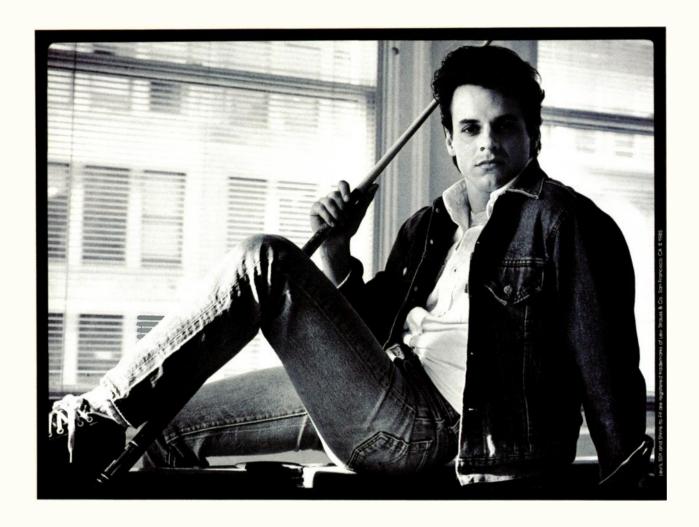
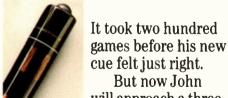
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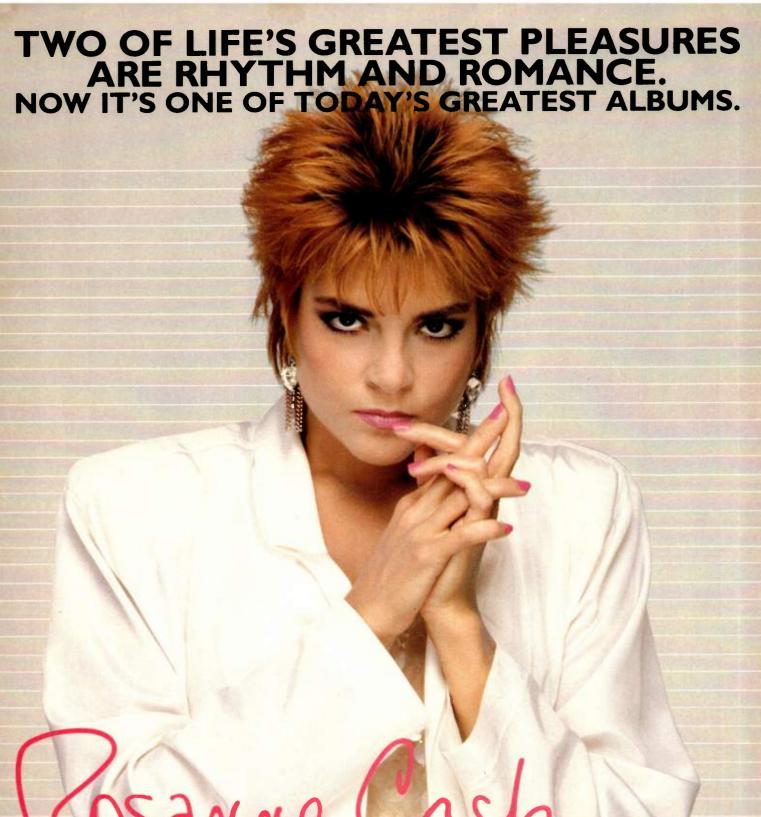
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Madonna is a knockout on stage in Atlanta; Bob Geldof wants to get out of soybeans and into music; the Mary Jane Girls are pretty regular, so they say; Jules Shear comes out from behind the pen (again); Jackson Browne, in an exclusive interview, discusses his most recent recording projects: producing two albums for Nicaraguan folk artists, after visiting "our neighbors to the south" firsthand.

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BRONSKI AND BEYOND

THERE'S ACTUALLY A rather simple answer to the central question raised in J.D. Considine's review of Bronski Beat (April RECORD). Speaking of recent openly gay rockers, Considine asks, "Why should political rhetoric served up by any of these groups be taken seriously when recent history tells us that there will be yet another equally poignant cause celebre turning up a few months down the road?"

The answer is because bands like Bronski Beat are not singing about some trendy "cause celebre"—they're singing about an inexorable part of their lives. To lump the Bronskis in with the "fashion fanatics" is to trivialize a deep and important part of their selves. How anyone who's seen the band's poignant "Smalltown Boy" video can question the nature of their political commitment is unfathomable to me.

Considine also totally missed the musical context of the record. He blandly refers to the Bronskis' "almost religious devotion to disco," failing to understand the significance of an openly gay band seizing control of a genre that has always claimed to speak for them, while using female voices to express blatant maleto-male desires. It was especially subversive, then, for the band to cover "I Feel Love," the hit by well-known homophobe Donna Summer.

Lyrically, Considine doesn't

seem to fathom the Bronskis either. He says the band "depicts the gay life as not all that different from what we heterosexuals live, at least in terms of hope and heartbreak." The qualifier at the end is not only vague, it also sidesteps the issue. The LP specifically intends to express gay experiences of oppression, and to apply the old "people are all the same" liberal pose here is to deny the very individuality of being gay. And while we're at it-I really like this "we heterosexuals" stuff. Does Consiassume dine really all RECORD's readers are straight?

Most naive of all, though, is Considine's apparent belief that gay politics is so established and confident that it "doesn't need the likes of Boy George, the Smiths, Frankie Goes To Hollywood and Bronski Beat to help things along." The truth is, gay liberation is at such an embarrassingly primitive stage, that even swill like Frankie help the gay profile, if only by being visibly, unequivocally out. Bronski Beat, on the other hand, are making some terrific and moving music-the kind that speaks directly to and for millions of people whose voices still remain muffled in the

> JIM FARBER New York, NY

J.D. CONSIDINE REPLIES: If Jim Farber wants to complain about the "central question raised" in my review, he should at least have the decency to quote me in context. The

paragraph leading up to the sentence in question had as its subject England's trend-mongers, not Bronski Beat; my point was that by turning gay consciousness into a trend like glitter or two-tone, "the fashion fanatics have done their pet cause a bad turn." Neither did the piece, as Farber insists, "question the nature" of the Bronski's politics. In fact, it applauded the band's "common sense gay politics." As for missing "the musical context," the review acknowledged that the Bronskis' beat "is a recent descendant of the Eurodisco beat that has been a staple in gay dance clubs"; if Farber wants to think that simply regurgitating that Don Ray/Giorgio Moroder formula amounts to "seizing control of the genre," that's his business, but I don't buy it. Then again, I've never subscribed to the theory that being politically correct counts for more than being musically interesting, as Farber appears to, and therefore won't applaud a record I find annoying as music simply because I agree with what it says.

KULT KOMMENT

THANKS FOR THE INTELligent Ray Davies interview ("Why Is This Man Smiling?" April RECORD). Jim Sullivan's probing questions captured the essence of the man and his music. Both, it should be pointed out, are aging gracefully. Davies' respect for his fans is in a league with Springsteen's, and that's no small praise. This is evidenced by the forward moving albums the Kinks release. No tired old "product" from tired old "legends" (are you listening, Stones?). Ray and his band are proof that creativity need not take a hike at age 40. As the "kult" grows larger, we can only hope the Kinks rock for another 20 years.

MARK SEILER Zurich, Switzerland

BRYAN BOOSTER

IN REGARD TO THE ARticle "Reckless Disregard" (May RECORD), rock 'n' roll critic Mark Mehler tries hard to be a pompous snob and succeeds. Cigar awarded. Even between his snide comments, Bryan Adams' sensitivity and understanding come through loud and clear. Mr. Mehler would have us believe that commercial success ruins an artist's credibility. If he spent more time listening to Bryan's music, and less time attempting to make himself seem superior, perhaps he wouldn't seem so small next to an undeniable industry giant. Being concerned about whether Adams says he gives 100 percent or 110 percent in performance leaves me with zero percent interest in reading further interviews of this nature. Bryan, you're appreciated and always welcome in west Texas. People out there are 100 percent behind you.

> MARK LAPIDUS Program Director KUFO-FM

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RECORD is a special interest publication of Straight Arrow Publishers, Inc.:

Chairman: Jann S. Wenner Sr. Vice President: Kent Brownridge

Main Office: 745 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10151 (212) PL8-3800

Advertising Department: (212) 350-1298

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INROCKON ROCKON ROCKO



CALLING Mr. band aid

Bob Geldof used to be a rock musician, before he got into the corn, soybean and barley business. He would love to get back into music someday.

"This is getting awfully boring," says the head Boomtown Rat of his role as a trustee and leading light of the Band-Aid funding phenomenon. "I'd love to just turn the running of the thing over to professionals and get on with my music, but it's all become so personalized; it's too closely associated with me. Do you think I like spending my days negotiating grain contracts?"

This is not to say that Geldof has gotten little personal satisfaction out of helping millions of starving Ethiopians. On a visit to New York to promote the Rats' new LP, In The Long Grass, Geldof spoke of the thrill of being handed a \$20 bill by a cab driver who recognized him as Mr. Band-Aid.

"In Britain, I can't even walk from one end of the block to the other without winding up with 120 pounds in my pocket. That's a great trust and it makes me feel great, not only to have that trust, but to see how much a lot of people care."

Funny, but it seems like only yesterday that Geldof was viewed in some quarters as a boorish swine, because the Rats' single "I Don't Like Mondays" (about a young girl who shot some people because she didn't like Mondays) was judged flippant and tasteless. Geldof, of course, rejects that notion as ludicrous, noting his Band-Aid work is of a piece with his previous songwriting efforts. "I'm just a pragmatist," he insists. "The Clash, with their stun-guns in Knightsbridge, are utterly naive. I'm interested in writing about things that could happen, or already are happening. 'Do They Know It's Christmas' is really not that different from any songs I've written before."

Meanwhile, Geldof says the halo around his head is rusting. He hopes the Rats will tour this fall and he can once again return to the beloved role of rock iconoclast. "Right now I'm a victim of the tyranny of boredom," he sighs, before ushering out another reporter and answering a few more phone inquiries about soybean prices.

-Mark Mehler

CROWN JULES

What kind of routine is this for a pop star anyway? Just as his video starts rolling, Jules Shear blushes furiously and hurries out of the room.

Not that this triple-A songwriter wouldn't enjoy being a little more of a pop star. In his own slightly strange fashion, Shear has been ambling toward a solid performance career for more than a decade, starting with the Funky Kings ("Slow Dancing") and the critically canonized Polar Bears. In '83 came the first solo LP. Watchdog went nowhere with the public but it went somewhere and then some with songwriting peers. Cyndi Lauper's version of "All Through The Night" made it to the Top Five ("Unbelievable, the day I heard that news"), and the two of them wrote four songs together. The rest of the recent collaborator list is pretty impressive: Elliot Easton, Lindsey Buckingham, Marshall Crenshaw, and the Blasters' Dave Alvin, to name a few. And with Susanna Hoffs and Vicki Peterson of the Bangles, Jules wrote

one of the cuts on the soundtrack of Steven Spielberg's *The Goonies*. For many years, Shear's tunes had mostly been covered by middle-of-the-roaders like Anne Murray. Now that his rock peers have discovered him, more would-be co-writers come courting than he can find time for. A dilemma, but not a bad one.

Of course all this new visibility has refueled hopes that Shear's own recordings will start to sell well-although so far, this spring's timeless and tender The Eternal Return hasn't done a lot. For whenever solo success does appear, Jules is struggling with an endearing ambivalence and trying to prepare for its vagaries. He pulls out a brand-new cassette recorder and sets it up: "I want to learn to do interviews better-do you mind if I tape this one?" Two hours later he's taped himself a good one, easy and confident-up until the moment his "Steady" video gets popped in a VCR. As the music of the clip fades, Jules sticks his tousled head back in the door. "Is it finished yet?" Nah, Julesin its own weird way, it's just starting up.

-Laura Fissinger

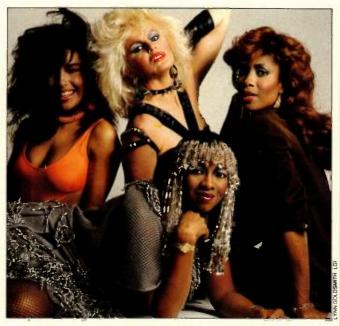


BORAHFEING

NRCKON BUILDING CKON ROCKON RO

MARY JANE CIRLS Beg to differ

Given the choice of intervi-wing the Mary Jane Girls or, say, the Mandrell Sisters, what line would you stand on? As Richard Pryor would say, "I'd be on that long line!" And the line to meet the Mary Jane Girls wouldn't be made up of just hct-blooded males, but would be littered with some hot-tempered females as well. For as their single, "In My House," moves rapid y into the Top Ten, substantiating their popularity with record buyers, some critics are balking at what they interpret as the group's unhealthy reinforcement of regressive se cual role models. Maxi, the Leather Queen, begs to differ: "There are women who identify with these four characters-Candi, the sophisticated lady; Cor-



vette, the Valley Girl; Maxi, the Leather Queen; and Jo Jo, the streetwise female. Some kids want to grow up like this. There are girls out there just like this, and there are some men that like girls like this." No doubt.

And on Only Four You—
the funk 'n' roll followup to

their gold-selling debut, once again written, arranged and produced by creative director Rick James—there are images those men would appreciate. Images of four women pining for, fantasizing about, acquiescing to or servicing the needs of their lovermen. Aren't these

songs, as written by James, more the reflection of a man's fantasy of what a woman wants from a man? "If you had a bad day at work," proposes Maxi, "wouldn't you feel more comfortable if you knew there was a lady in the back of your mind that said you were welcome any time you needed some peace of mind?" Well... yeah! But will a modern woman find her experience reflected in your songs? "We only sing what other women are afraid to say," insists Candi. "We're not ashamed to sing what's real. And we're not selling sex, we're selling emotions and feelings." So in the end, do you hold to the idea that women are still ultimately looking to worship dominant men? "Dominant?" cries Candi, annoyed. Jo Jo calmly clarifies, "No, not dominant. More like, 'Let's just understand each other.' O.K. Most women are dominated, but do you know anyone that's happy being dominated?" At one point I thought I knew that an--John McAlley

JACKSON BROWNE & THE NICARAGUAN NEW SONG MOVEMENT



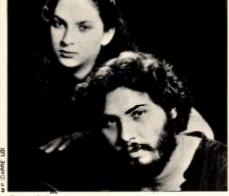
Sa vador Bustos

In May of 1984, and again in April 1985, Jackson Browne traveled to Nicaragua, meeting with artists, posts and musicians and surveying the effects of the Resgan administration's posicies toward the revolutionary Sandinista government. During his first visit, Browne was introduced to several singer-songwriters



Jackson Browne

of the Nicaraguan New Song, or Volcanto, movement, including Salvador Bustos and Salvador and Katia Cardenal, a brothersister duo who perform under the name Guardabarranco. The association grew deeper when the singers accepted Browne's invitation to visit him in Los Angeles. In the Ameri-

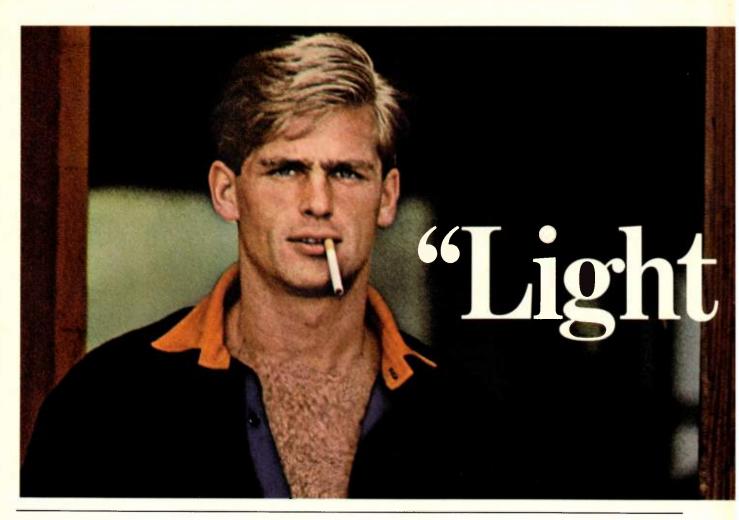


Guardabarranco

can singer-songwriter's personal studio, the Nicaraguan artists recorded their songs, with Browne producing and such Jacksonian familiars as Craig Doerge, Russ Kunkel and Bob Glaub contributing occasional spare accompaniment.

The elegantly simple and profound results—Guarda-

barranco's Si Buscabas (If You Were Looking) and Bustos' Tragaluz (Skylight)—were recently released by Redwood Records, the Oakland-based independent label founded by activist singer Holly Near. From his home in Los Angeles, taking time out from work on his own next LP, Browne discussed



his cross-cultural collaboration and some of the lessons he learned during the experience.

How did you get involved in this project as a producer and what did you hope to achieve?

On the first trip, I met these singers, and at a dinner table with various writers and painters and members of our two delegations, this brother and sister sang these amazing. beautiful songs, and one of the painters translated the songs, which I thought were extraordinary. It was because they were going to be in the United States that I was able to extend the invitation to come by and see me. I just said, "Come with me, we'll have a great time." I really didn't have it in mind to make an album. When they walked in, they said, "Okay, we're here to make our record," and I went, "Oh, god!" You know, it takes me a long time to make a record. It turned out to be a very enriching experience.

The album is very much like what I heard. We

didn't have the resources or the time, really, to do a large production, nor would I have wanted to, because, in most cases, these songs are very complete as they're arranged here. What I'm happiest about with Redwood is that with their attention to the translations and to representing them, they make these artists much more accessible than they would have been on any other label. What's really nice is that someone can put on this record and read the translations of the songs and experience them the way I experienced them the night I met them, hearing their voices and hearing the beauty and the unusualness, because they're very unusual as New Song goes. A lot of the other stuff is more folkloric. Salvador Cardenal and Bustos have a very sophisticated melodic sense.

What was it like for them to come to L.A.? Was there a culture shock?

Nicaraguans are into American culture, they're into rock 'n' roll. Plus these aren't kids from the coun-

try, they're from the city, they're middle class kids. I really shouldn't call them kids, 'cause they've been through a hell of a lot more than I've been through; they're kids-I still see the child in them-but they lived through a revolution. They were young when this happened and, as Salvador Cardenal told me, it was as if it was a crime to be young, because the people who were most suspected of subversive activities against the government of Somoza were people between 15 and 21. These were the ones that the death squads and the army were killing. They are city kids, but they took part in the literacy campaign. They were also sent to learn Mesquito songs and teach the Mesquitos Spanish songs. They also took part in the coffee harvest. Bustos, who's a pretty funny person, a very soulful person, he told how they're out there harvesting coffee and they have to carry a machine gun while they pick the beans. These are the people that the Contras are killing. They're killing

the farmers. They're poets, but they're patriots, too.

What did you learn about the role of music in Nicaraguan culture?

Well, the role of music is all-pervasive. Music is called the blood of the revolution, the blood of the people, because this is the thing that keeps them going, because in many cases, this is all they have for morale. They have so little of the necessities, let alone the comforts, that they sing to each other to bolster their spirits. Everybody sings, many people write songs. It's very well documented now that Nicaragua is a culture full of poetsevery third person is a poet. People don't pay for music there. Music is something that is for free. And they were telling me, if we wanted to make money playing, there's almost no way to do it. People say, "What? Pay for music? Where's your spirit? Where's your solidarity?"

How has contact with the New Song movement affected you?

Ah, well, you'll just have to



wait and see. I'm writing some songs that deal in general with the subject that we've been talking about. The New Song movement, it's a revelation that there are people who write songs about what's going on in their life. Here, we're not really encouraged to sing about social things. We sing about love, relationships and whatever, but it's a characteristic of Nicaraguan life that people have all undergone something similar to one another and they've had a lot of similar experiences. Everybody has lost somebody in the revolution or in the ensuing Contra war, many people have seen their families killed. In the New Song movement, when they sing about a war of necessity and when they sing about freedom, they're singing about something they struggle for first hand. If you have Americans singing about freedon, it's considered very corny because it's not something everybody questions in our lifetime here. People take it for granted. Hcw many times have you

heard that? Americans take their freedom for granted. It's true. The world watches America and America watches TV. We're busy with our cars and our stereo equipment, meanwhile, the Nicaraguan song movement, and the New Song movement, are really dealing with social things, and it's the lifeblood of these movements for self-determination.

One of the big problems the Reagan administration has is that they want to paint it in black and white-the Sandinistas are Communists, they're stooges of the Soviet Union. But underlying that whole philosophy is the idea that these brown people, our neighbors to the south, are not sophisticated enough to handle their own affairs and if we are not dominating them, then the Russians will. This is racism and it's at the very heart of our policies.

I'm ashamed that the American people can be fooled this way. I'm doing what I can to rectify the situation, which is not to preach on this subject, but to try to popularize the idea that you go and see for yourself.

How much possibility do you see for a cultural movement in this country that speaks to such issues and struggles?

I see it happening. I see students at UCLA bringing New Song people, both from the Los Angeles area and from Nicaragua, together for one evening of song. This is very different from Vietnam because there are greater links with Nicaraguan culture than there were with Vietnamese culture. The Spanish speaking population of the United States is the largest minority. It's going to be very difficult for the Reagan administration-and they're doing everything they can, they're lying through their teeth-to portray Nicaragua in these negative terms and I don't think it's working.

When you talk with somebody who is a smiling person with light in his eyes, who's spontaneous, who's truthful and honest, who carried a guitar in one hand and had to defend his homeland with a gun in the other, you talk about these people who are willing to criticize themselves, willing to talk honestly about what is going on in their country. What is it about that that is not more appealing than this pre-fab, canned, stale, mass-produced image of a fearless commander-in-chief who is clearly just one step this side of senility?

Ooh, oh, you know what I see just now? A very powerful image. Like a raven or a crow, there's another one, these mockingbirds are chasing away these big black crows.

Outside your house?

Yeah. This big black bird, and this mockingbird is flying right above it, trying to nail him on the head, and obviously the little bird can maneuver a lot better. You know how badass mockingbirds can get. That's really something, eh? Very strong image. I've never seen this, he must have come too close to their nest. Like Nicaragua, huh?

-Derk Richardson

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ON ROCKON ROCKON



MADONNA The Omni Atlanta, Georgia May 14, 1985

Although The Girl herself comes gift-wrapped, the Madonna concert is no surprise package: the show is sex. It's wholly froth, but it's pretty terrific.

Fittingly, we see the image on the big screen first. when icons of movie-star Madonna flash above the amps. She enters, dominatrix of a six-man band and two pretty boys, the latter functioning sometimes as Solid Gold dancers, sometimes as fake Temps backups. As slick funk pumps. everybody ponies, setting the evening's tone: prepackaged party-time, with enough of the Material Girl's untamed exuberance to keep the edges ragged.

