MUSICIAN

PLAYER & LISTENER

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John Lennon Interview

STEELY DAN

the interview

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Marshall.
Ultimately.

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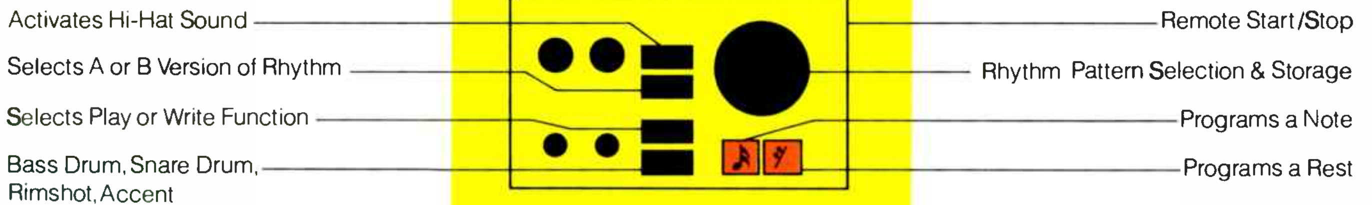
DR-55



It's a fact that just about all Rock music is based on the drum beat. So when you're writing or practicing, a good idea can sound awfully flat without the proper beat behind it. The BOSS Dr. Rhythm lets you write up to 16 of your own drum rhythms, and you don't have to be a drummer to do it.

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We Want You to Understand the Future

World Radio History

MUSICIAN
PLAYER & LISTENER

NO. 31, MARCH, 1981

Steve Winwood is returning to the musical scene after a long hiatus. He talks with Vic Garbarini about his new solo album, his years with Spencer Davis, Traffic and Blind Faith and his plans for the future.

John Lennon's death has given us all reason to re-examine the direction of our lives since the Sixties, through the loss of his music, our identification with the Beatles and the example of his life. Some thoughts on this along with the first interview John gave after coming out of retirement. Opener by Vic Garbarini, interview by Barbara Graustark.

Steely Dan's Donald Fagen and Walter Becker were tracked down by David Breskin for a wide-ranging interview on their new album, their audience, what they listen to, how they write, their favorite colors and more.

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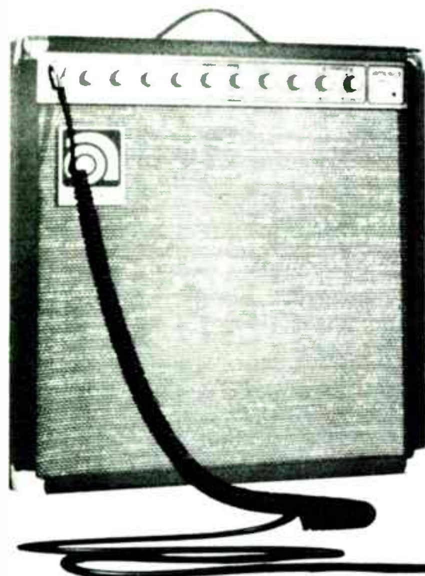

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LETTERS

FOUR FOR FOUR

Bravo! Bravo! on your December issue. You're probably the only magazine in the world that could make Michael McDonald seem interesting. Seriously, though pop music is not my music of choice, I found your articles on him and Beefheart most interesting, and your article/interview with Albert Collins to be one of the most rewarding I've read on any contemporary bluesman. Glad you haven't forgotten the blues. Also, I thought your jazz travelogue, in addition to being right on the money about jazz in Europe, was the nicest bit of non-traditional music writing you've had in quite some time.

Tony T. Little
New York City

WAKE UP! WAKE UP!

I really love your magazine but I'm getting sick and tired of Mr. Bangs and Mr. Marsh and their consistent stupidity. They are ruining the only really quality contemporary music publication on the newsstands. You've *got* to stop them before it's too late. Tney ruined *Creem*, they ruined *Rolling Stone* and now they're going after you guys. Before you know it Bangs will be publisher and Marsh will be his right hand man and *Musician* will be just another rock 'n' roll magazine. Wake up before it's too late.

A Concerned Reader
Address Withheld

Dear Concerned Reader: That's total nonsense, Lester and Dave are right here with me now, and they wouldn't do a thing like, would you fellas?...Lester, what are you doing with that giant safety pin, my god, you're pinning me to my chair...is this some kind of joke — Dave, why are you marching around my desk yelling 'born to run' over and over — what's going on here, please fellas, stop! help!...gurgle...gasp...

OLD BUT NOT IN THE WAY

I guess there comes a time in every man's life when he has to make that big decision about whether to give up music or become an old Rock 'n' Roller. That recently happened to me. After 20 years as a vocalist and bassist, I'm quitting. I sold my rig about a year ago and entered electronics school.

I wouldn't trade my life for any of those straight people's, but there must be a way to gracefully continue in music, if not as a player then as a helper. To all the young, full of §£★□‡ musicians: be nice to those old broken down musicians. You're gonna get there yourself someday and it's sooner than you think.

Dave Dykes
Austin, Texas

KUDOS FOR THE CAPTAIN

Thanks for the article on the Captain. He spoke to me once at a club in Denver. Inordinately upset because the air conditioning was out of order, he accused the management of trying to wipe him out (his words), his whole attitude emptying out a few rows of listeners. We were sitting very close to the stage and after he settled down, he seemed actually to be making *eye contact*, and just after a break he came up and started talking, about how he could sing in 7½ octaves, how next time he'd come to the Denver Coliseum and fill it up, about how great his band was if people would just listen. After he had driven off a third of the audience, even as he expressed a feeling people weren't listening, he was still trying to make contact with those people. He was really *there* for us then, not abstracted as he had been earlier.

Lester, you have captured the paradoxes like the one I experienced in Denver. To do it, you had to expose yourself, your foiled expectations as well as the fulfilled ones, your hurts at his hands. To you and your editor, congratulations and thanks.

Lou McElroy
Denver, CO

The Captain is truly beyond (outside) categorization but must survive to show America there really are some musical legends left. I was going to say that C.B. definitely has the album of the year but Lester summed it all up when he said, "It is one of the most brilliant achievements by any artist in any year." People on this planet must get hip to the Captain, how about a Captain Beefheart Awareness Day in '81? Damn sure I'll be there when C.B. and the Magic Band play the Old Waldorf in San Francisco in January. I couldn't think of a better way to start the year.

If you got ears you gotta listen.

Birge Seltzer
Palo Alto, CA

SHODDY DISCS, INFLATED PRICES

Obviously Dave Marsh couldn't get the stars out of his eyes long enough to ask Bruce Springsteen a relevant question: why did the album cost so much? If he really wanted to give his fans a break, why didn't he get Columbia to bring the list price down to a more reasonable $12.98?

Cleanup time begins at home. Unless Columbia and its corporate fellow travelers restore sensibility to prices and sensitivity to quality, I'll buy only from labels that care about listeners, like Takoma and Artists House and tape everything else.

Jim Higgins
Milwaukee, WI

We surely sympathize, but as the Steely Dan interview shows (p. 72 this issue), recording artists have virtually no input on price or quality of major labels' pressings. — Ed.

JUST LIKE BEING THERE

The report on the Jazz Times Convention was almost as good as being there — in fact, better in some ways, and less exhausting. I went last year and almost did this year until I figured it would be more of the same: lots of words followed by no action.

Leonard Feather
Sherman Oaks, CA

ERRATA

Regarding Rafi Zabor's account, in your Feburary issue, of his attendance at the recent Jazz Times Convention: all the gently self-deprecating humor in the world cannot obscure the fact that a writer covering an event of some importance to the jazz community in a major national music magazine has an obligation to, at the very least, learn the names of the people he is writing about. The attorney who spoke so eloquently about contract law is named *Noel* Silverman, not Noah. And the man Zabor calls "a well-liked booking agent whose name I have inexcusably forgotten" is named Jack Whittemore. These people deserve a bit more respect in the pages of your magazine than they received. The same thing might be said for the Jazz Times Convention as a whole.

Peter Keepnews
Senior Editor,
Record World Magazine, N.Y.

HANNIBAL RETRACTION

Hannibal Records "controlled" by Warner Communications? How dare you, sir! I admit the Island distribution system is a bit complex, but surely some of the editors of *Musician* are college graduates. Warners distributes the cream of Island product on the Island label. Island's own Antilles independent distribution network handles everything Warners doesn't want, plus their own Mango label for non-Marley Reggae product, Ze Records and Hannibal. There is no relationship between my label and Warners except that some of my best friends are in their all-embracing multi-national employ. And WCI owns no stock in Island and Island owns no stock in Hannibal.

Joe Boyd, President
Hannibal Records

MORE T&A

I usually admire that nice, conservative, content-oriented type of magazine you are, but I was charmed beyond measure by your T-shirt ad. Let's face it, a little cheesecake never hurt anything.

Michael Lawlor
Los Angeles, CA

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Everything you want in multi-instrument keyboards–more or less.

If you've been playing only one keyboard, and its single sound is getting you down, our new SK Series gives you more. More sounds to play with, so you can play more of today's sounds.

If you've been spending more time setting up than playing, our new SK Series multi-instrument keyboards give you less. Less hauling, patching, fuming and fussing. And more music. More easily.

There are three models in the series– the SK50D, the SK30 and the SK20. The chart points out their features. But a few words about some of their individual characteristics are in order.

Not only can you get many different sounds simultaneously, but you can also mix those sounds in many different ways.

With the split keyboard on the 20 and the 30, you can play different voices simultaneously with your right and left hands. The 50D offers two 5-octave keyboards.

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But instead of going on, we invite you to visit your Yamaha dealer. Because we feel that once you lay your hands on an SK, you couldn't want for more. Or write for more information: Yamaha, Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622. (In Canada: 135 Milner Ave., Scarb., Ont. M1S 3R1)

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	SK20	SK30	SK50D
Organ	O	O	O
Strings	O	O	O
Poly-Synth	O	O	O
Solo Synthesizer		O	O
Organ Bass			O
Bass Pedals (Optional)		O	O
Leslie Jack	O	O	O
Tremelo/Ensemble	O	O	O
Organ/String/Poly-Synth Presets	O	O	O
Split Keyboard	O	O	
Dual Manual			O

World Radio History

music industry news

Label Talk

Forget all that stuff we've been telling you about PRO-USA and how the Polygram Corporation's American record operation was set up. Just before Christmas; (sort of a gift to the biz) they changed the whole thing around. It is now PolyGram Records Inc. and all the companies involved (Mercury, Polydor, Casablanca) will be under one umbrella, though logos will be maintained for cosmetic purposes. David Braun is still president of this combine, but composer Chip Taylor, writer of the Trogs' "Wild Thing" and Marianne Faithful's "Angel of the Morning," has been made head of overall A&R. Mr. Taylor is now suddenly one of the most powerful men in the record industry. This third PolyGram re-structuring within a year was made in the name of "greater efficiency," just as were the previous two. Corporate rock lives. Nothing new, of course. That this consolidation happened in New York shows that the Apple is still perceived as this nation's music capitol. John Hammond may be back producing soon. Rumor is that the industry legend may make a line of big band recordings for Columbia. Apparently Arista is not moving as far away from jazz as some had recently feared. The company has announced a distribution agreement with Project 3 records, whose catalogue includes big band music by Tommy Dorsey, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, and Glenn Miller. But the news about Project 3 is not all good: they also have albums by (ugh!) Buddy Greco and "the finest easy listening."

Have you noticed the large 6" by 6" cassette packaging for Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*, Barry Manilow's latest collection of slush, Neil Diamond's saccharin soundtrack to *The Jazz Singer*, and the Broadway hit *42nd Street*? The record industry certainly hopes you have, because that's the reason this large format was introduced. Making pre-recorded cassette packaging more appealing is an attempt to discourage home taping. Also the labels are claiming, in the words of Arista records, tape quality that is "comparable to that used for home taping." We'll see.

The small New York jazz label Artists House, home of Ornette Coleman and other progressive jazzmen now has a distribution agreement with MCA. In an effort to increase its retail and radio presence Artists House has initiated a direct mail campaign aimed at its past customers. The letter urges them to lobby retailers and radio stations to make Artists House music available. Long known for its enlightened attitude toward its musicians (see *Musician* #12) Artists House deserves your support.

NARM and the RIAA are circulating a CBS study on blank tapes to all their members. It puts record industry losses to home taping at about $700 million per year and has 15 pages profiling the typical home taper. Just another item to make nervous retailers and record folks even more uneasy.

Geffen Records strikes again! Just added to its small, but impressive roster is Peter Gabriel. And David hasn't been shy on the publishing front either. The label's publishing wing has worldwide rights to John Lennon and Yoko Ono's Lenono music and picked up Burt Bacharach, including his catalogue of music, and talented session keyboardist Greg Phillinganes (Stevie Wonder, George Benson, Michael Jackson) who has a recording contract with Richard Perry's Planet records.

Latest casualty of the industry-wide slump appears to be those stalwart trench soldiers: the independent promotion men. Just about all the majors are in the process of evaluating or eliminating most of their local indies. With the change in current record buying habits and the decreasing importance of top 40 radio, the majors are finding their money can be better spent in other ways; i.e. tour supports or co-op ads.

Born to Sue

Perhaps because of his early legal problems with manager Mike Appel, Bruce Springsteen is conscious of the record industry's many abuses and aggressive in his reaction against them. No surprise then that he pursued and won a $2.1 million bootleg suit against a major West Coast counterfeiter. The details of the case are not as important as the firm stand Springsteen and CBS took in working with the FBI to serve notice they won't tolerate bootlegging. There has been a lot of anti-counterfeiting talk, but they turned it into action, hopefully setting a precedent that others will follow. In Springsteen's case it would be worthwhile for the Boss and CBS to finally release a live LP, nipping the bootleggers in the bud.

The Stairway Out

Led Zeppelin apparently is going to take that stairway to heaven and disband in reaction to the accidental death of drummer John "Bonzo" Bonham in September. Their label, Swan Song, released the following statement: "We wish it to be known that the loss of our dear friend and the deep respect we have for his supporters, for his family, together with the sense of undivided harmony felt by ourselves and our manager (Peter Grant), have led us to decide that we could not continue as we were." Swan Song will still be distributed by Atlantic records and the remaining members, Jimmy Page, Robert Plant, and John Paul Jones, are expected to release solo efforts.

Melodic Booty

Sick of Bon Jour? Fed up with Calvin Klein? Why not replace those famous symbols of backside comfort with Willie Nelson or Teddy Pendergrass or one of several other pop stars now in the jeans business. With T-shirts passe and satin jackets gone the way of penny bubble gum, pop stars are now using their names to sell clothes, with jeans the item of choice. Rock stars are lagging behind their country cousins in the retail biz, with Mickey Gilley hats, Kenny Rogers leisure suits, Larry Gatlin

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Simon Phillips - Beck's Backbone

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sportswear, and matching Conway Twitty-Loretta Lynn outfits all at your disposal. No word yet on when the Bruce Springsteen autographed leather jackets will hit the stores.

Look Boys, No Pants

Just for your information two Los Angeles-based musicians, Miss Ruby Tuesday and Miss Pixie Winker, have formed an all-nude female rock band. At this writing they were still recruiting members. "Someone who weighs 300 pounds, is ugly and can sing well" is listed as a pressing need by the band's founders. Their name, however, is under wraps.

Video Game

Yes, folks are walking out of record stores all over America with all kinds of video stuff for home use, but very little of it involves pop performers. Sure you can get your hands on *Saturday Night Fever* or *Urban Cowboy* and have a (God forbid!) private John Travolta film festival. But video disc matching visuals and music a la Blondie's *Eat To the Beat* is hard to find. There has been a lot of talk in industry circles, but not enough action on video disc. Video tapes are much more readily available. Witness Warner Home Video's release of one-hour video tapes featuring Fleetwood Mac, Rod Stewart, and Gary Numan. A battle's shaping up between video tapes and video-disc for superiority in the marketplace. At this point tapes are way ahead.

Royalty Rate Rises

After months of deliberation, the Copyright Royalty Tribunal has increased the mechanical royalty rate from 2¾¢ to 4¢ per album purchase effective July 1981. The record industry trade group RIAA claims this move will cost its members $55 million per year. A controversial section of the Tribunal's decision was the establishment of yearly hearings on whether upward adjustments in the rate are needed. The record companies feel this will be an "administrative nightmare" for them. For songwriters it means additional revenue every time an LP with their song(s) is purchased.

Changing the Message

Billboard, the oldest and most respected trade magazine, is making a move to have its editorial department more in touch with the industry. Managing editor Eliot Teigal is leaving and the editorial reins are shifting to two of the mag's brightest young staffers, Gerry Wood and Adam White, along with new West Coast editor Sam Sutherland from *Record World*. *Billboard*'s editorial leadership is returning to New York after nine extremely expensive years in Los Angeles. All these moves are in the right direction for a magazine that was losing touch with a fast-changing industry.

Top 50 Album Survey

In our continuing efforts to chronicle who is hot and who not to lend your car to, we have studied December's top 50 charted albums, label by label. Nineteen of the top 50 were from the WEA distribution network and 12 by the Columbia record group. These corporations dominated pop music in the 1970s, usually with Columbia setting the pace. But in the first year of the '80s, WEA has turned the tables. Warners supplied nine of that 19 with the Doobie Brothers and Christopher Cross heading the list. Almost as impressive was Elektra's six. This diverse grouping included Queen, the Doors, lovely Linda's Greatest Hits, and the *Urban Cowboy* soundtrack. Geffen chipped in two, Donna Summer and John Lennon, while the A in WEA, Atlantic, struggled along with only two. The Talking Heads was Sire's contribution.

Columbia's backbone was its inhouse roster with Streisand, Springsteen, and Earth, Wind & Fire all selling briskly. Epic, once a great source of revenue and musical excitement for Columbia, has fallen on hard times. Only three Epic albums made the top 50, two of the Greatest Hits collections from Heart and Boz Scaggs, but Philadelphia International's Teddy Pendergrass and Kirshner's Kansas helped somewhat.

That RCA has benefited from its distribution agreement with A&M was quite clear on the chart. Three A&M LPs (the Police, Joe Jackson, Super Tramp) were represented. For RCA only Bowie's *Scary Monsters* showed up, proving that being a part of a huge conglomerate is no guarantee of success. Arista and Capitol both held their own with three albums apiece, while Motown relied on old timers Stevie Wonder and Diana Ross to hoist the flag. RSO and Mercury, part of the PRO-USA combine, had one each, as did Chrysalis. MCA records, which theoretically has access to all the resources needed to make it an industry power, had only one release in the top 50 and that was number 50, Spyro Gyra's *Carnaval*.

What does it all mean to musicians? As for the Goliath's, Warners is rising and Columbia perhaps appears in some degree of decline. But Elektra, A&M, or Arista — medium level companies small enough to give an act personal attention, but large enough to have impact nationally — are the best bets for artists seeking both.

Chart Action

As is well known by now John Lennon's *Double Fantasy* was the biggest sales story during Christmas and early January. But aside from that very special case, MOR-country (Kenny Rogers and Anne Murray's *Greatest Hits*), MOR-pop (Barbra Streisand) and MOR-slush (who else but Barry Manilow?) were the biggest sellers, suggesting folks like to nod-off around the fireplace.

Following closely is music with a considerably higher energy level. Funk-rock (Queen's *The Game*), heavy metal (AC/DC's *Back in Black*), female metal (Pat Benatar's *Crimes of Passion*), Jersey rock (Springsteen), real arena rock (the Eagles *Live*), black-pop (Mr. Wonder), and puzzle-rock (Steely Dan's *Gaucho*). Don't know what this says about pop music these days but the Beatles, a group defunct over a decade, have four albums on the chart and the Chipmunks, who don't even exist, have three albums on the chart at this writing. Strange, strange...

It is good to see that with his first Capitol single, white R&B singer Delbert McClinton is doing well with "Giving It Up For Love" on the pop singles chart. He is a fine performer, who, to use a cliche creatively, has paid his dues. Blondie's "Tide Is High" from *AutoAmerican* is doing well around the country, while in New York and other urban centers a rap record, "Rapeture," off the album is garnering tremendous airplay. It is perhaps the most unintentionally funny record ever made by a major pop band.

Biggest story on the black album chart is the success of Lakeside's *Fantastic Voyage*, the only self-contained band on the Solar records roster. That company struck gold last year with vocal groups, but Lakeside shows Solar can promote all styles of black-pop. However, the most heartening event of all was the return of Aretha Franklin. She has made some decent albums in the last few years, but none made a real commercial dent. Her *Aretha* album and single "United Together" have made her Arista debut an artistic and commercial success.

In the country, Rogers, Murray, etc., are at the top. Meanwhile moving back into the top 10, after over 130 weeks up and down, is Willie Nelson's *Stardust*. It is a Ray Charles-like collection of standards ("Georgia On My Mind" for one) produced by Booker T. Jones, once the Booker in the MGs. Johnny Lee's "One In A Million" and Merle Haggard's "I Think I'll Just Stay Here and Drink" hold down the one and two positions among country singles. Coming up fast is Eddie Rabbit's "Love A Rainy Night" previewed before millions of fans in Miller beer commercials.

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Well,
maybe the guitar.

KAMAN
Musical String Corp.
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LIVE FROM AUSTIN, TX

A look at the surprising new sounds rising out of Austin's fertile fields.

By Lester Bangs

Inasmuch as the media have apparently decided on Texas and particularly Austin as the next locale to plunder, this article probably makes me as culpable as anybody else, so there's a little liberal guilt to put you off in front. On the other hand, this town has almost forty clubs featuring live music, which makes it the highest per capita in the country, and so much of that music (by both people who've recorded and those who haven't) so fine that you oughta know about it. Especially because all you probably do know is Willie Nelson and the rest of those Outlaw creeps, who haven't quite managed to completely destroy country music yet but are workin' on it.

Yes, it's true that every Fourth of July ol' Willie manages to drag in a couple hundred thousand people for his annual picnic where he whispers "Night Life," "Blue Eyes Cryin' in the Rain" and the rest of them for the nine millionth time, but it is also true that since I got to Texas three months ago I have not heard *one note* of Willie Nelson/Outlaw music, just like nobody down here watches *Dallas* or cares who shot J.R. and everybody everywhere knows what a joke John Travolta/Cowboy was. (And just in case you were wondering exactly why I do hate the Outlaws so much, it's because country music is not about how hip some lonesome, orn'ry and mean hombre's crystal cannabis musifyings are; country music as everybody knows is some poor sorry sumbitch sitting on a barstool crying in his beer over how he just committed adultery with his best friend's wife.)

MICHELLE LEVINAS

The Re/Cords playing "Acoustic Folk Punk" near the State Capitol Building.

But to hell with those worthless poseurs. There's been the emergence of a whole new breed of young West Texas singers and instrumentalists in the past few years with more interesting connections to the musical gene-pool the Outlaws draw on: people like Joe Ely, Butch Hancock and Jimmie Gilmore write and sing a more honest, soulful and unaffected country music that reaches back with equal sureness to Buddy Holly (Ely, Hancock) and Hank Williams (Gilmore's voice, at its best, recalls Williams' plaintive high tenor). Ely is the best known of them so far, and like Holly both he and Hancock come from Lubbock, Texas, where word has it they were a couple of the town's original peyote-chawing hipsters. Certainly Ely's songs, with which I am more familiar have a pure blue yearning running through them reflective of whole lives lived in small rural towns where everybody knows everybody for generations back and thus everybody knows who they themselves are leading unto a seldom admitted but palpable sense of oppression. The concomitant to this is an almost mystical and totally unfaked sense of the land, the soil, the winds through the grass, a nearness to the elements and overlooked textures of life that come through in Ely songs like "Cornbread Moon." I guess the constant is a sense of limits imposed both from within and without leading to an almost elegiac sense of regret, advance mourning for dreams never to be fulfilled, in songs like "Boxcars" and "Tonight I Think I'm Gonna go Downtown." I

Joe Ely and the Lubbock Flatlanders; "songs of pure blue yearning."

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guess it's not surprising that artists like this don't tour all that often, though Ely has recently been helped out in terms of garnering a wider international audience by the Clash. You can see Ely and, more often, Hancock in Austin at the Alamo Hotel Lounge at Sixth and Guadeloup, said hotel being spiritually and service-wise the Chelsea of Austin (LBJ's brother, Sam Houston Johnson, drank himself to death in one of the rooms). The Lounge off the lobby has wound up legendary as one of the best places in any state to come hear usually pretty fine folk-to-country/singer-songwriter style music in a casual and authentic setting (as opposed to the glitz of a Gilley's, though I guess C&W glitz is usually authentic in terms of the form).

