

RECORD

JULY 1985
VOL.4 NO.9
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R.E.M.

ERIC CLAPTON

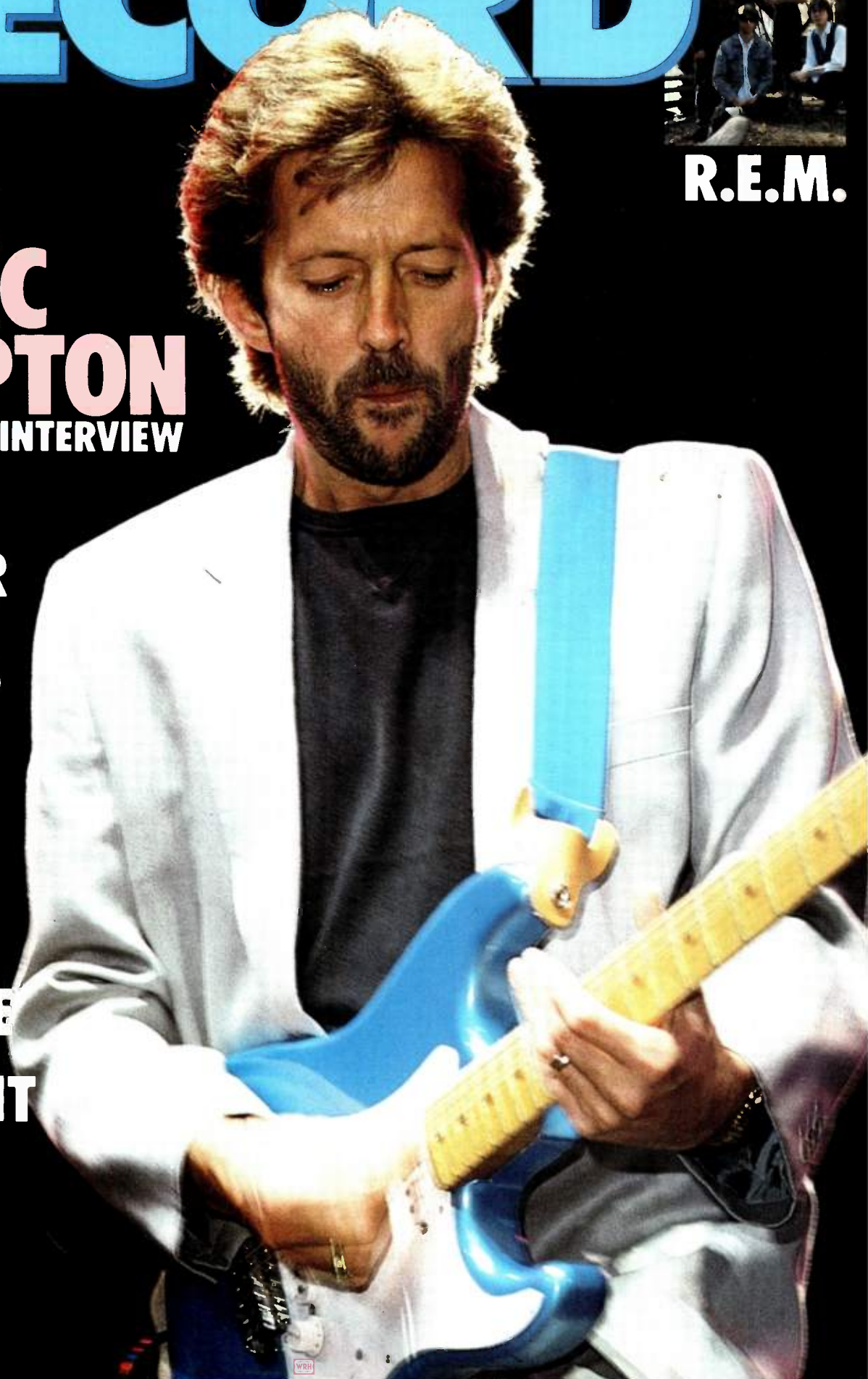
THE RECORD INTERVIEW

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MIDNIGHT
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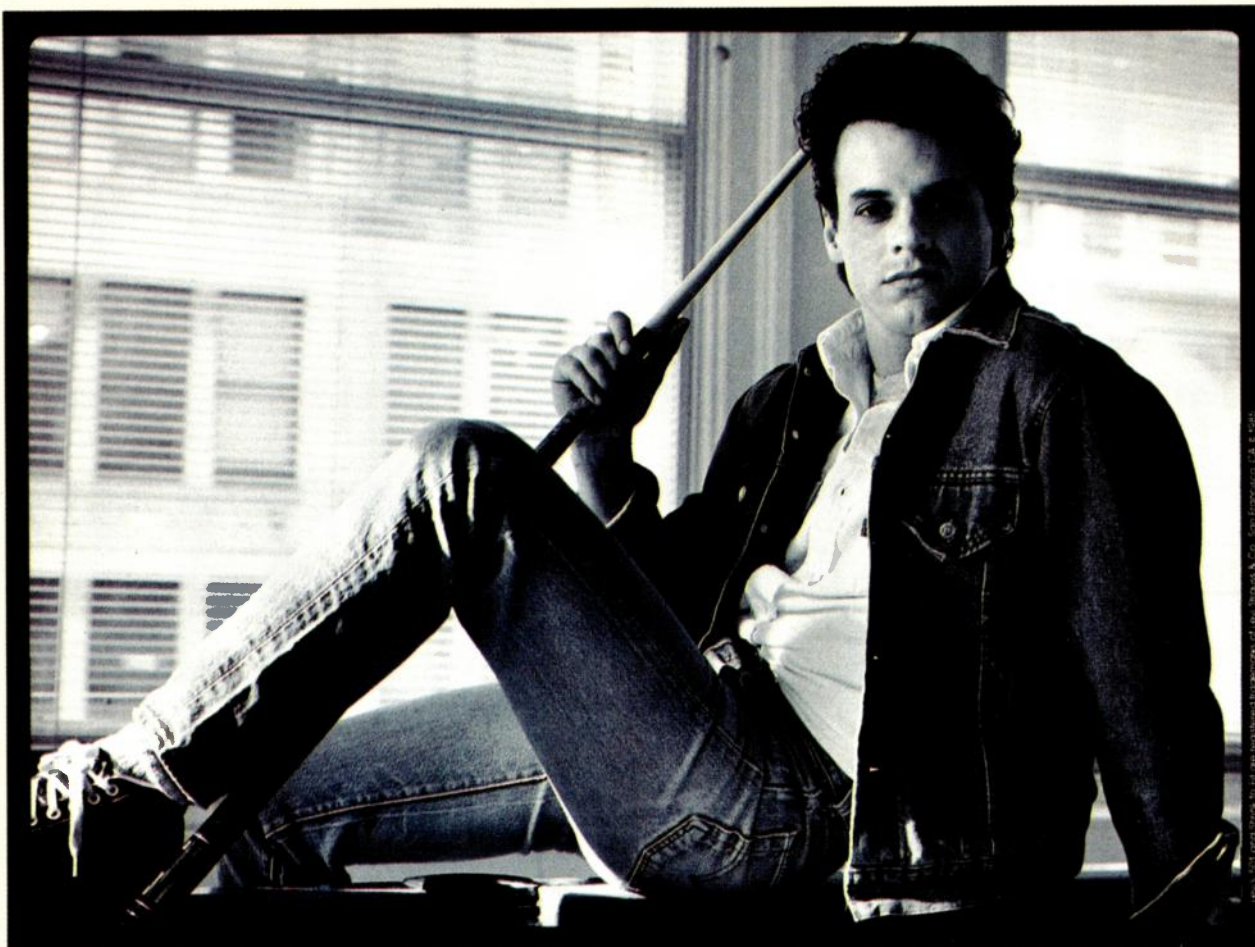
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RECORD

JULY 1985

VOL. 4 NO. 9



EBET ROBERTS

ROCK ON 6
Julian Lennon gets off to a fast start on his first U.S. tour; Ultravox's Midge Ure cutting solo LP; Records in Progress: Lita Ford, Tom Waits, Robert Palmer; Roxanne, Roxanne and what it is.

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EUGENE PINKOWSKI

WHO'S LAST

AS A ONCE AND FUTURE true believer, I read Wayne King's eulogy to the Who in the form of a record review ("The Song Is Over," May RECORD) with mixed emotions. I am among the generation that came after the conception of "My Generation," being born exactly 25 days before the official release of that now-classic assemblage of power chords and emotions. Yes, I was introduced to the Who through the "AOR rock machine" (thanks to MTV's J.J. Jackson, who stopped at a Los Angeles AOR station on his way to the big time) and, yes, Baba O'Reilly first caught my attention sandwiched between the likes of Journey and Styx. But it was more than desperation for good music that led me to the Who: it was an appreciation for the brilliant musicianship and the powerful belief in their music that struck me as I discovered their albums one by one, years after they had first been heralded by the rock world; and it is these same characteristics that attract me today to U2 and X as they are sandwiched between the likes of Duran Duran and Spandau Ballet on the "progressive" radio stations. I am still head over heels about the Who, but I also realize the song is over. Contrary to what King seems to think, though, it is possible for my generation to feel both an appreciation for what they have done as well as an understanding that they can do no more. The Who will be a part of rock's future because that fu-

ture rests in those bands whose integrity was first reflected by the Who. King is right: the Who is dead, but the true spirit of rock is not, and it was the Who that first nurtured the spirit in its toddler years and will be a part of it forever.

LIANE M. RANDOLPH
Los Angeles

Okay, so maybe the amazing journey begun over 20 years ago is over, but Wayne King didn't have to criticize every move the Who made. The spirit of the Who goes on forever!

JILL GIROUX
Warwick, RI

D² FANS TALK BACK

Ed. note: RECORD's coverage of Duran Duran in our May issue elicited more reader mail than any other feature in the magazine's history. Much of the response to Dan Hedges' update on the current Duran activities ("Wild Boys Cool Out") was positive, but as for Anthony DeCurtis' appraisal of Duran Duran's video legacy ("Such Gorgeous Blankness")... whoaaaa, doctor! Not a single complimentary response, and today Mr. DeCurtis is contemplating changing his identity and maybe even his sex in order to avoid the wrath of hard-charging Durannies. Herewith a mailbag sampling of reader reaction.

DAN HEDGES CLAIMS "John Taylor is no slouch on the bass." No kidding! Duran

Duran have been recording great music since 1981. Critics should listen to their music instead of the screams of adolescent girls. As a straight, 25-year-old male, I assure you I fell for Duran Duran's music, not their "blow-dried, air-brushed English schoolboy faces." I resent the constant attempts at discrediting this group based solely on their image. This image has done nothing more for D² than what the blue jean-bandana-blue collar image has done for Springsteen.

GLENN GAUDREAU
Methuen, MA

TO MR. DECURTIS' CREDIT, I'll have to admit that *Sing Blue Silver* was in a way disappointing, with unnecessary footage, too much emphasis on the backstage and not enough on the band members themselves. No *Last Waltz* here! But it's a documentary, not a music video. It's meant to show fans and others that there is a reality to Duran Duran, not just five pouting faces.

CATHY SIZEMORE
Hamilton, OH

I HAPPEN TO BE ABOUT twice the age of the "video-crazed" fans Anthony DeCurtis refers to in his article, older even than Simon LeBon; and I'm still a little resistant to the recent influx of Compact Discs, video music, etc. However, I always enjoy watching Simon, John or Roger on stage, in Antigua, in Sri Lanka or wherever. If their music is "faceless," as DeCurtis says, then why can't I fill in the "face" of my choice. I

can do the same with films, plays or books that call on my imagination to draw "faces." Gorgeous fits Duran. But blankness? Never! They have taken me places I've never been, both musically and visually. That's a full order for a rock 'n' roll band to have filled.

LESLIE LYLE
Santa Ana, CA

ANTHONY DECURTIS sounds like he dislikes Duran Duran and watched *Sing Blue Silver* chained to his chair, aching for release. Duran Duran probably want nothing more than to be seen as people, not as images. Perhaps Mr. DeCurtis could not understand that this was the band's prime objective on their video—to let their fans see them as normal, functioning human beings as opposed to musical automatons.

NIKKI PETRIE
London, Ontario, Canada

I FOUND ANTHONY DeCurtis' review of *Sing Blue Silver* outrageous to say the least. Duran Duran may have projected "playboy" images on video, but it's been quite a long time since I've seen a video with them looking like the nice young gentlemen your parents would welcome into their home. Don't get me wrong: I'm not saying Duran Duran are a bunch of disgusting slimes, but why base your opinion on what they look like rather than what their music sounds like? Mr. DeCurtis has insulted the intelligence of Duran fans everywhere.

DANA THOMAS
Peachtree City, GA

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I TOTALLY RESENT VARIOUS REMARKS made by Anthony DeCurtis in his article/review on Duran Duran in the April RECORD. I happen to be a teenage fan (and a girl, at that) who *does* know not only the names of the band members, but also the instruments they play. Even though D² may be "cute to death" and "have three guys in the band with the same last name," I would like to suggest to Mr. DeCurtis that he may find it easier to distinguish the guys from one another if he would observe their natural talents instead of their looks and names.

MICHELLE MCCOY
Fairview, TN

ENRAGED DOES NOT COME CLOSE to describing my feelings. Anthony DeCurtis thinks *Sing Blue Silver* shows just how uninteresting and normal Duran Duran really are. In fact, I found this video touching and funny; and it showed the band as real human beings, with real emotions. None of us are perfect, Mr. DeCurtis, not even you.

NANCY COLBERT
Baltimore, MD

MARK YOU THIS

I MUST TAKE ISSUE WITH MARK Mehler's statement in RECORD's May issue that Teena Marie is "the first white artist to make a name at Motown" ("Ike and Teena?"). Admittedly, the formulation "to make a name" is rather vague, but even so it must be noted that Motown has had a number of white acts over the years who've achieved some success, some in fact even going back to the label's "roots" days. One of the first, the Valadiers, scraped the charts in December 1961 with "Greetings This Is Uncle Sam." In the late '60s you had artists like Rare Earth (with three million sellers) and R. Dean Taylor ("Indiana Wants Me") way up in the pop charts. This is in addition to such British groups (whose music was distributed in the U.S. on Motown's Rare Earth label) as the Pretty Things and Love Sculpture with Dave Edmunds. Of course, in the mid-'60s such white acts as Chris Clark and Tony Martin appeared on Motown. And in the 1970s there was the C&W-oriented Melody/Hitsville label with such artists as Howard Crocket and Dorsey Burnette, in addition to such pop acts on the Mowest label as Frankie Valli, Lesley Gore and Bobby Darin.

Not all these artists "made their names" at Motown, but the point here is to show that there were other white acts who preceded Teena Marie at Motown who had some success—in some cases their *only* success—with Motown's labels.

DAN NOOGER
Flushing, NY



If you'd like to know the secret of burning wood into charcoal, drop Mr. Bateman a line at our distillery.

25 YEARS AGO, Jack Bateman learned a skill only a handful of others know.



As an apprentice ricker, Jack was taught the knack of burning hard maple wood into charcoal. We need this charcoal because nothing does a better job of smoothing out our whiskey. Of course, Mr. Bateman has changed a bit since his early days in the rickyard. But thanks to 25 years of his hard maple charcoal, Jack Daniel's Whiskey has stayed exactly the same.



CHARCOAL MELLOWED DROP BY DROP

RECORDS IN PROGRESS



CHRIS WALTER RETNA

A cover of B.B. King's "The Thrill Is Gone" highlights Lita Ford's third solo LP, due for release in late Summer or early Fall. Ex-Runaway Ford takes great pains to note the thrill is very much alive, and the upcoming album should help keep it that way. "I've done things here I've never done before," she says, while rehearsing with her three-piece band at Cherokee Studios in Los Angeles. "On the B.B. King cover, for example, I've raised the vocal key ridiculously high. I'll be playing it in E-minor. It gives the song a very different heavy blues

flavor. On at least two original cuts, 'Bride Wore Black' and 'Screams of Americans,' I play a lot of acoustic guitar, which I haven't done on any of my other albums."

The 26-year-old singer-guitarist-songwriter, a British native who lived in this country for 15 years before returning to her homeland six months ago, also has a movie soundtrack in the works. The film, a "futuristic battle of the sexes" titled *Thunder Women* ("I asked them to please change the title," says Lita), will feature Ford performing one song live. "It's a scene where someone is watching TV, and I'm on it doing the song. I think I can act pretty good. That's something I'd like to do a lot more."

On the heels of the Power Station project, Robert Palmer is about done with his next solo album. Sessions are underway at Compass Point Studios in the Bahamas, with Chic's

Bernard Edwards producing. Palmer's band includes Tony Thompson on drums, Eddie Martinez on guitar, Wally Badarou on keyboards, with guest performances by—guess who?—John and Andy Taylor of D². Tom Waits is also cutting a new album, the followup to his acclaimed '83 release, *Swordfish Trombone*, for release this summer. A tour is supposed to follow. In the meantime, those needing a Waits fix ought to check out the powerful documentary *Streetwise*, the music for which the Nighthawk wrote and performs... due in August or September is the Waterboys' second LP, currently in progress in London with Mick Glossop (who's worked with Van Morrison, among others) and Waterboy Mike Scott sharing production chores... the Everly Brothers are heading back to the studio, too, once again with producer Dave Edmunds in tow. In addition to their own original tunes, the Everlys have been gifted with outside material from numerous artists, including Journey's Steve Perry. Look for the Bros on tour beginning July 19 in Dallas.

—Mark Mehler



DAVE HOGAN LGI

URE CUTTING SOLO LP

Ultravox's Midge Ure is putting the wraps on his first solo album at his 24-track home studio in London. As yet untitled, the album will feature a lyric side and an all-instrumental side, and should be out in August.

"I've always wanted to do instrumentals," explains the vocalist/guitarist/key-boardist. "I think it's sort of a backlash on my part. People, especially in Europe, know Ultravox mainly from my voice. I'd like to get away from that as much as possible."

Ure also says Phil Collins has expressed interest in playing drums on some of the album's tracks. "So far," Ure explains, "I've done all my own (instrumentals), plus machine drums and bass. I don't want everything to be technology. A few of the songs need a little more swing, a little more feel. Phil doesn't waste time. On the Band-Aid single ("Do They Know It's Christmas/Feed The World"), I saw just how efficient he can be."

—Mark Mehler



LYNN GOLDSMITH LGI

ON STAGE: FULL CIRCLE



PAUL NATAKIN/PHOTOCERVE

JULIAN LENNON

Palmer Auditorium
Austin, Texas
March 25, 1985

The fanatic response to Julian Lennon's sold-out, 75-minute concert—the third of his maiden tour—proved that beyond the freeze-frame of his videos, this 22-year-old has a charismatic, mop top knock. Then again, so did Doug Feiger and Badfinger. So while Julian may reap the benefits of a halo effect bestowed on him by his dad's fans, that isn't what got him through the night. A genuine, self-effacing stage manner, a punchy six-piece band and some impressive performances did the trick.

He did, however, set a disquieting tone for the evening by opening with a forceful version of "Well I Don't Know," an unresolved rumination on a certain celebrated father-son relationship. From there, it was on to the rest of *Valotte*, complete and mostly faithful to the detailed studio sheen of producer Phil Ramone (one exception: "Too Late For Goodbyes," with a rock beat supplanting the record's reggae lilt, and with Julian's familiar falsetto shelved for the moment).

Surprisingly, Lennon chose to play piano on only two tunes, spending the rest of the time roaming the stage, illuminating lyrics with motions that seemed natural if a bit obvious. He also spent an undue amount of time apologizing for playing "another slow one," acknowledging the introspective nature of his material. A set-closing "Stand By Me," with an arrangement plucked straight from his father's *Rock and Roll* album, and an encore medley of "Day Tripper/Slippin' and Slidin'" not only picked up the pace, but brought the whole evening, and maybe a couple of lifetimes, full circle. Dr. Winston O'Boogie would have been proud. You should have been there.

—Jody Denberg

JAMES HAMILTON



NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Featured players (clockwise from left): UTFO's Kangol Kid, Doctor Ice (front), Mixmaster Ice (rear) and the Educated Rapper; impostor Shanté, the 'real' Roxanne with DJ Howie T.



KATHERINE BOURBEAU

TOO MUCH ROXANNE

*Yo, EMD.
Yeah, what's up man?
There goes that girl they
call Roxanne.
She's all stuck up.
Why do you say that?
Cause she wouldn't give a
guy like me no rap!*

So begins the Roxanne Saga, an unprecedented piece of Hip Hop history.

In November '84, rappers extraordinaire UTFO released a two-song 12-inch that included a hard-beat rap called "Roxanne, Roxanne." Incredibly, within a week of its release, "Roxanne" had become the hottest record on New York's highly discriminating street-scene. With its hilarious story of three homeboys—UTFO's Kangol Kid, Doctor Ice and the Educated Rapper—who come on to and get turned back by the super-fine Roxanne, this semi-autobiographical, self-effacing rap was a breath of fresh air in a medium dominated by

unchallenged braggarts and prophets. Massive phone requests forced UTFO's tale of woe into heavy rotation on WBAI and WRKS-FM, two local Urban Contemporary radio stations, and barely a month after the original's release, Roxanne stepped out to tell her side of the story.

"Roxanne's Revenge" was a crudely recorded, wildly vicious rebuttal by a dazzling 15-year-old free-style rapper from Queens, New York, named Lolita Gooden, aka Roxanne Shanté. Shanté's foul-mouthed retort was conceived as a one-shot joke, but with only moderate airplay on WBAI it became the most requested song on both 'BAI and 'RKS. To meet consumer demand, Shanté struck a deal with Philadelphia's Pop Art label, re-recorded a mildly censored version of "Revenge," and the Roxanne Saga became big business.