As the hit fest rolls by—
"Borderline" (a bit lackluster): "Lucky Star" (requisitely twinkling): "Crazy For
You" (Madonna's finest
hour as vocalist)—Madonna
keeps her audience tantalizingly short of satisfied. The
set lasts a shade under an
hour before encores and
concludes with a doublewhammy, "Like A Virgin"
and "Material Girl."

The one revelation is the star's persona. Blue comic, hot tramp, addled Rockette. Madonna does endlessly pose. But her act is celebratory, approachable, inspired more by a kind of defiant folly than arrogance.

The audience? More girls

The audience? More girls than at any rock show you can think of, all doing their darndest to mirror Madonna. They're week-end wastrels, actually, preppie and peppy, junior achievers who've seized tonight's one chance to be with it and wicked.

Perhaps every generation needs reminding that rock and sex are sometimes indistinguishable. At the moment, Madonna's the apostle of the body gospel, and, as her show makes apparent, it's hard to recall a more fetching zealot.

—Paul Evans

GARBOIS

JOAN ARMATRADING, MUSICAL MADONNA (AHEM) OF LIBERATED WOMANHOOD, DOES THE PARTY HEARTY BY LAURA FISSINGER

ecrets? No kidding Joan Armatrading has secrets—a formidable aura of hiddenness has made her both Garbo-mysterious and annoyingly remote. It's probably hurt her career more than it's helped. But on this day, Garbo is nowhere to be found. Armatrading sits on a chair by the sill of an open 32nd floor window, tossing words and fits of laughter like confetti down on the mangle of hot cars and dusty pedestrians.

"Hey, I like Madonna!" She's laughing, but she means it. One half expects that sentence to make a sound when it hits the sidewalk. "I think her image is quite mad-I love all that glitz. I also think she has the perfect pop voice." Warming up to the sort of quasi-fanzine questions that artists like her rarely get asked, Armatrading provides a partial list of "likes": Cyndi Lauper, Tina Turner, Frankie Goes To Hollywood, watching pimps and prostitutes on New York's 42nd Street, excessive amounts of coffee ice cream ("unfortunately"), comic books, comedies like Beverly Hills Cop ("people who know me think I have quite a sense of humor"), Prince's schtick and music, drag shows, the colors red and black, a goodly number of songs by Led Zeppelin ("If I were going to do a gig of covers, I'd have to do one of theirs"). And the list goes on, giving peeks into an ultraguarded offstage life, and, better yet, poking giant holes in Armatrading's image as a Very Serious and Meaningful Musician and Feminist. As far as the 35-yearold Englishwoman is concerned, it's time-for a few holes, anyway.

Before, Armatrading wasn't ready; her audience was so unready they'd have swooned from the sacrilege and shock. Up until 1983's rowdy *The Key* and this year's *Secret Secrets*, Armatrading was revered as the musical madonna (ahem) of liberated womanhood. She didn't paint her face or

do silly things to her hair. The vast majority of her songs made no reference to that cornerstone of female pop perspective, "I have a man, therefore I am." She was one of the only female pop stars ever, in fact, to flaunt autonomy instead of anatomy. Her music was as big-time as any male's-an amalgam of folk, pop, jazz, reggae and blues that got more complicated and distinctive with each LP (10 to date). Even pop fans who like their women to avoid clothing and complex thought saw the talent. But the aloofness, quite possibly, kept people away more than anything else, and the lack of funny bone didn't help either. Clearly, Joan was contributing to the soundtrack of the female march toward freedom. But at the party after the march, would Joan Armatrading cut loose and do anything worth being embarrassed about the next day?

On the dates of her '85 world tour, however, Joan is finally doing the party hearty, and up there for folks to see. The change in her persona is startling, so much so that graceless reporters blurt questions like "so what happened to you?"

"Nothing," chuckles Armatrading. "I'm just enjoying myself more, that's all. People say it's usually that the more you do this kind of career, the less you enjoy it. I actually seem to be getting it the other way around—the more I do it, the more I enjoy it." She chews on a long, slender finger and peruses the high-rise honeycombs across the way. "I don't know why. I'm obviously more confident and relaxed, but that doesn't necessarily mean you're going to enjoy yourself more. But that's what's happening. Sometimes I'm almost at the point where I don't really care if the audience likes it or not"-another chuckle-"I'm just having such a good time."

Not only are people supposed to enjoy rock careers less the longer they do them, they're also supposed to soften the rock. Not so, Joan? "I think I've proved those things aren't true. Yah." She stops tugging at the small braids fringing her neck and taps on a list of her albums flapping on the sill. "A lot of people have said that Secret Secrets is their favorite album of mine to date—if people don't like it, they're keeping it to themselves." Actually, some of the feminist fans are being fairly vocal in their complaints—the lyrics are too mainstream pop, some say, and the music is, well, too hard. Even though the record is less rock 'n' roll than The Key, the big beat reigns.

The fingertip taps on the album list again. "I point to How Cruel and say that's where people can notice the change, but that's not where I noticed it. I'd been writing all sorts of rock things and uptempo things before that—they just didn't fit in with any given batch of songs when the time would come to record." On Secret Secrets, the songs fit together by mood and psychological subtext rather than surface style, which is a rare achievement. So comfortably living next to the rough cuts are some of her best ballads ever, notably "Love By You," featuring only Joan's voice, Joe Jackson's piano and a more vulnerable Armatrading than has been heard before. "I wanted it to be that wide open." she says. "When we were playing it, I wanted it to be intimate and really personal, just these two people being private together." In earlier years, wouldn't she have backed away from that kind of disclosure? "Yah. Yah, but not now."

According to Joan, the same confidence that's dropping her musical defenses is also peeling away some layers of her public persona. Prior to '83, her relationship with the star-making machinery was not so hot. More than a few reporters told tales about her curtness, about how fast she'd walk out on an interview if the questions got too dumb or too personal. It still isn't okay to ask Armatrading about her personal life,



but she doesn't walk out on interviews anymore.

"I'm much more relaxed as a person now. Yah, absolutely. I was very shy, or am still very shy, but I'm better at not showing it. That's a combination of the success I've had, and aquiring things I've always wanted, and just plain old growing up. I started out thirteen years ago, and I've done the growing up in those years that everybody does, famous or not. All that spills over into singing and playing and being on stage and meeting people." Armatrading's lip curls up under her nose in a smile made of self-congratulation and sheer relief. "I'm so much better at talking to people now. It used to be that if someone asked me a question, I'd just say 'yes' or 'no.' But now I can actually string a sentence together." Another alto chuckle. "It's still slow." The temper has slowed, and she seems proud. "I did a phone interview recently with a bloke who was stepping in for another bloke, and this one didn't know anything but my name. I found myself getting annoyed and then I thought, Well, it's not his fault, really, somebody's put him in this position. I didn't quite give him one-word answersstill, I was rather short with him. But even there I'm able to handle this sort of thing much better. Before, I would have been really terrible."

Some people have said it went beyond temper; they said Joan Armatrading just didn't like her fellow human beings. "It's not so far from the truth. There's a song on one of the LPs called 'People,' where I say, 'people to the left of me, people to the right of me, I want to be alone.' And there's a similar thought in 'Me Myself I' ." Armatrading pauses to think for a moment, the exotic smoothness of her features hiding the thoughts' details. "It's not because I didn't like people—I just didn't like a lot of people around me all at once. I still don't particularly like to be in big crowds. Not like on stage, but at a party or the like. I'm much more at ease now, that whole thing about being more grown-up and confident. I suppose those negative feelings I had about people used to come across. But now, I'm able to recognize when I want to be on my own and have privacy, and take it at those times. And when I'm on tour, and 'I'M OBVIOUSLY MORE CONFIDENT AND RELAXED, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU'RE GOING TO ENJOY YOURSELF MORE. BUT THAT'S WHAT'S HAPPENING.'

I should be with people, I can just relax into that."

Armatrading continues to talk with minimal prompting. "It can be confusing, especially at the start. You don't know what it's like to do an interview, or what the interviewer will be like, or what the questions are going to be, or how you should act—like a pop star or what, you know what I mean? So you've got to learn all that. When I was growing up, I spent most of my time on my own, except for when I was at school. You can't come out of that into being with stacks of people and talking about yourself all the time—it wouldn't be natural, not if you're a real person."

Armatrading toys with the sleek sunglasses that hang by their bow from the neck of a nearly-trendy t-shirt. Save for the regulation blue jeans, in fact, nothing about her looks like the earnest, somber feminist icon of old. "I wouldn't have been comfortable a few years ago wearing some of the outfits I wear now. Too dressed up, you know?" How about too extroverted? "I am an introvert, yes-I'm never going to be Cyndi Lauper. I met her once-I quite like her music and the whole 'mad' image—but you couldn't find two more different people." Armatrading's face shifts to mischief. "Meeting her was an interesting moment. I can imagine that I'll be even more outgoing than I am now, but I'll never get to her stage—and that's what we want, all different kinds of people. Just like we want all different sorts of women musicians, from me to Cyndi or Madonna or whomever. Men have had that for yearswhy not us?" But what does Armatrading say to her feminist faithful about the likes of Madonna? "Well, the right to choose, that's what you were fighting for, right?"

A footnote on secrets. Especially now that she's more relaxed around people, Armatrading's face invites confessions and disclosures. Joan nods. "Yah, people seem to tell me things a lot. I have no idea why." Are their secrets safe with her? "Well, people who know me would say so, but I don't know that strangers can read that. You think so?"

How could they miss it?

Wonder what Madonna would tell her?



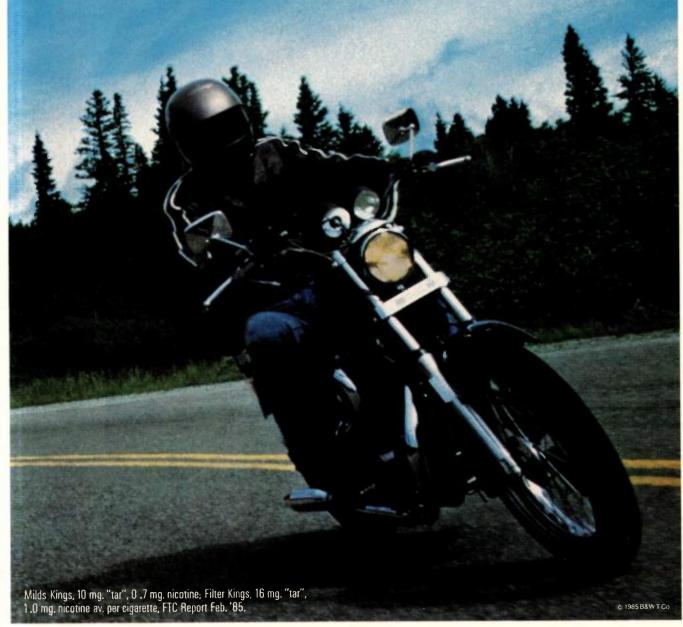
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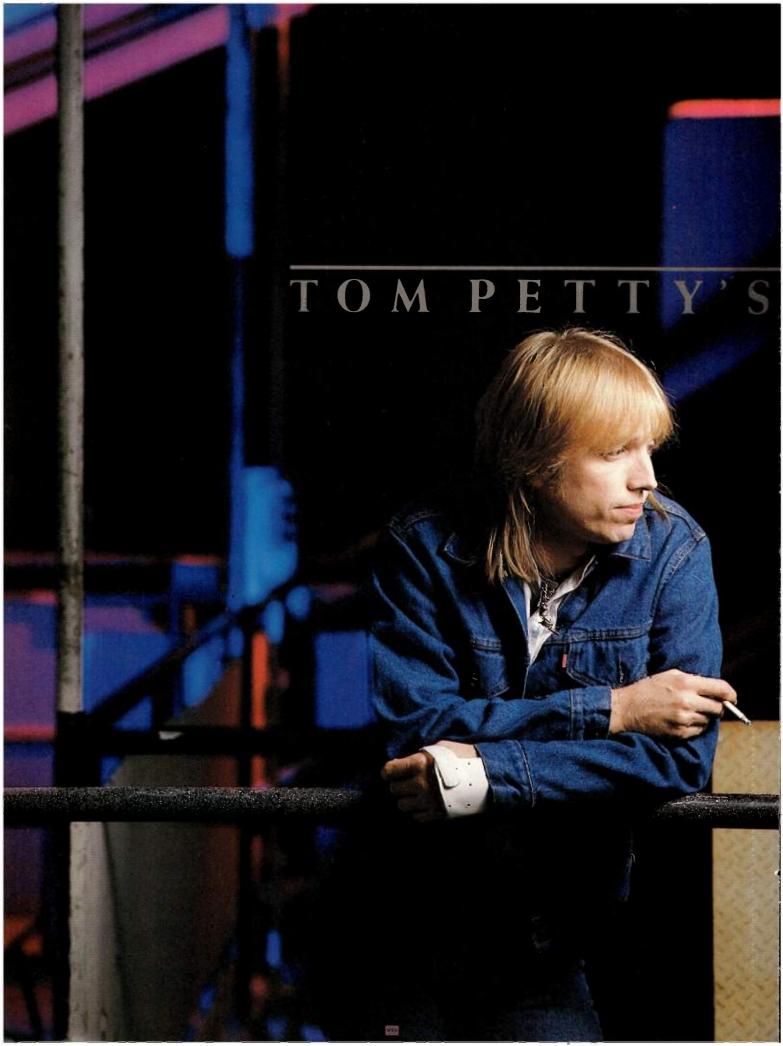
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'Southern Accents' was the album that would bring together all that Tom Petty had learned over 10 years as a recording artist and all the deep-rooted experiential stuff that had been gathering force inside him. He was going for the whole ball of wax this time. . .

YEAR (ORTWO) OF

LIVING DANGEROUSLY

Crickin' up / I'm gettin' ready to go
Hcd enough / I can't take anymore...
I'a run, but I'd find no face
I'a laugh, but it's wreckin' me, wreckin' me
It make a shiver / It make a shake / It
mcke a monster/Just like an earthquake
Ev=rybody havin' fun / I don't know how
they can carry on
'Ccuse I don't think it's funny no more...

—from "Crackin' Up" by Nick Lowe (as recorded by Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers)

For Tom Petty, obsessive rock artist, the construction of the Southern Accents album was an experience that spun wildly between agony and ecstacy. Granted, a record album isn't the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, but Southern Accents wasn't just any ol' record to Petty—it was The Biggie, the album that would bring together all he'd learned over ten years as a recording artist and all the deep-rooted experiential stuff that had been gathering force inside him. He was going for the whole ball of waz this time or be damned. The thing he

was creating consumed him, particularly since, like Dr. Frankenstein's project, it was coming to life right below him in the basement of his house (in a Tarzana, CA neighborhood known to its tight-knit residents as "Gainesville West"). Petty had installed a recording studio down there-a grand one-and, for a time, it completely took over his life. He'd stay up for days on end, unable to get away from the work-in-(prolonged)-process, pale, frayed, anxious and overwhelmed-a virtual Munster version of Tom Petty. "When you build a studio at home," he says now, "you go wild." What he was working on was a four-sided monster that was to be Petty's Exile on Main Street . . .

Leading the Heartbreakers, a three-piece horn section, and pair of female vocalists through a barrage of pre-tour rehearsals in a Universal Studios soundstage, a fully revived and patched Tom Petty is all smiles and animation. And, yes, he is indeed playing guitar—with both hands. During a break in the run-throughs, Petty describes his ordeal between bites of drummer Stan Lynch's bosom-shaped birthday cake: "I did a lot of tracks for this album. There's closets full of tape left over. I went all into bluegrass and country and that stuff. We even did three hard-core country tunes with (original producer) Denny Cordell. It's real good stuff—I hope it comes out. But in the end, I decided it was way too dense when it was two albums-I think we'd still be wadin' through it now. It was the most ambitious record I'd ever attempted, definitely. And it was hard to explain that to people, especially when you're into the second year of work on the album. It had been a personal crusade of mine that, at times, the band and I disagreed on-I think everyone around me disagreed at times about what I was doing. In the group it was real hard, because they were wanting to tour and be a group, you know, and all the things that go with it. And I was pleading for more patience.

"It was a real nice album in the sense that I felt some incredible highs, because I thought, Wow, I'm finally hittin' some

BY BUD SCOPPA

new ground here," Petty recalls. "And then there'd be nights that were awful, because when you'd think, Oh, no, it was all an illusion!" He's laughing now, but it's clear that it wasn't funny at the time. "You start to wonder, like, Why am I devoting this much of my life to a record album? Is this rock? Is this what I meant to be doing?"

Such was the situation on the fateful Night of the Hand.

"When I broke my hand, I mean...it was just...it's hard to explain... I don't really know exactly why I broke my hand. I know I was very frustrated at the time with the record. I'd finished recording," he remembers, "and I'd been over to the re-

cord company and played 'em some stuff. They weren't pushing me, but they were saying, 'Can we have it by the end of the year?' I said, 'Yeah, all I gotta do is mix it. I'm not gonna do a double-I'm gonna pare it down.' So then, tying up the ends was another six-month job, which I wasn't prepared to accept; I thought it was a sixweek job to go in and mix it. And the day I broke my hand, I think we'd been in there around the clock for a week with two teams of engineers and I was in the other room playin' the mixes on a ghetto blaster. And I'm sayin', No, this isn't what I pictured, and I was bummed.

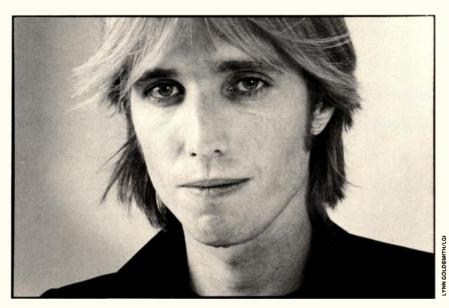
Walkin' up the stairwell back to the house, I just (throws his arm out to the side) hit the wall and broke my hand.

"I think the record made me so nuts that I did it," Petty says with a wry smile, then adds, "but it made a much better record. Because, after I got out of the hospital, I could hear very clearly things that I'd overlooked. (Producer Jimmy) Iovine showed up at that point, right after I broke my hand, just out of friendship and because he loved the songs so much. (After the last three) I was consciously tryin' to stay away from Jimmy on this album. I wanted to do something else. So, when Jimmy showed up, he was real fresh and I was real burnt. He helped me a lot with the mixing and added a few overdubs and some arrangement changes. Stuff I wouldn'ta heard, 'cause I was just too immersed in it. So anyway, (the accident) forced me to just calm down a little bit, basically. I think I'd been (staying up and working for days on end) for about a year when I broke my hand!"

Petty's conversation is speckled with short bursts of self-turned laughter. He's a shy, intermittently reclusive man who speaks slowly in a soft drawl. "I'm not real talkative," he explains. Tonight, though, Petty is anything but mute. The relief of having Southern Accents completed, released and accepted by the public and press alike, has loosened him up. Besides, he's getting a sustained buzz from playing onstage with his band after two-and-a-half years of virtual seclusion.

"I guess everyone says this, but I really am excited about playing," Petty states with unequivocal enthusiasm. "I didn't

'I wasn't trying to answer the Big Questions,' says Petty,
'I was just tryin' to hit some of the feel, and hopefully
you can play this album and get a very Southern feel from it. . .'



even want to go on tour, to be blunt; I didn't have any interest at all. But the band, they'd stay out there endlessly. I was a little tepid about committing to it. When we started rehearsing, it was just the group for a week—and that was exciting. Until then I hadn't realized how much I missed it.'Cause it's this great group, and I tend to take for granted how good they are. After that night, I thought, We're way too good not to be out on the road—we've gotta be on the road."

The Heartbreakers are, in fact, a truly impressive band. With Mike Campbell and Petty blasting out the jangles and squalls on the Rickenbackers and Stratocasters through Vox amps (these guys are classicists), Benmont Tench pumping up billowing floods of Hammond, bassist Howie Epstein (the band's lone non-Floridian, he replaced Ron Blair in 1981) carving out thick, melodious lines, and marvelous drummer Stan Lynch tearing into his kit with apparent abandon and secret re-

straint, the Heartbreakers are fully capable of making the hair on your arms stand straight up for minutes on end. History will surely place them right up there with America's most self-defining and *musical* rock 'n' roll bands—the Band, the Byrds, the Allmans, Little Feat, the E Streeters—even if they have been largely undervalued in their own time.

Emerging out of L.A. in 1976, the band soon became cult-heroic with their resonantly hooky blend of Byrds ("American Girl," "Listen to Her Heart") and Presley (the classic "Breakdown," "Mystery Man"). "It was a convenient time to come along," Petty admits, "'cause all of a sud-

den things just started to burst. At the Whiskey, we'd play with groups like Blondie and the Ramones, and all these people started showin' up. And there was this difference-people were sayin', These guys aren't like Fleetwood Mac, they're not thinking the same way. We also had a lot of success in England with that first album. That was when Johnny Rotten and all these guys were gettin' popular, and I think we had a little bit of a sneak preview on that. It was a really funny stigma: I had on a leather jacket on the cover (of Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers), and I remember them

wantin' to change it! I was sayin', No, man." Some of their first album cuts wound up on international punk compilations.

But the Heartbreakers' solid cult status changed when Petty contacted Jimmy Iovine to produce the band's third album. "At the time," Petty notes, "Iovine had only done the Patti Smith record [Easter] as a producer. That's the reason I gave him the job-because I'd heard 'Because the Night' with those great tom-toms. The songs were pretty well written for the album when Jimmy showed up. That album was a whole rediscovery of the studio for me, because we'd had our own way of doing it, which was pretty amateur. Then (engineer) Shelley Yakus came in from New York, and these guys were really serious about this stuff. They'd be gettin' a drum sound for a week. And I'd be pullin' my hair out, goin', What is going on? We've never spent more than an hour with the drums, I don't understand. So it was a

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real educational experience, and probably one of our better albums, really. It took a long time to make, and then it got confused with all the lawsuits that came along at that time [a protracted contract dispute that resulted in Petty moving from Shelter Records to its distributing label, MCA—Ed.]. But, yeah, it's still the album that's held up to me the most. Like, Well, is it Damn the Torpedoes or not? When I remember that time, I remember mass chaos, always."

But out of chaos came order-or, more precisely, orders—as MCA began selling serious tonnage on Torpedoes. With Iovine's production emphasizing Lynch's tom-toms and Tench's Hammond, the album came close to defining the AOR sound of the time. With the '80s came superstardom for Petty. But as his stock rose in terms of popularity, it took a nosedive with his musician peers. He was genuinely bewildered. "I think the hardest thing was, once you've sold a million records, you're a honky. Overnight. Once we got big in a commercial sense, I could sense this resentment, this feeling of like, You sold us out, you left the club. When all we did was make another record, really."