It's really hard to single out specific places, though, because as previously stated Austin currently has about as vital a music scene as you're liable to find anywhere, with clubs all over the city where on a decent to average night you can catch everything from headbanging punk to mainstream jazz to C&W/folk to both black and white blues bands to the spaced-out polkas of Mexican border *conjunto* music. And it's a tradition going back a while: there's a place called Duke's on Congress Ave. that's now one of the two major New Wave venues in town; in the Sixties it was the Vulcan Gas Works, where the Thirteenth Floor Elevators and other *creme* of Texas psychedelia played, and both Johnny Winter's first album and the Velvet Underground's *Live '69* set were recorded. An even greater legend is the Armadillo World Headquarters on Barton Springs Road, which opened in August 1970 and will finally close on January 1, 1981, making it for a solid decade one of the best places to go see name rock 'n' roll acts in the country. A lot of people credit the Armadillo with opening up Austin as a national music scene in the first place, and even though, as one friend put it, to go there now is to feel as if you're walking through the "rubble" of bygone glories, the ghosts *are* palpable, especially since so many of them have left their greetings on walls of the dressing rooms and backstage area in the form of incredibly elaborate and/or outrageous graffiti and works of multicolored magic marker art — last real biggie was the Clash, who painted a giant armadillo on the wall when they were here. There are large open spaces for shows as well as complete bars, both inside and out, and even though I obviously missed it, credit must be paid where it's due, especially since most of the places you're subjected to if you want to see live rock 'n' roll in this country are such unspeakable toilets.

Don Del Santo; velvety vocal whispers fusing reggae, R&B, jazz and rock.

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There is a thriving rhythm and blues (probably should make that accent on the *blues*, and largely white) scene here, and lemme tell you it's not like going to hear this stuff at the Village Gate. Standout bands include Double Trouble, the Headhunters and (hottest, and the only one so far with LPs out nationally) the Fabulous Thunderbirds. I caught the T-Birds at a club called Soap Creek, where you could pretty much see the steam in the air as Texas boys and girls hopped themselves high on longneck beers and indulged in furiously intense slow crotch grinds while the T-Birds stood onstage and ground out their own pelvic imperative in one of the rawest sets of white blues playing I've ever witnessed. The lead singer didn't even bother to *move*: he just stood there in a corny yellow Hawaiian shirt staring impassively at the audience while commiting slow homicide on his harp. Lead guitarist Jimmy Vaughan was even better, wringing out solos that were juicy unto fulsome yet always keeping that whiplash sidewinder *edge*. Best thing about him, though, was that standing up there all skinny, his body and arms almost totally rigid as he played, staring straight down with the front of his ultragreased Eddie Cochran duck-do hanging like some big swamp branch dripping a steady stream of Bryllcream and gushing sweat into his eyes which were squeezed shut in berserk pointless intensity, never looking up at the audience once . . . well, frankly, he reminded me of no one so much as Richard Speck. He was that good.

There's also the whole *conjunto/norteno* cultural crosspollination Mexican border polkas scene, which is something I don't know very much about yet but has already begun to inspire lots of musicians outside its parameters (cf. Joe "King" Carrasco). Basically it might be capsulized as Mariachi polkas with a sort of reggae consciousness, at least insofar as the songs assume a spacy, probably chemically-related but also tropic feel of drifting across Baja California and West Texas highways in your car on a hot afternoon with pretty much worthless fields stretching infinitely on both sides of you and nowhere at all to go but loving it with an open beer in your hand and this music on the radio as rank winds sweep in off the Gulf. The three main figures to emerge from local Mexican music are Little Joe, Johnny, y la Familia (that's the name of one band), Little Joe having styled himself as something of a "Godfather" to that particular scene in the area; Flaco Jimenez, who is keeping the roots of Tex-Mex music alive, a genre almost singlehandedly invented by his father Santiago Jimenez; and sometime *enfant terrible* (now becoming more established though not more assimilated — he still plays for migrant laborers for instance) Esteban (Steve) Jordan, who more than once has been called "the Jimi Hendrix of the accordian," which just as soon as I heard one of his records I could see exactly why. He combines consummate technical mastery with a penchant for bizarre

Border Polka *conjunto* scene.

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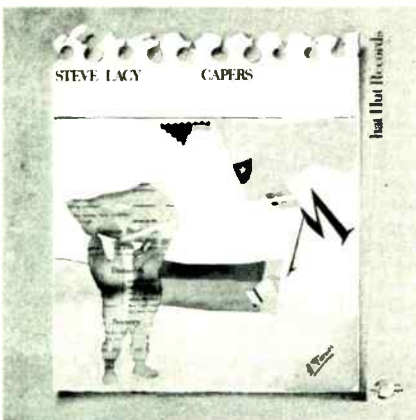
COMING AND/OR RECENT RELEASES

PETER KUHN/GHOST OF A TRANCE/ HH1R09
with William Parker and Phillip Wilson
Recorded live December 8, 1979/N.Y.
with Bill Horvitz, Wayne Horvitz, Mark Miller
and Dave Sewelson. Rec. live Febr. 2, 1980/N.Y.

ANDRÉ JAUME/JOE McPHEE HH2R12
feat. RAYMOND BONI
TALES AND PROPHECIES
Recorded live May 1980/France



STEVE LACY/CAPERS HH2R14
with Ronnie Boykins and Dennis Charles
Recorded live December 29, 1979 at
Soundscape N.Y.N.Y.

hat Hut Records
Box 127, West Park N.Y. 12493/USA
Box 461, 4106 Therwil/Switzerland

or highly idiosyncratic melodic figures and fingerings, and if a little bit of atonal aggression is what you always just kinda *missed* when you used to watch Lawrence Welk, he's your man. I should say that I have never liked polkas in my life, but this music is beautiful, haunting, a completely unexpected yet natural synthesis, and I can't get enough.

Which also goes for a guy by the name of Dan Del Santo, the single most impressive "new" talent I've seen anywhere in quite some time. Fronting a fairly large band featuring horns, percussion, the works, he is a visually unprepossesing man who stands there motionless in casual sportsuit with hat pulled down over one eye, singing powerful original songs about universal human pain and immutable aloneness, apartness, fear and loss in the most unique new vocal style I've heard in quite a while, a misleading velvety whisper that's capable of nigh-pathological depression. This vocal understatement contrasts startlingly with the brutal tones he wrenches from his Stratocaster, and his music overall seems to draw on an absorbingly original fusion of R&B, rock, jazz and reggae, with his whole band superlative on a Van Morrison level. Just from the two times I've seen him, I strongly suspect this guy is doing something genuinely new with root American and Caribbean musical forms, yet the band doesn't even have a single out. (Dan put out an acoustic blues album a couple of years back, but has evolved way beyond it.) When I asked him about it, he said that the record companies just never seemed to know which category to put him in.

There is one turnoff about the Austin music scene: it's very ghettoized. Which only makes sense, I suppose, when you reflect how many different communities coexist here: college (frats vs. punks), hippie (vs. frats and punks), and deeply entrenched white and black and Mexican communities with the more or less traditional values of most any nontransient population. Said ghettoization is perhaps most evident on the punk scene, which seems largely still unaware of the possibility that black musical forms could have anything to do with New Wave music. "I been hearing that blues shit all my life," said Gary of Raul's when my band auditioned there. "I like modern music." And Raul's, a rather uptight little place with paintings of giant rats along one inner wall and graffiti about local bands all over the outside,

MICHELLE LEVINAS

The Big Boys at Raul's; Austin punk for the headbangers.

serves a function roughly analagous to early C.B.G.B.'s as being the locus of Austin punk/New Wave hap'nin's. Personally I prefer the more congenial Duke's, but Raul's is the place where Elvis Costello and Patti Smith played and where punks can be found pogoing most any night of the week to the bands which are the club's staple, 1977 xerox Ramones-clones with names like the Dicks, the Big Boys, Sharon Tate's Baby and the Inserts. I like all these bands, because I've always liked that kind of music, but they really don't add anything to the form. Fortunately, there are a number of more original bands around. Joe "King" Carrasco you have probably heard of by now; his combination of "Wooly Bully"/"96 Tears" Tex-Mex with New Wave vitality recently won him a contract with Stiff. Standing Waves will probably be the next to follow him into (inter)national prominence — they've been compared to Talking Heads, which is more a reflection of most people's inability to receive something new and different on its own terms than anything else. There's not an art school in sight, and their songs (from *three* writers, yet), some bearing a Near Eastern flavor, are more compelling than

continued on pg. 103

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SOUL ON ICE

As major Soul artists perform again, are their audiences escaping contemporary funk for a safe but sterile revival?

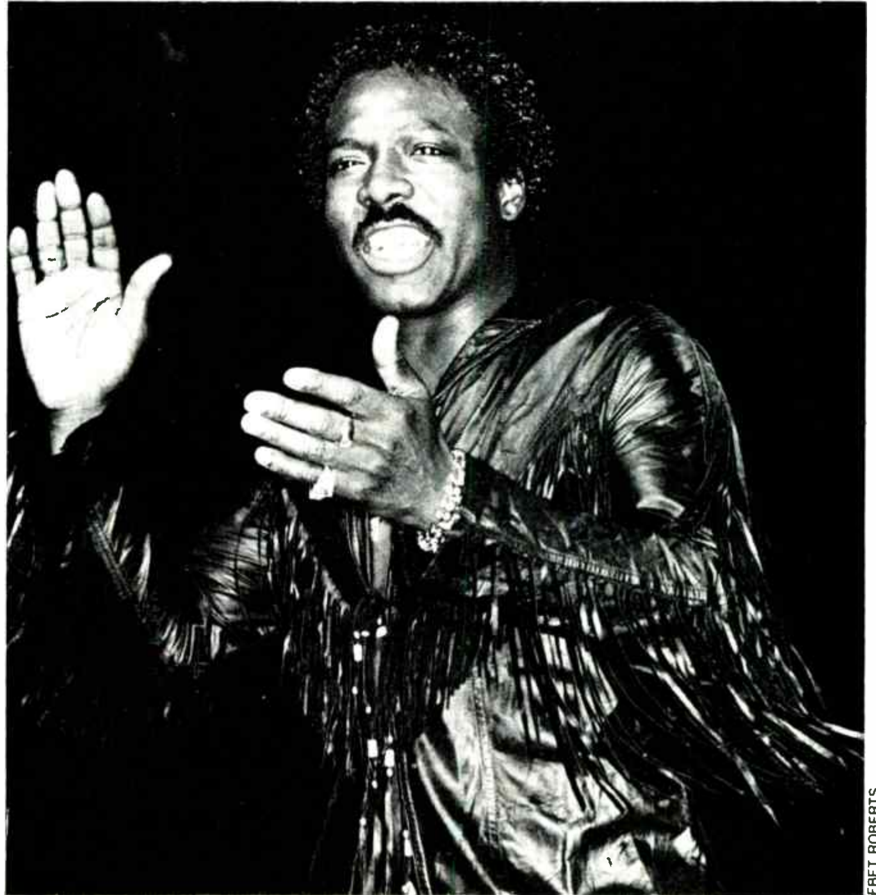
By Dave Marsh

The best way of discovering what music a person truly cherishes, I've always thought, is to turn them loose between midnight and dawn. In the daylight, you can tolerate almost anything, and after dinner, a certain conviviality is a necessity. But in the midnight hours, when the lights go down and the air is hazy, the treasures come out. One turns in those moments to what is most sustaining, if only as a hedge against heading for bed.

For me that has always meant soul music of the most bleak sort. I'm liable to put on *The Miracles From the Beginning* at almost any time, but when it gets late enough for the lingerers to head home, when only the hard core is hanging in alone, nothing satisfies quite like James Carr purring "Pouring Water On a Drowning Man," or Clarence Carter's hilarious and hair-raising "Making Love (At the Dark End of the Street)," or the great Sam Cooke ballads, or Bobby Bland's forlorn splendor on "Lead Me On." Lately, the number has been an obscure song from Otis Redding's *Soul Ballads* album called "Cigarettes and Coffee."

"Cigarettes and Coffee" is set in the midnight hours. "It's early in the morning, about a quarter till three," Otis sings, as the guitar of Steve Cropper plays off the swelling BarKays horns. This is Redding inside out, at least as far as most know him. He is not despairing or pleading but speaking as plainly as possible, not preaching but confessing, not ragging against infidelity or dissatisfaction but celebrating a profound contentment. (The lyric develops into a marriage proposal.) All the while, Al Jackson keeps time with stately accents, popping the one and virtually smothering all the other beats. And in the end, Redding's vulnerability is so great that it makes you accept your own a little bit better.

No one makes records like that anymore, maybe because the world has changed just enough to make such peace of mind even less imaginable than it was when Otis first recorded the song, fifteen years ago. For a long time, anyone who still held on to such music seemed anachronistic or felt very, very lonely. But in the last few months, soul music has begun to reblossom; Wilson Pickett, James Brown, Solomon Burke, Sam and Dave, Rufus Thomas, Jr. Walker and the All Stars, Percy Sledge, Carla Thomas, Martha Reeves and Clarence Carter have all made appearances at New York clubs, from the tiny ones to the huge Ritz Ballroom, from reasonably likely venues such as the Peppermint Lounge to the anomalous country bar, the Lone Star Cafe.



EBET ROBERTS

The Wicked Wilson Picket has lost none of his ferocity.

In Japan and England, there are already substantial soul revivals, spearheaded by an exquisite reissue program in Japan, and in the UK, by a number of good, solid soul-style bands, notably Dexy's Midnight Runners, Nine Below Zero and Paul Jones' The Blues Band. If trends operate as they usually do, that should make the spring of '81 just the moment for soul to reclaim some mainstream American attention. Already, Solid Smoke, the San Francisco revivalist label, has released an album of Fifties and Sixties tracks by the obscure but marvelous Sheppards, a Chicago harmony quartet, reissued James Brown's masterpiece, *Live and Lowdown at the Apollo, Vol. 1,* and reportedly, has plans afoot to put out some new sides by a revived version of the Falcons, the venerable Detroit group, whose reincarnation includes original members Eddie Floyd, Mack Rice (author of "Mustang Sally") and Joe Stubbs (brother of the Four Tops' Levi), and possibly including guest appearances by erstwhile Falcons Pickett and Johnny Taylor.

I've seen only a couple of the soul shows that have hit New York, one by Pickett at the Lone Star, and another at the much larger Ritz, which featured Carla Thomas, Clarence Carter, and Sledge. The show at the Ritz was poorly attended, although the four or five hundred patrons might well have been only a hundred or so fewer than those who packed Pickett's two sets. Thomas turned in a rather pedestrian set, which

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came to life only at the very end, when she scored into her original hit, "Gee Whiz." Sledge, the headliner, had disastrous problems with his band, and retired after singing only one full song, but that was a heartfelt version of "My Special Prayer" which revealed that he remains in full command of his spectacularly huge and orchestrally mellow voice. Carter, who was second-billed, stole the show like the rapscallion he is, cutting through the bulk of his hits, tossing off some casually terrific guitar solos and singing with professionalism, if not nearly so much passion as he conveys on his best records. Carter is blind, and perhaps it helps that he did not have to confront visually the vast empty spaces of the hall — indeed, his whole-hearted enthusiasm for this crowd, sparse as it was, struck me as a model of soul artifice, that special capacity for bringing emotional conviction to the most specious material that is soul's special glory.

Wilson Pickett was another story, but then, he always has been. Pickett never owned much subtlety, but he's learned more than a few tricks over the years, and despite the fact that he is nearly a decade between hits at the moment, the Lone Star performance convinced me that he is a surer, more intelligent singer than he was during his commercial heyday. Backed by a powerhouse band, which rocked mercilessly and set up a devilish groove, Pickett matched his best recorded moments lick for lick, opening with "Don't Let the Green Grass Fool You" and running through his most familiar hits, including "In the Midnight Hour" and "Mustang Sally" and about eight bars of "Ninety-nine and A Half (Just Won't Do)." Pickett was all sweat and leather, Stagger Lee incarnate, and although the audience was curiously apathetic — or maybe intimidated — he didn't hold anything back. In fact, the lukewarm response he received seemed to spur him on, and he pulled out "Hey Jude" for the final song of the set.

I've never liked Pickett's recording of that Beatles' chestnut because it served as a showcase for the worst excesses of both guitarist Duane Allman and himself. But on this night, the song was simply unmatchable, hard, stinging lick after lick, body punches that finally loosened up the crowd enough to share some of Wilson's frenzied energy. In those moments, chanting "Hey Jude" over and over, Pickett not only beat his own version of the song, he actually topped the Beatles' original, too. For that night, at least, he *owned* all of his material, and it was hard to believe that anyone anywhere was singing any better. Pickett's show was a minor revelation, and a lesson to anyone who takes seriously the idea that youth has anything to do with musical intensity. He must be past 40 by now, and it was hard to believe that he'd ever been more ferocious on any stage.

I thought at first that this ferocity explained the temerity of the audience. At his best, Pickett is a show business version of the urban black man most whites (and whites were 90 percent of the crowd) have been brought up to fear above all things. His perfect white counterpart is Jerry Lee Lewis, who represents to Northerners the incarnation of all that's most fearsome about the redneck South.

Yet Pickett was downright cordial (for Pickett) that night, at least until he became frustrated with the lack of feedback. Maybe, I thought later, such audiences have simply forgotten, if they ever knew, what it means to respond to such audience/performer give and take. What Pickett wanted was something more than the idle bottom shaking and random huzzahs of a rock band's show; he wanted participation in the spirit of the moment, and he wanted collective testimony to the power and presence of that spirit.

But then, clearly that audience was not particularly interested in saluting the spirit. At first I couldn't figure this out. Any experience of Pickett's show was colored by the fact that, for me, soul really didn't need to be revived, having never strayed very far from my turntable anyway. For most of the soul revival crowd, this music isn't an emotional necessity — it's only a convenience

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OTHER PEOPLE'S MUSIC

Once control of the stereo is lost, it's a long way to Tipperary. A look at the agonies of being a musical guest.

By Brian Cullman

Late November, I returned to New York from a trip to Morocco, and found I had no place to live. My apartment was set to be painted while I was away, but my landlord had not forgotten about the rent strike I'd organized two years before, and, with the genius that God only gives to evil children and landlords, he somehow determined what day I was due to return. And started painting that day. Very slowly.

Which meant another two weeks with no apartment and no phone and no typewriter and *NO STEREO,* no control of the music in my life, a fate worse than homelessness. Sleeping on people's floors, riding up and down in the subways all night, and standing outside in 18 degree weather trying to fit dimes into the coin slot of a phone before my fingers fall off have always seemed like mild irritations compared with the possibility of hearing *The Koln Concerts* or *Rumours* for the ten thousandth time. I have been known to turn down dinner invitations, not to mention romantic liaisons, based solely on the suspicion that there might be an Average White Band album in the house.

With heavy heart, I resigned myself to another few weeks of listening to other people's records. Morocco had already gotten me in training.

In Morocco, everything is extraordinary, but in totally ordinary ways — underneath the jellabas and the turbans, behind the veils and the mosques and the callings to prayer, life seems to be lived in pursuit of shade and sugar. On the edge of Tangier, near the American school and the Spanish hospital, and just down the road from Guitta's restaurant lives Paul Bowles. Though best known as a novelist *(The Sheltering Sky, Let It Come Down),* he is also a respected composer, having scored films for Jean Renoir and Roberto Rossellini and written incidental music for plays of Tennessee Williams. He is interested in the music scene in NYC, and I start telling him about Steve Reich and Phillip Glass and Paula Olivieros and the ambient musics of Brian Eno. In the midst of my ravings (the kif has begun to take effect, and I am trying to explain minimalist music in terms of telephone dial tones), he quietly slips a cassette into his Sony, and the music im-

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

World music may not be in quite the state you imagine.

mediately cuts through everything I'm saying. It has the sense of Reich and Glass and Terry Riley in it, but is somehow simpler, more natural, and very buoyant.

"That's Lou Harrison. He worked with me on The Herald Tribune in the 30's, but he moved out to California."

"Is this a new tape of his?"

"No, no — he was doing this in the fifties and early sixties."

So much for the new music scene in New York.

Much of what I heard ("Music For Violin," "Pacifika Ronda," "Two Pieces For Psaltery") is on an album entitled *Lou Harrison: Pacifika Rondo & Other Works* (Desto Records, Loch Road, Franklin Lake, N.J. 07417). The music has an Oriental feel, and radiates a sense of calm and serenity (there must really be something in the California air: much of the same peace — and much of the same odd percussion — shows up on the Beach Boys' "W.Woodpecker Symphony", from *Smiley Smile*). Despite their ethereal nature, the music is firmly grounded; pieces never simply float off, he follows things through.

"Of course!" Bowles insists. "He's an artist. He follows everything through."

I travel South from Tangier to Fez, assuming that a city named for a hat will be preferable to one named for a piece of fruit. But looking for Moroccan music (in urban areas, at least) is tricky business. The cassette revolution has taken place, and little machines everywhere blare disco, europop, rock and roll, and occasionally Om Khalsoum (the late Egyptian diva). In the medina, an old man with bandages on his hands is playing Ry Cooder (the new album, *Borderline,* no less), and behind the marketplace a blacksmith is hammering away, singing "Stayin' Alive" to himself.

An English woman, teaching at the university in Fez is sympathetic.

"You don't hear much real Moroccan music . . . maybe if you go out into the country or if you're invited to a wedding or a feast of some sort. What you're looking for is Berber music, and that's in the South, in Tan Tan and Tetuan, near Mauritania."

Music of Mauritania (on Ocora Records) is one of four records she owns here (the others are Neil Young's *Harvest,* Beethoven's "Eroica," and Iggy Pop). It is raw and dark; pure Berger music, filled with the mountains and the moon, with a sense of blood behind the drums, of dark gods moving through the hills and changing shapes: animals becoming men and men becoming animals. Less trance-like than the music of Jajouka, it is somehow more primal, completely pagan — calling to every conceivable god and spirit at once, the right and the left, the light and the dark, — and the effect is both exhilarating

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World Radio History

BOOTSY GETS DOWN TO HIS OWN

Progenitor of cartoon funk, "Bootzilla", and Casper the Holy Ghost, Bootsy Collins envisions new worlds and ultra waves.

By Barry Cooper

"I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids - and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me."
— Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 1947

Like the narrator in Ellison's classic novel, bassist William "Bootsy" Collins is invisible. The music industry can see him, yet it refuses to, because he represents a ghost from the Hendrix past: a para-talented Black artist who does not fit into the three-piece-doo-wop-choreographed-R & B mold. His music, The Funk, represents rebellion, opposition and change. With mastermind George Clinton, Bootsy has moved The Funk out of the realm of pure music into the socio-cultural domain: The Funk's got a look, a language, a politics.

Bootsy's albums, the epitome of avant-garde R & B, sell extremely well in every market except New York, where they get almost no airplay. The platinum "Bootzilla" from *Bootsy? Player of the Year* and the Bootsy-produced Zapp band's "More Bounce to The Ounce" are but the two exceptions that prove the rule. Outside New York, Bootsy gets the wattage he deserves — but only over black-based stations; the other program directors shy away from the booted one, hoping perhaps that this hallucinating Daliesque witch doctah will fade away if they follow a policy of benign neglect. But he hasn't yet and he probably won't: Bootsy's one polyrhythmic doppleganger that was born to haunt the narrow-minded and the self-serious till the day he — zapp! — disappears for good. At the same time, he's programmed against their programming, which pigeon-holes, hypes, manipulates, exploits, and destroys. He's aware of that route — the one Hendrix took — and he hopes The Funk will steer him clear.

Between *Bootsy? Player of the Year* and his newly charged *Ultra Wave*, Bootsy recorded the critically and commercially unsuccessful *This Boot Is Made For Fonk-N*. He was going through a nervous breakdown at the time: "Everybody wanted me to be Bootsy all the time. The constant touring, the promotional appearances, the role playing was too much for me. I fell into this self-destruct system that is set up to destroy the longevity of a performer. It's just like the American made car; built to last three years or less, and then you have to buy a new one. The constant hype. the constant drugs, the constant "constant" is set up to demolish you. I almost went for it, but I started to realize what was happening to me, and I pulled back just in time."

Do captains of industry scheme to keep this man off our TV screens and airwaves?

Just in time to save the dude whose first gig was at the Cincinnatti Playboy Club with Catfish Collins' House Guests, a band that included the vocal talents of Randy Crawford (of the Crusaders) and Phillipe Wyne (formerly of the Spinners, now with P-Funk.) Catfish was, of course, his big brother (still is); and Bootsy was all of 13. By 1968, Bootsy and the House Guests had hooked up with the Godfather himself, James Brown. With Brown he recorded such hits as "Talkin' Loud" and "Say It Loud (I'm Black and I'm Proud)." A teenage phenom, Bootsy was right *there*, back and center, with the Brown band that birthed The-Funk-as-we-know-it.

"James Brown is one of the best teachers in the world as far as Black music is concerned," says Bootsy, "and I felt we learned as much as we could. I mean, he raised a finger, we were on it."

