



MARILYN SCHATZBERG

TAPE TALK

WE AT DENON AMERICA noted with great interest the results of your premium high bias tape comparison in the March '85 issue of *RECORD* ("Chrome Wars: Tale of the Tapes"). I would like to state that the method and results of your comparison were fair and accurate. But wait! Why should a company whose product, DX-7, placed *last* be pleased with the results? Well, DX-7 is our *budget-priced high bias tape*. Our premium tape, DX-8, was not included in the comparison. In fact, the difference between our budget formulation, DX-7, and the premium formulations of TDK, Maxell, and others was so close that you stated that DX-7 "actually sounded better than our third and fourth place winners when no noise reduction was used."

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So, the results of the March issue tape test were accurate, but something of a mismatch; their heavyweights versus our light-heavyweight. Even so, Denon DX-7 hung in there. We believe, however, that our top contender, DX-8, could take the crown.

We look forward to the rematch.

STEPHEN BAKER
National Tape Sales Manager
Denon America, Inc.
Fairfield, NJ

Denon's high-bias DX-8 gets its proper test in this month's Audio column.—Ed.

VOX POPULI?

BONO DISGRACES HIMSELF with the observation that the critics who hated the songwriting on *The Unforgettable Fire* must be just mean, awful ol' cynics ("The Fire Within," March *RECORD*). "Can I be one day Batman and the next the Joker?" he coyly asks. Exactly, damn it! Bono simply doesn't know the difference between sublime lyrics and sappy ones, and that's the worm at the heart of my admiration for U2. I can only conclude that Batman wrote "New Year's Day," the lament

of a heart that knows it exists to be broken as surely as one year follows another.

Take "A Sort of Homecoming," for example. It's full of driving snow, fields of mourning, dream landscapes, and bomb-blast lightning waltzes, but the verbiage adds up to zero. When something "passes" water, Bono, what is it doing? Yep. I imagine that cloud peeing all over poor Martin Luther King's grave, and I blush for every time I grabbed a friend's sleeve and said, "Hey, you've got to listen to a song by this group from Ireland..."

Bono's Stanley Kubrick-like plea for the audience to be patient with his obscure work of art until they "find" the meanings doesn't hold up either. Listeners remember only too well that U2 worked out the meanings before they committed the songs to vinyl on *War*. I guess the official word from us cynics to the lyricist we still root for is "Cut out the justification and get back to work—we know you can do much better!"

Positive enough for you, Mr. Hewson?

EMILY FLUM
Athens, OH

PRIMADONNA

LIKE A GREAT MANY OF today's rock 'n' roll flash-in-the-pans, Madonna ("Maybe She's Good," March *RECORD*) works as much, if not more so, as an easy image for

the public to latch onto. Of course, as she says, it's the music between the grooves that's the most important aspect of her career. But does anyone honestly believe that's all she's selling to the public? It simply isn't enough to let the music speak for itself anymore, as I'm sure she's aware. Marketing strategy calls the shots, and given that fact that she's an aggressively ambitious young woman, I doubt Madonna has any qualms about exploiting herself as a sexy tart if that's what it takes to become a mega-star.

In this age of rock video, it's getting increasingly difficult to distinguish between what's real and what's image only. The business of selling the artist has almost taken precedence over the source of the interest in the first place: the tunes.

GARY KIMBER
Downsview, Ont., Canada

Last year when I purchased Madonna's first album, I was very impressed with this new artist's talent. But the fact that she is a talented musician is being overlooked because people are only listening to her lyrics and portraying her as a sleaze and a bad influence on today's young generation. Madonna identifies with today's young generation; she's someone young girls look up to. Madonna has created a new fashion trend, recorded two great albums, and made a celebrity of herself—she's going somewhere.

CYNTHIA FLETCHER
Pittsburgh, PA

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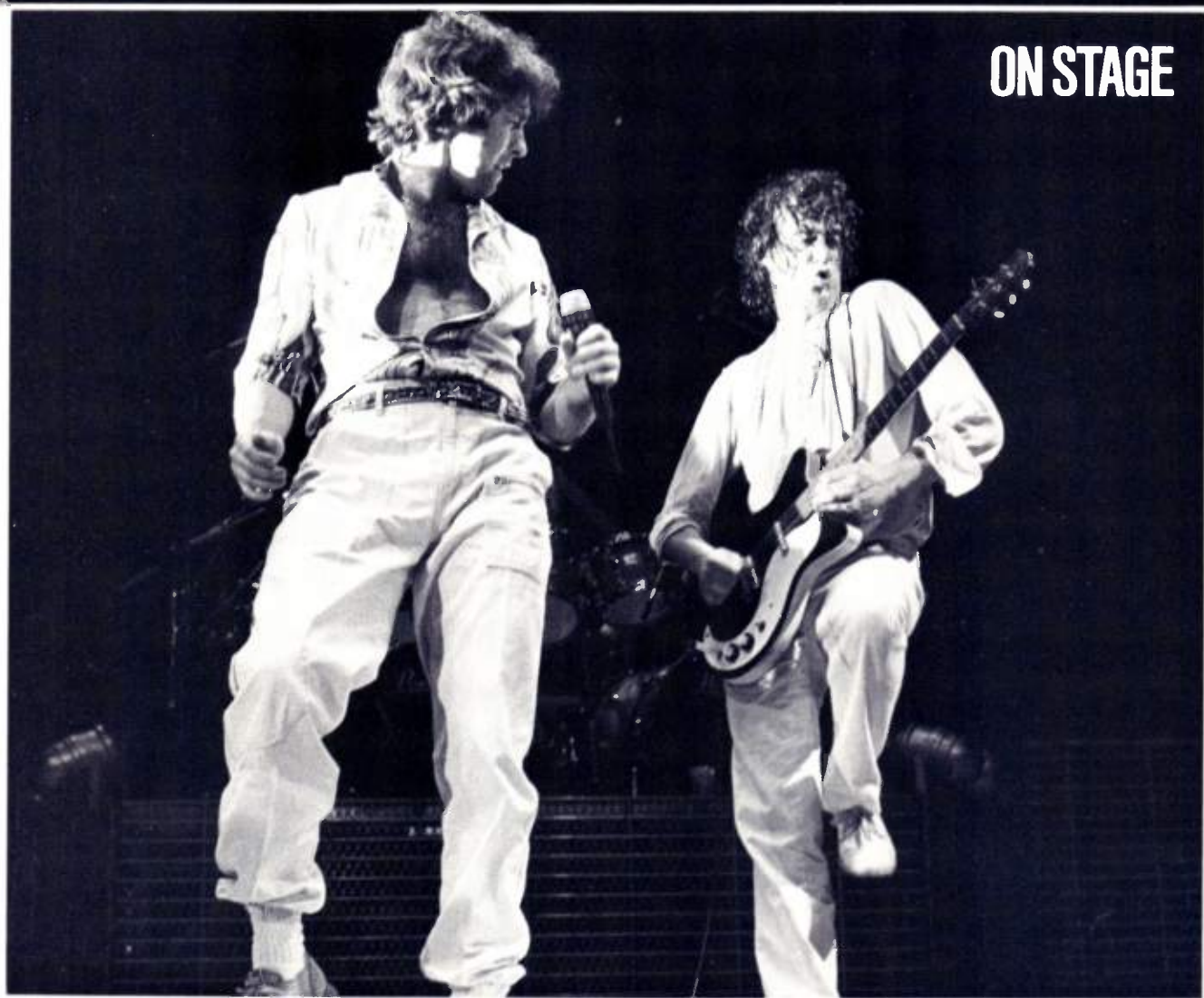
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ROCK ON ROCK ON ROCK ON ROCK ON

ON STAGE



KEST ROBERTS

NO SPARK, NO FIRE

THE FIRM

Reunion Arena
Dallas, Texas
February 28, 1985

Frank Erwin
Special Events Center
Austin, Texas
March 23, 1985

Rub together two rockers like Jimmy Page and Paul Rodgers with a thundering rhythm section and you'd expect sparks to fly. Back to the drawing board for that theory. Two Firm concerts a month apart in the Lone Star State were considerably less than incendiary. The tour's first show, February 28 in Dallas, was shaky as first nights can be—at times it was hard to tell that the four musicians who comprise the Firm realized they were playing in the same group—but three weeks later a poorly-attended Austin show proved mediocre at best.

Charisma is about all Page exuded in the two shows here. Blistering

notes from his battery of guitars with all the accuracy of rubber bullets fired in a padded cell, Page's timing in Dallas was abominable; he found a groove during the Austin show, especially during Rodgers' "Live In Peace" and "Midnight Moonlight," and showed glimpses of the sexual tension and release that characterized his glory days. Still, this was a case of hots on for nowhere.

Rodgers' voice remains an adequate if uninspiring instrument, rendering covers of "You've Lost That Loving Feeling" and "I Just Want To Make Love To You" redundant; he also displays about as much personality as the band's corrugated

steel staging. Bassist Tony Franklin and drummer Chris Slade hammer away with unfocused force throughout the two-hour set, becoming especially offensive during the 30-minute version of "The Chase" from Page's score for *Death Wish II*. This latter number also features the by-now-obligatory appearance of Page's violin bow, not to mention lasers, dry ice and hanging mirrors! To say that this band appears to have no relevance to anything happening today is to state the obvious—and to tell a truth that these musicians should own up to right away before this beast starts multiplying.

Jody Dember



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Sheena's Prince Connection

So does it embarrass Sheena Easton to sing a song about her vagina?

"Is that how you interpret it?" asks the wee Scot. "I'm not embarrassed because I don't say that's what it's about. But yes, it's sexual and yes, it's provocative. I enjoy that."

What this is all about is Easton's funky, naughty single "Sugar Walls." The songwriter's credit on the tune says "Alexander Nevermind," but the song gives all indications of being the handiwork of the hottest provocateur in the biz. If the production and arrangements didn't give Prince away, then the lyrics' transparent sexual invitation certainly did: "Come spend the night inside my sugar walls..."

In Easton's repertoire are songs that deal with a variety of sexual appeals. But as taboos recede in Top 40 she's recently found it easier to of-



JERRY WOLFE/STARFILE

fer riskier singles. In selecting "Strut" and "Swear" as the other chart offerings from her fifth LP, *A Private Heaven*, the singer asserts

she's more of a rocker than her past pop hits suggest.

"I've been influenced by what's been happening," says Easton, noting the post-

punk trend toward more aggressive popular tunes. Some fancy footwork on the music charts attests to her own commercial range. She's had hits in each of *Billboard's* pop, adult contemporary, black, dance and country Top Fives. It's a music first. And no mean feat, even for a bright, shrewd woman who knows the value of versatility in these changing times.

As for the Prince liaison, it was a wish come true for Easton. A mutual friend, engineer David Leonard, turned up with some tracks of "Sugar Walls" saying the song had been written expressly for her. "I was delighted," she says. "I played it and it blew me away." During the subsequent sessions, Prince "made me feel comfortable exploring my vocal potential."

Now about those "sugar walls"...

—Susanne Whatley

AND PRINCE HIS OWN SELF

What to do for an encore, after winning both a Grammy and an Oscar? How about another movie? Published reports have it that His Royal Badness will turn movie star again later this year when he takes the lead role in a \$15 million dollar musical called *Prince of Darkness and the Morning Star*. Producer Zev Braun has described the film as being "somewhat reminiscent of *West Side Story*—it's about those impulses within us that make us play it safe or take chances." ... another inside tipster tells us that Billy Joel's trying to go Hollywood too. He's said to be in heavy negotiation with Universal Pictures for a multi-film deal that would offer him opportunities to be-



come a triple-threat actor, producer and director ... and then there's the fine, fine, superfine Tina Turner, who's about to wrap her first movie role since her dazzling turn as the Acid Queen in *Tommy* in 1975. Portraying a character named Aunty Entity (described in press releases as "sexy and deadly"), Turner stars opposite Australian heartthrob Mel Gibson in the third saga of *Mad Max*, *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome*. Aunty Entity is the power-that-be in a desert oasis called Bartertown, an outpost Max stumbles onto after being bushwhacked and left to die in the heat. The plot summary indicates that Max narrowly escapes Entity's wringer; a simple twist of fate, however, brings him back trying to rescue some children from Entity's death grip. Check her out—isn't that a aunt you could learn to love?



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A Little Continuity, Please



KEITH MENOZA

Jenny Burton, a native New Yorker raised on gospel and jazz, says she's finally learned to sing pop. "I've been working very hard at my singing the past couple of years," says Burton, whose second Atlantic LP, *Jenny Burton*, is the end result of that intensive training. "First, I've had to speed up my vibrato. I've learned to push my chest way out and do a better job of mixing the very highs and lows. And I've learned not to make little curlicues on every word. Now I just try to sing the melody. When you're improvising all over it, you tend to forget the melody completely. I had to learn a new discipline."

The alto singer, who currently lives in midtown Manhattan and at presstime was expecting a child in the Spring, spent 10 years looking for a record deal before landing one with Atlantic. That didn't stop her, however, from "living and going about my career way beyond the reality of my life." Burton says she laid out more than \$12,000 in wardrobe and equipment just for some "track gigs" (singing lead vocals over instrument tracks at dance clubs). That figure includes \$2000 for a kimono, plus thousands of dollars for fog machines, microphones and speaker systems.

"I'm trying to have some continuity in my career," says Burton, who's worked nine-to-five in an office, studied acting, done a little dancing and a lot of cabaret work all around New York. She says she's no longer "uptight" about not making it, in part because of her three-year-old marriage and upcoming child, in part because she's finally got a large record company behind her.

"I've never really considered quitting," she says in reference to the bad times of the past. "No matter what, when it came to my career, I didn't pull punches. Hopefully, I won't have to worry about things like money anymore." —Mark Mehler

Of One Mind

Jim Kerr knew something was amiss when the members of Simple Minds failed to get pumped up over their first Number One British album. "To be honest," says the lead singer and co-founder of the eight-year-old Scottish quartet, "we felt

hardly any excitement at all. We were Number One, so what do we do next week? We lacked motivation."

Also, notes the husband of the Pretenders' Chrissie Hynde and, as of March 26, a proud papa, touring incessantly in support of last year's *Sparkle in the Rain* created a sense of creeping ennui. "No matter what great things we came up with, we never had any time during the tour to work them out on a stage. We weren't growing together."

A four-month break last year stemmed the tide of indifference. Simple Minds began rehearsing its seventh, as yet untitled, album in February, looking towards a summer release. Jimmy Iovine and Bob Clearmountain were the leading candidates to man the board for the band.

"We're planning to make some changes in the sound," Kerr reveals. "Charlie Burchill's been working more on writing complete songs, and doing some more things with guitar, echoes and lots of chord sequencers. We're moving from being a keyboard-based band that works with atmospheres and tacks on lyrics later, to one that deals in complete song structures. We'll have more of an acoustic type sound, too. We've found some ways to deal with our growing pains." —Mark Mehler



STILLS CO



DAVID KERR

MATERNITY WARD

In addition to the birth of Jim and Chrissie Kerr's baby girl, we should note some other blessed events that have come to pass recently. First up is Pat Benatar, who gave birth to a seven-pound, one-ounce baby girl on February 16 in Tarzana, California. Haley Egeana is the first child for Benatar and her husband-guitarist-producer Neil Giraldo. And in the good deed department, Benatar is donating the proceeds, estimated at \$50,000, from her Top Five single, "We Belong," to the USA For Africa effort. Benatar's pregnancy prevented her from participating in the all-star session . . . and on March 18, Keith Richards became a father for the third time when his wife, Patti Hansen, gave birth to seven-pound, 15-ounce Theodora Dupree Richards at New York Hospital. Arriving at the Keith-correct hour of 4 a.m., the newest Richards takes her Christian name from her mother's mother, and her middle name from her father's grandfather (Gus Dupree), who taught young Keith how to play guitar. Thank you, Gus.

Catching Up with **DaViD bYrne**

By Anthony DeCurtis

TALKING HEADS' MAIN MAN David Byrne never lets success slow him down. Hot off back-to-back gold records for the Heads' *Speaking in Tongues* and the *Stop Making Sense* soundtrack, he's just released a solo disk, *The Knee Plays*, consisting of pieces he wrote for playwright Robert Wilson's massive performance art extravaganza, *the CIVIL WarS*. Musically, Byrne takes a turn here, simultaneously moving away from the ecstatic funk of recent Talking Heads outings; the primitive rhythm-charged experimentalism of his Brian Eno collaboration, *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*; and the spare, spacy excur-

sions of his songs for choreographer Twyla Tharp's *The Catherine Wheel*.

On *The Knee Plays*, Byrne returns to some characteristic themes (food-shopping, clothing and personality, identity mergers) in spoken narrations over resonant brass arrangements inspired by indigenous New Orleans music. At his record company's offices in New York, Byrne spoke expansively about his new musical direction, the making of *Stop Making Sense*, his new film script, where the Heads are heading, and, um, UFOs. As you'll see, weird as he is, Byrne hasn't yet stopped making sense.

The Knee Plays is such a significant departure for you. How did you get interested in working with New Orleans brass music?

It was in a roundabout way inspired by this band I saw in New Orleans years ago—the Dirty Dozen Brass Band. They're a brass band of pretty conventional instrumentation, but they have arrangements that are more contemporary-sounding than the older bands that might play in the Dixieland or traditional jazz styles. They'll do, like, a Thelonious Monk song, but arranged for a marching band. And then they'll do a little bit of "Beat It" and segue into the theme from *Wild Wild West*.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVEN MARK NEEDHAM

Since then, Robert Wilson approached me about working with him as part of his epic opera, or performance piece or theater piece, *the CIVIL WarS*. He originally approached me about doing music for a few different sections, but due to time limitations I could only do one section. I chose *The Knee Plays*. He calls them that because they function as joints between the larger scenes. Each one is about five minutes long and is performed in front of a backdrop while the big sets and stage elements are being changed from one of the huge scenes to another.

When he approached me, as is his way of working, there was no text, no dialogue

and a very simple kind of story. Most of all there was just a series of little drawings, almost like illustrations for a fairy tale.

When you say a story, did he outline for you what he felt should be happening?

I did music that's going in one direction and the story's going in another direction. And the stage pictures, the staging, is telling another story again.

Having seen some of his theater pieces before, there's a sense that there's a number of things going on simultaneously which in a literal sense don't have anything to do with one another. In another sense, they might. Or they're at least presented

together, and they're sometimes organized in a way that they relate to one another, although they're telling separate stories at the same time, or telling a story and doing a dance at the same time. The dance may say one thing and the story might say something else.

Was *the CIVIL WarS* initially commissioned for the Olympics?

Yeah, (*The Knee Plays*) was just one small part of it. The total thing would have lasted at least eight hours. That's a pretty conservative estimate. The scale of the other scenes and acts is pretty massive and pretty involved. It involves a variety of things

'Most modern ideas that are really good are generally a reaffirmation of an eternal feeling that had been submerged for awhile'



picked from different portions of the arts. In one section there were very well-known opera singers. In another section, a pretty well-known European playwright was doing the text. Then there were film projections, people flying through the air, all sorts of things going on in different sections. Sometimes the sets are just huge, just humongous. They're on the scale of grand opera.

And it wasn't staged because of its scale. Was there any response from the Olympics Committee about that? Were they disappointed?

Some people were disappointed, other people felt that they were totally unfamiliar with that kind of work. Los Angeles is a city that doesn't have a tradition of theater, it has a tradition of film. So there isn't a tradition that theater can be a powerful medium. And it was during a period when there was a whole arts festival for the Olympics, so there were an awful lot of other things going on as well. So the loss of

one, even though it was probably the biggest one of all, wasn't missed as much as it might have been.

In terms of the music you decided to work with for *The Knee Plays*, did you feel that you wanted to make a departure from the things you had been doing? Did you feel you had gone about as far as you wanted to go with funk?

Pretty much. I felt I could keep doing it and still enjoy it, but if I kept doing it I'd turn into a parody of myself or be too completely identified with one thing. My interests are more well-rounded than that. I knew I wanted to do something else with theater or dance. For *The Catherine Wheel*, I did a tape. I thought this time I'd really like to do it with live musicians.