Beat to the punch by impostor Shanté, UTFO quickly completed a response rap of their own and recruited the "real" Roxanne—the scintillating femme who inspired the

original—to rap it. Hence the "authorized" Roxanne reply, "The Real Roxanne," released a month after Shanté's and sporting this saga's most enduring rhyme:

*What me, the Rox
Give up the box
So you can brag about it
For the next six blocks?*

Soon all three records were selling briskly—current figures have UTFO in the 400,000 range, and both Roxannes around 200,000—propelling this small-scale love war into a full-blown Hip Hop soap opera. For as the word on "Roxanne" spread to rap markets across the country, independent record labels, looking to cash in on the public's fad-ish appetite, set unknown rappers to the task of writing spin-off raps of their own. Soon we'd heard from "Roxanne's Doctor," "The Parents of Roxanne" and Roxanne's boyfriend Ricar-

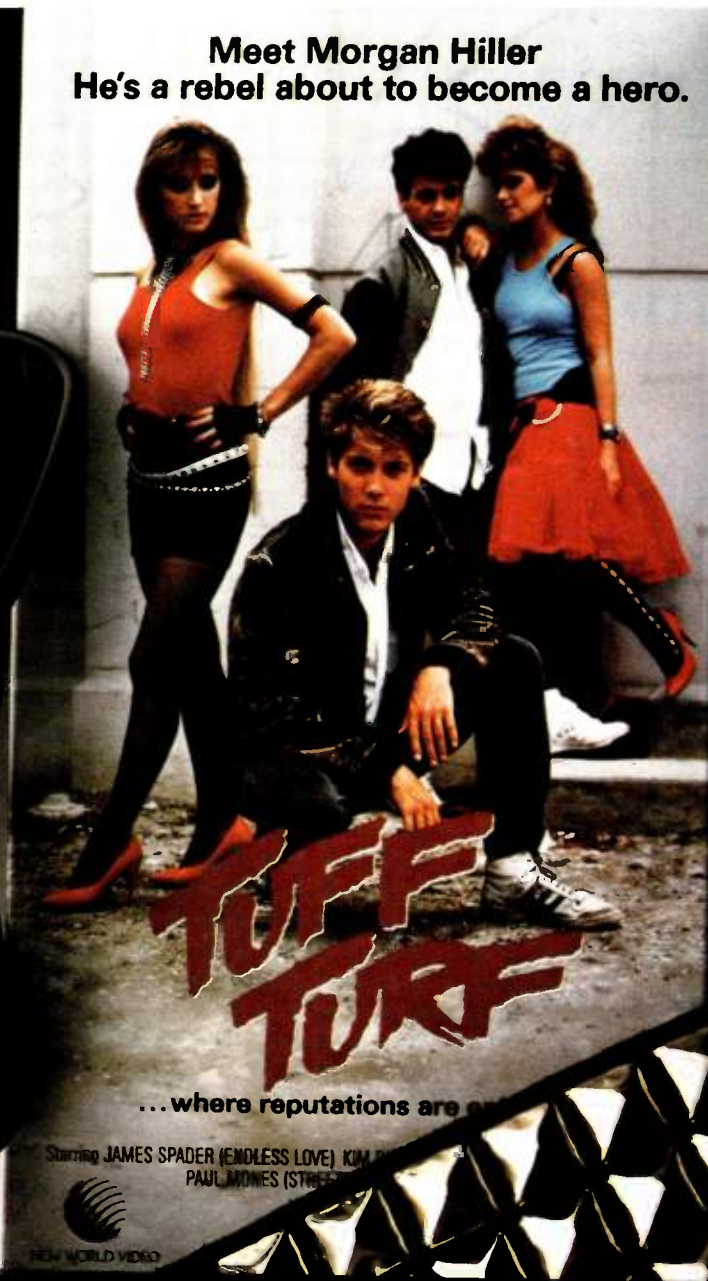
do. One blasphemous rapper insisted Roxanne was a man! At presstime, the total numbered 15, although it would be difficult to find most of these modestly distributed indies at local record stores.

But for all the fun and excitement this mini-series has generated among rap enthusiasts, the creative limitations of such novelty have begun to distress rap artists whose vision extends beyond Roxanne's world, and whose commitment to the medium relies on the privilege of individuality. Inspiring in this reporter the following plea (with a nod to Sparky D):

*Roxanne One and Roxanne Two
And all you fly-by-night
Try you might
Rappin' crews
You've tried your luck
And you've made your buck
But in Roxanne's name
Enough's enough!*

—John McAlley

Meet Morgan Hiller
He's a rebel about to become a hero.



GET TUFF

It's tough enough being Morgan Hiller, the new kid in school. But it's a horrendous nightmare when the girl you want happens to "belong" to Nick, the ruthless leader of the Tuffs. The most feared gang in school. And now Morgan's about to find out how they got their reputation.

A romantic, action movie starring James Spader ("Endless Love"), Kim Richards ("Assault on Precinct 13") and Paul Mones ("Streets of Fire," "Warriors"). With music by Marianne Faithfull, Jim Carroll, Jack Mack and the Heart Attack. "Tuff Turf." It hurts to be in love. **Now on Videocassette.**





*R.E.M. gets serious:
(from left) Buck, Mills, Berry, Stipe (with tonsure)*

THE PRICE OF VICTORY

Confident but confused, R.E.M. comes all the way home

Striking his characteristic foot-twitching posture of agitated patience, R.E.M. guitarist Peter Buck takes his place in line at an Athens, Georgia utility office. Amid the townies and comforting environmental grays of the waiting area, the lanky Buck sports a tails-flying red and black striped shirt, a black vest and black skin-tight jeans. It's early afternoon, half the work of this sun-scorched southern town's already done, but Buck, who'd been up till six doing interviews, watching *Dawn of the Dead* and reading Elmore Leonard, beams the engaging optimism of the just-risen.

An eon later the guitarist exchanges pleasantries with the ancient Southern matron behind the counter, who completes his forms with the exaggerated care and neatness of someone taking an exam in penmanship. Then the question comes: "May ah have the name and add-dress of yore landlor?" Self-consciousness mingles with pride as Buck replies, "Um, there is no landlord . . . I *bought* the house." Yes, folks, Peter Buck—club-crawler, voice of renegade American rock, guitar hero of the underground—is now also a home-owner. Has R.E.M. arrived?

Sorta. With two LPs that sell consistently—both *Murmur* and *Reckoning* have cracked

300,000 and are still moving—and an EP (*Chronic Town*) that's by no means dead, R.E.M. has seen the last of the grinding, open-ended, van-propelled tours to everywhere that built their fanatical following and blazed an alternative trail for young combos with the urge to play and something to say. The band's progression has been so steadily gradual since the 1981 independent release of the now collectible "Radio Free Europe"/"Sitting Still" single that championing R.E.M. is almost reflexive, even though the uninitiated has for some time been a diminishing crew. But the success of devotees' ardent efforts to realize their cause and put the band over may ironically be the very factor that ends R.E.M.'s honeymoon with fans and critics alike. Even given the modest level of success the group now enjoys—don't forget, in this multi-platinum age, R.E.M. has yet to score its first *gold* record—strange things sometimes happen when cults become crowds, clubs concert halls and underdogs victors. The band that once could do no wrong can suddenly be seen as doing nothing right. Unrealistic, highly personal standards are set, and if they're not met (can they ever be met?): the backlash. I ask again, Has R.E.M. arrived?

By Anthony DeCurtis

Bassist Mike Mills and drummer Bill Berry consider what's changed for the band over the years as they throw back brew and munch on fruit and cheese on the R.E.M. tour bus. "A lot of people bitched because we charged \$15 for a New Year's Eve show," Mills recalls, with a laughing seriousness, "with three bands and a whole lot of fun stuff, balloons and big lights that said 1985 and stuff . . ."

"To get it all together we had to rent the Atlanta Civic Center for two nights," adds Berry. "I figured out what we got for that, R.E.M. got *one dollar* of that fifteen."

Mills pitches in again: "And then there were people bitching, 'Oh, man, four years

Reckoning's lyrical expansiveness, is too dense and foreboding to welcome new listeners very easily. Buck acknowledges that certain aspects of *Fables* might not only throw newcomers to the band, but might upset widely held preconceptions among long-standing supporters about what an R.E.M. record should be like. "Listening to the record in retrospect," he allows, "it seems that something like, oh, 'Can't Get There From Here,' the first song, or 'Gravities Pull' are pretty much stylistically unlike anything else we've ever done. It's not that shocking as far as what happens in rock 'n' roll, but there's a horn section on one track and a really strange string sec-

were busy doing their own creative stuff," Buck explains, "and we all felt that it would be good to have a change, because they didn't want to get associated with us permanently any more than we wanted to be associated with them permanently . . . We had a list of producers who were interested in us, and Joe Boyd was one of them. We do things by intuition; we didn't think whether he had a track record or whatever—I liked his records, I liked him. We just decided on the spur of the moment, 'Okay, let's do it with him. Let's fly to England tomorrow and do the record.' It was that simple. We met him on Wednesday, and we decided on Thursday



PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

ago you coulda seen them for \$2 at Ty-rone's.' Well, *goddamn*, don't you get a *raise* when you work somewhere for five years? When you graduate from school, you're gonna go out and expect a raise when you've been somewhere for two years—don't bitch when we get one!"

Unless a single breaks out and carries the band to a truly mass audience, *Fables of the Reconstruction* will not be the LP that brings R.E.M. another big raise and broadens their following much beyond its current size. The faithful will willingly grant the album the time it takes for its virtues to unfold, but *Fables*, which lacks *Murmur's* instant, disarming uplift and

tion on another. There's a little bit of a soul feeling on 'Can't Get There From Here.' I think we just had a lot of divergent ideas about what we wanted to do with the album when it was being written, and we decided to encompass them all instead of one or two."

One way *Fables* diverges from its predecessors is that R.E.M. didn't use long-time pals Mitch Easter and Don Dixon for production. Instead the band journeyed to England to work at Livingston Studios with Joe Boyd, who's produced Fairport Convention and Richard Thompson. "Both Mitch Easter (who fronts the North Carolina combo, Let's Active) and Don Dixon

to fly to England and we left Friday."

Literally winging it to work with Boyd—"We didn't really want a producer who would give us the 'Steve Lillywhite sound' or the AOR sound," Buck insists—R.E.M. countered speculation that in their third LP outing they'd consciously shoot for a disk that, without compromising their characteristic style, would make them more radio-friendly. As it turns out, the swinging "Can't Get There From Here" and urgent "Driver Eight" both are potentially stronger singles than anything R.E.M.'s previously come up with. But if you've been listening to the super-smooth high ends and bam-boom bottoms of radio

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hits these days, it won't take you more than a few seconds to realize that the straightforward, unspectacular Joe Boyd ain't Phil Collins. And that's just fine with Buck.

"There's a style of production that's predominant on AOR radio," the guitarist states. "It's mostly digital, real slick sounding things, real high-tech drums, real crisp and real sterile, and our records don't sound like that. I don't like digital recording, I think it's completely dead sounding. Well, no, it's *live*, but it's lively just like an electric mannequin is lively. I think the human ear is designed to hear—at least we were brought up to hear—distortion in things. This natural built-in distortion from the word go has always been in electronic instruments and in electronic reproduction. And without it—which is what digital does, it cuts down the distortion in the transfer from the tape to, um, the *other* tape or whatever, I don't know, screw it, it's all technical stuff—but it takes away this distortion that people our age are used to hearing. All the rock 'n' roll records I had when I was a kid have this built-in distortion, every record ever made did until five or six years ago.

"I've kind of come to terms with the fact that we're never going to be a singles band," he continues. "We might make good singles, but they're parts of albums. When you hear 'So. Central Rain,' it's a good song but it *really* makes sense in the context of the album. Out of that context, although it's a good song, it doesn't make as much sense as something like that Def Leppard song, 'Foolin'.' Now *that* makes sense on any radio station, any time you hear it, on video, TV and in the context of the album. Our stuff, you almost have to understand it before you hear it in between Joan Jett and Foreigner.

"I listen to the radio the way most people listen to it, for a snappy chorus or whatever. Again, that Def Leppard song, 'Foolin',' I don't know any of the words except 'Fuh-fuh-fuh-foolin',' you know? But that's the *hook*, it's so overpowering with the guitars and all that it carries you in. And our stuff just doesn't have that. The hooks are more subtle and emotional and colored than something that hits with a sledge-hammer. Another hook that's real heavy is 'We Got the Beat,' you know (sings) 'Hey, hey, hey,' where the girls sing that? You hear that and your head snaps around, it's in your head for the rest of the week. I don't think our stuff is really like that. I mean, it might be in your head, but it's the kind of thing where you go, 'What was that I heard?'"

Spinning off improvised bird calls and leafing through art books, singer Michael Stipe stretches out on the lawn outside Waveform Media Rehearsal Studios in Atlanta, where R.E.M. is gearing up for a string of pre-album release college dates. An album called *Fables of the Reconstruction* and song titles like "The Auctioneer," "Wendell Gee," "Driver Eight" and "Old

Man Kinsey" led to speculation about thematic threads running through the new LP. "We suddenly had all these songs that were somewhat narrative," Stipe states. "Although I hesitate to use that term because all along we've said that our songs are not stories—not a beginning and an end with a middle and some kind of crisis point that has to be resolved. Most of these, I would say, would be a slice somewhere out of the middle; there's not really a beginning or an end. If you had to call it a narrative, it's probably not a complete one. That is real new for me, though, and it's real new for us. I found myself surrounded a whole lot when we were writing these songs by fables and nursery rhymes and *Uncle Remus* and old tales. The idea of stories being passed down and becoming a tradition, and having those stories become as much a part of a way of living or a particular area that you live in as the religion or the trees or the weather, I like the connection between that and the South."

And the South is undeniably a brooding, haunting presence on *Fables*—"There's more of a feeling of place on this record," says Buck, "a sense of home and a sense that we're not there"—but it's not the stereotypical South that governs the imagination of people who've never lived there. "I know we have a definite feeling of being Southern," Buck asserts. "I don't know if it shows up in the music much, but then again I don't know how it wouldn't. I read this article about the Del Fuegos—I really like them. It was this guy in the *Village Voice*, and he goes, Oh, you know, the Del Fuegos, they've got the soul of a real Southern band, unlike R.E.M., who could be from Chicago. And the reason he said that is because the Del Fuegos sing about getting their paycheck, driving around in their car and getting drunk. And I thought, well, gosh, *right*, that's all Southerners do. Being from the South is not Dukes of Hazzard county. Being from the South encompasses a lot of things that are slower and more reflective, that's the way I think of the South. I don't think of it as some red-neck heaven. It's more of a strange, slow, surrealistic place, and that comes through in a lot of our records."

Like, for example, in the moody night-train tune, "Driver Eight," where, in one of the album's recurrent blurrings of distance and desire, Stipe nervously assures that, "We can reach our destination, but it's still a ways away." "In 'Driver Eight' there is this real kind of searching," the singer states. "It's not like an ignorant searching, people kind of know what they're looking for. But it's something that's almost unobtainable, it's almost an idea, it's almost this fantasy or this dream, and you're fooling yourself into believing that it is obtainable, when in fact it really isn't. Or, if it was at one time, it's gone away farther than that."

The period of Reconstruction after the Civil War was a time of agonizing disloca-

tion in the South. The stir of promise only salted the sting of loss. Withdrawal overcame whatever urge for reconciliation existed in the region, and the South's eerie separateness was birthed as surely in defeat as it would have been in victory. Now from their four-year pilgrimage through "Little America" and the big world beyond, R.E.M. has returned to this real and mythical home for a time of recollection and soul searching as unsettlingly ambivalent as the tales they uncover on their new LP.

Speaking of *Reconstruction*, Berry states that "The first thing I thought of was literally the definition of the word, and that was what we did when we went in to write the songs and do the record. We pretty much just stripped down and started over, because we did write all those songs at one time." However, R.E.M.'s reconstruction, rebuilding and psychic retreat come as the price of victory, not defeat. After years of being the coming thing, their pre-eminence on the contemporary music scene is now virtually unquestioned. Their take-it-to-the-people, tour-till-you-drop approach to the independent music market is now an established path of progress for young bands. Almost all the kindred bands they've battled for have been signed to major labels. Their example has taught that it's at least possible to make it by doing nothing but what you want. Their outspoken demands in *Record* and elsewhere for a fair hearing for American bands has contributed in part to the surge in popularity American music is now enjoying worldwide. They helped create and shape the very American underground they're in the process of rising above.

So has R.E.M. arrived? Listen to "Driver Eight" and the other songs on *Fables*, like the clashing background vocals on the opening track that argue "I've been there, I know the way" against Stipe's insistence that "You can't get there from here." Or Stipe's yearning claim in "Good Advices" that "Home is a long way away . . . I'd like it here if I could leave and see you from a long way away." "You learn a lot as you go along, but then you also learn there are a lot of things you just don't know," reflects Berry. "I'll tell you, one thing I think we've come around to is that our intuition is usually right." He illustrates his point with an anecdote from four years ago. "You know, Miles Copeland came into our hotel room at the Iriquois and said we didn't have the image," Berry says. "We should be going on all these monstrous tours opening for people all over the world. We should do this, we should do that, we should have a big-name producer, we should make high-tech videos. And we've proven pretty much that we were right in the past, and now we're confident in our assertions. But we're still confused."

Confident and confused, a triumphant R.E.M. has arrived back home, arrived in the ambiguous country to which their good efforts have led. ○

THE HEAT

of the rhythm



By Brian Chin

Clearly, everything has a proper place and time for El DeBarge, chief writer, producer and spokesman of DeBarge, the family group that's emerged as probably the very brightest light in Motown's roster for the '80s. How else could he have the confidence to cite philosophy, rather than the always-pressing topics of promotion and tour support, in discussing DeBarge's fourth album, *Rhythm of the Night*? His perspective on the new record: "There comes a time when you have to learn; there

DeBarge's new high-gloss burn

comes a time when you have to teach and show what you've learned. I had to learn something else this time."

Just up from bed in a New York hotel, dressed in his robe prior to a *Friday Night Videos* interview taping, El is patiently explaining—as he will several more times that day—why he sought out Jay Graydon personally to do the major portion of the production on *Rhythm of the Night*. Actually, the work had been farmed out to several producers: Graydon did four cuts; Richard Perry, fresh from five smashes in a row with the Pointer Sisters, did the title cut, targeted clearly at the fans of Lionel Richie's "All Night Long" and Deniece Williams' "Let's Hear It For The Boy." There's a holdover from last year's *D.C. Cab* soundtrack produced by Giorgio Moroder, and finally, El himself produced three. But El had produced the previous two DeBarge albums in their entirety, with assistance credited to other family members. The new album is also mostly uptempo, unlike its ballad-driven predecessors.

These last two facts alone might make it look as if El surrendered a measure of creative control to ensure the fortunes of DeBarge in the wake of the family's 1984 pop breakthrough, *In A Special Way*. But just because El displays no apparent ego about being a studio wunderkind is no reason to assume it was Motown that pushed him into bed with three big-name producers. Historically, the label has been reluctant to assign production to anyone other than in-house producers (only Diana Ross, for instance, got the chance to make records with Richard Perry, Chic and the post-Motown Ashford & Simpson)—and it's only been since Rick James that new artists on the label have been allowed to produce themselves without the contractual struggles that Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye went through to gain that privilege.

"We've been through a lot this year and I wanted to express that in us," says El. Sitting up on a straight back chair and weighing some further philosophy briefly, he continues, elaborating on the point: "You're babies, then you're children, then you're a kid, then you're a young man. We've been through different phases in our career and I wanted to bring a different side of us out. I didn't want to make any mistakes, so I asked Jay to help me out." Indeed, El considers himself to have been in firm control of the album, no matter who produced or wrote any given track. "My job as the producer is to make the album a hit, right? (Motown) knows I know what I'm doing. I've given them a flop album once. I promised I'd never do that again. And I haven't."

El, heretofore a young prodigy, but now the young man of his own description, in fact describes Jay Graydon's specific influences in details far removed from his own music-making processes. "When you go to different cities there's a time change, right?



El DeBarge in full regalia: 'A lot of things I go through, I don't even know how to write about'

'My main influence,' says El DeBarge, 'is me. I've been spending a lot of time in the studio to see what I have to offer myself.'

Jay goes to bed about six o'clock in the morning and gets up about five o'clock. Every day. He kept me on that time schedule, man! I had to totally rearrange my life and go to bed at the time he went to bed, because he works at night. Musically, technically, I know I learned something from him. I just can't recall it right now. It's hard to put in words."

But El DeBarge hardly needs to rationalize his prior decisions, since the result is destined to be the DeBarge family's biggest-ever single. Maybe he's not completely self-possessed about himself—but he's extremely effective. The making of the new album, he says, was a timely opportunity to "relax and let geniuses help me." He doesn't neglect to add that Graydon was certainly acquainted with the El DeBarge hit streak. But, "If I had done this album myself it wouldn't be as great as it is."

With that perspective, it's almost rude to ask, *But what happened to the ballads?* Why is so much of the material uptempo? (To be fair, two of Graydon's cuts, "The Heart Is Not So Smart" and "Who's Holding Donna Now," do capture some of the magic of previous DeBarge ballads.) El takes no offense, but simply won't countenance any suggestion that *Rhythm of the Night* is a compromise of the group's hallmark vocal style. "It's *not* fair to call it slicker," he protests. "The last one was great, the one before that was great. If it wasn't for the other albums, this album wouldn't mean what it means now. Those albums were great setups."

Adds El: "We've always had uptempo tunes on our albums. But it seems like now people are recognizing them more so it must mean they're really great, because they weren't being recognized before."

The interview largely completed, El retreats to get dressed for the TV taping. He reappears from the bedroom in a smashing yellow jacket and black pants that emphasize his leanness. All of the DeBarges have put on the dog for the new album cover, particularly by growing their hair and having it styled in formidable punk/New Romantic dos. Unlike their first three album covers, on which the group looked sporty, the new sleeve suggests a stylist whose new wavo couture ideas have really been taken to the max.

El's carrying a lint roller that he'll use

on his black pants while being driven to and from the session, even though he's informed that he'll only be shot from the shoulders up. "It looks better," he murmurs—and it probably does, to the half dozen young fans who greet El at the hotel entrance.

In the limo on the way to the studio, El's mood has shifted perceptibly. Less ebullient than he was even minutes ago, El's answers become slightly clipped. Asked where the rest of the family is, he replies, simply, "In L.A." He fidgets with the window and seems to be following a song that's playing softly on the driver's radio and leaking back through the intercom. Another question: Has El had time to himself to get away from his heaviest year of work ever? As it turns out, he means to take some, but hasn't "because I got used to not doing it."

El's jauntiness returns as he's introduced at the studio, and he even gives different answers to the same questions as they are asked by the producer off camera. "My main influence," El says at one point, "is me. I've been spending a lot of time in the studio to see what I have to offer myself."

In a way, it's the inner voice of El DeBarge that has reached the group's fans so successfully. To the suggestion that some of his best work has an instinctive knack for subject matter and wording, he explains, "It is subconscious. I'm a different kind of writer than I thought I was. I learned I can't write songs purposely. When people ask me to write songs for movies, the hardest thing about that is I have to put all of me into it. There's a little valve you have to turn to loose me. It's not turned on by someone asking me to write a song purposely about a particular thing. It has to come when it wants to."

And then, though he won't explain specifically why his piano playing sounds so strong and attractive on vinyl ("I can't tell you my secrets"), he offhandedly offers some observations that further pinpoint the integrity and deep appeal of DeBarge: "When you go through some things in life you can't really chalk it all up. After a while you'll understand it better. And a lot of things I go through, I don't even know how to write about—how to put it in words until like, sometime later, when it's ready. See, I don't hardly do anything but stay

home, so I'm always there when the music wants to talk to me. I'm around my instruments. I like that.

El is in no great hurry to pin down details of the next records and live shows to come from the family DeBarge, or to speculate on any outside writing or production opportunities now that he and his siblings are on the verge of breaking into the really big leagues.