Another group of early supporters who turned inversely colder as the band got hotter was the critical community. This was inevitable, of course, but it hurt Petty nonetheless. When he undertook the Southern Accents marathon project, critical reinstatement was surely one of his motives, consciously or otherwise. And when the record finally came out, he prepared himself for the worst. But the reviews were largely positive, the primary reservation generally being that Petty had set out to make a concept album about the South, then backed off, throwing in three non-thematic tracks he'd co-written and co-produced with Eurythmics leader Dave Stewart. Did Petty in fact undertake Southern Accents as a concept album?

"I saw it as a theme," he answers, privately amused. "The Rolling Stone review was a good example; I didn't mind that review. I thought it was (approached) as if I'd written a book. But you have to listen to records—you can't just read them.

"I actually anticipated a little bit of criticism. The only position I can take is, look, I wasn't tryin' to answer the Big Questions, I was just tryin' to glaze over it and hit some of the feel, and hopefully, you can play this album and get a very Southern feel from it. But I didn't try to take sides on any issue or anything-I just wanted to present it. It was just a theme to work from, so that I didn't get caught up in love songs and stuff. I think that's what attracted me in the first place. I thought, Oh, wow, there's a lot to write about here. It's something that I'm real familiar with and that I've never written about, not very much. It's really just a record album, but it's an album that really asks something of you. You've got to hear it quite a bit to understand it.'

The notion of a "theme" album dealing with Petty's home region came out of a songwriting dilemma that faced Petty between the fourth and fifth albums, Hard Promises and Long After Dark. Petty now sees Hard Promises as "a vastly misunderstood album, too," although he admits it "was just too moody. But by the time we finished it, I felt we'd pretty much mined that vein. And when I hit on the Southern idea, which was a coupla years ago-just after Long After Dark-it was so easy; there were so many characters to assume with that concept, it was a lot of fun. It might not be exactly how I feel about something, but it's a lot more fun to take

'The fellas that
are really selling records
tend to get a little
bit careful. It's much
more fun to sell a
million records than
to sell 100,000, but you
need that edge. ...

on a character. I think it's pretty revealing, too, in the end."

Even before Petty began Long After Dark, though, Robbie Robertson, whose own visions of America are well documented, had lit the pilot light for Southern Accents. Petty had submitted "The Best of Everything"—the "one ballad too many" that had been dropped from Hard Promises—to Robertson, who was supervising the music for Martin Scorsese's film, The King of Comedy. The track didn't make that album, either, but Robertson did a lot of work on it, and the results of that work proved revelatory to Petty.

"I can thank Robbie for opening my eyes, really," Petty says. "I knew 'The Best of Everything' was a good song, but it just wouldn't come through. So I played it for Robbie, who liked it a lot and asked, 'What do you think if we take some liberties with it?" I said, Fine. (Later), he called and said, 'Look, I've had another idea. What do you think about a horn here and there?" I said, Sure, Robbie, whatever.

"He didn't want me to come in the studio while he as doin' the horn arrangement, which confused me at the time. Now I see why, because I probably would've backed him off. When he called me up to come hear it, I couldn't really even speak, you know. I heard it and just, Yeah-yeahyeah, I like it. So, from hearing that, I thought, Now, there's another way to go about things that's much more interesting."

But the liberating revisionist approach Robertson had formulated got no support when Petty, the band members and Iovine entered the studio for the *Long After Dark* sessions.

"It was stomped down at the door, which was what was so frustrating about that album to me," Petty snarls, reliving the torment. "Me and Iovine would have these huge disputes. I was tryin' to get a little wacky, and everyone in the group felt like this was a time for no wackiness; they thought that I'd gotten too wacky already. They'd say, 'No, let's just do a real good rock album.' and I'd think, Well, yeah, but there's a lot more we could be doin'. So I went along with it and did that album. But then I had the Southern thing goin' I still hadn't put together. On the Long After Dark tour, I played Nick Lowe 'The Best of Everything' one night, and Nick lost his mind—he must've played it twenty times over and over. He's sayin', 'This is it, man-this is what is goin' on!' He thought it sounded real Southern, and I thought, It'll work then; I'll put it on this album. I didn't even remix it."

In the reconstructed "The Best of Everything," Southern Accents had its coda a good year before the rest of the album was even written. The track's aching sentiment, bittersweet melody, brassy crescendoes, and the dusky Southernness Nick Lowe had observed locked its future position in Petty's mind's eye. "The night I played it for Nick," he recalls, "I thought, Oh, perfect—this'll end the album. I'm gonna build up and end there. No one else had a clue what I was so excited about. So I knew I was gonna start with 'Rebels' and end with 'The Best of Everything.' What made 'Rebels' so difficult was that it had to open the album, and I must've worked on that song a year, changin' the arrangement-another horn arrangement, another guitar arrangement, six or seven different bass lines. It had to open it and it had to be right."

Any creator in the linear mode (any jogger, for that matter) will tell you the hardest parts of the effort are the beginning and the ending. It's common knowledge. All Petty had to do at this point was fill in the rest. But Petty's ambition and perfectionism wouldn't permit easy answers or shortcuts. Nope, too literal. Nope, too dense. Nope, too boring. Writing the songs and pulling out the duds were only the start of the problem. Then he had to work the tunes through with the band, trying things until he-and they-were satisfied with the approaches they were taking. Finally, when the Heartbreakers had the tunes nailed in rehearsal, they were ready to woo the Recording Muse.

After months of this kind of concentrated effort—it's not easy to pull seemingly spontaneous performances out of grueling

intensiveness—Petty was in need of some bosening up. For the staunchly deliberate Petty, Dave Stewart couldn't have picked a tetter moment to show up in town. In one evening, Stewart blew the smog right out of Petty's airless sensibility.

After a concert last May, the Eurythmics leader headed over to Sunset Sound, where Iovine was working on a Stevie Nicks album, to talk tunes with the procucer. Impulsively, the pair called Petty and suggested that he get out of his basement for a while. Petty, who'd touted Stewart's "Love Is a Stranger" to Iovine, came on by to "hang out," as they say in the biz. He wasn't prepared for the ball of fire he encountered.

"Dave's real antsy, and we were drinkin' a little Jack Daniels, I think, and he says, 'You wanna write a song?' I said s are-I thought he meant in a week. But he had an idea, so we just did a little demo 'Don't Come 0 Around Here,' and that was it. Then, about two hours late-, we wrote 'Make It Better'; we just sat a the piano and did it I was savin', I just can't believe this, 'cause it would've taken me a year to

finish off a song, I was goin' so slow. And he said, 'You can't do that in L.A. You can't sit around L.A. and wait for the inspiration, because if you do, someone will invite you to a party!' And he's right," Petty admits with a soft chuckle. "He said, 'E etter just do it. And then, by that night, you can go, Nah, piece of shit, and throw it out. Or you might hit somethin'.' So he's a real gambler in that sense—very instant.

"The new Eurythmics album's great; it's got the Heartbreakers on it. I told him, 'You've gotta get some guitars in there,' 'cause he had these great ideas, but he was just kind of living them out with machines—just pretty much doin' everything himself. And he's not a techno-guy. He can barely get a stereo goin'. And I thought he was a keyboard player—he's a guitar player He's just kind of a two-fingered keyboard player. So on this album there's a lot more live playing in there. And he's really opened up on the guitar a lot, which helps."

Thoroughly inspired by Stewart's aural Polaroid approach, Petty insisted that his sudden collaborator come down to his studio and work up a song with the Heartbreakers. This, of course, was something completely different for the band; Petty figured he'd better explain the new plan of at ack to the boys.

"I told them, Listen, this guy from the

Eurythmics is comin' over, and they looked at me like, What? I said, Yeah, he's okay, I think you'll like him. He's just like you or me, he's okay.

"Right as I'm sayin' that, he opens the door and he's wearin' like a Kentucky general's outfit. He had on about six belts, handcuffs, these great big boots with spurs, and this great big white coat down to here with medals pinned on it—this is in the middle of summer—a hot, burnin' day—and a hat with a big plume comin' out the side. Which I thought was hilarious, you know, and I could see the looks on their faces—He's just like us? In an hour, everyone was comfortable, 'cause he is pretty



much like us.

"And he'd do stuff to keep me goin'. Like when you're in a band for nine years, people start to peel off after midnightthey know what's gonna happen. There's not much conversation. But with 'Don't Come Around Here No More,' that was two weeks on the same song every day. And one afternoon, Dave was gettin' a little shaky. And my wife Jane came in from this cowboy store where she'd bought some cowboy things. Dave goes, 'Oh, right, yeah! We gotta have some of that shit. Let's go get some cowboy stuff.' So we got in the car and we went down and we both goth these real wild cowboy outfits, with the jewels on them and the hats and weird glasses. And so we came back and we had everyone in the studio with all this gear on. Then this guy from the L.A. Philharmonic came over to play cello, and Iovine was s'posed to send him a chart, send him the tape so the guy could chart it out. He opens the door and walks in my house, and at the same time there must've been twenty-odd weirdos hangin' around, and everyone's wearin' jeweled cowboy suits. We said, 'Have you got the chart?' Nothin'. Iovine hadn't called him. So Dave and I go over to him and say, 'Look, we're gonna play you this song, and we just want you to play what you hear.' This guy says, 'What? I've never done that in my life.' I

said, 'You've never played just to play?' and he said, 'No, I read what I play.' And Dave says, 'Well, you're gonna have a real good time!' By the time he left, he had on a cowboy hat, and I think he did have a good time—he hung out till three in the morning. Good mixer, Dave Stewart."

With Southern Accents, Petty and the Heartbreakers seem to have reclaimed their rightful place in the scheme of things. Petty's thrilled, but he has no delusions of grandeur: "I'm not gonna go into movies, you'll be happy to hear." It's fitting that this downhome auteur's most explicitly American work should appear at a time when the legacy of American rock 'n' roll

has reinvigorated the contemporary scene. But Petty voices a note of caution about the situation: "All that American rock stuff they keep talkin' about, it's funny to me. There are some good groups-Los Lobos is real good, and Fogerty-I just hope it doesn't mean nostalgia. I think they've gotta be careful that American rock doesn't mean Chuck Berry, or as long as there's no synthesizer, it's American. I think the new Prince

record is very American, but I don't know if they'd describe it that way. He's fantastic, and he's so essential, because he's not afraid to do anything, which we've needed for a long time. I've always felt like the fellas that are really sellin' the records and have the influence tend to get a little bit careful. Because they like that, and I don't blame them—it's much more fun to sell a million records than to sell 100,000. But you need that edge. Bein' old enough to remember the '60s, I just remember that the people I looked up to were liable to do anything at any given time musically, which made it interesting.

"But I even love the way people complain about Prince's act, his remoteness. I just *love* seein' twelve motorcycles around that limo—to me, that is rock."

Armed with insights provided by an antsy English techno-klutz and a self-inflicted orthopedic nightmare, Tom Petty may now be free of the prolonged solitary anguish that haunted him through the making of Southern Accents. He knows, at least, that old dogs can learn new tricks. But now is not the time to ponder all that. Now is the time to get up on that stage with that great band, stick that Marlboro behind the nut of his Rickenbacker and start chuggin'. It's the time for Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers to honk. No doubt about it now—this is rock!

THE RECORD INTERVIEW

'This Time I'm Going for It'

ROBERTPLA

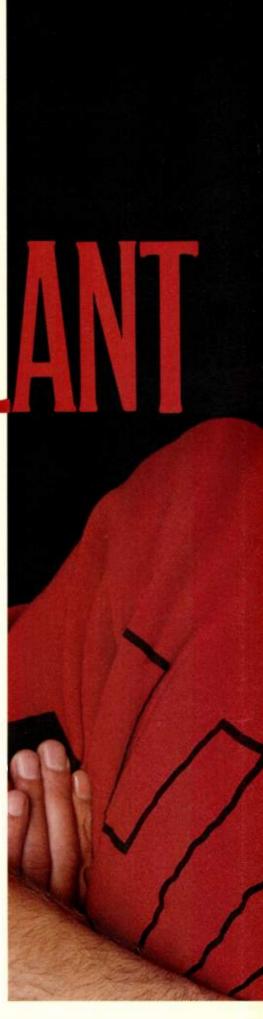
T IS, FINALLY, A TIME OF

change for Robert Plant. Curious statement that, considering the former Led Zeppelin frontman has had two highly successful solo outings under his own name and another, most recently, as part of an all-star band calling itself the Honeydrippers.

Still the yoke of Zeppelin remained around Plant's neck. Critics who couldn't find anything to like about the solo albums found annoying similarities—pro and con—to Zep with which to flog the singer, and then exclaimed "Aha!" when the Honeydrippers reunited him, albeit briefly, with Jimmy Page. And his relatively low profile in the post-Zep years (he didn't tour behind the first solo album, and made only one TV appearance, and granted no interviews, on behalf of the Honeydrippers project) has served to fuel speculation that he is reluctant to hang it out in public again, for fear of diminishing his legend.

But it is, finally, a time of change. Plant's new selfpenned bio scarcely mentions Zeppelin, and when it does, the great name is never actually spelled out in full. Plant's favorite new bands, it says, are This Mortal Coil and the

BY JOHN HUTCHINSON





'The whole idea of this record is to get rid of my preoccupation with removing images from people's minds, and get down to making some instant music.'

Del Fuegos, although I haven't been able to discern either group's influence on his new music, which I heard only half an hour before our interview began. My initial impression of the latest album, Shaken 'n' Stirred, is that it's more compressed and more studied than last year's The Principle of Moments. It's also a pressure record for him, coming off the chart-topping feat of the Honeydrippers' first outing, and presaging a worldwide tour that ought to lay

what I later learn is a reference to a forthcoming interview with a well-known British music paper, which he wasn't altogether looking forward to.

The hour flies, and Plant is keen to be on his way to rehearsals. We say goodbye upstairs, and by the time I've gathered my belongings and set foot outside, Plant is 20 yards or so ahead of me, striding purposefully towards Oxford Street. Two teenage boys, walking in the opposite direction,

clear and direct.

What sort of audiences did you find waiting for you? Were they mainly aging Led Zeppelin fans?

They were younger, on the whole, although the majority in Britain were Zeppelin fans, perhaps because the halls were smaller, and people were camping out to buy tickets to relive their memories.

Were they disappointed?

Yeah, I should think they were. They did call out for "Stairway to Heaven" a few times.

Did you play it?

Did I hell! The stuff I'm doing now is just as significant as that, and there are new gods out there now.

Some of your generation aren't maturing very well musically.

No, a lot of their music sounds very tired. But then again, Muddy Waters never stopped doing "Mannish Boy."

What do you think of The Firm's album?

I think I'll just shut the door! (laughs) Well, how can I put it? It depends on how one wants to be with oneself. I've personally enjoyed going to limits and extremes and surprising myself. For instance, on this album working with Toni Halliday has allowed me to extend and write parts for another voice. Whether what I'm doing is commercially viable or not is neither here nor there—I'm satisfying myself right now. In a year's time I'll want something totally different, and as long as I'm thinking like that, I'm healthy.

On the few occasions we've met, I've always found you decent enough. Have you changed since you were with Zeppelin?

No, I don't think I'm a great deal different from the way I was then.

So how do you explain your image in those days?

The image was inaccurate, but in our wisdom at the time-in hindsight I disagree with it-we let the whole thing roll. We just let everything go, and allowed people to think what they liked. After all, we were, and are, primarily musicians, and any amount of bullshit to the media doesn't add up to much. It's what comes off the records that counts. If there was tomfoolery, occasionally, it was almost always indulged with an air of mischief and bonhomie. A lot of people's impressions of the band seem to be based on the idea that we were a satanically-inspired bunch of people who devoured such riches in such a short span of time that we were completely



to rest any suspicions regarding Plant's reluctance to prove it all night on the concert stage.

During the interview Plant is in fine fettle, and full of nervous energy. Anxious to start his tour, he proclaims boldy that this time he's "really going for it." He is perhaps a shade less serious than he was when I've interviewed him in the past, and he's careful to stress the "fun" aspect of his music, maybe because the lightweight Honeydrippers EP did so well. At one point I mention the artful, carefully constructed textures in his music, and make a passing remark about Robert Fripp and King Crimson. Plant grins and says that the first track on the album, "Hip to Hoo," was originally called "Asia Minor," and is something of a musical reference to and takeoff on the music of a group with a similar name.

Our talk proceeds smoothly, and Plant answers questions with his customary courtesy and enthusiasm. Only once, when I suggest that interviews seldom reveal more than one side of someone's personality—the part the interviewee chooses to show us—does his mood change. "Do you want me to talk about rate-capping [taxes] in Hackney, then?" he mutters irritably in

stop dead in their tracks, awestruck by whom they think they've brushed up against. "Yeah, it is 'im!" says one to the other. "Are you sure?" asks his friend. "Positive" insists the first, "though 'e is taller than I thought 'e was."

As I said, it is, finally, a time of change.

The last tour, after the release of *The Principle of Moments*, was your first extended outing since the Zeppelin days. Did it affect the development of your music at all?

Oh yes, I think so, as did the Honeydrippers' record. I had a modicum of success, enough to sustain me, and besides, I think I grew up a lot on the road. I became aware of the fact that times had changed, but I enjoyed them anyway. When it was over I realized there was definitely a place for the kind of music I have in mind now, and I wouldn't have known that otherwise; I would have just been rather aimlessly churning it out in the way someone like Steve Winwood might do-he makes an LP, plays somewhere as a token gesture, and then retreats again. It showed me that I needed an audience to play to. More specifically, though, I learned I had to stop all the meandering that there might have been in my musical past, and keep everything



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'A lot of people's impressions of Led Zeppelin seem to be based on the idea that we were a Satanically-inspired bunch of people who devoured such riches in such a short span of time that we were completely 'round the bend.'

'round the bend. It wasn't the case. We had a lot of mercenaries around us, bathing in reflected glory, who furthered that notion on our behalf. We tried to fire them as often as we could.

Do you feel, in retrospect, that your manager, Peter Grant, was a bad influence on the band's public image?

Not a bad influence, exactly, but his involvement was in keeping with the way the whole business was going. Peter Grant made sure no one screwed the band. People were ripping us off, through unofficial merchandising, for instance—which these days is contained—and Peter would get on the case. He wouldn't be gentle about it. He wouldn't hurt anybody, but he would offend people. They were only offended, though, when they were caught. Peter Grant was cruel but fair.

Do you have a handle on how you're perceived by the public now?

Well, I don't think I've aged as much as some of my counterparts, but I don't think I've got a particular image. I know I can get my old clothes out, because they're back in fashion, but apart from that I don't really consider it. I just try to appear as unlike the rest as I can. I don't want to get preoccupied with too much image projection: I would like to be honest.

Do you become more vulnerable by trying to be honest?

Yes. I think I was very vulnerable in Zeppelin too. That was the case with one of the guys who co-wrote (a recently-published unauthorized biography of Led Zeppelin) who disliked me because I kept confronting him with his attitudes and way of operating. It was as if he were living on power that didn't really exist, and he got away with it for a long time.

I'll be honest, then. I must be one of the few who was less than thrilled by the Honeydrippers' record. When we talked about the Honeydrippers last time, I got the impression that it was a raw, lively band. The album seemed to me to be over-produced and not spontaneous enough—for example, I suspected that some of the guitar parts had been overdubbed. Were you happy with the record?

Yes, very much so. It's true that Jimmy put his solo on "Sea of Love" afterwards, but that was the whole point of the song—its substance isn't that great, but you can make it into something special. I now have a plan to do Gladys Knight and the Pips' "Letter Full of Tears" and Nina Simone's

version of Screamin' Jay Hawkins' "I Put A Spell On You," and admittedly I've learned that next time I should do the whole recording in one room. On Volume I I put the strings on after I'd got the rhythm section right—they hadn't heard the song before, and while I was talking them through it the strings were sitting around getting bored. I learned from that. But "Rockin' at Midnight" was a great track; maybe only "Young Boy Blues" didn't cut it vocally. I like the record though—it was very relaxed.

Exactly how long did you spend recording it? Reports vary.

The whole of that project took two afternoons and a morning to record, and about four hours to mix.

Were the famous names added as a selling point?

No, I wanted a guitarist to play on it, and I wanted somebody who was fluent enough to fit in with the style I had in mind. For the Roy Brown song, "Rockin' at Midnight," Beck was ideal, because he plays bottleneck in the same tuning as he plays straight concert tuning. I called him on the phone and asked him what he was doing the following Saturday morning. Beck said, "Well, I can't do anything until about midday, but I'll come around then." He arrived with his amp, put it on the table, and it leaked through all the kit-if you turned the drums up any more, the guitar would have overloaded everything. It was very free and easy, just like what I imagine the Coasters did with "Yakkety Yak": Bring in the sax player through the door to play a solo, and let it rip.

Let's talk about your new album. Does it have a theme, something that ties all the songs together?

No, I don't think popular music really needs a theme. The whole idea of this record is to get rid of my preoccupation with removing images from people's minds, and get down to making some instant music. The theme, if any, is getting out and being more immediate, both in intention and expression.

There are fewer obvious dynamic effects this time—you seem to be working within closer boundaries, in a tighter range.

That's the plan, yes. Working with the same drummer right through rehearsals makes the rhythm section really tight. The passage the rhythms take is down to a fine line now, which is what I want.

Do you more or less arrange all the songs on your records?

Yes, but on this album there's a lot more of the group than on *The Principle of Moments*. For example, Paul Martinez, the bass player, has become far more prominent. Although he's an oddball, the scope of his musical knowledge is vast. He and I, at rehearsals this afternoon, will be able to pick any song and go straight through it, whether it's "A Fool Such As I" by Presley or something by Tear for Fears. Everybody else is a bit limited from that point of view. When you've been listening as long as I have—23, 24 years—the difference between Jesse Hill, Chris Kenner and the O'Jays is not that great.

Do you ever get writer's block?

No, not really. Lyrically, on this album I wanted to be as simple and trite as possible.

Why?

Because I feel very free now, and I also think it's time for cliched pop lyrics right now. I wanted to do something that would make people say, "He can't be serious!" (Sings) "Aaaaaaah no . . . what's that . . . say goodbye . . . breaking my heart . . ." That's great, you know! Some of the best records were by Gene Vincent and Eddie Cochran, after all.

True, but we're not in Eddie Cochran's era any more. Besides, when you were in Led Zeppelin you were very proud of your lyrics.