Were you getting this together at the same time you were working on *Stop Making Sense*?

The music was composed while the sound was being mixed for *Stop Making Sense*, at

least a lot of the music was. The sound was being mixed in the daytime, and at night I'd come home and write. The final rehearsals were in April, May (of 1984). At that point, *Stop Making Sense* was done.

Do you have any difficulty making those kinds of shifts?

No, no, because I know in my own life I don't see it as a contradiction if I put on a pop record and right after it listen to something completely different.

You've been living in New York for a long time, but often your songs are set in a world of shopping malls, parking lots, cars, supermarkets. Is there any reason why you keep returning to that type of environment, even though it's removed from your day-to-day experience?

It is a little bit (removed), but somehow that's my impression of America. When I think about the country I live in, that's what I think about. I don't think about New York City. So that's what I write

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about, and I assume that's the environment most people live in, too.

Up to a point, it's a challenge. I almost feel obliged to write about the way I live and the way a lot of other people live, rather than writing about fantastic things, about heroic love affairs, or monsters and demons. Although I think those are valid things too, in a sense.

But ordinary daily living is ignored a lot, so it's my job to stand up and say (*rises from his seat and raises a clenched fist*), 'Wait a minute! I'm not gonna shirk that responsibility!'

Now you say the way you live and the way other people live, but a lot of times there's a real dispassionate quality in your presentation of those activities. It's almost as if you're looking at our culture the way an anthropologist or an alien would. Where does that distance come in?

I don't feel that way most of the time. I feel like I fit in pretty well. I mean (*begins grinning wildly*), when I go to a 7-11, I don't feel like, 'Wait a minute! What is *that*? What is *that*? What . . . is . . . that . . . for? How . . . do . . . you . . . eat . . . this?' I don't quite feel like *that*.

But at the same time, it's interesting to almost adopt that kind of approach. And then all of a sudden you look at these things that you deal with every day the way a foreigner would, or the way someone

would who's seeing it for the first time. It makes you see it in a fresh way.

The other reason is, to go along with the history of Bob Wilson's theater . . . quite a lot of recent theater has taken this kind of approach of presenting things in a rather detached way. In a sense the assumption is that the emotional input is left up to the audience. Listeners read their own emotions into it or their own meaning into it and apply it to their own lives. So it's assumed that it's inappropriate for the performer to dictate to the audience what the meaning is of a certain word or what the emotional content is of a certain word or phrase, that that's telling the audience what to think or how to feel. So as much as possible, you try to remove that and let the audience think or feel for themselves.

And so I even extended that to the music (for *The Knee Plays*), where although it would be easy to make this kind of music swing and be real bouncy, mix the drums up more and make it almost like a dance band, a lot of the emotional content has been flattened out, so the relationships among the different parts are more or less just presented without the other stuff.

And yet sometimes when I listen I still find the melodies moving, but in a sense I'm reading my own emotions into it, instead of the players putting theirs in. There's arguments for and against all that, but that's why the record is the way it is.

In "In the Future" you make a series of statements, many of which are contradictory, with the final statement being, "In the future there will be so much going on, no one will be able to keep track of it." Do you see that as a certain kind of reality that the art you create has to reflect?

I suppose it is some sort of response to media glut or something like that, but I think that kind of presentational theater is a way of offering things just for people to look at or listen to, without trying to justify their existence. In the sense that a person doesn't have to justify their existence; they were born and there's nothing much they can do about it! Or a tree, you look at it and there might be some reason why it's there, but it doesn't have to have a meaning.

A lot of this kind of performance is presented, I think, simply to say, 'This is something and here it is.' It might mean something, but more than anything else it *exists* and it's just placed before you.

While the *attitude* is to present things, there is a conscious or unconscious choice of *what* to present. And that *is* probably a response to the contemporary world, but it's hard for me to put my finger on what the reason is for each thing.

In the past, the solo projects that you've worked on have really had an impact on Talking Heads. Is that happening again?

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In a very roundabout way this time. On the Talking Heads record we're doing right now, we've used a lot more acoustic instruments. Of course, *(The Knee Plays)* is entirely acoustic. But I don't think the material would remind you of this at all.

Are you producing it yourselves?

Yes.

Was everybody pretty much in agreement about the direction they wanted the band to move in with the upcoming album?

I think so, I think so. We didn't have any big disagreements about the direction any of the songs should go in. Any disagreements we had were pretty small ones.

What made you decide to make *Stop Making Sense*?

I was real happy with the way things seemed to come together in that tour. The visual elements in the staging, the costumes and the music, it seemed to be a culmination of sorts. If not musically, then combining the music with the staging. And it went over really well with audiences. I thought, there's proof that it's successful, it's worth preserving or documenting so that more people can see it. Plus it frees me from having to duplicate any of that.

Many concert movies are bad, even when the concert was good. Was there any concern on your part about the difficulties of putting a concert over on film?

A little bit, not all that much, I guess because I'd had some experience editing videotapes and working with things myself that I didn't feel like I was completely handing over what we'd done to someone else. I still felt like I could be involved in it, have some input into it.

I'm real proud of it, and I think everybody who worked on it was, but at the same time the concert film genre is kind of frowned on and people don't have very high expectations of that genre. So there was a big chance that people would just stay away in droves because they'd been turned off by previous concert things.

Will there be a Talking Heads tour this year?

No, no, not at all. It's time to reassess what a performance with music should do, or could do, or can do. That takes awhile. If you just go out and tour, then you never take time to think or feel what you'd really like to feel out there.

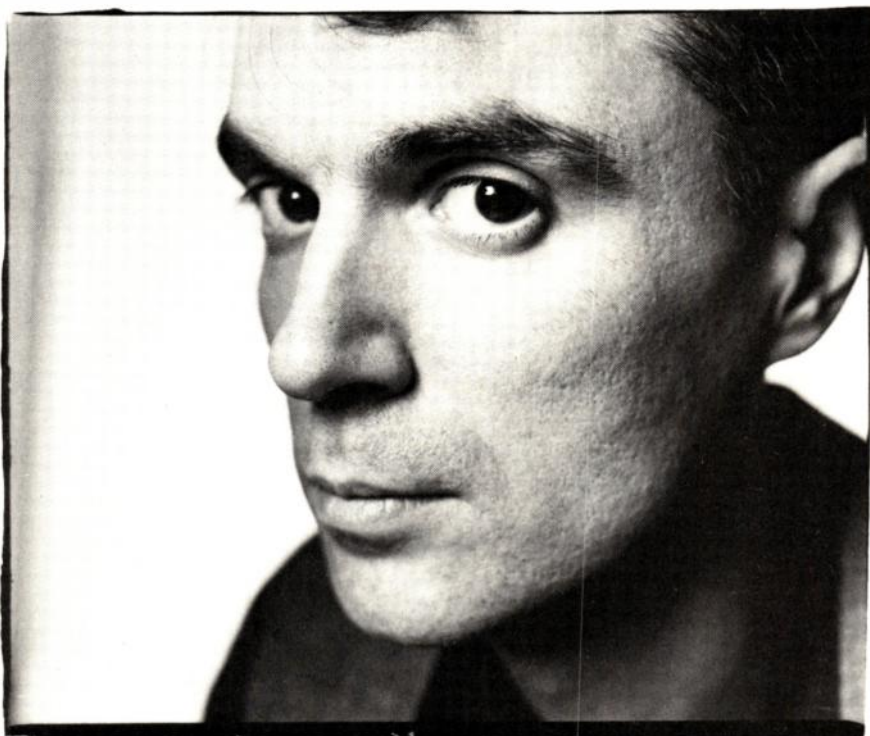
I understand you recently completed a movie script.

I worked with some other writers and wrote a script with songs for a movie project. It's kind of an impressionistic portrait of a town and a few people in the town. It's set in Texas.

Is *True Stories* the working title?

Yeah, because a lot of the characters and

*'I feel obliged to write about the way
I live and the way a lot of other people live,
rather than writing about
heroic love affairs, or monsters and demons'*



events are based on real things.

Isn't it partially based on stories from the *National Enquirer*?

Yeah, some of the characters and situations came from there.

Do you often read the *National Enquirer*?

Occasionally. A little bit that one, and a lot *The World Weekly News* (ed.: He means *The Weekly World News*), which is even more spectacular. That's the one that prints about "UFOs Visit Your Husband"! At the time I was most interested in the human interest stories. For instance, they'd have a story about a husband and wife who considered themselves happily married but they hadn't spoken with each other for about thirty years!

I believe that this family exists, that that's true, that it's not made up. Just as I think that somebody might believe that they took a trip on a UFO. I don't know that it happened, but they might really believe it did. I don't think all the time it's just a bunch of cynics at typewriters making up that stuff and getting a big laugh out

of it. (Laughs to himself) A pretty benevolent way of looking at *The World Weekly News*!

You're seen as a real modern guy, but there's a continuing fascination in your work with things that are extremely traditional in one way or another. Is that a dichotomy you feel in yourself?

No, I think the most modern ideas or modern notions that are really good are generally some kind of reaffirmation of some eternal or universal or traditional feeling that had been kind of submerged for a while. And so when it really clicks is when something eternal is rephrased in modern terms and made to live again and have some kind of relevance to contemporary life.

Do you see yourself as a spiritual person, then?

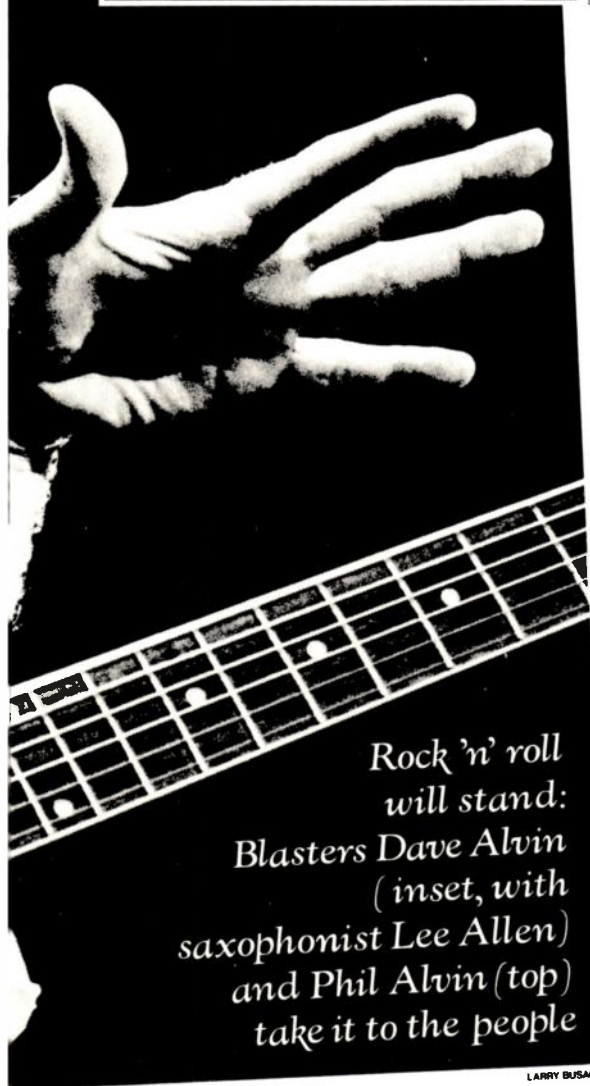
I can accept that as being an important realm in people's living, an important aspect of people's lives. Something that's non-material and doesn't have to do in a really direct way with ordinary notions, that goes beyond that. I can accept that that exists. ○

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Rock 'n' roll
will stand:
Blasters Dave Alvin
(inset, with
saxophonist Lee Allen)
and Phil Alvin (top)
take it to the people

LARRY BUSACCA

Taking a *Hard Line*

The Blasters
go for a breakthrough



By Gary Burch

THE GOLDEN BEAR IS A DANK LITTLE CLUB JUST off the ocean in Huntington Beach, California; the type of place where the stage lights lurk in a closet-sized loft that can only be reached via a small ladder nailed to a back wall. Unfortunate attendees who get in line late end up sardined off to one side without a seat. The surrounding apartments are the type that might house four locals who thrive on good pot, loose blondes, cheap beer and three-foot surf.

Located a few miles north of haute tauty Newport Beach, the Golden Bear is not the first place you'd expect a major label recording act would choose to preview an upcoming release. But that's just what the Blasters did for their Orange County following in mid-January, one week after doing the same at a larger and more respected Hollywood club.

The album in question is *Hard Line*, released on Warner-distributed Slash Records in late February. A big step forward for the Blasters, the LP promises to not only launch the band to the forefront of the current U.S. resurgence of roots-oriented rock 'n' roll, along side R.E.M., Los Lobos and the like, but also give the quintet their first big commercial break.

The Blasters' reverence for blues, country and R&B influences are well-documented on their first three Slash albums,

including a live EP, but *Hard Line* is fleshed out with even broader incurrents running from swampy Creedence inflections to strains of Appalachian mountain serenades. Mandolin and fiddle (supplied by Los Lobos' David Hidalgo), plus pedal steel and never-before-used backing vocals, add bright new tones to their sound. "Little Honey," co-written by John Doe of X, is a backwoods country tune with a Hank Williams-style vocal. "Samson and Delilah," and old Blind Willie Johnson folk-blues, is a pumped-up gospel turn that features the Jubilee Singers' heavenly voices. The Jordanares, legendary for

the tunes roared like classics, one and all.

After the show, Dave Alvin admits that the band's first thoughts going into the sessions that produced *Hard Line* centered on commercial needs. "You get tired of beatin' your head against a wall, you know?" he says in a twangless, wrung-out drawl. "It's rough because we have this large following, but you still want more. Shit, if Bruce Springsteen can have a hit, I want one too. Most of my heroes had hit records. Little Richard. Chuck Berry. Elvis. I'd like to have at least one.

"It's really frustrating," he continues,

Hard Line. Just as Gehman had done for Mellencamp—giving an artist who couldn't connect on record with a mass audience, a sound that sticks like country dumplings to your ribs—the pair put the Blasters' music in touch with today's air-play demands.

In spite of all its attributes, *Hard Line*'s success will likely hinge on the first single, Mellencamp's "Colored Lights." To charges that the Mellencamp connection is an obvious strategy to attract commercial attention, Dave responds: "When the song was offered to us, our whole thing was, If we don't like the song, we're not going to do it." Mellencamp agreed wholeheartedly, according to Dave, who says the gesture was born solely of a desire to help a fledgling band, as nobody ever did for him.

The Blasters and Mellencamp struck up a quick friendship over two years ago, when both were the only guests on an Italian television show. Subsequently, Mellencamp kept tabs on the Blasters' growing reputation and, upon learning of Gehman's involvement, quickly offered his input. Actually, "Colored Lights" began as a Mellencamp-Dave Alvin collaboration, but as Dave explains, "Every line I came up with, he'd come up with a better one. So basically John wrote it."

The remaining tracks of *Hard Line* grow, stretch and excel beyond Mellencamp's composition. They're a lesson in creating modern music without abandoning the strengths and glory of, nor an attachment to the musical loins from which it sprang. The lyrics, solely Dave's creation, are stocked with images of Anywhere U.S.A., making the songs uniquely American in their scope and adding infinite empathy for the everyman.

If a sharper commercial focus is readily apparent on first listen to *Hard Line*, Dave isn't willing to admit any compromise. "I think this album will take us to a more mainstream audience, though our audience is mainstream anyway," Dave says. "We get a real diverse crowd, and I like that. To me that's rock 'n' roll. Sometimes it has to become an elitist thing for a while, just to regenerate itself, but after awhile that becomes as numbing as playing arenas. Rock 'n' roll is really just electric folk music, and folk music means everybody. So I'm not into eliminating people."

To the contrary, the Blasters' music is about bringing the traditional foundations of rock 'n' roll to new generations of listeners in ways that seem both old and brand new. And when the truth be told, *Hard Line* is still Blasters music. "I don't think we've compromised anything, and I wouldn't want success that way," contends Dave. "It's still us. It's a little more commercial, but it's still the same old American rock 'n' roll." *Hard Line* isn't a move in a new direction, it's a wise, well-placed step in the same direction in which the quintet first headed half a decade ago. ○



Blasters relaxin', not blazin':
(from left) Bill Bateman, Gene Taylor, Dave Alvin,
John Bazz, Phil Alvin

their work with Elvis Presley, add vocals to "Help You Dream."

Altogether, the entire history of rock 'n' roll seems to coalesce on *Hard Line*, but with a new, radio-quality production that the Blasters hope will deliver them to the same lofty commercial heights as Bruce Springsteen and John Cougar Mellencamp. Mellencamp, in fact, tossed in a tune that should be the Blasters' foot-in-the-door to Top 40 radio.

That night at the Golden Bear, the Blasters seemed like a band on the threshold of something big. From the opening notes of "High School Confidential" on through the entire set, their sound cut through the room like a chain saw through cupcakes. The beat-for-beat perfect pacing of drummer Bill Bateman and bassist John Bazz was dizzying. Hefty, goateed pianist Gene Taylor burned on the ivories, and the Alvin brothers (Dave on lead guitar and Phil on vocals and rhythm) shared the spotlight like commanding old pros. And

"when you try to write songs that you want to mean something to a lot of people, and they're not hearing it."

For the Blasters, that didn't mean changing directions, or dropping the stylistic slants that have always been their cornerstone. First and foremost, it meant bringing in outside producers for the first time with instructions to update their production quality to contemporary standards.

"We've always tended to hear everything in mono," Dave explains, "cuz we listen to old records. So we got it to sound pretty up to date, sort of radio quality."

Most of *Hard Line* was produced by Jeff Eyrich, who's worked with T-Bone Burnett, Rank & File and the Gun Club. But the band had also taken notice of the guitar sound that Don Gehman gave John Cougar Mellencamp, so they sought his assistance as well. In the end, both Eyrich and Gehman were listed as producers, and the two proved to be the ideal honchos for

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PHASES I



*At the signpost up ahead,
another left turn for
Daryl Hall and John Oates*

BY ANTHONY DeCURTIS — The five bopping white boys lean into a loose circle. The one cradling an acoustic guitar begins strumming, the short dude with the pile of curly black hair starts to croon, the others doo-wop the harmony.

*You got a smile so bright
You know you could have
been a candle
I'm holding you so tight
You know you could have
been a handle
The way you swept me off my
fe-ee-eet
You know you could have been
a broom
The way you smell so sweet
You know you could have been
some perfume*

Meanwhile, outside the funky Florida dressing-room where this indoor street-corner scene shapes up, the packed arena stirs, waiting, restless. The road manager pops in, smiles, calls "Showtime," exits. John Oates, Daryl Hall, guitarist G.E. Smith, bassist T-Bone Wolk, and sax-boy Charlie DeChant



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*As pretty as you are/You know you could have
been a flower
If good looks was a minute/You know that you could
be an hour
The way you stole my he-ar-art/You know you could
have been a cool crook
And baby you're so smart/You know you could have
been a school-book
Well, you could have been anything that you
wanted to
And I can tell, the way you do the things you do.*

Moments after this blast-from-the-past vocal jam on a Temptations classic, the Hall and Oates band (including, this time, drummer Mickey Curry) are playing for pay, pumping out the state-of-the-sound urban dance grooves of "Dance On Your Knees"/"Out of Touch" before the Jacksonville Coliseum contingent of their devoted public. The story of rock and soul in two quick parts? Not quite. But if you ever wondered what gets those thoroughly modern blue-eyed soul-men Hall and Oates to the spotlight every night, you now know their heart's inspiration.

"We do something different every night," Hall explains about the pre-concert song fest, while kicking back at his hotel after the show. "First of all, it warms up our voices. But, beside that, it also tunes us into each other, because there's something about singing together that is the same thing as playing instruments, you know? It locks us into communicating musically. So it's fun to do, plus it's really useful."

Double dynamite at work: Surviving
the full psychic spectrum
of rumors



Hall and Oates have had no trouble communicating musically of late, at least as far as the known world's record buyers are concerned. After a commercial dry spell that followed such '70s smashes as "She's Gone," "Sara Smile," and "Rich Girl," the twosome went on a platinum tear beginning with their 1980 *Voices* LP and carrying through their current album, *Big Bam Boom*. They are now the most successful duo in pop music history, and they don't shuffle and blush about it. They also don't dodge the challenge their success presents.