Maybe the conversation has gone on too long: by the time he's asked where he'd like to be at the conclusion of this second, even bigger year of breakthrough, he retorts crisply: "Where would you like me to be?"

Top 40 staple, easily recognized . . .

He grins a bit. "Thanks, I like that concept. I'd like to be more stabilized, too. I'd like to have more people listening to us. I think they'd like us."

What El DeBarge can put into words, and easily, are the immediate goals he sees coming out of the new record. " 'Rhythm of the Night,' " he states, is the record to take him and his four siblings beyond the realm of the mere "hit-hit" and into the rarified atmosphere of the "smash hit." DeBarge's hit-hits have been sweet, reverent ballads on teen love, marked by gorgeous ensemble singing and absolute un-self-consciousness. All of them—"I Like It," "All This Love," "Love Me in a Special Way" and the crowningly glorious "Time Will Reveal"—peaked just around the pop Top 20.

But upon hearing that the group's latest single, "Rhythm of the Night" (featured on the soundtrack of *Berry Gordy's The Last Dragon*), is bulleting at 55 on the pop charts, El predicts—in his unassuming way—that it will go straight to the top. "I think it sounds like a number one record, don't you?" he asks casually, but rhetorically, in the almost clairvoyant assurance that we'll both soon see it in that slot. Time proves him close to the mark, as the politely festive pop-tropical "Rhythm" hits Number Three in a month, while the album makes a sixth-week surge into the Top 30. "Yeah," El says in the car on the way back from the taping, "it's the best album yet. But each album has been that way. Each one was the best until the next one came out."

And who among us would dare second-guess this man's wisdom? ○



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MODERN DRUMMER MAGAZINE

NO MORE MISTER NICE GUY

Midnight Oil's Peter

Garrett would

like to have

a word with you

By Duncan Strauss

EUGENE PINKOWSKI

Peter Garrett is on something. Peter Garrett is always *on* something, and in no uncertain terms. Now before the lawyers start firing paper bullets, and before Mr. Garrett's fans are roused to violence, allow an explanation.

Peter Garrett, the 6'5", shaven-headed lead singer of leftist Australian rock band Midnight Oil, is a walking treasury of vitriolic quotes, all delivered with the subtle-



SIMON FOWLER/RETNA

Oils (from left) James Moginie, Garrett, Martin Rotsey, Rob Hirst, Peter Gifford: 'Our aim,' says Garrett, 'is not to politically enlighten people, but to exist on our terms'

ty of a flying mallet as he looks directly into his interlocutor's eyes. Having earned both an undergraduate diploma in politics and a law degree, there's little question that *equivocate* is part of his vocabulary—it's just not part of his style.

Here's a sampling from the Garrett Book of Quotable Quotes:

On the famine in Ethiopia: "My answer to the Ethiopian thing is to say, 'Look, the American Administration is planning to spend \$1.6 billion on creating nuclear weapons in the next four years—a billion dollars a day will be spent on arms worldwide. That money needs to be spent on people who need it, not on nuclear weap-

ons that can kill us. Starvation in Ethiopia is a direct consequence, partly, of the nuclear arms race."

On heavy metal: "It's bewildering to me that heavy metal is still so popular and strong. The stuff is such a redundant, stereotyped, pathetic package of rifforama, macho posturing and ludicrous, meaningless, senseless lyrics."

On rock stars: "I'm sick of seeing rock stars get wealthy by indulging their adolescent fantasies, disappearing with their money and sticking it up their nose or into their motorcars or whatever, and doing nothing constructive, doing no good."

As per the latter quotation, it should be

pointed out that Peter Garrett is a rock star himself and perhaps ought to get his own glass house in order before hurling stones at others'. Well, he has. In and apart from Midnight Oil, he's made enough constructive moves for a couple of decades' worth of rockers. Over the course of the Oil's Five-LP history—which most recently yielded *Red Sails in the Sunset*, the quintet's second U.S. release (the first, *10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1*, had some chart success here, behind a strong single, "Power and the Passion")—the group has participated in numerous benefits Down Under in support of a plethora of causes ranging from Greenpeace (an environmental sup-

port group), unemployed youth, Save the Whales and the subject about which he's most passionate nowadays, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

But unlike so many rock stars whose devotion to the cause ends with lip service, Garrett went a step further last year by running as the Nuclear Disarmament Party's (NDP) candidate for Senate (see March RECORD). Technically this isn't the first time someone has attempted to leap from the rock arena to the political one—Dead Kennedys singer Jello Biafra's bid for the San Francisco mayoral seat immediately springs to mind. But Garrett's candidacy was, in every sense, thousands of miles from Biafra's effort.

Garrett agreed to run after being approached by representatives of the NDP, a political party formed this past summer by a group of Australian writers and actors. Although a fully registered coalition and officially recognized by the Australian government, the NDP's political pull was unknown and untested. That's where Garrett came in. "I agreed to (run) because I didn't want the Nuclear Disarmament Party to sink without a trace; I didn't want the politicians to say, 'There's no influence, no votes there.'"

In the weeks preceding the December 1 election, Australian political pundits examined the massive support Garrett was accumulating and predicted that the big fellow stood a good chance of winning his race. Then the results came in and things got interesting. Among the conflicting reports: he lost, he won, he was in a run-off, he won the popular vote but lost the electoral. The latter comes closest to the truth. Garrett lost the election—at least this much is now clear. But even Garrett's own version of the outcome contains elements of all the aforementioned possibilities, and that's a complicated story. Fans of irony and bureaucratic shenanigans will love it.

Citing approximate figures, Garrett explains that he received 300,000 popular, or "primary," votes; that 387,000 would have won the election outright; and that his opponent tallied 220,000 primary votes. After the *preference* votes (similar to our electoral votes) were assigned in an elaborate system that necessitated all the time-consuming recounts, the overall proportion of votes had flip-flopped, and the singer-cum-politico was defeated. It's a classic twist: The election system, a part of the very governmental workings Garrett had hoped to improve from within, squeezed him out of a Senate seat. Garrett's explanation of how that system worked against him is typically lucid and articulate. The process itself, however, sounds sufficiently convoluted to have been dreamt up by Professor Irwin Corey while listening to a tape loop of Abbott and Costello's "Who's On First" routine.

Nevertheless, Garrett takes his loss graciously. "No, I wasn't disappointed," he asserts. "Angry, frustrated that something

like this could happen—although it's understandable—but certainly not disappointed. We had a very successful campaign, really. We made enormous impact: We got the issue of disarmament on the front pages of all the newspapers and I debated the Prime Minister in a specially-televised debate, which was extraordinary. I had the Prime Minister after my neck," he recalls, grinning proudly.

I'm sick of seeing

rock stars get wealthy

by indulging their

adolescent fantasies,

and doing nothing

constructive,

doing no good.'

What irked some citizens apparently impressed others. The precise, comprehensive knowledge Garrett demonstrated during that debate and throughout the entire campaign—as well as the candidate's forceful yet gracious way of comporting himself—didn't go unappreciated by his countrymen ("I had the largest personal vote of any of the candidates for Senator, so obviously a lot of people responded to what I was doing"), or internationally (he's received, and accepted, invitations to speak on nuclear disarmament in New Zealand and Japan).

So how does all this extracurricular activity affect Midnight Oil? Or, more to the point, how does it square with Garrett's long-standing claim that the band is not a political outfit. "Our aim," he once said, "is not to politically enlighten people, but to exist on our own terms."

"Well," opines Garrett, "I think the Oils always wanted to show people where we were at and what we were about, but we never wanted to preach to them. That's why I never ran the campaign from the stage. We didn't, for example, allow the Nuclear Disarmament Party to come along to concerts and hand out things. But I think we clearly have jumped into the category of being a force in politics."

Facts is facts, though: Midnight Oil's music has always carried resonant social and political overtones. So in the wake of Garrett's stepped-up activity, one fully expected that when the Oils released the successor to *10,9,8* it would be even more overtly anti-nuke. *Red Sails*' cover does nothing to undermine those expectations: In the background is what's left of the sprawling metropolis of Sydney, in the foreground huge craters, a fiery red orb and total devastation. A Statement, right?

All is not what it appears to be. Scattered among the album's 12 tracks are some characteristically feisty essays slamming the murky methods employed by political and military leaders to influence and gain compliance ("When the Generals Talk") and others rife with Australian allusions and images (including "Kosciusko," a song titled after the country's largest mountain). But on the whole, the album, well-crafted and brimming with passion and brains, makes only indirect reference to the nuclear issue. What gives?

Says Garrett: "*10,9,8* was the nuclear album for us, really. Now we've said all we wanted to say, in song form, about that. We'll eventually come back to it, I'm sure. As for the [*Red Sails*] cover, we wanted to get over a multi-level idea of Nature sort of taking back over Man's terrain, plus various other images, and the nuclear thing a bit, as well."

While the lyrical emphasis on *Red Sails* has veered away from its predecessor's, the musical thrust has remained on sweeping, 31 Flavors-style variety. Randomly drop the needle on *Sails* (chiefly composed by keyboardist-guitarist James Moginie and demon drummer Rob Hirst, with Garrett credited on half the tunes) and prepare to hear an often pungent pastiche: "Best of Both Worlds" roars along with vein-popping intensity, driven by Hirst's relentless I-don't-mean-maybe-baby pounding; "Sleep" is a sedate number splashed with acoustic guitar and synth coloring; "Bakerman," an abbreviated instrumental that could pass for a soundtrack snippet, pushes clarinet (!) and tuba (!) out front. And so it goes.

Before dashing off to another interview, Garrett pauses to underline the importance of his anti-nuke discussions and debates. "I will happily go anywhere and talk to anyone about it," he states. "I'm a peculiar blend, because I happen to be someone who was educated in law school—I can speak the language if I have to. Now, most musicians don't want to sit down with Professor So-and-So from the University of Such-and-Such and argue about the deployment of missiles or whatever.

"But *someone*," he stresses, "has to argue with him, and I just happen to be the guy. I feel I know my stuff reasonably well, I feel I have a global perspective, and I feel I'm speaking for a vast majority of the population who don't have an opportunity to articulate these concerns." ○

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A Guide to this summer's top rock attractions · By Jeffrey Peisch

The summer touring season can be a time of great expectations and low rewards. Witness last summer's *Victory* tour by the Jacksons. Pre-tour anticipation was at a frenzied level, yet by the time the tour ended—amidst poor reviews, controversy over ticket prices and sibling rivalry—very few people gave a hoot. The last several dates of the tour were far from sellouts, and one show was even cancelled because of poor ticket sales. In the summer of '85 there'll be nothing as massive as the *Victory* tour, nothing as grandly



THE MAIN EVENTS

ALBUM RELEASES

With all album releases, we recommend readers proceed with caution, as these things have been known to change on less than a moment's notice.

June

Jimmy Buffett
Cheap Trick
Jimmy Cliff
Stuart Copeland
Bob Dylan
Bryan Ferry
Aretha Franklin
Heart
Nils Lofgren
Motley Crue
Aldo Nova
Phil Oakey
OMD
Ozzy Osbourne
Joe Piscopo
REM
Nile Rodgers
Romantics
Saga
Sting
Style Council
Talking Heads
Uriah Heep
Weird Al Yankovic

July

Asia
Box of Frogs
Tony Carey
Elvis Costello
John Cougar
ELO
INXS
Billy Joel (Greatest Hits)
Kid Creole
Michael McDonald
Midnight Oil
Nena
Ted Nugent
Squeeze
Neil Young

August-September

Bananarama
Marshall Crenshaw
Crosby, Stills, Nash
Marianne Faithful
Joni Mitchell
Molly Hatchet
Roches
Rush
Southside Johnny
Pete Townshend

In Our Lifetime

Boston
Stevie Wonder



hyped as David Bowie's *Serious Moonlight* tour. But even without any mega-super stop-the-world tours, and even though fewer bands will be on the road compared to years past, booking agents are predicting—and you'll excuse the crassness—a lot of business this summer.

The reason for this optimism, says Mitch Pollak of the International Talent Group, is that "the artists that are touring are quality acts who will sell a lot of tickets. There aren't that many acts going on the road, but the ones that are can fill the arenas, and the tours they're doing are not



MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA



LYNN GOLDSMITH/IGI



ANASTASIA PANTISI/OSKALEYDISCOPE



MOSHE BRACKA



ROBERT MATHIEU

too long, so the excitement will keep up."

Phil Collins is being touted by many industryites as the hottest act on the road this summer. Every show of his seven-week tour (ending in July) sold out the day tickets went on sale. Collins can't extend the tour, either, because of other commitments. "No one really expected his record [*No Jacket Required*] to be so big," says Pollak. "It would be nice to be able to add a couple more dates, but Phil's a real busy guy."

Some of the other highlights of the summer season:

—Tina Turner's *Private Dancer* tour will be one of the longest jaunts of the season, starting in mid-July and extending through December 8.

Huey Lewis and the News will be on the road during July and August, playing mostly arena-size venues.

Robert Plant will tour through August, and he'll play a Honeydrippers section at each show.

Sting, after releasing his first solo album at the end of June (*The Dream of the Blue Turtles*), will head to Europe and Japan for concerts with his new four-piece band. At the end of August, he'll start a five-week U.S. tour in Los Angeles.

And at some undetermined point in the future, the Rolling Stones will be on the road again, in support of a new album due for summer release. As this story went to press in early May, however, the Stones were still recording in Paris, and had only begun to assemble their technical crew for a tour.

The lone stadium shows of the season will come in late August and September, and will feature Wham! and Bruce Springsteen. Wham! will play six dates at the most, but they'll be big ones: JFK Stadium in Philadelphia, for example, with a capacity close to 100,000.

Springsteen, who's been on the road almost non-stop for an entire year, will play his first Stateside stadium dates—about 20 in all—starting in late August. Having successfully

transferred his show from concert halls to arenas, rock's blue-collar hero ventured into the great outdoors during the Australian/New Zealand leg of his world tour, playing to a combined audience of over 300,000 over the course of three dates. These were so well received, by artist and fans alike, that Springsteen agreed to play the majority of his early summer European concerts in large, open-air venues (including the 80,000-capacity Roundhay Park in Leeds, England).

And how has the *Born in the U.S.A.* marathon transferred to more cavernous environs? "Bruce doesn't let the bigness affect him," observes a devout fan who attended one of the Australian stadium shows. "Some acts come into a stadium, they feel the distance, and it destroys them. Bruce can pull it off. He talks to the people just like he does in a small theater, and it really works."

Nevertheless, for his U.S. stadium shows, Springsteen will use a special stage, with ramps on the side, and the concerts will be augmented by a video projection system.

The venues that seem to be the most popular this summer are the approximately 40 indoor/outdoor amphitheaters across the country—Pine Knob in Detroit, for example; Poplar Creek outside Chicago; the Greek Theatre in Los Angeles—places with five- to six-thousand permanent seats and room for up to 10,000 more fans outside. Traditionally home to MOR acts, these sites have become increasingly attractive to rock promoters and agents.

For one, the shows attract impulse ticket buyers, concertgoers who might not make plans in advance to see a show, but who'll go if the weather's nice and tickets are available. "It's pretty hard to get excited about taking a date to the Buffalo War Memorial in the middle of August," says Tom Hewlett of Concerts West. "But an outdoor show, on a nice night, now that's a real date."

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THE TOURS

Due to RECORD's two month lead time, it was impossible to pin down specific dates for the artists listed here. In matters such as these, the best advice we can give is to consult your local media for the date nearest you.

Bryan Adams

—June to September

Beach Boys

—June to November

Eric Clapton/

Graham Parker

—June, July

Phil Collins

—May, June, July

Dire Straits

—July to October

Bryan Ferry

—July (tentative)

Foreigner

—July to November

Huey Lewis

and the News

—July and August

Kenny Loggins

—May, June, July, August

Loverboy

—August to November

Men at Work

—August to October

Motley Crue

—July

Night Ranger

—July to January

Robert Plant

—June, July, August

Power Station

—July, August (tentative)

R.E.M.

—July, August

Bruce Springsteen

—August, September

Squeeze

—August, September

Tina Turner

—July to December

Wham!

—August, September

MUSIC VIDEO RELEASES

June

Chick Corea: Return to Forever: A concert featuring the group's original lineup.
Hot Rock Video, Vol. II: A compilation featuring the Thompson Twins, Lou Reed, Jefferson Starship, Rodney Dangerfield and others.

Elton John, Night and Day: The Nighttime Concert: Shot at Wembley Stadium in England.

Reggae Sunsplash II: The quintessential reggae festival, featuring Toots and the Maytals, Yellowman, Taj Mahal, Deniece Williams and others.

July

Prime Cuts: Jazz and Beyond: With Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock, Weather Report and others.

August

The Beat of the Live Drum: A \$1 million Rick Springfield program that includes a specially-produced concert and three new music videos.

The Cars: 1984-1985

—**Live:** A concert, with special effects.

History of British Rock: Directed by Patrick (The Comptat Beatles) Montgomery

potential. They can book medium-level acts—groups that only need to sell 4000 seats to break even—and have a chance of making a killing if 10,000 people show up on the grass.

Ironically, some of the reasons for the attractiveness of outdoor venues from the promoters' viewpoint are the very same reasons why some groups decided to stay indoors. General admission ticket prices outside are usually \$10, at least a few dollars lower than the average price a group can fetch at an indoor arena.

And some groups aren't going after the casual fan who's at the show because the weather's nice. Tina Turner, for instance, is playing only indoor shows. "Her audience is varied," says John Marx of the Triad Agency, "but the people are focused. They want to see Tina and they want to see her under the best, most controlled circumstances."

Other artists, continues Marx, lend themselves to an outdoor atmosphere, no matter how focused their audience is. **Kenny Loggins** fits this category, so he'll play most of his shows this summer at the amphitheaters. Other acts who'll appear often under the stars this summer: **Men at Work**, **Night Ranger**, **Squeeze**, **Dire Straits** and **Santana**.

With so many bands playing the outdoor venues, the three- to five-thousand-seat theaters are hurting for business. "These places have been suffering for the past several years," says Dave Hart of the Nederlander Organization, "but this summer the situation is very bad."

Hart and others say that the economics of promoting a show in a mid-size theater are so "tight" that it's very hard to turn a profit: the percentage of money spent on advertising is proportionately higher than that spent on an arena or stadium show; the profit margin is slim, so that five rows of seats can make or break a show; and, perhaps most important, record labels almost never give artists tour support subsidies for theater-size showcase tours.



"The labels would rather spend the money to make videos," says Hart. "They feel their money is better spent this way."

For the concert-goer, though, there's a positive upshot from this situation. Acts that can't do enough business to mount a tour of theaters are being forced to double up with other acts, and this results in some good double bills. The best example: **Eric Clapton/Graham Parker**, on tour through July. "I get calls every day from managers who want their bands to hitch up with the Clapton tour," says Tom Hewlett. "The bands just can't swing it at the theaters."

No matter how much they need that extra income, though, most promoters and agents say ticket prices will rise only slightly this summer, and only in the major markets. Last year, prime Robert Plant ducats went for \$13.50; this year they'll be \$15.

The place to really watch your wallet is in the lobby, where the t-shirts and other paraphernalia are sold. "It's getting out of hand," says Mitch Pollak. "Everyone wants in on the business—artists, building managers, promoters and, of course, the merchandisers—and they all want a big piece of the pie." Pollak says that t-shirts will hit \$15 at some shows this summer. Ouch!! ○



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On the BEAT

IN THE RACKS

Guitar great **Chet Atkins** recently released an album that had him joining forces with some of the great rock and jazz artists of our time. Called *Stay Tuned*, the project was originally planned as a duo between Atkins and **George Benson**, though as Atkins says, "it just evolved." With bassist David Hungate (of **Toto** fame) producing, the final roster of guitar talent included Benson, **Dire Straits'** Mark Knopfler, L.A. session masters Larry Carlton and Dean Parks, **Toto's** Steve Lukather, and jazz master Earl Klugh, in addition to a supporting cast that included Boots Randolph on sax and **Toto** drummer Jeff Porcaro... If all goes well, the first album by **Emerson, Lake and Powell** should be arriving in a few weeks' time. Keyboardist Keith Emerson and bassist Greg Lake first found fame a decade ago (with drummer Carl Palmer) as the ultimate progressive trio, **ELP**. The duo began writing together again at Emerson's 400-year-old Tudor mansion last summer (the same place where J. M. Barrie wrote *Peter Pan*), and with the addition of former Jeff Beck/Rainbow/Whitesnake drummer Cozy Powell, found themselves on the receiving end of more record company offers than three men should have to bear. PolyGram came out on top... **Yes** fans with an ear for the obscure might want to track down a recent British import compilation released on EMI's See For Miles label. Titled *Sixties Back Beat*, it features a rendition of the old Association tune, "Never My Love", by one Hans Christian Anderson—the nom-de-croon of **Yes** frontman Jon Anderson during his scuffling days in London. On the same album is "Marlena" by the **Federals**—whose keyboardist, Tony Kaye, later found fame and fortune with **Yes**. Another **Federals** nugget from the vaults, "Boot Hill" is included on the companion album, *Twenty Classic Instrumentals*. ■

MISCELLANIA

Rock columnist Lisa Robinson reportedly has asked for \$1,000,000 to write a biography on **Van Halen**. Can't blame her for trying... Obviously aware of its dual audience, **New Edition** has been playing double-headers on tour in many cities: a regular evening show for their older fans, and an afternoon matinee for those too young to be out after dark... Guess **Frankie Goes to Hollywood** has been faring pretty well—a British real estate agent reports that producer/whiz kid **Trevor Horn** recently dropped a cool 800,000 British pounds (that's nearly a million bucks) on a "five bedroom white stucco house" in the Maida Vale



Photo: Brian Hagiwara

Kool and the Gang were running through their hit "Misled" on a recent regional TV show when a noticeably large person strolled out of the crowd and started break dancing. According to Robert "Kool" Bell, nobody at the station had told them about a dancer being hired, "and this was no lightweight breaker." Every time the stranger hit the floor, Bell recalls, "it felt like an earthquake." Not surprising. The dancing intruder was Washington Redskins fullback John Riggins.

section of London... For those who've been playing "Spot the Heavy Metallist" on **Ratt's** video for "You Think You're Tough," this list of participating luminaries: **Ozzy Osbourne**, Herman Rarebill of the **Scorpions**, Nikki Sixx and Tommy Lee of **Motley Crue**, ex-Rod Stewart drummer Carmine Appice, and **Ozzy Osbourne's** guitarist, Jake E. Lee... A challenge, of sorts, has been issued. John Shelton Ivany, editor-in-chief of *Hit Parader* magazine, recently appeared on a local cable TV program *Crashing New York*. During the segment, Ivany offered to lock debating horns with the Reverend Jerry Falwell on a topic of interest to both men: "Heavy Metal—Good or