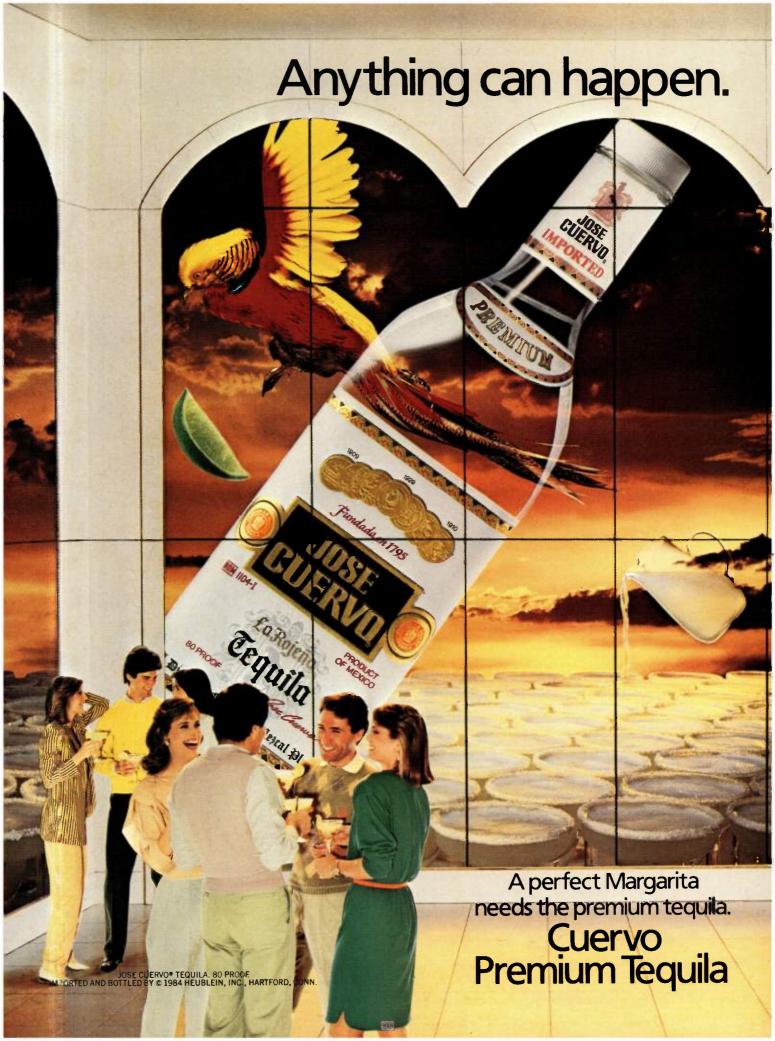
I'd still say that "Sixes and Sevens" is pretty relevant lyrically, and the words are obscure enough for my 17-year-old daughter to ask, "What on earth are you talking about, Dad? You're doing one of those songs again." "Messin' with the Mekon" and "Stranger Here Than Over There" (from *The Principle of Moments*) had very simple lyrics, but what they were about was fairly complex. "Wreckless Love" is an especially good song, lyrically.

Do you think "Wreckless Love" was the best song on the album?

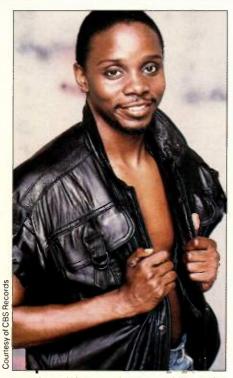
My daughter thinks so. She always says, "'Wreckless Love' would have been a big hit, Dad." For me, though, musical construction makes "Messin' With The Mekon" by far the best. That kind of drama was great.

There appears to be less of it on Shaken 'n' Stirred.

It's there, but it's more subtle, further back in the mix. I have little timing tricks all



Salem anthe Beat



Something didn't sound right to Philip Bailey while rehearsing his hit "Easy Lover" for performance at the annual CBS Records convention in Hawaii. Minus Phil Collins (the second voice on the single), Bailey couldn't find anybody with quality pipes who could duet with him for the conventioneers. Bailey was on the verge of skipping the tune, but was rescued by the only other person who he says "I'd trust to sing the song with me"—Kenny Loggins.

MISCELLANIA

England's Spandau Ballet is such a hit in Europe that the crush against the stage during recent gigs led to the collapse of 100-200 fans each night. Fan enthusiasm, however, reached an unprecedented height in Italy. A concert scheduled for the 15,000-seat Palasport in Rome sold out in two hours. Consequently, a second show was added to meet the demand and those tickets, too, sold pronto. Even with additional concerts announced for the following month, a lot of disappointed Spandau fans were left with a free Saturday night on their hands. When band members Gary and Martin Kemp, Tony Hadley, Steve Norman, and John Keeble turned up at the hall later that evening, they found the place ringed by two chain link fences patrolled by an impressive squad of security guards. The precautions came in handy. Peeved when they couldn't gain entrance, 3,000 ticketless Romans at-

tacked the outer fence with sledgehammers. When the local cops turned up in force, the fans firebombed the patrol cars. The second fence remained intact, fortunately, and the show went on as scheduled .. The Creative Mind at Work: Ray Davies has long made a habit of jotting down notes, impressions, and various song and story ideas during his global travels with the Kinks. He used to keep his bits and pieces in briefcases, "but the briefcases were always stolen." Nowadays, "I carry them around in shopping bags."...lt's been a while since the resurrected Yes scored with 90125. Although reports have had the band re-entering the studio "at any minute," things are only now shifting into gear. This time it won't be whiz kid (and former Yes member) Trevor Horn producing, but Nile Rodgers. The album is due early in 1986...Just before Thompson Twin Tom Bailey's recent bout of poor health, Steve Stevens, Billy Idol's guitarist, spent several days in Paris laying down two tracks for the Twins' newest album...Always socially relevant, NRBQ exploded a total of five Cabbage Patch dolls on stage in Boston, Philadelphia, Washington DC, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Heartened by the response ("a grand sense of social statement," said the San Francisco Chronicle), the band escalated the campaign at a recent New York concert, where a luckless doll was tarred and feathered before a rapturous crowd. The band members star as zombies in George Romero's newest film, Day of the Dead and hope to have an album out on Rounder Records this month. They'll be teaming up with Grand Ole Opry star Skeeter Davis. By the way, the NRBQ lads claim that they started the rock-'n'-wrestling craze in 1980 when Captain Lou Albano became their manager... Billy Squier has been preparing for a long-overdue vacation, one that would take him on a Himalayan mountaineering expedition to the remote villages and monasteries of Nepal. Wh en asked why he chose such an out-ofthe-way spot, Squier claimed that he's got a thing about the thrill of the unknown, "and I want to get there before David Lee Roth."

...The Mae West Award for Quotable Quotes goes to Maxine Petrucci, the leather 'n' studs lead guitarist for metal band Madame X. When asked about the importance



Visionary/entrepreneur Malcolm McLaren continues to dip his toes in alien waters. The man who invented the Sex Pistols has been cruising around Hollywood lately, working out preliminary plans for his own movie adaptation of Beauty and the Beast. Next stop: Broadway, where his stage version of Fans will be produced by the theatrical wing of Geffen Records. Latest word has McLaren talking with Toni Basil about handling the choreography.

of Edward Van Halen, Maxine notes that "his contribution to modern music is as important as the contribution of the electric guitar to rock & roll. Besides, I love a man that can use all of his fingers."

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BOCKS

The Coors continue to buck the trends nearly twenty years after "Light My Fire." The British writing team of John Tobler and Andrew Doe find the Doors unique—now as then-a point hammered home by the duo's book, The Doors (Proteus Books, \$10.95) ... Hot Sauces: Latin and Caribbean Pop is the latest work to follow the emergence of ethnic-based contemporary music on the world scene. Writer Billy Bergman and associates cover a broader field than most, going back to Desi Arnaz (and further) to help explain the rise of everything from the tango to reggae to rock (Quill, \$7.95)...For those who like lots of pictures along with their text, Hendrix: An Illustrated Biography by Victor Sampson should fit the bill. Also by Prc teus, \$10.95, the book charts the guitarist's rise from his Seattle boyhood, through the Greenwich Village club era, the peak years with the Experience, to his final days.

SCFEENINGS

While the black residents of Washington DC have been plugged into it for a while, Go-Go (the Capitol's home-grown hybrid of soul, urbar funk and African rhythm) has been a mostly underground phenomenon all but unknown beyond the inner city and British dance clubs. Artists like Trouble Funk, Chuck Brown, Mass Extinction, and Redds & the Boys will get a boost with the release of the first Go-Go film, tentatively titled Good to Go. Directed by Don Letts (who's overseen videos by the Clash, the Pretenders and Elvis Costello), the flick stars Art Carfunkel as a journalist covering the urbar scene and a Go-Go cast of thousands ... Making Michael Jackson's Thriller has copped two American video awards, for "Best Music Video—Long Form" and "Best Home Video." Vestron Music, the video label, claims that the Jackson item is the Number One best seller worldwide ... From the time capsule: A youthful Ricky and Davic Nelson are locked in a battle of wills. Ricky's got Big Mama Thornton's "Hound Dog" blaring on his record player; David's trying to listen to classical music. Tempers



Leslie West, once again finding fame and fortune with Mountain, is set to make his acting debut in *The Money Pit*, starring Tom Hanks, Shelley Long, Alexander Godunov, and Maureen Stapleton. The feature-length "restoration comedy" is directed by Richard *My Favorite Year* Benjamin and shot by Steven Spielberg's production company, Amblin Entertainment. West plays a wealthy musician. Release is planned for year's end.

flare, a battle of the volume knobs ensues, and Ricky wins the day—though not before his record player explodes in a cloud of smoke. The clip, from an old *Ozzie and Harriet* episode, opens RCA/Columbia Pictures new home video, *Rock and Roll: The Early Days*, a collection of rock memorabilia culled from forgotten newsreels, performance clips, ancient TV shows, 50's teen flicks, and home movies. Tracing the rise of rock from its black urban and white "hill-billy" roots of the 40's to the invention of the teen idol during the late 50's, the hour-long program (narrated by actor John Heard)

was assembled by the team responsible for The Compleat Beatles. Among the bits: Bo Diddley's first (and last) appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show, where he played his hit "Bo Diddley" in defiance of Sullivan; Jerry Lee Lewis and his 13-year-old child bride getting the third degree from an insistent reporter; the Executive Secretary of the Alabama White Citizens Council condemning rock and roll as part of a "Communist conspiracy"; and a young, squeaky-clean Pat Boone explaining his reluctance to cover Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti" because the lyrics "just didn't make sense."



'Whether what I'm doing is commercially viable or not is neither here nor there. I'm satisfying myself right now. In a year's time

I'll want something totally different, and as long as I'm thinking like that, I'm healthy.'

over the album, but they don't stand out as if to say, "Look how good we are!" You just keep them back, and people can put their headphones on, sit back and think, "I didn't realize that was there!" I still do that with some records, and I'm really pleased that it's not too obvious.

What does your daughter think of your new album?

She's immersed in fairly off-beat music, which doesn't relate to modern trends at all. She likes the Guana Batz, the Cramps and a lot of psychobilly stuff. So when she listens to my music, she's coming in from a different angle. But she did say to me this time, "You've done it, Dad. 'Pink and Black' is great!" Last night I was talking to her on the phone from the hotel, and she asked me why I wasn't going to appear on The Old Grey Whistle Test [Note: The Old Grey Whistle Test is an important TV showcase for rock artists in England). I told her I didn't want to be confronted with two guys who asked Don Henley what it was like being in the most boring band in the world. "It doesn't matter," she said. "Your record's great, and they can't slag you for that." So I said to her that what bothered me was the fact that they seem to arrive at a sense of selfesteem by destroying things that are marginally questionable. But she still thought I should go on.

Do you perceive an ideal listener for your music?

I couldn't image one, no. I'm not singing for anyone in particular. Perhaps someone who enjoys multiple aspects of music, whether it be J.B. Hutto and the Hawks or the Woodentops—it doesn't matter as long as he or she knows the difference between good and bad. But I'm not trying to appeal to people who expect me to be some kind of rock hero.

Would you ever change your music because of a critic's views or comments? How seriously do you take criticism?

I want to be successful now, and I'm going to find the formula for success very hard, because of my own standards. I don't expect any favors from the media.

How will you react if the reviews on the new record are negative?

You can guarantee that I'm going to get bad reviews, even if the record is incredible. That won't change anything, though. I'll be gutted for a bit, but I'll recover. Generally reviews in Britain are based on the premise that I've been recording for twenty-odd years, and for that reason alone I shouldn't be recording now. It's a strange theory. I don't imagine there will be much constructive criticism, but if there is, I'll absorb it and tuck it away in the back of my mind. I don't think I'd ever change something on the strength of it.

To what extent does your music reflect your life?

I don't separate one from the other. This record is a mirror of the fact that I'm up and going now. The Principle of Moments was reflective, but this one is really punchy. Listen to this: (Plant puts on a cassette, plays "Too Loud" for a minute or so, then switches it off). "Sneakin' in the bathroom, powdering your nose, creeping in to join you when you thought you didn't know..." Do you not think that's got impact? That's about the media, the cocaine generation. I've seen it all before—but maybe I'm being a bit cynical.

You have a body of solo work behind you now. What are your strengths and weaknesses as an artist?

I'm too close to the records to be able to comment yet. I do know that tracks like "Slow Dancer" on the first album brought out all the old Zeppelin pomposity, but I have no remorse about it. It may have been a bit too close to the past, but it's all part of what I am. That's my equivalent of The Firm's album. On the other hand, I still feel there's room for that kind of Arabic dance music. When I hear U2 now, I'm so proud of them because they're bringing drama back to music, and they're actually using mood with so much more depth than a band like The Smiths, who just warble on about not eating meat.

Do you see your music as a development of Zeppelin's then?

I think the shackles of my imagination are disappearing now. Until people ask me what it was like in those days, I don't dwell on them at all, although I can recall them vividly if I try. They're somewhere over there, out of sight, filed away with critics' comments. One of the good points is that I've got a great band working with me. Although they look at me at times as if I'm completely crazy, they actually manage to follow my whims through to the last letter, and that gets us to where we've got to go.

Is it all getting easier for you?

(Laughs) No, it's not! I wouldn't like to be-

lieve it's getting easier, or I'd have to think about becoming a journalist! It can't be easier, because I'm looking for so many things that are abstract anyway, as all writers and musicians are. I'm no good compared to a lot of people, but I do the best I can. The Honeydrippers' music can be easy, though.

Are you happy with the way your life has gone, post-Zeppelin?

I find it rather hard to relax after highpressure work, which seems to dominate my life. This is quite pleasant for me now, but I know I have to jump into a cab soon to go to rehearsals, which will take me through to midnight. I'll sleep for a few hours, get up, and start again. I'm going to be touring from now until Christmas—the British Isles, all of Europe, Australia, Japan, American and Canada. I'm going to go for it this time.

What do you do when you're not working?

Apart from a two-month break when I got back from Hong Kong last year, I've been at this almost non-stop for almost three-and-a-half years. Remember, this is my fourth 12" project to be released since 1982

What is this success you're fighting for?

I've got an obsession! I believe that the songs we write and perform are at least as good as the very pleasant but superficial music around at the moment. If I can get it through to public perception, then I think I'll have achieved something. I heard "Big Log" on the radio recently, and I was so proud because it seemed to hold steady, while other songs that were popular at the time have since stumbled and fell.

Is is worth the effort?

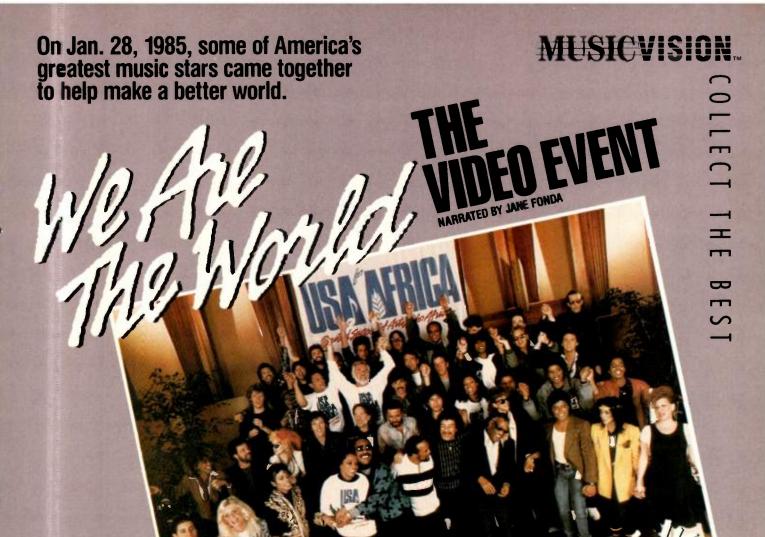
Of course it's worth it! It's climbing the hill, and maybe leaving some marks on it. And perhaps some people will eventually say, "Yeah, it's amazing how it turned out. Funny he never gave up and went to live near Alvin Lee!"

Poor Alvin Lee.

Yeah, but if you say "poor Robert Plant," it's only because I try too hard.

So when this tour is over at Christmas, will you go off to lie on a beach in Hawaii for a few weeks?

I've no idea what I'll do. Maybe Brian Setzer and I will disappear into the sunset playing T-Bone Walker songs. Who knows?



DAN AYKROYD HARRY BELAFONTE LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM

KIM CARNES RAY CHARLES **BOB DYLAN**

SFEILA E.

BCB GELDOF

DFRYL HALL & JOHN OATES

JAMES INGRAM JACKIE JACKSON LA TOYA JACKSON

MARLON JACKSON M CHAEL JACKSON

RANDY JACKSON

TITO JACKSON

AL JARREAU **WAYLON JENNINGS**

BILLY JOEL

CYNDI LAUPER **HJEY LEWIS & THE NEWS**

KENNY LOGGINS

BETTE MIDLER **WILLIE NELSON JEFFREY OSBORNE** STEVE PERRY THE POINTER SISTERS LIONEL RICHIE **SMOKEY ROBINSON KENNY ROGERS DIANA ROSS PAUL SIMON BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN TINA TURNER DIONNE WARWICK**

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Katrina and the Waves break softly on the shore

LOW

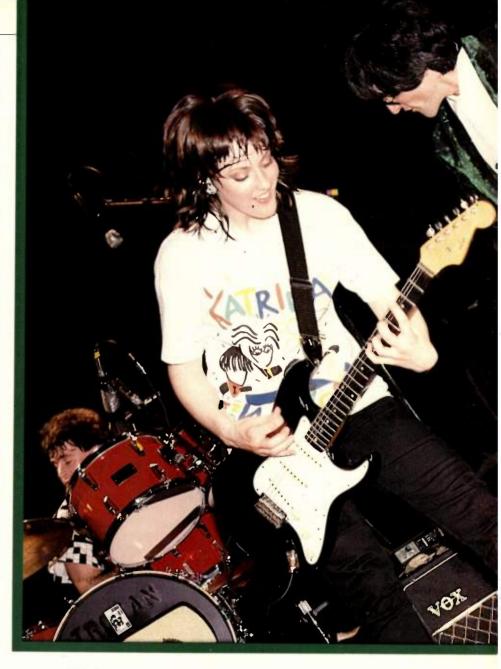
By John Leland

STILL DON'T UNDERstand it. They seemed like such
nice people. Friendly. Innocent.
Unpretentious. Modest. Regular
hairdos, regular clothes. From
regular working backgrounds: mailman,
grocery bagger, mortician, bowling ball
hole driller. With respectable underground
credentials, and a new album that abounds
with AM hooks that defeat the very idea of
rock 'n' roll pomp. So what if the album
struck me as being a little too slick and artificially buoyant? I really liked these guys.

Liked. One week after a delightfully pleasant interview, Katrina and the Waves treated me and a thousand-plus other hot, crowded New Yorkers to the most pompous, self-congratulatory display of rock stardom I'd seen in years. Lots of betweensong hype. Lots of over-the-head hand clapping. Lots of exhortations to the crowd to sing along. Even a drum solo. A really bad drum solo. Katrina milked the audience, secure in the conviction that we were having the time of our lives. She even gleefully spattered the folks in the front with mouthfuls of Budweiser. Give 'em an actual touch of greatness, eh? When it was over, I expected people to light matches. A truly ugly experience. How could I have been so wrong about these guys?

Or, what are nice people like these doing in a monstrous dinosaur like this? Why does a band that pays the rent with subtle pop soul intimacy bury its winning effervescence in AOR/arena hyperbole? Why does a wholesome, cow-eyed woman from Kansas strut unironically around the stage like Joan Jett without balls? In short, why do the meek become such bastards when they start to inherit the earth?

In 1976, while attending Cambridge University, lead guitarist Kimberley Rew and drummer Alex Cooper formed the original Waves, played some local gigs and

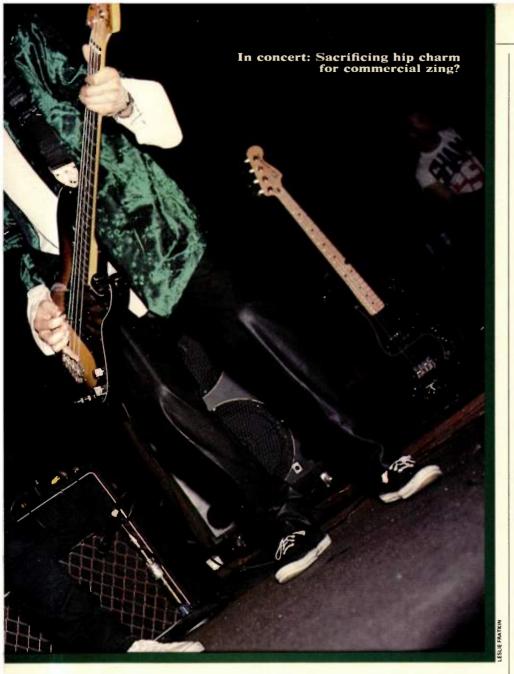


tapped out. "We had a lot of personnel problems," Rew recalls. "And I was on very good terms with members of the Soft Boys, who had just started up. They were very keen for me to join. It seemed the natural thing to do at the time." Exit Waves, enter Soft Boys.

Led by elfin eccentric Robyn Hitchcock, the Soft Boys were one of the first and certainly the most hallucinatory band to spring from the late '70s English psychedelic revival. Combining Merseybeat hooks 'n' harmonies with arcanely twisted Syd Barrettisms, they warped the most innocent pop perspective into a Never Never Land of surreal and mind-bending images. Hitchcock was the band's acid visionary; Rew its pop classicist. Each kept the other's tendencies toward excess in check, and the synthesis brought forth a totally original, startlingly weird batch of post-Sgt. Pepper psychedelia. Hitchcock's paisley visions proved too obscure for the rest of the world, and the band split up in 1981 after

releasing three commercially unsuccessful albums. "I was a bit disillusioned when we disbanded the group," says Rew, whose quarrels with Hitchcock were an important reason for the split. "That was a big disappointment." But if the Soft Boys never scaled the charts, they did manage—especially after their dissolution—to attract a cult following. "It's only in the last few weeks," Rew says, "that I've become more famous as a member of Katrina and the Waves than I am as a former member of the Soft Boys."

