



Songwriter

July 1978

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BEAU-TI-FUL FOR SPAC-ION'S SKIES FOR A WAVES OF
GRAN FOR PUR-PLE MORN TAW MAS-ES-TIES A- THE FRUIT-ED
PLAN A-MER-1-CA A-MER-1-CA G SHED HIS GRACE ON
THEE AND CROWN THY GOOD WITH BROTH-ER-HOOD FROM SE WITH
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Harry Chapin

Jay Morgenstern

Tony Camillo

• Songwriter

Interview: Harry Chapin — Page 24

The *Taxi* man talks with the meter off . . . and gives a cradle-full of advice to beginning songwriters.

• ABC's Jay Morgenstern — Page 18

He keeps the door open to songwriters . . . but before you walk in, heed his do's and don'ts.

by Rich Wiseman

• Pitfalls for the Beginning Lyricist — Page 14

... or how not to stay an amateur.

by Doug Thiele

• Anatomy of a Hit Song — Page 7

... why Billy Joel's *Just the Way You Are* reads like a textbook on composing skill.

by Al Kasha and Joel Hirschhorn

• Producer Tony Camillo: "Stretch Your Brain" — Page 16

... AGAC's Askapro guest talks about producing records . . . and success.

ELSEWHERE . . .

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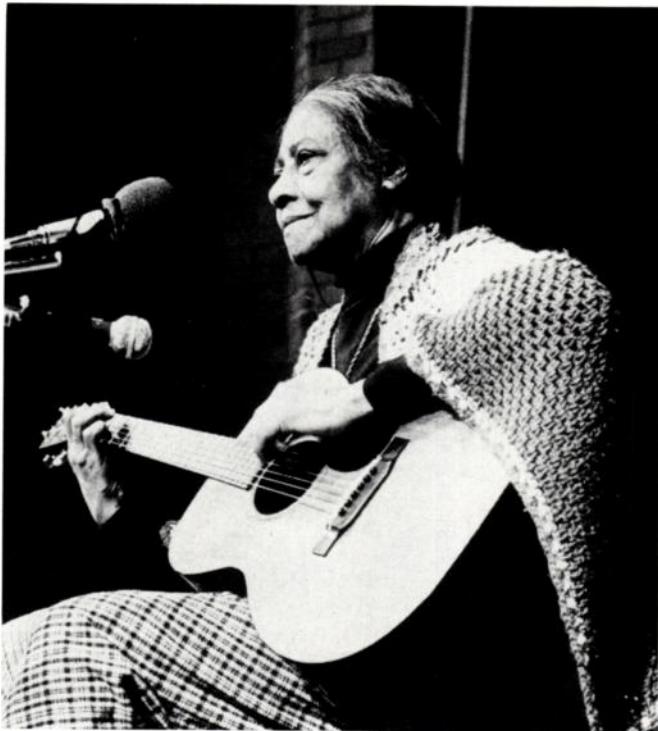
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Songwriter News



Libba Cotten, still riding that Freight Train at 85

"I've been around real smart," folk/blues legend Elizabeth Cotten, 85 and still pickin', told us recently at McCabe's in Santa Monica. Busy Libba, a Washington, D.C. resident, was in town for two shows at McCabe's, her second appearance at the guitar shop/concert hall in little more than a month.

Libba, her purse at her side, nimbly performed her unique guitar stylings for nearly an hour and a half. Among the highlights: her now-classic *Freight Train*, written more than 70 years ago. Ever spry, she implored the audience at one point in the show to "Open your mouths and sing." Later, after starting a song in the wrong key, she cracked: "We can't sing that low — we sound like June bugs under a box."

Afterwards, we asked Libba if she still wrote songs. "I'm writing two," she replied. Then she confessed to a problem that occasionally plagues even the most veteran songwriter: "But I can't find a tune that I like!"

x

The ASCAP Foundation is sponsoring a new program of grants, ranging between \$500 and \$2,500, to composers under 30.

Applicants may secure an entry kit containing an informational brochure, application form and professional recommendation blank by writing Martin Bookspan, Director of the ASCAP Foundation Grants to Young Composers Program, ASCAP Building, One Lincoln Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10023. October 1 is the deadline for receipt of entries.

The program will be funded by the Jack and Amy Norworth Memorial Fund. Does the name ring a bell, or get you thinking about peanuts and Cracker Jack? Norworth is best remembered for such standards as *Take Me Out to the Ballgame* and *Shine On Harvest Moon*.

continued on page 6



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NEWS
from page 4

Loretta Ayeroff



A&M's Herb Alpert, honing in on performing career again?

Elsewhere along the club circuit: Herb Alpert left his desk at A&M Records, dusted off his trumpet, and played a three-day engagement at L.A.'s Roxy with Hugh Masekela recently. The A&M cofounder, who has recorded an LP with Masekela, told one reporter: "I thought I was finished with playing when the Tijuana Brass split up. But I realize I have to play the horn. If I didn't have this position at A&M I'd be playing all the time."



FREE VERSE: Marvin Hamlisch and Carole Bayer Sager have pacted with Chappell; Sager's is actually a "continuation" signing. Hamlisch and Sager, who collaborated on Carly Simon's hit, *Nobody Does it Better*, also are working on a Neil Simon Broadway-bound musical, and solo albums. Yes, Hamlisch will sing on his. "Actually, he's got quite a nice voice," commented one insider. . . . A former president of Chappell, Norman Weiser, is SESAC's new head; Alice H. Prager, former president, is now chairman. Weiser, one-time publisher of *downbeat*, is also a former director and senior vice president of Polygram.



LATE FLASH: The second Los Angeles Songwriter Expo has been set for August 19 and 20 at L.A.'s Immaculate Heart College. The expo, put on by the BMI-sponsored Alternative Chorus/Songwriters Showcase will "give writers an introduction to all the major songwriter service organizations as well as to many songwriting and music industry classes, seminars and workshops," according to AC/SS' John Braheny. The registration fee is \$20, and information can be obtained by writing AC/SS at 943 Palm Ave., Los Angeles 90069, or calling (213) 655-7780.



You wouldn't know it by listening, but Bob Welch's "French Kiss" LP was basically a homemade job. "All the material was written at home on a TEAC four-track, and it just transferred right over the studio with virtually no changes," said Bob of the album which recently turned platinum on the strength of its hit singles, *Sentimental Lady* and *Ebony Eyes*. Welch, who played most of the instruments and sang most of the parts, added: "There was no bass player to say 'I want to play this,' no keyboard player to say, 'Why don't we put this here.' It's simplified stuff, just songs with a verse, a chorus, a verse, a chorus. Which is maybe one of the reasons it gets through."

Al Kasha



and Joel Hirschhorn

Anatomy of a Hit: “Just the Way You Are”

Words and music
by Billy Joel

Don't go changing to try and please me
You never let me down before
Don't imagine you're too familiar
And I don't see you anymore
I would not leave you in times of trouble
We never could have come this far
I took the good times, I'll take the
bad times
I'll take you just the way you are.

Don't go trying some new fashion
Don't change the color of your hair
You always have my unspoken passion
Although I might not seem to care
I don't want clever conversation
I never want to work that hard
I just want someone that I can talk to
I want you just the way you are.

I need to know that you will always be
The same old someone that I knew
What will it take till you believe in me
The way that I believe in you.
I said I love you and that's forever
And this I promise from the heart
I could not love you any better
I love you just the way you are.

I don't want clever conversation
I never want to work that hard
I just want someone that I can talk to
I want you just the way you are.

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feeling of reassurance being conveyed. The way the sound is musically curled heightens the emotional effect.

A word like **passion**, misused, can seem overblown, especially in a love song as gentle as this one, but the phrase **unspoken passion** has a freshness that projects sensitivity and sincerity. It's safe to assume that the word **unspoken** was arrived at only with a good deal of thought, and with a talented songwriter's instinctive taste. The rhyme of **fashion** and **passion** is a unique one.

The line **Although I might not seem to care** is a line of characterization, which slides by quietly but defines the protagonist. In those words, he implies that he is sometimes thoughtless, involved in other things and doesn't give his lover the emotional security she needs, therefore justifying and explaining why she feels anxious. The lyric goes below the surface and makes the listener aware of the *people* involved, not merely the specifics of their dilemma. Further characterization is supplied by the brilliantly original lines, **I don't want clever conversation . . . I never want to work that hard**.

In popular music, a commercially potent approach is having the hero pedestalize his girl. Females who buy records like to hear the singer enumerate his girl's outstanding attributes. This title **Just the Way You Are** furnishes that dream fulfillment — everybody longs to be loved and accepted without reservation, for just what they are, without any need of pretense, and this song speaks for that universal need.

Our contention has always been that
continued on page 45

In past months, we've cited dozens of songs as examples of lyrical or musical excellence. Sometimes a song comes along that combines these qualities and reads like a textbook on composing skill. Such a song is Billy Joel's *Just the Way You Are* © 1977 by Joelsongs/ Administered by Blackwood Music).

Musically, the tune opens with a sequential pattern that imprints the melody in the listener's mind right away. The first two measures establish a theme, and the next one answers it.



This ask-and-answer pattern is maintained throughout the piece, in bars 9-10 and 11-12, 17-18 and 19-20 and again later when these sections repeat.

Last month we spoke of a flair for first lines, and the opening here, **Don't go changing to try and please me** is immediately provocative. It gives complexity and dimension to the relationship by suggesting that the girl involved is trying to alter her personality to please her lover. It also makes the hero an understanding person when he urges his girlfriend to be herself. Since the characters are such recognizable human beings, you want to listen further.

Prosody (marriage of words and music) is effectively illustrated in the sixth measure with the line **You never let me down before** and the music curves downward to match the phrase **let me down**. This combination of melody and lyric gives the thought poignancy.

Alliteration (the repetition of certain letters in a line to give the sentence

rhythm) is maintained with **in times of trouble** and **We never could have come this far**. These lyrics are simple and not particularly flashy or flamboyant, but they flow easily because of the unobtrusive alliteration.

Commercially speaking, the use of **mm mm** in bars 8, 24, 38 and elsewhere is effective, not just because it's a gimmick that adds repetition, although that's also true, but because it has a quality of tenderness which adds to the



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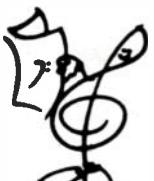
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Who's Who

by Pat & Pete Luboff



LOS ANGELES

Geri Duryea, professional manager
April Music — ASCAP
Blackwood Music — BMI
1801 Century Park West
Los Angeles, CA 90067
(213) 556-4700

Also: CBS Radio and TV; CBS, Columbia, Epic and Portrait Records; Blackwood Productions

Other Offices: New York, Nashville and worldwide

Geri Duryea's first job was with the William Morris Agency in New York as secretary/assistant to the head of the television Commercial Department. In 1967, she began a two year assignment as administrative assistant to a theatrical attorney and music publisher, after which she worked for Catalyst Management/Victrix Productions, and as a freelancer in theater and TV production. In 1975, having decided on a career in the music industry, she joined the staff of Warner Brothers Music. She assumed her present position in January, 1977.

April/Blackwood, the publishing arm of CBS Records, boasts a huge catalog ranging from standards like *Unchained Melody* (just recorded by Willie Nelson), to current hits like Billy Joel's *Just The Way You Are*, covered by the likes of Johnny Mathis and Deniece Williams, Suzanne Stevens and Mary MacGregor. Other recent cuts: *You*

Can't Dance (To This One) by England Dan and John Ford Coley; Lamont Dozier's *Sight for Sore Eyes* by Diana Ross; *Baby, I'm Yours* by Debby Boone, and Billy Joel's *Always a Woman*, by TV's "Wonder Woman," Linda Carter. Writers in the April/Blackwood catalog include Al Kasha, Joel Hirschhorn and staff writers Barry Goldberg, Rick Sandler and Martie Echito, Gene Holmes and Michael Easley, and members of the group Waves. Blackwood Productions is currently working with Kaptain Kool and the Kongs on their single, *And I Never Dreamed*, written by Gino Cunico and Harvey Scales.

Says Geri: "The music industry is groping for something new and is ready for anything. I believe that a strong melody hook and a strong lyric hook are equally important. You may submit your two strongest songs on cassette only. Your cassette should be a copy of a good quality reel to reel master. Include lyric sheets and lead sheets if you have them. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope or your tape will not be returned. We're looking for writer/artists as well as Top 40, pop, R&B crossover and rock 'n' roll material.

"Today's music business is so competitive. You have to be as good as, if not better than, the likes of Billy Joel in order to break in. That doesn't mean that it can't be done, just that one has to be ever so persistent. You have to want it with every inch of your being, because those are the ones who make it. The rejection can be devastating, but you have to learn not to take it personally. I get the same kind of rejection from producers, so I know.

"Study the market, look at the charts, listen to the radio, be in tune with what's happening. Write for the market and the publisher, not for yourself. Grow with the market."



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As a folksinger in the early 60s, Erv Lewis traveled the New York City hoot circuit. In 1968, he became a Christian and began writing and performing Christian music. Other artists started singing his songs, and the Zondervan Corporation's Singspiration Music published some in songbooks and sheet music. In 1971, Erv signed as an artist with Impact, releasing two albums on the label.

His third album, on his own Herald Records, charted regionally, attracting the attention of other artists who approached Erv to produce them. Herald was set up to contract other artists in 1974.

Herald's *Breaker, Breaker Sweet Jesus*, by writer/artist Jerry Arhelger, has been on the national and regional gospel charts for five months; Lewis has written Arhelger's new single, *Don't Lighten My Load*. As for Silhouette Music, Lewis' publishing arm, he says, "The publishing company started as a companion activity to the label, to expose the material to other artists. Now, the Silhouette catalog recording rate is 60 to 70% of all the songs signed."

Herald Association writers include Arhelger, Rick Eldridge, Sandy Bond, Rick Taylor and Stan Bailey. Rick Eldridge's *Sing Praises To The King* is charted in California. Sandy Bond wrote *A Vision Of The Cross* on her first album and the title song on her second, *Teach Me to Lean On You*. Rick Taylor's single is *Walking On Higher Ground* and Stan Bailey wrote and recorded *Never Like This Before*.

Erv will review all gospel material sent to him *only* if you follow his instructions. He insists on tapes; packages with lyrics or lead sheets only will not be reviewed or responded to. The gospel material may be in any style, from quartet to rock, but the songs must have a Christian message that is scripturally accurate. No more than four

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Melody Lines

Mental Telepathy . . .

Dear Friends:

Received my first issue of *Songwriter* and have read it thoroughly.

The only criticism I have concerns the lack of a Letters to the Editor section. The Q and A column is good, but it doesn't provide the forum for positive and negative input from readers that keeps a healthy relationship going. I believe that such a section can add a new dimension, new depth, to *Songwriter*.

Scott DeShong
Kalamazoo, Mich.

How's this for service, Scott? As for the reason behind our decision to begin

Melody Lines, a combination reader feedback/Q and A column, well, you took the words right out of our collective mouth (typewriter?).