"We've reached a certain point and we're locked into people's minds as a cer-

tain thing more than we ever have been, and I have a real fear of that," Hall admits. "I don't like being locked into any expectations, even my own. I think that breaking the rules, breaking the patterns is the best thing we could do right now, because something unique will come out of it. We'll take some kind of left turn somehow. We need it and I'm sure it will keep people's interest in us, too."

Breaking the rules in this case means that Hall and Oates will each be sniffing around for solo projects once their current tour ends this summer. The two men have worked together for fifteen years and don't take either their partnership or their

friendship lightly. But both believe that *Big Bam Boom* is as complete and successful a statement of their mutual vision as they could want for the immediate future; both credit Hall's 1977 solo excursion with Robert Fripp (the *Sacred Songs* album, eventually released in 1980) as having sped their progress toward the *Voices* breakthrough; and both are convinced the time is ripe for "new sources of information." Not that anybody's really sure where the info will come from. But that uncertainty is part of the point, as Hall makes clear when asked what sort of solo work he's planning.

"I don't know. I'm planning to do something different, I don't know what it's gonna be yet," the singer states. "Actually, planning's the wrong word. I'm *gonna* do it, but I have no plans at all. I generally don't know what I'm doing before I do it anyway . . . I just want to play the field. I want to work with a lot of different people and just get some different ideas, and I'm sure some project will result from that."

Oates' "plans" are in a similar open-ended state, and suggest an even more radical left turn than Hall's. "I'm not gonna do a record, but I shouldn't say I'm *not*, because I *may*," he laughs. "To me, going into the studio and making another album would be just like what I've been doing for the past twelve, thirteen years, except I'd be doing it without Daryl. So, yes, I would sing more, and they'd be my songs or whatever, but that's not so much a challenge for me creatively. I'm looking for another way of expressing myself."

"I've always wanted to do something with films . . . I'm interested in writing for the screen as well as writing music. I have some projects in mind and I'm talking to some people now, and hopefully we can get something going. That would be a solo project with validity, because to me the reason to do a solo project is to do something other than what we do together."

"A-ha," you exclaim, hasty reader. "Films! Solo projects!" You perhaps surmise the end's in sight for double-dynamite? You can think what you like, but take some advice: don't venture coin on it. First of all, there's Daryl's word: "All that stuff about John and I separating and all that—we're gonna separate and do projects, but we're gonna keep coming back together again for various shows (in Europe and elsewhere) all through '85, so we're not ever gonna get too far apart."

And, remember, through all the commercial and artistic ups and downs, Hall and Oates have survived the full psychic spectrum of rumors, from insinuations that they're lovers to insistence that they hate each other's guts.

"That *could* be the same thing," quips Hall, who knows a thing or two about the method of modern love and keeps a sense



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of humor about it. "Not in our case—but neither one is true. It's our cross to bear, that's all I can say. That's something that we've been dealing with for years and years. We're neither gay nor do we hate each other. We're very good friends, we're like brothers. We've known each other since we were sixteen or seventeen years old, and we just get along, you know? We've shared experiences over the years, obviously; we grew up together. It's a really solid, profitable, creative relationship."

"I don't find it that unusual that people don't understand how we work together and what it is we're doing," Oates declares, "because the average person in America can't keep a marriage together for more than a year or two, much less an intense working relationship and a friendship for fifteen years or so. So if they can't do it in their own lives, how the hell are they ever gonna relate to what we're doing?"

"Then, if they can't relate to it, they must say, 'Well, there's gotta be a reason these guys are working together—they must be lovers.' Or, 'They hate each other, but they've signed their million-dollar contract and they've gotta work together.' The fact of the matter is we work together because we like to work together."

● For Oates, the issue of public perception is even more loaded than it is for Hall, who writes and sings most of the duo's material and who is the live show's undeniable front-man. Speculation about dissension between the two has often centered on the charge that Oates is not Hall's equal in the band's power and creative structure, a charge the guitarist has become inured to dismissing as groundless.

"I've always felt pretty well-adjusted," he states, the calm epitome of well-adjustedness. "I know what I am, and I hope other people appreciate it and can recognize it. And if they don't, I don't really give a care. Because I know what I do, I know what my talents are, I know what my strong points are and I know what my weak points are."

"You know, Daryl is a fantastic singer—he's one of the best singers I've ever heard. He's a charismatic individual—he looks great, he's tall, he's blond, all those things, and it catches people's attention and he deserves to have people's attention because of his ability. If I was uptight about that, then maybe I should go do something else."

"I can get off on the fact that there's a kid in the front row who I know, after the first song, is a rhythm guitar player. And I play pretty good rhythm guitar, you know, and I do what I do pretty well. Sometimes I can get off on the fact that I know there's a kid out there who's watching when I'm playing and getting off on it, and knowing that I'm doing what I do right. So, I'll take it where I can get it."

One place Oates scores some kudos is from his partner, who still believes the mix

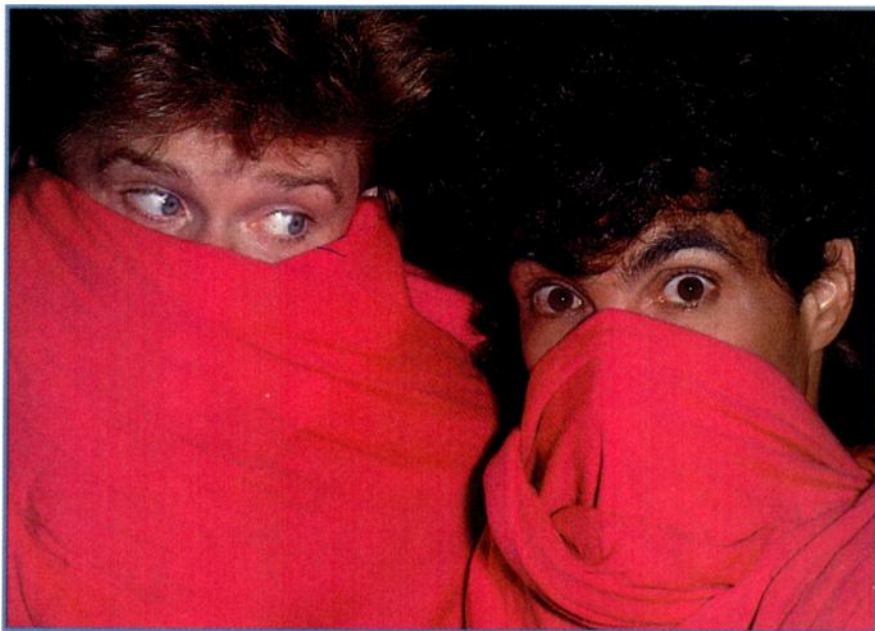
between the two is hot. "Our relationship comes out of our real personalities," says Hall. "The way John is and the way I am dictate the rules of our relationship. John is a more methodical person. He's into different things, he's more analytical, pays more attention to detail. And I'm more conceptual, I guess, and spontaneous. So those things really work in everything from the recording to . . . to life."

On many levels in music and life, the dynamic pull of opposite elements proves to be the explosive catalyst in the Hall and Oates connection. From their Philly-soul roots to the nearly collaborative involvement of dance-master Arthur Baker as

sic that we like.' That tends to happen in lulls in rock music.

"I hope for the best, and I certainly exist more comfortably in a world where that crossover happens, because that's what my music is all about."

● Another much less noted aspect of the Hall and Oates "crossover" phenomenon is the fact that they are among a handful of male mega-stars who consistently write songs with women, namely Hall's long-time live-in girl-friend, Sara Allen, and her sister Janna. For example, the dimension and breadth of *Big Bam Boom*'s tough assessment of contemporary



"mix consultant" and part-time producer on *Big Bam Boom*, the pair have blended black and white musical styles and spun crossover hits with a vigorous flair that's made their audience among the most fully integrated in the history of American music. This is a particular point of pride for them, because, as Hall sees it, sounds with multiracial appeal can potentially affect for the good the world beneath the air waves.

"Music rides the line between generation and reflection of what goes on," he argues. "Sometimes it generates ideas and sometimes it reflects the most 'now' of ideas . . . I think it's helping to change things racially right now, because of the crossover that's going on."

"It still worries me. I still get nervous that 'dance' music is just a euphemism for 'black' music, and that's just some sort of fad that white people seem to be latched onto now. That worries me. You know, I actually heard somebody in a very prominent position say, 'I guess people are gonna get tired of dance music pretty soon.' That smacks of 'Okay, we'll get tired of these black people's music after a while here, and now we'll go back to the ol' white mu-

romance and missed connections between the sexes can be partly attributed to the interplay between the boys and the girls in the composing process."

"It's a great situation," says Hall, describing how he, John, Sara and Janna write together, "because they (Sara and Janna) live in much the same world as I do, but for many months of the year, and because of what John and I have to go through, they live in a different world, too. So we get a lot of different sides to the same story, but all the sides are part of something that we can all relate to, because we're a family."

"So that's the advantage of it. And having a woman's point of view, too. I think the funniest thing that ever happened was when we were accused of misogyny on the last album (*H2O*, which launched the super-hit, "Maneater") because (cracking up) . . . that was the most absurd criticism I ever heard, because these girls aren't fools, you know?"

And neither are the men they write with. For all the influences they freely admit, Hall and Oates have earned a deserved reputation for single-mindedness about shaping their music—a result of their

experiences with producers and sounds in the '70s with which they could never get comfortable. "No-o-o, we don't go with any kinda flow," Oates chuckles. "The only flow we go with is our *own* flow, and sometimes we're not sure where that's flowing. We *definitely* are people who like to be in control of our own destiny."

That destiny was born when Hall and Oates seized the production reins for the first time in their career on *Voices* and annihilated half a decade of so-so sales and a horde of second-guessers. The subsequent wild reception enjoyed by *Private Eyes*; *H2O*; the hits anthology *Rock 'n' Soul, Part 1*; and *Big Bam Boom* delivered further vindication for not going with any flow. But the years in which Hall and Oates discovered who they were—regardless of when the rest of the world picked up on it—were 1977-1979, when *Beauty on a Back Street*, *Along the Red Ledge*, *Live Time*, and *X-Static* didn't rock the charts. Dealing with failure after having tasted success as only the '70s could deliver it was the stone on which these boys sharpened their souls.

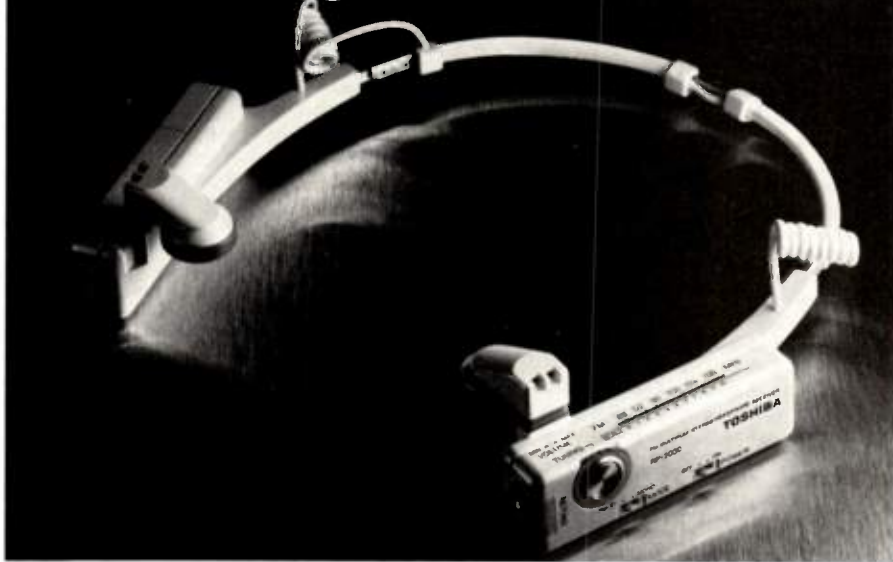
"We don't have a normal blast-to-the-top kind of career," Hall states. "We've experienced just about every aspect of it at this point, and it gives you that overview, that no matter what's going on, you know what the other side is all about. . . . We learned a lot of lessons through it. We learned how far we could push people, as far as what they'd accept from us. We learned what to do when they didn't accept something, how to get around those problems. We learned how to be strong in the face of derision and/or criticism.

"And we also learned how to take success with a grain of salt. To know that you could be playing a big arena one day, and then someday you're gonna be faced with playing a club, and how bad do you wanna do it? Do you wanna play a club? And we found out that we do—and did."

Now, as their tour winds up and Hall and Oates seek for new light and new directions, the same re-commitment to wanting to "do it" is being declared, this time without the spur of failure. "It's like looking at a problem a new way," Hall concludes. "I read one of the most fascinating things in a magazine a couple of years ago—they were talking about new drugs, and they said that somebody had developed a new drug that enabled you to look at a problem a hundred times, and each time you look at it, *feel* like you're looking at it for the first time. I said, 'Gimme that drug!' because that's the ultimate drug to me. It's like that thing where you see it a million times and suddenly you see it like you're seeing it for the first time. That's when the thing clicks, however that happens."

However it happens, whatever makes the thing click, Hall and Oates are gearing up to make it fresh and new—again. ○

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On the Beat

MISCELLANEA

With the situation still critical in drought-stricken Ethiopia and East Africa, the Boomtown Rats' **Bob Geldof** (the driving force behind the Band Aid Trust) recently spent a week in the region observing firsthand the famine's effects. Geldof says he traveled constantly, "to the refugee camps in the north and Addis Ababa, then up to Khartoum and the Sudan. But none of the things I've seen before—the pictures of the starving children, the reports, the TV coverage that prompted me to do this in the first place—have any bearing [on] the awfulness of what's happening there." Geldof reports that the Trust has been promised free flight time to ship food into the area, but that more food is needed. The underground water table has sunk alarmingly, requiring expensive drilling equipment. Ground transport, medicines and vaccines remain in short supply, and shelters and water tanks for each village need to be constructed. Still, Geldof says that he saw hope. "I saw the ones who got better. I saw the kids who could run around and were smiling and laughing. But the ones who are dying outnumber the ones who've got life by 3-to-1." Meanwhile, CBS Records has handed over to the Trust the first \$1 million of the company's net proceeds from Stateside sales of over two and a half million copies of **Band Aid's** "Do They Know It's Christmas?" To date, the star-packed single has sold roughly seven million copies worldwide, raising \$10 million for relief efforts. CBS will release additional funds as soon as the accounts are tallied. The company is continuing to ask retailers to send their net proceeds from the single (remember, nobody's supposed to make a profit out of this) directly to: The Band Aid Trust, c/o Stoy Hayward Associates, 54 Baker Street, London W1, England. Contributions from individuals are also welcome, and can be sent to the same address . . . Toward the same end, **John Denver** recently took part in a more localized plan to raise some bucks for the cause—in this case in Aspen, Colorado. As part of the ski town's African Relief Day, 34 four-member teams paid a minimum of \$250 per team to lock horns in an epic Trivial Pursuit game. The proceeds went toward the local famine committee's goal of \$200,000. Denver, who's been to Africa himself over the last few months, reports that his team went down in flames . . . With a bare wall that needs filling, **Luther Vandross** has commissioned an unusual work from L.A. artist Allee Willis. As Van-



It's been said that you can't go home again. Let's Active's Mitch Easter and Faye Hunter, the dB's Peter Holsapple, former dB Chris Stamey and friends recently proved Father Time wrong, however, when they returned (with their bands) to Reynolds High School in Winston-Salem, North Carolina to play a special benefit gig to aid the victims of the Ethiopian drought. Easter, Stamey and Holsapple had been heard around those parts before, in local garage bands like Rittenhouse Square and Sacred Image, and during the late 70's in the gone-but-not-forgotten Sneakers. Held amidst the "Parthenon-like" grandeur of the school's auditorium, the gig was apparently the Teen Event of the year, and raised a fair chunk of change for the Red Cross' famine relief efforts.

dross (who's written and produced hits for **Aretha Franklin** and **Dionne Warwick** and counts himself as **Diana Ross'** Biggest Fan) explains, "the painting will have Aretha, Dionne, and Diana dressed to the nines—with minks, high heels . . . and boxing gloves. Allee makes these things so

they'll move. I asked her to set it up so when Diana knocks down Dionne, a *Billboard* chart pops up with 'Baby Love' at number one. And when Aretha knocks down Diana, up pops the chart with 'Respect'." When Vandross crossed paths with Ms. Franklin in California and told her about the project,

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however, the lady suggested a tiny change in the concept. Said Aretha: "You tell the artist it's going to take two of them to knock me down." . . . Billy Idol's guitarist and co-collaborator, **Steve Stevens**, has more offers of work than he can handle. First, **David Lee Roth** and Ted Templeman asked him to co-produce Roth's *Crazy From the Heat*—an offer Stevens turned down because he was working on Idol's follow-up to *Rebel Yell*. Then former Prince compatriot **Dez Dickerson** came calling with a project needing the Stevens touch—an offer the man, once again, had to decline. When **Nona Hendryx** asked him to co-write a couple of songs for her next album, however, Stevens dove in head-first, no questions asked. As for why Roth and Dickerson got the bum's rush in favor of Hendryx, the guitarist says his reasoning was simple. "She's the only one who lives near me. She's also a lot prettier than they are." ■

TRANSITIONS

With the **Plasmatics** now in the past tense, **Wendy O. Williams** (signed to Passport Records as a solo artist) has been plying the tour circuit on her own. With the rigors of the road getting a tad wearisome, she recently took a working sabbatical in Cleveland, Ohio, where she performed with the touring company of *The Rocky Horror Show*. ■

BOOKS

For those who miss **The Rolling Stones** the way they used to be—snarling, surly, and caught up in Swinging London—a recent book called *Satisfaction: The Rolling Stones Photographs of Gerard Mankowitz* should rattle the memory banks a bit. All the pictures were snapped between 1965 and 1967, back when Mick had Chrissie Shrimpton (and later Marianne Faithfull), Keith had good teeth, and Brian Jones was convinced he'd live forever. Published by St. Martin's Press, the book sells for \$9.95 . . . For those who prefer to see their rock 'n'



Because many bands book studio time and then spend \$200 an hour staring at the walls in an effort to come up with new tunes, R.E.M. took a thriftier approach with its third I.R.S. album. To work the kinks out of a newly-rehearsed stack of virgin tunes, the band checked into a local Athens, Georgia bar, the Uptown, to give said songs a test drive in front of 150 unsuspecting patrons. Unsuspecting because R.E.M. didn't warn anyone about it—not the club owners, not its record label—and played the gig under a nom du rock, *The Hornets Attack Victor Mature*.

roll faves without all those words getting in the way, Robus Books has expanded its series of Rock Photo Collections. Latest artists to get the full-color pictorial treatment include: **The Cars**, **Billy Idol**, **Huey Lewis**

and the **News**, **John Cougar Mellencamp**, **Robert Plant**, **Ratt**, and the omnipresent **Twisted Sister**. For reasons unknown, the Twisted Sister tome goes for \$3.95. The rest will set you back \$4.95. ■

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the fervor OF RURAL MYSTICS



MARK TUCKER

In late summer Nashville sits sultry and placid in its crook of the Tennessee River, a town strangely without presence. It doesn't feel like a Southern town—no ghost of Confederate swagger haunts these streets, no ancient Dixie grace. After a while the neutralness of the place begins to make you jumpy, like looking at the unbroken gray sky over this river town on an August afternoon, suspecting that any sky so monotonal must be hiding heat lightning

and thunder. In fact there is another Nashville. The other Nashville is located in the imagination, a nexus on the mythic map of America. Nashville is colorless because for decades it has given its soul over to the people that make that myth, the arcane circle of musicians that work behind the doors of the numberless candy-colored bungalows along Music Row, the studios of Nashville. In one of those bungalows this summer, Jason and the Scorchers are recording their first full-length album.