After the Boys broke up, Rew recorded a single with Peter Holsapple and Will Rigby of the dB's, and Mitch Easter of Let's Active. Meanwhile, a couple of American military brats living in the tiny English farming village of Norfolk were stumbling through the less than auspicious first steps of their young musical careers. Singer-guitarist Katrina Leskanich and Texas-born bassist Vince de la Cruz were entertaining the troops at U.S. military



bases and RAF clubs-"just for the money," says Leskanich. "I had met Vince in the church choir-there goes my rock 'n' roll credibility—and we had put a little band together." As unlikely as it might seem, Alex Cooper got wind of the group and rang up Leskanich; the three became Mama's Cooking. "We were writing music," she remembers, "but it wasn't very good. So it was a real relief when we heard that Kim was available and was joining us, because he had a lot of really great songs." Rew says that even after the oblique idiosyncracies of the Soft Boys, he wasn't necessarily looking for a more direct pop band. "I just wanted to find some people with whom there would be a good chemistry," he recalls. "It wasn't like I was looking for someone with certain characteristics." Likewise, the other three were less impressed with Rew's sublegendary status than with his tunes. "I knew very little about [the Soft Boys]," admits Leskanich, "until we started making it, and people started asking Kim about them."

Thus, Rew's and Cooper's original Waves became Katrina and the Wavesthe first name tacked on to get a rise out of the boys on the bases. The band got out of the military circuit, but had a hard time finding an audience or a record company for Rew's unassuming, organic pop songs. They cut a tape, and sent it to all the major labels and the other usual suspects. "The one good offer we got," explains Rew, "was from Attic Records in Canada." That original tape became the Canadian Walking on Sunshine LP. A year later, in 1983, Attic released Katrina and the Waves. The two Canadian albums captured everything that was good about the band: subtly inviting melodicism, understated playing, and refreshingly genuine warmth. However, this kind of quiet magic wasn't for everybody. According to Leskanich, "For three years we were really criticized, or, as they say in England,

slagged off, for dressing the way we do and having our hairstyles and singing happy, happy songs. They thought it was just terrible, because for a long time it was the thing to look dead miserable onstage and wear all black and sing horrible, horrible songs. We're taking the opportunity to express ourselves in a happy, up way, without bringing people down. That's what I call entertainment."

Attic's distribution system kept the LPs from falling into too many of the wrong hands. But the Bangles were able to get copies, and fell for Rew's resigned "Going Down to Liverpool." Their version of the song—the definitive version—helped launch their career. And it brought attention to Katrina and the Waves. In December of 1984, Capitol signed the band.

This is where things take a turn for the worse. For their first Capitol album, the new Katrina and the Waves, the band rerecorded 10 songs from the previous records. Abandoning their seductive subtlety, they beefed up the songs with an overly rich AOR production. "We weren't really going for anything," says de la Cruz. "We gave the tapes to Scott [Litt, who engineered, mixed and provided "additional production"], and he just went to town with them. And we liked it." The album packs more punch than the previous two, but sacrifices hip charm for commercial zing.

Revisionist history? An underground band confused by—and defensive about—its sudden mainstream success? While success seems possibly to be on the very brink of spoiling Katrina and the Waves, Rew at least hasn't forgotten the lessons about public opinion that his long career on the bottom has taught him. "I'm sure backlash will come," he says. "It always does. At the moment we can do no wrong, because we're a novelty, and people want to be associated with it and say how good it is. But the time will come when people will get jaded and they'll start slagging it off."

For the moment, though, the band is riding a different wave, and seems to be perched self-satisfiedly on its crest. Katrina and the Waves have worked hard, achieved well-earned success, and—judging from their live show—undercut the values that got them there. They're confident, but their confidence seems to be more in their success than in their music. And they recognize that their hold on that can only be fleeting. "I think we'll probably carry on doing this kind of music," says Leskanich, "and if people get tired of it and don't buy our records any more, then that'll be it."

Nice people. Really great songs. But they seem to have lost the sense of proportion that their music, more than most other styles, so desperately requires. It would be premature to call for removing the electrode from the monster's neck. Instead, here's hoping the Waves settle back down into a more natural ebb and flow.



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This summer's hottest tickets in audio- and video-to-go

BY STEVEN SCHWARTZ

WHAT'S THE GREATEST audio innovation for any music lover old enough to remember when the Beatles released Sgt. Pepper, and anyone young enough to care about Duran

Duran? Answer: Audio-to-go.

Traveling music has been with us for years—since someone first figured out how to pack batteries in the back of an old tube radio. But audio-to-go means more than just "moving music"; it means truly portable audio products. Radios, tape decks and yes, even Compact Discs, that deliver hi-fi regardless of the locale.

Granted, these inconspicu-

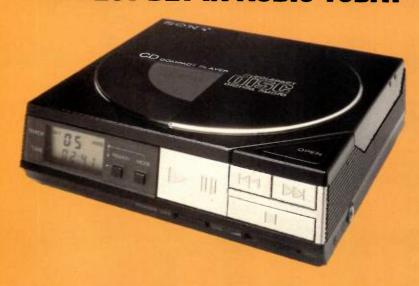
ous tune boxes haven't exactly transformed the American landscape, but they've certainly changed the beat of the great outdoors.

LIKE ANY INVENTION worth its salt, the personal stereo was born of necessity. According to the oft-told story, the original Sony Walkman was developed upon the request of Sony chairman Akio

Morita for a device that would allow him to listen to music in private when he attended tennis matches.

Evidently, Mr. Morita's own backhand has proven more effective than he could have possibly imagined; today, the Walkman is joined by literally hundreds of personal stereo systems on the market. But while the widespread proliferation of miniature music sys-

THE BEST BET IN AUDIO TODAY



AT \$300, SONY'S D-5 PORTABLE COMPACT DISC PLAYER IS SIMply the best bet in audio today. In fact, it's such a hot item that most dealers are currently sweating out long customer waiting lists while demand continues to outstrip supply.

What's all the fuss about? For one, the size is right. It weighs a mere 1.3 pounds and is only slightly larger than a CD case—not necessarily Walkman material, yet adorable enough to win an audio charm contest. Still, the D-5 has a lot more going for it than cute cosmetics.

A unit this small would, on the surface, seem to lose something in sound quality, particularly when the playback and tracking circuits have been squeezed onto a single chip (rather than the standard three). And consider the specs: the D-5 has a rated signal-to-noise ratio of 85 dB, while most home CD players fall somewhere between 90 to 96 dB. But in this case performance speaks louder than words—or numbers.

The truth is that the D-5 has the full, crystal-clean sound common to any quality CD player. And while it may not win a side-by-side comparison with an expensive home unit, try carrying one of those on a shoulder strap.

Although the D-5 comes with its own AC adapter, only the optional EBP-9LC carrying case/battery pack (approx. \$50) makes it truly portable. The case requires six C cell batteries; normal alkalines will provide about five hours playing time.

Just how portable is the D-5? Aye, there's the rub. When used outside of its carrying case, the unit will play upside down and so forth, but any quick movement or slight bump will cause it to mistrack (or skip, for those who were raised on vinyl LPs). The case does provide some extra shock protection, but even within its confines the machine will still mistrack when jarred. So for argument's sake, let's say you'd be wise to leave it home when jogging.

Nevertheless, the best thing about this mini CD player is that although it sounds great through headphones, it sounds even better through a home system, which is how most consumers will probably prefer to use it. The difference is simply that you can crank it to your heart's content through your speakers, even though its built-in amplifier will probably leave some in want of a few more decibels. Keep in mind that because of its size, the D-5 lacks all the programmability of expensive home players. Still, all of the essentials are here, such as forward and backward track repeat, automatic music search and cueing to any portion of a disc. The controls are straightforward, and the unit's 2.5-second track retrieval time should be acceptable to most users.

As a single-play unit, the D-5 is hard to beat; and its degree of portability is nothing short of remarkable. Now all that's needed is an equally ingenious CD carrying case.

—Steven Schwartz

tems has resulted in improved features and lower prices, it has also made the selection process more difficult than ever.

What do you look for when shopping for a personal stereo system? First, consider your lifestyle. If you're planning on taking it with you as a beach companion this summer, you might consider purchasing a water-resistant (or "sports") model. These lightweight units offer excellent protection against the elements and can be used year-round—winter as well as summer. They are somewhat more expensive than comparable non-waterproof models, but after all, it only takes one healthy splash of water to, shall we say, dampen the performance of most unprotected personal stereos, regardless of price.

On the other hand, if you want to listen to cassettes on your daily run, then the size of the player is an obvious concern. But unless you want to wind up with a batch of mangled tape, you should also make sure that the unit you choose has an effective counterbalance mechanism. This can easily be determined during in-store demonstrations by giving your prospective contenders a few gentle shakes while you listen through the headphones. A good unit will not produce any sound deviation while a noticeable change in the tape speed should be taken as a definite warning sign.

While you're examining the store models don't forget to check out their construction. Is the unit solidly built? How do the controls feel? Are they easily accessible? These are all factors that should be determined before you head home.

Aside from such structural considerations, careful thought should also be given to your personal stereo's feature selection—particularly in the case of cassette players. Getting the most for your money is the name of the game, but you shouldn't have to pay extra for features you're not going to use. For instance, unless you record your own metal cassettes, most people don't really need metal tape capability, since nearly all prerecorded cassettes are recorded on either chrome or normal tape.

However, one feature that should be considered with any personal cassette player is Dolby noise reduction. Tape hiss is annoying under any conditions, but through a set of headphones it can be particularly nerve-wracking. Even though you may not have to use noise reduction with all your tapes, that extra 10 dB of cushioning can often come in handy. Again, some units feature both Dolby B and C, but unless you record your own tapes with Dolby C it may be an unnecessary expense.

Two other interesting cassette features are automatic shutoff and auto reverse. Automatic shutoff cuts off power at completion of tape play, rewind or fast for-

Card, conserving batteries as well as the I fe of the unit's motor. Meanwhile, auto reverse provides you with uninterrupted I stening by automatically switching the tape direction to play both sides of a cassette.

Those interested in an AM/FM unit mirus the cassette deck have the widest variety of shapes and sizes to choose from. Because there is no cassette mechanism to ceal with here, manufacturers have been able to throw the shrink machine into everdrive on this portable breed. The offspring of the transistor radio of the '50s are imaginative creations like the credit cards zed receiver and cordless radio headsets (now the de facto choice among the roller scate set).

There isn't much in the way of features to look for in personal radios. Options for scan tuning or programmable station settings don't exist in this genre of portable radios—yet. What is important, though, is audio reception. And to ensure the best possible performance from your personal radio, you may want to opt for a unit equipped with a distant/local selector switch or AFC control.

GETTING SMALL

NOW THAT YOU HAVE SOME IDEA o what to look for in a personal stereo system, check out this sampling of equipment choices.

Chalk up another "personal" first for Sony. This time the company's master shrinkers have created the world's first dual cassette personal stereo with full dubbing abilities; amazingly enough, it's only slightly larger than a standard Walkman. The WM-W800 (approx. \$180) is designed with two back-to-back decks-one specifically for playback and another for playback/recording. Meanwhile, its auto reverse feature works with both decks, and enables you to listen to both sides of two different tapes consecutively. You can also make your own live recordings via the included One Point Stereo mic, although the unit's Dolby B noise reduction is effective only in the playback mode.

The same Dolby option is found on Toshiba's new KT-4085 personal cassette recorder with AM/FM stereo (approx. \$150). In fact, this pint-sized system has just about everything you could ask for in a portable personal—a built-in AM/FM stereo tuner, full auto reverse in both playback and record modes, a three-band equalizer, a detachable stereo mic and a pair of collapsible headphones.

Deluxe models are great for on-themove recording but most folks' portable music needs are satisfied by a basic personal cassette player/radio. A solid choice in this category is Koss's A-3 Music Box (approx. \$90). In addition to its rugged construction and full-sized controls, the A-3 is equipped with an AM/FM tuner pack, Dolby B noise reduction, switchable tape equalization and an end of tape "auto stop" function. The A-3 is further enhanced by a pair of Koss's best-selling, collapsible Sound Partner headphones and the unit's own unique "Safelite" feature: a yellow light diode that warns listeners of dangerous volume levels above 95 dB, which may save your hearing for when you're too old to rock 'n' roll.

For pocket radio fans, there's Panasonic's FR-11 (approx. \$43). This high-techstyled AM/FM stereo receiver is available in either chrome or black finish and is equipped with a three-position preset equalizer that lets you select the proper setting for all types of music (high/low boost is suggested for rock and jazz). And an LED indicator that signals perfect FM stereo reception and fixed AFC (which prevents station drifting) come as stock equipment.

EAR CONVERTIBLES

ONE OF THE HARSH REALITIES OF pocket-sized stereo systems is that all headphones are not created equal. And while most major manufacturers tend to package their personal portables with matching quality headsets, it may pay to mix and match your own combination.

One big problem is that the lightweight cord used in many headsets will sooner or later give out under the strain of being rolled up into a ball and tossed into a purse or beach bag; nevertheless, should you find yourself having to replace your headphones—or if you just want to invest in a second pair-you might consider purchasing a set that can be used with both your personal and home stereos. Such doubleduty models come equipped with an adapter that fits over the attached mini-plug for connection with standard-sized components. Most offer higher sensitivity ranges than the average personal stereo headset, so always remember to watch the volume levels.

While we're talking safety, only consider an open-air headphone design that will let you filter in the real world while you're spacing out between your ears.

Pioneer's SE-L22 (approx. \$30) openair design is one to consider carefully; in this case the speaker diaphragm is precisely lined up to face the eardrum for unattenuated listening. It's earpieces won't crunch your sideburns and its ultra-high sensitivity rating of 110 dB/mW provides enough kick for handling any audio source.

Practicality is important, but style counts too. So if you're looking for a designer headset to go along with your de-



signer jeans try on Yamaha's YHD-1 (approx. \$70). These ultra-comfortable, orthodynamic headphones were created by Italian designer Mario Bellini, and follow the line headed by the Yamaha/Porsche headphones (now included in the Museum of Modern Art's Design Collection). Available in chic charcoal black, the YHD-1 weighs only 5.9 ounces (including an eight-foot cord) and utilizes samarian cobalt magnets for highly accurate performance in all frequency ranges.

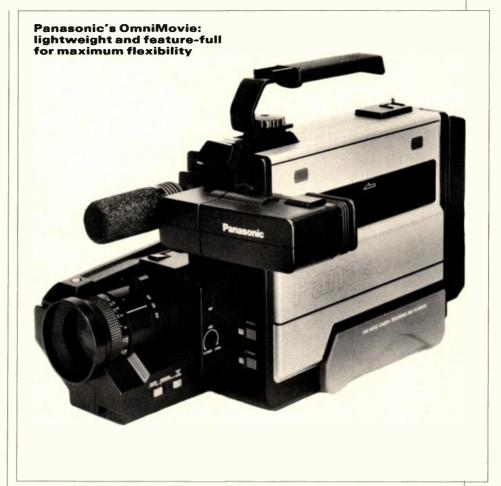
It may not be as stylish as the YHD-1, but the Koss Porta Pro I (approx. \$50) has what it takes to make portable listening a pleasure. These lightweight, adjustable headphones carry on the Koss reputation for sonic quality with a 15 to 25,000 Hz frequency response range and a unique three-position earcup adjustment for proper fit and comfort. Another highlight of the Porta Pro is a mute switch that instantly shuts off the sound when the outside world calls.

You can also turn your personal stereo into a boom-box of sorts with Audio-Technica's AT-SP3 subminiature loudspeakers (approx. \$75). They measure six inches high and can produce faithful sound reproduction from 200 to 16,000 Hz thanks to each speaker's three-inch driver and builtin amplifier. Power is supplied by eight Ccell batteries (included) or by an optional 6V DC adapter. Also included is a six-foot cable with one stereo and two mono mini plugs for various audio connections.

PERSONAL STEREOS ARE GREAT for individual sojourns, but they aren't very functional when you're traveling in groups. Thus, your summer music requirements may demand the output that only a "boom box" can bestow. If so, there's good news. The latest crop of these portable music systems is the most feature-packed to date-with some surprising additions.

For instance, there's Casio's CK-500 (approx. \$500), which combines the dubbing capabilities of a double cassette recorder with a three-band (AM/FM/SW) radio and 49-key keyboard. The CK-500 even lets you do your own tape mixes using any dual combination of recorded tape, radio, keyboard or microphone. Meanwhile, the eight-note polyphonic keyboard features 12 preset tones and auto-rhythms, "Casio Chord" keys, pitch control and four types of bass. All this is somehow squeezed into a package that weighs only 11.5 pounds—including batteries.

For mobile audiophiles, Sony's new CFD-5—a digital boom box with a built-in Compact Disc player—is the only way to go. Like Sony's D-5 portable CD player



(see separate story), the CFD-5's digital system utilizes advanced one-chip technology to provide an impressive 90 dB dynamic range with only 0.008 percent total harmonic distortion. Of course, it also carries all the standard portable goods as well: an auto-reverse cassette deck with microprocessor-controlled operation and automatic music sensor (AMS) function, AM/ FM stereo tuner, five-band stereo graphic equalizer and a pair of detachable two-way speakers. A sweet deal for \$550.

Yamaha's new PC-6 portable component system (approx. \$250) has a high-tech black finish and weighs in at only 11.9 pounds. Its auto-reverse cassette deck is equipped with two repeat modes, automatic music search, tape type selector and Dolby B noise reduction. The system also includes AM/FM stereo reception, a fiveband equalizer, a five-watt-per-channel RMS amplifier and detachable two-way speakers.

High-speed dubbing fans will want to check out Aiwa's CA-W50 component system (approx. \$300). This top-of-the-line model features dual cassette operation with half-time dubbing capability, onetouch synchro recording, dual tape type selection and mic/line mixing. It also has a stereo radio tuner, five-band equalizer and detachable two-way speakers.

Toshiba's RT-8075 (approx. \$200) also offers high-speed dubbing capability. This lightweight wonder is further enhanced with double auto-reverse for consecutive playing of two full cassettes, AM/FM stereo radio, and a phono-in jack for an MM cartridge turntable.

SIGHTS OF SUMMER

WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT TO MAKE your own "California Girls" video? You may not be able to get David Lee Roth to play the lead, but there's plenty of local talent to be found at the beach.

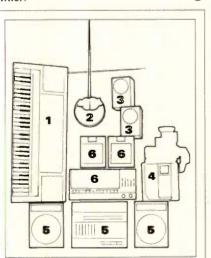
The video camcorder just might be your ticket to a career in rock video. This compact, hand-held unit combines the photographic capabilities of a video camera with the recording guts of a VCR, thus eliminating much of the load of on-location videotaping. New 8mm camcorders have already arrived from companies like Kodak, Polaroid, Canon and Sony. But, with the prevalence of the half-inch video format at home, it'll be several years before this smaller tape format—which produces even lighter weight camcorders-becomes a serious contender.

Nevertheless, improvements continue to

be made within the Beta and VHS camcorder camps. Sanyo's VRC200 Betamovie Camcorder (approx. \$1600) has an added automatic focus function not found on the company's first generation machine. Meanwhile, other features of the VRC200 include a power zoom lens with macro focus for closeups, low-light recording (in 28 lux minimum illumination) and a built-in condenser microphone. It's capa-He of recording three hours' worth of material on a single cassette in the Beta II mode, while the unit's rechargeable battery pack fits neatly inside the pistol grip for up to an hour of continuous use.

Still, the VHS remains the hands-on leader for maximum flexibility. These units can be played back directly through a TV or, with their electronic viewfinders, can even be viewed on the road.

Panasonic's OmniMovie is one of the tottest new contenders in this category. Complete with a black and white electronis viewfinder and full playback ability, the OmniMovie records up to two hours and 40 minutes on a single T160 tape and can roduce its videos with as little as 20 lux of l ght (low level, indoor). It also features a power zoom lens with macro focusing and ε rechargeable battery for up to two hours cf power. And it only weighs 7.5 pounds (including battery)—meaning you may not build up your biceps carrying it around, but you also won't drop dead from tatigue in the middle of a crucial shot, either.



EQUIPMENT KEY

(from P. 35)

- 1. Casio CK-500 (approx. \$500)
- 2. Yamaha YHD-1 (approx. \$70)
- 3. Audio-Technica AT-SP3 (approx. \$75)
- 4. Sanyo VRC200 Betamovie Camcorder (approx. \$1600)
- 5. Yamaha PC6 (approx. \$250)
- 6. Aiwa CA-W50 (approx. \$300)



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it's completely iron-freeand iron is a natural enemy of good whiskey. A sip of Jack Daniel's, we believe, will tell you why we all appreciate our iron-free spring.



CHARCOAL MELLOWED DROP BY DROP

MIKE SHEA

THE SOFTWARE of YOUR CONNECTION

Pt. II: Testing the musical applications of Yamaha's CX5M

ast month HANDS ON dealt with the Yamaha CX5M and its keyboard interface strictly as an instrument; in that regard, it scored highly in terms of both cost and sound quality. Still, the first column barely scratched the surface in attempting to detail the unit's many capabilities: remember, there's an honest to God personal computer at the heart of this system.

Micro Soft, a U.S. software development company, came up with a computer operating system based on the Z80 microprocessor. Using older 8-bit computer technology, they packed everything possible into it, making it not only compatible to BASIC language, but also to much more expensive operating systems like MS-DOS. Not only is it inexpensive, but it's easy to operate and has wonderful graphics, perfect interfaceability and, most importantly, great music capabilities. Micro Soft licenses the right to use this system, MSX, and Yamaha, is utilizing it in its CX5M music synthesizer which as noted last month also incorporates Yamaha's FM synthesizer.

Since digital sounds are merely numbers of pulses, and the MSX computer has an internal memory, it's possible to retain or load and later unload them for playback, thus allowing the computer to double as an actual recording studio. This function is greatly enhanced by the use of Yamaha's optional Micro Composer software package. Since it will not program or record in real time (i.e., playing the keyboard while in record mode will not commit music to memory properly), the CX5M can't match comparable synths in the \$35,000 range. No great revelation that; more to the point, the CX5M, at a much lower price point, has strengths comparable to those of a more sophisticated unit.