Evil?" At press time, Ivany was still waiting by the phone... **Jimmy Page** and **Yes** frontman **Jon Anderson** are among the contributors to the soundtrack for the new film *Scream for Help*. ■

BOOKS

Rock writer Robert Santelli has put together a hefty, 320-page tome titled *Sixties Rock: A Listener's Guide*. A survey of the key contributors to that era's rock scene, it's published by Contemporary Books in Chicago which claims that "with this book, New Wavers seeking their rock roots will discover this great music

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Backstage following a **REO Speedwagon** gig in Fresno, California, a delivery boy knocked on the dressing room door and asked: "Which one of you guys is Mario?" "Mario?" asked band member Gary Richrath. "Yeah," the kid responded. "I got a pizza here for Mario Speedwagon."

for the first time, and nostalgic baby-boomers can relive the excitement of the decade." *Sixties Rock* goes for \$9.95... From the same publisher, another Beatles book, this one called *The Book of Beatles Lists*. It's a must for those who've ever wondered which Beatle tunes feature Horst Obber as lead singer, how many aliases George Harrison has used over the years, who dubbed the Beatles' voices in *Yellow Submarine*, or the fifty most frequently used words in Beatle lyrics (in addition to data on record releases, awards, TV appearances, etc.). Written by *Goldmine* columnist Charles Reinhart, the book is priced at \$6.95. ■

TRAVEL NEWS

Possibly the first *big time* rock act to play in the shadow of the Great Wall, **Wham!** recently wheeled out their best clothes to play two gigs in China. Invited there by the 200,000,000-member Youth Federation of China and Canton's Minister of Culture, the back-to-back shows at Peking's 15,000-seat People's Gymnasium and the 5,000-seat Canton Opera House were the result of nine months of negotiation. The Chinese government was leery, but opposition faded after members of their Tokyo Embassy were slipped gratis tickets and backstage passes for the band's gig at the Budokan. Deciding it was "a bit loud," the diplomats relayed copies of Wham! lyrics to senior officials in Peking for approval. Lest anyone get the idea that Wham! made a bundle, ticket prices were set at the country's norm—roughly 50 cents. With a population of 1.1 billion potential record buyers, however, the band's management obviously has an eye on more long-term rewards: at the moment, five different Cantonese covers of "Careless Whispers" can be heard in China and an EP of Wham! tunes, performed by native Chinese artists, recently went on sale... You might remember the First Airborne Rock & Roll Division, the USO-sponsored collection of rock musicians who played various military installations throughout the South Pacific and Indian Oceans last year. Seems the tour was so successful that they decided to do it again. The resulting entourage (made up of **Cheap Trick**, parts of **Kansas**, and others including **Stephen Stills**) found themselves playing to somewhat captive audiences on aircraft carriers at sea, hospitals, and at bases throughout Europe and the Middle East. "American servicemen and women are often forgotten by the public," Kansas drummer Phil Ehart says. "When we toured last year, it made you see how much you meant to those servicemen and women who are cut off from rock and roll." During the three-week trek, the musicians found themselves bedding down in barracks, flying to gigs in choppers, and generally living on a basic, no-frills level. As **Bob Hope**, the USO's most perennial entertainer, recalls: "I knew



Photo: Ben Weaver

Good things come to those who wait. In **Daryl Hall's** case, the wait was longer than he'd bargained for. In 1976 he sent a self-invented instrument called a **Mandar** (a hybrid of a mandolin and a guitar) off to the repair shop. The thing disappeared in transit. Although a thorough search was made, the **Mandar** never turned up, and a saddened Hall despaired of ever seeing it again. However, when Hall and Oates checked into Tampa, Florida recently on their **Big Bam Boom** tour, the head of the **Elvis Presley** Museum in Memphis turned up backstage with a large parcel. To Hall's delight, it was his long-lost **Mandar**. Seems the visitor knew the head of the **Federal Express** Lost and Found, and had heard tales of a strange instrument seen lurking around the facility for nearly eight years. A fan of the Philly duo, he recognized the **Mandar** from Hall's description of it in early interviews. A flight was booked and no expense was spared to reunite the man with his invention. Hall was thrilled, had a few private moments with his wayward **Mandar**, then promptly donated it to the Presley instrument collection. ■

the First Airborne was diversified... but to hear there was a rock 'n' roll division, it blew my mind. Hey, wouldn't it be great if disputes, differences, and wars could be solved by drums, keyboards, and guitars instead of bullets?" ■

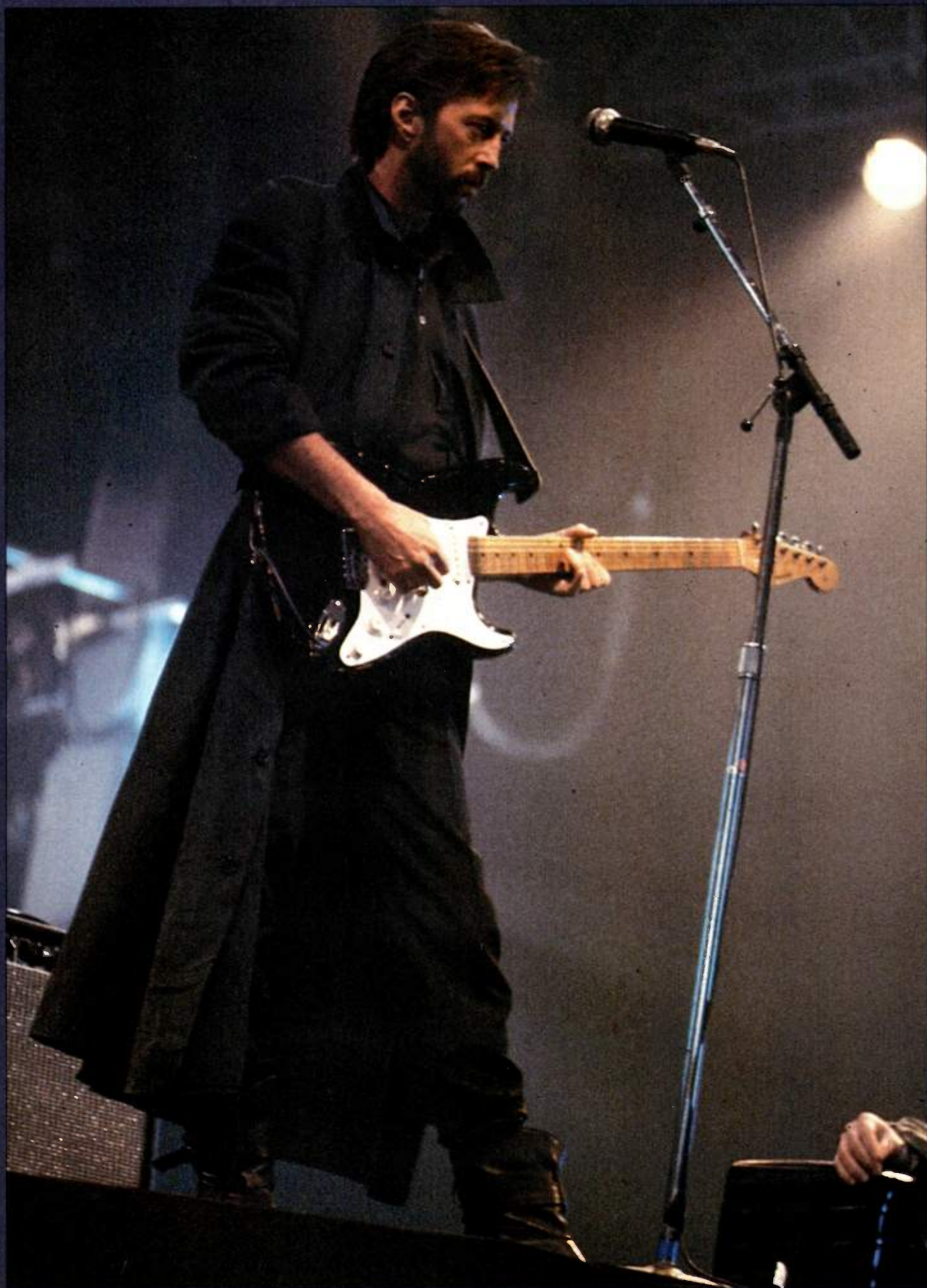
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SITTIN' IN WITH ERIC CLAPTON

THE SLOWHAND OF GOD

Dallas. What do you think of when you think of Dallas? The Cowboys? Money? J.R. Ewing? Bassist Donald “Duck” Dunn, in town as a member of Eric Clapton’s touring band, says E.C. chose this site to begin his U.S. tour because . . . he loves the city’s barbecue restaurants.

While he did admit to having visited a few of the Big D’s finer eating establishments, Clapton maintained that he came here because it’s the headquarters for Vari Lights, the sophisticated, computer-driven lighting system that many bands use to spruce up their concerts. He was trying out the system for the first time and wanted to have adequate rehearsal time to fine-tune the presentation.

Clapton’s concern with concert lighting is hardly the stuff of headlines, except for what it says about his present state of mind. “I’m in

THE RECORD INTERVIEW BY JEFFREY PEISCH

more control of my life now that I ever have been," he stresses, and in that regard he's become more cognizant of what playing rock 'n' roll in the '80s is all about. For starters, he was up for this interview at 10 a.m. on the morning after his opening night show, a two-and-a-half hour affair that ended at close to 1 a.m. And if he hasn't totally accepted that rock 'n' roll is a *business*, he's at least more concerned nowadays with his approach to concertizing—as demonstrated by the concern over lighting, by his tan silk suit-with-tie stage apparel that he wears well on his trim, fit frame. Even backup singers Shaun Murphy and Marcy Levy put on the dog for this tour, decking themselves out in black leather and blue, punk wigs.

Otherwise, it's vintage Slowhand all the way. Accompanied by Dunn on bass, Tim Renwick on guitar, Chris Stainton on keyboards, and the dependable Tulsa rhythm master Jamie Oldaker on drums, Clapton served up a good helping of his new album, *Behind the Sun*, and some well-received oldies, such as "Layla," a song that, incredibly, improves with age. Playing with a precision combination of fire and grace, Clapton's work brought to mind a quote of his from some years back, when he told a reporter he'd like to make listeners cry by playing just one note on the guitar.

Throughout our time together, Clapton was chipper, friendly and forthright, surprisingly so when we came to topics—booze, drugs, his wife Patti—I had been advised to tread lightly over. In keeping with Clapton's current mode, though, our discussion began with the show itself.

You've always been concerned about succumbing to the clichés of rock-star showmanship. You don't feel you're compromising yourself by focusing so much attention on staging?

The days when you can just go on and play and hope the music will get you by are gone, really. You have to be aware of the competition. As I'm not a particularly gymnastic performer—I don't like leaping around and I never have—I think you have to provide the audience with something to look at. The Vari Lights we're using are very sophisticated—and very expensive—but worth it. I feel there is a need to provide more. I don't provide enough with my own movements for the audience. They deserve to have something else to see as well.

I don't like to do anything that isn't in my character. But the lights feel natural for me. I love them. I saw them with Genesis and I was completely knocked out. I said, I have to have these lights.

Now it wouldn't be in my character, for example, to put on any kind of real stage *act* or *choreography*. It wouldn't be me. And, also, I think it's something I'd have to live with. If I'd done it earlier in my career I'd still be having to do it now. I don't have anything in that way to live up to.

But in another sense you do. You have to live up to the audience's expectations of who you are. Like the song "Layla." 10 years ago you said you were tired of playing it and often didn't enjoy it.

Yeah, I suppose I often am tired of it. There'll be nights on this tour when I'll be dreading doing it, because it can fall a little flat. If we play it really well, it's fun. But I *have* been playing it every night that I've played for the last 15 years, so you can imagine that you have to work up a lot of false enthusiasm for something like that. If it works, it's great, but if it doesn't it leaves you with a sour taste.

What makes it "work" some nights and

**I DON'T REALLY
LIKE (SUPERSTAR)
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AN APPRECIATION
OF MUSIC WITHOUT
THEATRICALS.**

not work other nights? What is it that makes you have an inspired night?

It's very basic really. It's physical and mental well-being. It's as simple as that. That's *all* it is in fact—if you're thinking good and clear, things usually go well. Of course, you have to take into account the audience reaction. The crowd last night was ready. They were wild. That can really get you up and make for a good night.

But you've often said that you could do without any of the mass audience hysteria.

Yes, it's a complete contradiction. I'm not really sure how you can be a superstar without being one. But I find that my music seems to thrive more if there's someone giving me that push. If the crowd is in your camp, it gives you the confidence to go that much further. In the studio you tend to settle for less; maybe you're too easily satisfied.

But what I was really trying to say with the "superstar" thing is that I don't really like all the trappings. I like the whole thing to be purely musical, an appreciation of music without theatrics.

Is that why you enjoy working on projects like the one you did last year with Roger Waters, where you weren't presented as a superstar, but just as one of the musicians?

Yeah, I like to have the time where I can get away from being in the lead. It's like

having a little holiday in a way. It gives you a sense of reality. If you lead your own band and you do a lot of promotion work and interviews about yourself, you become wrapped up in yourself too much. And my ego tends to fly off the handle too easily. I get wrapped up in believing that what I do is faultless and I walk down the street and say, "Hey, everyone feel alright? I'm feeling great." So when you work with someone else you really have to learn how to slot in a band and make it sound good.

Did you enjoy working with Waters?

I've never come across music like that, or had to play that way before in my life. It really was off the beaten track for me. That gig was like playing John Cage or Stockhausen—wearing headphones with click tracks going on, being ready for cues, and things like that.

The musicians you're playing with on this tour are almost all Americans, as has been the case for several years now. Why?

As long as I can remember I've always preferred American musicians. I kind of feel like I'm one myself. I don't really fit in the English music scene very well. I don't play there that much. It's only when I come here that I really come alive musically. Most of my influences are from here. All of the people I wanted to play like were Americans. As early as when I was 15 or 16 I remember wishing that I'd been born in Chicago, and not being able to do anything about it except come and play here when I could.

You feel you're really not appreciated in England?

Well, it's the backyard syndrome: blues wasn't appreciated by U.S. fans and I'm not really appreciated in my home the way I am here. But I'm not really underappreciated in the U.K. It's just that what I do is more readily understood by an American audience than an English one. It's not in the English musical character to like something that's the same as something else for very long. They have to have novelty or change in great amounts. They really like to like someone for a bit and then usher someone else in.

Let's talk about *Behind the Sun*. Why did you pick Phil Collins as producer?

He became a friend of mine through John Martyn, whose last album Phil produced. Then Phil moved into my neighborhood. I wasn't very aware of Genesis; I didn't have any of their records, and wasn't too sure what they were like. It wasn't until I got to know Phil that I realized what a good drummer he was and that his tastes in music were akin to mine—the fact that we both like black music the best. I heard the way he was producing John Martyn, and I heard Phil's own things, and I thought I would like to have him do my record. He's got a great understanding of synthesizers



PHILLIS ROSNEY/STAR FILE

and how they can be used without becoming overpowering.

Did you and Collins have a certain sound you were going for on the album?

No, we were going more for atmosphere than for a sound, something intangible. Also, it was a working relationship that was very creative. I knew it would be easy, from having been around him when he's been making records. We get on very well in the studio; it's a great relationship.

Your friendship didn't get in the way of the work?

It was a little hard because we were friends, but that's good. He's said [in the press] that he was intimidated by me, but I tried not to make him feel that way.

The title song really seems to have Phil's signature, with only your guitar and his

synthesizer on it. Would you like to record more of that type of material?

We did that at Phil's house, in one take on an eight-track. That's the kind of thing I do when I'm at home working on little tape machines. I do lots of things like that but never thought about putting them on a record, because I don't think the record companies would accept it. I think they only accepted it in this case because it was so short and we snuck it on the end of the album.

Speaking of the record company, the album has three songs produced by Ted Templeman and [Warner Bros. president] Lenny Waronker. Is it true they weren't happy with the record you and Collins made and insisted on substituting these songs?

The story is that Phil and I made the re-

cord, finished it, mixed it and sent it off, and thought no more about it. I should say that we made the record on Phil's wish and my wish too. We wanted the record to be the first album to be a true portrayal of what I could do in all the areas that I play in: there was a little bit of reggae, a little acoustic blues, and a lot more of my playing that Roland [guitar synthesizer], sounding like a saxophone, harmonic and so forth. We were very satisfied with it as a concept album, you know, showing the different sides of me.

Well, Phil went on to his next project and I was doing some film music and that was the end of that. Then we got this message from Warner Bros. saying that the record wasn't strong enough. I asked why, and they said because it needed more songs that would be able to be taken off as potential hit singles. I was very upset of course,

because I'd never considered that to be a priority in my life, and still don't. But I suppose I had to bend with it and I wanted to know from them what they thought hit single material was. So they sent me some songs [by Texas songwriter Jerry Lynn Williams], which I liked a great deal. I said yeah, sure, I'll do them, and we'll see how it works out. But I think it would be best if you produced them, I told them. Phil couldn't do it; he was already locked into something else. I thought it would be best if Warners produced the songs, and provided the musicians. So if any mistakes were made it would be in their camp; it was kind of a little tactical game, you know. So I went back to America and did those songs in Los Angeles with what they call the A team. [The songs, including the first single, "Forever Man," feature such studio heavyweights as Toto's Jeff Porcaro and Steve Lukather, Michael Omartian and Greg Phillinganes.]

In essence you were saying to Warner Bros., If you're not happy with the record, you show me how to make it better.

Yeah, because I couldn't really see how the album could be better. But then again, I don't really know what constitutes making a hit record. I've always felt that it's pure emotion, that if you make a record that delivers something purely emotional and it's very strong and it connects, then it will sell. I've sometimes been proven wrong on that (laughs).

This album has received its share of negative reviews. Does it bother you when critics refer to you as passe?

No, it doesn't bother me when they say that. They're absolutely right—I am passe, but it's just a question of cycles. I think it would be crazy for me to be upset by that and to try to do something about it, you know, change my music. Because I'd be trying to find out what they like, and they don't even know what they like; they only know what they don't like. It's very difficult to model yourself on someone else's likes and dislikes. You really have to do what is natural for you to do. I can do what I do and no other thing, and just be me, and just wait for that cycle to come back to where I'm not passe anymore. It doesn't bother me, because maybe in a couple of years those people will like my music again. Or they'll say, "That new guy, he's good, but he's not as good as Clapton."

Would you like a big hit single?

Of course, I'd love it, but I would like to have a hit with something I like 100 percent, obviously something I'd written would be best. But you can drive yourself insane trying to find out what the right formula is. I think the best thing to do is just carry on writing, and hone it down until you've got something that you really are sure is good, and then go for that.

You didn't play "Forever Man" last night.

That breaks one of the most basic rules in the book: play the new single in concert. Was the decision not to play it a snub of Warner Bros., because the company had forced you to record it?

Not really. We rehearsed the song on maybe 15 different occasions and we rehearsed it when we came here for two or three days running, and could not get it right. And if it's not going to be right then we can't do it on stage. It's probably got a lot to do with the fact that my band didn't play on it, and there could be a kind of subconscious resentment going on. And it's perfectly within their rights to feel that way. But I don't

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think it's even that. Sometimes when you record something in a studio, you put it together in a kind of piecemeal way, and then you find yourself in the impossible situation of recreating it in a live atmosphere. And it can't be done, or it can be done but it's so uncomfortable to do that you don't do it. Because if something like that brings you down on stage, you should avoid it.

You recently made your first modern-era music video, for "Forever Man." Did you enjoy the experience?

It was fun, but I think it goes against the grain for me. It's a concession to the star-making machinery we were talking about. I've always found the video thing a bit obnoxious. Funny enough, when I was young I used to love to track down rare footage of Jerry Lee Lewis, Chuck Berry and people like that. I would have given my right arm to see that stuff. But now, you're swamped with it, it's the other extreme. There's something a bit tasteless and gross about the whole thing for me. The mystery is being taken out of the music. Just to turn on the TV and everyone's there, ramming themselves down your throat—ah, I don't know, it makes me sad. Music for me has always been something to close your eyes to, to have your own picture.

Will you be doing more videos?

Yeah, I guess, but I won't be in the next

one. We'll use an actor or something, so that I'm not exposed that much. I don't feel comfortable having my face on the screen like that.

You mentioned earlier that you had done a film score. What was that for?

Well, it's really just the intro of a film called *The Hit*, and it stars John Hurt. Someone else did the main music; I did an instrumental piece for the credits. It was really a way of opening the door into the film world. It gave me an insight into how I could actually get involved in film in a way that I'd enjoy. I've always been fairly frightened of that scene. You know, you can write a score and then not like the film when it comes out. That's the trouble: you really don't know what the movie's going to be like if you get involved on the ground floor. I was offered to do the opening music for *Into the Night*, which B.B. King ended up doing. This was last year, and I was in L.A. really up to my neck finishing the album, and I couldn't see that I'd have time to do it. Well now I've talked to some people who said they didn't like the film and that it was a shame B.B. got involved. I haven't seen it at all, so I have no idea. But that *can* happen. You have no idea what's going to happen when you start working on the score. When the film comes out you might be ashamed that you were involved.

Let's change gears a little. When you think back on your career, do you divide it into certain eras, or is it all just a blur?

Yes, it's quite a blur. Mostly because of what was happening to me in the beginning. I was pursuing a goal of my own, I think, and everything outside of that was replaceable. I never felt any great attachment to any of the bands I was in at the time. It's almost as if I was living inside myself. The music outside—what I was contributing to—was really quite temporary. That's why it was very easy for me to slip out of one band and into another, because I was developing something inside—an attitude perhaps—that wasn't really reliant on anything else.

What are some of your fondest memories of the early part of your career?

With Cream there was a camaraderie that not many people could have experienced in their lifetimes. I mean the three of us, chemically, were so suited to one another that there were times when we would all get stoned—we did a lot of dope in those days, nothing heavy, but acid and grass—and we started to develop a complete language that no one else could understand. And I think that only a really tight family type of group can really experience or understand what that type of relationship is like. We had a rapport where we could be in a room, the three of us, surrounded by people and no one else could get *in* at all. It was a tight, closed shop and we could direct that malevolently, or humorously, at

ON STAGE: E.C. RETURNS TO FORM

Like the Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton shed his blues-purist image a long time ago for that of a pop star, and he's never looked back; but during the course of his career the best moments have come as a result of the ongoing tension between his melodic pop/rock songwriting and his steely, obsessive blues guitar aesthetic. After all, the blues/rock hybrid is what he helped to invent with Cream, and without its inherent contrast Clapton's music has lacked a cutting edge. For a period in the mid-'70s Clapton seemed to have lost his balance, apparently content to merely stand in front of a band rather than command it, strumming an acoustic guitar and shunning the fire inside. Long obsessed with the self-destructive legend of bluesman Robert Johnson, Clapton gave the impression of an old man trapped in a young man's body, doing his best to catch up with drugs and drink.