After two years though, school was out: Bootsy and the back-up band left Brown for Detroit, where they met the man who would fill Brown's shoes in the coming decade, George Clinton. Clinton grooved on Bootsy's rhythmatical intuition; Bootsy grooved on Clinton's yen for experimentation. Hendrix provided the music for their wedding reception. "Hendrix was number one. As far as 'crossin' over' is concerned, he started from over there (white audiences) and began to come back to where we were at. He just didn't make it, but he was on the way." If Hendrix was the major influence on Bootsy's echo-plexed phase-shifted bass realizations, Larry Graham's thumb-thwack percussive playing with Sly and the family Stone hit the minor chord in Bootsy. Mix and match, throw in some hints of Stanley Clarke and Motown sessionman James Jamerson, and sync the whole thing up with those unique, intricate D.T.P.R.s (dance/trance/psycho-rhythm) and you

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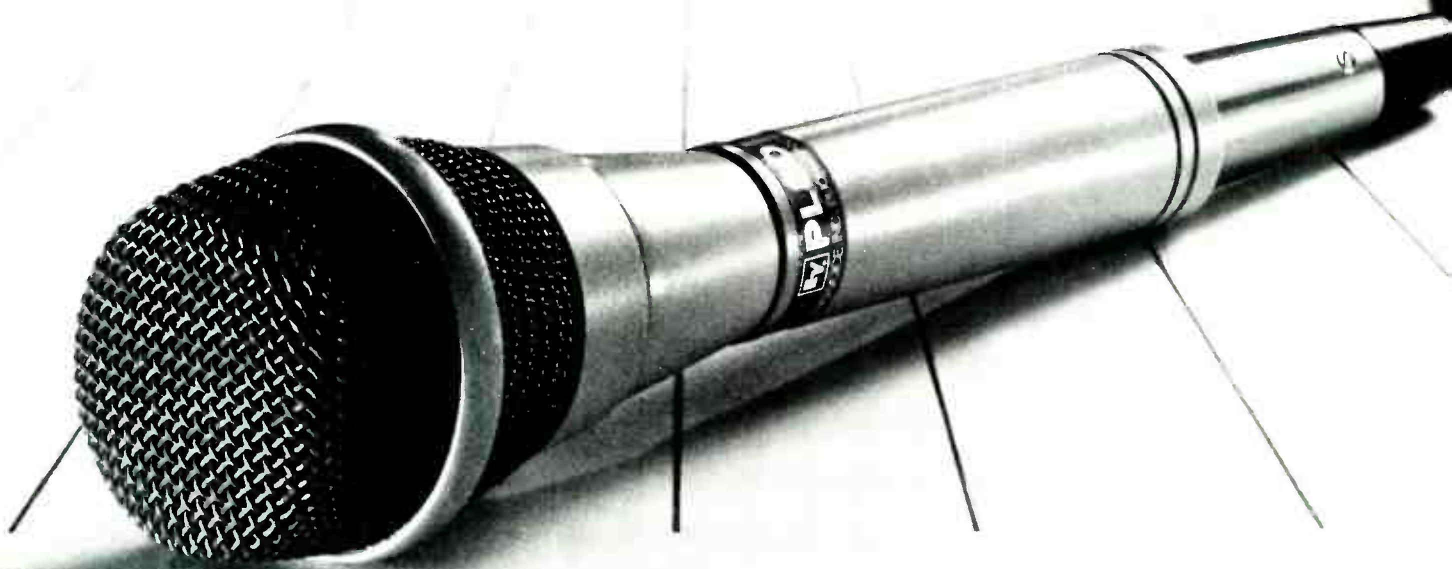

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have some idea of the stature of Bootsy's syncretic innovation.

Bootsy cut his first album with Funkadelic in 1972, an acid-rock venture called *America Eats Its Young*. When Bootsy's bouncing, rubbery, groovalistic bass stylings became *an item* on the following Funkadelic and Parliament lps, such as *Let's Take It to The Stage* and *Chocolate City*, Clinton set him up to stretch out on his own. His 1976 debut, *Stretching Out In Bootsy's Rubber Band*, went gold on the West Coast despite minimal airplay. Bootsy took his Hendrix posture and his cartoonal knowledge and went right for the kids, the geepies. He became the first character of cartoon funk — Casper the Ghost, an "invisible man" to some mature folk in the music biz and an irritation to the religious community. Casper was a holy ghost, not a friendly ghost.

"At the time," notes Casper, "I was deeply into religion, into self denial and self-discipline, because of certain hardships I'd been through in my life. And when the feeling hit me, it just felt good to sing 'Not a friendly ghost/but a Holy Ghost.' I wasn't trying to make a mockery of anything." Mockery or not, Bootsy's career as a leader was hot on the one, as *Ahh . . . The Name is Bootsy, Baby!* and *Bootsy? Player Of The Year* became in-demand items on the black market funk scene. *Bootsy?* featured "Bootzilla", an absurdist nursery rhyme glorifying a new character, "The world's only rhinestone rock star doll baby," and "Hollywood Squares," a laid-back Sly-like account of L.A.'s "freeways / free highs / freebies / and free-OK-byes" plastic ambience. Something for the geepie funkateers, something for the old folk: this thing was getting strong.

The problem the Funk had and still has, thinks Bootsy, is that certain critics and assorted media-controllers say: "There is a possibility of this boy performing on tee vee in front of my kids. We can't have no more Hendrix, we can't have no more Woodstock, we can't have this kind of power in people's hands. The funk is a threat to them.

Between the great awakening of the new wave "dance" bands (Talking Heads, Polyrock, The Police, B-52s) and the born-again Bootsy (much preferred, much truer) of *Ultra Wave*, that religion enters the new year with a power to match the Moral Majority. And Bootsy's preachin' a different message from the pulpit: *Ultra Wave*, dispenses with the ME-istic narcissism of his earlier discs and turns to topics like positive thinking ("It's A Musical"), crooked politicians ("Fat Cat"), and business stresses ("F-Encounters"). It tilts Bootsy's silly/serious equation away from the world of cartoons and toward the world of capital.

Musically, *Ultra Wave* conjures a whole hyper-polyrhythmic "environment" of multi-tracked synthesizers, syndrums, percussion, Space Bass glide paths and ethereal vocals all of which are woven into a network of individual grooves. Sweat meets technology: progro-tech funk. It goes beyond the new wave movement, which only recently has begun to incorporate funky dance grooves into neurotic rock, just as it goes back to the center of all that early funk, the Bootsy bass. It taunts the new wave bands with its very title and I wouldn't be surprised if it sends a chill down some of their spines. ■

BOOTSY'S EQUIPMENT

Bootsy does not play the bass guitar. He plays the custom-made, star-shaped Space Bass and the "Space Face" double bass and a new Space Bass called "Gadgitmon." The former two are made by Larry Pless of Gus Zoppi Music, Detroit, Michigan and the latter by Hammon Music. On record, Bootsy sounds like he's playing lead and background simultaneously. Multi-tracking? No: the multi-track "effect" is realized by using High A pickups on his bass — highs, lows, and mids, which are channelled into three different amps. He uses six amps in total: two Yamaha 2000 power amps and four Crown 300 cabinets. Bootsy's watery, bubbling signature sound is the child of a Mu-tron 3. In addition to the Space Bass, Progo-tech Funk leans heavy on synthesized doo-dads such as the Prophet 5, Arp Omni, Oberheim Polyphonic, Micro and Mini and Polymoogs, Syndrums, and Roland Instruments.

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LA BELLA'S MUSICIAN *of* NOTE

Photo by Richard Laird

ROBERT SHUMBRES "SHADOW"

Born: October 5, 1946

Home: I was born in Scranton, Pa. I now live in Thousand Oaks, California.

Profession: Bass Guitarist with Dave Mason; Songwriter.

Earliest Musical Experience: When I was about 15, I can remember washing dishes in a restaurant after school, and setting pins in a bowling alley on weekends. All to buy my first guitar.

Major Influences: I was first inspired by Elvis, when I saw him on the Ed Sullivan Show years ago. It was then that I decided to entertain people by playing music.

Latest Musical Accomplishment: Besides playing with Dave Mason, I do a lot of session work in L.A. I did a couple of tracks on Mark Stein's solo album, also Les Dudak, Tom Scott, Jimmy Haslip and Steve Perry before he joined Journey.

Keynotes: I've been touring with Dave Mason and a great group of Musicians; Jim Krueger on guitar, Mark Stein on keyboards, and Marc Lucarelli on drums. We just got back from Japan and will tour the states.

On Today's Music: There's such a vast selection of music styles to choose from. I like most of it, although there are a few I really can't handle.

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THE AACM: ANCIENT TO THE FUTURE

The AACM, the school that produced the major new jazz of the '70's, looks to the new decade.

By Neil Tesser

There are two enduring jazz myths about Chicago. The first goes back to jazz's Old Testament, book of Exodus: it claims that when the music was expelled from New Orleans, it immediately and directly found its way up the Mississippi to the City of Broad Shoulders. The second myth works in reverse. It takes place in 1969, and it suggests that when several serious young black men — all members of the then four-year-old Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians — left Chicago for Europe, they were in effect firing a musical salvo that reached global targets.

Only the first of these myths is false. As Muhal Richard Abrams once remarked: "The AACM came out of the Chicago ghetto and spread around the world."

There's an irony to that comment, and a well-founded irony at that. Indeed, it would be difficult to imagine a climate less hospitable than Chicago for the care and feeding of an infant art form — especially an infant considered quite ugly by those unaccustomed to dissonance, polyphony, and free improvisation in open-ended structures. For the most part, Chicago (marble-sided, steel-girded, granite-faced workingville) remained unmoved and impassive; for all its life, it offered the culture-nourishing sustenance of the Gobi desert.

And yet the AACM grew, like some sort of cactus flower: there was something about the Chicago experience that allowed that growth. Something about living in Chicago — whose South Side has the largest single concentration of urban blacks — fostered the development of a music drawing richly from jazz and African traditions. In fact, Chicago life may even have been a necessary ingredient. As Iqua Colson, an especially visible member of the AACM's Chicago contingent, once stated: "The unity that goes on among the AACM — and the push to get things done together — maybe couldn't happen the same way in New York . . . [the pressure and competition] may prevent the kind of formation happening that has happened here."

That initial formation had several goals. The AACM's charter aimed for (among other things) the creation of an ongoing workshop program; establishment of a free music school for inner-city youth; the exemplification of "high moral standards" and the stimulation of spiritual growth; even financial contributions to charity. (Kahil El-Zabar, a recent AACM president, put it like this: "The organization, whether we're talking about music or not, is one of the most unusual in the country.") More pragmatically, the AACM was and remains a true collective, designed to do for its members what, in the beginning, nobody else would do: support, promote, and represent the new music, in self-produced concerts and festivals.

DENNIS ISHABASHI

Douglas Ewart at Jazz Fest '80, continuing the AACM tradition.

Eventually, it was the interest of European audiences that brought the AACM its fame at home. In '69, Roscoe Mitchell, Lester Bowie, and Malachi Favors left for Paris, where they were soon joined by Joseph Jarman, and where they became the Art Ensemble of Chicago. Shortly thereafter, the trio of Anthony Braxton, Leo Smith, and Leroy Jenkins were standing in Eiffel's shadow. The acclaim in Europe — plus the many discs that issued from their hectic, prolific recording schedule — made some Chicagoans sit up and take note. It also helped soften New York critics toward the new music, which was once called the "New Thing," then the "avant-garde," and by this time dubbed (by the musicians themselves) "Great Black Music."

Of course, the music proved innovative and influential. The emphasis on unusual, evocative instrumentation resulted, in the case of the early Art Ensemble, in a band without a drummer, and helped promote the now widespread use of the small percussion instruments. As pointed out by Bob Blumenthal in this space, it was the AACM that was most responsible for the explosion of solo and duo formats (Lester Bowie, in his stint as AACM prexy, required each member to undertake the arduous task of performing a solo concert). Most important was the framework, atmosphere, and interaction to allow the avant-garde's second wave to blossom from the seeds of the first: the pantonal discoveries of Ornette Coleman, the spiritual idealism of John Coltrane, the visionary discords of Cecil Taylor, the unshackled pulse of Elvin Jones, and the range of timbral expression suggested by Albert Ayler.

The music has continued its exploratory path in recent years, as a lion's share of the home-front activity has shifted to the AACM's second generation. Such musicians as woodwind virtuoso Douglas Ewart (the current AACM president), the startling Ethnic Heritage Ensemble, the Unity Troupe, pianist Soji Adebatrom and flutist Hana Jon Taylor — as well as stalwarts like Jarman and Don Moye — have made

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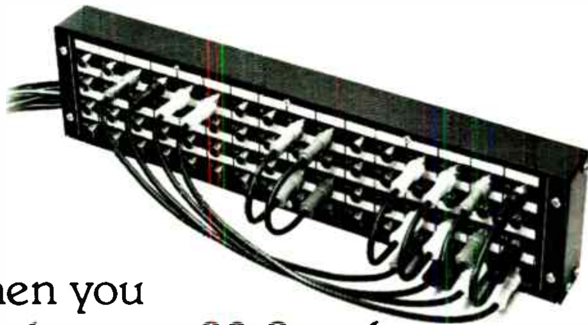

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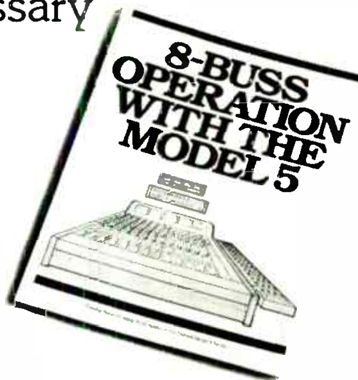

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PSYCHEDELIA — ENGLAND'S NEXT BIG THING?

The trappings of the new psychedelia are a far cry from the real content of Acid Rock.

By Van Gosse

Every three months or so the English musical world, which is dominated not by radio, as in the States, but by a handful of weekly papers (all with immense circulations — the biggest, NME, was at 240,000 the last time I looked) — discovers the Next Big Thing. Sometimes they're right (Gary Numan, the Specials, each of whom was extremely chart-dominant in the UK for a while) and sometimes it's a dud (the notorious "mod revival" of 1979). Right now, across the water there's a lot of tentative nosing around about a "psychedelic revival," and it seems very logical as the Brits have of late exhumed and exhausted virtually every other remotely interesting pop genre of the past twenty-five years: ska, sixties pop, rockabilly, the list goes on and on. Yet there's something wrong with this too. Psychedelia, hippie music, acid rock, whatever you want to call it, was part of something much more longlived and powerful than a fashion or a fad, something that cannot just be blithely conjured with a Nehru jacket and a few peyote buttons.

Can the Psychedelic Furs truly recapture the thunder and din of the '60s social uprising?

First, to the bands. The most famous of them by far are the Psychedelic Furs, whose fine American album has just been released and who've been around for years but who are only now being properly "interpreted." Yes, it's true, the Furs do have a light show, and songs with mystical titles and obscure meanings like "Sister Europe," "India," "Flowers." But really, there's far more of Bowie's invocation-of-the-seance ritualism a la "Heroes" in their sound than of the goofy chiming weirdness of, say, the Electric Prunes' "I Had Too Much to Dream Last Night". The Furs have too much of a hard, thudding beat and not enough wildly spiritual flailing to really evoke the good old days. And they've got nowhere near enough hair. The other band oft-cited is U-2, whose life style has been described as going from "very epic" to "extremely epic." That's about it, really: U-2, like many other English bands of the past few years, have discovered that they can trick up the echoing minimalist bigbeat of the post-punk era with sound effects, chants, poetic declamation, et cetera, all of which does indeed bring to mind "psychedelic" excesses and experiment. But that's like saying employing a harmonica ipso facto makes any group a blues band. It ain't the meat, it's the motion, buster, and the true analogy to the summer of love lies elsewhere.

Picture this: a distinct grouping of restless, disaffected youth seizes upon a noisily uncommercial 'new music' that attacks the sickness of the world they inhabit, instead of counterposing fantasies and colored lights the way Pop music usually does. It is created by a vanguard of experimental amateurs who don't know what they're doing and don't care, because they're mad or bored as hell. It's time for something that cuts to the bone, and when a few record companies take the plunge, this 'new thing' hits like a ton of bricks, and before you can say "youth-culture-megabucks", the "rebels" have limos and adoring publics and it's business as usual, because this *is* a business, remember?

Here's the point: this is either America (San Francisco) in 1966-1967 and/or England (London) in 1976-1977; you pick it, both fit the bill.

I hear a symphony of objection. Didn't the London punks four years ago say they hated hippies, peace and love, and were out to destroy all that "long-haired marijuana music?" Yes, but what they really detested was the hollow shell of hippiedom — the ornamental, pretentious and effete thing it had become post-Woodstock. By 1974 the ideas and totems of the Sixties were deformed symbols of an Establishment orthodoxy; that which had to be attacked.

The similarities between The Age of Aquarius and The Age of Black Leather are not simply vague, theoretical analogies. "Somebody to Love" is much more of a soul sister to "God Save The Queen" than you might think. Both songs were marching, charging anthems for a whole generation; both are saying "take this, and us, *seriously*" or maybe just "we mean it, man" — the very words of John L. Rotten himself.

Their common origin and meaning lie in the fact that both movements were born out of an intense, peculiar frustration and tension. You won't find it in the great watershed rock'n'roll years of 1956 or 1964, and certainly not in 1980. American college kids in the mid-sixties had known nothing but the family/career/consumer culture of the Cold War era. They'd been too young for Elvis and Chuck Berry and the Beatles and Stones, no matter how great, were still a *British* "Invasion". Suddenly there was the reality of the draft and a vicious, imperialistic war facing them. Under these conditions assorted dropouts, art students, and ex-folkies came to the fore — people like Paul Kantner, Jim Morrison, and Jerry Garcia who wanted to do their own thing: a real weird, hick, American thing.

A decade later English working class

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THE CARS

After three years, three platinum albums, and half a dozen hit singles, the Cars still show no signs of running out of gas. In a country where cruising is fast becoming a lost art and an industry faced with its own severe energy shortage, the Top Ten performance by guitarist-songwriter-de facto leader Ric Oscasek and his mean machine stands as a startling exception to the current record biz rule. It may not be entirely hip to like the Cars anymore — the age-old question can anything that successful be that good? — but is there another band with a songbook as thick with hits ("Just What I Needed," "My Best Friend's Girl," "Let's Go"), New Wave credibility, and sales in seven digits?

When the Cars cruised through New York recently, there were two packed houses at Madison Square Garden ready to hitch a ride. They've been accused of being as cold as chrome in concert and the charge that they're just a jukebox on wheels is not that far afield. The Cars do play 'em just like the records, but for a very good reason. Ocasek does not leave any escape hatches in his songs for jamming, drum solos, or other ego-gratifying displays of virtuosity. It is the song or nothing, even Elliot Easton's barnstorming solo on "Touch and Go" (from the recent *Panorama* LP) is just another piece in Ocasek's puzzle, fitting snugly against the quick bursts of Duane Eddy riffing, keysman Gregg Hawkes electro-punctuation, and the sophisticated slam of drummer David Robinson's alternating 5/4 and 4/4 beats.

However, playing hits note-for-note and just going through the motions are not the same thing. What the Cars lack in surprises on stage they make up for with high-octane drive, revving up even lilting Top 40 boppers like "It's All I Can Do" and "My Best Friend's Girl." They confounded even their hardiest fans at the Garden by opening with an extended rave-up on "Shoo Be Doo," the pulsating Suicide-style electrode from *Candy-O*. And while it's been many moons since they had a go at Brenton Wood's '67 smash "Gimme Little Sign," the combined horsepower of Robinson's bullish drumming, Ben Orr's strident bass, and Easton's scorching guitar hot-wires punchy punky rockers like "Candy-O" and "Down Boys" until they sound like *nuggets* in the 21st Century.

Neither as contrived as the Knack nor as self-consciously arty as Blondie (make that "playfully indulgent"), the Cars ride the same fine line as Roxy Music, bending the commercial rules without flatly disobeying them. Even songs as stark and foreboding as those on *Panorama*, many of them as primal as anything by Suicide, come alive as rock & roll in concert. And their stage set-up — all highly polished chrome, garage doors, and chain link fences, (like Fritz Lang's idea of a parking lot) — is flashy enough to balance the band's understated stage presence. Cynics to the contrary, their warranty as a rock & roll band has yet to run out. — *David Fricke*

THE CARS

EBET ROBERTS

AL DiMEOLA PACO DeLUCIA JOHN McLAUGHLIN

The lights went off, the crowd screamed. The m.c. came on stage, the crowd screamed. He said "Al DiMeola," ditto. He said "John McLaughlin," ditto. He said "Paco De Lucia," smaller ditto. The evening was great material for a thesis on the Pavlovian propensity of rock audiences. They long ago learned to cheer for the sheer speed which DiMeola and McLaughlin substituted for rock power licks. This night they were still screaming at every sixteenth note run, even though the only instruments on stage were DiMeola's steel string Ovation, McLaughlin's classical Ovation, and Paco De Lucia's flamenco guitar.

The concert built from solos to duets, to trio jams. DiMeola led off, mixing his trademark percussive scales with some bogus Bach. Then McLaughlin attempted some rock 'n roll on his classical guitar. He seemed uncomfortable on that instrument all night, since it does not respond to the string bends and the very forceful pick attack which are major parts of his style. Paco De Lucia played a sprightly major key flamenco dance, exhibiting all the technical wizardry that led *Guitar Review* to call him "possibly the most advanced guitarist in any idiom." He is certainly — believe it or not — faster and cleaner than either McLaughlin or DiMeola. Flamenco, in which he is considered the ranking modern virtuoso, is *the* music of fast scales, but also of varied and flexible rhythms which adapt to fusion perfectly. The respect and admiration of his fellow guitarists was especially evident in the duets. The inevitable "Mediterreanean Sundance," with DiMeola, and an untitled piece with McLaughlin were models of musical cooperation and support. DiMeola and McLaughlin, on the other hand, let their duet collapse in "anything you can do..." ego battles and quote trading, during which it was revealed that Al doesn't know the Bach Bouree and John hasn't learned the Pink Panther Theme.

The trio section which followed was what you'd expect from a jam session including these three players. Head-solo-solo-solo-optional riff trading-head, on fusion standards like "Spain," "Short Tales From the Black Forest," and "Birds of Fire." The occasional passages arranged for three guitars, like the introductions of "Manha De Carnaval" and "Birds of Fire" were beautiful mixtures of thick chords and lightning unisons — and much too rare, considering the extensive European tour the trio had just finished. Paco De Lucia's guitar was faint during the jams (it wasn't plugged into the mixer) but his playing stood out — not only for technical brilliance, but for the rhythmic subtlety and melodic form he maintained even in the fastest phrases. The crowd kept on screaming at every superfast scale, often drowning them out entirely. They rushed the stage, stood and stomped for three encores, and left as soon as the house lights went back on, having proved to themselves that the evening was a great success. — *Chris Doering*

STEVE LACY

Faster than a stalled Amtrak train, stronger than a kiddy cocktail, able to make people smile through a single set...it's a Bird, it's a Trane, no it's Steve Lacy playing a set of light, quirky music at Soundscape in New York before winging his way back to Europe. His group didn't overpower anyone — like Julius Hemphill's big band did at the Public Theatre that same trick or treat weekend — nor did it out-conceptualize anyone — the pieces followed head-solos-head formula with steady rhythmic movement — but it did wriggle, nip, bow, spin, skip, dance, whinny, bounce, squeak, shake, march, cry, quip, question, sing, swing, and crinkle enough to leave a good taste in my ears when the set was over.

Lacy's quintet came out in a 3-2 formation, with a front line of Irene Aebi on cello, violin, and vocals, Steve Potts on alto and soprano, Lacy on soprano, and a backcourt on a riser of Kent Carter on bass and Oliver Johnson on drums. Unannounced and played with the benefit of sheet music, the set's five compo-

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sitions (presumably by Lacy) were all uptempo, good-humored, wry musings on that ambiguous territory where swing — sometimes straightahead, sometimes off-the-wall — meets post-free improvisation. The solos were concise investigations, the tunes were lucent and sharp: the first, a sort of swivel-hips march out of the Roswell Rudd-Tony Braxton school of marching; the second, a melodic climb up and down a swaying rhythmic ladder; the third, a silly/sincere vocal by Aebi ("I want somebody/somebody special to live with/somebody special to look after me") which sounded like a giddy cross between Carla Bley, Loudon Wainwright III and the Revolutionary Ensemble's "Chinese Rock"; the fourth, a herky jerky romp prompting a "point-counterpoint" satirical discussion between the sopranos of Potts and Lacy; the last, another vocal which found Lacy jingling a tambourine.