Inputting notes via the computer's type-writer keyboard is a two-step process. First the length of the note is selected (1/8, 1/4, 1/2, etc.), then the note itself (c, d, e, f, etc.) is typed in. Using the piano-style keyboard for note entry is a simple task, but the note played must be held down until the on-screen cursor moves to the desired note length indication. These notes are entered on a musical score along with key signature, rests, tempo, the selected instrument voice, dynamics and other musical peramaters, plus standard professional indications for crescendos, decrescendos and so forth, all with full editing capabilities to

boot. In short, the CX5M is an almost perfect music instruction tool. Furthermore, even though this process is more time-consuming than the same process when used on megabuck synths, one's efforts are not wasted, as all programming information can be saved to printed copy, cassette or optional memory modules. Cassette usage is less expensive, but loading to and from the memory modules is inherently faster. Adding the Music Macro software to the

YAMAHA
FM Music Composer
Compositeur Musical FM
YRM-101

system (via the second port and an optional adaptor) further increases the possibilities. Not only will it record eight parts of up to four instruments, but it can double the length of the song (by sacrificing tracks), create drum sounds and pattern accompaniment, make volume and pitch changes during playback and use the MIDI output to automatically control or make other MIDI-capable instruments play the recorded parts. Once recorded, a song can still be modified in terms of the sounds and instruments used, and its structure (verse, chorus, intro, etc.) rearranged. The Music Macro software also allows for the use of the MSX's graphics capabilities along with the music-and believe me, these are as exceptional as they are simple. For instance, I was able to add to a routine, self-programmed composition (consisting of only drums, bass line and lead synth line) graphics that included circles, squares and triangles of different colors synchronized perfectly with the notes

being played—a basic function, perhaps, but impressive nonetheless. Unlike other computers I've worked with the CX5M's graphics capabilities are both extensiveencompassing 16 colors, backgrounds with animated high resolution drawings over them and much more-and efficient: everything is accomplished with only a few keystrokes. This ease-of-operation is the real beauty of the system's brain: it's people-oriented. On every other computer standard available, be it CP/M, IBM-PC, MS-DOS or whatever, manufacturers offer 16-bit and 32-bit processing speeds, presumably on the theory that these higher speeds are more useful than, say, the MSX's "older" eight-bit system. Yet the latter comes in a close second to the higher-tech IBM-PC, a 16-bit system that costs thousands more dollars than the one in question here.

Recent shakeouts in the home computer industry indicate that consumers are still trying to figure out what use these machines have in their lives, beyond important applications in the workplace. Competing systems don't interface perfectly, if at all, with systems and software from other manufacturers, despite being of the same standard; and once a user's tired of playing games or monitoring home finances, what's left? MSX components, however, will interface properly, no matter the manufacturer, and there's already a wealth of software on the market. Unfortunately the MSX is currently unavailable in the States; in Japan it happens to be the most popular home computer, and word is that it's doing well in England, where it was recently introduced. However, everyone from Microsoft (the MSX's developer) on down is very circumspect about its Stateside prospects, even though it appears to have everything anyone would want in a home computer. The HANDS ON advisor says if you're in the market for a wonderfully powerful synthesizer and haven't hit the lottery lately, the CX5M is the right ticket. On the other hand, if you're only interested in getting a computer, wait a little while until judgment day arrives for MSX system components.

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CRAIG ANDERTON

VAPORWARE: NOW YOU SEE IT, NOW YOU DON'T

saw it with my own eyes. A guitar synthesizer, connected to a Chroma keyboard synthesizer, that was responding faster and more accurately than any other guitar synthesizer I had seen; in fact, the company showing the thing had specifically hired an ultra-fast Mashville picker to do the demo. The insurument sounded just fine, and many of the people who saw the device at a summer 1984 industry trade show came away faworably impressed.

Try to find one of these wonder boxes at your music store, though, and you won't; it was not even mentioned at a more recent trade show, and for now seems to have disappeared from the face of the earth. This is cne example of "vaporware"—not hardware, not software, but something that leads a shadowy existence somewhere between reality and the imagination of a mar-Leting person. Vaporware is the software update you've been told will arrive "in six to 10 weeks," then find out in 10 weeks that it will be available "in six to 10 weeks." Vaporware is seeing the same product "introduced" at a half dozen trade shows before you ever see one in a music store. Vaporware is the monophonic sampling that was supposed to be polyphonic two years ago, and the MIDI retrofit that still hasn't arrived.

But vaporware is also unpredictable. The guitar synthesizer I mentioned may resurface at the next trade show in an even better form, and be a giant hit. Maybe the problem was that it couldn't be produced at a competitive price, and when the prices of certain components drop far enough the thing will come out of the woodwork. Or maybe we'll never see it again.

More and more, musicians are finding out that those neat toys they read about in heir favorite magazines are having a hard ime making it to music stores. Why the problem? Are manufacturers really that antogether, or is there more to the story?

As with so many other developments in the music biz, the computer industry which is even more competitive than the nusic industry) has set the precedent. Probably the most famous example of vacorware in action occurred with the Oscorne computer company. Their Osborne I, essentially the first portable computer, was a huge success; other companies umped on the portable computer band wagon, and had the advantage of using hindsight to correct some of the Osborne's



deficiencies. These improved, second generation products started chipping away at Osborne's market share.

Then Osborne announced its second generation computer, which sounded absolutely fantastic. The only problem was that they were not even close to getting the thing into production. Although the premature nature of the announcement was probably due more to over-optimism (or possibly hubris) than to malice, Osborne paid dearly. With the anticipated arrival of the new computer, sales of the original model vaporized and, due to these and other difficulties inherent in growing too large too soon, the company folded. To a greater or lesser degree, many manufacturers in the music industry have fallen victim to this same syndrome.

So why don't companies just wait until products are ready to ship? There are many reasons, ranging from bad planning to bad luck. Part of the problem lies with the electronics industry itself, which furnishes many of the critical components used in the new breed of musical instruments. Electronics companies are so competitive that they often follow an elaborate ritual where they first "announce" the part, then some time later "sample" the part to preferred customers in limited quantities, then "introduce" the part, and finally (sometimes more than a year later) get ready for volume shipments. At each stage, delays and problems can crop up. What's more, if IBM suddenly decides it wants a particular part, there's going to be a shortage of that part—and since musical instrument manufacturers do not have the leverage to beat out an IBM, they have to wait their turn.

The software writing process presents problems as well. Traditionally, companies underestimate the time required to write the software that makes these computer-based instruments tick. Bugs commonly crop up that require many hours to track down, and to further complicate matters, additional features are added up to the last possible minute in order to make a device more appealing. The extensive use of software-based instruments has created a paradox: While the hardware in instruments has become more reliable than ever before, software bugs have now taken over as the main source of unreliable operation. Sometimes instruments "freeze up" for no apparent reason, dump their data, or just plain freak out and do strange things. While this rarely (if ever) leads to physical damage, it is at the very least inconvenient and companies often delay a product to make it as bug-free as possible.

Will the problem get worse, or will it get better? Who knows? Some companies, having almost killed themselves by being premature in their announcements, are being very careful not to repeat their mistakes. Others are not as cautious. There is some good news, however: I have just been assured that companies will no longer announce products that are not yet ready to ship, and this industry-wide policy goes into effect in . . . "six to 10 weeks."





Sparkling videos from the Platinum LP "Diamond Life."

Hang On To Your Love

Smooth Operator (EXTENDED VERSION)

Your Love Is King

When Am I Going To Make A Living?

Plus personal reflections by SADE.



Now on Videocassette



REVIEWS

Krokus: The Video Blitz

E: Marty Callner

60 min./RCA-Columbia Pictures Home Video/\$19.95

A video album from one of the more pedestrian heavy metal bands around. Director Marty "Set 'em and forget 'em'' Callner incorporates some conceptual videos into the mix of concert footage, but it's all so much smoke and decibels for raught. For a better heavy metal reference, check out Judas Priest Live or Kiss's Animalized —David Manners videos

Utopia: A Retrospective 1977-1984

[Bob Lampel (live)/Todd Rundgren (studio) 70 min. / Passport Music Video / \$29.95

Concert and conceptual videos from one of mock's longest-running progressive groups. Best bet here is the studio segments directed by Todd Lundgren, who may one day get his due as a mock video pioneer, perhaps with this collection. On stage, Utopia doesn't exactly get white-hot, but fans of the form will find much to admire in the ensemble's tight instrumental work and protessional performances. -D.M.

Blancmange

6 min./Sony Video 45/\$19.95 "Living on the Ceiling"/

"Waves" / "Blind Vision"

Low-calorie synth-pop from a band named after a dessert. What more do you expect from a band named after a dessert? -D.M.

Midnight Triangle: The Crusaders Live

#O min./MCA Home Video/\$29.95 D: Makoto Hasegawa

A bit of jazz, a bit of rock, some of it hot, some of it medium-cool, all of it played with intelligence and passion by pros whose integrity ihines through each note. Maybe a bit too lite for your sensitive but hardcore bluesman, but atisfying nonetheless.

Randy Newman: Live At the Odeon

J: Michael Lindsay-Hogg

57 min./RCA Musicvision/\$29.95

Granted, it's a bizarre package, but Rand's unsightly mug, monotonous voice and exquisite songcraft make for some of the most expressive and resonant work in any art form—here, "Christmas In Cape Town," "Rednecks" and, particularly, "God's Song" prove shattering examples. Although the special guests and beyond hip setting are undoubtedly producer Lorne Michaels' idea, it is the unmistakable touch of one of America's master ironists to have Linda Ronstadt sing "Real Emotional Girl." 20 songs for \$29.95-we love it!

-John McAlley

NEW AND NOTED

Barry Gibb: Now Voyager (MCA Home Video)

-As lifeless and contrived as the record of the same name. And some call it singing.

Queen: The Works

(Sony Video 45)

-Who cares if they're smart? Music this overblown and derivative cannot be defended on any level. And isn't Freddie Mercury the guy who put the you back in yougly?

M PROGRAMMING

NEW ADDS

A-Ha, "TAKE ON ME" (WB)

Kim Carnes, "CRAZY IN THE NIGHT" (EMI) Ray Davies, "RETURN TO WATERLOO"

The Doors, "ROAD HOUSE BLUES" (MCA Home Video/Elektrol

Bob Dylan, "TIGHT CONNECTION" (Col) Don Henley, "NOT ENOUGH LOVE"

lam Siam, "SHE WENT POP" (Col) Greg Kihn, "BOYS WON'T LEAVE GIRLS"

Long Ryders, "I HAD A DREAM" (Frontier) Freddie Mercury, "I WAS BORN" (Col) Power Station, "BANG A GONG"

Translator "COME WITH ME" (415 Col)

POWER ROTATION

David Bowie, "LOVING THE ALIEN" (EMI) Duran Duran, "A VIEW TO A KILL" (Capitol) Eurythmics. "WOULD FLIE TO YOU?" (RCA) Don Henley, "NOT ENOUGH LOVE"

Mick Jagger, "LUCKY IN LOVE" (Col) Cyndi Lauper, "GOONIES R GOOD ENOUGH" (Epic)

Robert Plant, "LITTLE BY LITTLE" (Esperon-

Power Station, "BANG A GONG"

HEAVY ROTATION

Bryan Adams, "HEAVEN" (A&M) Phil Collins, "SUSSUDIO" (Atlantic)

Foreigner, "THAT WAS YESTERDAY"

Glann Frey "SMUGGLER'S BLUES" IMCAL Huey Lewis, "BAD IS BAD" (Chrysolis) Madonna, "INTO THE GROOVE" (Orion)

Power Station, "SOME LIKE IT HOT"

David Lee Roth, "JUST A GIGOLO" (WB) Simple Minds, "DON'T YOU" (A&M) Bruce Springsteen, "I'M ON FIRE"

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

'til tuesday, "VOICES CARRY" (Epic) Wham! "EVERYTHING SHE WANTS" (Col)

ACTIVE ROTATION

Cafferty & Brown "TOUGHALL OVER" (Scotti Bros/CBS)

Harold Faltermeyer, "AXELF" (MCA) The Fools, "DO WAH DIDDY DIDDY" (Jem) Hall & Oates, "POSSESSION/OBSES-

Hall & Oates, "SOME THINGS ARE BET-

Howard Jones, "THINGS CAN ONLY

Julian Lennon, "SAY YOU'RE WRONG"

Katrina & the Waves, "WALKING ON SUNSHINE" (Capital

REO Speedwagon, "ONE LONELY NIGHT" (Epic)

Paul Young, "EVERY TIME YOU GO AWAY"

BREAKOUT ROTATION

Bon Jovi, "ONLY LONELY" (Polygram) Depeche Mode, "PEOPLE ARE PEOPLE"

Bryan Ferry, "SLAVE TO LOVE" (WB) Corey Hart, "NEVER SURRENDER" (EMI) King, "LOVE AND PRIDE" (Epic)

Lords of the New Church, "THE METHOD TO MY MADNESS" (IRS)

Menudo, "HOLD ON" (RCA)

Graham Parker & the Shot, "WAKE UP" (Elektra)

Supertramp, "CANNONBALL" (A&M) Joe Walsh, "THE CONFESSOR" (WB)

NEW ROTATION

Bongos, "BRAVE NEW WORLD" (RCA) Bronski Beat, "WHY?" (MCA)

DeGarmo & Key, "666" (Power Disc.)

Flash Kahan, "ONE AT A TIME" (Capital) lam Siam, "SHE WENT POP" (Col)

Jazzy Jeff, "KING HEROIN" (Jive/Aristo)

Long Ryders, "I HAD A DREAM" (Frontier) Raven. "ON & ON" (Atlantic)

Translator, "COME WITH ME" (415/Col) Marc Anthony Thompson,

"LOVE COOLS DOWN" (WB)

Uli John Roth, "THE NIGHT THE MASTER" (Capitol)

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

THE NEW BILLY BRAGG

Portrait of the artist trying to be himself

NEW YORK—Billy Bragg's first full-length LP, Brewing Up With Billy Bragg, bears the somewhat arch subtitle, "A Puckish Satire On Contemporary Mores," but Billy would like all his fans to know that was not his first choice.

"I really wanted to have it read, 'The Pen Is Mightier Than The Sword,' only the words 'Pen' and 'Is' would be very close together," chuckles the 27-yearold singer-guitaristsongwriter. "But when me mum heard about it, she said, 'Oh no, son, you can't do a thing like that,' and as bad as I am, I draw the line at me mum. So it ended up as a 'puckish satire.' "

And though he's hardly modest about his music, he does admit "you can't change the world with rock 'n' roll. Most of it has been anthems, with no action at all to back it up. Maybe my eight songs might make

'em think a bit about politics and what it has to do with their lives."

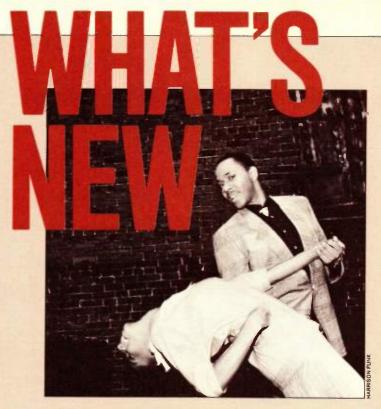
That realization came to Bragg himself back in 1981, when he "mistakenly" joined the British Army after his four-year-old band, Riff Raff, went the way of all flesh. "In Britain, the Army is the sponge of the working class youth, and after me band broke up I had nothing else to do with me time. I stayed three months."

Since his discharge, Bragg's career has been on a fairly straight uphill course. He already has a seven-song mini-LP, Life's a Riot With Spy vs. Spy, to his credit, and, in support of his new album, he's toured the U.S. and plans to go to Japan this summer.

Though his solo renderings of jagged, urgent polit-pop have provided the proper yin to Frankie's yang, they've also engendered among scribes a propensity for comparing Bragg to both Elvis Costello and Bob Dylan. The artist in question suddenly finds himself running out of ways to be original. "I'm trying very hard," he says earnestly, "to be the new Billy Bragg."

-Mark Mehler





OUT OF GRIDLOCK

Freddie Jackson maneuvers through chart traffic to no. 1

NEW YORK—Check it out, 'cause it ain't likely to happen again: Here's the dutiful reporter waiting patiently to conduct an interview with young Freddie Jackson, one of the top new black vocalists on the scene. The reporter waits... and he waits... and he waits. No Freddie.

Finally, a breathless Jackson charges into the office, polite and apologetic to the max, even if the words come hard. "I got stuck in traffic," he explains. "My cab couldn't get through."

Now this is significant, because Freddie Jackson's big news for the day was that his first single, "Rock Me Tonight," the title cut of his debut album, had edged out Whitney Houston's "You Give Good Love" for the Number One spot on the Black Singles chart. Keep it up, and traffic (and lots of other obstacles, natural or otherwise) parts for you, as the Red Sea did for Moses. You are delivered, baby, from your oppressors.

A native New Yorker, Jackson's most apparent influence is Luther Vandross, another Big Apple favorite son, with whom Jackson shares a forceful but delicate vocal delivery and a winning politesse. But what the hey—this guy was born to sing. Literally.

"My mother was a singer," Jackson relates, "and one night during a concert she went into labor, and had me. And ever since then she's been telling me, 'You better be a successful singer, because you cut my show short.' "That he did, springing from the choir loft of White Rock Baptist Church to a break writing songs and singing backup for Melba Moore and Lillo Thomas.

From there it was on to *Rock Me Tonight*, Number One, and a clear understanding of his *raison d'etre*. "I try to have messages in all my songs," he notes. "I like to sing songs with feeling and I want people to be able to relate to my music—I want them to feel something."

Home, James, through traffic, non-stop, keep on steppin'.

Check you at the top.

—David McGee

IN OUR OWN WORLD

The Vipers strike a blow for day-glow

When Jon Weiss got camned from his adjunct horn-man gig with the Fleshtones in 1981, his path was clear. "It was summertime," the Vipers' vocalist recalls, "ard I said, I gotta start a band."

Weiss collared guitarist Paul Martin and bassist Graham Mayand later rounded up guitarist David Mann and drummer Patrick Brcwn-and the Vipers sound got shaped. "We laid out all the guidelines before we even picked up instruments," says Weiss. Guidelines? "Pebbles, Vo's. 1-12, you know, Nuggets," Weiss explains. "Not that we were gonna rip off the tur es or even necessarily cover them, but we were gonna work within those boundaries."

The most recent fruit of this determined neopsychedelic vision is Outta the Nest, the Vipers' debut LP on the independent PVC label (South Plainfield, NJ 07080). The album recreates with almost eerie exactness the grungy day-glo-garage-inside-your-mind trippiness of the '60s head bands the Vipers revere.

But do the Vipes wonder about the viability of mining a musical style that had its moment two decades ago? "We're in our own world," responds Weiss. "We're aware of what's goin' on out there, we know what things sound like. It would be a lot easier to become avant-garde, innovative, unique and original, because when you do that, hell, anything goes. If we can't think of a middle section, well, why don't we just throw in this dissonant chord? Don't even hit a chord, make some noise. But try and write something in the primitive tradition of a '60s garage band without sounding contrived. It takes more guts sometimes to go up on a stage and smile than, you know, remind people about what's going on in the world. Which you can't avoid, but that's not the purpose of the Vipers."

-Anthony DeCurtis





THE IMAGE IS 'TOO SHARP'

Process & the Doo Rags got the look you want to know better

"Ah, man, I know who that is. That's Process and the Doo Rags!"

"Nah, that ain't them."

"Man, where else you gonna find five guys with that hairstyle."
—overheard at LaGuardia Airport

NEW YORK—"Lookin' Doo Rag." That's how Process and the Doo Rags (Gumps, Wave, Shorty and Smoothie) describe struttin' their killer look. A look—zoot suits, Stetsons, spats, dangling earrings and, of course, those waves—they take to the supermarket, the gas station, down to the corner and, in fact, wherever they go. "Our image is 'Too sharp,' " declares Process. "On or off stage, we're always clean. Because no matter where we go, somebody knows who we are. And if you ain't lookin' Doo Rag, they say, Wait a minute, something's missin'!"

As conceived by producer Rick James, the Doo Rags are a group drawing off several decades of influence for their looks and their hooks. On Too Sharp, their debut LP, the Rags mix up their freaky funk with a little rap, then come at you with some sweet, close doowop harmonies. As if the demands of such a diverse musical mix weren't challenge enough, these five guys from Buffalo had to figure out how to "look Doo Rag" as well. Shorty, in particular, had some problems finding the right threads. Process explains: "He was all misdirected. He didn't have any concept of what he was doin'. He got this Chinese army hat with the big flaps and had 'Doo Rag' written on it. Then he put an Apache scarf around his neck, and wore a tie with a sweatsuit! Talk about lookin' Doo Rag!"

Now, with their look intact, the Doo Rags are tour bound with Slick Rick and the Mary Jane Girls, and in addition to their multi-dimensional musical attack, they intend to dazzle audiences with some tricked-up terpsichore. "Within our show we're choreographed with floor rockin', pop lockin' and break dancin'." Break dancing? Any plans to spin on your heads? "What?" cries Gumps, in disbelief. "Not on the waves!"

Y E S T E R D A Y
A U G U S T 1 9 7 4

TOP 10 JAZZ ALBUMS

BODY HEAT

HEAD HUNTERS

SCOTT JOPLIN:
THE RED BACK BOOK
Gunther Schuller

CROSSWINDS Billy Cobham

5 STREET LADY

SPECTRUM
Billy Cobham

SCOTT JOPLIN: PIANO RAGS, VOL. 1 AND 2 Joshua Rifkin

REGGAE Herbie Mann

MYSTERIOUS TRAVELLER
Weather Report

Mahayishnu Orchestra

TOP 10 POP ALBUMS

461 OCEAN BOULEVARD Eric Clapton

BACK HOME AGAIN

CARIBOU

BACHMAN-TURNER
OVERDRIVE 2
Bachman-Turner Overdrive

BEFORE THE FLOOD
Bob Dylan

JOHN DENVER'S GREATEST HITS, VOL. 1 John Denver

BAND ON THE RUN

FULFILLINGNESS'
FIRST FINALE
Stevie Wonder

JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH Rick Wakeman

ON STAGE
Loggins and Messina

IT WAS RAGTIME

It was the year of The Sting, "The Entertainer" and the beginning of renewed interest in ragtime and its founding father, Scott Joplin. Joplin's compositions plumbed unusual emotional depths for a music widely regarded as being of the good time, party down type. In the summer of '74, both Gunther Schuller and Joshua Rifkin put Joplin's work on the jazz charts, although it was Marvin Hamlisch's interpretation of "The Entertainer" that brought Joplin to the masses. Later in the decade there appeared an even more viable alternative to these recordings: Nonesuch Records released an album of Scott Joplin piano rolls, as played by the master.