Recently, however, Clapton seems to have woken up. The first sign of this was a knockout performance at the A.R.M.S. benefit concert at Madison Square Garden, followed by a well-received stint as a sideman for Roger Waters. But it was the show at Brendan Byrne Arena in New Jersey on April 25 that gave the most convincing evidence of his return to form.

Opening with a rollicking version of "Tulsa Time," followed by an equally energetic "Motherless Children," Clapton sang robustly and wielded his slide with fervor and precision, basking in the strong support of bassist "Duck" Dunn, keyboardist Chris Stainton, long-time drummer Jamie Oldaker and newcomer Tim Renwick, a gifted young guitarist. But it was when Clapton lit into "I Shot The Sheriff" that it became clear that he had really come to play. Leaning back and swaying slightly, Clapton cut loose with an impassioned, twisting solo, stalking and stabbing at every melodic and rhythmic nuance, gnawing doggedly on nasty shards of notes and finally digging into, and refusing to let go of, some howling, climactic lick that would bring screams of approval from the delighted audience.

Guitar ace Albert Lee, a former Clapton sideman, once said of him: "It's really weird the way he addresses the guitar. His



LARRY BUSACCA

Clapton: Walking the line between his roots and pop stardom

feeling is so amazing, and he can just lift it way above the everyday humdrum guitar." This was one of those nights, for above and beyond the knee-jerk pleasure process of a regular arena rock concert, here was rock's most influential and longest-reigning guitar hero playing as if his life depended on it, and the sheer authority of his phrasing and that cold-blooded guitar sound were transcending the ordinary pop event just as easily as they did in 1965.

But with hits to be played and fans to please it still was an ordinary pop event, and for all the abandon of the solos, a rather conservative one at that. Having not seen a full Clapton concert since 1974, one was pleasantly reminded of what a good repertoire of original material he's built up in spite of a decade's worth of unspectacular albums, and especially how much better they sound live when

he decides to make something of it. The obligatory slow passage ("Wonderful Tonight," "Never Make You Cry") was gracefully incorporated into the middle of the set, with Clapton in fine voice. But there were disappointments as well: sluggish versions of "Lay Down Sally" and "Cocaine," and two songs featuring each of the backup vocalists, Marcy Levy and Shaun Murphy, which were a bit forced and show-bizzy compared to Clapton's dead-natural delivery. One would also have gladly traded a real slow blues in the vein of "Have You Ever Loved A Woman" for the lumbering, slightly disjointed new "Same Old Blues." More successful was a medley of the Cream classic "Badge" and "Let It Rain," which gave Clapton's guitar a chance to raze a few more heads. But by this point the formulaic, give-the-people-the-hits aspect of the show was closing in, and was only partially dispelled by a spirited version of "Layla." A thousand lighters held aloft brought the band back for the encore, "Further On Up The Road," the closest they got to the blues all night.

Eric Clapton is still walking the line between his roots and pop stardom, living on blues power in a Top 40 world, baring a bruised soul to the masses who want to hear "Wonderful Tonight." And on that lonesome turf, there's still no one to touch him.

—Jonathan Gregg

anyone we liked. In any situation, we were totally secure.

I'd like to ask what might be a naive question about blues music. The belief that you have to suffer in order to create—do you buy it, or relate to it in any way?

That's a very intellectual way of looking at it. But I find that I live that way without actually wanting to. There's something in my makeup that keeps upsetting the cart. Anytime I get into a fairly secure, comforting position, I do something to damage it, like I'm setting myself up for a fall all the time. It's not anything I practice in order to play better. It simply happens that way. I think it's a bit late in my life to try and change that, maybe not, but there's probably no doubt that my music would suffer if I became a very contented, happy person. I'm relatively happy now, at the moment. I don't know how long that will last.

Several of the songs on *Behind The Sun* show a not-very-happy Eric Clapton. These songs—"She's Waiting," "Behind the Sun"—seem to be about your separation from your wife Patti last year.

I think it's important to share those thoughts in that way. I get letters from people who really feel honored that I've let them into my life in that way, and it's actually helped their life. If they feel like having a good cry or a good cheer, whatever they feel like, they can do it.

The British press had a field day with your marital problems.

We had our separation as a sort of mutual agreement. It was something that we discussed among ourselves as two people. But you forget that other people are interested in what you're doing. And when it got into the papers—the way they wrote about it—it really did hurt, because it hadn't occurred to me up until that point that it was really anyone else's business. And when you see it all in black and white it tends to become almost a little too real. You start believing what you read, and it multiplies the grief of all of it.

As far as what happened with us, the problem was on both our sides. Well, I probably—definitely—instigated it in many areas. First, by not involving her in my musical life. I tend to get very wrapped up in things. And this was happening during the period that I stopped drinking, and I was very dogmatic about that. You see, she likes to drink and I became very strict about that and I started to put her down. I was very intolerant. Then I would go out on the road and not take her with me; and so we began to drift apart. And after about a year of that you come to the realization that you've got very little in common any more. And that's when we decided to sit down and look at our marriage, and decided to have a trial separation. And thank God we found out during that time that there was a fairly strong bond there that we

hadn't considered at all. Neither of us had really understood this, but there's a real thread that holds us together. In actual fact, it was a good thing for us to have split, because we had a chance to find out how much we really did miss one another.

You're a teetotaler now, correct?

Yes, I haven't been drinking in three years, or probably closer to four years now. It was desperation. I could feel insanity coming around the corner. I was getting glimpses of actually losing everything. Not materially, but my grasp on the earth was slipping. And I was really having trouble keeping myself oriented. And that fright-

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ened the living daylights out of me, so I went for help. I would like now to be able to relax a little bit. It might be very unwise of me to do so, but it would be nice to be able to have a glass of wine occasionally.

And how about hard drugs? Ever tempted anymore?

No, that's way in the past. I don't think it would be a very good idea for me at this point. Especially touring. If I had nothing else to do and I could relax I might be tempted, but if you've got to keep a time schedule and you're working very hard, the last thing you want to do is put something in your body that's going to slow you down or alter your perception. Other people depend on me too much for that.

How much do you keep up with current pop music?

At home I listen to lots of music. If there's something good on the radio, I'll go out and buy the album. You hear lots of Paul Young now, and he really knocks me out. And Howard Jones, I love him. I try to be aware of what there is coming around all the time because it's always good to feel that you can actually like what's happening now. I'd hate to get into that state where everything is humbug, you know.

What do you think of some of the new hot-shot guitar players? Eddie Van Halen, for example, or Stevie Ray Vaughan?

Eddie Van Halen's great. I'm not really mad about the band. I think his technique is probably just a little bit too frenetic sometimes, but I think his idea of tone is correct, if you like. It's just a question of time before he really does become, you know, the greatest. Stevie Ray Vaughan I think is fantastic, too. A wonderful player.

What do you think of Prince?

Oh, now he's great. I was in the middle of the Roger Waters tour last year, and had become very much affected by the tour, the show. I was getting to be very dramatic in my thinking, and then the *Purple Rain* film opened in Montreal and we were there for a concert. I had loved Prince's records so I went to see the film opening day, and it tore my head off. I just loved it, really did love it. I went back to the U.K. screaming about how wonderful he was; I played the record for everyone and tried to get hold of a video. I was just completely converted.

Then he came over to England about three month ago, and they *hated* him. They slaughtered him, because he came over the way he is—he had his bodyguard, it was very much a showbiz-type trip—and the English people couldn't take it. If you're a pop star you have to be a good after-dinner speaker. And he just didn't fit in. But to me, he's great, he's what rock 'n' roll's all about.

And how about Bruce?

Springsteen? Oh, he's fabulous. I can't believe that man. And I haven't seen the show yet. I'm actually frightened to go see it now. I've heard so much. You know, it's like when someone tells you how funny a joke is, then you hear the joke and it isn't funny. But I know that isn't going to happen with him. I'm so much in awe of him I'll probably retire after seeing his show.

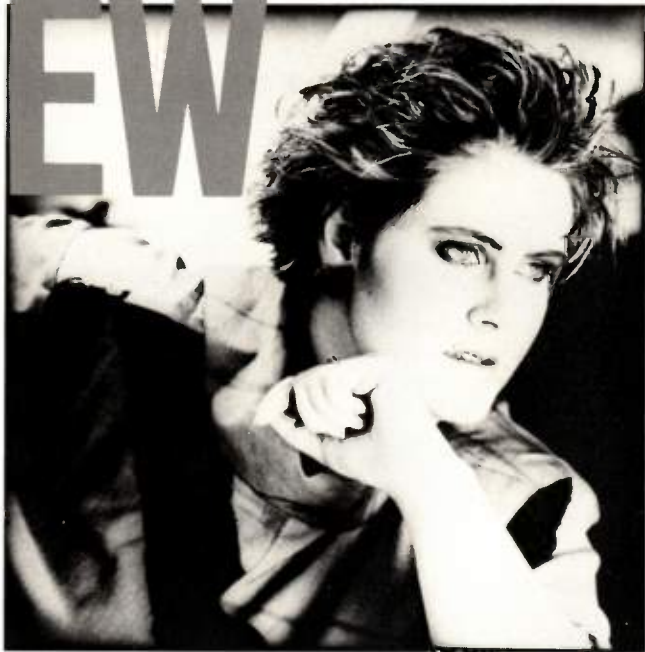
Recently you turned 40. What goes through your mind when you think about being 40 years old?

I'm very relieved. Thank God I got here. There was a period of time there when I didn't think I'd make it. I hated my 30s. I enjoyed my 20s, although I was a very serious person then. In my 30s I just dissipated, and by the time I was 33 I was really unsure of what I was here for. Now that I've reached 40 I can relax, in a way.

What are your immediate plans following the tour's completion?

Well, I'll do some fly fishing when I get back home—go out and catch some trout. It's very absorbing, and the ideal pursuit for someone who wants a solitary activity. It's a good time to think about everything and get it into perspective. I get a lot of good thinking done when I'm fishing. ○

WHAT'S NEW



THE SMART COMBINATION

Alison Moyet discovers the right mix

NEW YORK—Shortly after British electro-funksters Yazoo (Yaz to us yanks) split up in early 1983, vocalist Alison Moyet was at loose ends. "When we stopped, I really didn't know what I was gonna do," she confesses. "I completely lost confidence in myself, what I was going to do and whether I could do anything at all."

Then, the singer says, a record label confab finally began to set matters straight. "I sat down with CBS and we said, 'What am I going to do?' First we were going to come to America and find a black producer who could do a good get-down funk album. Then I thought about it and said, Well, there are so many brilliant R&B female singers, why try to emulate that when you won't cut it anyway, you don't have the same range? You must take the good things of that music and the good things of other things, mix them all together and make your own combination."

Important elements of the smart combination that makes Moyet's debut LP *Alf* such an entertaining treat are the contributions of producers Tony Swain and Steve Jolley (Banarama, Spandau Ballet), who co-wrote eight of the LP's nine tracks with the singer, including the Top 40 single, "Invisible." Still, Moyet's already looking beyond *Alf*—which takes its title from the singer's nickname—and what she views as its limitations. "There are pros and cons about everything," she concludes. "From working with Yazoo, I had the feeling sometimes that things were underdone, they were underproduced. From working with Swain and Jolley, sometimes I think things could have been a lot lighter and loosened up a bit. I can walk away now and go on to my next project, thinking, I learned this from Yazoo and I learned this from Swain and Jolley; now I'm going to go out and learn something else."

—Anthony DeCurtis

COUNTRY DICK AS A BLUE PLATE SPECIAL

Can't get bored at a Beat Farmers show

OAKLAND, Ca—Splish splash! Is he takin' a bath?

Yep. Country Dick, drummer and sometime vocalist with San Diego's Beat Farmers, says the tub is "as good a place to do an interview as any." Lucky for me, it's a phone interview.

Getting wet seems to be part of the Beat Farmers experience—and for some who sit close to the stage, sometimes getting bruised is, too, CD allows. When he steps out front to sing one of his novelty songs, "Everything takes to the air."

"I wouldn't want Country Dick on my table," laughs guitarist-songwriter Bubby Blue. Yes, he said *on* the table. "Sometimes I don't even want him too close to me on stage. I've had

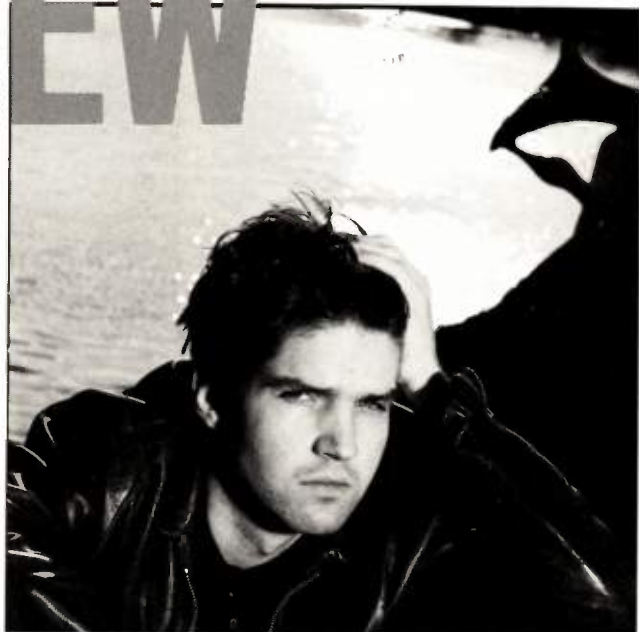
my guitars doused, and he's even fallen on me at times."

The Beat Farmers' rowdy stage work and raunchy country-rock 'n' roll-punkabilly bring to mind Commander Cody and His Lost Planet Airmen, a comparison that delights Country Dick and Blue. The latter points to a contrasting, "down-right serious" aspect of the Beat Farmers' music that reflects the four band members' (Blue, Dick, bassist Rolle Dexter and guitarist/vocalist Jerry Raney) mutual admiration for Bruce Springsteen. "Reason to Believe," from *Nebraska*, is included on the Beat Farmers' Rhino Records debut, *Tales of the New West*, along with a Velvet Underground song ("There She Goes Again"), John Stewart's "Never Going Back," and several originals. Quite a spread of styles, Blue agrees, but "I want people to see the Beat Farmers and, in the space of 10 minutes, laugh and cry and throw up in their soup. It's real difficult to get bored at a Beat Farmers show." —David Gans



ROSIE FITTS

WHAT'S NEW



PAUL COX/RETNA

PRIDE IN PRETENSION

New horizons in lexicography, courtesy Lloyd Cole

NEW YORK—Welcome to Mr. Cole's Neighborhood.

"I think it matters a lot that the audience likes a performer," says Lloyd Cole, who fronts Lloyd Cole and the Commotions, one of England's (by way of Scotland) hottest new groups. "I personally find it difficult to listen to a record by somebody I can't stand. I want people to know enough about my character to relate to me and even like me."

Nevertheless, Cole, who is in this country to tour in support of the Commotions' debut album, *Rattlesnakes*, has been accused of being pretentious (he reads serious fiction), arrogant and impatient. He doesn't actually deny any of these charges. In fact, he takes some pride in his pretensions.

"It's a badly-used word," he declares. "It's used a lot to describe what's banal about pop music. But to me, pretentious signifies striving for something, ambition, not just accepting the usual junk."

Cole simply hopes his listeners will look beyond his foibles and conceits to discover the real Lloyd Cole: a nice guy whose music reflects his preoccupation with words and sounds and the influence of electrified Dylan and the Byrds.

The 24-year-old Scottish-born singer/songwriter co-founded the Commotions as a trio with pianist Blair Cowan (they were students at Glasgow U.) and guitarist Neil Clark. The trio grew to an octet, which constituted an unholy mess. Cole believes the band has achieved a perfect balance as a quintet (Lawrence Donegan is the bassist, Stephen Irvine the drummer).

"The chemistry is just right, five of us, like the Rolling Stones," says Cole.

Pretension, anyone?

—Mark Mehler

ALL OVER THE MAP

Sussman Lawrence plays the field

NEW YORK—Sussman Lawrence songwriter Peter Himmelman gets tired of defending his band's eclectic tastes. "If we wanna hear something, we'll goddamn *play* it," he asserts. "Generally people like to hear a record where each groove is fresh. But people who are very commercial-minded, they say, 'What are you?' I'm gonna spend my entire life figuring that out!"

Indeed, the 21 tracks on *Pop City*, Sussman Lawrence's debut double-LP (I), offer enough stylistic range to keep anyone busy figuring out where this band's coming from. That is, anyone unwilling to drop the urge to pigeon-hole long enough to just enjoy the combo's frothy blend of edgy Elvis Costello-styled pop hooks, songcraft, word play and occasional reggae excursions.

Formed nearly six years ago in the "dull, middle-class" St. Louis

Park suburb of Minneapolis, Sussman Lawrence's polished pop did well with the fans but failed to find a groove among the hipsters in the hometown of Prince and the Replacements. "We weren't in any scene, other than our own," Himmelman drily states. In fact, Minneapolis, which began as "a great place to get started," eventually became a "trap." Now the fivesome lives in a house near New York City, where "the freedom and newness is so invigorating."

But next to what or where they are, *who* they are is another favorite question—no one in the band's named Sussman or Lawrence. Himmelman made up the moniker—and he's its harshest detractor. "What a name—*gruesome*," he groans. "It sounds like my dad's insurance company." And if you're wondering how you follow up a debut double-disk (Orange Records, P.O. Box 0316, Minneapolis, MN 55401), please note that Sussman Lawrence will be recording a five-song EP—intent on making sure that soon, no one will have to ask what or who they are.

—Anthony DeCurtis



BETH BAPTISTE

JULY 1970

TOP 10 JAZZ ALBUMS

- 1 **THE ISAAC HAYES MOVEMENT**
Isaac Hayes
- 2 **BITCHES BREW**
Miles Davis
- 3 **WALKING IN SPACE**
Quincy Jones
- 4 **SWISS MOVEMENT**
Les McCan and Eddie Harris
- 5 **MEMPHIS UNDERGROUND**
Herbie Mann
- 6 **COUNTRY PREACHER**
Cannonball Adderley Quintet
- 7 **GREATEST HITS**
Wes Montgomery
- 8 **COME ON DOWN**
Eddie Harris
- 9 **JEWELS OF THOUGHT**
Pharoah Sanders
- 10 **BEST OF RAMSEY**
Ramsey Lewis

TOP 10 POP ALBUMS

- 1 **WOODSTOCK**
Original Soundtrack
- 2 **LET IT BE**
The Beatles
- 3 **LIVE AT LEEDS**
The Who
- 4 **MCCARTNEY**
Paul McCartney
- 5 **ABC**
Jackson 5
- 6 **SELF-PORTRAIT**
Bob Dylan
- 7 **DEJA VU**
Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young
- 8 **CANDLES IN THE RAIN**
Melanie
- 9 **CHICAGO**
Chicago
- 10 **ON STAGE -FEBRUARY 1970**
Elvis Presley



STEPHEN SHAMES/PHOTON WEST

MILES AHEAD

Jazz-rock fusion is by now a cliché, a genre and a hoary reminder of some of the worst excesses perpetrated on the rock world. 'Twas not always thus. In 1970, following his initial forays into a fusion of jazz and rock forms (*Miles in the Sky*, *Filles de Kilimanjaro* and the acclaimed *In A Silent Way*), Miles Davis announced his intention to assemble "the best damn rock 'n' roll band in the world," and brought together a dream team that included, among others, saxophonist Wayne Shorter, guitarist John McLaughlin, bassist Dave Holland, and keyboardists Chick Corea and Joe Zawinul. With no rehearsals, Davis instructed his charges to start jamming, and got it all on tape. The result, *Bitches Brew*, rocked and sung and sold over 400,000 copies. A breath of fresh air in what was becoming a smug, corporate rock scene, *Brew* propelled Davis to a larger audience and his sidemen to solo careers, some of considerable distinction.

U K T O P L P S

- 1 **HITS VOLUME II**
Various Artists (CBS/WEA)
- 2 **THE SECRET OF ASSOCIATION**
Paul Young (CBS)
- 3 **NO JACKET REQUIRED**
Phil Collins (Virgin)
- 4 **SONGS FROM THE BIG CHAIR**
Tears For Fears (Mercury)
- 5 **BORN IN THE USA**
Bruce Springsteen (CBS)
- 6 **GO WEST**
Go West (Chrysalis)
- 7 **REQUIEM**
Various Artists (EMI)
- 8 **DREAM IN ACTION**
Howard Jones (WEA)
- 9 **ALF**
Alison Moyet (CBS)
- 10 **THE POWER STATION**
The Power Station (EMI)
- 11 **WELCOME TO THE PLEASURE DOME**
Frankie Goes To Hollywood (ZTT)
- 12 **SOUTHERN ACCENTS**
Tom Petty (MCA)
- 13 **RECKLESS**
Bryan Adams (Capitol)

- 14 **SO WHERE ARE YOU**
Loose Ends (Virgin)
- 15 **PRIVATE DANCER**
Tina Turner (Capitol)
- 16 **LIKE A VIRGIN**
Madonna (Sire)
- 17 **MAKE IT BIG**
Wham! (CBS)
- 18 **LOVE NOT MONEY**
Everything But The Girl (Blanco y Negro)
- 19 **BEHIND THE SUN**
Eric Clapton (WB)
- 20 **THE AGE OF CONSENT**
Bronski Beat (Forbidden Fruit)
- 21 **THE NIGHT WE FELL IN LOVE**
Luther Vandross (Epic)
- 22 **ELIMINATOR**
ZZ Top (WB)
- 23 **DIAMOND LIFE**
Sade (CBS)
- 24 **WORKING NIGHTS**
Working Week (Virgin)
- 25 **CHINESE WALL**
Philip Bailey (CBS)



SURETNA

BRONSKI BOYS MINUS ONE

One of England's hottest new bands of '84, Bronski Beat, lost a key member in April when vocalist/lyricist Jimmy Somerville left the band to pursue a new project called The Committee. According to a Tony Stewart report in the April 27 *New Musical Express*, Somerville was "unable to resolve the conflicts between his devout socialism and the wealth that came with the group's success." In the past year the band's debut LP, *The Age of Consent*, has generated four hit singles, and been cited in several best-of year-end polls. Bronski Beat's remaining members—Larry Steinbachet and Steve Bronski—have already cut a single with former Soft Cell leader Marc Almond in Somerville's place (it's due in June).