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

STEVE LACY

There were some problems. Aebi's cello was undermiked, and the textural interplay between it, Carter's bass,and the two horns was either underdeveloped or lost in the mix. And Carter and Johnson were not only in the background visually: they were in the background musically as well. On the whole, the performance was successful, but I found it too much of a one-note affair: light-hearted and witty, in a sardonic sort of way. It made me think of Woody Allen's humor, Twyla Tharp's choreography, Calder's circus and mobiles. Maybe us critics (boo!) could initiate a new category (hiss!) for this sort of music; we could call it MOR avant-garde, or maybe Easy Listening Progressive, call Lacy its leader.—David Breskin

LI'L QUEENIE

The reason New Orleans rhythm & blues never took the world by storm in the manner of Motown or Philly soul is simple: people from New Orleans just hate to leave that wonderful town. As a result, a healthy club scene has survived that's spawned a number of hot local bands, from the world-class funk unit The Meters to more recent revivalists like the Radiators. (For the real scoop on this music's history, check out a fine book called *Rhythm & Blues In New Orleans*, by John Brower, Pelican Publishing, 630 Burmaster Gretna, LA 70053).

The big news this year is that a Crescent City R&B band has made some highly touted appearances in New York. The band is Li'l Queenie and the Percolators, and their music is a generally mellow blend of traditional New Orleans rhythms and song forms played with their own loose-limbed individuality. Li'l Queenie is Leigh Harris, a diminutive red-headed belter who can oscillate between shimmying blues and pour-it-all-out, soulful balladry at the drop of a tailfeather. Five years ago she and pianist, co-composer John Magnie formed the group's core, they played cabaret and club dates as a duo, and gradually evolved into a full band. Bassist John Meunier and drummer Kenneth Blevins (who's from Louisiana swamp country and has toured extensively with cajun star Zachary Richard) nail down the second-line rhythms that define the style. On traditional tunes like Professor Longhair's "Big Chief," you could close your eyes at the 80's Club on Manhattan's upper East Side during a recent gig and be right on South Rampart Street. Guitarist Tommy Malone adds an even wider-ranging R&B influence, especially on covers like the Five Du-Tones' "Shake A Tailfeather" (not the Blues Brothers' version, either). The icing on this band's cake is a truly splendid tenor sax player named Fred Kemp, who's played with Fats Domino for years, and possesses an achingly sweet tone on top of jazz chops aplenty. Kemp adds the most striking instrumental voice to the band, but it's Queenie's trip all the way, and her originals capture the feeling of New Orleans today — which of course isn't *that* far from the way it felt 30 years ago. She sings with the wild but emotionally sure abandon of the young Janis Joplin, notably on the ballad "I Was Just Practicing" and the showstopper, "My Darlin', New Orleans." Another standout original was penned in New York with pop-jazz-scatster Robert Kraft, entitled "Gumbo Heaven." This girl can sing, honey, and with a zesty band like the percolators at her side, a night with Li'l Queenie is indeed memorable. Record labels are, as they say, interested. — *Crispin Cioe*

LI'L QUEENIE

DOUGLAS VANN/VISION FOTOS

STEVIE WONDER

STEVIE WONDER

Back from his trek through the furtive doings of flora, Stevie Wonder came to New York last November to give one concert at — of all paradoxical places—the Garden. In anticipation of "The Hotter Than July Summer Picnic" — as the concert was labeled — Madison Square sold out so quickly that a second date was added. We attended the latter, and by all indications — word of mouth and print, sneaking suspicions, and the deeply muted enthusiasm of the crowd as it left our show — the first gig was probably superior. That one may have been hotter than July, ours was more like May.

Not that anything ran amuck. Wonder and the unfortunately titled "Wonderlove," his 13-piece band heavy on the punchy horns and cooing chix, clicked off his 26 or 27 greatest hits with such rapidity and ease one wonders whether Stevie could do it all in his sleep by now. The medley was far from being a soporific, but the problem is: we've heard all his terrific tunes so many times by now — every bar mitzvah reception, debutante ball, and wedding party in the last five years has featured a Bill Murray styled Wonder medley — that unless the performance features radically different arrangements, Springsteenian energy, or at least a few flouncing solos (and this one had none of them) it becomes little more than an audio-visual aid to your radio memories. A live regurgitation session dominated by old material, even with the benefit of binoculars or weed, is still nothing to stand up and shout about. Appropriately, the audience stayed glued to its cushy seats for all but Wonder's two most recent kickers, "Let's Get Serious" and the concert-ending "Master Blaster." On the first, Wonder produced a full-color print of Jermaine Jackson's black-and-white negative, raking his voice over the hook in dramatic fashion, and on the second — only one of two offerings from the new record — he brought out Gil Scot-Heron (who opened the show) and Michael Jackson, who bopped out boldly and nipped all over the stage in designer jeans, silver jacket, and mirror shades. The smiling gyrations of this littlest Jackson who must still be looking for Zimbabwe on the map, was the highlight of the night for a good many jeune fille in attendance.

Me, I thought the evening's apogee occurred when Wonderlove split and left Stevie to Fender Rhodes for himself. His lectures on love and his kibbitzing with the crowd ("Let me take off my glasses and get a look at y'all" ha-ha) I can do without, but his improvisational, almost free-form sculpting of ballads, such as "All Is Fair In Love," made the set's quietest moments its most powerful. When he gave himself room to truly *play* with his songs — the emotions as well as the chords — laughing ironically through one phrase, countering with a choked sob on the next, glided from his sandpaper shout into Hartmanesque ribbons of velvet, Wonder cut through not only the oppressive capaciousness of the Garden, but also the slick wrapping on the rest of the evening's pop package. — *David Breskin*

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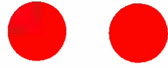
STEVE WINWOOD



THE ANATOMY OF A RETIREMENT • THE MAKINGS OF A COMEBACK

Stevie Winwood, superstar to one musical era and survivor and student in another, reflects on the flow of Traffic, the dangers of Blind Faith, the simple pleasures of solo art and the diver's art, and life in the limelight without illusions.

By Vic Garbarini

Ever since the ancient Egyptians were hit with seven years of famine after squandering an equal period of plenty, there's been a persistent tradition that events follow an alternating cycle of seven good years, followed by seven bad. Things *do* seem to happen in 7s: seven days of the week; the Saturn cycle in astrology; Gurdjieff's Law of Sevenfoldness; seven notes in the octave, *The Return of the (Magnificent) Seven* (The original was better). The idea is to be in synch with the rhythms, to go with the tide during the good times and drop back and punt during the lean. Why buck the cosmos? After all, it's not nice to fool Mother Nature, and it may be downright unhealthy. Stevie Winwood's unusual career seems to provide a textbook illustration of just that phenomenon. After 7 years of relatively Garboesque retreat since the breakup of Traffic (a band which he formed exactly seven years earlier, after leaving The Spencer Davis Group), Winwood seems about to begin another active phase of his career with the release of his second solo album, *Arc Of A Diver*. It wasn't as if he'd gone into hibernation after 74's *When The Eagle Flies* — he'd lent his name to a number of projects and collaborations during that period, including a live performance with a very hot salsa group, the Fania All Stars, (with whom he also later recorded). He also participated in the Stomu Yamashta/Mike Shreive/Winwood collaboration *Go*, and his first solo effort *Steve Winwood*, as well as occasional session work with the likes of Marianne Faithful, George Harrison, Sandy Denny and Gong. Still, one couldn't help but feel that the man was merely marking time. The *Go* albums were, at best, avant garde for the easy listening set, The *Winwood* solo effort pleasantly workmanlike — relaxed but not soporific. Treading water. There was nothing to match the youthful passion and exuberance of "Gimme Some Lovin", the stark beauty of *John Barleycorn*, or the eclectic synthesis of rock, jazz, blues, and folk that was early Traffic. *Arc Of A Diver* may not be the equal of *Mr. Fantasy* either, but that's not the point. It's a solo album in the purest sense of the word, with Winwood responsible for virtually every instrumental and vocal sound on the album. Mono and poly synthesizers predominate over keyboards and guitars, though as with most projects of this nature there's an awkward stiffness to some of the tracks, the inevitable price of doing it yourself. But there's also a change in spirit here that bodes well for the future. Neither

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the lean pathos of *Barleycorn* nor the smoky narcolepsy of *Low Spark Of High Heeled Boys* are evident here. Instead, there's a prevailing feeling of hope and optimism, heralded by the opening cuts' stirring melody and technicolor wash of synthesizer. "Night Train"'s cheerful funk and "Slowdown Sundown"'s graceful chorus prove his sense of rhythm and melody is as strong as ever, and his synthesizer explorations, while technically unspectacular, show he's still willing to take risks and grow. His announcement that he's forming a band and planning a tour for later this year is a further indication that Stevie is wanting to take the plunge back into the marketplace. *Arc Of A Diver* may not be the comeback album many of us have been waiting for, but it does mark a significant turning point: the re-emergence of a major artist. What happens after this is up to him. And the cosmos.

MUSICIAN: What was it like being 16 and suddenly becoming a popstar?

WINWOOD: Well, it was pretty intense, but probably not in the way you think. In those days '65, '66, success was judged not by how many records you sold, but by how many nights a week you were on the road doing gigs. We'd start off on the Birmingham club circuit, then developed and went wider, covered the London clubs, universities, theatres, ballrooms — it just kept building up in such a way that I never had the chance to reap the benefits of what one calls stardom. I remember sitting in a van on the motorway travelling to the next gig and staring at the road thinking *'So this is stardom, is it? Ah . . . I don't understand what everyone sees in it . . .'* So in the early days the work was quite intense, but not the benefits. But I think I was lucky in that it didn't seem to have a great psychological effect on me for the worse.

MUSICIAN: Were you ever frightened that it might get out of hand, or overwhelm you?

WINWOOD: No, because the progression was pretty gradual. There was no drastic change in our day to day reality when we started to make it. We were already playing seven nights a week. What could they do, make us play *eight?* All that happened was that the venues held more people, and from the musicians' point of view — from the stage — there isn't that much difference between a packed club of 500 in Birmingham and 5 or 10 thousand in a theatre in London.

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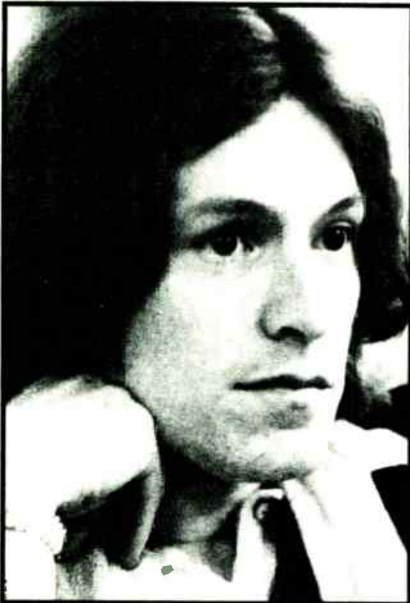

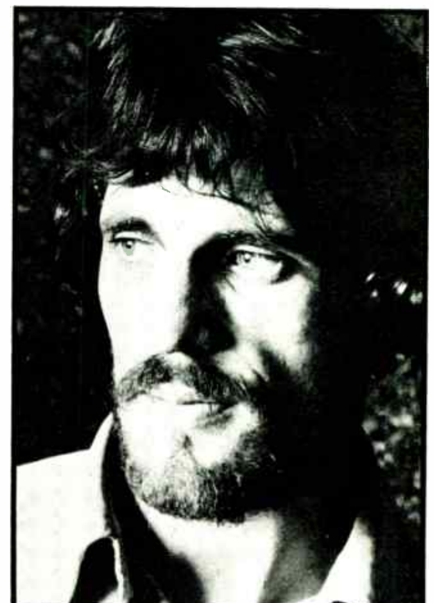

MICHAEL PUTLAND · RETNA LTD

Berkshire cottage roommates: Stevie Winwood, architect and prime mover; Chris Wood, flute, sax, and stubble variations; Jim Capaldi, drums and later vocals and songcraft; Dave Mason (not pictured), intermittent guitar and vocals.

You're still doing the same thing you were doing in the club in Birmingham, there's just a few more people. But then the lights are much brighter so you can't *see* as many people as you could in the club! So it pretty much evens out in the end.
MUSICIAN: What was recording like with Spencer Davis? Was it pretty primitive?
WINWOOD: Oh yeah, (laughing) *amazing!* The first recording we made was actually a demo. At the time I had no ideas what a demo was, so as far as I was concerned this was it — this was recording. It was pretty bewildering!
MUSICIAN: The early Spencer Davis material seemed to be a mixture of straight ahead pop, R&B, and classic blues. How did that evolve?
WINWOOD: We really hadn't started writing in the beginning, we were mostly doing R&B covers in those days. Our early hits like "Keep On Runnin" and "Somebody Help Me" were written by an outsider — Jackie Edwards. So by covering these certain types of records we gradually developed our own identity.
MUSICIAN: So the pop stream and the R&B stream eventually converged and you wrote your first original hit. . .
WINWOOD: "Gimme' Some Lovin'", right. We were just playing around, jamming one day and we realized we'd got something, and so I went home and wrote the words and arrived at a melody.
MUSICIAN: I think "I'm A Man" was the next big one you wrote. Was that the same kind of process?
WINWOOD: Yeah, that was a similar kind of thing, except the lyrics were written by Jimmy Miller. "I'm A Man" was the very last thing that happened before I left the group.
MUSICIAN: Why did you leave at that point?
WINWOOD: A number of reasons: I really didn't want to get stuck in a rhythm and blues thing, for one. There was also a big age difference in the group, and I had met a group of people I wanted to try something different with.
MUSICIAN: Did you have a vision of what Traffic would be? A kind of synthesis of different genres?
WINWOOD: Right, that was it. We wanted to create something that had no name, that couldn't be immediately pegged as R&B, or country or jazz or whatever. We took pleasure in listening to the most diverse types of music possible. Otis Redding, for example, classical music like Ravel . . .
MUSICIAN: What about jazz?
WINWOOD: Well, we were a bit wary of jazz at the time of Traffic, because that was slightly . . . old music to us, but obviously we'd been listening to people like Coltrane, Miles, Mingus, Ornette Coleman. But during Traffic we tended to gravitate towards jazz musicians who worked with popular song forms, like Louis Jordan and Bill Doggett.
MUSICIAN: That period around '67 and '68 seemed to be an incredibly open and creative time in Britain. There was a great deal of high caliber experimentation, wasn't there?
WINWOOD: Steady on, lad! Time mellows memories a bit, you know. You might say that it was special, but there was also some bad stuff going on at the same time. But yes, there was a kind of awakening and expansion happening. But in my opinion nothing more really came out of that period than any other, it was just viewed in a different way. Look at the period just before, when you had Elvis and Little Richard and Fats Domino, that was fantastic too.
MUSICIAN: True, but there wasn't that synthesis of styles that came later on.
WINWOOD: Yes, it was a breakdown of tradition, wasn't it? And not just in music — it was happening everywhere, in art, and painting too.
MUSICIAN: Did you see yourselves as iconoclasts, breaking down tradition?
WINWOOD: Not really, I think that tradition is a very important base for any art form, and shouldn't be tossed out the window. If it is, it's only for an effect. In Traffic we were very involved with trying to use them in a different way, to blend different traditions in a new way.
MUSICIAN: When you started Traffic you all left the city and moved to a cottage in Berkshire. Why did you want to work in the country?
WINWOOD: There were several reasons we did it. In London we didn't have those wonderful lofts like you do in New York, so being in the country meant we could play as loud and often as we liked. We also felt at the time that it was important for all of us to live together in the same spot.
MUSICIAN: How did that work out?
WINWOOD: It was a disaster! Think about it, man. I mean, what do you do when a *girl* comes along, or something? You know what I mean? They'd say "well, I can't live here with four blokes!" It wasn't only that, of course, you had to go three miles through mud and mire just to buy some tea or cigarettes, cause we were really out in the middle of nowhere. And then there were all the usual problems and conflicts that come up when friends live together.
MUSICIAN: Sounds idyllic. How and where did you meet the other members of the band?
WINWOOD: I met them at clubs during breaks. While I was doing all this hard work with Spencer Davis, it was realized by the Powers That Be that it actually would be better if we were given one or two days off every year or so. So I'd go to clubs in Birmingham and hang out and mingle, and that's where I

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met Chris Wood, then Dave and Jim. They were all playing in various bands.
MUSICIAN: Wasn't Dave Mason a roadie for Traffic?
WINWOOD: No, no, no. He was a roadie for Spencer Davis, not Traffic. At that point we knew we were going to form Traffic, and Dave needed some money so I got him a job as a roadie with us, and we'd go off and practice when we had time.
MUSICIAN: What was the band's chemistry like during those first few albums? It seemed like Dave Mason left the band and rejoined every other day.
WINWOOD: It was a bit like that. The idea of Traffic when we were working in the cottage was that we'd collaborate on all the material — everybody would contribute — because we felt that was a much better way of operating than one person going away and composing alone. It worked fine for awhile until we had a breakdown, which was because Dave decided he just couldn't work that way. He had to go off and write his songs alone and then present them to us as accompanists. This happened fairly early on, I think it was on the first album or halfway through the second. Things like "Mr. Fantasy" and "Paper Sun" were true collaborations, but as soon as we started getting reactions like "Look, whose song is this, mine or yours?", then it became a political problem within the group, and Dave left.
MUSICIAN: What caused him to change his mind?
WINWOOD: We went to the States and played as a three piece and Dave saw us and thought "Hey, I'm missing out" and said "Look, I want to come back . . ." I think he realized that playing on stage really is a collaborative thing, more than writing.
MUSICIAN: *John Barleycorn* seemed to be a real turning point for you. The tone was very positive and up, you seemed to be going through a mood change.
WINWOOD: Yeah, I was feeling relief, actually. Between the second album and *John Barleycorn* I quit the group and did this thing with Blind Faith which turned into a bit of a nightmare, so I was relieved to be out of that situation.
MUSICIAN: What went wrong with Blind Faith? Were people expecting . . .
WINWOOD: *That* was the problem right there: expectations! It did seem like the ultimate supergroup, and when people begin to think like that about a group before they've even heard them play together . . . I mean, what can you possibly do in a situation like that?
MUSICIAN: People expected you to be Super-Cream. We'd just caught on to the idea of long jams, and when you guys came out with that record with those short, concise songs (relatively speaking), many people just couldn't shift gears.
WINWOOD: Yes, that's it. There was just too much of a gap between what was expected and what we were doing.
MUSICIAN: What was the main problem, and how did it manifest?
WINWOOD: Well, the main problem was that we would do a bad gig, and there would be 25-30 thousand people going mad saying it was just *fantastic* . . . you just can't hold up under that kind of pressure. You either go mad or you say that's it. Or you turn to drugs or drink. You begin to feel like you're losing touch with reality, cause people's response has nothing to do with the actual situation. The true communication between musician and audience breaks down, and that communication is vital — it's what music is all about — it's what makes the musician do what he does and strive to do it better. There was no way we could kid ourselves that it was a good situation.
MUSICIAN: So you were almost eaten alive by your audience.
WINWOOD: Yeah. The chemistry was very good, and if the situation hadn't overpowered us I think it would have been a great group. But there was no way we could turn around and say *"Hey, this is great. We'll go out there and play a load of shit, and they'll just love it and we'll rake in the dough forever!"*
MUSICIAN: What was it like working with Eric Clapton? Is he quiet, assertive . . .
WINWOOD: Both. He's quiet *and* assertive. Great to work with really, we both wound up playing guitar on the album, trading leads. I've heard interviews on the radio with Eric where he seems to be trying to convince himself that he's very mediocre and everyone in his band plays better than he does. That's ridiculous, an overreaction. He wasn't *quite* like that.
MUSICIAN: What about yourself? People have wondered why you pulled out of the London scene to go live on a farm, when you could have stayed in the big city and drank whiskey, played cards, drove around in big cars, gone out with fancy women, stayed up all night. All that neat stuff. Seriously, was there a part of you that just rejected the whole star syndrome, that wanted to have a safe place to retreat to?
WINWOOD: Well, as I was saying before, success didn't just drop out of the sky for me like it does with a lot of other people. It was a very slow, gradual process, and I think I was lucky enough to be able to cope with it. I'm sure people who are close to me might disagree or whatever, but I think that it didn't change me — definitely not like I've seen it change other people for the worse. To me it was important to maintain the purity of the thing itself, to make music out of a need to express something, not because of the pressures of a contract or anything. I also really wanted to devote some time to perfecting my technique, because people think — more in this country than the U.S. — that rock and roll is a juvenile thing. The energies may be essentially youthful, but the techniques involved are really quite tricky and hard, and most of the young kids don't master them before they're out there. I thought it important to develop the technique whilst still trying to maintain the energy, and that's what made me move out to the farm. If you go back to Traffic it's clear that we wanted to express ourselves essentially musically; we weren't much interested in theatre, or visuals. On the other hand, I was never really a great piano player. . .
MUSICIAN: Maybe not technically, but that's what I loved about your playing. It was rough and earthy, lotsa' soul, I could listen to your organ playing on the live side of the *Last Exit* album all day. You have a certain touch. . .
WINWOOD: But that's not piano. Do you see what I'm saying? Organ is a very different instrument that requires quite a different technique. Much closer to synthesizer, actually. Elton John, for instance, is a great piano player, but whenever he goes to synth it doesn't work, cause they're like apples and oranges. I've played keyboards for years, but I'd really have to work quite a bit harder to master them. So when synthesizers came in, especially polysynths, it opened a whole new door for me. I just regret that it didn't happen 15 years earlier.
MUSICIAN: But isn't it true that in actual fact the synth forces you to play a different kind of music in some ways?
WINWOOD: It might do, but it shouldn't. You ought to be able to make music with spaces in it on a synth. It's the polysynth on this album which in many ways makes up for the lack of musicianship on the basic tracks — that gives it that texture. The mono synth I've used more to imitate horns and that kind of thing.
MUSICIAN: Let's talk about the new solo album. You play all the instruments on it, don't you?
WINWOOD: Right. Including the background vocals.

We would do a bad gig, and there would be 25-30 thousand people going mad, saying it was just fantastic... you just can't hold up under that kind of pressure.

MUSICIAN: Had it been a goal or ambition of yours to do something like this?
WINWOOD: Well, before I answer that let me say that I'm aware that doing this kind of thing can be a real cop out.
MUSICIAN: How so?
WINWOOD: Because you can play the finished product for

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The supergroup Blind Faith: Steve Winwood, keyboards and vocals; Rick Grech, bass; Ginger Baker, drums; Eric Clapton, guitar.

people and they'll say "Hmm, yeah, that's O.K.", and then you say "I did it all myself" and they say "WHAT?""Fantastic!". So I want to say that the idea was not to impress people. I'd started to put the ideas down on tape with the possibility of using people, and then I just thought in my stubborn bloody-minded sort of way "Well, I'm going to do the whole thing like this." I'd sunk nearly all my money in my new home studio and so I had the opportunity to work on my own and at my own pace. I thought doing it this way would be quick, inexpensive, and easy, and it turned out to be slow, expensive, and difficult. That lesson came home to me quite soon!

MUSICIAN: How did you actually go about doing it? What tracks would you lay down first? Was there a particular instrument you'd always start with?

WINWOOD: I don't believe in using formulas to write or make records, because as soon as I arrive at one it's always so exciting to break it. It's like a compulsion to break the formula, to satisfy myself, my own curiosity, in case I'm missing something. On this album the approach varied with each track. Sometimes I'd begin with keyboards, on a couple of them I started with drums. . .

MUSICIAN: That must be incredibly difficult . .

WINWOOD: It's not hard to hear what the thing might sound like in your head while you're laying down the drum part. It's difficult, sure, but not impossible. The really difficult aspect of it was all the caps you had to wear. You had to listen to everything over and over again from different perspectives, with different ears, as it were: one for the writer, then put on the producer's cap, then the bass player's cap. . . I thought I was in danger of wearing out the tape from playing it back so much!

MUSICIAN: Isn't it hard to work up that passion and kineticism when you're doing it all by yourself, when you don't have other band members to interact with?

WINWOOD: I can see what you mean, but that wasn't really my problem. I'm used to doing sessions with other people where I have to overdub on tape, with nobody else there. So you have to bounce off the tape. Then again there are producers who believe that no good records have ever been made with overdubbing, but I'm not one of those. I don't agree that everything must be done then and there or else.

MUSICIAN: Speaking of sessions, your work with Marianne Faithfull on *Broken English* was very well received in the States. What kind of a role did you play on that album, besides the overdubbing? Did you have anything to do with the arrangements?

WINWOOD: I did work on the arrangements a bit, but I didn't write any material for that album, though we're now working together on her new record, and I have written a song for that one. I worked quite a bit with the producer on that first album, I remember we spent a lot of time working out that synth section on "Ballad Of Lucy Jordan", trying to find something that would work well.

MUSICIAN: What about that repetitive bass riff in "Broken English"? Did you make up that figure?

WINWOOD: Yeah, I made that up on the synth. I was told — I was going to say in no uncertain terms, but that's not right; it was more like I was told in *un*certain terms — what to do, if you know what to do, if you know what I mean. Well, this is Musician Magazine, so I guess your readers are sophisticated enough to understand. I was told what was required, and came up with that. Although it sounds like the whole track was based on that, it was actually overdubbed.

MUSICIAN: I never would have imagined. . .

WINWOOD: Yeah, it sounds like a sequencer was used and everything laid on top of that, but not so. I played the whole thing, because obviously you can't overdub a sequencer.