Readers, please address all letters for publication to Melody Lines, Songwriter, P.O. Box 3510, Hollywood, Calif. 90028. We want to hear from you!

Making His Marx . . .

Dear *Songwriter*:

Thank you for the excellent and comprehensive article on Irving Berlin (May, 1978).

I believe, however, that you missed one of Berlin's earlier film efforts, pre-dating "Top Hat." I am referring to the

1929 Vitaphone production, "Coconuts." It starred the Marx Brothers, and the music was written by Berlin. There are some very obscure numbers included in the score, and a very delicately structured love song called *When My Dream Comes True*. Between Berlin's music, and the Marx Brothers' genius, it is worth seeing more than once.

Greg Rister
Whittier, Calif.

Q & A: parodies

Dear *Songwriter*,

In the past several years I've written over 100 parodies, some of them more

Sharps and Flats

by Alex Granado



"It is written . . . 'You got to pay your dues if you want to sing the blues.'"

outrageous than Allan Sherman ever dreamed of. I'm interested in selling my works to someone who could use them in a nightclub act, but don't know where to begin.

Phyllis Bernstein
Bridgewater, N.J.

Unfortunately, there's not much of a market for the song parody. The few people we can think of who perform them (i.e. the "Rutles," those would-be Beatles) write their own. Your best bet is to contact the pop publishers listed in Songwriter's 1978 Music Directory. Publishers know who's looking for what type of material.



Me and Tom T.

Dear *Songwriter*:

Just a note to tell you I just simply couldn't do without you! Songwriters who take your wonderful magazine get a "college" education plus practical "know-how." You can't beat that!

Elsie Childers
Nebo, Ky.

Gentlemen:

Songwriter is just what the doctor ordered for songwriters and we (12 of my 13 children and I, who are all musicians and songwriters) use it extensively in our creative division.

W. B. Mitchell, president/owner
Vimla Records/Catalpa
Productions
and His-Way Productions
Columbus, Miss.

Q & A: foreign songs

Gentlemen:

What is the procedure for translating and adapting foreign songs?

Mirosława Wanczycka
Minneapolis, Minn.

Contact the publisher, who has complete jurisdiction. Odds are he has an American affiliate. You can learn who the affiliate is by checking the song title with ASCAP or BMI. If the song in question is a folk song resting in the public domain, translate and adapt to your heart's content.

Aw, shucks . . .

Dear *Songwriter*:

It is not our wont to write to editors but we feel you've done such an excellent job we are taking this opportunity to tell you so. We feel that *Songwriter* is so informative that we recommend it to all of our clients and to newcomers, as well as suggesting that they obtain the back issues.

In all our years in the music business, going back to the early 30s, we cannot recall any magazine with so much good information for the writer, and such interesting articles as the Irving Berlin piece. We believe that more of this type of writing will permit today's songwriters to become well acquainted with the writers of the 30s and 40s and enable them to get an in-depth focus on an era that produced what will be immortals of popular music.

Howard King
Howard King Agency, Inc.
Beverly Hills, Calif.

According to ABC Music Publishers President Jay Morgenstern, who's quoted on the subject in his interview elsewhere in this issue, smaller independent labels sometimes ask for the publishing when making a record deal to help recoup their investment in a new act. The big labels, however, won't press for the rights.

Get Her a Deal!

Dear *Songwriter*,

I wrote and wrote for naught, yea my spirit would lag — Then came my first copy of you, oh *Songwriter Mag*! Though still unpublished, I'm ready to test a few songs that I consider my best.

You! darling magazine, have so much pazzaz! When revealing the publishers, from country to jazz.

And discussing with the experts what a writer should know, About submitting a demo that turns an amateur into a pro.

You've researched the field of music from every angle — And for those of us who would like to wangle

A studio contract or sell our song, Your Who's Who guides us along.

I for one, am hooked on your every issue. I'd come unglued if I should mis-sue!

Love your every page, fore and aft. Now back to work improving my craft!

Betty M. Radney
Montclair, Calif.

Q & A: publishing rights

Dear *Songwriter*:

I write songs with my partner, who is in a very successful band that plays in the Bay Area. Recently they have decided to go into the studio and record an album of our songs. I have read your articles about starting one's own publishing company and think it an excellent way to retain control over our tunes as well as receive more profits.

The problem is the band has a manager who is waiting to rush the album to Los Angeles to the record people she knows there. She says we should absolutely not publish the songs ourselves because she needs the publishing rights as a bargaining tool for landing a good contract. She says that the publishing rights will be a big factor in a record company accepting the band or not. Is she correct?

Gene J. Mascoli, Jr.
Monte Sereno, Calif.

Songwriter

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Open Chord Voicings, Part 2: Of Perfect Fourth Intervals and Disposable Roots

by Ladd McIntosh

In our first article on open chord voicings in the last issue, we left off discussing the interval between the bottom two notes. Every interval except fourths were covered.

Perfect fourth intervals between the bottom two notes of a voicing are usually limited to either suspended fourth chords (ex. 1) or those chords voiced primarily in fourths (ex. 2). This is sometimes referred to as "quartal harmony" or "quartal voicing." The more subtle aspects of voicing chords in fourths will be discussed in a subsequent issue.

It is very important that you be aware of the interval between your lowest two notes. The *clarity* of the voicing (how easily recognizable it is) often depends a great deal on the interaction of these two.

For example, let's assume you are voicing a C¹³ chord. You already know: 1) the fifth is expendable; 2) the eleventh is inadvisable since it clashes with the all-important third; and 3) the ninth may or may not be used at your discretion. This leaves you with four notes that must be used (root, third, seventh and thirteenth) plus the optional ninth. These notes are: *c, e, b-flat, a* and *d* — if you want it. Ignoring our advice about sevenths and tenths between bottom two voices, you scan our last article, see that sixths are possible between lower two notes, happily discover that a sixth exists between *c* and *a* (root and thirteenth) and slap those two notes down on paper (ex. 3). You then figure that the seventh (*b-flat*) shouldn't be smashed up against the thirteenth, so instead, you place the third (*e*) above the *a* and the seventh above that (ex. 4). Jolly good . . . until you play it. Dash it all. It sounds positively dreadful. (This last paragraph is most effective when read with an English accent, a la Monty Python.)

What's wrong? Maybe if you add that ninth you didn't use. . . . Nope, the chord still makes us go "Ouch!" Not only does the voicing lack clarity, the minor ninth interval between the thirteenth and the seventh is so dissonant as to make the voicing unusable. This leads us to another rule: *Thirteenths should be voiced above sevenths and never below them*. The only exceptions to this are: (1) It is sometimes possible to place the thirteenth and seventh next to one another (as long as they are *both* inner voices); and 2) Major seventh chords with added thirteenths may reverse the two since the resultant interval is a *major* ninth (ex. 5). Please make sure there are adequate notes placed between the two.

Let's try it again, this time using first the tenth and then the seventh between the lowest voices. Ah! By placing the third a *tenth* above the root, we can easily place the seventh above that and the thirteenth above that, making sure to include the ninth between *b-flat* and *a* so that the distance between the *top* two notes is not too large (ex. 6).

Probably the best solution — that is, the most uniform and compact, and therefore, most usable — is to place the seventh above the root; the third above the seventh; and the thirteenth above the third (ex. 7). To this, we may either place the ninth on top (ex. 8) or next to the third (ex. 9). Examples 6, 7, 8 and 9 are *all* quite acceptable. They are rich and full-bodied and they each clearly define the desired chord.

There is another possibility, and that is to place the root on top as well as on the bottom (ex. 10). Still another would be to add the fifth above the voicing in example 8 (ex. 11). Actually the fifth could be added most anywhere; it's entirely expendable. Examples 6a thru 10a show how the fifth (solid note head) may be added to examples 6 through 10.

Now that you have thoroughly digested all of this information about the bottom two notes, we're going to totally blow your collective mind with the following: *You may omit the root!* Yes, Virginia, you may take the root and dispose of it in each and every voicing example given here. Reason? If you are playing with a bass player, it's his job to emphasize the roots (and fifths). Even if you don't have a bass player, you are still sounding the essence of the chord by utilizing the thirds, sevenths and pertinent extensions. When voicing without the bass note please imagine that it is still there. We call this *bass note understood*. It's important to do this so that you continue to think of the space between the bottom two notes as the distance between the *root* of the chord and the voice directly above it, *even if the root is understood*. Just as the distance between the bottom two and top two voices is important, so, too, is the interval between the inner notes.

Seconds, thirds and fourths are all excellent and preferable. Fifths and sixths are generally all right and are needed, in fact, to create even more open-voiced (under-spaced) chords. Sevenths and larger should be avoided between any two adjacent inner voices, just as they should be avoided between the top two. Large intervals like these tend to spread the chord out in such a way that it loses its compactness and cohesiveness.

The important thing to look for in voicing is a balance that you can actually see when you look at the spacing of a chord. Large intervals between any two notes other than the lower two should immediately tip you that something is not right. Compact, generally even-spaced voicings should sound fine as long as you observe the limitations set forth here.

Exs. 1, 8b, 9 and 12 show seconds be-

1 $C^{\text{sus4}} \left(G_m:7 \right)$ 2 $F_m:11 \left/ \begin{smallmatrix} C \\ C \end{smallmatrix} \right.$ 3 $C_m:7^{(11)}$ 4 (wrong)

5 $G_m:7^{(13)}$ 6 C^{13} 7 C^{13} 8 C^{13} 9 C^{13} 10 C^{13}

11 C^{13} 6a 7a 8a 8b 9a 10a

12 $B^b_m:9$ $E^b_m:9$ $D_m:9$ 13 $D_m:9$ G^{11}^{b9} $F_m:9$

14 C^{13} G^{13} $G_m:6^{9''}$ 15 $F_m:9$ 16 $F_m:9$ $G_m:9$ $C_m:7$

tween adjacent inner voices.

Exs. 1, 6, 6a, 7a, 8a, 8b, 9a, 10a, 12 and 13 show thirds between adjacent inner voices.

Exs. 1, 7, 7a, 8, 8a, 8b, 10, 10a and 14 show fourths between adjacent inner voices.

Exs. 5, 6, 6a, 12, 13 and 15 show fifths between adjacent inner voices.

Ex. 16 shows sixths between adjacent inner voices. Notice that fifths and sixths definitely open up the voicings more. As you can see, a good, open-voiced chord has a combination of the guidelines expressed here.

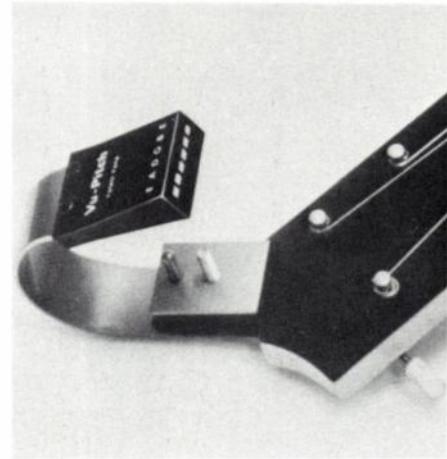
For example, the $B^b_m:9$ in ex. 12 consists of a seventh between the bottom two, thirds between the top two and voices 3 and 4 down from the top and a minor second between voices 2 and 3. The $D_m:9$ in ex. 13 contains a 10th between 4 and 5; a 4th between 1 and 2; a third between 2 and 3; a fifth between 3 and 4; the top of the voicing is quite compact while the greatest interval is

in the bottom — where it should be. Ex. 14 is loaded with fourths (there's that "quartal" voicing again). The $F_m:9$ in ex. 16 shows a third between 1 and 2; a 5th between 2 and 3 and 4 and 5; and a sixth between 3 and 4. The $F_m:9$ of ex. 15 shows fifths between 1 and 2, 2 and 3 and 4 and 5; a minor second between 3 and 4 and the ever-popular tenth between 5 and 6. You should really examine each of your own voicings in this manner until you become more familiar with the more common and useful voicings. After a while it will be quite easy to voice any chord symbol at sight. But you must practice.

We'll conclude our series on chord voicings next issue with a look at the practical range limits involved in voicing chords.

v

Editor's note: Ladd McIntosh is a Los Angeles-based freelance arranger and composer. At the California State University at Northridge, he leads one of four big bands. In the fall, he'll also teach a class on jazz improvisation.



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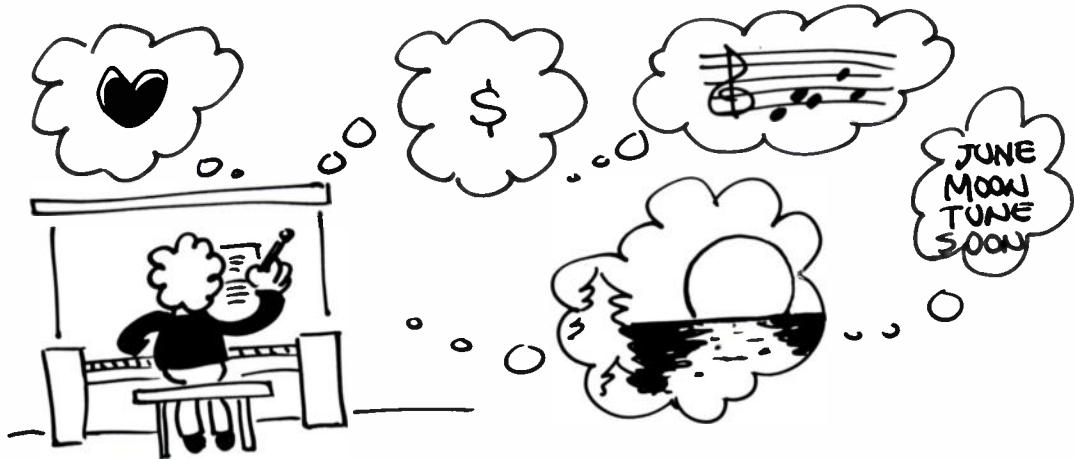
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Pitfalls for the Beginning Lyricist Or... How Not to Stay an Amateur

by Doug Thiele

As the coordinator of a lyric writing workshop, I've had the opportunity to critique the work of many budding lyricists. In the process, I've noticed many common mistakes made by good writers when they try to hit the commercial idiom in their lyrics. Commercial lyric writing is a craft, and as a writer of the commercial word, you'll need to call on some special skills as well as your normal abilities as a writer. But assuming you have talent, you can craft a strong commercial lyric as long as you avoid the following pitfalls:

1) The Wrong Subject and/or the Ho-Hum Approach

Many writers make the mistake of choosing a subject which artists won't sing about, or which doesn't have broad listener appeal. Common sense will keep you away from supercontroversial subjects which program managers of radio stations won't allow, and you should shop material which isn't solidly depressing or negative (you *will* find titles like *Poor Poor Pitiful Me* on the charts, but you'll see many more like *Just the Way You Are, Feels So Good and We'll Never Have to Say Goodbye*). Artists care about their "song image," and publishers are aware of that fact, aware of that fact.