U.K. LP chart reprinted from *New Musical Express*, April 27, 1985

DANCE LPs

- 1 **WE ARE THE WORLD**
USA for Africa (Col)
- 2 **DIAMOND LIFE**
Sade (Col)
- 3 **PRIVATE DANCER**
Tina Turner (Capitol)
- 4 **THE NIGHT I FELL FOR YOU**
Luther Vandross (Epic)
- 5 **BREAK OUT**
Pointer Sisters (Planet)
- 6 **NIGHT SHIFT**
Commodores (Motown)
- 7 **CAN'T SLOW DOWN**
Lionel Richie (Motown)
- 8 **SUDDENLY**
Billy Ocean (Arista)
- 9 **RHYTHM OF THE NIGHT**
DeBarge (Motown)
- 10 **PURPLE RAIN**
Prince (WB)
- 11 **NEW EDITION**
New Edition (MCA)
- 12 **EMERGENCY**
Kool & the Gang (De-Lite)
- 13 **STARCHILD**
Teena Marie (Epic)
- 14 **ICE CREAM CASTLES**
The Time (WB)
- 15 **KING OF ROCK**
Run-D.M.C. (Profile)
- 16 **JESSE JOHNSON'S REVUE**
Jesse Johnson (A&M)
- 17 **CAN'T STOP THE LOVE**
Maze (Capitol)
- 18 **ONLY FOR YOU**
Mary Jane Girls (Gordy)
- 19 **WHITNEY HOUSTON**
Whitney Houston (Arista)
- 20 **MEETING IN THE LADIES ROOM**
Klymaxx (MCA)
- 21 **CHINESE WALL**
Philip Bailey (Col)
- 22 **ESCAPE**
Whodini (Jive/Arista)
- 23 **RAIN FOREST**
Paul Hardcastle (Profile)
- 24 **ALEXANDER O'NEAL**
Alexander O'Neal (Tabu)
- 25 **SECRETS**
Wilton Felder (MCA)



TOP OF THE WORLD, MA!

"We Are The World"? We are Number One. The USA for Africa album not only tops RECORD's chart, but ascended to the top spot in the *Billboard* Top 100 in only two weeks, putting it in a select league of LPs reaching Number One within a fortnight of release. The Beatles and the Rolling Stones each have five albums that have earned this distinction, while Elton John and Led Zeppelin have four. Worldwide, the "We Are The World" single has topped charts in Britain, Australia and Holland, and risen to Number Two in Japan and Number Three in West Germany. On the video front, RCA/Columbia Pictures has obtained the home video rights to a half-hour documentary of the all-star recording session (not the same docu that aired May 1 on Home Box Office). All this, and nary a Smokey Robinson solo to be found on the album.

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 (Polydor)
- 5 **METAL HEART**
Accept (Portrait)
- 6 **THUNDER IN THE EAST**
Loudness (Atco)
- 7 **ANIMALIZE**
Kiss (Polydor)
- 8 **RIGHT TO ROCK**
Keel (Gold Mountain/A&M)
- 9 **RISING FORCE**
Yngwie Malmsteen (Polydor)
- 10 **STAY HUNGRY**
Twisted Sister (Atlantic)
- 11 **TOOTH & NAIL**
Dokken (Elektra)
- 12 **THUNDER 7**
Triumph (MCA)
- 13 **STAY HARD**
Raven (Atlantic)
- 14 **RIDE THE LIGHTNING**
Metallica (Elektra)
- 15 **WASP**
WASP (Capitol)
- 16 **ROGUES GALLERY**
Slade (Epic)
- 17 **DISTURBING THE PEACE**
Alcatrazz (Capitol)
- 18 **78,000 DEGREES FARENHEIT**
Bon Jovi (Mercury)
- 19 **MARCH OF THE SAINT**
Armored Saint (Chrysalis)
- 20 **GO FOR YOUR LIFE**
Mountain (Scotti Bros.)
- 21 **SILENT SCREAM**
Shooting Star (Geffen)
- 22 **READY TO STRIKE**
King Cobra (Capitol)
- 23 **DANGEROUS MUSIC**
Robin George (Bronze)
- 24 **GLORIOUS RESULTS OF A MISSPENT YOUTH**
Joan Jett (MCA)
- 25 **POWER OF THE NIGHT**
Savatage (Atlantic)



BREAKING OUT

No Parole From Rock 'n' Roll was the title of Alcatrazz's first album, released in 1983, and no one in the band is looking for one. The quintet's fifth album, *Disturbing the Peace*, finds Alcatrazz continuing to refine its blend of heavy metal buzzsaw attack, interesting melodies and unusual arrangements into something unique in the nominal field of heavy metal. Instead of focusing on what lead vocalist Graham Bonnet calls the "dungeons and dragons" school of metal, Alcatrazz takes pride in living in the real world. "We're definitely making statements with our music," bassist Gary Shea told a *BAM* reporter. "There's a lot of that '60s attitude of making good music and saying something with it in us. Because of that we're a lot more upbeat in our outlook."

Dance and Heavy Metal LP charts researched and compiled by Street Pulse Group

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CASIO CZ-101



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8 lb. Amp/Speaker \$129.50



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MUSICVIDEO

REVIEWS

THE DECLINE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

D: Penelope Spheeris/100 min./Music Media/\$49.95

X, Fear, Black Flag, the Germs and other bands and scenemakers were filmed in the clubs and in their homes between December '79 and May '80 for this documentary on Los Angeles hardcore. Aware that the camera inevitably becomes a participant in such situations, director Penelope Spheeris avoids "deep" questions that can't be answered candidly and let the characters say and do what they wanted to. Performance and offstage footage, stark black-and-white interviews with fans and a visit to *Slash Magazine* are combined to create a rich portrait that actually justifies the film's title. Some of these characters are obviously playing it for laughs while others seem truly hostile and violent, and some pathetic souls appear so disenfranchised that this ugly scene is their only niche. This film is a well-made document of a phenomenon that is simultaneously both perpetrator and victim of the decline of western civilization.

—David Gans

ARMS CONCERT, PT. 1

D: Stanley Dorfman/60 min./Music Media/\$29.95

ARMS CONCERT, PT. 2

D: Stanley Dorfman/59 min./Music Media/\$29.95

All-star concert at London's Rainbow Theater to raise money to treat victims of Multiple Sclerosis from which ex-Face Ronnie Lane suffers. This was no celebrity sleepwalk, but a well-rehearsed, spirited show featuring Eric Clapton, Bill Wyman, Charlie Watts, and many more, plus Steve Winwood (on Pt. 1) and Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page (on Pt. 2). Of the two tapes, Pt. 1 is the better, because it features the ensemble more. Jeff Beck's four mechano-funk numbers, performed with his own band, seem somewhat out of place, and Jimmy Page just lurches around the stage playing aimless guitar solos. "I've got some pretty powerful friends," says Lane at the outset, as brief shots of the musicians in rehearsal are shown. And oddly enough, many of them had never played together before this occasion. Thumbs up for Pt. 1—Joe Bob says check it out.

—D.G.

PLAYBOY'S GIRLS OF ROCK & ROLL

A David Winters Production

Approx. 60 min./CBS-Fox/\$39.98

Well yes, they are girls, most definitely girls, but no, it is not rock 'n' roll except in the corporate, frontally- and laterally-lobotomized sense. This waste of videotape showcases 10 rising non-talents in never-before-seen (and never-should-be-seen) conceptual videos and "erotic, intimate nude scenes." Well yes, the girls are nude, and some are architecturally significant, but erotic? Chicken soup's got more going for it in the way of sensuality. As for intimate, give me *Inside the NBA* any time.

—David McGee



PROGRAMMING

NEW ADDS

Paul Young, "EVERY TIME YOU GO AWAY" (Col)
Meatloaf, "MODERN GIRL" (RCA)
Doors, "WILD CHILD" (Elektra)
Red 7, "HEARTBEAT" (MCA)
White Animals, "THIS GIRL IS MINE" (Deadbeat)
Third World, "SENSE OF PURPOSE" (Col)
Loudness, "CRAZY NIGHTS" (Atlantic-Re-add)
Kim Mitchell, "GO FOR SODA" (Island)
Strange Advance, "WE RUN" (Capitol)
Sisters of Mercy, "WALK AWAY" (Elektra)
Go West, "CALL ME" (Chrysalis)
King, "LOVE AND PRICE" (Epic)
Dead or Alive, "YOU SPIN ME AROUND" (Epic)
Autograph, "SEND HER TO ME" (RCA)

POWER ROTATION

Bryan Adams, "HEAVEN" (A&M)
John Cafferty & Beaver Brown, "TOUGH ALL OVER" (Scotti Bros./CBS)
Doors, "WILD CHILD" (Elektra)
Foreigner, "THAT WAS YESTERDAY" (Atlantic)
Frankie Goes to Hollywood, "WELCOME TO THE PLEASURE DOME" (Island)
Julian Lennon, "SAY YOU'RE WRONG" (Atlantic)
REO Speedwagon, "ONE LONELY NIGHT" (Epic)
Rick Springfield, "CELEBRATE YOUTH" (RCA)
Tina Turner, "SHOW SOME RESPECT" (Capitol)
U2, "UNFORGETTABLE FIRE" (Island)
Paul Young, "EVERY TIME YOU GO AWAY" (Col)

HEAVY ROTATION

Animotion, "OBSESSION" (Polygram)
Eric Clapton, "FOREVER MAN" (WB)
Phil Collins, "SUSSUDIO" (Atlantic)
Chicago, "ALONG COMES A WOMAN" (Full Moon/WB)
John Fogerty, "ROCK 'N' ROLL GIRLS" (WB)
Don Henley, "ALL SHE WANTS TO DO..." (Geffen)
Huey Lewis, "BAD IS BAD" (Chrysalis)
Madonna, "INTO THE GROOVE" (Orion)
Madonna, "CRAZY FOR YOU" (Geffen)
Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers, "DON'T COME AROUND HERE" (MCA)

David Lee Roth, "JUST A GIGOLO" (WB)

Simple Minds, "DON'T YOU" (A&M)

Bruce Springsteen, "I'M ON FIRE" (Col)

Tears for Fears, "EVERYBODY WANTS TO RULE" (Mercury)

U2, "A SORT OF HOMECOMING" (Island)

ACTIVE ROTATION

Fiona, "TALK TO ME" (Atlantic)
Glenn Frey, "SMUGGLER'S BLUES" (MCA)
Hall & Oates, "SOME THINGS ARE BETTER" (RCA)
Howard Jones, "THINGS CAN ONLY GET..." (Elektra)
Power Station, "SOME LIKE IT HOT" (Capitol)
Sade, "SMOOTH OPERATOR" (CBS)
'til Tuesday, "VOICES CARRY" (Epic)
Wham!, "EVERYTHING SHE WANTS" (Col)
Peter Wolf, "OO-EE-DIDDLEY-BOP" (EMI)

BREAKOUT ROTATION

Belouis Some, "IMAGINATION" (Capitol)
Dokken, "ALONE AGAIN" (Elektra)
Lone Justice, "WAYS TO BE WICKED" (Geffen)
Meatloaf, "MODERN GIRL" (RCA)
Northern Lights, "TEARS ARE NOT ENOUGH" (CBS)
Graham Parker & the Shot, "WAKE UP" (Elektra)
John Parr, "MAGICAL" (Atlantic)
Van Zant, "I'M A FIGHTER" (Geffen)

NEW ROTATION

Accept, "MIDNIGHT MOVER" (Portrait/Epic)
Peter Brown, "ZIE ZIE WON'T DANCE" (Col)
DeGarmo & Key, "666" (Power Disc.)
Kevin J. Friend, "I AM THE ONE" (Unsigned)
Guadalcanal Diary, "WATUSI RODEO" (Landslide)
Jazzy Jeff, "KING HEROIN" (Jive/Arista)
Kaja, "TURN YOUR BACK ON ME" (EMI)
Mountain, "HARD TIMES" (CBS)
John Palumbo, "BLOWING UP IN DETROIT" (HME/CBS)
Process & the Doo Rags, "STOMP AND SHOUT" (Col)
Gino Vanelli, "BLACK CARS" (HME/CBS)
White Animals, "THIS GIRL IS MINE" (Deadbeat)
Yello, "VICIOUS GAMES" (Elektra)

This chart reflects programming for the week of April 29 and does not include videos in recurrent or oldie rotation.

MARTIN PORTER + STEVE SCHWARTZ

A COMPACT DISC BUYING GUIDE

Who's who and what's what in CDs

Not so very long ago most people didn't even know what a Compact Disc player was—let alone consider buying one. But thanks to a wide range of machines on the market and lower hardware prices, the format has firmly established itself both in the audio industry and in the home.

Still, digital technology is strange turf for most people. They look relatively idiot-proof and the prices continue to drop, with one New York discounter recently offering a down-and-dirty model for only \$250. But what should the CD player shopper look for in these new-fangled laser record players?

First off, let's kill some misconceptions. The impression that if you've heard one CD player you've heard them all isn't quite accurate. There are distinct differences in the sonic quality of the various models, a condition based on the laser pick-up design and the filtering circuitry employed. But, frankly, most listeners will be so blown away by the CD's improvement in sound quality over the venerable vinyl LP that they'll jump at the first CD players they lay their ears on.

As a result, the differences from model to model for most consumers rest mainly on the available features. Some CD players only let you play the disc passively, while

others let you wander your way from track to track from clear across the room.

So what are the most important features to look for in a CD player? We asked this question of several leading manufacturers, and assembled the following shopper's guide.

Besides the obvious sonic advantages, CD hardware affords users a great deal of programming flexibility with options such as random play selection, sophisticated repeat modes, track scanning and wireless remote control. Therefore, Paul Foschino, Technics' national product manager, advises that consumers "shouldn't be too concerned with how low a price they get on a CD player; rather, they should look at how many features they can get for the price."

Infrared remote control has emerged as a popular customer feature and is now offered on many machines in both the mid- and upper-price ranges. This lazy man's boob tube favorite has finally found its audio milieu in the CD mode.

Foschino also mentions that the player's size should be another consideration for consumers.

"Some of the lower-priced units out on the market are really designed to fit in with audio systems used in Japan, which are a lot smaller than our full-sized components," he explains.

True audiophiles or even an occasional kick-out-the-jams rocker are concerned more with sound quality than with gadgetry. Consequently, Frank Applestein, Yamaha's national sales manager for



audio components, suggests customers bring along their own Disc when shopping for a CD player. After all, if you're into Twisted Sister, why judge a CD player based on its reproduction of Ludwig Van's Ninth?

By the way, CD shoppers are also advised to listen to units through headphones wherever possible to compare units' high frequency outputs and phase relationships: Applestein says the

Yamaha's CD-3 Compact Disc player: Emphasizing convenience (\$500)



differences are "subtle but important."

But when you come right down to it, price is probably a premier consideration for any CD buyer and, in this respect, the differences are quite extreme. CD players go for as low as \$250 and as high as \$2500.

Obviously, the product has to fit your budget, especially since you'll be investing a considerable amount of money in rebuilding your record collection from scratch.

But you also should inspect the quality of its construction and (when nobody is looking) give it a firm tap on the side while it's in the play mode; if the tap doesn't disturb it, odds are the engineers did their job in protecting the laser from jostling.

Proponents of the high end like to say "you get what you pay for" when it comes to CDs. Larry Jaffe, Studer Revox's director of marketing and sales, recommends consumers select CD equipment based on



Sony's CDP-302: The look and price of CD players to come (approx. \$320)

out" unit for as low as \$250, you're likely to be limited on all fronts. On the other hand, if you can afford to lay out a couple of hundred dollars more, your money will go a lot further.

Yamaha's newest CD player, the CD-3, is a prime example of the recent emphasis on convenience in CD player technology. With a retail price of \$500, the CD-3 fits into the price range formerly held by Yamaha's first-generation machine, the CD-X1. But the comparisons end there as the

CD-3 has added such upscale features as program indexing, random access, programmability for sequences of up to nine selections and a 12-function wireless remote control.

The CD-3 is also equipped with a

front panel headphone jack with a separate output amplifier and a "space play" function that automatically inserts a four-second delay between tracks for recording with programmable cassette decks.

Technics' sleek-looking SL-P2 (approx. \$500) also offers wireless remote control and flexible programmability. In fact, it's the only unit in its price range that allows the user to create a 15-step programming sequence via remote control. It also features programmable music scanning for playing one to 99 seconds of each track on a disc, bidirectional search and expanded repeat play functions for repeating an entire disc or any preprogrammed selection.

For those who prefer high-quality performance without any programmable frills, Sherwood's CDP-100 (approx. \$500) comes highly recommended. Although it's the company's first CD player, the CDP-100 is one of the best-sounding mid-priced units around, thanks to its use of proprietary LSIs and three-beam laser pickup.

At \$450, Sylvania's FDD104SL packs a lot of convenience into an economically priced package. It may not have a remote control device, but there's still plenty of programmability provided by random sequence play for up to 20 tracks, next/previous play, three repeat modes (repeat entire disk, a track or particular program), and three-speed search.

Finally, Sony's new third generation machine, the CDP-302 (approx. \$320),

features fully programmable operation for up to 16 selections in any order, a wireless remote control device and super-fast, one-second search to any desired track on a disc. It's the look and price tag of CD players to come.

THE TOP 10 ROCK CDs

While this past year saw the number of rock CDs swell tremendously, it should be noted that not all rock 'n' roll LPs take the transfer to the digital domain with equal grace. Quite frankly, some rock CDs sound downright lousy—much worse, in fact, than their analog counterparts.

There are three possible explanations for such bad CD apples: a poor analog recording to start with; a poor analog-to-digital conversion process; or both. One recent CD release that apparently suffers from both deficiencies is Jethro Tull's *Aqualung*, voted worst CD of the year in several listening polls. If your old LPs sound lousy, odds are they'll still sound lousy on CD.

But if a bad CD emphasizes a recording's shortcomings, a good one brings out the best in a performance. And, in the case of those LPs that were digitally recorded, such as Donald Fagen's *Nightfly* and Joe Jackson's *Body and Soul*, the results can sometimes be truly outstanding.

That said, here's an admittedly biased list of the 10 best-sounding rock Compact Discs:

- Donald Fagen
The Nightfly (WB)
- Bruce Springsteen
Born in the U.S.A. (Col)
- Lionel Richie
Can't Slow Down (Motown)
- Bob Dylan
Infidels (Col)
- Joe Jackson
Body and Soul (A&M)
- Yes
90125 (Atlantic)
- Culture Club
Colour By Numbers (Virgin)
- The Police
Synchronicity (A&M)
- Peter Gabriel
Security (Geffen)
- Billy Joel
An Innocent Man (Col)



Technics' SL-P2 CD: Sleek design, flexible programmability (\$500)

its long-term performance and dependability. It's a nice way to go—that is, if you can afford the \$1000-plus price tags that Revox offers the audio elite.

MOST VALUABLE PLAYERS

As noted above, the current generation of CD players is distinguished by the addition of high-end features (and/or performance) in the mid-price range. Although it may be possible to pick up a bare-bones "close



MIKE SHEA

A MUSICIAN-FRIENDLY COMPUTER

Pt. 1: Testing the music function of Yamaha's CX5M

What's a computer doing in HANDS ON? Well, in addition to accepting all the MSX standard computer cartridges and tape programs, Yamaha's CX5M's primary function is as a music computer. Craig Anderton included the CX5M in his Musical Electronics overview of musical computers in the June RECORD, but the question remaining to be answered for HANDS ON readers is, How much bang is there for the buck? (The buck is \$470 in this case.)

The CX5M comes with a built-in FM sound synthesizer; internal software allows access to 46 preset voices or instrument sounds. These can be recorded and played back through another area of the computer's internal 2000-note memory. Like many of Yamaha's other synthesizers, this one provides automatic bass line, drum rhythm and chord accompaniment, all entered via a standard (ASC II) computer keyboard incorporating 10 additional function keys that enable the user to enter and store the most-used commands instead of repeatedly typing them out. These functions are accomplished with the aid of on-screen graphics via a computer monitor or, with the assistance of Yamaha's optional RF-01 interface, a regular television set. Once a song is completed the internal memory can be stored on tape (the CX5M even controls the cassette deck), disk or optional MSX ROM data cartridges. True to its musical nature, the CX5M has a MIDI interface for use with musical instruments.

Add on an optional plug-in keyboard and the CX5M becomes a full-fledged instrument itself. Yamaha offers two keyboards, the YK-01 mini and the YK-10 (\$100 and \$200, respectively) with full-sized keys. The latter gets my recommendation, because it works very much like an acoustical instrument in sensing both the necessary strength of keyboard attack and pitch changes. Once powered up the YK-10 will not only record a tune (rhythm and bass lines are not recorded but instead have to be reselected before or during playback), but will also permit the addition of another part during playback. After recording a number of options are available: editing, changing the voice or the key, transposing over a two-octave range, adding and adjusting sustain, vibrato and/or tremelo, and mixing (left, right or mono) to the



The soul of Yamaha's new machine: Top left, the YK-10 keyboard; center, the CX5M music computer; at right, DX-7 Voicing Program software

CX5M's stereo audio outputs. Bass line accompaniment can be a major, minor or seventh chord, and there's also six pre-set rhythm patterns from which to choose.

Still, with all these built-in advantages, the computer didn't impress me on first run. I've been using Yamaha's FM DX7 quite regularly in the studio for about a year now, and I'd hoped the CX5M's sounds would compare favorably to this earlier model. Instead what I heard were sort of wishy-washy generalized voices and rhythm patterns that aren't as good as some of the inexpensive toy-like drum boxes available today. The key word in this criticism, though, is *generalized*, and here's why.

Yamaha has several optional software programs for the CX5M, all going for \$50 a pop. The YRM-102 FM Voicing Program, for example, aids in changing the voices by either editing the pre-set sounds or by starting completely from scratch. It took me, a knowledgeable recording engineer, a full day to get this program together and I already understood algorithm, feedback, amplitude and pitch modulation, frequency, harmonics, detuning, phasing, chorus, attack, decay, sustain, release, key scaling, low frequency oscillation, waveforms and all the rest of the close to 100 user-variable parameters. What Yamaha has done is develop generalized voices that can be slightly edited so that the

user can begin to figure out all the different options offered by the program. And the sounds generated with this software are indeed *mighty*. I put together some synth sounds that were truly heavy metal tough, and I got an upright bass sound that some professional jazz musicians couldn't believe. (When played way down the neck for high notes, an upright puts out a dual note; I got the CX5M to do the same).

Next insert the Music Macro software and change, to your heart's content, not only the rhythm patterns (in step-by-step form) but also the kick, snare, hi-hat (open and closed) and two tom-tom sounds. This program also facilitates multi-track recording and special effects; during playback, it offers on-screen matching graphics. The Music Composer software package will assemble and allow for print-out of a complete score. There's so much more, and so little space. Tune in again next month for a look at the CX5M's computer functions and vast interfacing options. For more information contact Yamaha International Corporation, P.O. Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622. ○

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 ●

VCRs MAKE SOUND RECORDERS

A new source for recording music

Music videos have made a difference to the music industry; no one doubts that. Now video recorders are poised to make wide-reaching changes in the way we record music.

It all started a few years back when Sony introduced the PCM-F1 digital audio processor, which converts an audio signal into a digital code. Unfortunately, though, digitized audio has a frequency response of about 2 MHz (two million cycles per second), which cannot be recorded by audio recording devices since their frequency response is about 1/100th of what is required. However, this digitized signal can be recorded with no problem whatsoever on the two video tracks of a VCR.