U K T O P L P s

SONGS FROM THE BIG CHAIR Tears for Fears (Mercury)

NO JACKET REQUIRED
Phil Collins (Virgin)

BE YOURSELF TONIGHT Eurythmics (RCA)

HITS VOLUME II
Various Artists (CBS/WEA)

BROTHERS IN ARMS
Dire Straits (Vertigo)

MR. BAD GUY Freddie Mercury (CBS)

THE SECRET

OF ASSOCIATION
Paul Young (CBS)

FLAUNT THE IMPERFECTION China Crisis (Virgin)

AROUND THE WORLD IN A DAY Prince (WB)

BORN IN THE USA
Bruce Springsteen (CBS)

THE BEST OF Elvis Costello (F-Beat)

GO WEST
Go West (Chrysalis)

THE AGE OF CONSENT Bronski Beat (Forbidden Fruit)

YOUTHQUAKE
Dead Or Alive (Epic)

THE BEST OF THE 20TH CENTURY BOY Marc Bolan (K-Tel)

STREETSOUNDS
ELECTRO VII

Various Artists (Streetsounds)

Alison Moyet (CBS)

THE BEST OF Eagles (WEA)

> LOVE NOT MONEY Everything But The Girl (Blanco Y Negro)

DREAM IN ACTION
Howard Jones (WEA)

OUT NOW! Various (Chrysalis)

THE POWER STATION
The Power Station (EMI)

PRIVATE DANCER Tina Turner (Capitol)

RECKLESS
Bryan Adams (Capitol)

SHAMROCK DIARIES Chris Rea (Magnet)



PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

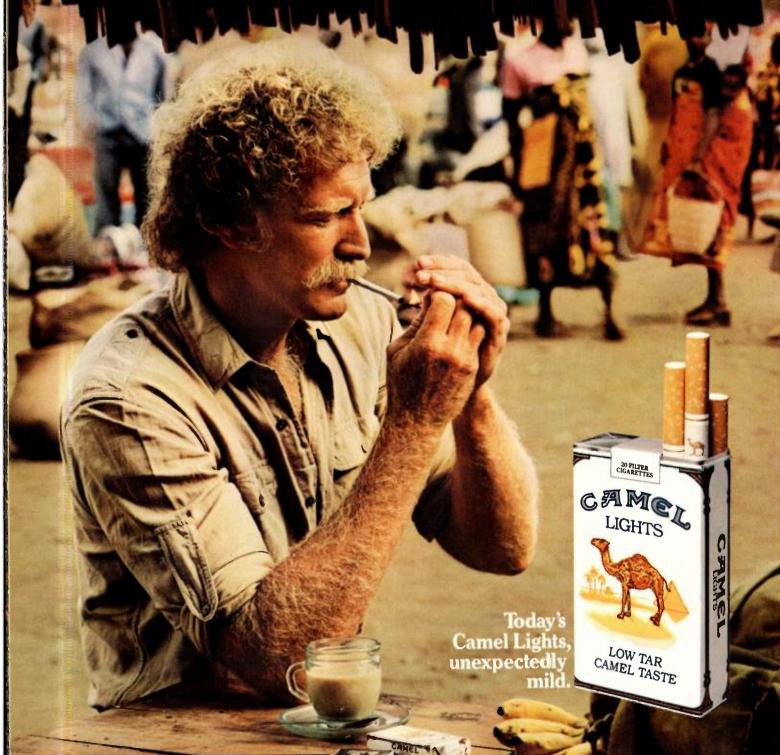
As per the May 25 edition of New Musical Express, a couple of notable projects in progress: The Thompson Twins' Tom Bailey has rejoined mates Alannah Currie and Joe Leeway after a period of R&R following his collapse from exhaustion this past spring. The trio is now back in the studio finishing its next LP, assisted by producer Nile Rodgers, who stepped into the breach after hearing of Bailey's woes. The album should be out later

this summer, with an autumn tour to follow...Tom Waits has both a record (see July RECORD) and a musical play in progress, the latter based on the song "Frank's Wild Years" from the acclaimed Swordfishtrombones LP. In an interview with NME's Barney Hoskyns, Waits described the play thusly: "[It's] a cross between Eraserhead and It's a Wonderful Life. It's bent and misshapen and tawdry and warm... something for all the family." We wouldn't have expected anything less.

UK LP chart reprinted from New Musical Express, May 25, 1985

CAMEL LIGHTS

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9 mg. "tar", 0.8 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method.

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D A N C E L P s

AROUND THE WORLD IN A DAY Prince (WB)

LIKE A VIRGIN Madonna (Sire)

> DIAMOND LIFE Sade (Epic)

BEVERLY HILLS COP Soundtrack (MCA)

WE ARE THE WORLD USA for Africa (Col)

SUDDENLY
Billy Ocean (Jive/Arista)

THE NIGHT I FELL IN LOVE Luther Vandross (Epic)

PRIVATE DANCER
Tina Turner (Capitol)

EMERGENCY
Kool & the Gang (De-Lite)

RHYTHM OF THE NIGHT
DeBarge (Gordy)

ONLY FOUR YOU
Mary Jane Girls (Gordy)

BREAK OUT
Pointer Sisters (Planet)

WHITNEY HOUSTON
Whitney Houston (Arista)

| 4 NIGHTSHIFT Commodores (Motown)

Lionel Richie (Motown)

JESSE JOHNSON'S REVUE
Jesse Johnson (A&M)

ROCK ME TONIGHT
Freddie Jackson (Capitol)

UTFO (Select)

GLOW Rick James (Gordy)

KING OF ROCK
Run-D.M.C. (Profile)

NEW EDITION
New Edition (MCA)

MEETING
IN THE LADIES ROOM
Klymaxx (MCA)

DREAM OF A LIFETIME
Marvin Gaye (Col)

CAN'T STOP THE LOVING

AS THE BAND TURNS
Atlantic Starr (A&M)



CONDITION OF THE EDITION

Anyone with an answer to the question "What's in a name?" might want to check in with the Massachussetts Court of Appeals. Seems the distinguished barristers up north have decided in favor of Streetwise Records and producer Maurice Starr in a dispute with New Edition over the group's name, Streetwise and Starr claiming ownership of it for all recordings, the group and its representatives begging to differ. Earlier this year a U.S. District judge had ruled in New Edition's favor, but that decision was overturned in late May. The Court of Appeals will rehear the case in August; one of the group's attorneys was quoted in Billboard as saying the name New Edition "isn't important," and speculating that in the future the quintet might record as the Edition.

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INTO THE GROOVE Madonna (Sire)

EVERYBODY WANTS TO RULE THE WORLD Tears for Fears (Mercury)

EVERYTHING SHE WANTS Wham! (Col)

YOU SPIN ME AROUND Dead or Alive (Epic)

SANCTIFIED LADY Marvin Gaye (Col)

THINGS CAN ONLY GET BETTER Howard Jones (Elektra)

IN MY HOUSE

Mary Jane Girls (Gordy)

I WONDER IF
I TAKE YOU HOME
Lisa-Lisa & Cult Jam with
Full Force (Col)

NEW ATTITUDE
Patti Labelle (MCA)

SUSSUDIO
Phil Collins (Atlantic)

MEETING IN THE LADIES ROOM Klymaxx (Constellation)

AXEL F THEME
Harold Faltermeyer (MCA)

FRESH Kool & the Gang (De-Lite)

Paul Hardcastle (Chrysalis)

WOULD I LIE TO YOU?

HANGIN' ON A STRING

PERFECT KISS
New Order (Qwest/WB)

SHOUT
Tears for Fears (Mercury)

DO YOU WANNA GET AWAY Shannon (Mirage)

DANGEROUS Natalie Cole (Modern)

RAPPIN' DUKE Rappin' Duke (JWP)

SOME LIKE IT HOT Power Station (Capitol)

DON'T MESS WITH MY TOOT TOOT Jean Knight (Mirage)

THINKIN' ABOUT
YOUR LOVE
Skipworth & Turner (4th and
Broadway)

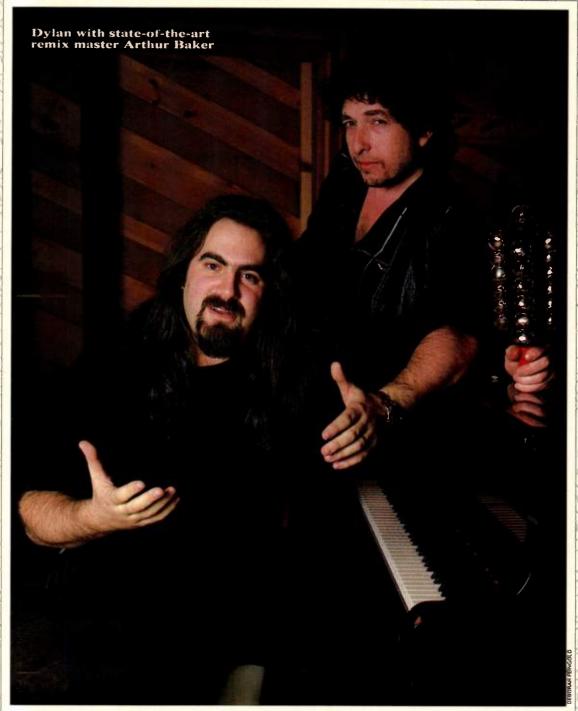
ROCK ME TONIGHT
Freddie Jackson (Capitol)



THE WAR GOES ON

The Paul Hardcastle disc "19" may have hit Number One in England, but it's on a different sort of hit list with ABC-TV and NBC-TV. Executives from the two networks have voiced strenuous objections to the inclusion of their graphic footage from the Vietnam War in a video accompaning the song, ostensibly designed to entertain viewers (actually, one exec wasn't so charitable: ABC's Richard Richter characterized the "19" video as "a trivial piece of rock bop"). The footage comes from an award-winning documentary, Vietnam Requiem, which moved Hardcastle to compose original electronic music and lyrics and mix it with narration from the documentary (the disc's title refers to the average age of the American combat soldier during the War). Upshot? The network footage has been excised and replaced by similar scenes from stock footage houses.

Dance LP and 12" charts researched and compiled by Street Pulse Group



FROM THE HEART

EMPIRE BURLESQUE Bob Dylan

Columbia

By C-reg Tate

Like Mick Jagger's She's tre Boss, Bob



Dylan's Empire Burlesque is above all else an act of self-resuscitation, marked by refound passion, whimsy and modern production values. Dylan produced the record himself, then handed it over to Arthur Baker for a state-ofthe-art remix. The results aren't what you hoped or feared-a Dylanesque take on the art of high-tech noise. What we get instead is the man's most affecting and generous record in years, lyrically, emotionally, musically.

A gaggle of stars perform the sideman chores here with un-

derstated relish and aplomb-Sly and Robbie, Ron Wood, Mick Taylor, Al Kooper, Jim Keltner and, from Tom Petty's band, Mike Campbell, Howie Epstein and Benmont Tench. While these mega-pros bring mucho brio to the project, their presence is clearly supportive, rather than dominating, primarily because Dylan's vocals are as virile and impassioned as they've been at any stage of his career. In places his voice erupts from the grooves, flashing the exuberance and wit we haven't heard from him since Blonde on Blonde.



Where Dylan's recent albums have reveled in a spiteful admixture of religious fanaticism and musical lethargy, Empire Burlesque extols the pains, pleasures and delusions of romance. Tales of broken hearts, lonely hearts, longing hearts and affairs of the heart all make appearances. Nothing here is as potent or visionary as his best work of twenty years ago, but these songs are as passionate as anything he's ever done, and this album may be the most butt-rocking he's cut.

Listen to "Clean Cut Kid," for example, one helluva rockabilly shakedown bristling with nerve and sarcasm on the subject of All-American boys and their makeover into military murderers by the All-American way. Dylan's vocal is clipped, acerbic and driven, rambling and rolling over the tune's four-to-the-bar boogie like a drunken kid headed for disaster in a hotrod Lincoln. For anybody who figured Dylan would be investing in a Florida condo soon, this one oughta put 'em on notice—and a whole lotta greenhorn rockabilly pretenders besides.

The LP's first single, "Tight Connection to My Heart (Has Anybody Seen My Love)," also rears up impressions of a younger Dylan, sowing his wild oats somewhere between Woody Guthrie country and Gotham bohemia, particularly in its lyrics, which marry reflections on a love gone sour with surreal social observation: They're beating the devil out of a guy in a powder-blue wig

Later he'll be shot for resisting arrest
I can still hear his voice crying in the
wilderness...

I never could learn to drink that blood and call it wine

I never could learn to hold you love and call you mine.

Sensitive to the confluence of romantic and political intrigue in these lines, Dylan's world-weary voice evokes the ease with which we summon empathy for the big causes even as we fail to do the same for those nearest and dearest to us. Another song that handily strips bare illusions is "Trust Yourself," where Dylan seems to lampoon his own poetic persona: "Don't trust me to show you beauty/When beauty may only turn to rot."

In the end, though, while the lyric tenor of the LP is melancholy, albeit satirical, the music is ebulliently soulful and vital. Given that Arthur Baker is more renowned for his iron hand than his silk glove, I wasn't expecting the sublime power and subtlety of his work here. For the most part he's used his mixing board prowess to shade, texture and enhance Dylan's vocals, so that what you get is a more dubwise than hiphopped-up sound, one where grunge guitars creep out from under cooing backup vocals rather than splatter their razzle-dazzle across the middle of the tracks. Drums echo spacily as in a Phil Spector production, rather than thud hyperkinetically. From a sonic standpoint,

the highlight of the record is "When the Night Comes Falling From the Sky," which rhythmically recalls Sly and Robbie's ominous Black Uhuru productions. On it Baker unleashes a barrage of subliminal orchestral effects that enhance the suspenseful ambience of the bass/drum team and function as an undertow to Dylan's tortured versifying.

Dylan has always defied our expectations when we thought we had him pegged. That *Empire Burlesque*, this decade's Dylan turnaround, should be so exhilarating is proof positive that the great ones always show what they're really made of when they're down for the count. Welcome back, baby blue.

SHAKEN 'N' STIRRED Robert Plant

Es Paranza/Atlantic

By Wayne King

Robert Plant might not carry a rep for being



a funny guy, but I think he's gotten off a deliciously funny pun on Side Two of Shaken 'N' Stirred. Near the end of the third song, the tempo accelerates and Plant chases it, screaming "lonely, lonely, lonely" in a way that recalls the Zep barnburner "Rock and Roll." The name of the song happens to be "Easily Lead." For Plant, even after the success of The Principle of Moments— his unZeplike solo record—it must have been tempting to merely recreate the sound of the seventies most successful band. That he's refused to do so speaks well for the man.

Plant's using the same set of musicians from *Principle* here, with the exception of drummer Ritchie Hayward, who replaces Phil Collins and Barriemore Barlow. Even more so than with *Principle*, Plant and crew have gone for a jagged, uncommercial sound. Robbie Blunt's guitar work has receded even further in the scheme of things, and Hayward's drums now dominate. His work is on the front line of the mix, even ahead of the vocals, which are designed as mere support for the rhythm.

The main beef with Shaken 'N' Stirred will probably be that there isn't enough "rock 'n' roll" on it, and the argument has merit. All too often, the music here fails to move; it often gets by with intelligence where direct emotional commitment is needed. There's a moment in "Kallalou Kallalou" where the quietly ticking rhythm explodes with four timed blasts, showing off the power hidden behind much of Shaken. There should have been more such moments, when the fragmented

pieces coalesce and reveal the heart of the matter. After the surprising commercial and critical success of the Honeydrippers' EP, maybe Plant can be encouraged to combine the formality of more traditional song forms with his vibrant new music. The results could be devastating.

BROTHERS IN ARMS Dire Straits

Warner Bros.

By Jonathan Gregg

hile day-jobs like producing Bob Dylan



and scoring two film soundtracks could hardly fail to broaden one's vision, Mark Knopfler has brought more craft than inspiration back to the Dire Straits fold for the band's first studio album in over two years. Sound-wise, Brothers in Arms is impressive, sometimes irresistible. For example, "Ride Across the River" evokes an almost tangible tropical ambience, as horns, faraway percussion and various atmospheric synthesizers surround Knopfler's marvelously articulated guitar, imaginary landscapes looming up then disappearing by the pure power of audio suggestion.

But compelling though these atmospheres may be, too few of them materialize into convincing songs—at least not the title track, a too-laid-back, exercise in melancholy, or "Your Latest Trick," where for all of Knopfler's whispering intimations, he never gets to the point.

There's something a bit pat about these tunes—in spite of the addition of outside musicians (bassist Tony Levin, drummer Omar Hakim, the Brecker Brothers) the songs are familiar and unextraordinary. keynoted by Knopfler's trademark Dylanesque vocals. "So Far Away" and "Why Worry" are pleasantly lonesome; "Walk of Life" is a sprightly Tex-Mex interpolation. "Money for Nothing," the album's straight-ahead rocker, is ostensibly about an appliance deliveryman's perception of MTV (!)—it will either mildly amuse or mildly depress you, depending on how seriously you think Knopfler wants to be taken. Topical humor has always been a dubious proposition in rock and roll, and no song ending with the chant "I want my MTV" is likely to dispel those doubts.

The album's toughest cut is "The Man's Too Strong," a potent blend of folksong dread and doomsday technology about a dying war criminal who seeks absolution for his sins in confession. Still, for all the aural landscapes Knopfler is capable of



AUSTIN TEXCENTRICITIES

By Jody Denberg

hile a global oil glut is driving Houston's gas executives to drink, an abundance of Austin vinyl is sending Lone Star state music lovers to stock up on the following 12-inch petro products. Though major label folks buzzed through Texas last year, they signed more expense vouchers than musicians, so these releases are currently available only from independent companies. Git 'em now—once the word gets out, rationing may be necessary!

The Leroi Brothers have revitalized their roadhouse raunch on Lucky Lucky Me. Gone is the tentative mix and approach of last year's CBS mini-LP, as well as its lead guitarist. This longplayer is closer in feel to the Lerois' rollicking live show, buoyed by the arrival of Fender string-bender Evan Johns. The tunes are divided between Steve Doerr's swinging, romantic pop-tinged songs and younger brother Joe's maniacal rockers with a mystical bent, giving the LP a split personality appropriate to this

twisted bunch of Texcentrics.

When guitarist Don Leady left the Lerois, speculation was that the group would lose its cajun underpinnings. Lucky Lucky Me does still include some lovely Louisiana lilts, but Leady's new band, The Tail Gators, cruises Creole country full-throttle. The trio, which also includes former Fabulous Thunderbirds bassist Keith Ferguson, employs traditional cajun tempos and inflections on their Swamp Rock LP (Wrestler Records, 1900 East Side, Austin, TX 78704), though they keep the fiddle, lap steel and rub board in the background and the electric guitar up front. Recorded and mixed in three days, Swamp Rock aims for the heart and spits in the eye of conformist production values.

Now get ready for Texas' wall of guitars, as members of the Lerois, the Tail Gators and other Austin notables team up to forge Trash, Twang and Thunder—Big Guitars From Texas (Jungle Records, P.O. Box 3034, Austin, TX 78764). A blitz of fourteen instrumental extravaganzas featuring four six-stringers, the selections on this record include several variations on that old standby, the I-IV-V progression, as well as the jungle rhythms of "The Lost Incas," the sonic crunch of "Boomerang," and . . . well, suffice to say that this disk is an awesome testament to the staying power of the guitar outside the realm of the popular song.

No stranger to guitar instrumentals himself, Lonnie Mack struck paydirt in the pre-Fab-Four sixties with the hits "Memphis" and "Wham!," paving the way for that decade's lead guitar explorers. A gritty voice and a pioneering ability to merge rock's roots accompanied Mack throughout his career, which has been low profile since the late seventies. Now Mack has set up shop in Austin and re-emerged with Strike Like Lightning (Alligator Records, Box 60234, Chicago, IL 60660), an r&b workout with co-production courtesy of

Stevie Ray Vaughan, one of Mack's most distinguished disciples. The highlights include two Mack/Vaughan collaborations: Vaughan's first recorded acoustic outing, "Oreo Cookie Blues," and an overdrive remake of "Wham!" dubbed "Double Whammy" that finds this duo shaking like tremolo.

While it's true that roots rockers like Stevie Ray Vaughan and the Leroi Brothers are prevalent in Austex, the spirit of the age is alive and kicking as well. Zeitgeist-a quartet whose indie single "Freight Train Rain" garnered mucho kudos-have now issued Translate Slowly (DB Recs, 450 14th St., Atlanta, GA 30318), a Velvety mixture of introspective songwriting smarts, layered chordings and inventive male/female vocal harmonies. The LP also includes a winning cover of Willie Nelson's "Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain" that gives new meaning to the word crossover.

Along with Zeitgeist and the muchheralded True Believers, the next hometown folks to make good will be Doctor's Mob. Young, loud and pissed, Doctor's Mob endow their Headache Machine LP (Wrestler) with the perfect blend of guitar crunch and melodic hooks, vulnerability and post-punk fury. Abetted by Big Boys/Poison 13 bassist Chris Gates' seething production, Doctor's Mob have fashioned a debut record as intense, raucous and liberating as the Replacements' Let It Be. Your local indie vinyl emporium should be stocking Headache Machine, along with the rest of these LPs. If not, they're worth waltzing across Texas for.

(The Tail Gators and Big Guitars from Texas have appeared on Jody Denberg's radio show on KLBJ-FM in Austin. He is thanked in their album notes, but had no creative involvement with either record.)

a ral landscapes Knopfler is capable of summoning up, the lack of tunes to focus them makes Brothers in Arms less like Making Movies than like a string of captivating visuals with no real story to tell.

DREAM OF A LIFETIME Marvin Gaye

By John McAlley

Pream
of a Lifetime
captures the



Marvin Gaye experienced as he struggled to resolve the sacred/profane dualism that rent his life. The LP—a collection of the X-rated material he was recording at the time of his death, plus outtakes from his '70s Motown work—rearranges the dynamics of Gaye's turbulent life to elicit a cathartic emotional effect. Though this too-neat, aesthetically enforced catharsis misrepresents Gaye's terminally divided soul, it does not diminish *Dream*'s dramatic resonance.

Conceptually sequenced, *Dream* leads the listener through the disturbing explicitness of "Sanctified Lady" (originally titled "Sanctified Pussy"), "Savage in the Sack" and "Masochistic Beauty," and on to the more redemptive "Symphony," "Life's Opera" and "Dream of a Lifetime." In this progression from the profane to the sacred, producers Larkin Arnold, Gordon Banks and Harvey Fuqua contrive

a bogus, if well-meaning resolution to Gaye's fractured reality. As if in response to Side One's disconcerting sexual imagery—and to the revealing portrait of paranoia, impotence, self-destruction and self-loathing painted by biographer David Ritz in Divided Soul: The Life of Marvin Gaye—Gaye remonstrates in the album's final and title cut: "I may cry with the past / But it's easier to laugh about it... I thank God for my wonderful life." In light of the allusions to insanity in the album's haunting centerpiece, "It's Madness," spirit-crushing irony undermines this upbeat reconciliation.

Gaye's consciousness at the time of his death is more likely revealed in one of the last songs he recorded, "Masochistic Beauty." "Beauty" initially registers as a misogynistic harangue, but evolves into a startling self-dialogue. Ostensibly addressing his female victim, Gaye adopts a mock-

sophisticated alter-ego, and indirectly confronts himself: "You hate yourself ... You're in poor health/I'll use you till you moan and cry so hard/Your guilt becomes your key/To turn to God." Finally, this song's last verse holds the most clearly realized expression of Gaye's loss of the faith to face his life: "It seems it's your delight / To fuck the fate / You're looking for a way / To close the gate."

There are moments of astonishing beauty on *Dream of a Lifetime*, and while it is a desperate reminder of loss, it also reminds us of the extraordinary and frightening life-force of Marvin Gaye's artistry. In the end, issues of intent or interpretation are silenced by the arresting picture this LP presents of one man's harrowing, hallowed dream of a spiritual/psychosexual unity he could never attain in his lifetime.