Also, avoid a really common idea, such as "My baby left me," unless your lyric treats it in an offbeat way. Even in love, the safest of themes, try for as fresh a perspective as possible.



2) Forgetting the Setting — and Your Listener

Keep in mind that your listener (and that includes the publisher you shop your song with) isn't as familiar with your song as you are. Many amateur lyricists neglect to give their listeners some very necessary information, failing to establish where the action is taking place and who the characters are. In your three minutes, you don't have time to draw a complete scene, but you can suggest your setting by naming an object in the room, or mentioning sky, for instance, for an outdoor setting.

There are songs that don't need a setting, such as catalogue songs (for example, *These Are A Few Of My Favorite Things*) or songs where the character is the song (*Eleanor Rigby*). But, in most cases, you have to give your listener the necessary "who" and "where."

3) Lyrical Side Trips, or Which Way to the Point?

As the beginning songwriter's lyrics wander, so does a listener's attention. A lyric should make a clear and concise statement. To avoid the pitfall of the

wandering lyric, make certain that each line is set up by the line before it. You should follow this guideline within stanzas and from verse to chorus.

A word about length: Some writers fall into the trap of turning a three-minute idea into an eight-minute song. Unless you're Bob Dylan or Don McLean, you significantly cut your chances of placing a song if it's much longer than three minutes.

4) "I'm a Poet, I Know It . . ." and So You Blow It

A poem is not a lyric, especially a commercial lyric. Some lyricists sacrifice conversational lyrics for those pretty images and esoteric poetic ideas, and find that publishers pass on the resulting song regularly. If you can't imagine saying your lyric to somebody else in conversation, then you're in trouble — you probably have more intellect than emotion in your song. Cliches, in fact, are a common device in commercial lyrics because we *all* relate to them, and, indeed, use them in everyday speech. You might look at the opening stanza of *Really Love to See You Tonight* for a good example of conversational lyrics.

Another common poetic mistake is to reverse the order of words to make a rhyme. For example, "I met a lady pretty on my way to Culver City." Unless you're writing for Longfellow, don't invert the natural order of words in your lyric.

5) The Hookless Wonder, or Let the Music Carry It

Even though so much has been written about the hook, some writers still try to shop title-less songs or songs without a recurring hook. Your hook is the phrase which sums up the lyric. It's also the thing your listeners will ask for when they go to buy your song.

Whether you use a gimmick hook (*I Had Too Much to Dream Last Night*), a familiar phrase hook (*Easy Come, Easy Go*) or a new idea (*Killing Me Softly*), by all means use a hook!

6) The Eternal Chorus, or On a Clear Day I Could Sing Forever

The common mistake beginning lyricists make in their chorus is to go on and on with it. Your chorus should contain your hook, sum up the lyric's theme, but be concise. A good example is Peter McCann's hit chorus: "It's the right time of the night/The stars are wakin' above/It's the right time of the night for makin' love."

7) The Forced Rhyme, or What Rhymes with Amateur?

There's a tendency among amateur songwriters to force their rhymes. Rhymes which don't appear natural and easy will hurt your lyric. If you have to interrupt the natural flow of the lyric to get to a rhyme, you'd better rethink your ideas. And, by the way, there's nothing shameful about using a rhyming dictionary for new rhyme ideas.

Natural rhymes don't have to be dull or predictable. A good example of an imaginative rhyme occurs in the chorus of *Like a Rhinestone Cowboy*: "There'll be a load of compromisin'/On the road to my horizon."

8) The So-What Syndrome, or Show, Not Tell

This is a common trap for fledgling lyricists. If you continuously say "I'm lonely" in your lyric, your listener is likely to reply, "So what, everybody has problems!" But if you can show the results of loneliness on your characters, your listener might reply "Yeah! . . . I can relate to that!"

In *My Old Man*, Joni Mitchell writes, "But when he's gone, me and the lonesome wind collide/The bed's too big, the fryin' pan's too wide." Showing rather than saying provokes listener empathy.



10) Untamed Melody, or Let Somebody Else Worry About the Music

It's your job to make sure that the music fits your lyric. The musical style and "feel" must be right for your lyric to come across effectively. Don't forget you're writing words for music, and pay close attention to the musical side of your lyrics.



9) Rewriter's Block, or Igiveupitis

Very few lyrics come out complete the first time through. You may be sick and tired of writing that lyric, but you can't afford to "big-time" your publisher or yourself by refusing to rewrite. Be objective about your lyric.

THE LYRIC IS A LINEAR ART FORM...
SO, GO WITH THE FLOW!



Here are a few tips which might help your lyric writing along:

- Listen to hit lyrics. An artist's clout has sometimes carried bad lyrics onto the charts, but most chart lyrics deserve the attention.
- Try outlining your lyrical ideas in prose, stanza by stanza. It might sound a bit rinky-dink, but outlining will force you to structure your thoughts well.
- Hook first. It's possible to write a great lyric starting with the first line of the first verse, but most of us find it easiest starting with that killer hook and working a lyric around it.
- Practice your craft, and maintain a dialogue with other lyricists. Your openness to other perspectives and attitudes will only help you grow.
- Finally, try to write a lyric which will stand on its own merits. If you do, you'll never wonder whether that great music made your average lyric work. You'll know half the credit is yours.

Editor's Note: Doug Thiele, a published songwriter, teaches lyric-writing workshops for Songwriters Resources and Services in Los Angeles and San Diego.

Tony Camillo

Producer/Composer/Arranger/Recording Artist:

"The Whole Idea Is to Stretch Your Brain"

Tony Camillo has touched a few music business bases in his time. The 34-year-old New Jerseyite is a producer (Gladys Knight and the Pips, Richie Havens, Freda Payne), songwriter (I Feel A Song, and Pipe Dreams for Knight) and arranger. He's also touched gold as a performer – his tune, Dynamite, was a Top Five hit for his own short-lived group, Bazooka.

Tony isn't exactly standing still these days: proprietor of his own studio, Venture Sound in Somerville, N.J., he also is making plans to form his own record label, Venture Records.

The following is an edited transcript of a recent New York Askapro rap session with Camillo, moderated by Sheila Davis, executive vice-president of the American Guild of Authors and Composers. AGAC hosts Askapro each Thursday at noon in its offices at 40 W. 57th St.

Sheila: When you get all those little brown envelopes from songwriters coming to your office, what is your reaction? Does a song coming in the mail that way have as much clout as the same song coming to you from, say, Don Oriolo at April Blackwood?

Tony: The people who are very active in the publishing area call all the time and talk to my assistant, Alison, and ask what is Tony doing, what kind of material is he looking for at the moment. Those people don't really get any more attention, but they are more on top of things than a person who, here and there, sends me a song. That's the difference. But I listen to every song that comes to me sooner or later.

For the most part, the biggest problem of all songs is in the lyrics. If you listen to most pop songs, the title really



sets up what's going to happen in the song. The whole idea is getting a phrase that is catchy and allows you to expand. Use a minimal number of words. Most lyricists are so wordy, that when the composer gets the lyric there's no way he can write the melody unless he writes a half-hour symphony. You have to really get to the point.

When I listen to a song, I want to hear something with a new slant or something I can identify with. Take a song like Harry Chapin's *Cat's in the Cradle*. Older people could identify with that song, and so could the kids. There's a totally different slant and Chapin's not just doing a whole lot of mumbo-jumbo, he's really saying something. So that to me is a classic song.

The whole trick is to stretch your brain and think. I mean, nobody wants to hear Thoreau. You want the lyric to be simple enough so it applies to everybody's life, with simple words that strike a chord. I'm not saying it's so easy because as a writer I have a heck of a time with it. But, if you have any substance, you're looking to write songs that are lasting.

Writer: Is a demo with piano and voice sufficient or does it have to be more elaborate?

Tony: No, it doesn't have to be elaborate, but one of the things you can do for yourself is have a really good voice for the song. Lots of times people will send songs and they're hard to listen to because the voices are so bad. And only send two or three songs. That's all anyone needs to know if there's talent there. I mean I've gotten things where I can hardly listen to three bars because you know it's amateur hour. But if something is interesting you can hear it pretty quick and you continue to listen.

Anybody can get through to any producer. We're always looking for material. If you have an artist in mind, it's a good idea to get a singer who sounds somewhat in that area. I've had publishers who are supposedly really tuned in who send me a song for Helen Schneider, for instance, which is a total male lyric. There's no way that I could make it a female lyric, so I know that that guy has not even spent 10 minutes listening to songs for Helen Schneider. He's wasting his time and mine.

Sheila: While you're picking songs, are you thinking Top 40 constantly?

Tony: It depends on the artist. In Helen's case, I would not want to go with her so that it was really geared commercially. Obviously her management is trying to build an artist, so therefore it's important that there's a lot of class connected to the arrangements and to the songs. As long as we come out of it with two or three songs that really have a possibility of having a wide acceptance commercially, that's good for me.

Writer: Would you talk about how you function as a producer?

Tony: What I do is try to get the best from an artist/artists that they have to

offer. Working with a group I might say "Try doing it this way and see what you think." Sometimes they lean on me heavily; they might not be able to do vocal background parts or strings. That's when I step in and do it. When I see that they're really in control, I step

If you have any substance, you're looking to write songs that are lasting.

back. So it's a give-and-take relationship.

In some cases, where the artist is not a writer but strictly a singer, it's my responsibility to put the arrangements together, to choose the songs, to cast them in the right light. As a producer, I have the responsibility to the record company to deliver a finished product. They don't care if I do the arranging myself or if I hire an arranger, if I do it in my studio or some other studio.

Writer: How do you come to work with an artist, and what are the financial considerations?

Tony: What a record company will do is ask, "Like to do this artist?" You say yes or no if you feel the artist suits your tastes. Then you meet with the artist, and if you feel you're compatible, you enter into a working relationship. The record company says okay, what do you feel it will take to do this single or this album and you give them an estimated budget. A producer gets anywhere from \$300 to \$2,000 per song, depending upon his stature. That's a production fee that the record company pays. It's an advance against royalties that really comes from the artist.

Also, you have the option to do the arrangements if you are an arranger. The cost ranges from \$250 to \$500 per song. And then you get anywhere from three to five points (percent) on the sale of the records.

Writer: Once in the studio, what are the steps you follow in making a recording?

Tony: First you get the rhythm track the way you want to. What you do next, very often, is dummy vocals, a vocal just to hear what it's going to sound like. Then you build on top of that with background voices, strings or whatever. And when that's all done, then you go in and redo a vocal with the artist to get the nth degree out of him.

The reason we do the record in layers is because there's nothing to be gained by doing it all at one time. The more you do at one time, the less control you have.

I remember one of the first tracks I ever did. I did this at a very well established studio with a very well-known engineer. And I said, "Are you sure the way this room is set up we're going to

be able to really control the leakage?" He said, "No problem." Well, it sounded great in there. But when I went back to mix it, the drums were in the strings. So I had to bring 16 strings back in there and redo it.

I've been wanting to say something that I haven't gotten a chance to say yet, and this involves a word to anyone aspiring to be a player, a writer, whatever. This is a real business. It's not just fun and games. There are obvious things that you need to follow to get wherever it is you wish to go. And being tuned in to what those things are at your stage of the game is really what matters.

Obviously you need to be available, you need to be in certain circles so that you can relate to people who are doing things. For instance, I tried to get a keyboard player friend of mine to go to ABC to work with various artists. And

When I listen to a song, I want to hear something with a new slant.

for nothing, because I did it for a long time for nothing. But a lot of people don't want to go through that. They feel like they're being taken advantage of, so they won't expend that energy and time. But that's what has to happen. There are power structures going on

within the field, you just don't walk in and take over.

Start with a record company by making yourself available, getting in on a session, whatever. Do whatever you can for nothing. And if you are really that good, they'll soon find out.

Sheila: Tell us some more on how you got started in the business.

Tony: I was teaching music in school. One day I decided that I wasn't really having enough fun. So I decided to write some songs. I took one of them to Columbia Records and the man there said, "I don't really want to be unkind, but school teachers have a problem because their songs are too poetic," and he suggested that maybe "I should go back and teach school and forget about it."

Well, I went away from there, asking myself the question: "Is he right, or is it really a matter of me getting past certain things and understanding what's out there?" I decided to buckle down, and I did a lot of listening and writing.

Several years later, after I had had lots of hit records and I was working at Mercury Records, I met up with this same man. I related the story of when we first met and he said, "Well, I can't always be right." It was fun. But had I told myself at that time, the man is right that would be the end of the story. But I accepted the challenge.

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ABC's Jay Morgenstern

This Street Player Keeps an Open Door to Songwriters

by Rich Wiseman

Jay Morgenstern, president of ABC Music Publishing, is a "street player" — it says so on a basketball in his office.

He's played, and won on the biggest street of them all — Broadway. As executive vice-president of Metromedia's Record and Publishing Division, he handled the publishing of such Broadway shows as "Fiddler on the Roof" and "Cabaret." As a copartner in Music Maximus, he published off-Broadway's "Godspell."

The one-time entertainment biz accountant moved to Los Angeles in 1976 to take over ABC's publishing division. Today, ABC, with its 90 to 100 licenses per month, ranks among the Top 15 U.S. music publishers. The catalog includes tunes by Steely Dan's Donald Fagen and Walter Becker, Jimmy Buffett, B. B. King and Kenny Loggins.

Since he joined ABC, Morgenstern has been campaigning to reactivate the dustier segment of ABC's catalog, explaining, "Our catalog is kind of unique. We have the pre-1976 Dennis Lambert/Brian Potter material; all the Mamas and Papas; the Don and Lyon catalogue, which goes back to the 50s in R & B and gospel; and the M. M. Cole catalogue, which goes back to the 20s with Mexicali Rose and That Silver Haired Daddy of Mine."

Which is not to say that Morgenstern isn't also thinking 1978. To attract new



writers he's endeavored to "reestablish ABC as a very personal kind of publishing company." ABC, in fact, is one of the few publishers with an "open door policy." In both the Los Angeles and Nashville offices, two days a week are set aside to listen to any and all writers. Even though the policy has left his staff "swamped" with requests for appointments, Morgenstern said he's sure he's gone the right way. Peter McCann, after all, walked in one day with Do You Wanna Make Love and is now an ABC staff writer.

When Paul August and Len Latimer interviewed Morgenstern recently in his Beverly Boulevard office, the pipe-smoking publisher started off by addressing himself to the do's and don'ts of in-person auditions.

You've got to do it like a business. Come prepared and don't expect to play 20 songs. Say in front, "Look, sir, I will not be insulted if you ask me to stop in the middle of a song, because I'd rather play more songs for you than play one through that you don't like." Put him at his ease when you start — that's what I do when I go out to an A&R man or producer.

Because a publisher's time is at a premium, be on time for your appointment. Understand, too, that if you take a lot of time you might be depriving someone else of some time who's waiting. If the person you're playing for seems impatient, try to be hip enough to excuse yourself and ask if you can come back another time. Don't filibuster. You would want the same courtesy extended to you.

What about the songwriter in Wyoming who has to do his song-plugging via the mail? What advice do you have for him?