Jason & the Scorchers take it to the limit

Stardom flared fitfully across the Scorchers' horizon in 1984. Reviews of their *Fervor* EP were almost unanimously favorable. Critics hailed them as leaders of a wave of young bands building a new American rock 'n' roll style, nourished by rich traditions. England and the Continent dropped like plums into their hands during two quick tours. A taste of 45 RPM success came with their version of Dylan's

BY CHRISTOPHER HILL

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"Absolutely Sweet Marie." There was even a piece in *People* magazine.

And so there are tremors in the hidden Nashville as the Scorchers gather each day in the studio. Legendary picker James Burton, right hand man to Elvis, Gram Parsons, Ricky Nelson, Ronnie Hawkins and countless others, has dropped in on these sessions. So has Kenny Lovelace, Jerry Lee's long-time fiddle player. So has pianist Earl Poole Ball of Johnny Cash's band. Generations are meeting. Hopes have been raised. People are waiting to see what the Scorchers can bring out of the myth-making factory.

Jason is alone in the studio with producer Terry Manning (who's also worked with ZZ Top and George Thorogood), getting ready to cut some vocals. He asks if the lights can be turned out while he sings. In a moment, the first verse of "Long Black Veil," Lefty Frizzell's old ghost story about love and a debt that survives the grave, comes from the darkness. Jason doesn't have what's thought of as a good voice, but something in its unprotected lack of artifice recalls Bill Monroe's quivering alto, or Jonathan Richman's unashamed nerdiness. Like those voices, it's already accepted the worst that can happen, and so it brings the Appalachian fatalism of the song unsettlingly alive. "The scaffold is high and eternity near . . ." Suddenly, imperceptibly, a leap has been made inside the song. The dark studio, the guileless voice, have tricked us. Someone is really contemplating the nearness of their death. "Nobody knows, nobody sees, nobody knows but me . . ." Jason hangs the last word on an unresolved, discordant note—and so leaves you uneasily aware that the moldering bones aren't as resigned as the lyric has it; that the land harbors memories that never die. Jason pops back into the control booth, grinning self-consciously. "Kids," he says, addressing his imagined audience, "if you think Twisted Sister is scary, wait'll you hear Lefty Frizzell!"

Scorchers' lead guitarist Warner Hodges is holding court at Cantrell's, a likeable little rock 'n' roll honky-tonk and sometime Nashville scene focus. Today's topic is the true spirit of rock'n'roll, and who has it and who don't. "People have been misled about rock 'n' roll for a long time," Hodges explains. "There's an awful lot of bands around getting huge amounts of airplay and money that don't have the slightest thing to do with rock 'n' roll. There's got to be heart in it, and those people just don't have that much heart." He searches for an illustration. "The only time I ever met Jerry Lee Lewis," he recalls, "he was playing under a streetlight on the back of a truck—and he's still playin' 'Great Balls of Fire' so that it'll scare the hell out of you. And he will no matter where he is or who he's playing to. When I went to in-

'It's time for musicians to present a rock 'n' roll alternative that has its roots in pride and self-respect'



roduce myself after the set, he's got a girl on one arm and a bottle in the other, and he says to me, 'Son, the only thing I have to tell you is stay away from liquor and women.' " Warner laughs, but then he's suddenly serious. "You see, the thing rockers have to get at now is the secret those people like Jerry Lee or Keith Richards have—like, when you've been doing it for twenty or thirty years, when you're not a punk anymore, when there's nothing left to rebel against—whatever keeps them rocking, that's *it*. That's exactly what I think the Scorchers have right now, and what I think we'll keep. It's like a religion," he concludes. "And like any religion, it can take you and really swamp you up—we've all seen it. Or it can take you and really do you right."

A Scorchers show is not easy to describe. But it is certainly—on the right night—the nearest you'll find today to that unspeakable rock 'n' roll borderline where

chaos is transformed magically into art, and art splinters into chaos. In other words, the edge, a place most bands wisely avoid. 'Cause greatness isn't enough to get there—a certain kind of beyond-caring greatness is required. Elvis was there, and Jerry Lee, real early on. So were the Stones in their first days. Who else? The Dolls, of course. The MC5, maybe the Stooges and the Pistols.

I recently watched the Scorchers begin a show with "Great Balls of Fire." From the start, it's clear that Jason is involved in some inner dialogue with the core of the song, this story of a man shaken in the grip of forces too big for him to control. Digging deep, he seems to hit on that very force. He's seized, tossed about, limbs exploding in every direction, his voice cracking with every sudden whip of his spine—"You shake my nerves and you rattle my brain . . ."

Warner's wild, too, but he's riding the power, using it. He's woven every classic

guitar move into a seamless style, and pushed it all from 45 to 78. He knows his crowd, and his leaps, splits and spins are aimed straight out to the wildness in the heart of each audience.

Meanwhile, stage right, there's bassist Jeff Johnson, the founder of the Scorchers, the band's dandy. He's a hidden power in the band, using body language and the insistent pulse of his bass to keep pushing the band to more daring depredations. And then there's drummer Perry Baggs, a happy little gremlin apparently trying to systematically demolish his drum kit, yet all the while guiding the chaos in front of him with surprising precision.

But now things are passing the point of effective control. It's the middle of "Both Sides of the Line," one of their most intense numbers, and Jason is real, real gone. The band has stopped dead except for Perry's drums, rolling along like a distant train, nothing else but an ominous hum from the amps, and Jason is on his knees, reciting . . . the Lord's Prayer. He's into it, eyes shut tight, rivulets of sweat glistening on his forehead. Suddenly he's up, springing into the air, Warner's exploding all over the place, the whole band is racing pell mell into the vortex of chaos that ends the song.

In the midst of it all, Jason has ended up flat on his back. He lifts himself on an elbow, as the shouts and applause wash across the stage, regarding in dazed wonder the havoc he's created, on his face the unfocused, oceanic joy of a newborn child. A huge grin splits his features.

"Sometimes," Jason tells me later, "I call up things in my performance that in my rational state I would never consider."

Jason is, in fact, one of the more serious and self-aware people on the contemporary rock scene. "We do feel we should be a positive influence," he says. "I think that it's time for musicians to feel a responsibility to their audience, to present a rock 'n' roll alternative that has its roots in pride and self-respect. We want to show young kids that you can generate the kind of energy we do—the highest levels of energy—without the negativity of heavy metal or hard core. We're saying that to imitate a performer's lifestyle is to miss the point."

"You know," he continues, coming at the issue from another angle, "this band has a real strong Southern identity. But it's not that 'South's gonna rise again, let's drink a lot of Jack Daniel's and kick some ass' kind of Southern. That's still the bad old South you hear talking through that kind of music. My ancestors were Ohio Mennonites, Abolitionists from the heart of Abolition country. And that spirit's as much a part of this band as any other. We like to think we speak for a kind of rural idealism—a rural mysticism—for the people who watch the life and death cycle every year. To me, that's the glory of rock 'n' roll—that it can absorb so many things

that came before, that had nothing to do with rock 'n' roll. Sometimes," he confides, "when I'm up on stage, I feel like I'm actually fulfilling some of the dreams of those ancestors of mine."

Back in the studio, producer Manning is playing back a rough mix of "Lost Highway," Hank Williams' haunting meditation on the "live fast/die young" myth. Hank's version is quiet, resigned, timeless. The Scorchers have made it their signature song, taking it at a breathless charge. But the magic of the Scorchers' method is that they draw out and strengthen the contradictions in Williams' original rather than riding roughshod over them. As the Scorchers play it, you first hear the eternal rebelliousness that makes rock 'n' roll new

in each generation—a New York Dolls determination to press everything to the howling limit. Deeper down, though, it's built on a firm structure of rock 'n' roll classicism, using the riches of the past the way the Stones once used Chuck Berry. And still there in the center is Hank Williams' lonely voice, warning us never, ever to lose the human community that sustains all effort.

The last word belongs to drummer Baggs: "I think that there's people who've been waiting for a while to hear this kind of music again. And I think when those people see us, we really provide a thrill. Then there's the people who don't know what to expect—it's new to 'em. I think they'll come away kind of . . . shocked." ○

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A Consumer Guide to **ROCK VIDEO**

You've seen the ads—the Lionel Richie video with all his recent hits and more for \$14.95. Eight-song clip compilations with current hits like Wham's "Wake Me Up (Before You Go-Go)" and REO's "Can't Fight This Feeling" for \$19.95. Well, to paraphrase Chicken Little, "The prices are falling, the prices are falling."

Actually, falling prices started with Sony, whose Video 45s are still the least expensive around (\$16.95 for clips). In late '84 \$20 barrier with ton-John EP, (\$19.95), followed Columbia's *Rick*



music videos three or four MCA broke the the Olivia New-*Twist of Fate* closely by RCA/*Springfield* and

CBS/Fox's *Prime Cuts I*. \$19.95 became the industry standard for music videos of 30 minutes or less in length, \$29.95 for concerts and other long forms. '84 may have been the year of plenty—as in "plenty of good music videos"—but '85 is clearly the year when it doesn't cost plenty to own one.

"We're committed to low prices for music videos," states Len White, president, consumer products division, CBS/Fox Home Video (the company that released the first videocassette in a VHS Hi-Fi format). "We're



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A Consumer Guide to **ROCK VIDEO**

trying to give consumers timely music videos that are an integrated product not a by-product of an artist's creative activity." For CBS/Fox, this means dropping the list price of short form programs (approximately 30 minutes in length) to \$19.95 and conceptualizing music videos with artists concurrent with the planning of an album release.

As for further price reductions . . . "It's a push-pull effect," notes Ken Ross, manager of music programming for CBS/Fox. "Greater volume will allow prices to stretch downward."

"What's the magic number?" asks Robert Blattner, president of RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video, a company that recently made a huge impact in video stores with a line of music videos (MusicVision) sporting its own look and marketing strategy. "We're doing a lot of research to determine that price," he continues. "But the growth of music video isn't just a price story, it's a genre story, it's a changing habit story. Music audiences are beginning to understand that their collections aren't complete without music videos to go along with their record albums."

Next stop: the eight-inch laserdisc, 20 minutes of programming priced at \$9.98 for playback on a combined audio/video CD/laserdisc player. But that harvest is still in the future. At this year's prices, music videos are ripe for the plucking.

—Alan Hecht

Go-Go's

D: Various

"Our Lips Are Sealed," "We Got The Beat," "Vacation," "Get Up and Go," "Head Over Heels," "Turn To You," "Yes or No"

25 min./RCA-Columbia Pictures Home Video/\$16.95

One of the more agreeable video compilations around, the Go-Go's' clips are, by and large, well-executed, low key on special effects and done with tongue firmly in cheek. With the exception of "We Got The Beat," a straight-ahead and fairly static concert clip, this collection's winning moments come when the girls are away from their instruments, doing the town or splashing in a swimming pool (as they do in both "Our Lips Are Sealed" and "Yes or No") or at a party (in "Head Over Heels"), dressed as men and providing the musical entertainment. And "Vacation" is a riot with its hilarious and campy process shots of the Go-Go's on water skis. Unfortunately, the studio concert scenes show us some extremely self-conscious musicians who have no flair for playing to the camera—to call their performances wooden is to be exceedingly generous. These scenes are as embarrassing to watch as they must have been to play. Nevertheless, good songs and

good humor carry the day here. *Go-Go's* rises above its flaws to become splendid pop video.

—David McGee

Kiss: Animalized

D: Keef for Keefco

90 min./RCA-Columbia Pictures Home Video/\$16.95

Caught live in Detroit, veteran hard rockers Kiss deliver a rousing overview of their career, emphasizing a still-fruitful present as the songs from *Animalize* aptly demonstrate.

Doffing the makeup appears not only to have revitalized their career, but may well help put it in proper perspective: Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley, working together, apart and with other partners, have created a substantial body of first-rate hard rock tunes over the years; and while they've certainly lost their cartoon-character allure these days, their assuredness as performers still sets them a cut above the competition. Stanley remains a cocksure, winningly arrogant frontman who shows no signs of tiring of his between-songs raps, some of which are getting on in years; though Simmons might be advised to retire the tongue-wagging act, it has evolved into a hilarious vaudeville touch in this relatively straight show. On the music side, Simmons and drummer Eric Carr are a formidable rhythm section, laboring mightily in service of Stanley and fellow guitarist Bruce Kulick. Kiss-mania may have ebbed since the late '70s, but the band has become, to borrow an expression from Paul McCartney, a "tight little unit." And I say, Well done.

—D.M.

Pat Benatar

D: Marty Callner

72 min./RCA-Columbia Pictures Home Video/\$29.95

A well-paced concert film directed by Marty "Set 'em and forget 'em" Callner, whose limited camera moves serve him and the viewer well here, because Ms. Benatar has a lot going for her. As *Saturday Night Live's* Fernando would put it, she looks mmmmmaahvelous; more than that, though, she *sounds* mmmmmaahvelous—such a huge voice coming out of that tiny frame. As powerful as the voice is, it's the energy and emotion of her singing that carries the day. The bottom line here is that Pat Benatar's totally believable on stage, and her audience clearly relates to this quality in her work and comportment. There aren't a lot of scintillating highs—old standards "Heartbreaker" and "Hit Me With Your Best Shot" are notably effective—but neither are there any real lows. Tip your hat to Pat; the kid's alright.

—D.M.



Men at Work

Men at Work Live in San Francisco . . . or Was It Berkeley?

D: Bruce Gowers

58 min./CBS-Fox Video Music/\$29.98

Men at Work were the singles band of 1982-83, cranking out perfect, derivative gems like "Who Can It Be Now?," "Down Under," "Overkill," "It's a Mistake" and lesser smashes and demonstrating a measure of musical range but not much depth.

Not much of stage show, either, as it turns out. This 13-title performance video, taped at Berkeley's handsome Greek Theatre at the end of the Aussie band's 1983 tour, finds the quintet hopelessly out of their element on the big-league concert stage. Visual interest had to be added in post-production, in the form of isolated-camera closeups and segments of the band's videos, matted into wide shots to create the effect of giant screens flanking the stage.

Singer-songwriter Colin Hay dominates the show, as he has the Men's two LPs, now and then allowing keyboard-and-wind player Greg Ham to take a solo and log a few seconds of screen time. The other three band members can be spotted from time to time, muttering to themselves and fingering their cutlasses ominously. Self-conscious bits of schtick, aided by props and costumes, are used to introduce a few songs; they also add to the slightly forced feel of the Men's set.

Camera work and recording (and rerecording?) are first-rate, but the subject matter doesn't lend itself to the format. The performances are faithful and spirited, but this music is the stuff of clubs, not concerts—nor concert videos.

—David Gans

A Consumer Guide to **ROCK VIDEO**



Bette Midler: Art or Bust

D: Thomas Schlamme
70 min./Vestron Video/\$59.95

As fine a song interpreter as there is in this country, Bette Midler remains something of a puzzle. Given the range of her talent—singer, comedienne, actress, raconteur—she seems oddly overlooked by a public that ought to be hungering for this sort of entertainment. *Art or Bust* won't provide any answers to this puzzle, because here she's dazzling as ever, singing splendidly, cracking wise and bawdy at every turn, demonstrating impeccable timing and pacing throughout the set. Moreover, director Thomas Schlamme hasn't settled for your average concert video setup: at key moments he employs some wonderfully-conceived computer animation to augment Midler's performance, and he's also included, as a bit of perspective, footage from Midler's final performance at the Continental Baths in 1971 and a segment from Midler's appearance on a 1973 telethon for Israel (in which Midler offers, for a \$5000 donation, to "drop my dress for Israel"). Midler herself makes this concert video especially satisfying, but the judiciously used special effects and found footage place *Art or Bust* a cut above the standard fare in this genre.

—D.M.

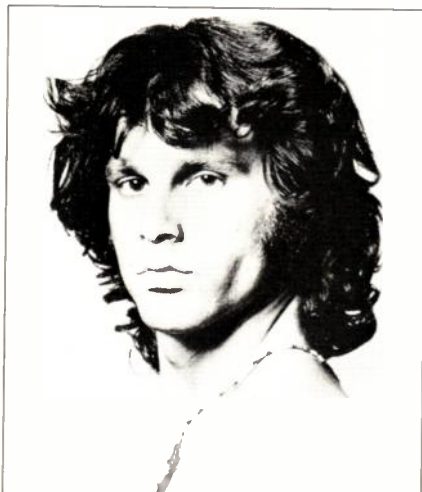
The Doors: Dance on Fire

Creative director: Ray Manzarek
65 min./MCA Home Video/\$39.95

Dance on Fire is a potpourri of Doors performances, TV appearances, promotional clips, "behind-the-scenes" footage and what appear to be home movies, assembled under the guidance of the three surviving members of the band and, in particular, keyboardist Ray Manzarek. Since most of the 14 songs herein are from the Doors' original LPs (digitally remastered for video hi-fi), this package's principal value is in its visual rarities—a mixed bag presented with no particular chronological or musi-

cal sequence and therefore lacking cohesiveness as a historical document. But the late Jim Morrison was a compelling presence and a controversial figure in his time, and when the video gets out of the way and shows him and his music, *Dance on Fire* is fascinating.

Manzarek gets credit for assembling scraps of film and still photos into some very effective musicvideo segments, especially "Road House Blues" (with its montage of crazed stageside scenes and Morrison being arrested during the show) and "Love Me Two Times." But more often than not he ruins the flavor of the Doors with new, unrelated footage apparently used to fill gaps in his visual continuity; it's strikingly MOR imagery that undercuts the erotic power of the Lizard King's persona and the Doors' dark sound. Most obnoxious are "People Are Strange" and "L.A. Woman," the latter featuring Doors disciple John Doe of X in a boy-meets-girl sequence thrown into a parade of cliché L.A. shots. Manzarek really sells the Doors short; I saw more interesting stuff than this in my teenage mind's eye when I was a Doors fanatic in the late '60s—and Manzarek was *making* this mu-



sic, so he should have known better than anyone how to illustrate it effectively.

The best moments here are the pure performance segments, including "The End" (with a surprising interlude of humor), an early "Light My Fire" performed live on a television show and a bizarre "Touch Me" from a TV stage with the band surrounded by horn and string players in suits.

Despite its flawed construction and the absence of any historical information, *Dance on Fire* is a good portrait of the Doors and the charismatic personality of Jim Morrison. It's a must-have for serious Doors fans, and anyone else interested in the history of rock in America.

—D.G.

Prime Cuts: Red Hots

D: Various
35 min./CBS-Fox Video/\$19.98

Of the eight promo videos contained herein, only one is evidence of anything besides the degeneration of the songwriting art in the 1980s. In fact, I'm not sure why Eurogliders' tasteful "Heaven (Must Be There)" was included in this river of swill. Take, for example, Scandal's two contributions: In "Warrior," the visuals build on the literal content of the lyrics, destroying what little metaphoric value they had to begin with, and Patty Smyth's vocal skills take a back seat to costumes, artificial smoke and her ability to make pained expressions with her little monkey face; and "Hands Tied" is a tormented-face tour de force without the generic horror-movie stuff. The Eurogliders, on the other hand, offer a song that makes it without the visuals and a video that uses subtle effects to accent the visual charms of the band itself. This one does what video is supposed to do: motivate the viewer to go get the record and hear the rest of it. Lead singer Grace Knight sells the song, and the video sells her and the band most effectively. Apart from this the viewer is left with not only Scandal but Wham's "Wake Me Up (Before You Go-Go)," John Cafferty and the Beaver Brown Band's ersatz Springsteen take on "Tender Years," the woeful Survivor's "I Can't Hold Back," and a pair of big-budget atrocities from REO Speedwagon, "I Can't Fight The Feeling" and "I Don't Wanna Know." Hey, I *can* fight the feeling and I don't wanna know about this tape anymore. Good luck if it crosses your path—and I advise having some Bromo-Seltzer at hand if it does.

—D.G.