Those who combined the PCM-F1 with virtually any VCR available in this country were rewarded with a superb stereo recording setup—one that boasted digital-quality sound second only to devices such as the Compact Disc. In addition to virtually eliminating noise, wow, flutter and normal analog distortion, tape costs were quite low. (VCR cartridges, which typically hold several hours of music and cost under \$10, are even more cost-effective than open reel or even cassette tape.)

For less than the price of a good analog two-track recorder, musicians could now get into live recording gear that had virtually perfect specs. Of course, the system was not totally without problems, the biggest one being that you could not, and still cannot, edit VCR-based recording systems very easily (although editing systems do exist). Still, being able to capture sound in pristine form for a reasonable price meant that you could afford to rent a couple of hours in a studio with an excellent analog recorder, dub the decoded digital audio over to the analog recorder to create a master tape, then do any necessary splicing on the master.

Sound effects people could now take a portable VCR and battery-powered digital audio processor out into the field to cap-

ture incredibly life-like sound effects. Musicians with sampling instruments, such as the Fairlight or Emulator, could sample sounds on the PCM system, load the audio into the sampling instrument, then do any editing within the instrument itself. And for safety copies, the PCM recorder was the answer to a prayer—before sending any tape out to be duplicated or mastered, it was a simple matter to create a safety copy that sounded exactly like the original.

However, PCM recording remained a two-track system, which is a limitation in today's track-conscious world. Then at Musicom 84 in Holland, a sound specialist named Floris Van Manen demonstrated a simple way to do sound-on-sound with two

And as you might expect, this is the electronics industry, so prices are going down. Several companies now make digital audio processors; some are even designed as consumer-level devices, and have been selling for under \$400. Except for portable and other "pro" models, VCRs are becoming more affordable, and this bodes well for those interested in digital recording.

How this will affect the music biz is hard to predict, but there are some intriguing possibilities. Much of the music released in the past decade has relied heavily on studio wizardry and the extensive use of overdubs. Sure, there are the occasional live albums, but even these are usually doctored in the studio. However, since it's now quite

inexpensive to make quality live recordings with a wide dynamic range, we could see more and more musicians recording their music live. It's also possible that the public will become acclimated to clean, digital sound coupled with the psychological impact of a live performance, and start to look upon present-day overdubbing techniques as



Sony's PCM-F1 digital audio processor: Direct, clean, visceral

VCRs and a single PCM-F1. This was the first time I had ever seen anyone stretch a PCM system out to 12 tracks of overdubs, and the sound was very impressive. While not true digital multitracking (in the sense that each track cannot be altered once it has been recorded), this technique nonetheless allows for multiple digital overdubs with no noticeable loss of quality.

Another approach requires Beta Hi-Fi or VHS Hi-Fi, either of which adds to the video two more quality audio tracks. With one of these units and a digital audio processor, you can simultaneously record four tracks of excellent-sounding audio. This adds even more flexibility to live recording, since you can have additional mics for the audience, as well as two main mics or direct stereo feeds from a mixer. Only a few years ago, it cost thousands of dollars to rent a digital four-track; now, you can own one for about \$1100—figure on \$600 for a Beta Hi-Fi and \$500 for the digital audio process.

excessive.

Playing live is also being made easier by the new generation of MIDI-controlled sequencers. These can sequence several parts along with "live" music, essentially letting you program a "backup" band (such as drum machine, synthesized bass, and perhaps a "sampled" piano). Thus, a solo artist, instead of simply playing a guitar or piano on stage, can program a backup band then sing and/or play on top of that . . . and the entire result can be fed into the digital audio processor and captured with exceptional fidelity.

The widespread adoption of digital recording will no doubt raise standards as well; noisy effects will no longer be tolerated, nor will anything else that adds a "woolliness" to the sound. In the overstimulated '80s, PCM audio fits in perfectly—it's direct, clean and visceral. At the very least, it should hold us over until erasable optical disks make their debut in the not-too-distant future. ○



AROUND THE WORLD IN A DAY Prince and the Revolution

Warner Bros.

By
Anthony
DeCurtis

"Love is more important than sex," Prince concludes near the end of the extremely bizarre *Around the World in a Day*, and may-



be you think this insight's the worthy product of seven albums of work, but me, I was hoping for more. After all, the Royal One's baddest tracks always insisted that love and sex are inextricably bound in dangerous and liberating ways—to assert the preeminence of one over the other is like saying that flesh is more important than blood.

But both flesh and blood are notable absences on Prince and the Revolution's followup to the gazillion-selling *Purple Rain* soundtrack, and sex rears its lovely head in only the most

disappointingly obvious ways. Love is here, but it's not the ecstatic burn of "Dirty Mind"; the wedding-ravaging oral lust of "Head"; the taboo-exploding incestuous desire of "Sister"; or the charged Oedipal mine field of "When Doves Cry." No, love is here in its broadest, least trying, least meaningful expression: the oh-wow "love is all you need" universal oneness of '60s psychedelia.

Which doesn't mean that *Around the World's* sweatless spaciness lacks charm, whatever it may lack in muscle and



PHILIP BURKE

Prince's tenderest tunes.

But *Around the World's* core of meaning rests in its two closing numbers: "The Ladder" and "Temptation," where Prince's religious fixations and apocalyptic yearnings flower in full. On previous records, Prince's religiosity had been a sanction for his outrageous sexual vision, an appeal to a higher, self-identified, sympathetic voice beyond the narrow world of petty morality. Now Prince is gripped by the urge to escape the conflict-ridden "land of Sinaplicity" and his God sentences him to death for his inability to resist temptation. From the unified mind/body, sex/salvation world-views of William Blake and D.H. Lawrence, Prince has fallen into the divided, traditionally Christian scheme that rent (and rends) the souls of Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis, Marvin Gaye and Elvis Presley.

Of course, for all his talent and accomplishment, Prince still must prove that he can withstand such comparisons in any but the most incidental terms. The phenomenal success of *Purple Rain* has clearly freaked him, and *Around the World's* wistful sojourn into a pastel-colored never-neverland of unchallenged, unconditional love is his way of withdrawing from the controversy to collect himself. Another film project is supposedly in the works, but word is that no videos are planned for this album and, for what it's worth, touring plans are in limbo. "I have to go now, I don't know when I'll return, good-bye," are Prince's parting words on "Temptation," and however self-indulgent he's being, I think he means what he says. I also think he'll be back sooner than he currently believes, at which time one hopes he'll resume his responsibilities in the same edgy world the rest of us have no choice but to live in.

By
RJ
Smith

FABLES OF THE RECONSTRUCTION

R.E.M.

I.R.S.



Jefferson, I think they're lost.

R. E. M.'s new *Fables of the Reconstruction* evidences no reconstruction, but rather a diminishment—the band sounds predictable, stalled. And they don't rock. This is the dehydrated R.E.M. record—just add water to get that R.E.M. experience and it makes its own sauce! In short, *Reconstruction's* depressingly recycled and full of itself.

Perhaps the real deal is Michael Stipe, whose secret longing is to be the Donovan

of the '80s. He was a bundle of energy with a daydreamy way that never hid the fact that he wasn't any different from anybody else, but now he's a "poet." After last year's *Reckoning* clarified how unmysterious his lyrics and singing ultimately were, you'd have been forgiven for thinking he'd only get more articulate. Hope you didn't bet the ant farm on it. Some of these tunes ("Kahoutec," "Good Advices") hardly feel like they're about anything, and others ("Maps and Legends," "Gravity's Pull," "Life and How to Live It") shoot for art and miss. "Stay off the highway, word is it's not too safe," Stipe sings in "Green Grow the Rushes," and in his indirectness Stipe strays so far from the highway that he gets lost in the karmic.

But the problem's not just Stipe's reluctance to emote. Choosing Joe Boyd (Richard Thompson, Nick Drake) for producer must have seemed like a worthy experiment, but Boyd only succeeds in applying novacaine to the band's zip. Not that they're zipping much anyway. Consider guitarist Peter Buck, as much as Stipe the reason for R.E.M.'s appeal. Here Buck rummages around in his collection of terrific single-note figures and blocky chords one time too many.

There are two fun spots on the record: the jumpin' "Can't Get There From Here" (Nick Danger nods in assent) and the true and soulful "Driver Eight," a natch single. But for the rest of the vinyl, when they aren't redoing what they did before, they're diddling around.

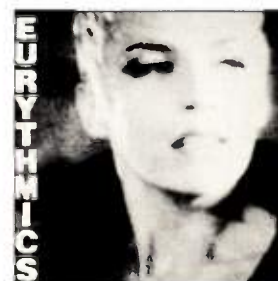
Look, R.E.M. are great, and what's really cool and shocking is that they're great and popular—they sell okay, they fill up big venues. *Reconstruction* isn't as bad as, say, the Jagger album. But, then, they promise so much more than he does by now. And because of that, the failure is even greater.

By
J.D.
Considine

BE YOURSELF TONIGHT

Eurythmics

RCA



What's in a name? In the case of the Eurythmics, pretty much everything. On the one hand, it's a clever combination of "European" and "rhythmic," which neatly sums up the band's sound; on the other, it's an incredibly awkward portmanteau construction, what with its maddeningly massed vowels and missing "h" (come now, do all God's Europeans have "rythm"?). And just as the band's name

dance jams. "Paisley Park" and "Raspberry Beret"—reminiscent of the folk-rocking "Take Me With U" on *Purple Rain*—in particular capture the beaming, trippy wonderment of such mind-blow classics as "Strawberry Fields Forever," "Penny Lane" and the Small Faces' "Itchycoo Park." The Eastern-accented title cut (co-written, like "The Ladder," by Prince's father) casts the album as a journey to the center of your mind, while "America" (with its cops from "America the Beautiful") and "Pop Life" offer some social commentary before concluding in blithe passivity that "Everybody can't be on top." A one-riff bore, "Tamborine" is dismissible, but "Condition of the Heart," an unassuming heartbreak ballad, is among

works better as an idea than as an actual word, the Eurythmics' music has the uncomfortable feel of calculation and conceptualization winning out over inspiration.

Consider, for starters, how utterly formulaic the songs are here. "Would I Lie to You" opens the album with an almost parodic display of British soul licks, from the driving Stax-style drums to the exaggerated punch of the horn arrangements. And things proceed apiece from there, bouncing studiously from the arch neopschedelia of "Here Comes That Sinking Feeling" to "I Love You Like a Ball and Chain," perhaps the best Yaz impression on record. Best of all are the album's cameo appearances, for the Eurythmics have taken care to recreate the familiar mannerisms of all their guests. "There Must Be an Angel" has Stevie Wonder's harmonica blowing over *Key of Life*-style changes; "Adrian" plumps its wistful harmonies and wry wordplay with Elvis Costello; and "Sisters Are Doin' It For Themselves" sounds like every ersatz Aretha Franklin number you've ever heard.

Granted, that doesn't necessarily take away from the album as pop product. Dave Stewart may not be the most innovative musician in rock, but he's more than capable of turning a second-hand idea into a first-rate single. Part of it is his ear for detail, which delivers such gems as the synthetic bamboo flute and marimba sprinkled through "Conditioned Soul." But mostly it's the efficient economy of his arrangements that turns the trick. Nor does it hurt that Annie Lennox always finds the right balance between melodic construction and vocal communication, so that even the most clichéd phrases—the chorus to "It's All Right," for instance—take on a powerful immediacy.

But *Be Yourself Tonight* isn't anything more than product, a smug display of pop smarts that ultimately outwits itself. Because the music is intended to go only so far, aiming for your ears and feet instead of your heart and mind, it wears thin a lot faster than it ought. After a few listens the songs simply drift by unheard, like over-repeated jingles. Which, in a way, they are. Trouble is, they're not selling us on anything, not even the Eurythmics.

THE SECRET OF ASSOCIATION Paul Young

Columbia

By
Nick
Burton

1 983's
No Parlez—
with its
stretch of



covers ranging from Joy Division's "Love Will Tear Us Apart" to Marvin Gaye's "Wherever I Lay My Hat"—established Paul Young as one of the gutsiest and most skillful vocalists to emerge from the Brit pop scene in many a moon. In fact, the LP was the kind of debut that made you wonder what Young could do for an encore.

Happily, *The Secret of Association* is a powerful second outing. Young and producer Laurie Latham (who was also behind the board for *No Parlez*) have again dared to set Young's gritty, expressive vocals against a strikingly eccentric aural backdrop, one in which electric sitars and backwards guitar loops mesh with Fairlights and Emulators. Though not always suited to every taste—for example, the high-tech, funk-up reading of "I'm Gonna Tear Your Playhouse Down" will not move aficionados of Graham Parker's version—the production and arrangements here are consistently stylish and intelligent.

Young's choice of tunes again emphasizes his range, as evidenced by the Trad-folk-tinged "I Was in Chains" (an old Sutherland Brothers and Quiver tune) and a lovely rendition of Hall and Oates' "Everytime You Go Away." The version of Tom Waits' "Soldier's Things" misses the gin-soaked, 3 A.M. intimacy of the original, but it's the album's only misfire. Of Young's five compositions (all co-written with keyboardist Ian Kewley), the standout is "Tomb of Memories," a bouncy R&B cut that settles into a Motown groove with the help of Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook's soulful backing vocals.

Latham's sonically pixilated approach may take some getting used to, but *The Secret of Association* is a beauty of an album that provides an outstanding showcase for Young's vocal chops, which are among pop music's very best.

WE ARE THE WORLD USA for Africa

Columbia

By
Paul
Evans

Okay, so it's the fastest mega-seller of the last three eons, everyone but your mother's on it, and the proceeds go to the worthiest of causes. But how about *We Are the World* as music? Even hermits are humming the hit—and it is a nice anthem. Sway-along melodies, easy-to-remember lyrics. Like most rock 'n' roll big bands, it steals pacing and production from the Phil Spector hymnal; like most things "Hey



Jude"-ish it starts slow and intimate and builds to rousing. And this Michael Jackson/Lionel Richie collaboration is even better as video. As each superstar lunges for the mike, we get a neat crash course in the pleasurable fevers of method singing.

"Tears Are Not Enough" is the Canadian partner—Bryan Adams, Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, Gordon Lightfoot and a host of Canuck popsters weigh in as Northern Lights. They belt as mightily as their States-side neighbors, but their song's the frailer vehicle. Once again it's anthem time (get out the glockenspiel), but the song gets clogged with clumsy rhyme ("We can bridge the distance/Only we can make a difference") and rhythm as stiff as a Coke commercial's.

The songs contributed by individual celebs offer few surprises. Sadly, Steve Perry opts for MOR with a so-so ballad, rather than offering one of his soul/slick rockers. The Pointer Sisters give up capable, if humdrum, funk. Kenny Rogers gives us . . . pleasant—you expected more?

Chicago comes up with "Good for Nothing," an indifferent loper with a lyric that seems a bit mean-spirited in the USA for Africa context. Tina Turner dazzles by investing a Motels' song with much more heat than it deserves. Prince presents straightforward Christianity, a celebration of He who died "4 the Tears in Your Eyes." The bar band verve of Huey Lewis is fairly engaging. And Springsteen plays it earnest with a live cut of Jimmy Cliff's "Trapped"—the number begins chunk-a-chunk with Johnny Cash-like guitars; at the chorus the Boss heads once more for the histrionic.

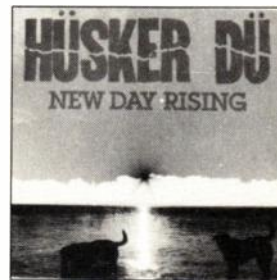
Obviously, the commendable impulses behind *We Are the World* mitigate (for once) against quibbling about art. And, aside from helping feed the hungry, the record serves another purpose—its ten cuts function as a time capsule, a fairly representative sample of the pleasures and insufficiencies of commercial radio '85.

NEW DAY RISING Husker Du

SST

By
J.D.
Considine

In the liner notes to *Zen Arcade*, Husker Du's ambitious 1984 milestone, the band exhaustedly notes that SST headman Joe Carducci "wants another album already, but not another double LP." *New Day Rising* is that album, but it's hardly the follow-up the band's boosters might have anticipated. Instead of taking another step



RAREST ZAPPA

THE OLD MASTERS, BOX ONE

Frank Zappa

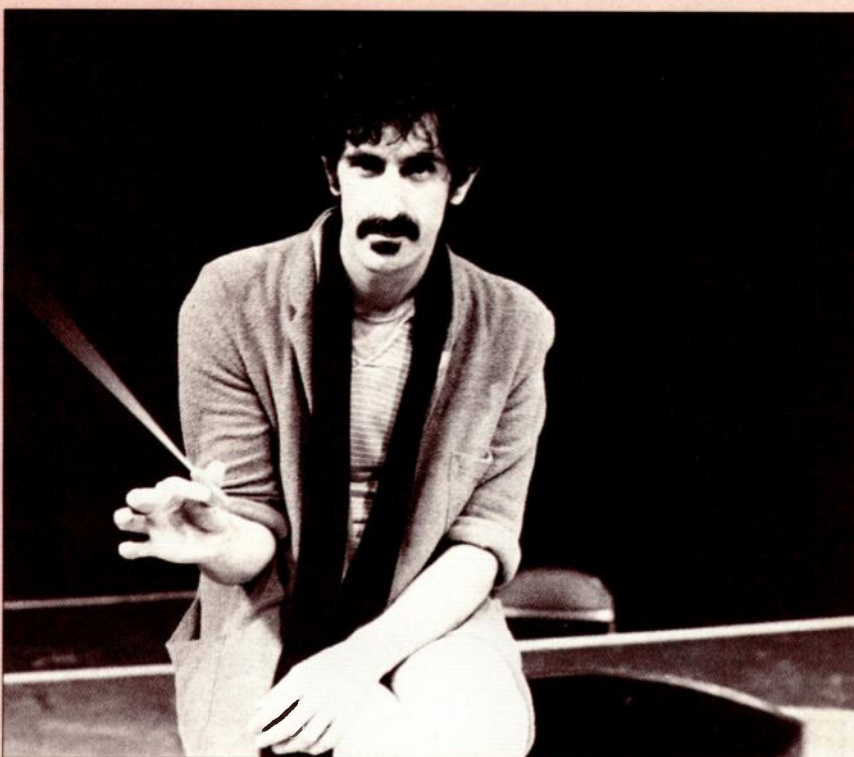
(Barking Pumpkin)

By Dan Forte

Frank Zappa is probably the most prolific rock composer/bandleader of all time—in 19 years he's released 40 or so albums, and who knows how much more's in the vaults. He's also one of the few whose *entire* body of work bears periodic scrutinizing. If anything in Zappa's catalogue embarrasses or frustrates him, it's likely because it wasn't executed or produced to his standard. The boy's hardly infallible—but if you picked up on his sides via "Valley Girls," you made the scene pretty late and missed plenty of the good parts. Some of his early stuff sounds dated but, let's face it, that's no less true of Jimi Hendrix.

This seven-disk set contains digitally refurbished versions of Zappa and the Mothers of Invention's first five releases, plus a "Mystery Disc." Because Zappa's remixes reveal sounds that even sealed copies of the original records don't, this collection provides more than audiophile nostalgia for old-timers and should enlighten more youthful initiates.

For *We're Only in It for the Money* and *Cruising with Ruben & the Jets*, Zappa even rerecorded bass and drum tracks. The "purity" of this approach could be questioned, though we're definitely not talking Elvis' *I Was the One* or Jimi's *Crash Landing*. In this case the actual *artist/composer* wasn't satisfied with the original vinyl product and for-



LINDA MATLOW

Zappa: Not infallible, but prolific and always interesting

unately got a chance to edge it closer to his standard nearly two decades later. *Freak Out*, *Absolutely Free* and the classic, but out-of-print *Lumpy Gravy* have been re-mixed without changes. *Money* has the new drum and bass parts and an uncensored version of "Harry, You're a Beast." *Ruben & the Jets* deviates furthest from its original form—for example, "Cheap Thrills" is slightly slowed down and begins with an upright bass line.

The "Mystery Disc" begins with a sort of Ennio Morricone spaghetti Western epic with private eye overtones. Some of the material here—such as FZ's early rock opera, "I Was a Teenage Maltshop"—has been bootlegged, but most is news to every-

one but Zappa himself. Highlights include a live version of "Plastic People," a '50s piano lesson, and a primitive live rendition of "Steal Away" displaying Frank's early blues roots.

Now here's the hard bottom line: a hundred bills for the seven disks, slightly altered covers, a booklet, pictures, info and assorted other goodies. Sound steep? Consider what buying near-mint copies of the originals would run, not to mention what your ears have been missing. If you can cover the damage, call this specific vegetable (818-PUMPKIN) and order up a box of Zappa. (You can also write to Barfko-Swill, Box 5418, North Hollywood, CA 91616-5418). ○

towards the freedom sketched by *Arcade*'s aggressive eclecticism, Husker Du burrows deeper into the limitations of hard-and-fast.

To a certain extent, hard-and-fast constructs limits in the same way that black-and-white does; while on the one hand you're left without color, on the other there's still a whole world of subtleties left in the infinite gradations of gray. That's roughly the way the Huskers approach things—hard-and-fast can be the chaotic rant of "Plans I Make"; it can be the amphetamine hooks of the Jam-styled "I Apologize"; it can be the white-hot roar of the title song; it can be most anything, provided it's still hard-and-fast. So the question becomes how to keep within the format without falling into the trap of monotony. Do you toss in a few spoken verses, like on "59 Times The Pain," so that the song accelerates into melody? Do you play

with the beat, applying unexpected turns like the quasi-martial pulse given "Folk Lore"? Or do you simply pile track on top of track until you're left with the buzzing density displayed in "I Don't Know What You're Talking About"?

Interesting questions, and in a way, *New Day Rising*'s greatest failing is in not taking the time to think them out. Sure, Husker Du runs through each of the approaches mentioned, but "run through" is about it—at the end of "Plans I Make" the band can be heard joking, "Who cares? That's the last song on the album."

By and large, there's far more execution than exploration going on here, and while that may suit Husker Du's self-image as mighty Minnesotan one-take wonders, in the long run, its implication that form outweighs content hobbles their music. Both Husker Du and their fans deserve better than that.

LIFE Gladys Knight and The Pips

Columbia

By Rico Mitchell

While she's enjoyed her share of commercial success, Gladys Knight has rarely attracted the critical attention accorded some of her soul-singer peers. *Life*—the best album of her career—should rectify this undeserved slight.

Life isn't your routine collection of two



or three potential hit singles crowded by competent filler. Six of the ten tracks here were written and/or produced by the team of Knight, Sam Dees and brother Merald "Bubba" Knight, with L.A. studio vet Leon Sylvers doing the honors on the other four cuts. Each tune contributes to a satisfying, balanced vision of Gladys Knight as a mature artist whose time to shine has come.