Send no more than five songs on a demo, either cassette or reel-to-reel tape. You don't have to be elaborate or spend a lot of money — professional publishers have the experience to be able to tell with minimum arranging and production.

The first song on the tape should be



At a party for B.B. King (l to r): jazz producer Esmund Edwards, Morgenstern, unidentified woman, King, Stevie Wonder and former ABC R&B coordinator Al Lewis



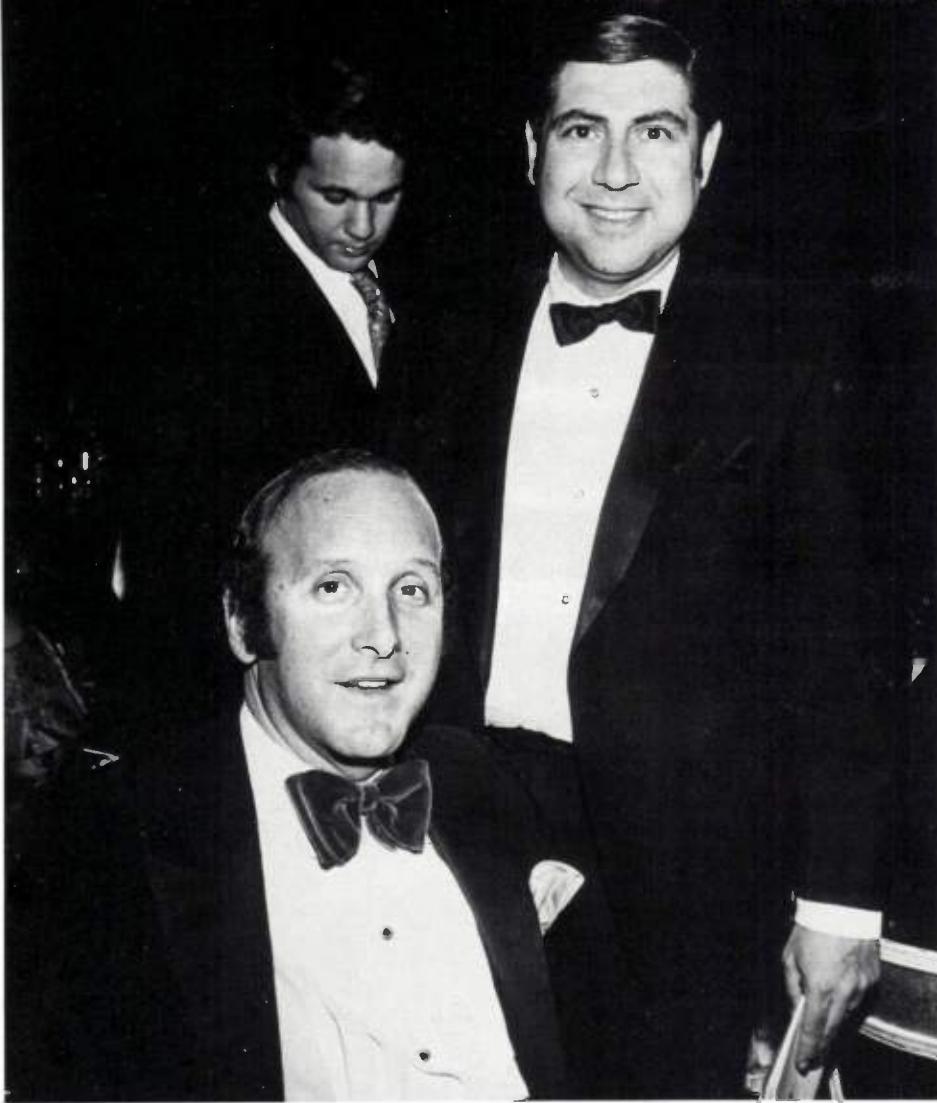
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With Bobby Sherman, during Morgenstern's Metromedia period.



At a signing party for country artist Tommy Overstreet (l): Morgenstern, ABC Nashville Vice President Dianne Petty, ABC President of Professional Activities Rick Shoemaker.

Morgenstern



With Arista President Clive Davis, during Davis' period as head of CBS Records.



With Steely Dan's Donald Fagen

the one that you think is your best, because if it's not nobody's going to listen to the second, third, fourth and fifth. And the fifth could be a smash.

Sometimes, in fact, it's better to just send one than five. Even if that song isn't acceptable, it might be good enough for a publisher to write back and say, "We like what we heard, send more."

Send a neatly typed lyric sheet so that the song is easier to follow. Remember, you're the seller and the guy sitting behind the desk is the buyer; you don't show him a dress with the seams open.

Listen to the radio, observe the form that songs are taking. Most hit songs fall into a pattern of construction. You beat it to death with the chorus and the hook. That's what everybody remembers.

You might, as an exercise, write for an artist. In other words, rather than just to write a song, write a song for Glenn Campbell. Then, take *Billboard* and see who published the songs in the last Campbell album . . . or buy the album. And then solicit those publishers.

As a song evaluator you're likely to climb the walls if . . .

If I get neat little packages with a piece of music and no demo. We don't have a piano player sitting around that plays these things. Or if I get a lyric sheet without any music, or a letter describing the song.

Some people go to the trouble of making a demo on their home cassette players, and it'll sound like they're in the other room, and they won't even send you a lyric sheet with it so that you can follow along with the words. Or they'll make a tape with a whole explanation of what the song is about, or send us a tape with 25 songs.

Now all these people spend a lot on postage — they may send out hundreds. Worthless, because no one's going to listen.

But as long as beginners do their homework and follow the rules on song submissions, you will listen?

Right. And, young people, don't come in with this built-in anxiety, fear and distrust. Remember, that this is a multibillion-dollar industry run by businessmen. A company like Columbia doesn't do three-quarters of a billion dollars in the record and music business

and a Warner Bros. doesn't do a half a billion dollars, and an ABC doesn't do in the 100s by cheating or by being disreputable. We do it because it's a profitable business.

Sure, every industry has rip-off people. Fortunately, in the music industry, you have your BMI and ASCAP, your trade publications, your writer-oriented publications, who will steer you right.

Before you start going around, prepare yourself, get some sound information. You should know, for example, that no reputable publisher will take money for publishing your song. No reputable record company will charge you to record your song. If anybody wants any money to publish or record your song, there's something wrong. Because the reverse is true. If the publisher wants your song, he's liable to give you an advance for it. If the record company wants you to record for them, they'll be liable to give you advances and are certainly willing, as a business expense, to pay for the recording.

Something else you should know: have a lawyer read over any contract before you sign it. If you can't afford a lawyer, again, go to one of the performing societies or songwriter-oriented organizations; they'll give you enough

The first song on the tape should be your best. If it's not, nobody's going to listen to the second.

paralegal advice so that you won't sign something that's totally off the wall. The point is, don't go berserk if somebody says they like something, just because you want so badly to hear that somebody likes something.

Here's something else many fledgling singer-songwriters want to know: whether they should hold onto their publishing until they make a record deal, for fear the record company might ask for the publishing as well.

22 This is a problem in the business. Because the cost of doing an album is phenomenal, a lot of the smaller, independent record companies have made a policy of asking for the publishing to help them recoup their investment. But it doesn't happen if you go to an ABC or A&M. By then, the publishing has probably been committed to the producer or to a manager or to somebody else.

How would you approach an act

that has just been signed by ABC and has publishing available?

We would negotiate with them the same way we would if they were being signed to another label. The same with our production company, ABC Music Productions. We produced three artists last year, and each was signed to a different label. We're not bound to go to ABC with any of our artists. ABC Music Publishers has to be a very independent operation.

Being owned by a broadcaster, we do have a unique responsibility. The FCC

Don't go berserk if somebody says they like something, just because you want so badly to hear that.

is most particular about anything that hints at collusion, strong-arming or payola. We, along with the CBS and RCA people, would not want an artist to go to the FCC and say we demanded his publishing, we demanded the record deal, we demanded his management. That's not in line with the public service image that broadcasters are required to have. So we are absolutely meticulous in this area.

Sure we get audits and lawsuits. Every accounting system in the record business is subject to interpretation. But I think that anybody who's making a deal with a company owned by a broadcaster can pretty well know that he's going to get a clean shake. I know in the music publishing division we don't want to have an unhappy person. For example, if we sign a song and it's with us for a reasonable length of time, and we haven't gotten a record and we haven't had much luck, and the writer wants it back, we'll give it back — even if the contract doesn't stipulate it. Your integrity, your credibility, is very, very important in this business — as important as the results. Most of the new writers look at these giant companies and are overwhelmed. I think they want to feel comfortable with whom they're doing business.

You mentioned your ABC Music Productions a moment ago. It seems

Your integrity is very, very important in this business — as important as the results.

to be a trend these days for publishers to set up production wings.

It's more a necessity than a trend. Our prime function as a music publisher is to exploit and promote songs. If

that means that we go out and produce a record, then we'll do it. It's just part of the total exploitation of your catalogue.

I think most publishers would prefer not to go into production because it leads to certain complications. You become sort of a record company in a minor way, and it might take away from some of your objectiveness. The production company is a tool, we don't ever want it to be the motivating factor.

Now, Warner Bros. did it differently. They started Pacific Records, with Alan O'Day as the first artist, and I guess that fit the bill for them. It isn't the best way for us to go.

Speaking of ways to go, you've gone an interesting way in taking on a new title, vice president, International Division.

I travel all over the world. That's one of the reasons that we tied international

Most hit songs fall into a pattern. You beat it to death with the chorus and hook.

and publishing together, because there's a great mutuality of interests.

When I was up in Canada on other matters, for example, I heard about Bruce Cockburn and Murray McLauchlin, who come from that coffee house group of Joni Mitchell, Gordon Lightfoot and Dan Hill. Each had had five or six albums out in Canada with no success in the United States. So we've published them in the United States and the rest of the world. Though their albums on Island Records haven't had the kind of success that I thought they would have, I still feel that it's coming.

Canada, for us, is no different than finding a writer in France, Belgium, or

If anybody wants money to publish or record your song, there's something wrong.

Albuquerque. But the trend now is for them to come to California — California's the mecca.

In terms of trends, do you see any trends in music?

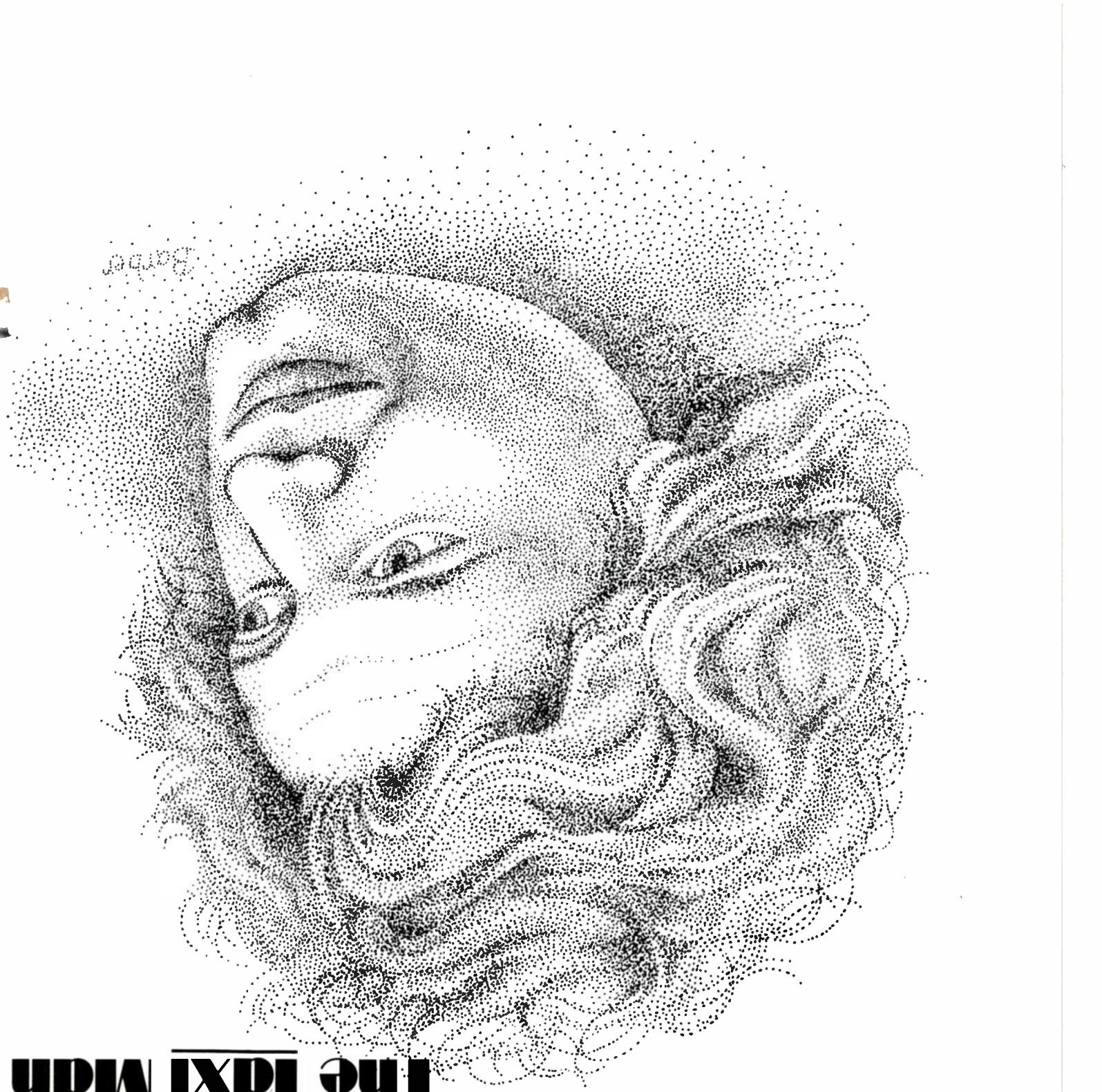
The song makes the trend. Look at the charts and you'll see an *Evergreen* or *The Way We Were* followed by a hard-rock song. It's the song, and I think any publisher will say the same thing. If you can get the marriage between song/arrangement/production/performance on a record, it's going to be a hit whether it's bossa nova or the theme from "Star Wars."



At a production agreement signing for Peter McCann (l to r): 20th Century Records Senior Vice President of A&R Harvey Cooper, McCann manager Hal Yoergler, Smiley McCann, former 20th Century President Russ Regan, Morgenstern, 20th A&R chief Pat Glasser.



With Stephen Schwartz, writer of "Godspell" and "Pippin."



the taxi man
happily chappin'

**"Your success will be decided
to the degree you're willing
to put your ego on the line"**

Talks with the Meter Off

There's nothing humdrum about Harry Chapin's bio. His 1972 story song, *Taxi*, scooted to the top of the charts — despite its six-minute-plus length. He's performed on Broadway in "The Night That Made America Famous," his own multimedia concept show. And he's the founder of *World Hunger Year*, a non-profit group dedicated to increasing public awareness of worldwide hunger.