GLOW Rick James

Gordy

By J.D. Considine

his is a concept album.



don't run away. It's not what you think. True, there's this thing called "The Glow Fable" on the inner sleeve, set up to look (but certainly not read) like poetry. It's a muddled epic about the "Kingdom of the Light" and the "evil Dark Wizard," but don't worry—the songs themselves have nothing to do with the concept.

Instead, James regales us with meditations on his favorite topic: sex. Most of Glow is about girls: girls Rick James wants ("Spend the Night with Me," "Glow"); girls he has ("Somebody," "Moonchild"); even a girl he lost ("Sha La La La"). For variety's sake, there are a few songs about music ("Melody Make Me Dance" and "Rock and Roll Control"), but even they end up in the sack eventually. Sex is such an obsession here that you begin to wonder why James didn't seize upon that as a concept. It wouldn't have been too hard: Take a lonely but talented boy, give him a magic bass that unlocks the secrets of getting down, and watch him sow funk throughout the land while reaping a bountiful harvest of damsels in undress.

But, unfortunately, cleaning up the concept still wouldn't save this album. For one thing, the lyrics of these songs say little more than the titles themselves do; for another, James's melodramatic vibrato has a pronounced tendency to push his voice off pitch. Most damning of all, though, is the sad truth that Slick Rick's seemingly endless supply of sure-fire grooves ran out

some time ago—no matter how doggedly he and his bandmates flog the beat, the record still flails and founders. Occasionally a hook or a solo floats to the top and holds the listener's attention, but that's about as close to thrills as James gets us. By and large, this album's "glow" is mostly sepulchral.

LOW LIFE New Order

Qwest/Warner

By John Leland

Just for a moment, forget about Joy Division.



Forget Ian Curtis and the poetics of despair. Forget morbid romantic fascination and the ultimate proof of a tormented man's convictions.

Now, there's this great band called New Order that's just released a superb third LP entitled Low Life. The disc is the band's first for a U.S. major label—Qwest, Quincy Jones' Warner-distributed custom line. Although Jones didn't work on the album, it sports the qualities that light him up: crisp songwriting, crystalline arrangements, and a precise, percolating sound. As a result, Low Life is New Order's slickest and most commercial record to date. Also its warmest. Quite possibly its best.

In the past New Order suffered from a tendency to withdraw into its excellent rhythm section. Everything contracted into the dense high-tech groove, creating an intense but chilly and tuneless sonic enigma. On Low Life the band busts out with a cache of pretty, bittersweet folky pop songs. Sequencers and machines still edge out the sharp guitar work of Bernard Sumner (neé Dicken, aka Albrecht) as the core of the instrumental sound, but Sumner's melodic vocals take command of the songs. And the album is full of warm surprises: an airy harmonica intro on "Love Vigilantes"; Sumner's voice waxing gravelly and emotional as he strains to emphasize lyrics; reedy synthesizer swells on "Sooner Than You Think."

With the exception of the turgid and pretentious instrumental "Elegia," Low Life steers clear of the gloomy abyss. The songs are generally sad, but they avoid obsessive brooding, capturing the beauty of melancholia without over-indulging it.

Low Life is neither as heavy nor as danceable as Power, Corruption, and Lies. But as New Order loosens its hold on existential angst, I find them much easier to embrace. There's plenty of gothic glam bands ready to show a guy a bad time on a Saturday night. Now we know that New

Order's palette offers more than that one dark color.

UP ON THE SUN Meat Puppets

NO MATTER HOW LONG THE LINE IS AT THE CAFETERIA THERE'S ALWAYS A SEAT The Big Boys Enigma

By Tom Anderson

In 1984 hardcore came of age. Records like



Husker Du's Zen Arcade brought deserved attention to a sound that previously had only been dug by a small, intense fandom on the fringes of the fringe. Not only critics, but even the occasional record-buyer discovered a genre of music that, without compromising its raw power, was blossoming into a broader vehicle of expression. And the evidence of these two disks suggests that 1985 may turn out to be hardcore's golden year.

With *Up on the Sun*, Phoenix's Meat Puppets come a long way from the roar of their early work. With its ringing guitar arpeggios and tentative vocals, the album at first seems a bit too reminiscent of R.E.M., or stranger still, *Talking Heads 77*. But when that first impression fades, the consistent strength of the songcraft and the dazzle of the lyrics kick in. The songs sound casual as an old friend and cryptic as an Anglo-Saxon riddle—but perhaps one shouldn't expect easy accessibility from tunes with titles like "Enchanted Pork Fist" and "Buckethead."

Meanwhile back in Austin, The Big Boys' newest is far and away their best. The Boys match the manic rush of the early Clash on "Listen," with Tim Kerr ripping buzz-saw chords behind Randy "Biscuit" Turner's inimitable rasp. Then on "What's the Word" they slide into a horn-fitted Sly Stone groove. Added attractions include gonzo-feedback guitar solos and, compliments of deejay Gerald Grates, even some uptown scratchin'. Amazingly enough, it all comes off in aces. Look for these big boys to grow even bigger.

Musical barriers are crumbling in hardcore, just as in the crossover world of mainstream pop. It's nice to know that all those years of slam-dancing finally knocked down a few walls.

LONE JUSTICE Lone Justice

E.y James Hunter



1. conceived, energetically execut-

ed, and hyped to the hilt, Lone Justice is a æbut. This Los Angeles-based countrified rock combo is fronted by singer/guitarist Maria McKee, who gazes out from the cover like she just emerged from Mississipri-or a French film.

On crack songs, such as Steve Van-Zandt, Ben Tench and McKee's "Sweet, Sweet Baby (I'm Falling)," Tom Petty and Mike Campbell's "Ways to be Wicked," and Bryan MacLean's "Don't Toss Us Away," McKee shines in balladry of the booky soul, engaged rock, and all-out nountain variety. With the commitment cf her approach—the aim and attitude of Chryssie Hynde executed with the abancon and once-and-past angst of Dolly Parton-McKee's something to hear.

But this isn't just her debut. The bandguitarist Ryan Hedgecock, bassist Marvin Etzioni, drummer Don Heffington-are as shrewd and efficient as McKee; they're part of the reason this record covers as much ground as it does. McKee remains Ligh-powered but the group, benefiting from their songs' pyramiding arrangements and Jimmy Iovine's anti-gloss procuction, creates the contexts for her.

On "East of Eden" Lone Justice explodes like a mainstream X; elsewhere they're more country, but never neat like Nashville. The LP's second side, unlike its £rst, serves up some soupiness, but it also offers "Wait 'Til We Get Home," where Heffington's snare pulse reins in McKee's Partonisms, as well as "You Are the Light," a heart song that could've come out of a Tennessee hollow. Lone Justice should be watched—it's not as if there's nothing here worth hyping.

> FLIP Nils Lofgren

3y **David Browne**

address the obvious first. Yes, Nils



Lofgren's eighth solo album (and first in two years) is on Bruce Springsteen's record label. And, yes, Flip is studded with cops from the Boss-the occasional synthesized glockenspiel, working-class lyric ("you spend all day working in the factory line") and "sha-la-la." And, yes, the album title shrewdly refers to the onstage acrobatics Springsteen fans have come to associate with Nils since he hooked up with the E Street Band last summer.

But Nils is not, and never has been, merely a sideman. A progenitor of the dreamy/cocky grunge-rocker, he has a sort of hokey, undying devotion to rock that made him a natural for the E Street job. Lofgren's stuck to his guns despite 15 years of discouraging sales, frequently uninspired product and "cult journeyman" status. Now thanks to his newfound recognition, there's an energetic, second-wind feel to Flip-the sound of a coulda-been-acontender being given another shot.

It's easily heard on the hooky power pop of "Flip Ya Flip" and the thunderous gallop of "Secrets of the Street," which kick off the album with the wistful vocals and choruses characteristic of Lofgren since his Grin days. The ballads-"From the Heart" and "Delivery Night"-further mine the theme of unrequited love, always his strong suit. "New Holes in Old Shoes" opens with acoustic guitar, drum machine and bluesy harmonica, creating an echoey, down-and-out ambiance unlike anything he's ever recorded. But even there, Lofgren blasts the funk away, pulling the song into first gear with drums and slide guitar.

Flip only stalls when Lofgren tries too hard for his share of the pie-i.e., when the arrangements turn toward boomy, anonymous AOR rather than the tight, clipped rock 'n' roll of his best work. But you have to credit Lofgren for keeping the faith. At his best, he still represents everything enthralling about the street-urchin-of-rock persona. And it's reassuring to know that the title of one of his new songs-"Dreams Die Hard"—applies to him so well.

INTERNATIONALISTS Style Council

 $\mathbf{B}\mathbf{y}$ **James Farber**

Style Council albums, Paul Weller's



ever-changing moods have led him to write the most fluid, full-bodied melodies of his career. Who would've thought the stiffrocking spit-tune punk of 1977 would loosen up and become a cross between Marvin Gaye and Louis Jourdan in the eighties?

As on last year's terrific My Ever Changing Moods, the new LP's overall musical hybrid is a kind of Euro-soul—combining the sensuality of r&b hooks with cool continental sophistication. Songs like "A Man of Great Promise" or "With Everything to Lose" are great summer wind-in-your-hair numbers-and I still maintain "My Ever Changing Moods" was the windows-down car song of last year. But even in Weller's most breezy and refined songs (like the disco-jazz "Boy Who Cried Wolf" or the Brazilian-tinged "All Gone Away"), his stylings never seem snooty. The hooks are too passionate for that.

Still, the very pull of Weller's songwriting hooks reveals one drawback to his Style Council incarnation. While Weller's voice has developed respectable r&b-pop inflections over the years, the songs often demand more attention than the singer. The Jam's explosiveness kept Weller's ornery persona center stage at all times, but listening to Style Council I sometimes can't help wondering what Curtis Mayfield could do with "Luck" or "Homebreakers," and going back a bit, can you imagine what Marvin could've done for "Long Hot Summer"?

But such musings are really a testament to Weller's first-rate tunesmanship. And as for the lyrical content, the new album does provide more of Weller's trademark sociopolitical rants than last time. Some may be strained, like the trite "The Stand-up Comic's Instructions," but the last two songs on the LP provide metaphors with characteristic political resonance. In this context, "Shout to the Top," with its stac-cato '70s soul strings, and "Walls Come Tumblin' Down," with its blaring sixties horns, are more than great pop numbers. From Weller's pen, these are moving blows against the empire.

> **BOYS AND GIRLS** Bryan Ferry

By Larry Frascella





one of the figures most responsible for the theatricality, romantic warble and sophisticated air of so many of the new Britons. He also has a way with an image and could easily fit the MTV mold. So why the low profile? His last solo album, The Bride Stripped Bare, was done in 1978, and the most recent Roxy Music records were modest and only moderately successful. Doesn't Ferry know, like the Bowie of Let's Dance, that it's time to simplify, amplify and get what's coming to him?

At first, Boys and Girls seems designed to set things straight. The record's first and best track, "Sensation," breaks out with a Chic-like guitar riff and slamming, confident drums that set the scene for the opulent pop that's been Ferry's best foil since Roxy's earliest days.

In 1985, however, the songs and setting just aren't there. Boys and Girls yearns for a big sound, but aside from the emphatic drums, there's too much wash and not enough spark. The lyrics run the usual gamut from desire to surrender, but lack the irony and crazy melodrama of Ferry at his peak. The rhythms are muscular, but ready made. Every cut has a nice guitar fill or small hook to recommend it; Ferry is aware of the connective tissue we expect from him-Enoesque sweeps of sound, the distant castanet, the lonely saxophone. But it's all a very familiar bag of tricks. The record's biggest disappointment, however, is its lack of vocal audacity. The man who covered "It's My Party" without changing the sexes now just sounds depressed and careful, coaxed along by background vocalists, drifting in the mix.

But perhaps it's unfair to expect Ferry to follow in the footsteps of today's video stars—there's a cracked dignity to the way he clings to the old ennui. Maybe he wants to craft a complete work, rather than a collection of singles—a masterpiece of dissolution, an adult statement in a time of renewed adolescence. That would be comforting if the material were better. As it stands, Ferry merely seems to have blown a perfect pop opportunity, this year's call to world-weary glory.

YOU'RE UNDER ARREST Miles Davis

Columbia

By Chip Stern





evidence that Miles Davis is a pop star. The LP is light, likeable, disposable, and intermittently significant in that it signals a shift in everyone's musical priorities, and marks Miles' return to the "where's the melody" mainstream of his early Columbia successes—albeit in a technological age. It might just as well have been called Someday My Check Will Come.

Miles acknowledges the pop parallels with rhythmic allusions to a '50s hit, "Surrey With a Fringe on Top," during the coda to his solo on Michael Jackson's "Hu-

man Nature." Well, it's not really a solo, but a fairly straightforward outline of the melody, whereas his pensive reflections on Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time" suggest something more elusive, and illuminate the song's hard-earned sentiment with Harmon-muted breathlessness and a tintinnabulous curtain of guitar arpeggios and synth colors.

Elsewhere little Dewey leaps into the modal astral jams of the '70s on "Katia" (with help from John McLaughlin), and on the title tune he finally gives up the funk, thanks to bassist Darryl Jones, drummer Al Foster and guitarist John Scofield. "Something on Your Mind" is an appealing uptown ballad, and the tantalizing hints of melody on "Jean-Pierre" and "Then There Were None" reveal the playful side of the Prince of Darkness.

Overall, You're Under Arrest works as pop, although any child could still recognize it as jazz, man. Miles has made a calculated Top-40 move at a time when the song (and its packaging) takes precedence over the singers and soloist—and when pop writers are coming up with tunes harmonically rich enough to sustain a jazz master's attention. And maybe become standards? Arrest sounds eminently appealing coming out of a car radio or a blaster, but a little hollow on the old home stereo. Perhaps after Miles' parole...

NEED ME A CAR The BelAirs

Blind Pig

STEADY DATE Mitch Woods and His Rocket 88's

Blind Pig

NOTHING TO LOSE Soulard Blues Band

King Solomon Records

I TOLD YOU SO Omar and the Howlers

Austin Records

By Dan Forte



chained to a stereo, buried in the Butterfield Blues Band, Charlie Musselwhite, John Mayall's Bluesbreakers and the original Fleetwood Mac, the past 15 years or so have been steady torture—with only brief moments of relief courtesy the Fabulous Thunderbirds, Roomful of Blues and a few others

Oh, there've been plenty of bands paying their blues dues, some even competently, but none have combined 12-bar reverence, originality and experimentation with Mike Bloomfield's or Harvey Mandel's zealous guitar eccentricities, Peter Green's finesse, or Eric Clapton's unleashed aggression. Now four indie debuts beam rays of hope.

Hailing from Columbia, Missouri, the BelAirs (Blind Pig Records, 1304 West Schubert, Chicago, IL 60614) open promisingly with herky-jerky Diddley chords shimmering in electronic tremolo on the master's "Pretty Thing," but the overall sound of the band, reminiscent of early J. Geils, is a tad thin on vinyl. They could use a stronger vocalist than Dick Pruitt, and sometimes, as on "My Baby's Sweeter," they're about as bluesy as early Manfred Mann—i.e., not very. But slide guitarist Michael Henderson serves up a most soulful selection, Elmore James' "Sunnyland," and proves there's potential here.

Mitch Woods and his Rocket 88's (Blind Pig) roll out a brand of swing they call "rock-a-boogie," with the accent on boogie. These guys are sort of the West Coast's answer to Roomful of Blues; their aim is to preserve and recreate rather than break ground. Pianist/vocalist Woods is equally at home in a Louis Jordan groove ("Boogie Woogie Bar-B-Que") or with New Orleans second-line ("Mojo Mambo"), as is his band, which includes three ex-members of David Bromberg's outfit.

While Woods writes new tunes in familiar modes, St. Louis' Soulard Blues Band (King Solomon Records, 1017 Allen, St. Louis, MO) falls into the bar-circuit trap of recording covers that go down great live but pale on disk. I mean, no one's going to improve Albert King's "I'll Play the Blues for You," so why attempt it? This is uptown and slick, a la Albert, B.B., and Son Seals, and spread over ten tunes (many of which are variations on "Tramp") seems somewhat one-dimensional. Soulard's strong points are dynamic singer Thurston Lawrence, and the Little Big Horns, consisting solely of sax and harmonica.

If you find the Thunderbirds "heavy," the Roomful old-fashioned, the defunct Stray Cats a gimmick and the Blasters a bit lightweight, check out Omar and the Howlers (Austin Records, P.O. Box 33207, Austin, TX 78764). From the opening riffs of "Border Girl," it's obvious that these guys are no mere revivalists. This trio of eclectics can definitely play the blues, but in the Texas tradition they spice it up with rockabilly, swamp rock and most anything else-including, for example, surf guitar on "Rocket to Nowhere"! Kent "Omar" Dykes wrote all nine tunes, plays lead/rhythm Fender and squeezes out inspired vocals with the spirit of Howlin' Wolf, the likely source of the combo's moniker. All the bands mentioned here are doubtless monsters onstage, but if it came to a battle, I'd throw in with Omar & Co.

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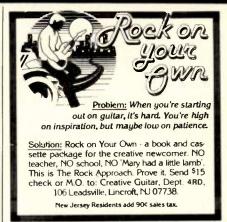
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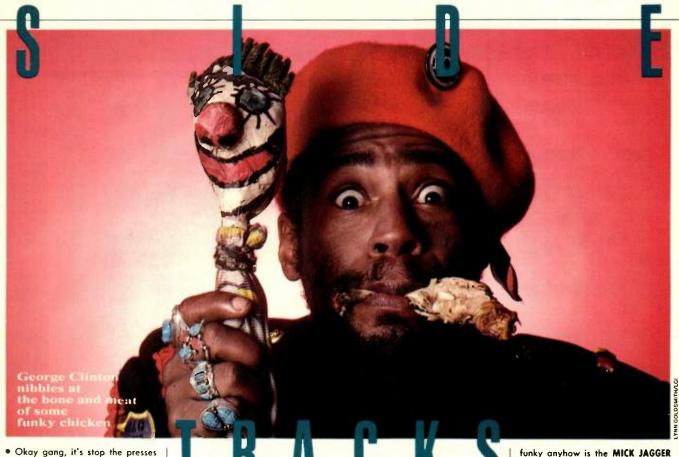
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- time again: here I am racing against a deadline when what should turn up on my radio but a new single by MORRIS DAY and THE TIME. They call the mug "Tricky," and boy is it ever weird. Musically it sounds like a parody of Pentacostal church drumming and His Royal Badness' favorite synthesizer move-you know, that staccato brass burst doohickey he likes to crank out on his DMX- dialed-tothe-organ program. Lyrically and vocally it's even more bizarre, sporting a half-mumbled, half-sung refrain by Morris that has something to do with the Michelin Man and somebody being too fat. Out to lunch, and it funks like a mutha-fer-ya besides all that.
- If gonze dance music is your taste, as much as it is mine, then you won't want to miss GEORGE CLINTON's new single, "Double Oh-Oh." I have yet to decode the thing; could be about the relationship of interpersonal intrique to that of the international variety-maybe. In any event, what's hip otherwise about the jam is the staccato beatbox thud augmented by live traps and the dense layers of voices crooning over the top. The B side of the 45 version is pretty whacky, too. Called "Bangladesh," it features a live symphony orchestra, rambling fuzz guitar and out-oftune doowop vocal arrangements, Taken together, these two cuts would seem to augur a return to Funkadelic weirdness of old as in way back when—like, say, the acid funk era of Free Your Mind and Your Ass Will Follow.
- Picking up where P-funk left off

seems also to be the intention of a young black Los Angeles-based band of eclectics known as FISH-BONE, whose first EP for Columbia is a must-listen for black rock fans everywhere. The first single, "Modern Industry," isn't the toughest thing from the set, but it's bizarre enough to transmit the message that these guys aren't exactly gearing their act to take the chitterling circuit by storm. Think of Zappa, Clinton and the English Beat rolled into one-only crazier!! I tell ya, these bloods here give me hope that black rockers won't have to all go AOR to get a deal.

 By now I trust you've heard all about Washington, D.C.'s fertile funk scene. Go-go they call it, and it's funk the way James Brown always meant it to be: brassy on top, groove-fluid on the bottom, out to incite a riot in the raucous and chantinflected vocal middle. The scene has been led for years by three or four different acts: Troublefunk, E.U., Chuck Brown and the Soul Searchers and Rare Essence—but the killingest go-go groove I heard in a while comes from a group known as REDDS and the BOYS. "Movin' and Groovin' " is the suckahs appelative and it features a vertiginous horn line

over a bass-and-drum lockstomp that would put the P-funk rhythm section to shame, and that's no little feat we talking (with all due respect to Lowell George and company). You can expand your go-go horizons even more with the Island Records' compilation, Go-Go Cranking: Paint the White House Black, which offers you the opportunity to handily survey some more of the best the scene has to offer, including the aforementioned Redds, Troublefunk, E.U. and Chuck Brown.

- Now let's talk mainstream black pop: NILE RODGERS has a new single out, "Let's Go Out Tonight," which won't make anybody wanna hock his best work with Chic; an all-female funk outfit, KLYMAXX, has a ribald, anti-feminist number racing up the charts, "Meeting in the Ladies" Room," which would seem to advocate women tearing each other to shreds over some sucker of a dude, and in doing so almost makes the Mary Jane Girls come off like radical fems; then there's that POWER STA-TION hypeola, which would like to be what Chic once was but fails on account of those two lames from Duran Duran and their hackneyed arena rock posturing.
- Not quite black pop but pretty

funky anyhow is the MICK JAGGER single, "Lucky in Love," notable as much for Sly and Robbie's loping support as for Jeff Beck's serpentine guitar obbligatos and Jagger's absurdist loser vocal antics. Equally mesmerizing and anthemic is TEARS FOR FEARS' "Everybody Wants To Rule The World," a moody and melodic cry of empathy for the eco-system and, at that, a record that makes you think of what The Smiths would be like if they were more inspired by Summer of Love flower power psychedelia than by, say, Joy

 Yes, Viriginia, there is news to speak of from the hip-hop world in this column, too: namely LISA-LISA and the CULT JAM with FULL FORCE (how they managed to get all that on a record label is beyond me) with "I Wonder If I Take You Home." Full Force, you may recall, is the outfit responsible for precipitating the Roxanne saga (still in full swing, by the way—be on the lookout for Roxanne Shante's "Queen of Rox" and Dr. Fresh's "Roxanne's Doctor"). What they've come up with here is a little different: an adolescent confection that asks the age-old question of whether a young girl should give it up before she gets married. Given the hotbed of youthful sexual frolic that is the modern age, this song may seem a bit quaint to the elders in the audience, but-surprise, surprise—it's on its way to being one of the biggest club hits of the year. Maybe 'cause Lisa-Lisa manages to warble so convincingly virginal. Hmmmm. Until next time . . .