MUSICIAN: How precise were the instructions from the producer.

WINWOOD: Well, he usually said things like "I want it to sound like lemmings going over a cliff. . ."

MUSICIAN: I see. Speaking of going over a cliff, we never finished the Traffic story. After *John Barleycorn* came *Low Spark Of High Heeled Boys*, which seemed to mark another transition point.

WINWOOD: Right. We were going through a lot of changes, adding extra people, and Jim Capaldi was getting more into songwriting and wanted to leave off drums, so we got in a new drummer and extra musicians.

MUSICIAN: Did that drastically alter the band's chemistry?

WINWOOD: In one way it was a great help to Traffic, and in

continued on pg. 104

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POP-JAZZ INSTRUMENTALISTS

Is the pop instrumental merely jazz trivialized? Actually, its best artists have far different roots, the Blues, R&B and pop, and believe simple melody and strong emotion are essentials.

By Crispin Cioe

ANDY FREEBERG/ENCORE

Grover Washington Jr. was told by Hank Crawford to play his horn as if it were the woman he loved.

Great pop instrumentals have been every bit as important and memorable in my life as any Beatles album, Coltrane solo, or Miles Davis tune. A finely crafted pop instrumental endures by projecting a mood so clearly and deeply without words, by summing up with pure melody and current rhythms a place, a time, an emotion — the sort of things we might usually find in lyrics. I think about the year JFK was assassinated and I remember pianist Vince Guaraldi's wistfully stomping "Cast Your Fate To The Wind." Jr. Walker and the All Stars' "Shotgun" was only half-instrumental — although lines like "we're gonna pick tomatoes, dig potatoes" were more like field holler than top-10 hit — but the song just as surely summed up that brief but flashy period in the '60s when soul music and sharkskin suits ruled. From decades long past, a former jukebox instrumental jewel like tenor sax king Coleman Hawkins' "Stumpy" still projects the crazy, uptempo '40s swing mania that kept jitterbugs hopping on the dance floor and elbows bent at the bar. In the last decade, certain instrumentals have snuck updated pop gospel (the Crusaders' "Way Back Home" and "Put It Where You Want It"), Sly Stone-derived 16th note jazz-funk (Herbie Hancock's "Chameleon"), horn-driven dance anthems (AWB's "Pick Up The Pieces", the Brecker Bros.' "Sneakin' Up Behind You"), sophisticated fusion (Weather Report's "Birdland"), and sugary but sure-footed melodicism (Chuck Mangione's "Feels So Good") onto the pop radio. And whether tunes like these end up as theme songs for Tom Snyder or half-time music at an NBA game, they share a common ground in our musical memories.

The fact that a pop instrumental is played on millions of jukes and radio stations only enhances such a song's hoodoo power. On a deeper level, though, it's part of a long heritage that involves any era's most expressive musicians, from Charlie Parker to King Curtis to George Benson to Jeff Beck. Usually these musicians have jazz backgrounds and complete technical command of their instruments. With that jazz training come early exposure to honky tonks, dancing, R&R, R&B, blues, and the night club scene in general. This alchemy produces an exceptional focus on direct communication via shading of notes and inflection, rhythmic accuracy and overall tonal mastery. A great pop instrumentalist may not be a great soloist in the jazz-blowing sense of the term (although Hawkins, Benson, Mike Brecker & Zawinul most certainly are), because the bottom line here isn't how many convincing choruses of "Giant Steps" a guy can play. Rather, this is a more condensed art form: the short, crystalline solo is everything (examples within famous pop vocal tunes would include Amos Garrett's ethereal guitar solo on Maria Muldaur's "Midnight At The Oasis" and virtually every solo by saxist David "Fathead" Newman with the old Ray Charles band.)

In recent months I've talked with a few leaders in the pop instrumental field today: sax players David Sanborn and Grover Washington, and pianist / arranger / composer / producer Bob James. I also spoke with Jr. Walker, a master blaster from the past who still sounds great and whose highly original style continues to have great influence. I leaned towards sax players here because it's the one Western instrument whose innate timbre is closest to the human voice, and as such is still the most prominent solo voice in pop instrumentals today.

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Born Autry Dewalt in South Bend, Indiana, Jr. Walker came on like gangbusters in the '60s with a sound that combined the brawny Texas tenor style popularized in rock'n'roll by players like King Curtis and Sam "The Man" Taylor, with the passionately sweet sound of '60s soul. He freely used high harmonic notes and had an uncanny agility with syncopated phrasing and tonguing. Starting with his trademark riff — those first three notes in "Shotgun" that spell out a major triad — Jr. Walker's style and mastery of pentatonic melody established him as a major source for all modern pop-rock instrumental playing. I caught up with Jr. when he played to dancing crowds at the Ritz Ballroom in Manhattan last fall, and he recalled the early background that led to his nonpareil style.

"I started on alto, then switched to tenor sax when a guy gave me one, which I first learned to repair and fix up. I started out playing by going to Sunday afternoon jam sessions, listening, and then going home and working on the tunes. I listened to all kinds of horn players on record: Arnett Cobb, Prez, Jug, Illinois Jacquet, Boots Randolph, you name it; I'd listen to records for hours in my room, getting the feeling. Then I started playing in bands. I got the name Jr. Walker because when I was a kid I walked everywhere — to school, to gigs. Once I was playing a club in South Bend and I walked right out of the club and into the alley while I was blowing. Everybody followed me, which brought the police down and put an end to that."

"I'd intended to continue playing jazz, but I also wasn't eating too good, and I found I could pick up a little more change playing with blues bands. It was hard times then for a lot of cats, so I moved on over to blues gigs, using what I'd learned from jazz, of course. A lot of sax players couldn't handle those blues keys anyway — you know, E and A natural — and I knew the horn real well, so it was no problem blowing those guitarists' minds and getting gigs. I even lived in St. Louis for a bit, worked at the airport, and played all kinds of blues, with guys like Albert King. Later, I was playing a lot in Battle Creek, Michigan, and by then the band was under my name. A guy named Johnny Bristol (who later produced Jr.'s famed "What Does It Take To Win Your Love") came out from Detroit to hear us, and said 'You should be making records, man.' I says, 'Is there any money in it?', he says, 'Yea,' and I said, 'Let's go.' In Detroit Johnny introduced me to Berry Gordy of Motown and producer Harvey Fuqua. I had written a tune called 'Shotgun,' based on a dance everybody was doing then. When we went in to cut that song, the singer in the band never showed for the session. So since I'd written the song, I had to sing it, which is something I'd never done before that session. We cut it in two takes, and everybody in the Motown studio that day knew it was a hit. In fact, all the studio musicians who had been making fun of us, calling us the 'Funk Brothers,' suddenly wanted to play on all our records after that. To tell the truth, though, our drummer couldn't really make the drum part on 'Shotgun' — ta dum, ta dum, ta dum, ta dum — so Fuqua called in the famous Motown session guy, Benny Benjamin, and he played on it. And there was a whole lot of hits after 'Shotgun' too."

JAMES HAMILTON

Jr. Walker, whose R&B and soul instrumental hits got the whole thing going in the 60s, still loves playing for the people and making them dance.

Walker hasn't recorded an album in a year or so, but he's playing plenty of new material and says he'll be in an L.A. studio recording soon. Meanwhile, he continues to tour the world. Why? He laughed as he grabbed his horn and headed towards the stage while his band (including son Art on pile-driving drums) kicked into the opening bars of "Roadrunner," and called back over his shoulder: "I always love to play for people, man."

Saxophonically, altoist David Sanborn is a direct descendant of Jr Walker and other R&B/jazz stylists, though he's transcended his influences and has emerged with one of the most compelling instrumental sounds in pop. It's a trebly tone, even for alto, but never loses its richness and color. After years of recording and touring with all forms of contemporary amplified music — including Stevie Wonder, Paul Butterfield, Gil Evans, James Brown, David Bowie, the Brecker Brothers, and Linda Ronstadt — he evolved a vibrant tonal concept that can compete with electric guitar distortion and volume levels without sacrificing the integrity of the alto's sound. In recent months producers have used his solos to help confer hit status on singles by artists as diverse as Aretha Franklin and Pure Prairie League. More importantly, with his fifth solo LP, *Hideaway*, Sanborn has finally hit stride in his own recording career.

Bob James believes strong and very structured thematic motives and melodies are the key to pop instrumental hits.

DARRYL PITT/ENCORE

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David Sanborn, meditating on the overtones of bus exhaust, eschews technique for tone color, dynamics and instinct.

The album features the fullest recorded sound on his horn to date and leaner arrangements of (mostly) self-penned material. It's a showcase for his own impressionistic palette; from lushly smeared notes on ballads to virtuosic control of blues and funk inflections to a delicate, vocal sense of phrasing and dynamics. I spoke with David recently at his lower Manhattan loft, where he lives, composes and jams with his recording band and friends. He had been busy all week finishing overdubs for a new Rickie Lee Jones album, and we talked at length about his musical development and outlook.

"I'm from St Louis, and I started playing alto at 11, but even before that my father had taken me to hear the Ray Charles Show, where Hank Crawford made a big impression on me. He had that warm, yet distant sound on alto. At 15, I was gigging around with local blues and R&B people. Albert King, Little Milton, Ike and Tina Turner. My development was always a little haphazard: in high school I played baritone in the band because I couldn't read music very well, but every night I'd play in clubs and roadhouses, especially one in Blackjack, Missouri that had chickenwire around the bandstand. I saw somebody get killed in the Blue Note Club in E. St. Louis while I played. One summer I worked that club from midnite to 6, 7 nights a week, in an organ combo that included Phillip Wilson on drums and Hammiett Bluiett on baritone. I went to college for a while at Northwestern and in Iowa, and in Chicago I did a stint with Sonny Stitt. The first night he gave me that condor look then called out 'Cherokee in B' at some ridiculously fast tempo. Of course, I immediately discovered my limitations in that style. I never fully understood the bebop vocabulary, but it's something I practice always.

"I think of myself as primarily an R&B player because that's how I came up, playing for dancers I mean, I dance to Miles Davis, and I think all music is visceral, it's felt before the brain tries to figure it out. Albert King would play the same solo every night, but what a solo! In fact, I guess I related to guitar players first, which is probably why I play on the sharp side. I learned to play in E and A first & bright, stinging keys. Most sax players learn in flat keys, which have a more muffled quality on the instrument."

> ***"I related to guitar players first, which is why I play on the sharp side. I learned to play in E and A first, bright and stinging keys. It's the natural upper partials, the overtones, that I look for, to be sensitive to the sound of the notes being played."***
> ***Dave Sanborn***

In conversation I found Sanborn's analysis of his own playing revealed a distinctive tone-color approach to improvisation that illuminates his unique sound. "Music is about taking in information and sending it back out; a player's point of view is what people relate to, and technique is supposed to allow you to play what you hear. That's why you practice, to have an arsenal of things at your command. But this can also become an end in itself, like when you get 9,000 players from Berklee School of Music practicing "Giant Steps" 12 hours a day. I've always had some technical limitations — I don't have the finger quickness of, say, Mike Brecker — so I generated toward certain things partly due to my limitations.

"It's the natural upper partials, the overtones, that I look for, to follow a melodic pattern when improvising, to be sensitive to the *sound* of the note being played. A lot of my sound is playing with overtones, and I have to use LaVoz reeds to get it, because with them I can hear and play with those partials. Also, the Dukoff mouthpiece projects very well. A note in a passage, like C, isn't just a C — it's got horizontal movement, with another note or space before and after, so there are different ways to approach that note. Dynamics are the key for me here, rather than just hard-edged soloing through changes, and this is the way I've always felt about playing. I'll use different vowel sounds for notes, or different kinds of tonguing. I just love the texture and color of a sound — I even

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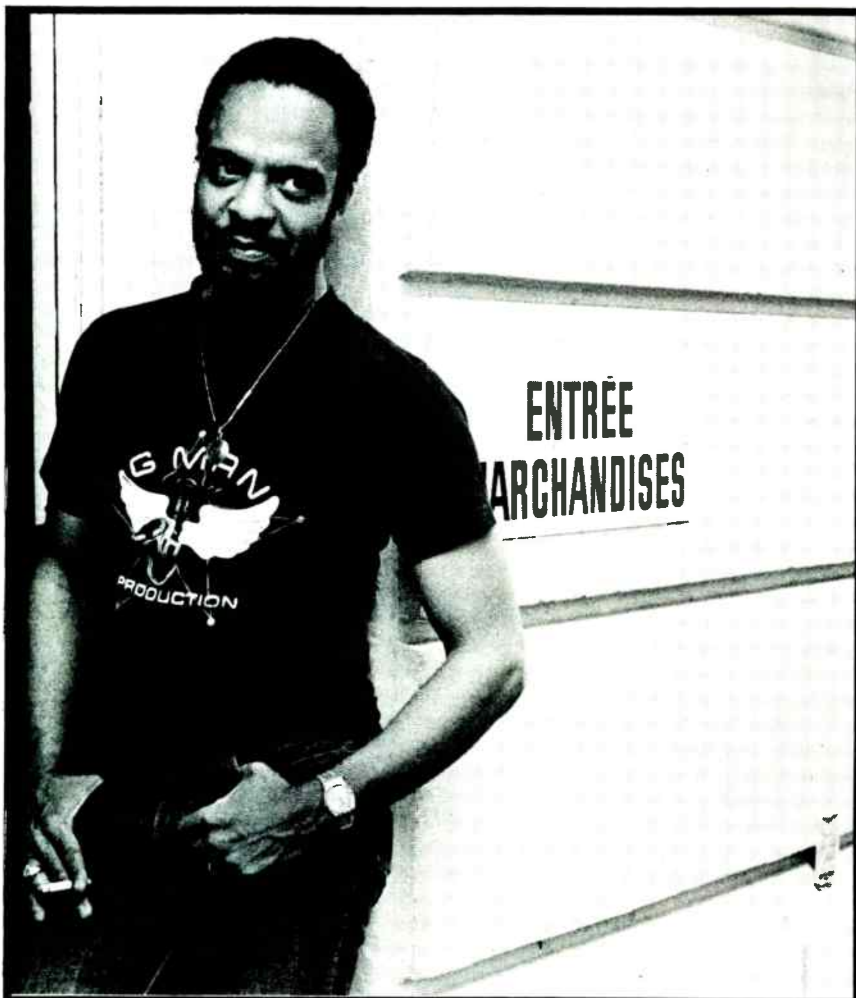

DARRYL PITT/ENCORE

Grover learns the words to a song before the notes to put across its meaning.

like the overtones of a bus exhaust."

Before I left that afternoon David played some demos of material for his next LP, including a couple of very funky syncopators written by his astounding young bassist, Marcus Miller. Halfway through one rhythm track Sanborn's unmistakable sound came on the tape, playing with different melodic ideas. He smiled and said, "It's about interrupting space, too, treating sound and silence with equal weight, and Miles is a master of that. You're not just soloing, you're interacting with other musicians, creating textures, density . . . . and dance-ity."

Grover Washington is another sax player who's a leading pop instrumentalist, though his approach is quite different. I first heard him as a session player on late '60s / early '70s / Prestige and CTI / jazz-funk albums, like Boogaloo Joe Jones' *No Way*, Johnny Hammond's *Breakout*, and Randy Weston's *Blue Moses*. His warm tone and fiery soulfulness stood out immediately, and a viable solo career began soon after on CTI with *Inner City Blues*, taking off dramatically with *Mister Magic* in 1975. After leaving CTI (which also folded as a label soon afterward), Grover was occasionally slagged in the press and by some musicians for "commercializing" jazz, presumably because the critics assumed he was a "jazz" player who quit playing straightahead, 4/4, mainstream jazz to make bucks. My own opinion is that his albums have indeed been uneven — some a tad overproduced or busy for my taste, which leans toward pared-down funk — but that he's done appealing, sincere work as an instrumentalist on all his albums. I also happen to like his newest release, *Winelight*, as much as his early smokers; the album strikes a nice balance between his bona fide R&B attack and a mellow, balladic sensibility. But as always, a good story lurks behind every interesting career, and a phone conversation with Grover last month from his home in Philadelphia (he's given up the road for at least a year while he picks up a master's degree in composition from Temple University) supplied fresh insights about a musician who has wide-ranging taste and big ears.

"I've played all kinds of music," Grover, now 36, began, "from Charlie Parker-style bebop to Ramsey Lewis' '60s funk to avant garde, and what's always been most important to me is to be true to my heart. My nature is that sometimes I feel like doing something funky, sometimes I feature an old standard, like 'Don't Explain,' sometimes a lowdown blues like 'Afterhours.' I'm also an incurable romantic, and I love songs with a message; Stevie Wonder's tunes are among my favorites. I decided to record that song Michael Jackson did, 'I Can't Help It,' before I even knew Stevie had written it. I always learn the words before I start playing a song, to learn the meaning first, so I can phrase it right and make it live."

Washington's father and uncle both played sax, and he grew up schooled in "all the greats: Don Byas, Sonny Rollins, Wardell Gray, Ben Webster, and so on. But I also played a lot of record hops and organ combos; playing for dancers and very live crowds taught me a lot about using dynamics, because that was the way to build excitement. I played with organists like Charles Earland and Johnny Hammond later, guys who knew all the old and new songs, as well as all the right changes. I was in the Army Band, where I met Billy Cobham, and through him, met a lot of great New York jazz musicians. I got to where I could be flexible, playing a Latin session in the morning, a jazz gig at night, and maybe a rock date the next day. At the same time, I made a point of studying the lives of the jazz giants, even back to the '20s. One thing about them all was that they played gut feelings always, they played brilliantly always, whether they were sick or well. I was playing on a Hank Crawford album date years ago for CTI, and he never made it to the session. Creed Taylor asked me if I wanted to do it, and I said I didn't really play much alto, didn't even own one. He said he'd have one for me the next day to play; I came in, played it for a half hour, and did the album. It was my first solo LP, *Inner City Blues*. You know, Hank Crawford had been my teacher for awhile, and he always said that I should play the horn as if it were the woman I love, with that much feeling and care. I've always tried to do that."

Grover is pleased with his new release and with the fact that he's playing with some of the same musicians on those early CTI sides. "This album gave me the chance to get into the melodies again, rather than letting the arrangements get into me too much. We did most of the tracks live at percussionist Ralph MacDonald's Rosebud Studio, and we played off each other a lot. But then, I also try to have each album be different from the ones before, to cover different musical terrain. That's just my nature, I guess."

Finally, I talked with Bob James, whose records often *do* turn up as intro music for the *Tomorrow* show. James' tunes are insistently thematic, and some would say function totally as background music. But anyone this successful with pop instrumentals is striking some genuinely responsive chords in

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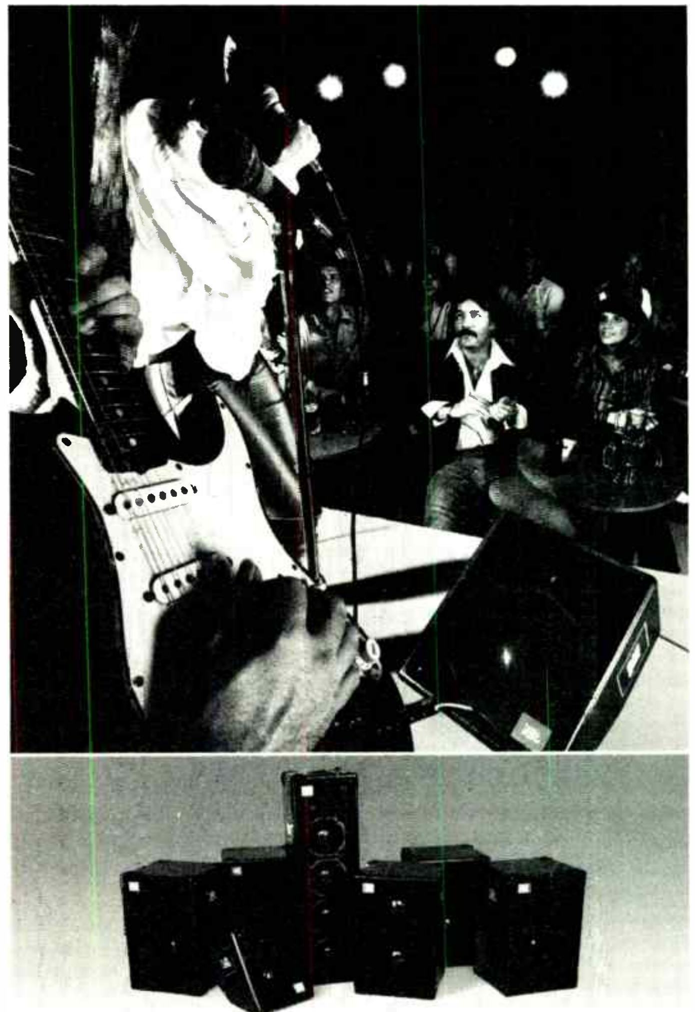

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Sanborn: "primarily an R&B player"

many people. His latest, *H*, uses studio stalwarts like guitarist Hiram Bullock, drummer Buddy Williams, and even Grover Washington, Jr., as well as members of Billy Joel's band on several cuts. His own keyboard playing is sometimes restrained, but he has a graceful touch and an unerring sense of comping chords, especially on Fender Rhodes (my favorite James tune, "Westchester Lady," has its whole melody based on slightly echoed Rhodes-voiced chording). At the heart of Bob James' talent is an honest slickness and sophistication, an architectural sense of arrangement and solo structure, rather than an R&B-based rhythmic sensibility. When I met with him at his midtown Manhattan office, he spoke of his varied roots.

"I graduated from the University of Michigan with a master's in composition, but during college I had a jazz trio that played every week. In 1962 we brought Eric Dolphy to Ann Arbor to play with us, and we even recorded an avant-garde album for Mercury Records. We moved to New York after graduating, thinking we'd make it big immediately. As it turned out, I got no real work for years, but ended up staying in New York. Later, I cut an album of electronic music for ESP, then began arranging for various singers, including Morgana King, Aretha Franklin, and Sarah Vaughan. Later, Quincy Jones, who'd heard my college band, asked me to arrange a tune for his *Walking In Space* which is how I met producer Creed Taylor. When Creed started CTI Records in the early '70s, he asked me to arrange and later record for the label. Creed had the concept of taking established jazz artists, like Freddie Hubbard or Joe Farrell, and adding production values. I was an arranger, along with Don Sebesky and others, who could, say, do string and horn charts but could also play jazz and relate well to musicians. The eclectic style of CTI agreed with my own sensibility and with my varied musical experiences in New York, and it's stayed with me over the years. I'd have to count Quincy Jones as another lasting influence. Besides being a great arranger, he has an incredible ability to make things happen in the studio. He represents a quality that makes musicians want to give the music something extra, so there's an excitement in the air on his dates.

"I enjoy making music that communicates directly with people, and always have, even when doing avant-garde stuff. To me, music-making, no matter how far out it gets, is something you do for people, not just for yourself or other musicians. I was always interested in how it would affect the total layman, who doesn't know a C from a B*b*. The best music to me will communicate with a layman and a musician, and that especially applies to a group like Earth, Wind & Fire today. Maybe this is the 1980's equivalent of the way we felt about Basie in the early days: simple, direct music without too many notes, but that communicates in a straight-ahead way.

"I feel that a record, as distinct from live jazz performance, demands strong and structured thematic motives and melodies, if it's going to get played and listened to by a lot of people. And even the improvisation on such a record has to be carefully showcased. However, generally when I record I try to get a loose, improvisational excitement happening when the rhythm section is laying down tracks. Then I'll listen to those tapes, live with them for awhile, and write horn charts and other overdub parts based on things like the freely improvised drum accents that occurred on the basic tracks. That's generally how I work in the studio."

"Maybe Earth, Wind & Fire is the 1980's equivalent of the way we felt about Basie in the early days: simple direct music without too may notes."