Go Johnny Go

D: Paul Landres
75 min./Music Media/\$29.95

A typical 1950s ('59 to be precise) rock 'n' roll melodrama, building some scintillat-

ing rock performances around the thinnest of plots. Here the obligatory teen idol role is played with awkward sincerity by Jimmy Clanton, whose character is hoping an Alan Freed talent contest will launch him to stardom. How do you suppose it ends? Go, Jimmy, go. Otherwise, dig Chuck Berry's explosive "Maybelline" and his display of *real acting, with dialogue*—apart from Freed, he's the most believable character here. And how 'bout Jackie Wilson ("Lonely Teardrops"), Eddie Cochran ("C'mon Everybody") and Ritchie Valens ("La Bamba")? The cognoscenti should also get wise to a nice turn by the Cadillacs (featuring dynamic lead singer Earl "Speedo" Carroll, now a much-beloved custodian at P.S. 87 in Manhattan) and Harvey Fuqua, newly-separated from the Moonglows and well in advance of his sterling behind-the-scenes work with Motown in the '60s. A nice little time capsule, despite the wooden Indians posing as actors. —D.M.

Bachelor Party

D: Neil Israel
105 min./CBS-Fox Home Video/\$79.98

Tom Hanks (*Splash*) and an exceptional soundtrack are the stars of this inconsistent but often frantically funny comedy. Hanks plays a man on the verge of marriage whose hip friends want to throw him the ultimate bachelor party. The catch? His wife-to-be makes him promise there'll be no hookers while his friends are desperate to party with a bevy of ladies of the night. Music by the Fleshtones ("American Beat"), the Police ("Rehumanize Yourself"), R.E.M. ("Wind Out"), Wang Chung ("Dance Hall Days") and Darlene Love ("Alley Oop") helps keep the comedy pumping but the plot takes some decidedly cliched and sophomoric turns. —A.H.

Revenge of the Nerds

D: Jeff Kahew
89 min./CBS-Fox Home Video/\$79.98

A movie for anyone who's ever been called "four eyes," or yelled at someone with braces, "Hey radar mouth!," which means just about everybody. An hysterical, good-natured college comedy with precisely the right attitude as school jocks and sorority girls torture freshmen "nerds," until they discover just how tough a guy with a square noggin' can be. The theme song and additional music by the Rubinoos bounces along, while Talking Heads' "Burning Down The House," Michael Jackson's "Thriller" and Queen's "We Are The Champions," among others, provide a rock 'n' roll backdrop for this well-played comedy. —A.H.



If you're a friend of Jack Daniel's Whiskey, drop us a line. We'd like to hear from you.

AFTER WE USE A BARREL for aging Jack Daniel's, our employees can use it for just about anything.

Mr. Bobby Owen (that's him up above) has taken one and turned it into a mailbox. And other employees make them into everything from barbecue grills to living room chairs. They do have hundreds of uses, these old barrels. But after a sip of Jack Daniel's, we believe, you'll know the most important use of all.



CHARCOAL MELLOWED DROP BY DROP

MARTIN PORTER ●

OPEN-AIR PLAY

What's new
in portable stereos

WHAT'S THIS SUMMER's hit song going to be? Too soon to call, but one thing is certain: Whichever tune it is will be getting "open air play" via a range of new portable stereos that deserve rightful credit for promoting the Top 40.

Unfortunately, privacy is the rule when it comes to portable audio these days. You can bury a mini-cassette player in any pocket and cram a couple of speakers in each ear canal. This may cramp the style of those hit melodies that usually waft through the open humidity, but this portable option still provides the best music under the sun.

With that in mind, Sanyo has introduced a solar-powered portable AM/FM radio. The **RP-AMT2** (approx. \$40) weighs only 1.7 ounces and uses four solar energy cells to power its built-in nicad battery. When fully charged, the battery can supply up to eight hours use in the shade. Of course, in direct sunlight, you're limited only to the number of hours of daylight.

Those looking for unlimited musical entertainment should check out Kenwood's pocket-sized **CP-G5** (approx. \$180), a feature-full portable that illustrates how hard the audio engineers have been working to improve the quality of today's audio-to-go. Features include: auto reverse, metal tape capability, Dolby B noise reduction, AM/FM tuner pack and a five-band graphic equalizer for a ± 10 dB adjustment throughout the bandwidth.

Aiwa's personal cassette deck, model **HS-FO7** (approx. \$150), isn't feature fancy—no five-band equalizer or AM/FM reception for this porto-pack. Instead, this machine gives you all the cassette playback essentials—and then some. In addition to auto reverse and Dolby B, this mini-deck also provides a music sensor function, which allows you to record your own tapes, either by the included snap-on stereo mic or auxiliary audio feed.

Panasonic's compact **RX-1930**, meanwhile, doesn't have the flexibility of the CP-G5 or the recording capability of the HS-FO7. But with a price tag of less than \$63,

this stereo radio/cassette combination still supplies you with the added convenience of a three-position equalizer with low boost, high boost and high cut settings. This budget model also contains an auto-stop mechanism, which automatically disengages the tape transport at tape's end—a handy feature for conserving power usage and the life of the motor.

Finally, we shouldn't forget a product that virtually defined this audio category; the latest Sony SuperWalkman configuration, the **WM-F15** (approx. \$100), provides quality AM/FM/cassette performance in a very small package—just slightly bigger than a cassette box. It also features Dolby B noise reduction, metal tape capability and a counter-inertia flywheel for handling on-the-move bumps and jostles. Meanwhile, the extremely lightweight **MDR** (micro dynamic receiver) headphones double as an antenna for the built-in AM/FM tuner.



Good day sunshine: Sanyo's solar-powered RP-AMT2 AM/FM radio (\$40)

BIG BAM BOOM BOX

ALL OUTDOOR AUDIO won't be "private" this summer, though. Those Top 40 hits will get their fair share of public airplay, thanks in part to the proverbial "ghetto blaster," which is designed for more than simply annoying subway riders. Hey, let's finally give these portable music systems due credit: In a recent interview Daryl Hall even attributed the musical energy of his New York City hometown to these shoulder-hoisted music billboards. And thanks to some clever design work, they often integrate sophisticated electronics that match quality audio performance with flexible convenience features such as auto-reverse and multi-band equalization.

There are even those units—such as Akai's **PJ-43** (approx. \$400)—that pack a full component stereo system into a portable package. Nevertheless, at 21.7 pounds (and that's without batteries), you're bound to build up your biceps if you carry it everywhere you go. Included here is a four-band radio (AM, FM and two short wave bands); a Dolby B cassette deck with auto reverse capability in both play and record modes, music scan and metal capability; a five-band graphic equalizer; and a pair of detachable two-way bass reflex speakers. It is further highlighted by a rated power output of 15 watts per channel, light-touch controls and additional inputs for a turntable and CD.

In addition to sharing the same price tag as the Akai PJ-43, Yamaha's **PC-8B** portable component system also has a similar receiver/five-band equalizer/auto-reverse cassette deck configuration. However, it has exchanged the dispensable short wave bands for such tuner enhancements as AFC control and FM muting, which let you

lock in on hard-to-find stations while skimming off the hiss. Meanwhile, the cassette

deck is short on some automatic features but heavy on noise reduction—offering both Dolby B and C.

Dolby C seems to be catching on in portable stereo systems. It's a natural choice, as this recent Dolby noise reduction format provides for an additional 10 dB of hiss reduction and safeguards against tape saturation—both common problems in-

least bit encumbered.

Aiwa's **HR-SO1MKII** (approx. \$60) provides both AM and FM stereo reception. Combining state-of-the-art technology with samarian-cobalt magnet drivers and microchip circuitry, this unit is also equipped with input/output jacks that allow it to be used as a standard



Boom in the box: Yamaha's PC-8B (\$400)

herent in the boom box genre. Oddly enough, **Panasonic's** new **RX-C20** portable radio cassette recorder (approx. \$220) has skipped over the ubiquitous Dolby B altogether in favor of Dolby C. It also has a five-band equalizer, while its auto reverse mechanism can be used to volley back and forth between both sides of a tape—even in the middle of a song.

And what do you need if you're out to party under the sun? If you're looking for the BIG sound in portable stereos, check out **Hitachi's** **TRK-7620** (approx. \$160). This AM/FM/short wave/cassette combo is in a category by itself with 15 watts per channel supplied by three amplifiers and delivered through five—count 'em—speakers. It is further equipped with both metal and chrome tape compatibility, mic mixing and a five-band equalizer for tune-fixing chores.

"The TRK-7620 is not just a 'ghetto blaster,'" notes Hitachi vice president Bruce Shoenegge. "It's an entire urban renewal project."

EARS UP

IF A CASSETTE PLAYER DOESN'T necessarily fit into your portable audio needs, you can enjoy totally hands-free listening with one of the new stereo radio headsets that manufacturers are currently adding to their line. No wire links your ears to your hip pocket here. We're talking headphones that talk, sing and boogie all by themselves, with no strings (or cables) attached.

The sound quality of these feather-weight receivers is better than ever, owing to new speaker magnet designs and improved radio circuitry. And because there are no wires to hassle with, you're not the

stereo headphone or for connection to an external source for taping broadcasts or listening through a home system. It weighs less than five ounces without batteries and is powered by two AA alkaline batteries.

Panasonic's **RF-H5** (approx. \$70) is an FM stereo headphone receiver that utilizes radio high-density circuitry to account for its lightweight compact design. When not in use, this headset can be collapsed to fit in your pocket. **GE's** **7-1285** (approx. \$40) is another collapsible, FM stereo unit and weighs less than four ounces with batteries.

That's travelling light.

TV TO GO

PERSONAL STEREOS MAY BE FINE for music lovers, but they're of little use to television buffs. And, until recently, even the most portable TV sets weren't nearly as lightweight as most would have liked.

But now you can get the big picture on very small-screen units that are truly the first "personal" TVs.

In fact, **Seiko's** **TFT Pocket Color TV** (approx. \$550) gives most personal audio systems a run for the money in the down-scale department. Its two-inch diagonal screen uses a revolutionary liquid crystal display (LCD) and thin-film transistors (TFT) for operation in any lighting situation, while the unit itself measures only 6-3/8-inches wide and weighs less than a pound (including five AA batteries). Furthermore, it receives both VHF and UHF bands and can even be used as a video monitor. In addition to using dry cell batteries, it can be powered by AC current, rechargeable nicad battery or car battery.

Meanwhile, **Panasonic's** **CT-101** (approx. \$470) portable color TV may not be quite as portable as the Seiko, but it will

easily fit into any briefcase. Its 1.5-inch diagonal screen is a miniature CRT and it incorporates such advanced features as electronic auto-scan tuning, four-way powering and video input capability. Included in the CT-101 package is an AC adaptor, rechargeable battery, built-in battery charger, car adaptor cord, audio/video connector cable, dry cell battery case and magnifying hood.

CHROME WARS REDUX

OUR "CHROME WARS" COLUMN IN the March issue, in which we subjected several leading chrome cassettes to audible taste tests, drew such a heavy response that a rematch is already being booked.

In the meantime, one of the lingering questions from the first bout concerns the tape deck that was used for the test's recording and playback chores. So for those of you who were kept wondering, our referee—so to speak—was **Onkyo's** top-of-the-line **Integra TA-2090** (approx. \$800), a microprocessor-controlled cassette deck with three Sendite heads and a three-motor transport.

The TA-2090 is also standardly equipped with automatic tape selection (for proper playback EQ), a real-time tape counter, and automatic Accubias, an exclusive feature that adjusts the bias current for each tape individually to obtain the widest and most linear frequency response possible (applied to all tapes we tested).

It is further outfitted with all commercially available noise reduction systems: dbx, Dolby B, C and HX Pro. The latter is a headroom expansion system that allows for additional high-frequency room on the tape (used during recording only), and this is the only unit we know of to offer a dbx/HX Pro combination. It also has independent, left and right Dolby calibration controls for proper adjustment of the encoding signal with high bias and metal tapes.

It has also come to our attention from **Denon** that while their **DX-7** tape performed admirably in the test, their top chrome tape, **DX-8**, performs even better and would have been more suited to the field of competitors.

Indeed, a subsequent testing of the tape backed them up on it. The **DX-8** scored extremely well in both high and low frequency response and had a better overall performance with the various types of noise reduction. Although curiously, the **DX-8**, like the **DX-7**, still sounded best when no noise reduction was used.

Incidentally, the song that was used to test each tape was Bob Marley's "Is This Love" from the *Legend* album. This reggae classic survived at least one hundred listens over a period of several days. No listener went stark raving mad. What better compliment can anyone give any melody? ○

MIKE SHEA ●

HUMANS IN THE MACHINE

Digital drums
on the
threshold of change

About 12 years ago I was pulling a double shift in a rehearsal studio where every band used the same drum kit. The previous night the tuning had been done by a heavy metal drummer, and was all low and deep sounding. The next morning the first client in was a Latin band whose drummer tuned the two mounted toms up very high like timbales. Usually I'd have retuned the kit in between sessions just to keep them sounding like they belonged to the same set. But this day I didn't get the chance and the next client was the legendary jazz drummer Elvin Jones.

Handing him the tuning keys, I apologized for the condition of the now multi-tuned kit. He smiled, put the keys on the floor and tapped each drum once. As I walked away he started playing and the kit sounded like he had spent an hour adjusting it. It blew me away! This cat had the ability to get the sound he wanted out of any drum simply by the touch and location of his strike.

Enter digital drum machines, exit all the problems of tuning, broken skins and rattling hardware. These instruments even allow non-percussionists to program rhythms in a step-by-step fashion and later (on the better machines) vary the tempo so as to add more of a human feel. At the same time, though, digital drums preclude a drummer's ability to change the feel by the force of the strike—they don't program the sensibility of an Elvin Jones, in other words. Granted, many machines have two snare or kick loudnesses, but offer this to a rocker who wants to whomp the snare at the end of a bridge leading into the final chorus, or a Latin percussionist who will often strike the sides of a drum and even the mounting hardware to express a sharp rhythmic feel, and they'll shake their heads in disbelief. Worst of all, the sounds are always the same, outside of a little variability

allowed in the tuning. The end result is that for the past few years the drum sounds on many records have been so similar that I'm able to pick out a digital drum track within a couple of bars. Depressing? You bet, but a major change is on the horizon.

With its **SDS 1**, Simmons introduces dynamics to the digital drum, meaning that the harder this drum is struck the louder the resulting sound. The SDS 1 is like a normal drum machine in that it plays digitally recorded sounds. Any conceivable sound can be sampled (converted to digital format), loaded (programmed) into a chip (integrated circuit) and triggered to play, either by pressing a button or hitting a drum pad.

Many other companies are introducing drum pads that will allow sounds to be triggered by real stick usage while the loudness is electronically controlled, thereby paralleling the force of the strike. However, the SDS 1 is self-contained:

pop in a

sound chip, hook up an amp and play. You can vary the pitch, have the sound automatically bend up or down like a timpani or actually time the pitch change so that a roll on the single pad will sound like a roll across several drums. Simmons has also opted to use newer chips that have a great deal more memory, which translates, in performance, either to longer sounds or greater fidelity.

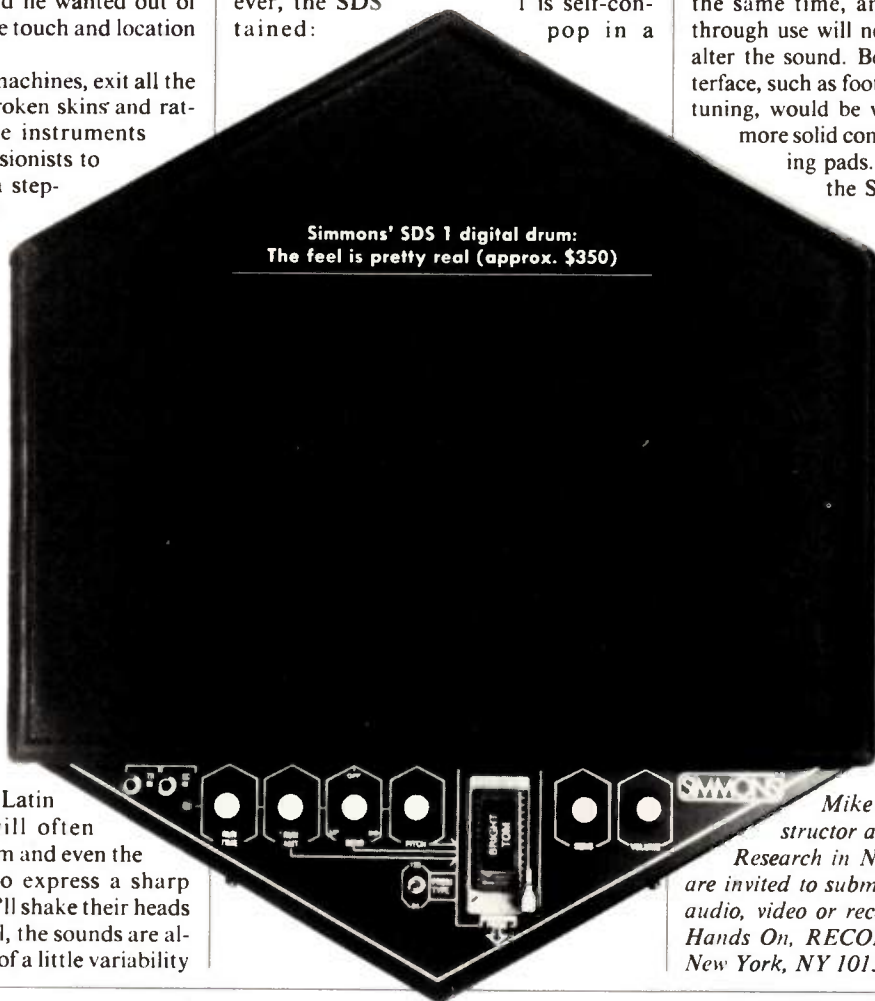
While hardly the final answer to digital percussion, the SDS 1 is nevertheless a good starter drum, and at \$350 the price is right, too. Unlike a practice pad or a cheap drum, which would be pretty useless when you move to an acoustical or even a different digital drum kit, the SDS 1 will always be a welcome addition to any set, no matter how advanced.

Unfortunately, the SDS 1's construction—it's basically held together by staples!—leaves something to be desired. At the same time, any damage that occurs through use will not damage vital parts or alter the sound. Better player-machine interface, such as foot pedal/switch control of tuning, would be welcome here, as would more solid construction and less fatiguing pads. In the recording studio

the SDS 1 sounds great, but the pad can make a bit too much noise for recording other sounds at the same time.

While imperfect, Simmons' SDS 1 is easy to use. It requires no additional equipment, and also renders an endless variety of sounds and dynamics. For this alone, the SDS 1 bodes well for the future of digital percussion. For more information, contact Simmons at P.O. Box 1444, Reseda, CA 91335; phone (818) 884-2653.

Simmons' SDS 1 digital drum:
The feel is pretty real (approx. \$350)



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

CRAIG ANDERTON ●

NEW COMPUTERS FOR ELECTRONIC MUSICIANS

Bold challengers will test Commodore's dominance

For several years, the Commodore-64 has been the dominant home computer for musical applications. Thanks to "SID," the C-64's built-in music-synthesizer-on-a-chip, no other computer can provide as much sound quality "out of the box." As a result, much musically-related software has been written for the C-64, and accessories such as MIDI interfaces and add-on keyboards have been introduced over the years.

But the C-64's dominance now seems likely to end as another generation of computers gets ready to flirt with the volatile home computer market. With Mattel, Timex, Texas Instruments and even Coleco's much-touted Adam out of the picture, Commodore, Radio Shack, Atari and "dark horse" Sinclair are the lone survivors. Atari had been limping along until it was acquired by Jack Tramiel, a controversial figure in the computer field who, pre-Atari, built Commodore into what it is today. Atari introduced several machines recently; its lowest cost model, the 65XE (approx. \$120), does not include its own sound chip but instead features a MIDI interface suitable for controlling existing MIDI-compatible keyboard instruments. The 65XE's low list price is only slightly higher than that of a MIDI interface alone from another company. But that's not all. The slightly more expensive 65XEM includes "AMY," a breakthrough synthesizer-on-a-chip that uses digital sampling techniques for high fidelity sound. AMY covers over 10 octaves, has eight independent voices, and includes a total of 64 oscillators—which just goes to show how much the technology has advanced since Commodore introduced its three-voice, analog-based SID music chip a few years back.