"My Time," the first single, lacks the immediate groove impact of 1983's smash, "Save the Overtime (For Me)," but the danger-combo of Jervony Collier's stalking Fender bass and Gladys' unvanquishable vocal lingers in the soul long after the feet have retired. "Strivin'" extends the message of faith and determination to all black and poor folks struggling in Babylon, while the Pips' gospel roots emerge full-blown on the stirring title track.

Gladys brings her best stuff to the ballads. *Life* has five of them, all immaculately produced, all gorgeous. Her breathy entrance on "Keep Giving Me Love" would turn even the sternest man into a midnight mover.

At a time when most urban pop is little more than balloon bread and soda, *Life* serves up authentic Southern cookin' that will bring you back for seconds and more.

FOR COLLECTORS, VOL. ONE Bob Wills

Delta

RARE 1953 CALIFORNIA RADIO BROADCASTS, VOL. ONE Bob Wills

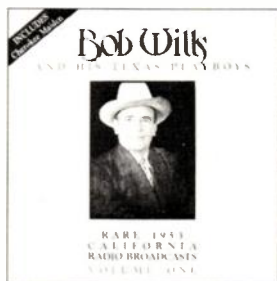
Delta

A TRIBUTE TO BOB WILLS/50TH ANNIVERSARY TEXAS PLAYBOY REUNION The Texas Playboys

Delta

By
David
Browne

You're not supposed to fuss with country music—not even a loose, spunky hybrid like western swing—but Bob Wills did it anyway. Disregarding country's focus on homespun vocalists, Wills instead concentrated on hefty big-band arrangements. A brassy fiddler in his own right, he was more inclined to give solos over to the jazzier, more polished members of the Texas



Playboys, his long-time, ever-malleable band. At a time (the '30s and '40s) when horns and drums—and sometimes electric guitars—were frowned upon by the Grand Ole Opry, he blatantly used not only those instruments but also electric mandolins and Earl Hines-like piano breaks. Thanks to him, the concept of country/pop crossover actually seemed respectable. Unfortunately, though, much of Wills' prolific output—for Columbia, MGM, Decca and Liberty—is either out of print or hard to find. These new albums, the first in a series that will see the release of over 40 albums of previously unissued Wills recordings, aim to rectify that situation.

You can hear the Playboys' careening eclecticism on "Milk Cow Blues," the oft-covered blues standard that leads off *For Collectors, Volume One*, taken from a slew of 1949 radio transcriptions. The song opens with the fiddles and pedal steel taking the melody, followed by a crooning, almost bland vocal from bass player Jack Loyd that gives no hint of sultriness. Suddenly, though, Alex Brashear's muted trumpet (shades of Satchmo) glides in, and a jazzy drum crack introduces Tiny Moore's clanking electric-mandolin solo. Then it's back to the pedal steel—full circle through several different genres of American popular music.

The rest of the album—which avoids Playboys hits in favor of lesser-known songs from their repertoire—covers much of the same ground. Wills was always intent on getting his band, whether large or small, into a solid groove and keeping it there, and there's plenty of such tight interplay here. The vocals are more problematic—the Playboys' original and best singer, Tommy Duncan, had left the band by this point—but it's hard to whine when Wills' own fiddle leads the band into a breakneck hoedown on the country standard "Arkansas Traveler."

When the Playboys' personnel dwindled, as it did in the '50s due to economics and Wills' problem-inducing drinking habit, the music invariably suffered. Such is the case on the self-explanatory *Rare 1953 California Radio Broadcasts, Vol. One*. Despite the presence of fine musicians like guitarist Eldon Shamblin and fiddler Keith Coleman, the six-piece band never quite takes off, and the format of the album—an entire 30-minute radio show complete with between-songs banter and commercials—makes for little more than a pleasant period piece.

The five-record *A Tribute to Bob Wills/50th Anniversary Texas Playboy Reunion*, recorded this past August in Tulsa with 48 former Playboys participating, is less compelling than *For The Last Time*, the definitive Playboys reunion album (with Wills participating) released by United Artists in 1973. Many of the musicians have since passed retirement age, thus accounting for a certain creakiness, especially in the vocals, but the instrumental kick of many of

these performances cannot be denied. Anchored throughout by "Take it away" Leon McAuliffe's still-sweet steel guitar, the band settles into a relaxed, mellow groove. The album soon becomes a tribute not only to Wills, but to the swing side of western swing itself. For more information on the Delta albums reviewed here, write to the label at P.O. Box 225, Nacogdoches, TX 75963.

DANCING IN THE KEY OF LIFE Steve Arrington

Atlantic

By
Greg
Tate



Steve Arrington is probably one of the best

young funk singers in the business. His work with Slave on such monsters as "Snapshot" and "Watching You" established his rubbery falsetto and melismatic way with a melody as staples of black pop radio in the late '70s. A couple of years back Arrington left Slave to form his own band, Hall of Fame, which pumped out two fine contemporary funk records that did about zip for him in these parts.

On this new disk Arrington is flanked by a crew of California studio funksters who are a tad slicker than Hall of Fame. But for a mainstream black pop record, *Dancing In the Key of Life* sports a pretty eclectic and eccentric batch of tunes. Take, for example, the rousing, kinesthetic "Turn Up the Love," which opens with Black Sabbath power chords that dovetail into an effervescent synth-funk arrangement. Then there's "Gasoline," which swerves around guitar-simulated car noises right out of the Adrian Belew effects box.

While the shadow of Stevie Wonder's verse looms over the LP's title, his musical influence is discernible in "She Just Don't Know," particularly in the buoyant bass line and Arrington's lilting phrasing of the jazzy melody. And the narrative melodrama of "Willie Mae," about an impoverished husband and wife who lose their first child, strikes achingly plaintive chords.

I'm doubtful this LP will garner Arrington the big hit he's been after since his Slave days. It's square in the pocket and tuneful, but lacks some erg of charisma. It's also just a tad less offbeat than it needs to be to come across as totally gonzo like, say, P-Funk. Nevertheless, there's a singular luminosity to Arrington's style and sound that warrants the attention of anyone looking for a polished alternative to both Prince-clones and formula black pop. If that's you, check him out.

BUTTONS & BOWS

Various Artists

(Dambuster U.K.)

HEARTLAND MESSENGER

Gerald Trimble

(Green Linnet)

MAD PLAID

Rare Air

(Flying Fish)

BOBBITYSHOOTY

Blowzabella

(Plant Life U.K.)

By
Ken
Roseman

Bluegrass and country music are more

popular than ever before, and so's the stuff that music sprang from—centuries old Anglo-Celtic folk music. Young artists today don't just recreate the old styles; they interpret them in fascinating new ways, even adding original compositions to the tradition.

The following albums by English, Canadian and American acts explore the instrumental side of this timeless music. Among them you'll find an amazing range of treatments, from solo guitar arrangements to full folk-rock workouts.

Buttons & Bows (Silo Records, P.O. Box 429, S. Main St., Waterbury, VT 05676) is a fine place to start this survey since it's a sampler set (two LPs, 24 cuts) comprising almost every possible way of playing folk tunes, from the lovely guitar adaptations of Richard Digance and Martin Simpson to stomping rock 'n' reel from the Albion Dance Band, Eavesdropper and John O'Connor.

Several of the most compelling tracks on *Buttons & Bows* are by comparative newcomers. The fiddle/guitar duo of Colin Reece and Ian Cutler contribute two fine tunes. Stuart Moffatt duets expertly with himself on acoustic and electric guitars on "Saddle the Pony," "Smash the Windows" and the English folk standard "The Banks of the Sweet Primroses." Then there's John O'Connor, who pulled out the stops for his version of the Irish ballad, "Curragh of Kildare."

Buttons & Bows is also an excellent introduction to some of the finest talent on the English folk circuit. Many of the artists represented, such as the Albion Dance Band, Martin Simpson, Richard Digance (who assembled this collection) and Dave Pegg (former bassist with Fairport Convention and Jethro Tull) have released

their own albums, which are well worth owning.

Gerald Trimble's *Heartland Messenger* (Green Linnet, 70 Turner Hill Rd., New Canaan, CN 06840) is, in its own way, as eclectic as *Buttons & Bows*. What's most interesting about this record is the way Trimble brings in his Missouri influences. For example, the "Heartland Messenger Trilogy," an ambitious suite taking up most of side two, includes two tunes where the ancient Celtic melodies are wedded to stomping swing rhythms.

Ontario's Rare Air are another matter altogether. The group studied deeply the traditional music of Brittany and brought it back to North America for the rest of us to hear. Breton tunes can be wild as a psychedelic rave-up or soft as an Irish air. The "Rockin' Off to Roscoff" medley on *Mad Plaid* includes both. Starting off is a moderate dance tune with the melody played by a "biniou-koz," a small Breton bagpipe, joined by flute and a set of clay drums which tap out a steady beat. A slow air featuring the bombard, a "traditional Breton oboe," with a higher pitch than its U.S. cousin, is next. Closing out the medley is a real raver, with the bombard and biniou-koz trading riffs like two hot rock 'n' roll guitars. If you ever thought folk music was too laid back, this'll change your mind (Flying Fish, 1304 W. Schubert, Chicago, IL 60614).

Blowzabella is an English folk band very different from their neo-pastoral colleagues. *Bobbityshooty* (Silo Records) is their third album and has about an even mix between original and traditional material. That's not so unusual, but how the tunes are played is. For along with the fiddle and accordion, Blowzabella use a fantastic variety of medieval and ethnic instruments. When you've got a fiddle and accordion leading a tune, accompanied by a buzzing hurdy-gurdy with a bassoon playing bass, you know something unusual's going on. It works brilliantly. Several of the tunes here (as with *Rare Air*) rock as heartily as anything you've ever heard, proving that electric instruments aren't necessary to create powerful music.

By
Duncan
Strauss

Joan Armatrading approaches songwriting with the power and simplicity of a fine, discerning journalist. On *Secret Secrets* she continues her penchant for probing, first-

person narratives chiefly concerned with the ins and outs—and quirks—of romance.

Balance always was one of Armatrading's great strengths in covering the romance beat. Some of her tunes expressed love-letter confessions of vulnerability; others communicated a sturdy, admirable independence, suggesting she could easily flare, grab someone who'd wronged her and shout, "Don't jack me around, bust-er!" This duality was captured with the skill and insight to be convincing, not contradictory.

This time out, Armatrading's independence has all but disappeared—the closing track, "Strange," is its only remnant. In that tune Armatrading gloats to a former flame, "I am not missing you." Otherwise, *Secrets* is dominated by insecure longing, not to say begging: "Why don't I know how to make you mine?"; "Cos any way you want it baby/Hey, you got it, power over me"; "Baby come back to me, don't leave this girl." Get the picture?

Unfortunately this new preference for limpness is matched by *Secrets*' sound. The well-crafted compositions aren't the culprits, and Armatrading has a typically top-notch band that includes Simple Minds drummer Mel Gaynor, Peter Gabriel's guitarist David Rhodes and, on two tracks, Joe Jackson. The problem is production. Armatrading has always worked with superb, appropriate producers—Glyn Johns, Richard Gottcher, Steve Lillywhite. But for this LP she hooked up with Mike Howlett (A Flock of Seagulls, Berlin), who may be good, but who isn't right.

In a dramatic shift from Lillywhite's big-bam-boom sound, Howlett has set almost all these songs in a washed-out, easy-listening environment that serves both the tunes and Armatrading's voice, which can soar, very poorly. Given this limitation, it's a tribute to Armatrading's multiple gifts that *Secret Secrets* retains as much virtue as it does. A sharper thematic edge and greater production focus should raise her next outing to her characteristic heights.

JESSE JOHNSON'S REVUE

Jesse Johnson

A&M

By
John
McAlley

As Prince's demons move him several giant steps off the groove line, the temptation to reevaluate Jesse Johnson's derivative solo debut becomes irresistible. After all, what at first could be dismissed as a



SECRET SECRETS

Joan Armatrading

A & M



lackluster exercise in appropriation and approximation by a former employee of Prince's Starr Company now begins to impress as a nearly heroic perpetuation of the synth-funk legacy Prince birthed six years ago with "I Wanna Be Your Lover." Unfortunately, such a second look at *Jesse Johnson's Revue* only makes this LP's cautious, dispassionate mimicry more exasperating and Prince's psychedelic short-circuit more disconcerting for friends of the funk.

Johnson's tenure with the Time seems to have left him in tune with funk's fundamentals but at odds with its essence. There's certainly a craftsman-like sturdiness to these jams, but what seems painfully absent is the personality and conviction that assign attitude to any band's groove. The Time, of course, were "Cool"; Rick James is surely a "Super Freak"; Lord knows Prince had a "Dirty Mind" before he took his bath with God.

Here, unfortunately, Johnson denies himself and the listener such a metaphoric handle and virtually becomes a nonentity on his own record. As both a singer and a guitarist, he seems content to let the constancy of his band's groove buffer him against the risks of self-expression. In a music that lends itself to aggressive self-promotion—and in the wake of such champion blow-hard predecessors as Morris Day and Prince—this timidity seems wildly misplaced.

We're not looking for anything as buffoonish as "The Bird," but a little wing-flapping might take Johnson to higher musical ground.

RECONSIDER BABY

Elvis Presley

RCA

By
Paul
Evans

Elvis addicts assert the significance of every syllable the King recorded. Every stutter and gulp, the faithful insist, qualifies as art or history or simply as fun. But on one point true-believers, critics and the uncritical all agree: El was best when he stuck closest to roots rock.

For Presley, home was country—and the blues. His remarkable, if naive, musical intelligence led him to interpret the blues irreverently. Wallowing in their expansive emotionalism, he toyed with the form, rocked it. Such happy bravery paved the way for the great cartoon blues of the British masters (Cream, early Beck, Led Zep) and made purists (Butterfield, Bloomfield, et al.) seem all the more crabbed.



Reconsider Baby is Elvis blues, mid-'50s to early '70s. It's one of the liveliest of the (innumerable) Presley repackagings. Here's Elvis gettin' down 'n' dirty with "One Night (of Sin)," Smiley Lewis's red-lit boudoir lament. He's stung but swaggering on Arthur Crudup's "My Baby Left Me," a bouncy turn that's rockabilly in embryo. He's a Sultan of Strut on "Ain't That Loving You Baby," a handclapper originally kicked out by Eddie Ruff.

We get a novelty rhumba-blues by Chuck Willis ("I Feel So Bad"), and a take of "Hi-Heel Sneakers" that triumphs over its misguided late-'60s sitar guitar. Elvis does Percy Mayfield's "Stranger in My Own Home Town" menacingly funky, and makes a nearly seven-minute workout out of Charles Brown's "Merry Christmas Baby."

While Peter Guralnick's intelligent liner-notes are a plus, *Reconsider Baby* sure ain't no exercise in archivism. This long-player pumps with blues-blood life and physical heat.

ONLY FOUR YOU

Mary Jane Girls

Motown

By
Laura
Fissinger

This was originally planned as a funny record review. Then I listened to the record.

By all rights *Only Four You* should be, at worst, harmless. For example, check out the photos of the group. The quartet's costumes look like parodies of hooker haute couture. The body language? Rejected by men's magazines for being too stupid to believe. And the stage names are too far-fetched even for real-life street life—"Corvette"? "Maxi"? Puh-leeze! Madonna, by comparison, looks like a radical feminist. What a hoot.

I'd gotten the notion this album was supposed to be funny from hearing its hit single (the video helped too), "In My House." The groove is solid Rick James (who wrote, produced and arranged the whole LP) and the patter is submissive enough for a doormat. I'd never heard the first Mary Jane Girls LP, obviously, so I was free to think all of this was some kind of inside joke between James and the singers. Yahhh, let's dress up like cartoon sluts and sing about being the sexual equivalents of 7-11 stores and make fun of Prince's musical harem girls, Appolonia and Vanity. And we can flip the bird at men who really do insist upon women with the wits of gerbils. Hey!

But it only took three songs to prove that this James gang isn't trying to whittle



away at sexism by stretching it to caricaturish dimensions and making it look ridiculous. This record is not funny. *Only Four You* is to women what Stepen Fetchit was to blacks. I don't know what we non-gerbils can do about stuff like this—in this particular case the bad music might bury it for us. I only know that Rick James, who has done some fine work in his career, and his puppets should be ashamed of themselves.

THE BEST OF THE GAP BAND: GAP GOLD

Total Experience/Polygram

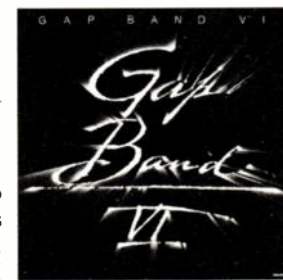
GAP BAND VI

The Gap Band

Total Experience/RCA

By
James
Hunter

The Gap Band is damn good. 1979's "I



Don't Believe You Want to Get Up and Dance (Oops)," the oldest and frankly loopyest jam of *Gap Gold*, shows this underrated Oklahoma-bred trio's debt to stupid/serious P-Funk swing. 1980's exact and flowing "Burn Rubber (Why You Wanna Hurt Me)" finds them giving up the funk as surely as they *don't* give up sweaty low-down soul grinding. With 1982's dynamic trio of "Early in the Morning," "You Dropped a Bomb on Me," and "Outstanding," they've staked out their own down-home/uptown, woolly-silky terrain. By the time you get to 1983's "Party Train"—one of the most transcendent grooves of our time—they sound like they invented rhythm. In short, *Gap Gold* is essential.

The instrumental Asian strains of "The Sun Don't Shine Everyday" weave through the first side of *VI*, the Gap's new album, and the desperate ballad singer Charlie Wilson puts the entire tune across with a rough urgency at the finale of Side Two. This thematic coloring and consistency imparts a certain sadness to *VI*, but then the unique quality of even The Gap Band's most robust songs is their edginess; get on board or bear the dire consequences is, for example, "Party Train"'s submerged threat. On other song fronts, "Video Junkie" and "Beep A Freak"—both about love and electronics, both untrivial and solid as rocks—are terrific Gap tunes. The effortless "Don't You Leave Me," with Wilson a great soul man in motion, finds a comfortable place here; the cut would leap off a lesser group's record. But the ever-deepening Gap is no lesser group, as the heat and coolness of *VI* convincingly testify.

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I don't know what it's like where y'all are, but from where I'm sitting it's show nuff Spring finally in New York City. Which means as I bask in a balmy 86 degrees at my typewriter that I am in a very upbeat mood. So much so that it gives me great pleasure to announce that my favorite new single of the month is by one of my all-time musical heartthobs, **MILES DAVIS**. No, I don't mean his insipid cover of Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time," but the B-side, "Kalia" (Columbia), a taut, funky and mysterious original that swells and ripens with each replay. Don't miss it, especially for Miles' buoyant ensemble blowing with Robert Irving's synthesizer comping, and Jon Scofield's most gonzo guitar breaks yet.

• A bunch of new things came through the chute this month; so new it's too early to predict just how they'll ultimately do with you people. Nevertheless, forging ahead, undaunted as ever by the possibility that I could be totally off base, I'll cite several of the more interesting ones.

• First is **NONA HENDRYX**' "Moving Violations" (RCA) title song for the movie of the same name. Nowhere near as peripatetic as her last glandular workout, "I Sweat," but guaranteed nonetheless to insure that there'll be no parking (not to mention wallflower action) on the dance floor. Another one with mucho party potential is **THE DEELE**'s "Material Thangz" (Solar), the latest offering from a group with the potential to pick up where the Time left off. Since I haven't seen 'em live yet—for some reasons midwestern funk takes an inordinately long time to make it to the Northeastern stages, even in the wake of Prince—I can't tell you if they've got as much presence but they've definitely got the energy and ideas (for further reference, check out their '84 jam, "Body Talk"), not to mention, judging from their album covers, a sardonic and sinister look. Rick James, by the way, has produced a new group he dubs **PROCESS AND THE DOO RAGS**, who also look like Time clones with their big baggy suits and wave jobs, but what they really are is a killer doowop act. Their first single, "Stomp and Shout" (Columbia), is an uptempo exhortation for the dance floor, but their forte is really crooning, a cappella even, versions of sweet-harmony oldies by the likes of the Dells, the Persuasions and the Originals.

• **SHANNON**, whose vocals prodded the beat box innovations on "Let The Music Play" and "Give Me The Night" into national prominence



(and set the stage for Chaka Khan's "I Feel For You") returns with "Do You Wanna Get Away" (Mirage), which is more of the same but equally mesmerizing, melodic and high-tech saturated. Like its predecessors, it'll bore you to tears before it grows on you, at which point it'll make you wanna wear your body down to the lilting beat. Another celebratory number is **STEVE ARRINGTON**'s "Feels So Real" (Atlantic), a love paean heavenly set to California techno-funk. Not gospel (or even "soul gospel," as the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences—the folks who bring you the Grammys—would divide black spiritual songs from white ones) but religious faith set to the groove of mainstream black pop. In that vein a more secular masterwork comes from the **S.O.S. BAND** as produced by former Time-men Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis; namely "Weekend Girl"

(Tabu/CBS), an effervescent ode to the working woman and the compromises she has to make to survive this nine-to-five world and still get some good loving on the side. More steamy is **MIDNIGHT STAR**'s "Curious" (Solar), which would cop a serious plea to convince me this provocative contribution to the art of foreplay wasn't inspired by Marvin Gaye's "Sexual Healing." This, by the way, isn't my way of nailing them for being copycats, because theirs is winsome make-out music in its own right. And comparisons like that should never embarrass anybody.

• So what's happening with rap? Well, by now you know all about Whodini's double-barrelled blasts, "Freaks Come Out At Night" and "Big Mouth," and Run-D.M.C.'s "You Talk Too Much," but are you hip to **MELLE MEL**'s latest apocalyp-

tic opus, "World War III"? In actuality, Mel needs to chill on this Armageddon bombast, because for all its good prophetic intentions, it's beginning to get a bit wearisome being harangued while waiting for the Big One to fall. Reason I even bother to bring it up at all is 'cause of the bomb B-side, "Melle Mel Mega Mix," which segues and cross-fades in and out of various of Mel's more memorable socially-relevant rants, like "Beat Street Breakdown" and "The Message." From this collaging emerges a captivating retrospective of this pioneer rapper's career and clear evidence of why we're going to be hearing from him for a long while to come—no matter how many lapses of doomsday overkill he falls into along the way. Lastly, let me hip you to **DEATH COMET CREW**'s three-track, self-titled 12-inch featuring graffiti theoretician Ramm-El-Zee, whose idiosyncratic and eccentric style of rapping makes for the aural equivalent of one of gonzo novelist William Burroughs' cut-ups. Meaning scattered, shattered, manic expressive, paranoid rapid fire stream-of-consciousness versifying set to spacey syncretism of beatbox bomp and *Star Wars* special effects noises. Whew! ○

BY GREG TATE
TRACKS

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