And, yes, Harry Chapin, 36, once applied for a taxi driver's license. The year was 1971, only two years after Chapin earned an Academy Award nomination for coproducing a documentary on boxing's greats, "Legendary Champions." "The recession was getting worse and suddenly there was no work for even established filmmakers," he explained to one interviewer.

Chapin never drove that taxi — three film offers saved the day. But that rough period in his life got him thinking of all "my big statements and old dreams" — the stuff of *Taxi*.

Chapin didn't give up on those dreams. Son of a professional drummer, he and brothers Tom and Steve (accompanied by dad) had started performing around New York City as the Chapin Brothers in 1964. In 1971, the year of the taxi, Chapin formed his own group. He couldn't find a club that would hire him, however, so headstrong Harry rented his own nightclub in Greenwich Village in which to showcase his oddly affecting story songs.

Elektra Records signed him later that year. Chapin's debut album, "Heads and Tales," included *Taxi*. He's been recording steadily ever since. On "Verities and Balderdash," his fourth album (he has eight and a ninth is on the way), he scored again with the No. 1 hit, *Cat's in the Cradle*, his two-cents'-worth on the failing of some father-son relations (one cent belongs to wife Sandy, the co-writer).

Despite the fact he has become a fam-

ily man — he and Sandy have six children — it still wouldn't be like Harry to be content with a simple songwriting/recording/performing career. Harry Chapin, concerned citizen, works for Ralph Nader's Public Interest Research Group, chairs the Performing Arts Foundation of Long Island, and is involved with the One on One program for the retarded, in addition to crusading against world hunger.

In one more example of public service . . . songwriter service in this case . . . Chapin recently guested at a special edition of the American Guild of Authors and Composers' Askapro seminar, held at New York's Barbizon-Plaza Hotel.

"Every question from the audience of hundreds of songwriters sparked a torrent of words from one of the most interesting lyricists writing today," reported Sheila Davis, AGAC's executive vice president.

The following is an edited transcript of Harry's comments, courtesy of AGAC.

— Rich Wiseman

So you want to be a songwriter?

Anybody in a business like ours that is made up of dreams has to be willing to implement them. You have to be willing to make a complete ass of yourself in terms of drive and ambition.

A good hard-headed way to start would be to make two columns, debits and credits — the things you've got going for you and the things you've got going against you. And then you look at the entries on the debits column and figure out ways to overcome them. If you haven't got a fantastic voice, okay, maybe you'll find somebody else to sing your songs. Maybe you'll invent a new way of singing.

Bob Dylan is a perfect example of someone who had what to everybody's ears in the early 60s was a horrible

voice. Well, he ended up by affecting an awful lot of singers. He is a perfect example of somebody taking a debit column and turning it into a credit.

The arts, like everything else in life, are a can-do business. The people who succeed in music are the ones who force people to notice. If you write great songs and sing them in a garret, nobody will ever know they exist. Your success will be decided to the degree you're willing to put your ego and talent on the line and be willing to withstand "zingers" as you do it. We can never count on the Lord coming down and squiring us up to his right-hand seat!

I did it my way . . .

Back in 1971 I thought an awful lot of performers of the late 60s and early 70s had been putting walls — either walls of sound, walls of aggression or walls of superstardom — between themselves and the audience. Our group went a different way. We worked very hard at trying to create a living-room atmosphere every time we played. Back when we started there was a certain amount of excitement just because we seemed to have a different tonality. Not only because of the cello and the story songs, but because of the relaxed adult sense of the concerts. We're going to have validity for 20 years, 30 years, because we're not based on fads or the latest thing that seems to be getting played on Top-40 stations. The most meaningful thing to me is that I'm having my cake and eating it too in the sense that I'm writing as good songs as I can, and, at the same time, I'm pleasantly surprised when some of them do well.

Commercial viability is not really the major criterion. Now that's not to say that it is not important to try and communicate with as many people as possible. It's just that there is a basic distortion in Top-40 radio. The average



single buyer is a pre- or postpubescent female between 10 and 15 and I really don't want to be spending a large amount of time trying to figure out what they want to hear. As a matter of fact, *W.O.L.D.* is about somebody trying to deal in false ways with the fact of a youth-oriented business.

I don't write singles. If I wrote singles, I wouldn't have come up with *Taxi* because it was too long, it had no chorus, it mentioned getting stoned, it was about older people. In other words it was a disaster in terms of all the "formulas." *W.O.L.D.* obviously wasn't meant to be a single either because I thought there was no way it was going to get played on AM since it didn't put DJs in a positive light. *Sniper* had never gotten played on AM; it's one of my most ambitious works. *A Better Place to Be* hardly ever got played, and in the years since I wrote it I've written many new things that will never get played.

Basically I'm interested in a different kind of communication. The feedback you get from a record is maybe three months after you record it, on a sheet of sales figures, or else your numbers on the charts. To me it's not as satisfying as the direct communication with an audience. Still, I continue to learn about recorded sound.

"Commercial," that 10-letter word . . .

When I was in architecture school at Cornell University, the good architects seemed to think in spaces while I was locked into thinking in terms of structures. There are different ways of look-

You have to be willing to make a complete ass of yourself in terms of drive and ambition.

ing at things. I'd put a wall here and I'd put a beam there while they were thinking, "Hey, how would it feel to live in that space?" Real architects worry about where people live. They had it all over me.

In music I am a linear thinker. The fact that most of my lyrics are chronological shows it. But I have found you can do story songs and communicate and not sell out. Communication to me includes all the various kinds of clues that come back to you from "live" people

The big question is, how commercial do you want to be? The analogy I use about where I would like to be in the commercial spectrum relates to what the racing driver, Eddie Sachs, once said before he got killed at the Indianapolis 500. He said, "I'm driving perfectly when if I take a curve at 163.1 mph, I know that if I took it at 163.2 I would be out of control." I try to write

as ambitiously artistic as I can without going out of control. Let's face it, if you are writing a song and you're asking other people to listen to it, you're asking for it to touch a common chord. And that is what the record industry calls "commercial."

A lot of people say that many of my songs are about different forms of loneliness and that sort of limits them. Well, in one sense I would agree that they are limited, but I think an awful lot of what human intercourse — both literal and figurative — is about is try-



With "Doonesbury's" Garry Trudeau

ing to bridge gaps and make connections. So if you want to translate that into loneliness, then I'm completely guilty as charged.

The writer as salesman . . .

I think that anything you take seriously you should do your homework in and so you should take a deep interest in every aspect of your career. Make sure you have good management. A prerequisite is finding somebody honest. Then add a willingness for hard work and hopefully some imagination. But I think that there's no reason in the world for artists to stay apart from decision making. Every artist can help in making sensible career choices if he's willing to do a modicum of work and research about the business he's in. There are an awful lot of performers who feel that it's selling out to talk to DJs, to give interviews, to think about business. But then when they end up writing their music, they write, "Ooh be doo be doo, I love you." So they sell out there. And they sell out to the lowest common denominator, American Top-40 radio.

My theory is this: I'm going to write as good music as I can and figure every angle in the world to get my songs out to the people, so I can win on my terms rather than on theirs. You've got an imagination, just use it. I spent 10 years having people not pay attention to my

songs, and probably for good reasons. I wasn't ready. But there is no conspiring against talent. When you are getting turned down, don't quit, keep trying to write better.

When you start out as a writer who can't sing, you're starting with a handicap so you have to overcompensate in another way. That means that you find some people who can sing, who make good demos, or maybe get tied up with somebody's career. Bernie Taupin is a perfect example. Where would Bernie Taupin be without Elton John? And maybe vice versa.

If you're serious enough, you should be able to find answers for yourself. I work damn hard — I edit, I struggle, I throw away, and I resurrect.

Themes for the 70s . . .

John Canaday, *The New York Times* art critic, wrote a three-column summation of Picasso's life and said that if Picasso doesn't have any single great theme in his work as compared to some other great artists like Michelangelo, perhaps it's because at the time he was painting there weren't any great themes left. All the icons had been torn down, i.e. nationalism, man is beautiful, religion. These have been basic themes throughout Greek, Roman and medieval art, and his conclusion was perhaps it's not that Picasso failed the twentieth century, but that the twentieth century failed Picasso. And I thought about that, shook my head three times, and said bull.

I don't think there's been a century that ever had more major themes and more things to talk about, not necessarily easy ones, but that's a task for an artist. For the next 10 or 20 years, we're going to be making basic decisions about what man is himself. Up until now man has been a given: Jesus Christ, Napoleon, Abraham Lincoln. We're all basically of the same human structure and makeup. With cloning, DNA and gene manipulation, we're going to be changing that in the next 10

I don't write singles. If I wrote singles, I wouldn't have come up with *Taxi*.

or 20 years. That's as basic a theme as you can get.

So I decided I was going to find ways of dealing with concepts that people weren't dealing with. But each time you have to look for the key that brings your ambitious concepts back from that 163.2 miles an hour out of control and crashing into the sidewall at Indianapolis. Nobody's listening to you because you're being esoteric. You must find the key that brings it back to 163.1.

The key to *Sniper*, for example, was realizing that what the guy actually

TAXI**Words and music
by Harry Chapin**

It was raining hard in Frisco
I needed one more fare to make my night
A lady up ahead waved to flag me down
She got in at the light.

"Where you going to my Lady Blue
It's a shame you ruined your gown in the rain."

She just looked out the window
She said, "16 Parkside Lane."

Something about her was familiar
I could swear I seen her face before
But she said, "I'm sure you're mistaken."
And she didn't say anything more.

It took a while but she looked in the mirror
Then she glanced at the license for my name.
A smile seemed to come to her slowly.
It was a sad smile just the same.

And she said, "How are you, Harry?"
I said, "How are you, Sue? . . .
Through the too many miles and the too little smiles
I still remember you."

It was somewhere in a fairy tale
I used to take her home in my car.
We learned about love in the back of a Dodge,
The lesson hadn't gone too far.

You see . . .
She was gonna be an actress
And I was gonna learn to fly.
She took off to find the footlights,
I took off to find the sky.

I got something inside me
To drive the princess blind.
There's a wild man wizard he's hiding in me
Illuminating my mind.

I got something inside me
Not what my life's about
'Cause I been letting my outside tide me
Over 'til my time runs out.

Baby's so high that she's skying
Yeah she's flying, but afraid to fall
And I'll tell you why Baby's crying
'Cause she's dying, aren't we all?

There was not much more for us to talk about
Whatever we had once was gone.
So I turned the cab into the driveway
Past the gate and the fine trimmed lawns.

And she said, "We must get together."
But I knew it'd never be arranged.
And she handed me twenty dollars for a two-fifty fare
She said, "Harry, keep the change."

Well another man might have been angry
And another man might have been hurt
But another man never would have let her go
I stashed the bill in my shirt.

And she walked away in silence
It's strange how you never know
But we'd both gotten what we'd asked for
Such a long, long time ago.

You see . . .
She was gonna be an actress
And I was gonna learn to fly.
She took off to find the footlights,
I took off to find the sky.

And here she's acting happy,
Inside her handsome home
And me I'm flying in my taxi,
Taking tips and getting stoned.

I go flying so high when I'm stoned.

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CAT'S IN THE CRADLE**Words and music
by Harry Chapin**

My child arrived just the other day.
He came to the world in the usual way.
But there were planes to catch and bills to pay.
He learned to walk while I was away.
And he was talkin' 'fore I knew it, and as he grew
He'd say "I'm gonna be like you, dad,
You know I'm gonna be like you."

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man on the moon.
"When you comin' home dad?"
"I don't know when, but we'll get together then.
You know we'll have a good time then."

My son turned ten just the other day.
He said "Thanks for the ball, dad, come on let's play.
Can you teach me to throw?" I said "Not today
I got a lot to do." He said "That's O.K."
And he walked away, but his smile never dimmed,
And said "I'm gonna be like him, yeah,
You know I'm gonna be like him."

And the cat's in the cradle . . .

Well he came from college just the other day
So much like a man I just had to say
"Son, I'm proud of you can you sit for awhile?"
He shook his head and said with a smile
"What I'd really like dad is to borrow the car keys.
See you later. Can I have them please?"

And the cat's in the cradle . . .

I've long since retired. My son's moved away.
I called him up just the other day.
I said "I'd like to see you if you don't mind."
He said "I'd love to dad if I can find the time.
You see my new job's a hassle and the kids have the flu
But it's sure nice talking to you, dad,
It's been sure nice talking to you."

And as I hung up the phone it occurred to me—
He'd grown up just like me.
My boy was just like me.

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man on the moon.
"When you comin' home son?"
"I don't know when, but we'll get together then.
You know we'll have a good time then."

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was doing was having a conversation, that he was asking people if he was alive. Now he was speaking in the only language that America seems to understand at times, and that's violence, and, yes, he got his answer in the same terms. He had a tremendously successful conversation because he had it with most of the world; he's etched himself bloodily into all our consciousness.

I don't write traditional hooks, like "Baby don't get hooked on me." I look for hooks in a different way; that insight, that sensitizing thing, the thing that reduces a very complex subject into something that is artistic, that is understandable, so that I cannot just communicate with the intellectuals.

The great thing about Shakespeare is that he got the people in the cheap seats up in the front who were interested in the plot and who got the girl and who

I try to write as ambitiously artistic as possible without going out of control.

won the duel as well as the intellectuals in the back in the boxes. What I was looking for in *Sniper* was something that could reduce it and when I got the idea of the conversation everything broke out from there.

The same with *Taxi*, in a sense. *Taxi* is about broken dreams and how people hide from their own realities. The key to that song is the lines,

*She was going to be an actress
I was going to learn to fly
She took off to find the footlights
I took off to find the sky
And here she's acting happy
Inside her handsome home
And me I'm flying in my taxi
Taking tips and getting stoned.*

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The story went out both ways in my head. That is, what came before — what came after. Each time I look for a phrase, a tonality, a way of approaching the thing. The key moment is that connective — the thing that puts the technique after the subject in a way that makes it unique. You can't force those moments — you can stew about them.

How I write the songs . . .

Every song operates differently. Generally, I have an idea for a story; then I try to get a couple of lines down. Then maybe I got to a guitar just to find a sound and feel, just to see where it sits. Then I finish the lyric and come back and finish the melody. An important thing about these story songs is not to make them so entirely linear that if you miss the first word, you're not going to get interested halfway through. Even though it's better that people start from the beginning, you can make a whole



With daughter, Jenny



With Grandma Abby, 96

bunch of musical, lyrical and emotional things happen that seduce listeners into the story.

Obviously if you're writing music, playing an instrument helps. At the same time I think it's interesting to find that people often write into grooves after they've gotten to know an instrument well, their chords flow naturally in certain predetermined ways. Piano is probably least limiting in that sense. Guitar chording can definitely get grooved. If you find yourself getting stale, there are two different solutions. One is to put the guitar down and maybe write a melody while driving a

An awful lot of songwriters submit to what Robert Frost called the tyranny of rhyme.

car — you haven't got that C, D minor, G7 running through your head or C, A minor, F, G7. Break all the standard things that you had set up in your head and get thinking in new ways.