There's competition coming from another direction as well: at least 20 Japanese computer manufacturers have adopted the MSX standard for home computers proposed by Microsoft, an American software company. MSX computers, which can easily interface with each other, have not taken off as rapidly as had been hoped; 1985 is probably a make-or-break year for establishing them in the United States. MSX machines can easily synchronize to video, are readily adaptable to MIDI interfaces, are great for home security and other utilitarian functions, have lots of game software available (at least in Japan) and are inexpensive. Unfortunately, MSX com-



Yamaha's CX5M computer is designed specifically for musical applications (under \$500)

puters are essentially based around late 1970s technology (the eight-bit Z-80 chip). However, rumor has it that a 16-bit MSX-compatible standard will be forthcoming later this year, which could open the way to greater acceptance.

Meanwhile, Yamaha has introduced the CX5M, an inexpensive (under \$500) computer designed specifically for musical applications. This eight-bit, MSX standard computer goes well beyond the call of duty with respect to musical capability. First of all, there's an on-board sound generator, which is essentially a Yamaha DX-9 keyboard-on-a-chip. Add on one of two optional keyboards (mini keys, \$100; or regular size keys, \$200), and you've got an eight-voice polyphonic synthesizer with 48 different pre-programmed patches (sounds). There's also a MIDI interface. While certain features are lacking—the keyboards do not provide dynamics, nor are there real-time performance controls such as pitch-bend wheels—the CX5M is certainly more than adequate for working out songs and doing basic composition.

Yamaha has already developed several software cartridges. Their DX-7 keyboard synthesizer has the reputation of being difficult to program for custom sounds, so one piece of software uses the computer to "talk" to the DX-7 for you, thus simplifying programming. There's also a sequencer program that works the CX5M's MIDI interface as well as the internal sound chip; notes can be entered from the keyboard or the computer, and show up on a video display of the lines of staff. Another cartridge accesses the internal sound chip so that you can program your own sounds rather than using the internal presets.

The CX5M is not really a pro-level machine; as a home computer it's about average, and at present can save only to cassettes rather than disks (the latter are much faster and more reliable). As a home computer-cum-synthesizer, though, it puts enough strength into the musical attributes that many musicians will probably not even think of it as a "home computer."

And what about Commodore? It seems to be taking its complete corporate name (Commodore Business Machines) more seriously these days, having introduced the P128, basically a Commodore-64 with far more capability for business applications. For now, the company shows little interest in pursuing the music market.

Meanwhile, rumors persist about new chips under development at various companies, 16-bit MSX standards, and Commodore's as-yet-unintroduced "Amiga" computer. It's impossible to predict what will happen in this changeable industry, but the worst case is that nobody wins—MSX establishes just enough of a foothold to act as a spoiler for Atari, Commodore or both; a general lack of standards keeps software prices high; and the consumer is left with orphan computers, incompatibility between different machines and a lack of useful programs. The best case is that musicians gravitate towards one reasonably powerful computer as the dominant music machine. If MSX goes over in the consumer market, the CX5M will gain credibility in the music world—but if MSX bombs, Yamaha will be the lone kid on the block. Or will Atari be the one that ends up setting the price/performance standard for a "musician's controller" computer? We'll find out soon.

JUNE 1975

TOP 10 POP SINGLES

- 1 **THE HUSTLE**
Van McCoy
- 2 **LOVE WILL KEEP US TOGETHER**
Captain & Tennille
- 3 **WILDFIRE**
Michael Murphey
- 4 **LISTEN TO WHAT THE MAN SAID**
Paul McCartney
- 5 **MAGIC**
Pilot
- 6 **LOVE WON'T LET ME WAIT**
Major Harris
- 7 **SWEARIN' TO GOD**
Frankie Valli
- 8 **I'M NOT IN LOVE**
10cc
- 9 **ONE OF THESE NIGHTS**
Eagles
- 10 **ROCKIN' CHAIR**
Gwen McCrae

TOP 10 BLACK SINGLES

- 1 **THE HUSTLE**
Van McCoy
- 2 **LOVE WON'T LET ME WAIT**
Major Harris
- 3 **ROCKIN' CHAIR**
Gwen McCrae
- 4 **FIGHT THE POWER, PART 1**
Isley Brothers
- 5 **JUST A LITTLE BIT OF YOU**
Michael Jackson
- 6 **SOONER OR LATER**
The Impressions
- 7 **SLIPPERY WHEN WET**
Commodores
- 8 **LOOK AT ME (I'M IN LOVE)**
The Moments
- 9 **THE WAY WE WERE/ TRY TO REMEMBER**
Gladys Knight & the Pips
- 10 **SEXY**
MFSB



SUMMER OF '75

In the disco summer of '75 it was a catchy dance number by veteran producer-writer Van McCoy that dominated the airwaves and the clubs. Only Barry White's heavy breathing really challenged McCoy's "Hustle" supremacy, although some other artists gave it a good run. This month, for example, the chart shows soul singer Gwen McCrae crossing over with her sultry "Rockin' Chair," and former Delfonics lead singer Major Harris scoring big on both the pop and black charts with "Love Won't Let Me Wait." On the pop side only, the chart is notable for "Wildfire," Michael Murphey's biggest Top 40 hit. Oddly enough, as Murphey's material became richer in lyrical substance, the hits stopped coming. Today he's found a home as a country singer, and still offers more grit and honesty than most of his contemporaries in the field.

UK TOPS

- 1 **NO JACKET REQUIRED**
Phil Collins (Virgin)
- 2 **SONGS FROM THE BIG CHAIR**
Tears for Fears (Mercury)
- 3 **BORN IN THE USA**
Bruce Springsteen (CBS)
- 4 **SHE'S THE BOSS**
Mick Jagger (CBS)
- 5 **ALF**
Alison Moyet (CBS)
- 6 **RECKLESS**
Bryan Adams (Capitol)
- 7 **DIAMOND LIFE**
Sade (CBS)
- 8 **BUILDING THE PERFECT BEAST**
Don Henley (Geffen)
- 9 **ELIMINATOR**
ZZ Top (WB)
- 10 **HITS OUT OF HELL**
Meatloaf (Epic)
- 11 **DREAM IN ACTION**
Howard Jones (WEA)
- 12 **NIGHTTIME**
Killing Joke (EG)
- 13 **LIKE A VIRGIN**
Madonna (Sire)
- 14 **NIGHTSHIFT**
Commodores (Motown)
- 15 **MEAT IS MURDER**
The Smiths (Rough Trade)
- 16 **PRIVATE DANCER**
Tina Turner (Capitol)
- 17 **PURPLE RAIN**
Prince (WB)
- 18 **BEHIND THE SUN**
Eric Clapton (WB)
- 19 **THE AGE OF CONSENT**
Bronski Beat (Forbidden Fruit)
- 20 **FIRST AND LAST AND ALWAYS**
Sisters of Mercy (Merciful Release)
- 21 **1999**
Prince (WB)
- 22 **THE FIRM**
The Firm (Atlantic)
- 23 **WHATEVER HAPPENED TO JUGULA**
Roy Harper and Jimmy Page (Second Sight)
- 24 **CHESS**
Various Artists (RCA)
- 25 **MAKE IT BIG**
Wham! (CBS)

TINA 1, BAND 0

With her *Private Dancer* LP still sitting comfortably in the *NME* Top 20, Tina Turner continued her astounding comeback by returning to the shores from whence it sprang: England, to be precise, where the *Private Dancer* story started some three years ago with the release of the Heaven 17-produced single, "Let's Stay Together." Playing four nights recently at the Wembley Arena, Turner offered the expected fire and brimstone, but at least one critic came away unimpressed. Veteran *NME* scribe Paolo Hewitt, while praising the vocalist's remarkable pipes, described her standard-issue band as "a bombastic, insensitive ensemble that churned out all the old tricks and clichés with a frightening lack of embarrassment at such an outdated approach. In the end, it's not so much Tina Turner but the company she keeps."



UK LP chart reprinted from *New Musical Express*, March 23, 1985

DANCE LPs

- 1 **GAP BAND VI**
Gap Band (Total Experience)
- 2 **PRIVATE DANCER**
Tina Turner (Capitol)
- 3 **NIGHT SHIFT**
Commodores (Motown)
- 4 **STARCHILD**
Teena Marie (Epic)
- 5 **SOLID**
Ashford & Simpson (Capitol)
- 6 **EMERGENCY**
Kool & the Gang (De-Lite)
- 7 **ESCAPE**
Whodini (Jive/Arista)
- 8 **NEW EDITION**
New Edition (MCA)
- 9 **PLANETARY INVASION**
Midnight Star (Solar)
- 10 **CHINESE WALL**
Philip Bailey (Col)
- 11 **BEVERLY HILLS COP**
Soundtrack (MCA)
- 12 **KING OF ROCK**
Run-D.M.C. (Profile)
- 13 **SWEPT AWAY**
Diana Ross (RCA)
- 14 **TRULY FOR YOU**
Temptations (Gordy)
- 15 **BREAKOUT**
Pointer Sisters (Planet)
- 16 **FAT BOYS**
Fat Boys (Sutra)
- 17 **DIAMOND LIFE**
Sade (Epic)
- 18 **SECRETS**
Wilton Felder (MCA)
- 19 **SUDDENLY**
Billy Ocean (Arista)
- 20 **SO GOOD**
Whispers (Solar)
- 21 **THEY SAID IT COULDN'T BE DONE**
Grandmaster Flash (Elektra)
- 22 **JESSE JOHNSON'S REVUE**
Jesse Johnson (A&M)
- 23 **JENNY BURTON**
Jenny Burton (Atlantic)
- 24 **STEP BY STEP**
Jeff Lorber (Arista)
- 25 **FINDER OF LOST LOVES**
Dionne Warwick (Arista)

JESSE TAKES A BOW

So you're 20 years old and land in Minnesota by way of Rock Island, Illinois. In short order you hook up with an ambitious funkster named Morris Day, become part of his band The Time, meet a cat calls himself Prince, cut three best-selling Time albums, start writing and producing for the likes of Sheila E. and Vanity 6, and then land a role in *Purple Rain*. Not a bad way to fill up four years of your life. Now 24-years-old, Jesse Johnson has broken with The Time to go the solo route on *Jesse Johnson's Revue*, a rock solid effort that ought to further establish Johnson's credentials as a no-nonsense guitarist-writer-producer. Says Johnson: "I feel there's something new and fresh here. I play and write what I feel. It may be painful—real life often is—but it's true."



EBERT ROBERTS

HEAVY METAL LPs

- 1 **THE FIRM**
The Firm (Atlantic)
- 2 **CRAZY FROM THE HEAT**
David Lee Roth (WB)
- 3 **SIGN IN PLEASE**
Autograph (RCA)
- 4 **PERFECT STRANGERS**
Deep Purple (WB)
- 5 **METAL HEART**
Accept (Portrait)
- 6 **STAY HUNGRY**
Twisted Sister (Atlantic)
- 7 **THUNDER IN THE EAST**
Loudness (Atco)
- 8 **RIGHT TO ROCK**
Keel (Gold Mountain/A&M)
- 9 **GIUFFRIA**
Giuffria (MCA)
- 10 **THUNDER 7**
Triumph (MCA)
- 11 **GO FOR YOUR LIFE**
Mountain (Col)
- 12 **V.O.A.**
Sammy Hagar (Capitol)
- 13 **RIDE THE LIGHTNING**
Metallica (Elektra)
- 14 **STAY HARD**
Raven (Atlantic)
- 15 **TOOTH & NAIL**
Dokken (Elektra)
- 16 **MARCH OF THE SAINT**
Armored Saint (Chrysalis)
- 17 **OUT OF THE CELLAR**
Ratt (Atlantic)
- 18 **GLORIOUS RESULTS OF A MISSPENT YOUTH**
Joan Jett (MCA)
- 19 **ROUGH CUTT**
Rough Cutt (RCA)
- 20 **STANDING ALONE**
White Wolf (RCA)
- 21 **ROGUES GALLERY**
Slade (Epic)
- 22 **READY TO STRIKE**
King Kobra (Capitol)
- 23 **EVERYBODY'S CRAZY**
Michael Bolton (Col)
- 24 **FRICTION**
Coney Hatch (Polydor)
- 25 **DANGEROUS MUSIC**
Robin George (Bronze)



EBERT ROBERTS

ACCEPTIONS

Founded in Germany in 1977, Accept made its U.S. breakthrough last year with its fifth LP release (second in the U.S.), *Balls to the Wall*. A relentless touring schedule helped break the band on these shores, and today reports have it that *Balls* continues selling at a neat clip of 1000 copies a week. For a followup, the quintet (vocalist/lyricist Udo Deleed guitarist Wolf Hoffman, guitarist Jorg Fischer, bassist Peter Baltes and drummer Stefan Kaufmann) recently released *Metal Heart*. Produced by Dieter Dierks, a renowned name in heavy metal circles, *Heart's* 10 tracks barely contain the searing heat of Accept's attack. Look for the band up close and personal this summer when touring season gets underway.

Dance and Heavy Metal LPs researched and compiled by Street Pulse Group

WHAT'S NEW

PAGING ELLIOT NESS

The Untouchables never say die

LOS ANGELES—When the Untouchables sprang onto the L.A. club scene four years ago, the band was a marginally competent mod/ska outfit. But the bi-racial quintet has come a long way, baby, driven by a *very* tough-minded quest for success.

Examples? Here's three. (1) When the band leaders decided its two-tone base needed more musical color—and opted for shades of pop, rock and soul—members not of a mind or an ability to comply were asked to resign; (2) Last summer, after being unable to parlay the wild local buzz into a record deal, the group released its own EP, *Live and Let Dance*, which promptly drew local airplay and press galore; (3) Perhaps most telling, in the Untouchables' press kit sits a "copy" of the *Los Angeles Times*' mostly-favorable review of the EP—with the negative section neatly excised.

This ambitious maneuvering appears to be paying off. After building a strong reputation with its spirited, pack-the-dance-floor live show, the Untouchables landed the guest spot on UB-40's recent tour and, from all accounts, routinely upstaged the headliner. But in Los Angeles, the group still couldn't get arrested, much less score a record contract.

Then along came England's Stiff Records (distributed in the U.S. by MCA) with a contract. Singer Chuck Askerneese appreciates the irony of having to go overseas to get launched Stateside, but he's also optimistic: "I see this European thing making us an international act," he states. Lofty words, perhaps. But are *you* going to argue? **Duncan Strauss**

WHY PUT OFF 'TIL TUESDAY?

Boston quartet feels it's bound for glory today

B O S T O N — "Every-thing's totally fallen

Joey Pesce, the band went public.

"The thing that's amazing about this band is that the minute I really made up my mind and said, 'Look. Shut up. You gotta do it,' things happened," Mann says. First, 'til tuesday won radio station WBCN's annual battle of the bands, the 1983 Rock 'n' Roll Rumble. Then it



into place," chirps Aimee Mann, bassist and lead singer for the Boston quartet 'til tuesday. "It's really a Cinderella story."

But in this case Cinderella is a tall and striking 24-year-old blonde from Richmond, Virginia, who ended up in Boston in 1979 to attend the Berklee College of Music. That adventure lasted less than a year, and Mann was soon singing for a local artsy punk band called the Young Snakes. "The way I felt about playing art-rock was, it's interesting, but who the hell wants to listen to it?"

So in December of 1982, after meeting guitarist Robert Holmes, she laid the groundwork for 'til tuesday. "I wanted to sing about love and write melodies that are very pretty and haunting," Mann says. After signing up drummer Michael Hausman and keyboards player

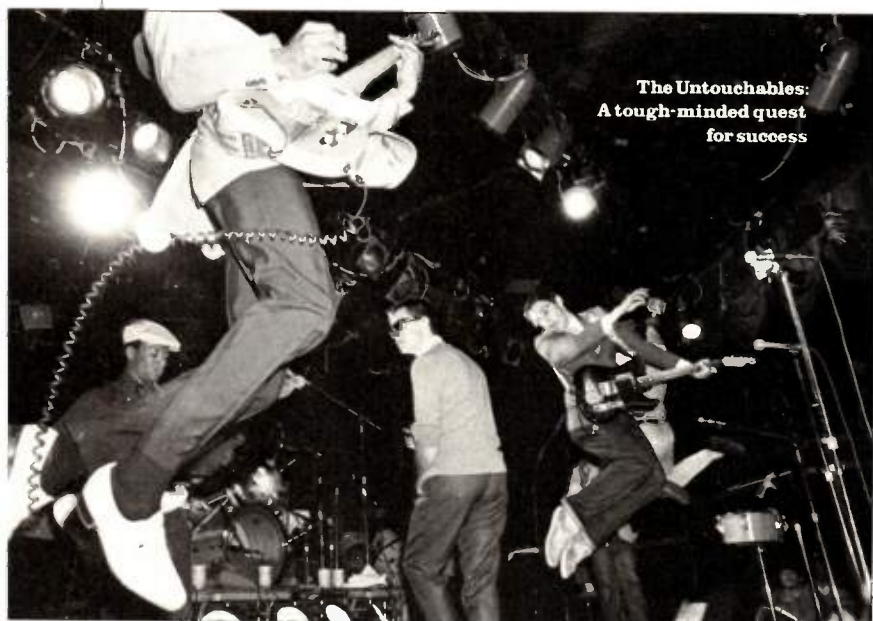
got signed to Epic on the strength of its live show and a demo tape. And before the group's debut album, *Voices Carry*, even got decent airplay, 'til tuesday landed the opening slot on Hall and Oates' tour.

Mann has a distinct vocal and songwriting style: fragile and vulnerable one moment, worldly and sophisticated the next. "What we try to do is keep things pretty sparse and restrained but very emotional," Mann explains.

And then there's the X factor—the unswerving determination that you will succeed in a tough business. "Everybody can make their own rules," she observes. "I wanna make my own." Rule Number One: "I'm going to make it and absolutely nothing is going to stand in my way."

And you can bet your glass slippers on that one. —Dean Johnson

The Untouchables:
A tough-minded quest
for success



MAKE MY DAY (AND NIGHT)

Eramus Hall pursues the groove full-time

NEW YORK—Eramus Hall? Never heard of 'em. *Gohead*, the title implored. Unwrapped the mug, dropped the needle and ... POW! The funkiest, funniest and most eclectic party record since P-Funk's *Urban Dancefloor Guerrillas*. What say?

Co-produced by funk's grand poobah George Clinton and talented newcomer Joel Martin, Eramus Hall's debut LP for Capitol has all the varied richness you'd expect from a band that's soaked up a lifetime's worth of R&B influences in their native Detroit. James Brown, Motown, Funkadelics, War, Earth, Wind & Fire; they're all here as forebears of the tradition this seven-man groove-crew carry forward. And if survival is the essence of tradition, these guys may well be over-qualified for the job.

Funksters by night, flunkies by day, the band has hung together for 15 years by keeping the faith and working 'round the clock. As hired guns they've backed up R&B legends Jackie Wilson, the Spinners and Al Green on their respective Motor City gigs. But if a night's workout with such heavy-weights proved invigorating, the day-work necessary for economic survival could be downright unnerving. "I got bit by dogs every day," recounts group spokesman Michael Gatherright, who kept food on his table as a utilities worker, cutting off the gas of delinquent customers. "People were threatening me, throwing bricks through my car window. One guy sat me at his dining room table and held me at gunpoint. His gas bill was \$1000. He never paid it! But he was gonna kill me!" Other band members found less threatening but similarly unsatisfying work on Chrysler's assembly lines until "a couple of years ago when everybody successfully got fired from their jobs" to pursue the groove full time.

And not a minute too soon. With R&B bending every which way to cross pop and rock's commercial boundaries, Eramus Hall has got its head in the right place. So *Gohead* ... just for the funk of it.