Bob James

Perhaps "everyday" is a good adjective to describe the music these musicians make and represent — a music

DARRYL PITT ENCORE

James: "simple, direct music"

that's neither as verbose as fusion nor as harmonically and improvisationally complex as bebop and its outgrowths. Certainly people don't listen to these artists expecting to hear the extended-form pyrotechnic excursions of a Sam Rivers or the serpentine melodicism of a Dizzy Gillespie. By the same token, though, the pop instrumentalists I spoke with don't strike me as "jazz" players who've "gone commercial" by playing in an unnatural style (which *has* happened with such admitted jazz masters as Freddie Hubbard). Rather, Jr. Walker really loves to dance, sing and play for writhing dance crowds; Grover Washington, Jr. calls himself "an incurable romantic", and truly embodies the classic saxophone organ combo tradition writ large, combining hip cover versions of current standards with precision-grooved funk; David Sanborn's emotionally charged fusion of roadhouse R&B roots, lush, melodic statements and occasional bop flurries is an accurate reflection of his life in music; and Bob James' blend of careful arrangements and well-crafted melodies, some of them quite memorable, is also a sincere statement that can stand up as solidly unpretentious good listening or, just as convincingly, as great background music. This is music that's literally in the air; the very fact of its commonness, its mass appeal and repeated performance becomes an artistic ingredient. I'm glad that musicians this committed are working in this form; they make the airwaves and dance floors safer places to be. M

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JOHN LENNON

By Vic Garbarini, Interview by Barbara Graustark

We've got to come up with a better word than tragedy to describe the death of John Lennon. It's not just that it doesn't begin to convey the scope of our loss, sorrow, and pain — there's so much that needs to be said that it ignores, or even misrepresents. In the classic Shakespearean sense, tragedy implied that the victim had a hand in his or her own demise by means of some fatal flaw or action. I fail to see that here. The word also suggests a sense of incompletion, of promises unkept, of potential unfulfilled. Elvis Presley's death was tragic. So was John Bonham's, I guess, and maybe even Tim Hardin's. But as anyone who reads this interview with a clear head (and heart) must see, there was just too much damn joy, hope, and triumph crammed into John Lennon's forty years on this planet for us to speak of him in terms of an unfulfilled life. The kind of triumph I'm talking about had nothing to do with his fame, his music, or what he accomplished, but with how he handled them — what he did with the fruits of his labors. It's not just that he'd freed himself from the oppression of governments, the music industry, and other institutions of that ilk. His was a much greater victory. By the end, through struggle, perserverance and determination, (and a little help from his friends), John Lennon had begun to free himself from the biggest obstacle any of us ever encounters. Himself.

The Beatles were our means of self discovery. They were true catalysts, the agents of our generations awakening, helping to reveal to us our potential as individuals and as a community. Like modern day shamans, they became vehicles through which we contacted our own deeper nature, our collective unconscious or whatever you choose to call it. But as John stated in his last interview, the Beatles weren't apart from society, they *were* society. It was a self liberation, and they became the instruments through which we discovered our birthright. It's important that we begin to understand this whole process, as John had finally done. Certainly, we owe him that much. Unlike most people who become mediums for that kind of cultural transformation, John resisted the temptation to let his ego take credit for what was happening, to spoil it by clogging that creative opening with his own greed and egoism. He struggled to transform his anger, pain and frustration into a force for his own and others' liberation, striving to maintain contact with the source of his inspiration. In the process he came to the inner realization that it was indeed true, as all the sacred texts had told him, that creativity was a gift. That we didn't really own his songs any more than he owned the wind. Reaching that kind of freedom is not easy. It requires a painful process of stripping away illusion, of letting go of "Elvis Beatle" to find John Lennon. The real John Lennon. It also requires commitment, the courage to take risks, and yes, even a willingness to make a fool of oneself on occassion. And it *was* a true liberation — not total by any means, the man was riddled with faults like all of us — but true in the sense that it occured on an essential level. The action the Beatles initiated in us had such force because it, too, touched us in our depths, in the place where we all touch each other, where there's a true oneness, where it's not a sentimental cliche to say "I am he as you are me as we are all together." We'd forgotten about that place, lost touch with it until it became crusted over and the connections

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atrophied, until that network of intuitive unity was only an embarrassing memory. Maybe we really never understood the process in the first place. We're not a civilization that's learned to understand the laws and forces that determine our creative potential, our art, and our lives. Maybe we didn't know, but somehow we instinctively understood.

On December 8 that common space, that long-forgotten sanctuary was jolted awake again in many of us, and we found we were still part of the same nervous system. It continued all that week, culminating in Sunday's vigil, described so simply and clearly by Yoko: "I saw we were one mind." And we were. In such moments we move closer to being truly human, to a place in all of us that's outside of time and space, and from which flows all that we value in our inner world: creativity, joy, music itself:

> *"When the real music comes to me — the music of the spheres, the music that surpasseth understanding — that has nothing to do with me, cause I'm just the channel. The only joy for me is for it to be given to me, and to transcribe it like a medium...those moments are what I live for."* — John Lennon

What's touched in us at such times is not just emotion, but something far greater and more satisfying. It's our own potential, the future urging us forward, and we have to learn to respond to it, cooperate with that higher part of ourselves if our lives are to be anything more than just mechanical exercises in the worship of quantity over quality. We have to be active in this process of transformation, and through his example John Lennon showed us how to begin to empty ourselves of all the crap that blocks our contact with that inner strength, to prepare ourselves to let that part of ourselves awaken and flourish, and to establish and maintain contact with that inner strength that "surpasseth understanding."

We need all the help we can get with this kind of endeavor, and certainly the most important factor in John's growth was Yoko Ono. Some thought of her as the Dragon Lady — an unhealthy, domineering influence on their hero. Recently she's emerged as a kind of Lady Madonna, his main source of strength and sustenance. Which is the real Yoko? Well, it depends on what level we're looking at. On the surface, John's mother fixation seemed an unhealthy regression, and Yoko's somewhat cool and uncompromising personality made her an easy target for those who disliked her. That may all be partly true, but it misses the essential point. In a deep and profound way, Yoko became a mother to him in the true sense of the word. She constantly nurtured his inner being, and far from protecting him from the world, she forced him to face both it and himself — to drop the masks, illusions, and ego trips and find out who he really was. His true nature. I sometimes feel that as Americans we've missed some of the point about women's liberation. How can we liberate what we don't understand? We have much to thank John and Yoko for, and much to learn from the depth, understanding, and commitment evidenced in their Heart Play.

In the end there was a sense of wonder and hope amidst the pain and grief as he passed from us not as a flame snuffed out, but more like a comet illuminating our lonely night, showing us once again parts of ourselves that we weren't sure we still believed in. He had been part of the instrument of our original awakening in the 60's, and his death was a final, ironic gift that enabled us to reaffirm our unity. Some spoke of losing a part of themselves, but it wasn't like that. We'd rediscovered something we no longer dared believe in, the power and grandeur of our own spirits. We glimpsed that space before, on Ed Sullivan Show in '64, at Woodstock, at the Fillmore, and felt ashamed of our naivete when we dared to embrace the vision. Our naivete was not in believing in the reality of those events, but in thinking that these glimpses into another reality could sustain themselves indefinitely. We're still a long way from becoming citizens of that world, and it's going to take a lot of struggle and work to get there, if we do. This is no longer just a question of utopian daydreaming, as our lack of contact with the inner reality of things has resulted in a hollow civilization that's crumbling before our eyes, and it's going to get worse before it gets better. Much worse.

"You say you want a revolution
why don't you free your mind instead?"

By the end, John Lennon knew that any society or system could only be as strong and conscious as the individuals comprising it. And unlike most of us, he had the guts to put into practice what he'd begun to realize in his own inner searching: To strive to maintain contact with the inner sources of transcendence and reality that had touched him, to learn what was required of him in order to play his role as an active agent in his own transformation, and to pursue that path, wherever it led him, and in spite of whatever obstacles, inner or outer, stood in his way.

The following excerpts were taken from an interview with John Lennon and Yoko Ono originally done for *Newsweek* magazine by Barbara Graustark in September 1980. This expanded version is from the recent book ***Strawberry Fields Forever: John Lennon Remembered***, an appreciation of John and Yoko's life and music by *Musician* staffers Vic Garbarini and Brian Cullman, with Barbara Graustark.

Withdrawal

"I'd been under contract since I was twenty-two and I was always *supposed* to, *supposed* to. I was *supposed* to write a hundred songs by Friday, *supposed* to have a single out by Saturday, *supposed* to do this and do that. It dawned on me that the reason I became an artist was freedom; because I couldn't fit into the classroom, the college, the society. I was the outsider. And that freedom was what I cherished — that was the plus for all the minuses of being an oddball...that I was free, and everybody else had to go to the office. But suddenly, it was exactly the opposite of what I had set out to be. I was obliged to a record company, obliged to the media, obliged to the public, obliged to the American immigration, obliged to go to court every time some asshole bumped into me on the street.

So I said, "What the hell is this? I'm not free at all." I know freedom is in the mind but I couldn't clear my mind. So it was time to regroup.

The fear in the music business is that you don't exist if you're not in the gossip columns, or on the charts, at Xenon with Mick Jagger or Andy Warhol. I just wanted to remember that I existed at all.

At first it was very hard not to be doing something musical because I felt I ought to be. But musically my mind was just a big clutter. It wasn't a question of not having anything to say — if you listen to my early records, there's a dumb song on *Sgt. Pepper* called "Good Morning." There's absolutely nothing to say — just descriptions of paintings of what is. I never have illusions about having something to say but, "It's OK, good morning, good morning, good morning," as the dumb song goes. Quack, quack, quack. It wasn't a matter of nothing to say — it was a matter of no clarity and no desire to do it BECAUSE I WAS SUPPOSED TO. There was a hard withdrawal period, what people must go through at sixty-five, and then I started being a househusband, and swung my attention onto Sean. Then I realized, I'm not supposed to be doing something — I *am* doing something. And then I was free.

Getting Free

I was a working class macho guy that didn't know any better. Yoko taught me about women. I was used to being served, like Elvis and a lot of the stars were. And Yoko didn't buy that. She didn't give a shit about Beatles — what the fuck are the Beatles? "I'm Yoko Ono! Treat me as me." That was the battle. She came out with "Woman Is the Nigger of the World" in 1968 as the title of an article she wrote for *Nova* magazine. Because things were like they were, I took the title and wrote the song.

But it was her statement and what she was saying to the world she was saying to Lennon in spades. I had never considered it before. From the day I met her, she demanded equal time, equal space, equal rights. I didn't know what she was talking about. I said, "What do you want, a contract? You can have whatever you want, but don't expect anything from me or

Interview excerpts from *Strawberry Fields Forever*, a Delilah/Bantam book used with permission. A substantial portion of the proceeds from the sale of this book will be donated to the Spirit Foundation and other charities.

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for me to change in any way. Don't impinge in my space." "Well," she said, "The answer to that is I can't be here. Because there is no space where you are. Everything revolves around you. And I can't breathe in that atmosphere. I'm an artist, I'm not some female you picked up backstage." Well, I found out. And I'm thankful to her for the education.

I was used to a situation where the newspaper was there for me to read, and after I'd read it, somebody else could have it. It didn't occur to me that somebody else might want to look at it first. I think that's what kills people like Presley and others of that ilk. So-called stars who die in public and lots of people who die privately. The king is always killed by his courtiers, not by his enemies. The king is overfed, overdrugged, overindulged, anything to keep the king tied to his throne. Most people in that position never wake up. They either die mentally or physically or both. And what Yoko did for me, apart from liberating me to be a feminist, was to liberate me from that situation. And that's how the Beatles ended. Not because Yoko split the Beatles, but because she showed me what it was to *be* Elvis Beatle and to be surrounded by sycophants and slaves who were only interested in keeping the situation as it was. And that's a kind of death.

She said to me, "You've got no clothes on." Nobody had dared to tell me that before. Nobody dared tell Elvis Presley that, and I doubt if anybody ever dared to tell Mick Jagger, Paul McCartney, or Bob Dylan that they had no clothes on. I didn't accept it at first. "But I *am* clothed! Everything is perfect — *you're* crazy. Nobody tells me — I'm God. I'm King John of England. Nobody tells me nuthin'." Because nobody had. She told me, "You absolutely have no clothes on, and that man whisperin' in your ear is Machiavelli." "But he's been with me for twenty years!" "Then he's been screwin' you for twenty years." "Really?" I couldn't face any of that. She still tells me the truth. It's still painful.

Leaving the Beatles

"I was always waiting for a reason to get out of the Beatles from the day I made *How I Won the War* in 1966. I just didn't have the guts to do it, you see. Because I didn't know where to go. I remember why I made the movie. I did it because the Beatles had stopped touring and I didn't know what to do. So instead of going home, and being with the family, I immediately went to Spain with Dick Lester because I couldn't deal with not being continually onstage. That was the first time I thought, My God, what do you do if this isn't going on? What is there? There's no life without it.

And that's when the seed was planted that I had to somehow get out of this, without being thrown out by the others. But I could never step out of the palace because it was too frightening.

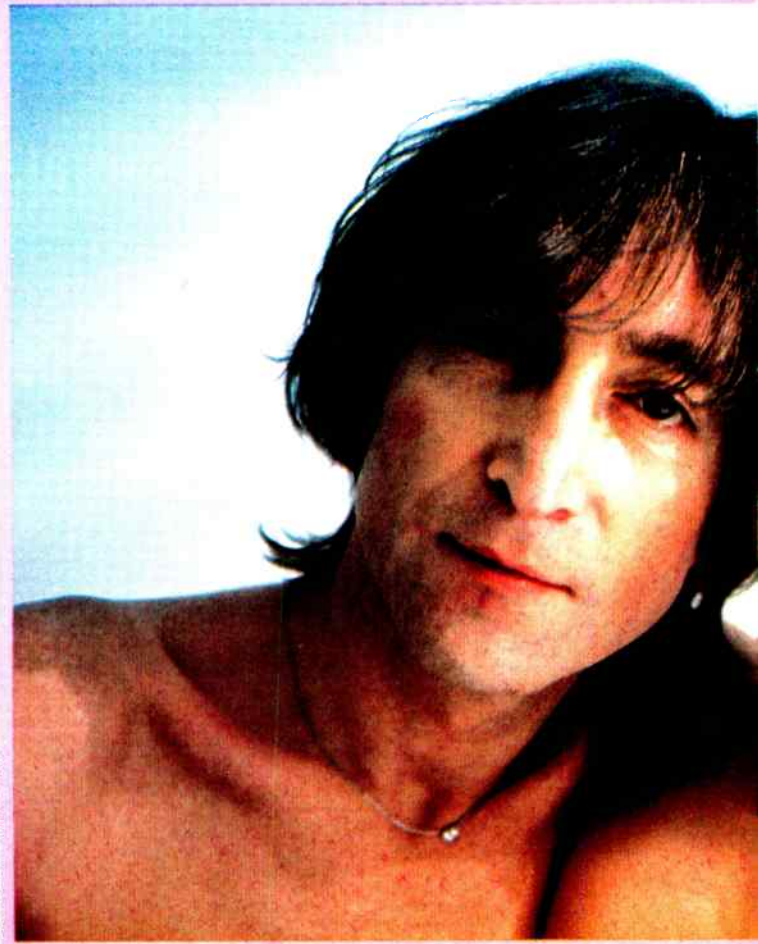
Creativity

I used to go through hell thinking I don't own any of my songs, and then it dawned on me that I never owned them in the first place. I don't own the copyright to anything I wrote up until *Walls and Bridges*. So I don't own any of the old so-called Beatles songs. I get writer royalties from them, but I don't own the copyright. I have to ask permission to do things to it, or whatever, and that used to make me suffer, and think I'd been robbed. I might have read that somewhere, that people don't own music, and I read it a hundred times, but it didn't make sense to me until it dawned on me that I'd have known it myself, you know what I mean? Because you can't own — how can you own it? It's insane. I can't believe that I would think that I owned it before — that's what's so strange. It's an illusion — ownership is an illusion. Like possession. Ownership is the same as possession. It's impossible.

Yoko and Children

Being with Yoko makes me free, you know. Being with Yoko makes me whole. I'm a half without her. Male is half without a female. We're like spiritual advisers to each other. You can do it correct, but there's something not there, only somebody close to each other, like this can tell each other what it is. But the spirit is in the way it's being performed.

That Judeo-Christian story that we've been living by for two thousand years, is that God and everything is some other thing outside of ourselves — that continual us and them relationship with God, with children, with animals, with nature, the environment, where we've conquered nature, worshipped God, we deal with children, it's this separation business that I don't believe exists. It's just an idea and so I cannot separate Sean from the environment or from me or from the other end of the universe, whatever that may or may not be. That it is one living organism. So therefore however I deal with you, I deal with Sean, and vice versa. But he's not separate from me. I don't deal with my left leg any different from my right ear. I deal with the reality of the shape, and where it's placed, and how I look after, or wash different parts of the body, but I don't consider them separate. The first thing I noticed about Sean in the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hospital was that when the black nurses came to feed him they would put the radio on, they're not supposed to, but they do. The radio would be on all the time...usually off the station blaring into these intensive care kids who are dying like little shriveled rabbits. Anyway, black nurses had on station WBLS, and when she fed the baby, she would hold him and give the bottle...like the whites would come in, switch it to the country-and-western, sit down, sit there like this, smoking. So the first thing I did was...got to get the rhythm. Whenever I fed him, I put the music on Bumm, bumm dee dummm. Now he moves like this! So in that way he was trained in music and he has my jukebox in his playroom."

Withdrawal II

I've withdrawn many times. Once to the Himalayas with Maharishi and all the press wrote about was look at those idiots going to Maharishi but I was sitting still as they call it in the *I-Ching* for three months in the Him...Once when we got

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back from Hamburg when we got deported and George had gotten deported, I didn't contact the other four for a month-...that's a long time at eighteen or nineteen. Because I withdrew to think whether this is worth going on with. Now when George and Paul found out, they were mad at me. Because they thought we could have been working now. But I just withdrew. So part of me is a monk. And part of me is a performing flea. Knowing when to stop is survival for me. It's like breathing in and out for me. It happened in many forms...Maharishi, Janov. The sneering and the sniggering about Maharishi from the public and the press was incredible but now they're all doing it...But now I'm old enough not to need to go somewhere with somebody to withdraw. Okay? So now I withdraw on my own.

The Creative Spirit

To be creative...is to receive a gift. And I'm a craftsman who

can fake it...like a lot of artists do. And I can reap from what I've sowed already for the rest of my life by just being a craftsman, by keeping my mouth shut and being a good boy. And I might get honored by every show-biz group and be in the Guinness book of records and get knighted. It wouldn't interest me to get it for being other than...for something *real* I created. For the creative spirit, the way I like it, where it's given to me, not where it's something I've made, cannot come through if the air is cluttered. The mind is cluttered. You can fake it and be a craftsman and put out paintings like Picasso, or records if you're a pop singer. And you might get away with it. And the business will let you get away with it. You know, inside. So in order to get that clear channel open again I had to stop picking up every radio station in the world, in the universe. So my turning away from it is how I began to heal it again. I couldn't see the wood for the trees. Or I couldn't hear the music for the noise in my own head...You know, Einstein or Newton, anything that was discovered was discovered by accident, by creative spirit or they were tuned into whatever came down at that moment, right? What did Einstein do, he spilled the theory of relativity when he was working on something else. He spent the rest of his life trying to prove something else, which you can never do. So what he did was really live off that record for the rest of his life. Not taking away from his brilliance or his natural native ability, but the real creation came when he sat there and something came to him or when the apple fell on his head. Newton would never have had the apple fall on his head and conceive of what it meant had he not been sitting under the tree. Day-dreamin'. So for me, it's the same with music. The real music comes to me, the music of the spheres, the music that surpasses understanding, that has not to do with me, that I'm just a channel...So for that to come through, which is the only joy for me out of the music is for it to be given to me and I transcribe it like a medium. But I have nothing to do with it other than I'm sitting under this tree and this whole damn thing comes down and I've just put it down. That is the only joy for me. Getting into the involvement, the pretending I'm this genius who creates things or owns the rights to them, that's when it's garbage. When I'm in that illusion of thinking that somebody owes me something because I was gifted — occasionally gifted, not permanently gifted, nobody is, occasionally gifted with this music or the words and pretending that they own it and that they should get a gold record for doing it (not that I don't appreciate adulation and awards and everything else) — but to believe it is another matter. To believe that's why I'm doing it, because as we've proved in the last five years, there's many other ways of making money. I don't have any doubt of our ablity to always make money. So it's nothing to do with money. But for the joy of having the apple fall on my head every ten years or so...that's what I'm living for besides trying to keep the little family going, happy and progressing together. And the rest can be fun or not fun. Like this is okay. We're having fun. We're having coffee. We're talking. We're bringing up stuff that I remember...You're enjoying it, I'm enjoying it. And we call it work. But believing in it that I own it, I created it. My record label. And my company. And my picture. Someone's stealing *MY* song...or they're singing my song-...garbage. When I start believing that, that's when I'm in trouble. And that's when the gift just goes to somebody else. And one becomes a craftsman. I have nothing against craftsmen but I have no interest in being a craftsman.

Friction and Art

The friction is in living. In waking up every day. And getting through another day. That's where the friction is. And to express it in art is the job of the artist. And that's what I can do. To express it on behalf of people who can't express it or haven't the time or ability or whatever it is. That's my job. My function in society. There's a reason for everything living. The gods that work in mysterious ways, their wonders to perform. And there's a job for flies, I'm not sure but there's a reason for it. And there's a reason for artists and musicians and it's to just do what we do. To better or lesser degrees, depending on whose opinion you follow. It's no more important or less important than anything else going on. See? But it's for the people who receive it later on. But it's for me basically and then the so-called audience second. And it's just why I'm here. Just my game. Everybody else thinks in such short time spans. The same as when the record company used to think each Beatle record was the last one. Only the Beatles knew it wasn't. And only the Beatles knew that they would be as big as they were. The record company never caught on. They still treated them as if "We better fuck them over now in case they don't produce anything else." But I don't think like that. I knew that if I was to do it, I would do it in my own good time. Life is long. It doesn't last in terms of three months on the charts or just having a movie out or not having a movie out. So that insecurity wasn't my problem. The problem was only with wanting to have the ability to express it in my terms, the way I wanted to. So that's all. Five years. It could have been twenty years. Some guys

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STEELY DAN

Those consumate troublemakers, Donald Fagen and Walter Becker, are finally cornered, producing dangerously controversial observations on film, literature, Free Jazz, touring and the music of Steely Dan, undermining nearly every tenet of the music industry.

By David Breskin

Three years, two hundred out-takes, a few mistakenly erased tracks, and one shattered shank after *Aja*, Steely Dan has come sauntering out of hibernation with a ravishing new record, *Gaucho*. It's elegant, it's extravagant; it shows again why Walter Becker and Donald, the masters of Ellingtonian Backbeat Coolpop-Jazzrock, are the closest thing this generation has to pre-war sophistication of Porter and Berlin, Rodgers and Hart, Weill and Waller. If *Aja* convinced Woody Herman to let his big band loose on Steely Dan material (*Chick, Donald, Walter and Woodrow*, 1978), prompted a Berklee College of Music songwriting analysis course featuring their work, and elevated the taste of the frat-dance college crowd, one wonders what kind of a dent *Gaucho* might make. One thing it *won't* do is send Steely Dan back on the road, not even after Becker's car-crunched leg heals completely. Nor will they perform in their native New York. So we are left solely — and quite happily — with the music at hand.

Which is, as may be expected by now, sublime and fragrant and audaciously smooth. Steely Dan Inc.'s revolving door of studio sidemen hasn't stopped swinging yet — some 36 grace *Gaucho* — and I mean this in the musical sense as well: rarely have so many done so little spontaneous blowing for so much music that sounds so fresh. But it probably won't sound that way upon first or second listen; chances are it will sound soft and round, blandly pleasant, almost superficial. With further listening, each of the record's seven tunes opens and deepens, revealing the harmonic jewels and subtle understated solos. At first obscured by the dominant colors of the surface, background colors become apparent, much as they will in fine oil paintings as your eye moves closer and closer to them; rhythmic nuances make themselves *felt*; each piece eventually jumps out of bed with the others and goes its own way: the patina, a rather mundane orgy of highgloss sensuality, gives way to the substance — seven different compositions in profound intercourse with their own partners, their indigenous lyrics.

As for the lyrics' subject matter, rest assured Steely Dan enters the '80s with some timely tales of tawdry high-life and desultory desperation. *Gaucho* overflows with mystics, coke dealers, sexual rivals, gosling girls ignorant of 'Retha Franklin, concupiscent Charlies out for "that cotton candy," playground hoopers, Third World schemers mobilized on First World lawns, surprisingly gay friends and bodacious cowboys. The stories are rich, richer than *Aja*'s, the metaphors subversive and witty. For instance, the rival lover is introduced with the couplet, "The milk truck eased into my space/Somebody screamed somewhere." All in all, we may say this about Steely Dan: the more things strange, the more they stay the same.

I recently spoke with Messrs Becker and Fagen at an MCA rented suite of the Park Lane hotel on Central Park South in New York. As I entered the room, the two jokingly whined about the day's previous interviewers; every one, it seems, had grazed over the parched grass of basic bio material, asking, "So did you two really meet at Bard College?" With furious swipes of my pen, I mimed scratching that one off the top of my list of questions and mumbled something about my master-plan being destroyed.

MUSICIAN: It *has* been a considerable time since Steely Dan first started: how do you feel you've grown as artists, as musicians and lyricists, since that time?