You should definitely create a forum for yourself in terms of friends who realize that they are not doing you a favor by telling you that everything's great. Get some real feedback. Since you are trying to communicate, people's responses are important.

That doesn't mean to say that audiences are always right, because an audience can be approached two ways: an audience can either be a mob or it can be a collection of individuals with a potential for positive action. There's a built-in shit-detector in everybody's head, and I think an awful lot of songwriters submit to what Robert Frost called the tyranny of rhyme. Sometimes we force it. But I know when I write a bad line or a bad rhyme I've got to throw the damn thing away, try it again. I mean, songwriting is the art of the possible. I've time and time again come up with a great line and I can't find another line that rhymes with it. So you try to change it around, you do something else. You've got to work with practical realities and you've got to be very tough with yourself. There's another Robert Frost trick. If you have a weak line that you have to use — one of two rhyming lines — put the weaker one first. When you hear the first line of a two-line couplet, people are settling themselves — getting used to it. The second line is when they're making their judgment. Most folk music is so fantastic because it's like old wood banisters. So many people have put their hands on it, smoothed it out, that there's no possibility of splinters. Well,

30 when I write a song I push it up about three or four keys so that it's in a stress range in my voice and I sing the hell out of it for a couple of days. You feel



Chapin performs with Pete Seeger and Steve Goodman at a benefit concert for the Performing Arts Foundation of Long Island





like there's a crazy man in the next room — it drives my family bats. But as you're doing it over and over again, boy, those rough spots jump right out. It's a cheap way of putting 2,000 years into a song in a couple of days.

A good song is like . . .

A good song is like a well-brought up child, it's got its own reality, tonality and toughness. It has reflections of the parent, but hopefully it's got a different personality and it's got its own way.

I'll give you a graphic example of the best technique ever for writing. After saying what you want to say, write next to it in prose form what you're trying to say. You'll find that the two things may not gibe. There will be a lot of things that are "here" but not "there," and vice versa. You've forced yourself to put words to your thoughts in a context where it's handleable rather than something up dream space.

I try to figure out every angle I can. I don't feel bad about the word "professional." If you think of yourself as a fountain, a wellhead, and constantly come up with new things, then you're in a much more healthy creative status than if you're just saying that you want to write hit songs.

There are a hell of a lot of tricks so you don't have to feel bad about it. A hit song is something that grabs people, something that communicates and takes people somewhere else. I don't think that there is any substitute for having something to say. Bob Dylan of course gave everybody of my generation courage to write about anything they wanted to. Poet James Dickey was willing to tackle some weird subjects and bring them home in effective ways. For example, a poem of his called *Falling* is about a stewardess falling out of an airplane, and taking her clothes off as she falls. It's an absolutely incredible poem about a hell of a lot of things based on a rather weird incident. He in a sense gave me clues about how to approach

I work damn hard — I edit, I struggle, I throw away, and I resurrect.

songs such as *Sniper* and *Dogtown* in ways that bring them back into the heartland of where people are.

The basic requirement for my songs is emotional honesty, in other words, that I understand the emotions about them. I've never been a sniper, but I understand what it's like to be frustrated, to feel like you really don't exist at times. I've never been a DJ, but I think I understand the toll that kind of life takes on you. The point is, by your technique, by your effort, try to find some area where you can do something that makes a leap from your own reality.



Punk Rock: Played

by Barry Alfonzo

When Britain's now defunct Sex Pistols hit America last year they were greeted with indifference or hostility. To date, no American or British punk rock band has broken here as a truly major recording act. Maybe it's because the time is wrong for this kind of music. This is the era, after all, of Debby Boone ballads and Bee Gees disco. Or maybe it's because punk rock is just plain bad music.

I don't accept the second reason. Punk rock is loud and harsh and its message can be ugly. But the punk musicians have something many top rock acts don't have today: a point of view. Punk rock is protest music, in both a social and an aesthetic sense. It's an attitude: a contempt for authority, a refusal to conform or be polite. The title of a Dead Boys' album describes the punk rocker well: "Young, Loud and Snotty."

The punk stance is not exactly foreign to rock 'n' roll — remember *Blue Suede Shoes* ... and the obnoxious *Charlie*

Brown? And musical connections between punk rock today and the early albums of the Who, the Rolling Stones and the Velvet Underground are obvious. Generally, punk records feature four-chord guitar rock with no frills or production gimmicks. The raw, simple musical approach is a backlash to the increasingly sophisticated and production-oriented sound of such 70s stalwarts as the Eagles, Wings and the Bee Gees.

The most important American punk group is the Ramones, a four-man unit that rose from a dingy Bowery rock club called CBGBs in 1974 to an Arista recording deal and a Top 40 single, *Sheena Is a Punk Rocker*. With songs about pinheads, lobotomies and sniffing glue, the Ramones traffic in junior high

There's a "crusade" says agent

BOOKING AGENT Miles Copeland this week about what he can "crusade" against the Pistols among the promoters up and down the country.

Copeland, who is EMI Records, is also as a new-wave agency, and secure recent European the Pistols. But many other agents him, failed to get any British date.

"We are together some but the brick unbelievable RockStar. "An for no reason are just making against the P. There is them, but the privated from Copeland the time band's prob be more just done and they're with. No

1,000 but come rent a

● Manager has been Festival in a few days, and with various re which could be contract in the m

● They resume a week, by way of a European tour starting on and visiting Holland, France, Norway, Sweden and Finland.

● They are £30,000 better off than the result of compensation paid them by EMI in an out-of-court settlement, following their sacking.

They were originally signed by EMI on a £40,000 guarantee, half of which was paid to them immediately. The first half has been spent in setting up a new autumn tour, but the guarantee sum, plus a £10,000 from their publisher, will be paid the other half.

6p

January 29th, 1977

News Desk

Pistols pocket £30,000 as EMI

Daily Mirror

BRITAIN'S BIGGEST DAILY SALE

Thursday, December 2, 1976

No. 22,658

TV's Bill Grundy in rock outrage

THE FILTH AND THE EIRY!



THE
FILTH
AND THE
EIRY!

Out or Still Punching?

school level humor. They may dress in leather jackets and torn jeans and act tough, but their cover versions of such rock classics as *Warm California Sun* and *Do You Wanna Dance?* make their intentions clear. They are trying to bring unpretentious, fun music back into the pop scene.

But to some British rockers the punk attitude means more than a stage routine. Early on, groups adopted the Ramones' bored, sneering style — and politicized it. The result was the unusually raw, uncompromisingly anti-establishment British punk rock sound, appealing to kids of working class backgrounds. For some, being a punk soon became a style . . . dyeing your hair blue . . . wearing safety pins in your ears . . . "pogo dancing" in small punk rock clubs.

The record that brought British punk rock to the attention of the world was the 1976 Sex Pistols charted single, *Anarchy In The U.K.* "I am an Anti-christ / I am an anarchist," lead singer Johnny Rotten snarled over blaring guitar. "Don't know what I want / But I know how to get it." (© 1977 Jones, Matlock, Cook and Rotten). This attack on English society dismayed most peo-

ple, but it made others fans of this new, angry kind of music.

Anarchy In The U.K. is included on the Sex Pistols debut album, "Never Mind The Bollocks, Here's The Sex Pistols," the most notorious punk rock album to date. Subjects (targets?) range from the Queen ("God Save the Queen/ She ain't no human being/There ain't no future/In England's dreaming") © 1977 Jones, Matlock, Cook and Rotten) to abortion, in which human life in general is dismissed as bestial. The LP ends appropriately with Rotten giving the world a very wet-sounding Bronx cheer.

So how to get by in this despicable world? The Clash, another well-known British punk band, offer a one-line guide on their debut album: "You better learn how to lie."

Despite all the notoriety, the Sex Pistols, the Clash and their brethren remain a distinctly minority musical taste, even in Britain. In the United

MELODY MAKER November 27 1976 Page 3

Anarchy, venom, outrage, fury!

LONDON: TUESDAY JANUARY

THESE REVOLTING VIPs

Sex Pistols

rumpus

JANUARY 13, 1977



UK group
igers and
their way
VIP send-off

JIM KEEBLE

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time.
Group — Londoners
ny Rotten, Glen Matl
Cook and Sta
e flying



Sex Pistols, from left: Johnny Rotten, Steve Jones, Glen Matlock

again later in a rubbish bin
While this was going on
the others were spitting on
the floor and at each other.
It was a disgrace."

The Sex Pistols caused

rumpus in December when

they used four-letter words

on ITVs Today programme

There were strong protests

from viewers and interviewers

Bill Grundy was suspended

A passenger who witnessed

the group's performance

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The Sex Pistols serenade their fans with a punkers' lullaby



Songwriters Resources and Services. A non-profit membership organization dedicated to the protection and education of songwriters and the expansion of social awareness through music.

Festivals of New Music. For the past two years SRS has been conducting Festivals of New Music where writers perform alternative, honestly written music in a professional, concert setting. The Fifth Festival will be held in August, 1978.

Songbank. Protect your songs through registration with SRS.

Pamphlets. SRS is publishing pamphlets on subjects vital to songwriters. **Songwriter Agreements** — The New Copyright Law: It Does Affect You — **The Personal Manager**. Additional exciting pamphlets will be announced as released.

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SRS 6381 Hollywood Blvd. Suite 503 Hollywood, CA 90028 (213) 463-7178

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 YOU WOULD LIKE: Membership—\$30 (\$10 initiation, \$20 annual dues)
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States, "Never Mind The Bollocks" peaked at a paltry 106 on the *Billboard* chart, despite the Pistols' highly publicized U.S. tour. Only the Ramones, who have moved up from clubs to concert halls, show any potential for breaking through to the masses.

At a National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences seminar in March, WNEW-FM's Vince Scelsa remarked that punk rock and other kinds of "New Wave" music won't become popular "until people hear it with some frequency. And there is no Alan Freed today to come out and play it."

So . . . the trend in punk rock seems to be the do-it-yourself approach: the independent pressing and distribution of punk records.

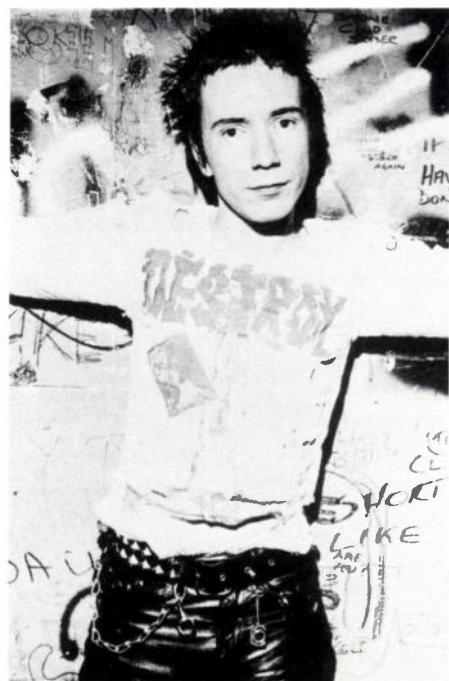
In Britain, punk rock singles released by tiny labels with crazy names like Rabid, Zoom and Raw sometimes sell up to 20,000 copies. In Los Angeles, a center for punk label activity, groups like the Zippers, the Skoings, the Dils and the Last have plunked down a \$1000 or so to record and press singles and have them distributed at retail stores by one of numerous home-grown labels. According to Bomp Records' Greg Shaw, "The reason we haven't been able to listen to the music we like for 10 years is strictly economic, and now we're creating a system that can support that music. The fans are taking control of the music they want to hear."

So count the punks down — but not out. As a discordant note in a time of increasing musical conformity, they deserve to be heard.

◆

SRS member Barry Alfonzo is an English major at the University of California at San Diego.

Pistol-punking Johnny Rotten



WHO'S WHO

from page 9

songs may be sent. They may be on reel to reel 7½ ips mono tape recorded on one side only, or on cassette. The tape *must* be accompanied by lead sheets, or lyric sheets with the words neatly typed out and chord symbols written in place above the words. Any tapes sent without lead or lyric sheets will not be reviewed. Put your name and address on the tape box and list the titles of the songs in their order on the tape. Tapes sent without self-addressed, stamped envelopes will not be returned.

Erv advises, "Beginning writers tend to get very far out in their chord progressions. Keep it simple. Don't try to solve every musical problem in one song. Listeners want to be comfortable in what they're listening to.

"Beginners also tend to get highly repetitive to the point of being monotonous in their lyrics. You should get the listeners' attention up front by punching what the song is about, develop the idea in the verses, then kick it with the chorus to excite the listener, accenting and reemphasizing what you're saying. Then, a last verse can relax, restate and close the song."



CHICAGO

Hank Hines, controller
Black Kat Record Company Publishing
— BMI
542 South Dearborn, Suite 1102
Chicago, IL 60605
(312) 939-9066

Also: Trackdown Enterprises and Record Distribution: Full Speed Ahead, Cherub, Cowyody, Potential and Black Kat Records; Roles Royce and Potential, motion picture and TV production companies

Other Offices: 19 cities in U.S., Germany, Japan

Hank Hines did independent promotion for Atlas/Angeltone Records in New York in the early 50s. He met John Richburg and did promotion for him on Wallace Brothers Records. Then, Hank helped Stan Lewis get SuAnn and Jewel Records started in Shreveport. After that, he got into independent production, publishing, booking and distribution, before joining Trackdown in 1965.

Trackdown started small in the early 60s. But by the mid-70s, it had grown

into a nationally and internationally active record distributor and mail-order house. Trackdown sells special record packages by direct mail order on their artists, most recently Deloris Hughes, the Krystals, the World Wonders and B.B. Odum. Some current products: B.B. Odum's *I've Got This Bad Feeling* on Hank and Frank Records; Deloris Hughes' *Help Me Make Up My Mind* on Trackdown; Lee Mitchell's *So Called Friends* on Full Speed Ahead (also recorded country by Bill Flippo on Cowyody); the World Wonders, a gospel group, with *Don't Give Up* on Cherub; and the Krystals' *Body Dance and False Alarm*; the Deltas' *Do The Spank* and Harvey Scales' *Follow the Disco Crowd*, all on Magic Touch. Most of these artists are open to outside material.

Hank is looking for gospel, R&B, disco, country, jazz and folk songs and material for top harmonica player Max Simmons. Seven song maximum, 7½ ips reel to reel or cassette, lyric sheets and a self addressed, stamped envelope or your tape won't be returned.

"Songwriters should have patience," Hank says. "It will take us at least four weeks to determine with our various A&R people which of our artists might record your songs.

"I advise songwriters to sing on their own demo tapes if they possibly can. Three of our artists were discovered that way. Also, the feeling is there of what you had in mind when you wrote the song. If you have someone else make your demo, you won't get that feeling."