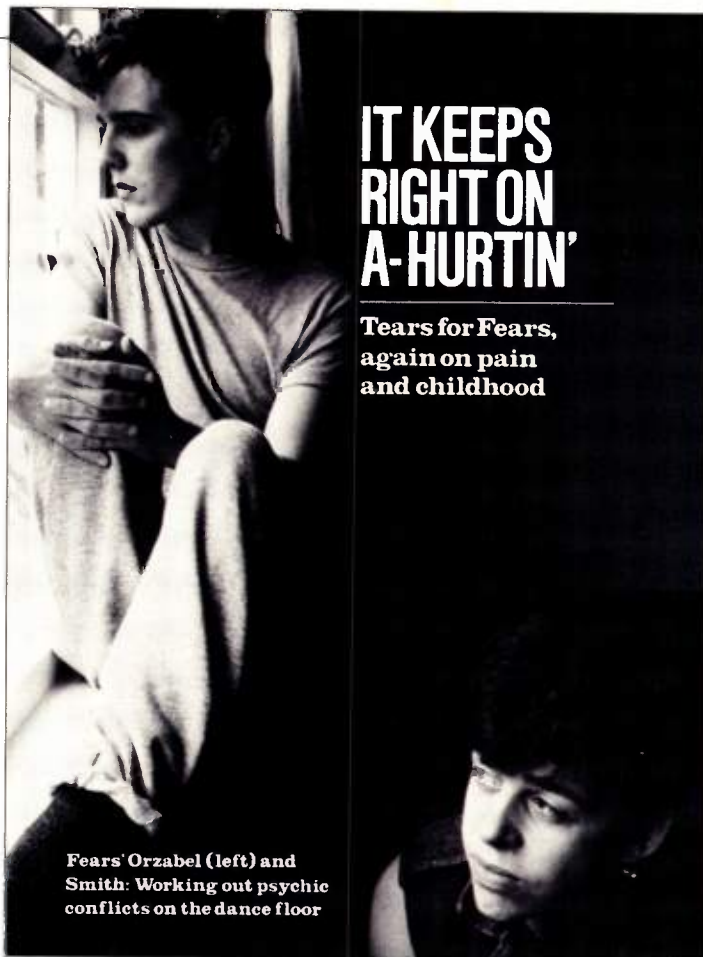
—John McAlley



Eramus Hall: The funksters come out at night

IT KEEPS RIGHT ON A-HURTIN'

Tears for Fears, again on pain and childhood



Fears' Orzabal (left) and Smith: Working out psychic conflicts on the dance floor

"When we finished *The Hurting*, I didn't believe I could write more songs about childhood and pain," quips the ever-mirthful Roland Orzabal, the songwriting duct through which Tears for Fears' trauma-charged dance music flows. "But the same things have cropped up, in a more vague way and in a way that's probably more accessible to people."

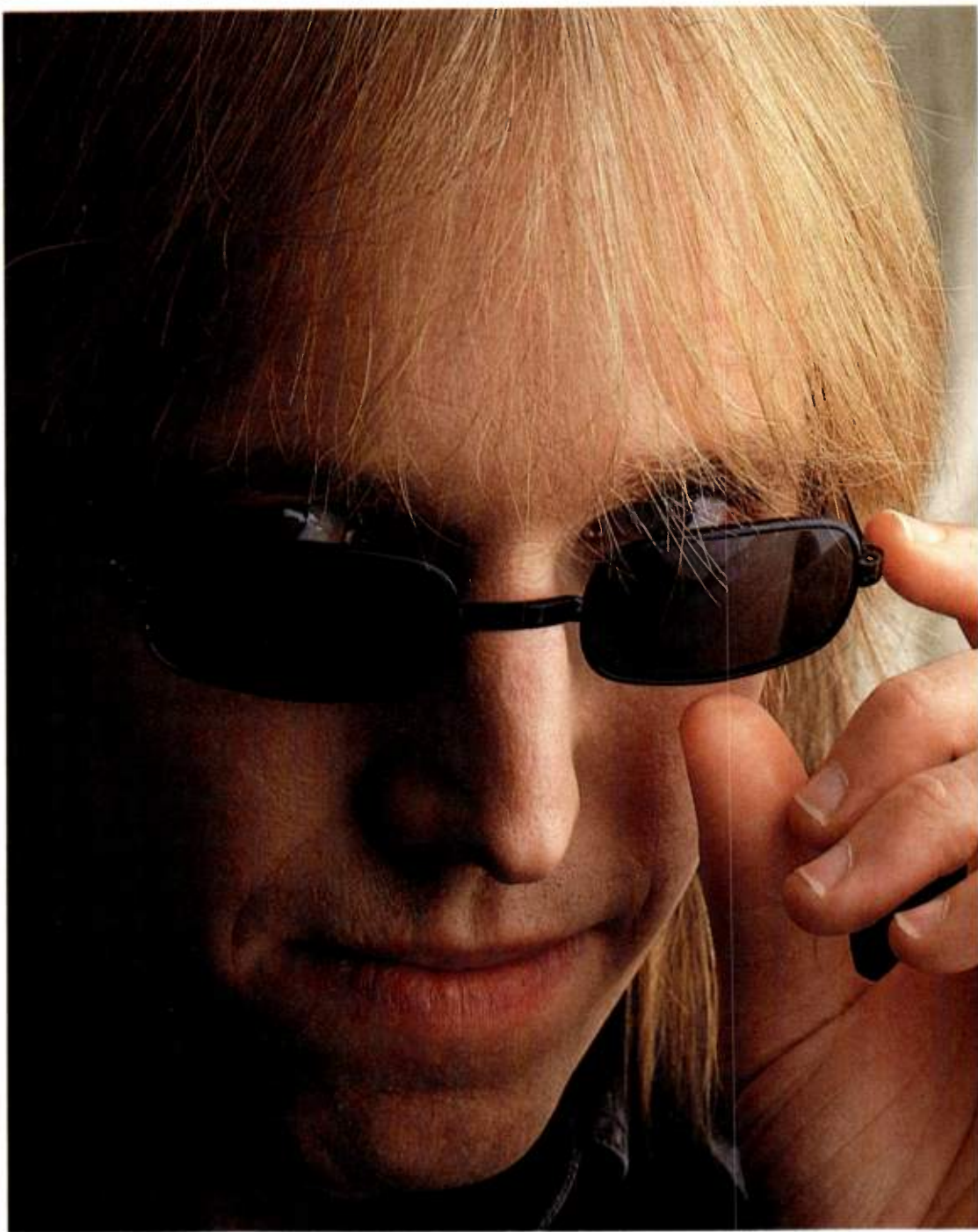
Roland, 23, is musing about *Songs from the Big Chair*, the LP he's just released with co-Tear Curt Smith. Like the duo's debut, *The Hurting*, *The Big Chair* exhorts the masses to work out their psychic conflicts on the dance floor. Are dance numbers about emotional repression a contradiction?

"Music works on three levels, roughly," Orzabal expounds. "You've got the beat—the rhythm, the heart, the motor. You've got

the second level, which is the feeling you come across with, the emotion. And then you've got the meaning of the song and of the music. That's vital to our records."

Based in Bath, England, Tears will be falling onto our shores in late Spring. To reproduce the luscious textures of such tunes as "Mad World," "Change" and "Pale Shelter" (from *The Hurting*) and "Shout" and "Mothers Talk" (from *Big Chair*), Tears will tour as a seven-piece combo. Bolstering vocalists Orzabal on guitar and Smith on bass will be a guitarist, two keyboardists, a drummer, two drum machines and a sax-man. Arranging this human/machine orchestra is "quite complicated," Roland laughs, "but when it works, it's great!"

—Anthony DeCurtis



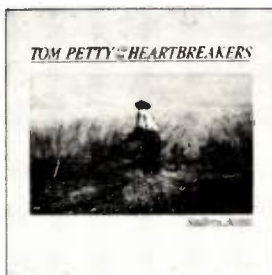
DENNIS KEELEY

BORN A REBEL

SOUTHERN ACCENTS
Tom Petty and
the Heartbreakers
MCA

By
James
Hunter

It's ironic
that Tom
Petty begins
Southern Ac-



cents, his stunning new album, confessing he was "born to rebel." Passionate, hooky, inspired, ragged, succinct—Petty and the Heartbreakers have often been all these things and more. But rebellious? These L.A. pop-rock classicists?

But "Rebels," the anthemic break-up song/album overture that kicks off *Southern Accents* with an anguished plea of "Honey don't walk out/You know I'm too drunk to follow," fires this record's rampaging tour of the American South "with one foot in the grave and one foot on the pedal." There's

not a stiff musical moment along the way. "Make It Better (Forget About Me)" steps out with a rejuvenated Stax-Voltish swagger, and on "Don't Come Around Here No More" and the amazing "Mary's New Car" the Heartbreakers' hungry rock 'n' roll is outfitted with subtle synth-beats.

Southern Accents, though, is still a resolutely old-fashioned work. It seems literally not to occupy the same pop world with the flashy rhythms of Prince and Madonna, or with the shrewd updated craft of Don Henley and Foreigner, or

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with today's polite country music, whose subject matter it shares. The closest comparison is *Born in the U.S.A.*—but *Accents* is quirkier, funnier, funkier, and at once more and less sentimental and grand. That is, it's more Southern, which is, of course, exactly what it ought to be.

For the first time, Tom Petty's music does indeed seem rebellious. He's always been cocky, and his dusty yawp's always gone its own idiosyncratic way. But on *Southern Accents*—singing like a punky Cat Hat one minute, an anxious teenager the next, an eloquent Dixie survivor the next—this native Florida boy digs into his background and constructs powerfully accurate scenes of a region's sadnesses and glories.

There's a brooding gloominess to most of this material, but there's also an exuberant truth at its heart. "There's a Southern accent, where I come from," he softly insists on the title ballad, "the young 'uns call it country and the Yankees call it dumb." Petty performs here from the point of view of an old man, lost in romantic misery and personal pride, dreaming of his woman and his mama and his God, who's probably dying with his claims that he's got his "own way of living, but everything gets done." It's an extraordinary piece.

On "It Ain't Nothin' to Me," a streaky and mean '70's-Stonesish groove, a wise-mouthing Petty dismisses many people's notions of significance ("The Jeffersons are home watchin' Jerry Falwell on TV/Might mean somethin' to you, it ain't nothin' to me") and emphatically states his own: "When you dance I can go right with you."

Meanwhile on the slowly swaying "Spoke" a bunch of redneck delta observers persecute a James Dean-like misfit who shows up in town and scares their wives—"got another man with a dog collar on—maybe we ought to throw old Spike a bone"—as Petty eventually taunts, "Can you tell me about life?"

The ace track, though, is "Mary's New Car," a gorgeous rocker that catches the hot affinities between sex and automobiles better than anything since George Lucas put a silent Suzanne Somers in a white T-Bird and parked her at various stoplights in *American Graffiti*. "Can we ride," wonders Petty, wiping his forehead and swearing, "man, you don't know how good it feels" before begging "We want to go where she goes, we want to listen to the radio."

Then the record ends with "The Best of Everything," a gracious, brassy farewell. Singing to an estranged old girlfriend, Petty says, "We never had the real thing, but sometimes we used to care." He also tells her he hopes she's discovered whatever she was looking for. This generosity comes naturally, because on *Southern Accents*, Tom Petty clearly still cares—and he's found the rooted truths, the best of everything he was looking for.

RHYTHM OF THE NIGHT DeBarge

Gordy

By
James
Hunter

Every so often a group comes along that makes outright niceness seem heroic. DeBarge is like that. *Rhythm of the Night*, their fourth album, isn't the zesty tour de force of sophisticated black pop that 1983's *In a Special Way* was—but it's no slouch. And despite four different producers, the sweet-soul sounds remain consistent.

Of the four Jay Graydon productions, "The Heart Is Not So Smart" is a California-calypto treasure, as genial and welcome as a warm afternoon in March. Although "Prime Time" and "Give It Up" are, for this outfit, a bit ordinary, "Who's Holding Donna Now" is a sumptuous heartbroken tune, the kind that loses a lot of its grief in its own healing music.

El DeBarge, who produced all of *In a Special Way* with Bobby DeBarge, has an intimate falsetto that throws parties, falls in love and turns somersaults—sometimes all at once—as it explores the skies. Advertising himself here as a hopeful "Single Heart" in a tuneful and tough Georgio Morder/Pete Bellotte beat atmosphere (from 1983's *D.C. Cab* soundtrack), El and taut-voiced sister Bunny can't go wrong. And who could resist the irresistible invitation to dance on the Richard Perry-produced title track?

But "You Wear It Well," by El and Chico DeBarge, and "The Walls (Came Tumbling Down)," by El and Tony Redic, are the real crackerjacks here, the essence of what this group has to offer: spikey, sparkling pop-soul with the wound-up attack of Michael Jackson, the graceful precision of Motown immemorial, and the friendly funk that's pure DeBarge.

THE POWER STATION

Capitol

By
Paul
Evans

John Taylor, Andy Taylor, Robert Palmer, Tony Thompson: two Durans, one studied



white soulster, one session monster and former Chic-man. We expect craft, if not art, from such a crack crew—and we get it. It's the big sound here (Bernard Edwards producing); no mind-fest, but a good raw romp.

The rawness surprises. We never doubted these fellows could play, we just questioned how hard. Here, a cover of T. Rex's "Bang a Gong (Get It On)" convinces—pretty needn't always equate with prissy. The goodlookers sweat out an update of the glam anthem that sacrifices neither its troglodyte stomp nor fey poetry. And Power Station's own "Murderess" is an outright guitar workout—an ax-primer from Keef-tuff to Hendrix-frenzied.

Not everything is boom-bam rocking. "Communication" and Isleys' oldie "Harvest For the World" share a sure, if easier, power. "Still in Your Heart," the almost-ballad, is graceful, but pedestrian. "Some Like It Hot" is horn-happy, its pace fierce and funk-styled.

While all concerned shine, Tony Thompson is stellar. Drumming this assured, this heatedly intelligent, compels, even in our day when all LPs have gone beat-crazy. If anyone's slightly overshadowed, it's the record's big solo name—Robert Palmer gives a righteous performance, but one less subtle than some of his previous work.

This remains, however, a bold intro to a force that should be reckoned with. Whenever pop's shifting winds carry these boys in days to come, at present Power Station ain't merely posing. This is real music—and who would've bet it would be?

BEHIND THE SUN Eric Clapton

Warner Bros.

By
Paul
Evans

All effortless guitars and earnest vocals,



Behind the Sun returns us to familiar turf—post-Dominos ClaptonLand. ClaptonLand is a pleasant enough place, a haven for accomplished professionals no longer suffering the itch of challenge, or whose main challenge is survival without undue sacrifice. False moves don't happen there; risk is not encouraged.

However, flawless playing counts for something, and E.C.'s easy mastery remains a minor miracle. With tasty licks drawn once more from the blues-bag, *Behind the Sun* ventures another of Clapton's exercises in palatable perfectionism.

The session stalwarts are all on board—

GOOD IS GOOD ENOUGH

KATRINA AND THE WAVES

Capitol

By Laura Fissinger

Amazing. Katrina and the Waves is a plain old good pop record. What will really be amazing is if all us wags can just leave it at that.

Terrible things can happen these days to plain old good pop records. They tend to get credited with rather remarkable powers; at the end of some reviews you almost expect the poor little platters to reveal life's secrets, cure cancer, and make real rock 'n' roll come back to reign forever and ever, amen. Problem is, when normal music fans read these pieces, they either expect way too much, or avoid the record altogether because it sounds like the band has serious aspirations to walking on water. Either way, the band in question gets gypped of legit fans, and the fans get gypped of legit pleasure.

The reason for all the misplaced hype is pretty simple. Most critics hit pimples and puberty in the '60s. It wasn't really that '60s bands were mystical purists defending the quintessential truth of rock; they just did their stuff with what was available. Sometimes it was good stuff—"Wild Thing," "Happy Together," "Walk Away Renee," "Glad All Over." You know. And while these tunes played on crackly car radios or hacked-out family stereos, future critics were driving too fast, getting felt up, throwing back six packs of beer, quoting Herman Hesse. Great days, "great" songs. So now when bands like Katrina and the Waves debut with plain old

good pop, hundreds of typewriter jockeys have major flashbacks.

With this album, I flashed back to my freshman year in this profession, when (natively) I used to fantasize about writing truly consumer-helpful reviews. I mean, what did people want to know about "Louie Louie"? Did they want to know its historical import and artistic essence, or did they want to know what the dirty parts said?

• SIDE ONE

1) "Red Wine and Whiskey": Written, like most of the tunes here, by lead guitarist Kimberly Rew, and originally released, like all the tunes here, on one of two Waves Canadian indie LPs. This one is a so-so mid-

crowd is greased. Also has some sly commentary, this time on terrorism. But don't worry, it's still just plain old pop. Good driving song too.

5) "Cry For Me": A ballad, and a bore—broken hearts are not news. Katrina does sound like Janis Joplin on this cut, though, which is pretty cool. Most bar bands do this kind of blues rock, but most of their singers aren't as good as Katrina and they can't do Joplin either, which is one reason why Katrina has a record contract and they don't.

• SIDE TWO

1) "Walking on Sunshine": This is insanely happy like the Turtles used to be insanely happy. And, even better, it's Mersey Beat meets Motown. Katrina does to "weeelllllll" what Ronnie Spector did to "oh oh oh ohhhh."

2) "Going Down to Liverpool": The Bangles covered this tune and did it better, but it's a moot point because the song could be done by singing dogs and still sound dynamite on a car radio. If the Beatles had been an '80s group, they would have written this song.

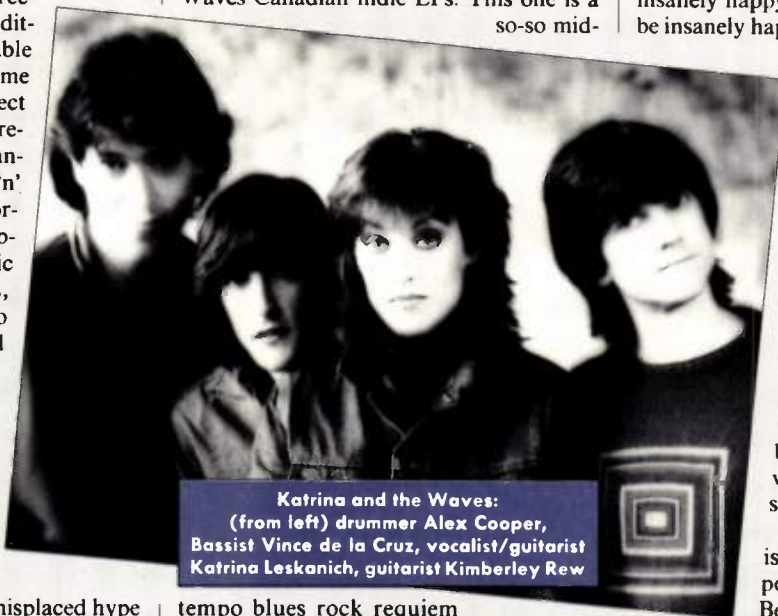
3) "Mexico": More British Tex Mex, more good post-grease music. If the Beatles had been Hispanic, they would have written

this song.

4) "The Sun Won't Shine Without You": Another bar band blues ballad. Only this time, the Waves sound like a bar band with no record contract.

5) "The Game of Love": Katrina does Chuck Berry, and does him good.

Note that last word. It's not "great." It's "good." *There*. If "good" is good enough, the album will sell just fine, and all the wags will stop looking for the mystical levels of sex and beer in the grooves of plain old pop records. And I'm going to have a beer, right now. ○



Katrina and the Waves:
(from left) drummer Alex Cooper,
Bassist Vince de la Cruz, vocalist/guitarist
Katrina Leskanich, guitarist Kimberley Rew

tempo blues rock requiem for money that got wasted on getting wasted. Rew's lead guitar is great, even if this album isn't.

2) "Do You Want Crying": A fast song with killer hooks, Mersey Beat harmonies and some juicy sarcasm ("Do you want crying?/Look, I'm crying!"). The beat is built like a brick house and the Everly Brothers get quoted, to boot.

3) "Que Te Quiero": Roughly translated: "it's that I love you." Dick Clark gives it a 95—Mersey Beat meets Tex-Mex. It also features some sly commentary on U.S. bigotry toward its southern neighbors.