FAGEN: [Long pause] It's a matter of maturing. Becoming more selective with material, knowing what to write about, being able to pick and choose — showing more discretion than in the earlier days. Musically, our harmonic vocabulary and so on has expanded a great deal...so I feel we've progressed a lot since our first records. They are plain embar-

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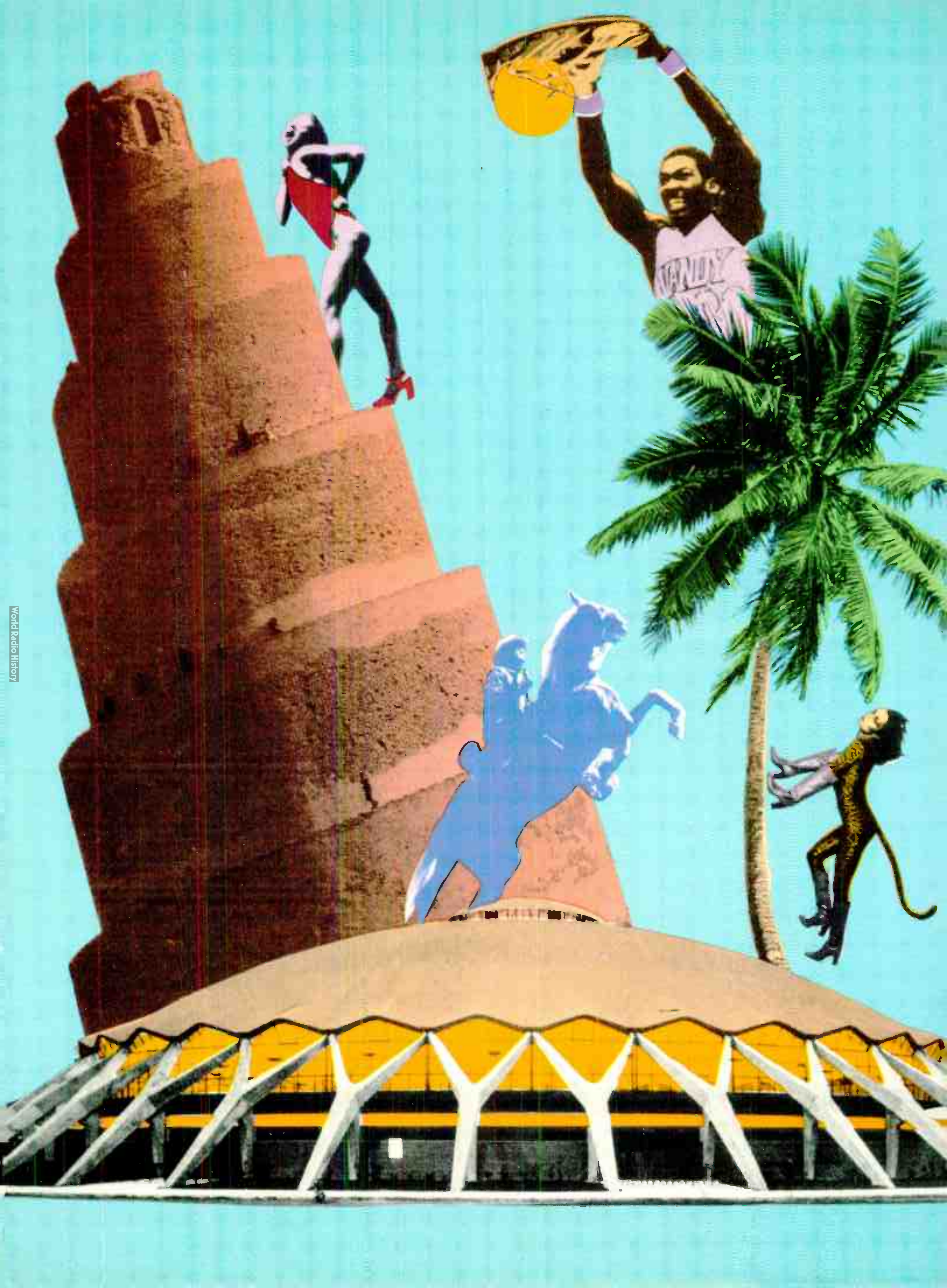

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rassing, if you listen to them.
MUSICIAN: When you look back at your older work — as all artists, regrettably or enthusiastically, must do — do you think, "Oh God, that just wasn't it at all"?
FAGEN: [Laughs] Well, yeah, you know I don't listen to our old records, but if I happen to hear one on the radio, my general feeling is humiliation. I don't really understand some of our earlier stuff.
BECKER: [Limping slowly back into the room] You mean: why would we do a thing like this or that?
FAGEN: In terms of why we would do certain things musically and also lyrically.
BECKER: Like, say "My Old School"? Gimme a for instance...
FAGEN: Not that one so much. That one has taken on a certain, well, it's improved with age. I'm trying to think of a really embarrassing one, but I can't off-hand.
MUSICIAN: At what point can you begin to stand yourself, listening back? 1974? 1975?
FAGEN: The next album I like pretty well. The one we haven't

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done yet. The rest of them are fairly humiliating.
MUSICIAN: You don't feel *Gaucho* is what you want to sound like?
FAGEN: Well, on the humiliation scale each album gets lower and lower. I think starting with *Pretzel Logic*, I began to like a few cuts here and there as things I can really listen to.
MUSICIAN: How do you feel, Walter?
BECKER: Differently. But I don't listen to them either. I mean there were a lot of things that were very shoddily done, and a lot of things that were just bad, but probably different things for me than for Donald. We were doing the best we could, but fuck it, it wasn't very good. It's like looking at yourself in a mirror: it's not how you really look. Left-handed people look weird. I don't know whether it's ultimately good or not, I really don't.
MUSICIAN: It's good to the extent that you can see some growth in the mirror...
BECKER: Oh yeah, but whether it's *ultimately* has been playing on my mind since 1970.
FAGEN: It's like: have you ever seen a picture of yourself taken in 1969 or '70 with a group of girls in mini-skirts or something and you say...
BECKER: What is *that* asshole doing there, or why was I wearing that sweater or a shirt with a fake turtle-neck or something. It's just aged. But I don't think it's aged that much. The stuff that is lousy was lousy then.
FAGEN: Yeah, that's true... well, harmonically we were naive.
BECKER: And we were miming a lot of things, we were clowning around.
FAGEN: We started out imitating, as most people do...
BECKER: [Slyly] As we continue to, in a much subtler way. Nothing comes from nothing. But "Do It Again" is a good fucking record. "Reelin' In The Years" is a good record.
FAGEN: I agree with that.
BECKER: It's only fuckin' rock 'n' roll. It's for kids. It's not for Gustav Mahler, or even Kristin Fabriani. [Laughs.]
MUSICIAN: Come now, only for kids?
BECKER: Well you know what I mean...
FAGEN: Basically, we've always composed for ourselves, which is the same as composing for your peers.
BECKER: Oh c'mon, you wouldn't do a thing like this for your peers. Would you do this for John Banker? Would you do this for what's his name? You know he doesn't like this, you know he doesn't need this.
FAGEN: Well I don't consider him my peer.
BECKER: Who do you mean then?
FAGEN: Well, some people, some...uh, well: *us* basically.
BECKER: [Laughs] Oh, that's different. O.K.
FAGEN: I guess I assume that people our age are thinking the same way we are. I'm not thinking of any individuals.
BECKER: But that's all we have to go by. I can't think of any individual that this stuff — it's always amazed me that somehow I've felt we're good but I never knew if there was anybody that would think so. Not good in any ultimate sense, but good compared to the bullshit you hear. But I don't *feel* any older than my audience. I used to worry about getting old when I was 17. I couldn't imagine being 30 and being 17.
MUSICIAN: Did you ever feel like a part of mainstream culture — which I guess was mainstream counterculture — in the '60s. I mean: how many times does '68 go into 1981?
BECKER: Hell now, God, we were wallflowers. We were cranks. What do you say...
FAGEN: Aliens.
BECKER: Yeah, that's better, alienated. Aliens, freaks.
MUSICIAN: So how do you feel in the situation now, which I guess would make you more alien...
BECKER: Yeah, more alien...you got it. A lot of artists are aliens. They're really a bunch of geeks when you get right down to it.
MUSICIAN: And classical losers too, in the sense that they just don't fit it.
FAGEN: That's right, in the sense that New York is the depository for misfit Americans — there's a reason why we're here. And why we don't live in Cincinnati.
BECKER: You have misfit Americans and you also have perfect New Yorkers; the guy who doesn't know who lives down the hall. It's all a little strange.
MUSICIAN: You walk down the street and think: Hmmm, something about all these folks is just a little off-center.
BECKER: Yeah, everybody's weird here. I mean, everybody's normal everywhere else, that's the way it looks to me. I mean, after many years of living in Los Angeles I remember sitting in someone's house, and somebody made a reference to the fact that someone was a Jew. I realized: not everybody is Jewish here, not even nominally Jewish. Now this took me by surprise. I come from Forest Hills. I'm not Jewish, but what difference does it make?
FAGEN: You might as well be.
BECKER: I might as well be, you know: yish gdall, yish gdosh, baruch atah Adonoi. But what I mean is, I feel *safe* around Jews.Jews are not gonna drag me off to the gas chambers. Jews are smart. They're not gonna lynch anybody, they're civilized.
FAGEN: What we're talking about is, basically metropolitan...
BECKER: But New York City is the only one.
FAGEN: It's the only one in America, and maybe in the world, as far as truly being cosmopolitan.
BECKER: I mean L.A. is the biggest small town in the world. It's the stix.
MUSICIAN: If artists are geeks, they're also scavengers. Do you find you can feed off the flesh of the city, the raw material so to speak? Is it a stimulus that Los Angeles wasn't?
FAGEN: I think New York has revitalized our stuff. But L.A. did a lot for us as far as giving us a perspective on America.
BECKER: It gave us something to complain about.
FAGEN: It gave us something to really complain about, to bitch about creatively.
BECKER: You can look at the people you see three times a week and twist them in your mind, treat them inhumanely

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in your mind, to create a character without actually defaming them. But you cannot accord them the respect that you accord every other human being. [Long pause] If there were no outside stimulus, I'd imagine we'd still have something to write about. Something we'd remembered or imagined.
FAGEN: You can create or compose in a vacuum.
BECKER: Keeping in mind that this is dance music, you are removing yourself from something by writing about it.
MUSICIAN: Do you think that act of distancing is important, not so much of "objectivity" as to keep a creative perspective?
FAGEN: I think it makes for better art. If you're gonna present rock 'n' roll as an art form, you have to draw on some of the traditions that are used in literature, and one that's proved effective is maintaining a certain distance from the subject. The trashier kinds of literature are the more basically sentimental kinds. Romantic, in the perjorative sense of the term. So we use that distancing technique in writing lyrics.
MUSICIAN: Speaking of dance music, can you see a time when you won't be concerned with prodding people out of their chairs?
FAGEN: I think we both really love rhythm-and-blues basically. A big back-beat. I don't know if it's a matter of dance music, it's a matter of pulse or feel.
BECKER: Jump music. Rhythm music. Something like that.
FAGEN: [Grinning] Race music.
MUSICIAN: Be careful, Donald.
BECKER: Race music. Obviously I don't dance or nothing, and never have...
FAGEN: [Pointing to Becker's crutches] Especially lately.
BECKER: Well, I've never seen you tripping the light fantastic in the last 32 years either.
FAGEN: But I have great shoes.
BECKER: Yes, you have great shoes. No one ever said you weren't a snappy dresser, but the point is: you don't dance. It's great music in your car though, you'd rather hear it in your car than pretty much anything else.
MUSICIAN: Which brings me to another question. I know you agonize over your lyrics. Does it ever frustrate you that with many or most of the people listening, they may being going in one ear — and with little in between to stop them — right out the other? That all they may want is a beat and a hummable melody?
BECKER: I assume that's the case for most of the audience, or at least a big part of it, and that's why we try to always make the lyrics not grab your attention. We want them to *sound* good with the music, even if you're not an English-speaking person.
MUSICIAN: But for those that are listening, atlas and dictionary in hand, you don't want the lyrics to be one-shot deals, like a comedy record that you put on once and it gets tired pretty quickly after that.
BECKER: That's definitely a problem. We have to be clever, but not funny.
FAGEN: We have a problem, trying not to cross the comedy threshold.
BECKER: Every time someone's in the next room when we're writing a song they'll say, "Don't tell me you're fucking writing songs in there, you're not working, 'cause you're fucking screaming and laughing in there. You're not writing, you're making up Pope jokes."
FAGEN: Sometimes Walter comes up with a line, and it's just too fuckin'...
BECKER: Funny. The whole thing would just stop; it would be like making Spike Jones records.
FAGEN: Suspension of disbelief would stop; there'd be laughter. You have to keep the equilibrium, have to maintain the irony, without getting into yuk-yuk territory.
MUSICIAN: There's also always a certain self-consciousness about being funny. Walter, you once said you wanted to branch out into odd narrative styles and more radical approaches, as long as they were "funny in the end." What kind of "funny" were you referring to?
BECKER: I'm talking about the possibility of maintaining one's sense of humor under all possible circumstances. Funny as opposed to grave or solemn. Kurt Vonnegut's not funny, there's nothing funny about Dresden for instance, but it's *funny*. And we can't even be that funny in music.
FAGEN: When you're writing about serious subjects, and I guess we are, we have to remember that it's rock 'n' roll music and the risk of being pretentious is real high, if you're not careful. It's just too short a time to really explain anything; it's not a short story, it's not a novel.
MUSICIAN: It has to be a miniature.
FAGEN: Yeah, a miniature, and sometimes you can't fill in the details. So you hope that you give the proper signals, so that people will get a sense of what you're talking about.
BECKER: In "Gaucho" for example, there's more of a story — that you and I know about — that's not in the song. There's very little in the song. As far as I can tell, [laughing] there's very little in the song other than a fucking cape and a car and the Custerdome, and nobody knows what that is. So.
MUSICIAN: Let's use that song as a jumping off point in terms of your lyrics. Certain artists — perhaps writers or film makers more than songwriters — strive for a certain amount of

Polysemy, or ambiguity in their work, in service of not only their desire to create something rich in meaning for their audience but also to keep some of their work personal, kind of private.
FAGEN: We're just trying to use what fits. It's the exact opposite of the *New York Times*, where it's "All The News That's Fit To Print." Here, we print what'll fit. Like you say, it's not even a short story, hardly a paragraph, so the story doesn't always fit. If you get — as opposed to the kernel of the thought — the husk of the thought, maybe you can figure out what kind of story is there. I don't feel like I'm being stripped of anything if I'm understood. Why would anybody doing this sort of thing want to preserve something or keep it for themselves?
MUSICIAN: I'm not talking about intentional mystification or impenetrability, but there is a school of thought which says, while the artist must communicate to his audience, he may also keep certain details or backgrounds or underpinnings of the art rather private.
FAGEN: It depends on the song and the subject matter. The lyrics must be subordinate to the music and you can only give as many clues as you have time for. There's no intentional mystification.
BECKER: We're not trying to protect anything. It's just that some of the smaller, pettier details in a story are the best ones. The little things that you retain in your sense more than in your mind; they may not make much sense but they color something. It's really hard. There may be something to what you're saying, in that, if something is open-ended, or means more than one thing, or is elliptical or whatever, someone listening to it carefully enough will in fact become creative, and fill in the spaces with their own intelligence. And you'd be amazed at the songs people have written about that we've written. Some guy wrote us and said "Rikki Don't Lose That Number" is about Eric Clapton and the number is a joint. We get letters, phone calls — from people who "know exactly what we mean" and they just have to tell us that they know.

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FAGEN: Sometimes it frightens me when we get some weird stoned Moonie with these weird ideations about these songs, and he starts talking about taking some kind of *action*.
BECKER: There was a guy living in Las Vegas when our first album came out who thought — his girlfriend has left him I guess — all of the songs were stories his girlfriend had told us. He wasn't asking any questions; he just wanted his girlfriend back. And we didn't know anything about the girl. But he thought every one of those stories was about him. He was willing to forgive us for making fun of him, making a fool of him, cuckolding him, etc., if we gave her back.
FAGEN: It's your basic Arthur Bremmer syndrome. We get a lot of letters that are written in very small printing with little pictures in the corner.
MUSICIAN: Well, you're talking about the perverse fringe of "active" listeners.
BECKER: No, this is the heart and soul of our audience. I've got news for you. Those weird people on the street — every hundreth weirdest one has a Steely Dan record at home.
MUSICIAN: People that are essentially out-takes.

BECKER: Right, or just flipped-out. Like that guy who hijacked that bus today [a friend of theirs had been hijacked in midtown Manhattan] probably has 47 copies of *The Royal Scam*.
MUSICIAN: The point is, desite the Vegas chump, a little restraint or open-endedness or ambiguity in a lyric — call it what you will — allows one to go back to a song time after time, and not just sing along, but get farther into it or think anew about it. I've read and listened to "Gaucho" many times and I still couldn't give you an orderly narrative, but I start thinking about it: O.K., here's a gaucho, a South American cowboy who's part Indian. Now, already I've come to a cultural contradiction for our country: a cowboy who's an Indian.
BECKER: Right, right.
MUSICIAN: And then you bring in Custer, as in the Custerdome, a great Indian killer and an integral part of the Cowboys and Injuns mythology of the American West, and we have some kind of cross-cultural tension, some clashing images that may not make sense in a narrative fashion...
BECKER: Right, it doesn't have to make sense in a narrative way. Something tells me, though, that we've been better behaved in terms of being more narrative lately. I don't know if that's a good or bad thing. I think with the narratives that we're undertaking [hearty chuckle] it doesn't really matter. You can't get from here to Chinatown in 30 seconds.
FAGEN: Well, I think it does matter.
BECKER: Well, it may come out the same in the long run, whether we write an understandable narrative or not.
FAGEN: I think we are communicating a little more directly than we have in the past.
MUSICIAN: Do either of you write poetry as poetry, that sort of sits around just waiting for the right piece of music?
FAGEN: Not as poetry per se.
BECKER: I used to do that, a long, long time ago, but I found out poetry was in much worse shape than any other art form, except maybe painting, which I also gave up because I didn't like getting paint all over myself.
FAGEN: We have fragments of things.
BECKER: Little lines and couplets...
FAGEN: Story ideas and the like...
BECKER: But nothing in finished form. Rhythmically, if you read our poetry on the page it's nothing really.
MUSICIAN: So you have at least a skeleton of the music first, the chords, roughly the tempo, etc., and then you work on the lyrics line-by-line, side-by-side?
FAGEN: We work on them together. One of us will come up with the basic idea, maybe a few words, and then we'll fill in the blanks together as needed.
MUSICIAN: How do you resolve conflicts — possibly different strategies on how to say something even if you both agree as to what will be said — without resorting to bloodshed?
FAGEN: We often see it in the same way. We've been together for a while.
BECKER: We agree.
FAGEN: Every once in a while we have a problem...
BECKER: But it usually doesn't make that much difference if it comes down to one word.
FAGEN: Usually, if we disagree about something, it may be whether or not something is singable phonetically.
BECKER: That's *his* story. My story is whether it's something else. That's how we agree.
MUSICIAN: Walter, you mentioned dabbling in finger-painting and poetry. In all interviews it seems the interviewer asks for the inevitable listing of musical influences [and of course the answer is always B.B. King], but I'm particularly interested in what other artists — could be writers, painters, filmmakers, etc. — have inspired you.
BECKER: You know, we've gotten in trouble on that with the "Steely Dan" thing [the name of a dildo in Burrough's great novel, *Naked Lunch*]. We've been invited out to dinner with William Burroughs a few times too many. So with that caveat, I can say that I like Samuel Beckett. I think it's ironic and amusing that the greatest living writer in the English language writes in French.
MUSICIAN: What does that tell you?
BECKER: It tells me that he doesn't want to be a show-off.
FAGEN: We both have our individual preferences. Vladimir Nabokov is mine.
BECKER: He was my candidate for greatest living artist, but he lost that gig.
FAGEN: I put him at the top of the list.
BECKER: He's dead, he can't be the greatest living artist.
FAGEN: Living, we're talking about the living?
MUSICIAN: O.K. then, let's talk about dead folks...
BECKER: Uh... Vladimir Nabokov.
FAGEN: I'm not visually oriented, but Walter likes very peculiar movies.
BECKER: A good cheap date. I have weird taste.
FAGEN: Walter's seen "The King of Marvin Gardens" quite a number of times.
MUSICIAN: Very bizarre in the Steely Dan sense. Jack Nicholson and Bruce Dern, your type of guys, played reversed roles...
BECKER: That was the cool part, they were so wrong for the roles. That made it for me.
FAGEN: Walter advises me *not* to see the movies he sees. That's *my* taste. I tend to like really expensive movies.
MUSICIAN: Like really expensive records. Your own, for instance.
BECKER: Donald goes for the value-per-dollar system.
FAGEN: Francis Ford Coppola stuff. "The Godfather." "Apocalypse Now."
BECKER: Did you know that the guy who plays the senator in the whorehouse in "The Godfather" is the same guy who sends Sheen to kill Brando in "Apocalypse Now"?
FAGEN: I really like Nicholas Rosa. I'm not hot on the new Germans. I like American movies; I had high hopes for Robert Altman, but I haven't seen a movie of his in years that I could sit through.

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BECKER: Jean Luc Godard has made two or three snappy movies.
FAGEN: I like W.C. Fields basically. "It's A Gift" is a real masterpiece.
MUSICIAN: Can you imagine yourselves working on a more expansive musical project: a full soundtrack, a musical perhaps, or even the songs for a musical?
FAGEN: I'd like to, but the project would have to be perfectly suited for us. I wouldn't want to write background music, or music that's subordinated to visual material.
BECKER: Ronnie Reagan is president, so I wouldn't mind doing a Kurt Weill or Bertolt Brecht kind of thing. There's potential in that.
FAGEN: Socialist opera.
BECKER: Anarchist opera.
MUSICIAN: Do we have a political disagreement in the house?
BECKER: No, no, no. And there's nothing in the works right now.
MUSICIAN: What about an extended work — a unified work

of considerable length — whether you want to call it a suite or opera or whatever?
FAGEN: We've discussed this, like the idea of a concept album, but it's awfully hard.
BECKER: I thought *Aja* itself was dangerously ambitious. I really did.
FAGEN: I dunno, I think we work best on miniatures. I like variety.
BECKER: Although there was once a demo album of ours with 12 songs on it. Completely unrelated songs — some of them were shlocky commerical Brill Building songs and some were tasty songs that were obviously the work of sociophobes — and some guy took this record and turned it into a musical. That's as close as we've come. We could write the songs and then lure someone into thinking about them, connecting them, and — thinking that he's figured them out — writing a musical around them.
FAGEN: We work better with vignettes.
BECKER: And what was the last good musical you saw?
MUSICIAN: That's just my point. Anyway, how do you characterize the new record, as opposed to, say, *Aja*?
BECKER: [Half-kidding] Excellent, excellent. Newer, bluer.
FAGEN: That's a difficult question because we write the songs individually. They are single audio objects; we don't plan the album conceptually. So it's hard to characterize the thing as a whole.
BECKER: Notice how the level of this discussion has dropped from songs to "audio objects."
FAGEN: It's really getting into that heavy French thing.
MUSICIAN: Semiotic, man. Donald, you were getting ready to bring in Roland Barthes...
FAGEN: I was going to, but I better not.
MUSICIAN: Well if not different as a whole — I know it was recorded over a two year span — then do you see it as a little step forward?
BECKER: We wrote the hook for "Glamour Profession" when we were in college and now just changed the words. So we've really moved forward.
FAGEN: It's possible that we took a few steps backward with this album. In a way, it's rhythmically more simplistic than *Aja*. But the harmonies are interesting. I don't know if it's better or worse.
BECKER: I don't think there's a progression at this point — it's too deliberate on our part. We're moving sideways. When you're writing one song at a time over a long period and you don't know which ones are eventually going to get recorded and which are then going to be on the record, and then you put them together in a certain order and put it in a package, all of a sudden it's something.
FAGEN: It becomes something else.
BECKER: It becomes something you hadn't anticipated. It's taken as a whole, even to me anyway, I take it as a whole. And it has a character as a whole that the individual parts never had.
FAGEN: You work on individual songs for two years and then you sequence them in a way that seems most pleasing, and all of a sudden, you're faced with this new *thing*.
BECKER: [Laughing] The only thing we look forward to in finishing it is that we're gonna find out what we did.
MUSICIAN: As your vocabulary grows, musically and lyrically, and you become more aware of your artistic options, do you find it more difficult to finish a song? That is, the more strategies you're familiar with, the rougher it is to decide which one to use?
BECKER: It got tough awhile ago. Yes, the last verse is hard to write. The more you know, the more you might paint yourself into a corner.
FAGEN: But the way we write — it's more improvisational and instinctual. We don't really use "strategies" consciously.
BECKER: But we do in a way.
FAGEN: The method derives from the subject.
BECKER But nevertheless there it is, the method. By the time you've finished everything except that last piece or link of a song, you've got to make some very, very conscious choices.
FAGEN: All right, we've learned certain things in terms of how to present the material. We now know what a bridge is supposed to do: it opens up the song musically, and we tend to open it up lyrically as well, in that it tends to talk about the subject more generally than the verses do.
BECKER: And it's also a real release from the tension of the lyrics in the verses. You're suspended in time for a while.
FAGEN: You generally find that there's much more detail in the verses than in the choruses.
BECKER: When you're in the bridge you don't have to worry about how you got to this point, however fucked up that may be, or, how did I get to this swell position I'm in now. So it's a release, a channel. Somebody invented the form, God knows when. I know they didn't have bridges in Gregorian chants but they've had them for a while.
MUSICIAN: The Brooklyn Bridge has been around for a very long time...
BECKER: Right, there you go, and you know how good you feel when you're on that because you're not yet in Brooklyn but you've left Manhattan.
FAGEN: [Wryly] The traditional popular song form of the '30s and '40s has served us well.
BECKER: Oh yes, through the '80s, through the '80s.
FAGEN: I like it, it's a good thing. It's the closest thing we have to a *structure* for rock 'n' roll. It's blues, and traditional song form.
MUSICIAN: How do you feel about modern improvisational music that diverges from that structure? Music that's come after the religious and political saxophoning of the '60s — like The Art Ensemble, Cecil Taylor, Anthony Braxton, etc.?
BECKER: I don't like any of it. I'd like to think that I'm open-minded, but nothing could be further from the truth.
FAGEN: We're real conservatives.
BECKER: Hey, you like Dolphy, you're not that conservative.