NASHVILLE

Skip McQuinn, director of creative projects
Louisiana Hayride Records
1708 Grand Ave.
Nashville, TN 37212
(615) 244-1322

Also: Haystack Music (ASCAP), Hayseed Music (BMI) and Sound Lab Studios.

Other Office: Shreveport, Louisiana

Skip McQuinn was a drummer who "played on the road forever." He settled down in Nashville four years ago and got involved with the Louisiana Hayride, then began working for their publishing companies 18 months ago. Today, Skip also works in the Sound Lab (a 16- and 24-track facility built by Ray Stevens and purchased by Louisiana

Hayride), and as director of creative projects for the label.

Louisiana Hayride started out in the 50s as a syndicated radio show, and has since become an institution in country music. Elvis' first performance on radio was on the Hayride and such country music legends as Nat Stuckey, Webb Pierce and Hank Williams have also sung on the show.

David Kent bought the show and the name for the independent label three years ago. Hayride has since charted with Willie Rainsford's *No Relief in Sight* and *Cheater's Kit*. Recently, Country Music Association's Songwriter Of the Year, Roger (Lucille) Bowling was signed; his first release, *Dance With Me Molly*, was produced by Bob Montgomery (*Honey*).

Skip wants hit songs in any style, especially country, Southern rock and religious. David Kent is producing a pop gospel female artist, Micki Furhman, whose sound ranges from country to Olivia Newton-John pop, and he needs material for her. Send no more than three songs on reel to reel tape (7½ ips) with lyric sheets and a self-addressed, stamped envelope, or your tape will not be returned.

"Songwriters who try to impress with a lot of fancy words have missed the concept of a hit song," says Skip. "It's something simple. People don't want to hear something they've got to stop and figure out. Country music goes all over. It's grown so that everybody, rich and poor, listens to it. A lot of writers are trying to write country crossover, but they forget about the country!"



TORONTO

Allen Shechtman, publishing and promotion coordinator
Intersound Publishing — CAPAC
Interchange Publishing — PRO CAN
39 Ontario St.
Toronto, Ontario M5A 2V1
(416) 364-8512

Also: Change Records, distributed in Canada by Polydor, and Sound Interchange Studios.

Allen Shechtman started at a local folk FM radio station in the 60s while he was still in college. He taped Saskatchewan "folkies," among them a bluegrass jug band called Humphrey and the Dump Truck. In 1969, when he graduated, he took a tape to Europe and got the group a contract with Boot Rec-
continued on page 43

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More About This Business of Music: Revised and enlarged. Edited by Shemel & Krasilovsky. Invaluable source covering serious music, background music and transcriptions, tape and cartridges, production and sale, live performances. 204 pages. \$10.95

How To Write A Song And Sell It by Tommy Boyce. A how-to book for the beginner or the up-and-coming songwriter. Reveals professional songwriting tips and charts a course of instruction to follow. Tells how he wrote six of his biggest hits and includes the music and lyrics for study. 160 pages. \$7.50

The Music/Record Career Handbook by Joseph Csida. An encyclopedic guide to beginning and developing more than 30 different careers in the creative, commentary, business and educational areas of the music and record industry. "Csida's credentials are impeccable and impressive — former music editor of Billboard . . . he covers virtually all aspects of song and music writing, royalties, publishing, etc." — Downbeat, 376 pages. \$14.95

Songwriters' Rhyming Dictionary by Jane Shaw Whitfield. Edited by Frances Stillman. Thousands of rhymes. A handy time-saving reference guide for lyric writers. 283 pages \$5.00

Bookshelf



This Business Of Music: Revised and enlarged. Edited by Shemel & Krasilovsky. The most practical and comprehensive guide to the music industry for publishers and songwriters alike. Details publishing business from contracts to foreign publishing and contains most used contract forms. 544pp., 180pp. of appendices \$16.95

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Songwriter Magazine's 1978 Music Directory. It's the new, expanded version of our highly successful Songwriter Publisher's Directory. This handy, time saving directory lists the top music publishers, carefully selected for their action and indexed according to their musical preference, such as "Pop," "Country," "Easy Listening," and "R&B." But that's not all! You also get the top record companies, personal managers, independent record producers, songwriter associations, plus a special Canadian section. \$2.00

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LYRICIST SEEKS COMPOSER, Country, MOR. Suzanne Rice, 654 Summit, Oconomowoc, WI 53066.

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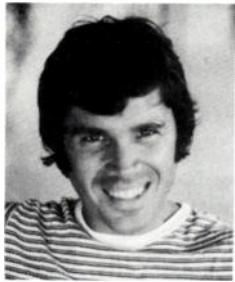
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NSA's Nashville Byline

Hanging In on Music Row -Two Views

Editor's note: The following columns were submitted by Maggie Cavender, executive director of the Nashville Songwriters Association.



**by Layng
Martine, Jr.**

One winter night in 1974 I was loading trucks on the Roadway Express docks in Nashville. It was snowing and I had only one glove and the steel rail on the cart I was wheeling kept sticking to my bare hand because it was so cold.

I remember thinking that I didn't have to be there. I could have been back on Madison Avenue in a warm office, with a good steady salary writing ad copy. I also remember asking myself who in their right mind would give up a job like that for this?

But I wanted to be a songwriter, to support myself writing. And for that there are no junior executive positions. So at night I loaded trucks and by day I wrote and pitched my songs.

The more I got around Nashville, the more I realized that most every other songwriter on the make felt the same way about their past lives.

Occasionally, we'd get a song cut. That helped.

Now, six years later, many of us who were nowhere then have begun to earn a living writing songs. We're not making a lot of money, but we do love our job.

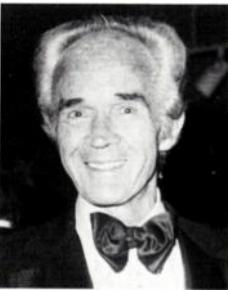
In fact, whenever I think about money, and how much I want to make, there's always one thought that overrides the others. And that thought is what it's like to wake up every morning and be free. To know my family and my friends and myself and have time for all.

So, for right now, I want to make enough money so that I can keep on being a songwriter. And if there should be a little extra . . . we're going to have another baby.

Memo from Maggie: We became aware of Layng Martine in 1974 when he became associated with Ray Stevens' Ahab Music. What most impressed us was his "up" attitude — he is one of the most positive people I know.

Layng is spotted from time to time riding his bicycle up and down Nashville's Music Row plugging his songs. It's a job he does very well; he's the writer of Elvis Presley's million-selling Way Down and Billy Crash Craddock's smash, Rub It In. As this is being written, the country charts are popping with Martine's I'm Gonna Love You Anyway, sung by Christy Lane.

Oh, by the way, Layng and wife are expecting a "little extra" in their life — their third child! They have two sons, Layngo, 9 and Tucker, 6.



**By Vic
McAlpin**

Songwriting has been my career for 37 years. I've seen songwriters come and go, and I've seen some great songwriters make it and stay.

There's no one secret to becoming a successful songwriter. Success comes with talent, hard work, luck and the ability to hang in. Hanging in is a nice way of saying surviving . . . surviving until you've got that first cut and, after that, surviving between cuts. Survival is not always easy, but that's one of the reasons why everyone isn't a songwriter.

Here's my personal guide to survival — and eventual success — as a songwriter:

- KISS, or "Keep It Simple, Stupid!"

This is a rule in technical communications writing, a friend told me, and it's a good rule for songwriters too. It's a fact that most great lyrics are basic stories, simply stated. As for the few tunes that almost all of us hum during the course of a lifetime — they're basic melodies too.

- Keep your eyes and ears open at all times. Song ideas come from everywhere — from fishing trips, roadside signs, newspapers and conversations.

- Write for people (your real audience), not just for yourself or other songwriters.

- Keep plugging. Sometimes the songs that you consider your best are the hardest ones to place. I've had songs that were cut immediately after I wrote them, some years later. Sometimes a song doesn't hit with the first artist who cuts it. But if it's a good song and you expose it to enough artists, you'll finally find the marriage of the right artist and your song.

- Listen to the work of songwriters you admire. You can learn a lot! But the bottom line is write your song in your own style. The trends, or the grammar that work for someone else may not work best for you. You have a better chance if you write songs you really feel. The difference between learning and copying is important!

Remember, the great ones keep it simple and keep with it!

Memo from Maggie: What do Eddy Arnold, Glen Campbell, Johnny Cash, Roy Clark, Mac Davis, Freddy Hart, Loretta Lynn, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Hank Snow, Ernest Tubb, Tammy Wynette and Hank Williams have in common? They're just a few of the people who've recorded tunes by the man who helped put the "Music" in Music City.

Some of Vic McAlpin's country gold: "God Walks These Hills," "How's My Ex Treating You," "What Is Life Without Love?," and "Standing At The End Of My World."

Vic, a native of Defeated Creek, Tenn., is now working on a book, "From Defeated Creek to Music City U.S.A. — A Nashville Songwriter's History."

WHO'S WHO

from page 37

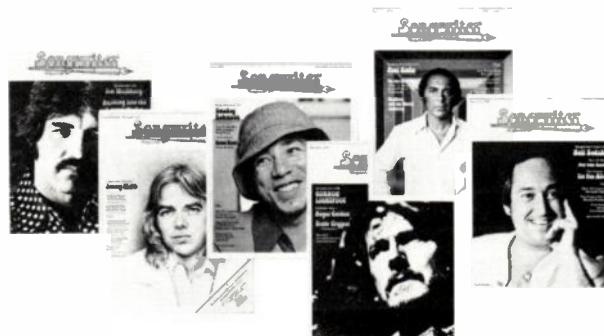
ords, managed them for a couple of years and produced an album for them on United Artists. When the band left Toronto, Allen went to work for Graeme Card's publishing and production companies. Then, after working as entertainment director for the Toronto Ramada Inns, Allen began his own label and put out an album with Graeme. Last summer, Allen ran into John James Stewart, who had also produced Humphrey and the Dump Truck, as Stewart was just leaving his post as professional manager for Leeds Music to set up his own label, Change Records. John asked Allen to run his publishing operation and Shechtman began working for Intersound in August, 1977. Today, Intersound has international connections with Leeds in England and Watanabee in Japan.

Sound Interchange Studios, a double 24-track facility, was bought five years ago by Jeff Smith. He and John Stewart began Change Records in April, 1977, to service some of the groups that had recorded in the studio. Today Change has a stable of five artists; three of them have albums and singles out that are charted in the country, Top 40 and AOR categories. They are Jim Mancel's *Just Be Yourself*, co-written with Glen Morrow; Myles' *Hold On Lovers* and outlaw country artist Van Dyke's double-sided single, his own *Riding High* and Harry Chapin's *They Call Her Easy*. The fourth, Ian Kemp, a singer/songwriter in the Jim Croce style is now recording an album. These artists write about 80% of their material. Aura, a female jazz/lush funk vocalist whose album is soon to be released, relies primarily on others' songs.

Allen is looking for songs in any mainstream style except classical and pure jazz. You may send a maximum of three songs on reel to reel (7½ ips) or cassette tape with lyric sheets (lead sheets if you have them). Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the return of your tape. Be sure your demo is of good quality recording. Allen says, "I get some tapes where the noise is louder than the signal!"

"I recommend that all writers reread the article in the December, 1977, issue of *Songwriter Magazine* on the subject of rewriting. It's very important. Writers should evaluate and polish their songs before they send out anything. Some people get very self-indulgent about their material and get perturbed when it's returned because they think that what they're writing is so good. Well, maybe it is, but we're here to make a living. It's a business and we have to make our judgements with that in mind."

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Songwriter

● Indicates those artists who record songs by other writers

Soul Top 10

Songwriter	Title	Artist	Publisher, Licensee, Label
1. K. Gamble L. Huff	Use Ta Be My Girl	●The O'Jays	Mighty Tree, BMI (Philadelphia Int'l)
2. G. Duke	Kukeey Stick	George Duke	Mycenea, ASCAP (Epic)
3. S. Robinson R. E. Jones	Daylight & Darkness	Smokey Robinson	Bertam, ASCAP (Tamla)
4. D. Oliver R. Robinson	MS.	David Oliver	Elecorn/Relaxed, BMI (Mercury)
5. A. Toussaint	Girl Callin'	Chocolate Milk	Marsaint, BMI (Atlantic)
6. D. Bugatti F. Musker	Ain't No Smoke Without Fire	●Eddie Kendricks	Mayfield, BMI (Arista)
7. E. Isley M. Isley R. Isley O. Isley R. Isley C. Jasper	Take Me To The Next Phase	Isley Brothers	Bovina, ASCAP (Columbia)
8. N. Cole	Annie Mae	●Natalie Cole	Cole-Arama, BMI Capitol
9. C. Mayfield	Almighty Fire	●Aretha Franklin	Mayfield, BMI (Atlantic)
10. M. Regin R. Burke A. Vosey J. Brown	Let's Go All The Way	Whispers	Free Delivery, ASCAP Wah Watson, Joseph & Art, BMI (Solar)

Easy Listening Top 10

Songwriter	Title	Artist	Publisher, Licensee, Label
1. R. Goodrum	Bluer Than Blue	Michael Johnson	Springcreek/Let There Be, ASCAP (Capitol)
2. Barry Manilow M. Panzer	Even Now	Barry Manilow	Kamakaze, BMI (Arista)
3. G. Rafferty	Baker Street	Gerry Rafferty	Hudson Bay, BMI (United Artists)
4. J. Ragovoy L. Laurie	You Got It	●Diana Ross	Society Hill/Brooklyn, ASCAP (Motown)
5. Scott & Wolfe	It's a Heartache	●Bonnie Tyler	PiGem, BMI (RCA)
6. John Farrar	You're The One That I Want	●John Travolta & Olivia Newton-John	Stigwood/Buffalo/Ensign, BMI (RSO)
7. B. Andersson B. Ulvaeus	Take A Chance on Me	Abba	Artwork, ASCAP Polar, AB (Atlantic)
8. J. Brooks	If I Ever See You Again	●Roberta Flack	Big Hill, ASCAP (Atlantic)
9. D. Bettesu	You're The Love	Seals & Crofts	Dawnbreaker, ASCAP Oaktree BMI (Warner Brothers)
10. M. Gordon H. Warren	Chattanooga Choo Choo	Tuxedo Junction	Louie Feist, ASCAP (Butterfly)

Country Top 10

Songwriter	Title	Artist	Publisher, Licensee, Label
1. D. McClinton	Two More Bottles of Wine	●Emmylou Harris	ABC Dunhill, BMI (Warner Bros.)
2. L. Gatlin	Night Time Magic	Larry Gatlin	First Generation, BMI (Monument)
3. A. Rhody	I'll Be True To You	Oak Ridge Boys	Tree, BMI (ABC)
4. M. David F. Slepman	It Only Hurts For a Little While	Margo Smith	Warner Bros., ASCAP (Warner Bros.)
5. J. Foster B. Rice	Gotta Quit Lookin' At You Baby	Dave & Sugar	Jack and Bill, ASCAP (RCA)
6. B. Anderson B. Klien	I Can't Wait Any Longer	Bill Anderson	Stallion, BMI (MCA)
7. B. Cannon G. Dunlap	I Believe In You	●Mel Tillis	Sabai, ASCAP & Sawgrass, BMI (MCA)
8. Scott Wolfe	It's A Heartache	●Bonnie Tyler	PiGem, BMI (RCA)
9. D. Reid H. Reid	Do You Know You Are My Sunshine	●Statler Brothers	Cowboy, BMI (Mercury)
10. J. Bettis R. C. Bannon	Only One Love In My Life	●Ronnie Milsap	WB/Sweet Harmony, ASCAP & Tamercane, BMI (RCA)