4) "Machine Gun Smith": Very fast—put it on at your parties, but not till the

Chris Stainton, of the unobtrusive keyboard stylings; "Duck" Dunn, of the trusty bass support; Marcy Levy, of the ladylike oo-wahs; Phil Collins, of the big bucks boom. Predictably, they deliver—blue-ribbon white soul on "Same Old Blues," early Doobies-style loping on "See What Love Can Do." They're the world's highest-paid bar band on "Knock on Wood," FM quasi-funksters on "Forever Man."

Sun's second side is stronger than its first. "Tangled in Love" rocks more briskly than Slowhand has in years; "Never Make You Cry" features Stainton's nifty

pseudo-Bach synthstuff (think of *Arc of the Diver's* subtle texturing, by Eric's Blind Faith buddy, Steve Winwood). "Just Like a Prisoner" is almost operatic in its lament; Clapton (on synth-guitar) drives descending chords homeward—the song skirts excess, but it certainly *emotes*.

An insinuating whisper, the title track is the album's odd gem. With the all-star cast reduced to two (Clapton and Collins), the song is pure atmosphere—tolling guitar and trembling keyboard. Eric's singing recalls Dennis Wilson's anguished croak, or J.J. Cale at his most dispirited. A chilling refrain ("dying now") fades into silence,

and we have Clapton as Eternal Sufferer.

For all his instrumental eloquence, Clapton's never been much of a word-smith. On this album, the lyrics are basic in style and well-worn in content. Again, Eric meditates on love's precarious redemption, seeks self-denying union with a "forever woman." His scratchy vocal delivery helps him out, lending a coarsening air of credence to heartfelt clichés.

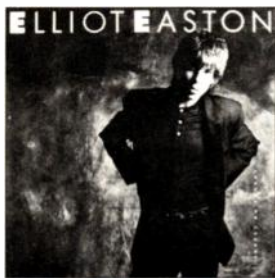
But who buys Clapton for his lyrics? He hasn't been God for quite some time, but his guitar speaks with just enough fire and grace (red hot here, a delicate quiver there) to continue to spark our interest.

CAROLINE GREYSHOCK

CHANGE NO CHANGE Elliot Easton

Elektra

By
Wayne
King



Long-time readers of this publication will recall Ric Ocasek's rant from last year's Cars cover story, in which the nut behind the wheel besmirched the rep of guitar whiz Elliot Easton. To wit: "If he (didn't play what he was told to play), all I'd hear would be blues licks and scales from the Berklee College of Music!"

Wrong, carburetor breath. *Change No Change*, Easton's first solo project, is no world-beater but it ain't the musical equivalent of chopped liver, either. What Easton hath wrought here is the traditional sideman-breaking-out-of-band-straitjacket LP that proliferated in the early '70s when a post-Beatles industry recognized that there was something to be said for supplementing a group's collective work with lots of little money-makers.

Change No Change turns out to be an appropriate title, because like most back-grounders trying to establish a front man identity, Easton goes about it by fusing experimentation (of a clangorous Belew variety) with a return to his roots (Beatlesque pop and '60s punk stompers). Sure, it would be easy enough to cite the George Harrison-isms of "Help Me," the gently weeping viola sound heard under the fade of the album's last track, "Wide Awake," or to note that Diddley daddy is father to the son called "Change." But working with ace songwriter Jules "All Through The Night" Shear, Easton manages to fill the entire LP with catchy tunes that by and large stand on their own. Which means Elliot Easton just might have a future for himself when the Cars are ready for the scrap heap.

THE NIGHT I FELL IN LOVE Luther Vandross

Epic

By
J.D.
Considine



Luther Vandross' delivery offers the per-

fect blend of technical ease and emotional involvement, allowing him to move from a whisper to a wail without strain or hesitation. Unlike Smokey Robinson or Marvin Gaye, Vandross hasn't built his style around a single vocal register, and because he has the ability to follow a melody wherever it may lead, Vandross has never been shy about strutting his stuff.

Unfortunately, that was almost his undoing. By his last album, *Busy Body*, Vandross' weakness for vocal display had gotten the better of him, leaving the record sounding less like an album than a dictionary of vocal mannerisms. But *The Night I Fell in Love* brings Vandross' talents back into focus, not by underplaying what his voice can do, but by providing a compelling context for his excursions.

The album kicks off with the ambitious "'Til My Baby Comes Home," a large-scale love song that seems eager to sum up the singer's best moments by borrowing devices from "Since I Lost My Baby," "She Loves Me Back" and "I'll Let You Slide." But Vandross keeps his delivery enough in check that the similarities slip by only half-noticed. Riding the powerful syncopation of Marcus Miller's rhythm arrangement, he follows Muhammad Ali's advice and floats like a butterfly while stinging the melody home.

It's a bravura performance and a bit of a risk, which perhaps explains why Vandross doesn't take any similar chances on the rest of the LP. No matter. From the hushed pleas of "If Only for One Night" to the sly mock-reticence of "My Sensitivity (Gets in the Way)," Vandross realizes his best moments here by holding back. Sliding gently through the songs, caressing his phrases and finessing his climaxes, he turns in his most convincing performances on record. It's enough to make you fall in love with his voice all over again.

.....

NO JACKET REQUIRED Phil Collins

Atlantic

By
Derk
Richardson



In the course of three solo LPs, Phil

Collins has transformed the cover shot of his face from a stark black-and-white frontal take (*Face Value*) to a realistic full-color profile on a deep blue background (*Hello, I Must Be Going!*) and finally, to the surreal and sweaty, fiery orange floating head that graces *No Jacket Required*. No doubt about it, the monochromatic voice-man of the coolly artful Genesis is now super-hot, what with million-seller

LPs, a top-ten duet ("Easy Lover") with Earth, Wind & Fire's Philip Bailey, and a "Best Male Pop Vocal" Grammy for "Against All Odds."

Under the covers, however, Collins has shifted only slightly. Despite the casualness implied in this LP's title, the drummer-turned-vocalist/keyboardist observes a telling formality in both style and subject. When he isn't reaching back several years to his divorce for emotional fodder—"Who Said I Would," "Long Long Way to Go," "I Don't Wanna Know," "Doesn't Anybody Stay Together Anymore"—Collins either aches for redemptive romance or charts the spaces that inexorably open up between lovers.

Fortunately, Collins and principal players Daryl Stuermer (guitars), Lee Sklar (bass), and The System's synth whiz David Frank fill those spaces with a seductive blend of booming drums (real and programmed), bright keyboards, crisp blasts from EW&F's Phenix Horns, and astute guitar fills that run the sonic spectrum from fuzz-roar to single-note flurry. The balladic "One More Night," the snappy "Sussudio" and "Don't Lose My Number," and the Van Halen "Jump"-styled "I Don't Wanna Know" traverse the attractive common ground between art/synth-rock, r&b and black pop.

Still, this album is colored by a certain emotional hyper-sensitivity. Collins styles himself "an ordinary man," "a prisoner all my life," who at one moment is drawn to a lover and at the next wants to turn away in the ultimately futile belief that "it's up to me and no one else." The bulk of Collins' lyrics are about sitting alone "trying to think of things to say" and fretting that "you're not anywhere that I can find you"—this, at a time when the political and cultural climate demands something more than romanticized loneliness and bleak autonomy.

.....

STEADY NERVES Graham Parker and the Shot

Elektra

By
Karen
Schlossberg



On *Steady Nerves*, Graham Parker has again sharpened the edge that has been missing from his work since 1979's near perfect *Squeezing Out Sparks*.

Much of Parker's fire was doused on the LPs he released in the '80s, after he had split from his long-time backing band, the Rumour. With *The Up Escalator* (uneven),

Another Grey Area (musically sound, badly produced), and *The Real Macaw* (forgettable) behind him, he appears to have found not only direction, but renewed conviction. Co-producing with William Wittman (who worked on Cyndi Lauper's *She's So Unusual*) and bolstered by a powerhouse group called the Shot (featuring ex-Rumour guitarist Brinsley Schwarz), Parker delivers a stripped-down, tight and punchy sound that effectively complements the acuity of his lyrics.

On this LP, Parker widens the scope of his writing, frequently going beyond the personal to address larger issues. The biting "Break Them Down" is a political rip about the destruction of a South American Indian culture by American missionaries. On "Take Everything" Parker attacks greed and compromise ("You don't have to sell your soul/Just kind of let it") with characteristic venom. "Everyone's Hand Is on the Switch" skewers the spectator sport of public executions: "Ooh where's the popcorn, the soft drinks, and the fudge . . . Give that switch a nudge." Only the self-conscious party song, "The Weekend's Too Short," rings thoroughly false—we can do without such sentiments from the man who spat "Saturday Night Is Dead."

So now that he's steadied his nerves, Parker's fitful post-Rumour search for purpose is over. On "Canned Laughter" he sings, "I can do without the rumour." You can finally believe him.

CITIZEN KIHN Greg Kihn EMI

By
Duncan
Strauss

A Greg Kihn album is usually pop-rock's equivalent of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich—dependable, uncomplicated, tasty, a bit gooey, unspectacular. *Citizen Kihn* is no exception to this general rule.

It's also not the stylistic departure one might have expected from a guy who just dissolved his band after a decade. It turns out the break wasn't completely clean, anyway; among the musicians featured here are former Kihn sidekicks Greg Douglass and Steve Wright. The more things change . . .

For the most part on this disk, Kihn and company lock into pulsing, keyboard-coated grooves—essentially, variations of "Jeopardy"'s rhythm track—while the gritty-throated singer palms off clichéd declarative statements as lyrics ("I'm in love again," "The boys won't leave the girls



alone"). Rockers advisory: with lyrics like these, avoid playing *Citizen Kihn* in the earshot of friends prone to observing how "disposable" pop music is.

But Kihn records have never offered incisive lyrics, and have only rarely pushed the emotional buttons necessary to move a listener. And while Kihn's musical focus has shifted from feisty guitar-oriented rock to gliding dance-oriented pop, most Kihn traditions die a little harder—like LP titles that pun on his name.

Certainly, Kihn's most long-standing tradition is extended on *Citizen*: throw together a collection of innocuous, highly listenable numbers, and include two or three superior songs. And the usual portion of winners are served up here. "Privacy," "Free Country" and "Go Back" are all upbeat, solidly crafted tunes with melodies that lure like a beckoning finger—the kind of tunes that you could very well find yourself humming the next time you're in the kitchen whipping up that trusty pb&j special.

BEYOND APPEARANCES Santana Columbia

By Jean-Charles
Costa

The bio for Santana's 15th LP, *Beyond Appearances*, tells us this combo's sound "has weathered the test of time without losing its creative fire." Instantly recognizable for their namesake-leader's incandescent guitar solos arcing through a smoldering force field of Latin percussion, Santana has always felt the fire. It's the creative part that gives one pause.

The Santana "band" grew out of loosely structured instrumental melt-downs embodying a distillation of Carlos' blues, rock 'n' roll, r&b and Mexican root influences. Early songs were basic vamps designed to provide a melodic launching pad for the inevitable firestorm of guitars, drums and percussion. As the years passed, the question of what happened after that last screaming high E note sustained off into oblivion became more critical.

Beyond Appearances' grandiose, sleek and somewhat bilious L.A. production (provided courtesy of Val Garay) only stands Santana's current creative dilemma in higher relief. "Modern" synthesizers dominate the overall texture, alternating between staccato, machine-like effects and ethereal washes of spectral tone color. Santana's guitar, recorded with all its sun-drenched nuance intact, explodes out of none-too-remarkable songs that virtually



scream for pop/mainstream acceptance. But his cascading instrumental work always seems to start in the middle with no discernible pretext, only to wander through a series of elaborate climaxes that end nowhere in particular.

The latest Santana band, featuring the vigorous support of superb players like Alfonso Johnson (bass), David Sancious (keyboards), ex-Genesis drummer Chester Thompson and ex-Tower of Power keyboardist Chester Thompson, does its best to carry Carlos out of the repeating fire-groove syndrome, but the material never matters. Only throwaway "jams" like "Touchdown Raiders" get back to the core of what Santana's music was first about: heat, meaningless beauty and fun.

THE RIGHT TO ROCK Keel A&M

DEFENDERS OF CREATION Warrior MCA

By
Crispin
Sartwell

No problem figuring out why metal is the most durable rock—at its best, it's rock in the raw, with no apologies or shame. And a new generation of bands—Metallica, Armored Saint, Dokken, W.A.S.P.—are blasting some of the most potent sounds metal has yet produced.

For their part, Keel and Warrior are two new acts from L.A. that do what metal bands do best: roar for ravenous revenge, snarl for satanic satisfaction, howl for holy hell. All the requisites are here: ferocious singers; warp-speed guitarists; primitive rhythm sections; tons of hair. The two gangs blow through tunes on these major label debuts like bullets through jello.

Tongue-man Gene Simmons produced Keel's *The Right to Rock*, and his presence is quite audible—in fact, Keel sounds like Kiss at its best. Kiss made last year's most molten metal song, "Heaven's on Fire," and Keel can be just as reprehensible, as they demonstrate beyond refutation on bombs-away cuts like "Speed Demon" and "You're the Victim (I'm the Crime)."

Though beautifully barbaric, Keel lacks a certain distinctiveness. Warrior, however, has an approach all its own. While most HM heroes never get beyond girl-bashing and devil worship, Warrior's adopted *environmentalism* as its pet cause! "Fighting for the Earth" and "Defenders of Creation" suggest that these brutal noize-



makers might actually be interested in saving, say, the whale. Musically, Warrior offers singer Parramore McCarty's excruciatingly feral screech and guitar work (by Joe Floyd and Tommy Asakawa) that's simultaneously primal and sophisticated, bludgeoning and beguiling.

So metalists rejoice—with these two disks, the crunch is vital and vicious as ever.

.....

SAM COOKE LIVE Sam Cooke RCA

By
Ashley
Kahn



It's 1963 in a packed, black Miami nightclub.

'50s' aspirations are still nursed and, in the musical realm, clean, Northern r&b styles still prevail. JFK is still alive—and so is Sam Cooke. The emcee brings the dance combo down behind him: "And now, ladies and gentlemen, the man you've all been waiting for, Mr. Soul! I said, MR. SOUL!"

What follows, resurrected from RCA's files, is a truth-testifying show: Sam Cooke as country preacher, his performance (and the crowd's) rising in gospel fervor. Cooke serves up the hits—"Chain Gang," "Cupid," "Twistin' the Night Away"—teasing the believers ("I better quit now, I gotta quit now!") and then stirring it up again with the closer, "Having A Party."

This disk's biggest surprise is the revelation of what Cooke traded in when he left the gospel road for the soul circuit. Gone is the smooth and effortless melisma of the Soul Stirrer sides—by 1963 you could hear the effort, a road-hardened voice more appropriate to "Bring It on Home to Me" than "He'll Welcome Me Home."

It's not hard to see Sam Cooke's story as a modern-day *Amadeus*. The boy-child is born to a Baptist minister who guides him to the church choir. Gifted with a flawless tenor, he's soon holding down the lead spot with the most popular harmony group in the gospel field. But he breaks away, forsaking his father's sacred path for more worldly pursuits. The hits come; he rises to fame, and its pressures. Finally, a mysterious, violent death at 29 that ends a life and raises a world of questions.

On this LP—recorded a year before his death—Cooke gives off a giddy laugh at the end of each number, a hint of the life-loving power he brought to his music in performance. It's a personal dimension his pop material never caught—and that makes this album so valuable.

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MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE this is a month of followups, comebacks, sequels and prequels even: To begin with, remember about two months or so ago I told you about a rapattack by **UTFO** called "Roxanne, Roxanne" (Select) and how it was the def jam of the hour on the street? Well, now it's not just a hit but a cottage industry, having spawned two responses. The most winning of these is "Roxanne's Revenge" (Popart) by

•On the bright and bouncy side, however, **KURTIS BLOW**'s ode to basketball heroes, called, simply enough, "Basketball" (Polygram) comes highly recommended. This one dribbles over with every street-court kid's fantasy of taking on the likes of Kareem and the Doctor and whupping serious butt. Maybe the most fun record to shake a tail-feather to since Newcleus' "Jam On It."

cut, sporting as it does the funkiest Jeff Beck riffing ever to the tune (and groove) of Sly and Robbie. C'est la vie, and maybe later those folks at Black Rock will get hip.

•On the subject of getting hip, Warner Bros. did just that in releasing **THE TIME**'s "The Bird," their cuckoo number from *Purple Rain*. One really hip single lost in last year's shuffle, by the way, is **THE RE-**

picks up where the throttling "Hard Times" (from the group's debut album) left off, invoking Murphy's Law to steer would-be slicksters away from their inevitable road to ruin: "You sweat for a dollar to get nothing back because at the end of the week you still get taxed/You'd even sell your soul/to make your life correct/but with the rate of inflation you should eat your check/so you try to make a hustle to get ahead/but the only thing you manage is to stay in the red."

•As wicked as those slices of hip-hop are, my favorite tracks of the month are actually right out of the American pop mainstream: **HALL AND OATES**' "Method of Modern Love" (RCA), with its tricky singalong chorus and loping bass syncopation; **SADE**'s "Smooth Operator" (Epic), whose title jazzily says it all; and the temptin' **TEMPTATIONS**' "Treat Her Like A Lady" (Gordy), which proves once again that the Tempts, like the Rolling Stones, got the kind of staying power that can weather whatever kind of wind blows in next from Pop Fashion Central. For my money, this one is as boss, classy and sophisticated as mainstream black pop gets, ranking right up there with Ashford and Simpson's "Solid" in that respect.

•Made for white pop crossover action but equally as soulful nonetheless is **JEFFREY OSBORNE**'s "The Borderlines" (A&M). As steeped in the R&B as this brother is, I think he could sing Ozzy Osbourne's greatest hits and make you feel as if the ghosts of Cooke and Redding had entered the room. Pursuant to this in an oddball kind of way is the fact that everybody's guitar hero **B.B. KING** has a fast-climbing single out in the theme from the John Landis flick *Into The Night*. Heard mixed reports about the movie, but B.B. is as tasty as ever on this one and crooning like it ain't nobody else's business still.

•Another one on the comeback trail is **CARLOS SANTANA**'s "Say It Again" (Columbia)—unfortunately like all too much of Santana's output of the past few years, this one too sounds like a Journey outtake rather than the innovative tripartite fusion of jazz, pop and soul Carlos made his bones with 10 years ago. Alas.

•**DAVID BOWIE**'s collaboration with **PAT METHENY**, "This Isn't America" (EMI), makes the point that here's one artist undaunted by the prospect of venturing into virgin terrain. Haunting as it is on the radio, though, you have to hear it against the tragicomic tableau of *The Falcon* and *the Snowman* to catch the full brunt of its wrath and irony.



Dunk you very much: Kurtis Blow tells the truth on 'Basketball'

14-year-old **ROXANNE SHANTE**, a biting, bitchy and far from sexually-naïve adolescent charmer who turns the UTFO trio's abject adulation into an occasion for vicious putdowns. Nasty, y' all. In defense UTFO has teamed with a singer calling herself **ROXANNE** on "The Real Roxanne" (Select), but this android creation of theirs ain't nowhere near Ms. Shante's league when it comes to jamming up the men.

•Speaking of manmade women, heard the monstrosity Prince wrote and produced for **SHEENA EASTON**, "Sugar Walls" (EMI)? Well, I have and the less of this fawning pleasure object I'm subjected to the better I'll like it. If nothing else this one proves how much Prince's idea of a sexually liberated woman is an EZ lay.

•Far as fun tracks go, I got to say how much I think **MICK JAGGER**'s *She's The Boss* (Columbia) is going to turn out to be one of the hit dance records of 1985, yielding the Glam Glimmer at least three monster singles. "Just Another Night" isn't the one I would've picked for first release—and the exec who did was just playing it safe with this dour Rolling Stones rehash of Dire Straits. There's so much material on this album, not the least of which is the title

BEL's "You Can Make It" (Celluloid), produced by Herbie Hancock vocalist Bernard Fowler. I found it on a compilation of Celluloid singles called *Spin Cycle*. This one's truly a dancefloor synthesis of Sly Stone and hip-hop that works in a positive stay-in-school message without being preachy about it.

•The new single from **RUN-D.M.C.**'s *King of Rock* LP (Profile) is "You're Blind," a Funkadelicky pastiche that

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