Songwriter Top 40

Songwriter	Title	Artist	Producer	Publisher, Licensee, Label
1. B. Gibb R. Gibb M. Gibb A. Gibb	Shadow Dancing	Andy Gibb	Barry Gibb, Carl Richardson, Alby Galuton	Stigwood/Unichappell, BMI (RSO)
2. John Farrar	You're The One That I Want	●John Travolta & Olivia Newton-John	John Farrar	John Farrar/Stigwood/Unichappell Ensign, BMI (RSO)
3. N. Kipner J. Vellins	Too Much, Too Little, Too Late	●Johnny Mathis & Deniece Williams	Jack Gold	Homewood House, BMI (Columbia)
4. B. Andersson B. Ulvaeus	Take A Chance On Me	Abba	Benny Andersson, Bjorn Ulvaeus	Artwork, ASCAP/Polar, AB (Atlantic)
5. S. Pippin L. Keith	This Time I'm In It For Love	Player	Dennis Lambert, Brian Potter	House of Gold/Windchime, BMI (RSO)
6. B. Mann C. Weil J. Leiber M. Stoller	On Broadway	●George Benson	Tommy L. Puma	Screen Gems—EMI, BMI (Warner Brothers)
7. G. Rafferty	Baker Street	Gerry Rafferty	Hugh Murphy, Gerry Rafferty	Hudson Bay, BMI (United Artists)
8. Eddie Money J. Lyon	Baby Hold On	Eddie Money	Bruce Botnick	Grajonca, BMI (Columbia)
9. Scott & Wolfe	It's A Heartache	●Bonnie Tyler	David Mackay/Scott & Wolfe	Ti-Gems, BMI (RCA)
10. A. Scott T. Griffen	Love Is Like Oxygen	Sweet	Sweet	Sweet/Warner Bros., ASCAP (Capitol)
11. Chuck Mangione	Feels So Good	Chuck Mangione	Chuck Mangione	Gates, BMI (A&M)
12. P. Brown R. Rans	Dance With Me	Peter Brown	Cory Wade	Sherlyn/Harrick, BMI (Drive)
13. R. Temperton	The Groove Line	Heatwave	Barry Blue	Almo/Tincabell, ASCAP (Epic)
14. B. Seger	Still The Same	Bob Seger	Bob Seger and Punch	Gear, ASCAP (Capitol)
15. Paul McCartney	With A Little Luck	Wings	Paul McCartney	A T.V., BMI (Capitol)
16. J. Mtume R. Lucas	The Closer I Get To You	●Roberta Flack	Rubina Flack, Joe Ferla, Eugene McDaniels	Scarab/Ensign, BMI (Atlantic)
17. Bule Nix Daughtry	Imaginary Lover	Atlanta Rhythm Section	Buddy Bule	Low-Sal, BMI (Polydor)
19. W. Becker D. Fagen	Deacon Blues	Steely Dan	Gary Katz	ABC/Dunhill, BMI (ABC)
20. Carly Simon M. McDonald	You Belong To Me	Carly Simon	Arif Mardin	Sung/C'est, ASCAP (Elektra)
21. Patti Smith Bruce Springsteen	Because The Night	Patti Smith	Jimmy Iovine	Ram Rod, BMI (Arista)
22. K. Gamble L. Huff	Use Ta Be My Girl	●The O'Jays	K. Gamble L. Huff	Might Three, BMI (Philadelphia International)
23. P. Jabara	Last Dance	●Donna Summer	Giorgio Moroder	Primus Artists/Olga, BMI (Casablanca)
24. R. Goodrum	Bluer Than Blue	Michael Johnson	Brent Maher, Steve Gibson	Springcreek/Let There Be, ASCAP (Capitol)
25. A. Fraser	Every Kinda People	Robert Palmer	Robert Palmer	Island/Restless, BMI (Island 100)
26. A. Wilson N. Wilson	Hearless	Heart	Mike Flicker	Andorra, ASCAP (Mushroom)
27. B. White U. Wilson	Oh What a Night For Dancing	Barry White	Barry White	Sa-Vette, BMI (20th Century)
28. B. Manilow M. Panzer	Even Now	Barry Manilow	Ron Dante & Barry Manilow	Kamakaze, BMI (Arista)
29. E. Clapton	Wonderful Tonight	Eric Clapton	Glyn Johns	Stigwood, BMI (RSO)
30. B. Joel	Only The Good Die Young	Billy Joel	Phil Ramone	Joelsongs, BMI (Columbia)
31. H. W. Casey	Dance Across The Floor	Jimmy "Bo" Horne	Casey/Finch, R. Finch	Sherlyn/Harrick, BMI (Sunshine Sound)
32. Jagger/ Richards	Miss You	Rolling Stones	The Glimmer Twins	Colgems—EMI, ASCAP (Atlantic)
33. B. Gibb	Grease	●Frankie Valli	Barry Gibb, Alby Galuton & Kari Richardson	Stigwood, BMI (RSO)
34. Holland Dozier Holland	It's The Same Old Song	K. C. & The Sunshine Band	Casey/Finch	Jobete, ASCAP (TK)
35. D. Seraphine D. Wolinski	Take Me Back To Chicago	Chicago	James William Guercio	Balloon Head/Big Ek, ASCAP (Columbia)
36. A. Costandinos	Thank God It's Friday	Love and Kisses	Alec R. Costandinos	Cafe Americana/O.P. Feebe, ASCAP (Casablanca)
37. J. Steinman Cleveland International	Two Out of Three Ain't Bad	Meat Loaf	Todd Rundgren	Edward B. Marks Neverland Peg, BMI (EPIC)
38. Barry Gibb, Robin Gibb Maurice Gibb	Night Fever	Bee Gees	Barry, Robin & Maurice Gibb, Kari Richardson, Alby Galuton	Stigwood/Unichappell, BMI (RSO)
39. J. Barish	Count On Me	Jefferson Starship	Larry Cox & Jefferson Starship	Diamond Back/Bright Moments, BMI (RCA)
40. Barry Gibb, Robin Gibb Maurice Gibb	If I Can't Have You	●Yvonne Elliman	Freddie Perren	Stigwood/Unichappell, BMI (RSO)

ANATOMY OF A HIT

from page 7

titles are tremendously important. Sometimes the titles can be picturesque, or (as in this case) direct and sincere, but they must always connect with people's feelings, and the ideal title spells out the whole story of a song, providing a capsule summary and setting a mood. When you hear *Just the Way You Are* you know what kind of tune and message you can expect.

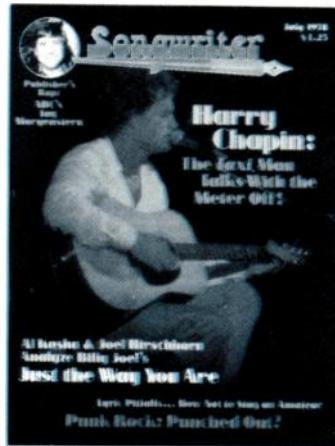
Today the emphasis is on rhythm, and a slow, dreamy ballad has a harder time breaking through on Top 40 formats. As a result, only what *Billboard* refers to as a "rhythm ballad" seems to gain acceptance with program directors, and this is a good example of one. There's an underlying pulse, a sense of syncopation, so that people are tapping their feet while absorbing the low-key romantic subtleties of the words.

The bridge is short and doesn't wander. It starts calmly, but then, when Joel sings, *Oh, what will it take till you believe in me*, the melody rises with matching dramatic energy to make its ultimate point and underscore the hero's plea for understanding.

The lifeblood of hit songs are hooks, and the title *Just the Way You Are* is repeated after each section of the song. It doesn't pound away as some hooks do, but nevertheless, when you've finished hearing the record for the first time, that key phrase is permanently committed to memory. Instrumental figures are also strong assets, and the figure here (which opens the record) threads its way through the production and gives it added vitality.

The major triumph of this song is the way it combines its effects. There's a self-effacing quality of understatement; the best art or drama is always a whole, consistent tapestry, without the injection of bizarrely theatrical things that beg for attention but detract from the overall mood. But just because this song seems straightforward and simple doesn't mean it is. The first four chord changes, for example, are offbeat, even odd, but repetition soon makes them appear simple and easy to follow. That quality of inventiveness is present in every note and word of *Just the Way You Are*, and offers the inspiring lesson that experimentation and imagination are possible beyond obvious and cliched chords, as long as the end result makes sense, as long as it is logical and tuneful.

The best thing about this song is that it's a work of consummate professionalism. Every commercial device is in it, and yet the listener doesn't feel the insertion of these devices, because the material is so flawlessly constructed.



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How to Make Good Stereo Recordings at Home

by Jim Gordon

Today's pop stereo records are mostly a group of discrete monophonic sound sources "panned" across the area between two speakers. The sound from each microphone is recorded on a separate track of a 16- or 24-track tape recorder, and the final mixing can be delayed until later. Each track can be recorded separately, a bad track can be rerecorded, several takes can be made and the best one chosen.

But suppose you're trying to make a demo and you don't have the luxury of a 24-track recorder, a 32-channel mixer and a few dozen microphones at your disposal? You can still make excellent stereo recordings with only two or three microphones, just the way the first stereo recordings were made 20 years ago.

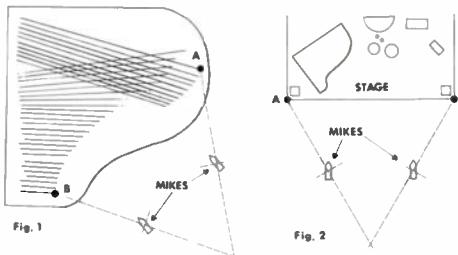
The trick is to carefully set up the microphones and the instruments that are being recorded. (You wouldn't take a picture with a camera without focusing it first, right?) Placing the microphones in just the right place results in the following advantages:

- Instead of requiring an enormous mixing board, you can mix everything by ear when it's recorded. What you hear is what you get.
- A very natural recording results from the natural echo in the room. You don't need a soundproof studio or expensive echo chamber. The amount of echo on each instrument can be adjusted by changing its location in the room.
- The musicians don't have to be artificially isolated and separated as in a studio. Everyone can hear each other perfectly, and it's much easier to play.
- A very live sound results from the recording being "focused."

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Ideally your microphones should be cardioids (most are), and they should be the same make and model. If you have a mike mixer with one channel in the center, then you can use that channel for a vocal mike.

Suppose you want to record an upright piano. Take the front off the piano, if possible. If the piano is tall enough you can place the microphones at the height of the player's chin; otherwise the microphones should be placed closer to the floor. Now here's where "focusing" is a must. The only



tools you'll need are string and masking tape.

First, use a small piece of masking tape to make a mark just to the left of the left-most piano strings. That's point A. Mark the corresponding place at the right end of the strings, point B. The sound front between A and B is what you want to record.

Next, cut two pieces of string to the exact length from A to B. Mark the center of each string with another piece of masking tape. Now, attach one end of each piece of string to the two pieces of masking tape already on the piano. Hold the two string ends taut and out from the piano. The mark in the center of each string shows you where to put the microphones. Point them straight at the piano. (Just about anything can be

recorded this way. Figure where the front corners of the sound front are, make your triangle, and set up the mikes.)

If you're recording the piano with other instruments in the room, you might want to close the front of the piano. If you do so, then record from the back of the piano, with points A and B at the right and left of the soundboard.

With a grand piano you can use the same method, but points A and B are now on the top of the soundboard (figure 1). This is a good way to record a solo piano with the lid open, or a piano and voice alone. If you're recording with other instruments and want the lid closed, try recording directly over the dampers, using the left-most and right-most dampers as points A and B.

Some instruments lend themselves to this kind of recording more than others. An electric guitar coming out of one speaker is already "in mono," so two mikes won't get you much more than one.

Recording an acoustic guitar in stereo is a different situation because sound is coming from the guitar in various directions. I suggest placing one mike in front of the instrument, close to the fingers to get the picking sounds, and the other mike behind the player, to capture the sound from the back of the guitar. It helps if you can reverse the phase of the back microphone (for example, with a Shure A15PR phase reverser or the equivalent).

So what if you want to record in a less intimate situation, i.e. a band that's playing on a stage (figure 2)? Points A and B are the left and right corners of the front of the stage (unless, of course, the band is off-center, or some instruments or speakers are off the stage). Hang the microphones from the ceiling, aiming them toward the stage. This is a great way to record on a stage, especially singers. Remember to measure carefully. An error of a couple of feet can put you "out-of-focus."

**Next month in
Songwriter**
Bill Conti
**The man who put the
musical punch
to "Rocky" and "F.I.S.T."**



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that this is what I was
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Editor's note: Jim Gordon is a Los Angeles based engineer and studio musician (keyboards), who's worked with the Band, John Lennon, Phil Spector, Ray Charles and Maria Muldaur.

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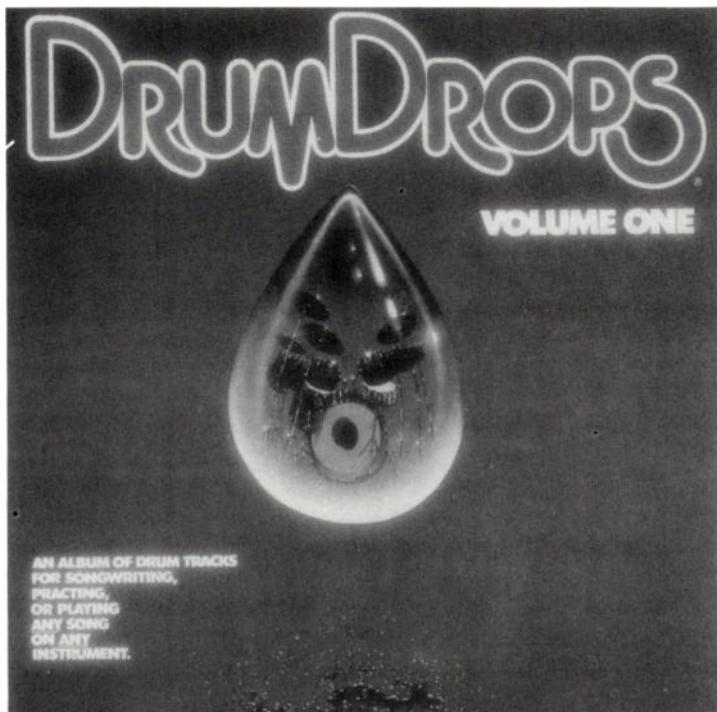
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