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FAGEN: But he played off a certain structure. He used bebop as a point of departure.
MUSICIAN: A post-modernist like Braxton uses many different kinds of structures. He's a structuralist of sorts, though maybe not in the mode of traditional song form.
BECKER: But he can't even play, so what does it matter? I can't figure it out. He sounds like a guy who has no tone, plays outta tune, and I don't know why he's playing what he's playing. Maybe I just heard the wrong records. Now Sam Rivers — the first album I heard of his sounded very interesting to me, but lately he sounds exactly like Braxton.
MUSICIAN: Let's go back twenty years — before the advent of a religious saxophoning — you have Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz*, which sounded so far-out then, sounds almost quaint now — in that it swings like mad, it's fairly orderly and well-structured and so on.
BECKER: I know. The first time I put on an Ornette record I said. "This is Charlie Parker music except the guy has a plastic saxophone and no chord changes." I couldn't believe that people talked about how "modern" it was.

FAGEN: Not that many people can get away with...
BECKER: What he does.
FAGEN: With not having any structure. Very few do.
BECKER: He had a few very good ideas. And he had an incredible band.
FAGEN: The rhythm section was fantastic.
BECKER: They were in a fucking trance, on the same plane he was. Don Cherry and Ornette had the ideas in common, that's what made it work.
MUSICIAN: Well what about some of the ECM artists of the last decade?
FAGEN: Very uninteresting on the whole.
BECKER: [Sarcastically] Dance music. But Jan Garbarek is very good.
MUSICIAN: Speaking of the Ice King, are you familiar with a Keith Jarrett record he was on, *Belonging*, particularly a tune called "Long As You Know You're Living Yours"?
BECKER: Yes.
MUSICIAN: Have you ever listened to that up against "Gaucho"?
BECKER: No.
MUSICIAN: I'm not casting any aspersions now, but in terms of the tempo and the bass line and the saxophone melody it's pretty interesting.
BECKER: Parenthetically it is, yeah [Uneasy laughter].
MUSICIAN: At this point the reporter traditionally asks the cornered politican or athlete to "go off the record."
FAGEN: Off the record, we were heavily influenced by that particular piece of music.
BECKER: I love it. [Becker and Fagen later approved their "off the record" responses for publication.]
MUSICIAN: We were talking about borrowing...
FAGEN: Hell, we steal. We're the robber barons of rock 'n' roll.
MUSICIAN: Well, the only other thing on the record that seems obviously borrowed is "Glamour Profession." The rhythm and feel of it, and the way the synthesizer/horn vamp swings against the pulse sounds very much like Dr. Buzzard's Original Savannah Band.
BECKER: I don't listen to them. Donald listens to them. But I see what you mean though.
FAGEN: I liked their first record.
MUSICIAN: I'm not saying it was necessarily a conscious act of pilferage.
FAGEN: That song was influenced by disco music in general.
BECKER: Stylized disco music. Art Deco disco, with roller skates.
MUSICIAN: Noveau Swing Disco?
FAGEN: What you're saying is basically valid. There are other things that are borrowed too. The bridge on "Glamour Profession" is a take on the bridge of Kurt Weill's "Speak Low."
BECKER: Which is taken from Ravel.
MUSICIAN: Well, I guess we've dismissed The Art Ensemble and Cecil Taylor...
MUSICIAN: Gosh fellows, all that's left is Sun Ra — I would think at least he has that touch of the absurd you go for.
BECKER: I did see him once and enjoyed it very much.
FAGEN: Especially theatrically.
BECKER: [Singing] "The planet, the planet Venus — huhn!"
FAGEN: He's funny. I also like Pharoah Sanders.
BECKER: But not the real experimental stuff.
FAGEN: True. He got into little bells and stuff.
BECKER: I like Bob Dorough. "Blue Xmas". That's what I like.
MUSICIAN: What about popular music? Anything going on that you might be a bit more enthusiastic about?
BECKER: I've had a tough time with the radio lately. It's pathetic.
FAGEN: The Talking Heads are very interesting. They're a top band.
FAGEN: Fortunately, it's mainly their album covers that I like. The covers and the guy's eyes are great. There's at least an intelligence behind them, which is more than you can say for most groups.
BECKER: Further and further behind as time goes by...they're leaving it in the dust.
FAGEN: I like Donna Summers' records.
BECKER: I bought the single, "Turn Out The Lights." Had to have it.
FAGEN: I did like Dr. Buzzard's first record. But only that one.
MUSICIAN: So I guess it's pretty bleak out there, is that what you're saying?
BECKER: I guess, unless there's something happening out there that's being supressed, which is entirely possible.
FAGEN: Oh, you know what I went for in a way, Ian Drury and The Blockheads. More of a comedy thing.
MUSICIAN: "Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick"?
BECKER: Hit me, Hit me. Since I broke my leg I think they're much funnier, 'cause the guy has polio or something. He's crippled.
FAGEN: The flipside of "Rhythm Stick" is great, "There Ain't Have Been Some Clever Bastards". Great stuff.
BECKER: Warne Marsh is the best I've heard in the past three years.
MUSICIAN: Do you plan to produce another album of his along the lines of the one with Pete Christlieb?
BECKER: No, no more. Because it's too hard to get Warne what he wants. And he wants Neils Henning Orsted Pederson, who used to be only great and now is just *ridiculous*.
FAGEN: One more thing, I heard a record the other day, a raggy sort of thing, Scott Joplin rags, by some funny tenor player, Henry Threadgill.
MUSICIAN: That's Air, the supertrio out of the, ahem...AACM.
FAGEN: Well, what I like was the way he phrased the melodies. I was real impressed. I could tell he was a super musician just from what I heard on the radio; he had that real Sonny Rollins rhythmic integrity.
BECKER: On the other hand, how new is all that — ragtime is

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only so recent you know. But I still like boogie-woogie, Meade Lux Lewis and Albert Ammons.
MUSICIAN: Television is probably the most profound shaping force in our society, yet it seems artists have a tough time dealing with it.
BECKER: That's because TV is anti-artistic. I was on my back for six months and so naturally TV came into my life in a big way. I used to have a cable TV thing hooked up and it bothered me 'cause I had trouble reaching the knob, and I disconnected it because I realized it doesn't matter what you watch on TV. Asking for better TV is like asking for a better cell in Sing Sing. It doesn't matter what you're watching: you're watching TV. It's all of a piece.
FAGEN: The commercials, the shows...good or bad, everything is elevated or sunken to a certain level.
BECKER: People talk about those big screen TVs. Can you imagine, the commercial of Ajax taking over your living room. Your brain would turn to jelly.
FAGEN: I can't believe the video-disc thing. It's madness: how much television can you watch. Steely Dan is not exactly a good item for video discs.
MUSICIAN: Speaking of video discs and corporatized mass culture...given the certain, uh, socio-political stance that comes through in your work, how do you feel about being produced, packaged, and marketed by huge corporations?
BECKER: I think they're the mafia, that's what I think. I really do. I don't like them. This new record costs a dollar more, it costs $9.98. And we said: "Please don't make it $9.98, that's too much." But we didn't matter. I feel like I'm robbing somebody, even though I benefit from it — I don't want it. It has nothing to do with recording artists. I don't think any recording artists said, "Make the records a dollar more so we can make more money." And I don't think any recording artists with our "socio-political stance" — because that's exactly what it is — wants to take X number of extra cents a record if it means raising the price. Who can swallow that? It's awful, but they just do it. Since 1974 I've not been crazy about the whole thing. I realized then that the reason we weren't making any money was that we were made to think we'd have to be on the road to have enough money to live and that we were always making the same amount of money no matter how many records we sold. So if I was politically minded, which I am, I'd certainly be angry about that.
MUSICIAN: Robert Fripp, the amiable *MUSICIAN* columnist who also plays the guitar, has written a series of articles about the politics of the recording industry, bemoans the Catch-22 set-up where the companies say you have to tour to sell records and you have to sell records to be able to tour.
BECKER: That's what the record companies tell you, but it's not true. They can sell records if you don't tour, aha!, but they can sell more if you do — and it's free, or it's cheap for them, so *they* make more money.
MUSICIAN: Any possibility that you might tour in the future?
BECKER: NO — that's about how political we are; we're not gonna tell the world about it unless you do it for us — but we're not gonna do it. And there are personal reasons.
MUSICIAN: Do you miss playing live music for people?
BECKER: Yeah, but I'd rather be playing for Jay and The Americans than touring with Steely Dan. With The Americans, there'd be some yo-yos in suits in front of us making fools out of themselves, and I'd be doing a great job.
FAGEN: Michael McDonald was in town the other night and gave me tickets to this Doobie Brothers concert, which I went to. I didn't stay long. Just going back into that world for a few hours — whew — it was unbelievable.
BECKER: There were mostly young people at the concert?
FAGEN: Mostly.
BECKER: The concerts are for the kids. The concert is where the party is. That's where the kids go, whoever may be playing. For instance, at one point we were opening for Frank Zappa, and he had a band with like nine brass instruments that no one knew the names of, a sarouzaphone soloist, a drummer reading the charts — a very arcane thing — and it wasn't worth it, but the point was: everyone was there and the hall was filled because that's where the party was, and that's where everybody went to do drugs.
MUSICIAN: And it becomes just like TV: don't matter what's on, it's just one show or another.
BECKER: Yeah, right.
FAGEN: Another thing I noticed at this Doobies concert was that look. We used to open for the Doobies when they were a different band, kind of a biker band with the long hair and leather jackets, they're different now. With all the agony we had on the road — and it was pretty bad sometimes, because we weren't really suited to touring as far as our personalities go...
BECKER: We were suited for indigestion...
FAGEN: But we had a lot more *fun* than it seems they're having now. Now it's strictly business.
BECKER: Big business and big dollars.
FAGEN: And they're backstage, the Doobies. Well, when we toured we'd get to the hall and start drinking and so on — you had to do it to survive on the road — but I noticed that the guy who used to have the long hair and the leather jacket had on a business suit and a coiff. It was strictly business. You know, Michael got there right before the show and he went on, 1-2-3, and did his thing. No drinks, no fun, no fucking around, no camaraderie. Business — and that's the way you have to do it.
MUSICIAN: Well, do you gig around privately, to work on your chops or just have a good time?
BECKER: I've been trying to figure out a way to do that, but you know, I can't figure out how people gig privately with the kind of music we play. New Wave and Top 40, I don't want to do any of that shit. I wish Jay and The Americans were still working.
FAGEN: I dunno, my girlfriend had a couple of friends over the other day and I accompanied them on "Over The Mountain, Over The Sea" for an hour or so.
BECKER: What the hell is that?
FAGEN: [Sings] "Over the mountain...etc., etc." But I practice. I do piano exercises four or five times a week.
MUSICIAN: Can you see putting a new band together, with which you could work without feeling like capitalists exploiting and oppressing the musicians in your employ?
BECKER: It's not even that anymore. The point now is, we've realized if we tried to do it what we'd be doing is re-creating something. It would be like Beatlemania. Do you realize how many musicians are on all our records. I mean: I'd have to learn all the bass parts. I'm gonna learn Chuck Rainey's bass parts? Ugh.
FAGEN: We're too lazy. What's more, after *Aja* came out, we tried to put something together with session musicians, good musicians. And as we started to run down the tunes this incredible sense of ennui came over both of us.
BECKER: It was a bad thing. And there was a socio-economic component added to that which I'm not gonna even talk about. But it was terrible.
FAGEN: It was unbelievably boring to start to run down these tunes for public performance.
BECKER: We had 4,000 dollars worth of musicians in the room. Guys who wouldn't go out on the road for Miles Davis, literally, and they were committed to doing this. And we both left the room together and said, "what do you say, you wanna can it." And we both said "yeah" without thinking twice.
FAGEN: We couldn't do it. It was depressing. We were going backwards.
BECKER: You play the same fucking song every single night. You're not creating anything, you're re-creating something.
MUSICIAN: Well jazz fans, what about improvising.
BECKER: Well that would be something different. It's something I've been thinking about, but the format would have to be different.
MUSICIAN: We'll be content to wait for your next record. What may we expect?
FAGEN: We'll be with a new company, Warners. And, as of yet, we have no plans. M

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RECORD REVIEWS

Ry Cooder

Borderline Warner Bros. BSK 3489

Ry Cooder's latest album is the clearest realization yet of his sound, and seems the most accessible to a mass audience. The tempos are a bit faster than '79s *Bop 'Til You Drop* and Ry's singing is more assertive and confident. Perhaps most important is the shift in lyrical concerns away from misogyny, which runs like red thread from "Alimony" on his first album right up to *Bop's* "The Very Thing That Makes You Rich." On "634-5789" and "Speedo," Cooder casts himself as that classic r&b ladies' man, while John Hiatt's "The Way We Make A Broken Heart" finds him aiding and abetting one of those low-down two-timing women as she takes advantage of some hapless sucker.

The band is as tight as your old blue jeans. Jim Keltner's drums weave a contrapuntal rhythmic spell with the bass and piano, Cooder's guitar dodges through the cracks, and the gospel voices of Bobby King and Willie Greene Jr. punctuate the groove. In this music, there is no old or new. Reggae and fatback r&b get down together and party with blues licks as old as the hills. An ancient boogie like "Johnny Porter" makes a natural companion to Joe South's 60's classic "Down in the Boondocks." And when Ry ends his solo on "Crazy 'Bout An Automobile" with a lick Son House might have played, it's right at home.

This is the same stuff Cooder's been doing all along, but this time the emotional impact of the music is more direct — from the happy feeling of the r&b cuts to the gathering doom of "Johnny Porter" to the wistful longing of "Down in the Boondocks." Most music for mass consumption stuffs every avai able space with sound, but Cooder leaves breathing space around each instrument of the ensemble. He respects openness, individuality, silence. Even the backup vocals are individual voices, not a homogenized blend. The music here reflects Cooder's folk roots, not in the sound, but in the way the sound is made — most of all in the way it recognizes silence as an equal, as the condition necessary for listening to the sounds of your own heart. — *Chris Doering*

Weather Report

Night Passage Arc-Columbia JC 36793.

The plant life with whom I share my modest apartment were less than thrilled when I arrived home with this latest Weather Report release. They've never forgiven me for exposing them to *Mr. Gone* despite the fact that I caught some foliage swaying in rhythm while enjoying the live thunder on *8:30*. As I cracked the seal on *Night Passage*, the protests began: The flame plants and others withdrew their colors as the rest started to chant "WE WANT THE ART ENSEMBLE OF IDAHO!" I mistakenly put on side two and soon a somewhat masked but strikingly familiar melody appeared. Musta'a, the African Violet, started to shake spasmodically and shrieked "Listen! it's 'Rockin N' Rhythm!' Weather is covering the Duke!!" The fertilizer hit the fan: Weather was swingin' hard and furious by the out chorus and the plants were groovin' on the band's positive aural-electric charges. "More, play more!!" they demanded as petals and stems shook with reckless abandon.

Well, we listened to this record for days and in that time WR had once again conquered the fickle affections of my critical greenery. They responded enthusiastically to Zawinul's frenzied composition "Fast City" and nodded with silent approval after Shorter's blistering tenor solo on the cut. Wayne is a favorite in our home and my friends can't seem to get enough of him in WR. Their blinding devotion to Shorter almost broke the celebratory spirit when 52nd St. Chickie, the spider plant, leaned over my shoulder to check out the liner credits: "Dig this," he growled, "Wayne's not involved in the production again! Our man has gone from Producer, to Co-Producer, to Assistant Producer to No Mention!!" Tensions mounted as insults were hurled at everyone from Zawinul and Pastorious to CBS Pres Bruce Lundvall. Recognizing the loss of perspective on the part of her compatriots, the prayer plant soberly interjected: "However, don't you find Mr. Zawinul's synthesizer solo impeccably tasteful and Mr. Pastorius' bass work full of modest fervor and very supportive on this "Fast City" piece?" Her brief parable hit home and the contemptuous outburst subsided.

Fortunately, they found little else to groan about though I did catch some undecipherable grumbling at the outset of "Night Passages." The cut begins as a strut — swing similar to "Mr. Gone," but it's not as programmed as its predecessor. Midway through the tune Zawinul and Shorter introduce a bouncy melodic phrase which they repeat while the rhythm section hits stride and sends the tune home cookin.' They also praise Pastorius for his penned contribution "Three Views of a Secret," an airy but substantial ballad which further accentuates the formidable writing talents of Jaco. And pandemonium in plantland struck when they heard Shorter's composition "Port of Entry." The tune, (credited as a studio track which appears to be live) opens with a jungle funkin' section that bursts into a sixteenth-note riddled, rapid fire tuba-in-heat Pastorius solo with newest member Robert Thomas offering decorous support on hand drums. (We favor the decision to keep a percussionist in this band.) Pastorius and Thomas lead the ensemble to the tune's apparent finale, only to have all re-enter with full force for a final attack, exiting with a roar from the crowd and in my sector, plant yelps.

Now that the extensive listening and debates are done, we're happy to tell you that this is the most uncompromising WR album since Pastorius' arrival, and it just might be our favorite since *Black Market*. And yes, that includes their more slickly crafted, commercially appealing *Heavy Weather*. One thing is for certain about *Night Passage*: Columbia will be hard pressed to find a single to pull out of this batch. Damn, there aren't even any catchy melodies for vocal groups to lyricize. The album is choppy in spots and

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the band hasn't introduced anything new in terms of structure. But Pastorius' virtuosic flair seems to have ignited Zawinul and Shorter, both of whom sound revivified and do some of their most ferocious blowing since *I Sing The Body Electric*. I'm not saying this is the ultimate WR record, but this is the record WR needed to make. Not many make Mustafa shake. — *Peter Giron*

Steely Dan
Gaucho MCA

Gaucho's message is lounge music, pure and complex. Do not be deceived by what sounds, at first, like seven songs for mildly anemic, 'luded-out lounge lizards. *Gaucho* may seem slower than *Aja*, more relaxed than *Royal Scam*, but after three days it's *Royal Scam* and *Aja* which come off sounding thin. *Gaucho's* no-nonsense horn arrangements and straight-ahead drum tracks are there for a reason: they provide a perfect grid for the most intricate, imaginative music that Walter Becker, Donald Fagan and Gary Katz have produced.

"Babylon Sisters" opens the set. We're in Los Angeles even before Donald Fagen can say, "Drive west on Sunset/To the sea/Turn that jungle music down..." By the time Steve Kahn's reggae rhythm guitar arrives, the air is thick and yellow. The sensation of travel, of sitting in The Limousine as it makes its way down The Boulevard, is unmistakable: "Close your eyes and you'll be there/It's everything they say/The end of a perfect day/Distant lights from across the bay..."

"Hey Nineteen" is a song composed for back-up singers. The "We can't dance together/No we can't talk at all" chorus impersonates Michael McDonald (who makes a later cameo on *Time Out of Mind*) while Donald Fagen alternately attacks and massages his synthesizer. Before the fade-out, he throws us a treat: a Stevie Wonderesque solo which unfortunately lasts only 32 seconds. "Glamour Profession" is Ellingtonia draped all over the City of Tinsel. We're back in The Limo, still traveling in style, but through heavier, more rewarding traffic. Again, the best music starts after the vocals are over: give some extra volume to Steve Khan's closing guitar work.

Tom Scott's sassy tenor opens "Gaucho". The tenor resurfaces at regular intervals, sometimes as an intro to Donald Fagen's vocals, sometimes as a direct accompaniment. Why is "Gaucho" the title cut? Because "Gaucho" is uncharted territory, an unmitigated breakthrough into the heights of the Custerdome: "One more expensive kissoff/Who do you think I am/Lord I know you're a special friend/But you don't seem to understand..."

"Time Out Of Mind" is party music; the lounge lizards come to their senses at 3 a.m. and dance to metaphysical bop. "My Rival" gives further evidence that Donald Fagen has arrived as the state-of-the-art popular vocalist. He gets more out of his voice in the way of perverting nuances and wiseass sneers than any singer since the lead vocalist on *Blonde and Blonde*. Where do they get these lines? "I still recall when I first held/Your tiny hand in mine.../I love you more than I can tell/But now it's stomping time..."

"Third World Man" adds to the final-song tradition which began with "Katy Lied" (the song) and continued so elegantly through "Royal Scam" (the song) and "Josie." This is a lullaby about a child who turns his front lawn into the front lines of a war zone. The final chorus has to rank among the more beautiful homages ever paid to The Beatles. So buy *Gaucho*. Spend that money. Legal problems are never truly over and quality like this requires an inordinate amount of seasoning — it may be 1984 before the next Steely Dan album is in the stores. Let's hope for a double. Let's pray for a double. Until then, *Gaucho* is rich enough to keep us patient. — *Joshua Baer*

Larry Coryell
Standing Ovation Arista Novus AN 3024

John Scofield
Bar Talk Artista Novus AN 3022.

Larry Coryell just keeps on getting better and better. He mastered his instrument some time ago, and on his latest solo acoustic album he's finally mastered his technique. The pyrotechnic displays are still there, but Coryell holds them back until the music calls for some flash; perhaps it's maturity, or perhaps he's just his own best sideman. Right from the open-moments of "Discotexas" the guitarist shows a new concern for melody: his phrases hang together now instead of racing out of control to nowhere. He's also developed some subtleties, like the crystalline harmonics that ripple through quieter passages and the superbly controlled string bends (on a 12-string!) that give the opening of "Wonderful Wolfgang" an Indian raga flavor.

Eight of the nine selections are Coryell compositions, and they're much more than vehicles for his solo chops. The first side is a small suite which brings together his folk & rock roots, his jazz past, and his recent interest in classical music (shown by his arrangement of Vaughn Williams' "A Lark Ascending" and the titles "Ravel" and "Wonderful Wolfgang.") Coryell uses overdubbed 6- and 12-string guitars to create a stunning series of textures in these pieces.

Side two is more of a jam — with separate rhythm and lead guitars. But a compositional attitude is still present in his solos on "Moon" and "Sweet Shuffle" (which shows that Coryell has finally learned to play blues). That attitude has always made the difference between great soloists and empty riffers. Now that Larry Coryell has harnessed his technique to the music, he's one of the former and not the latter.

John Scofield has been influenced by Coryell (last year's *Tributaries*) and also by Gary Burton, in whose group he played a few years ago.

Bar Talk, in fact, resembles nothing so much as a Gary Burton album without the vibist. Scofield's own writing has the same tendency to resolve dissonant passages in ringing major triads, and of course there's the presence of Steve Swallow's bass to further invite comparison. Scofield brings a grittier tone and a more energetic attack to this kind of music, which helps save it from becoming a dry cerebral exercise. His solos sound like he misses the piano a bit, but the pentatonic parallel fourths and vibratoed phrase endings on "Fat Dancer" make interesting music. The interplay among the trio is exceptionally rich, especially when Swallow is soloing over Scofield's chords and Adam Nussbaum's traps. Swallow's massive sound and flawless intonation on the fretless electric bass provide most of the major delights on this record. — *Chris Doering*

John Lennon/Yoko Ono
Double Fantasy, Geffen Records.

The many people who were disappointed with *Double Fantasy* have been pretty quiet since John Lennon's death, out of anything from respect to remorse. Their silence doesn't make them any less right. Despite some of the loveliness of Lennon's "Imagine"—esque soft-rocking, despite Ono's new-found structural discipline (and stylistic context with the advent of groups like the B-52's), the overall quality of *Double Fantasy's* music is erratic, certainly not representative of Lennon's capabilities. But it isn't only Lennon's album, it's Lennon's and Ono's. The latent combustion in their dialogue, intended or not, creates a work of some tension and truth-telling.

The seven songs by each composer deftly develop two Everyperson-type characters coming up to a potentially divisive point in a long term liason. "Woman I know you understand/The little child inside the man/Please re-

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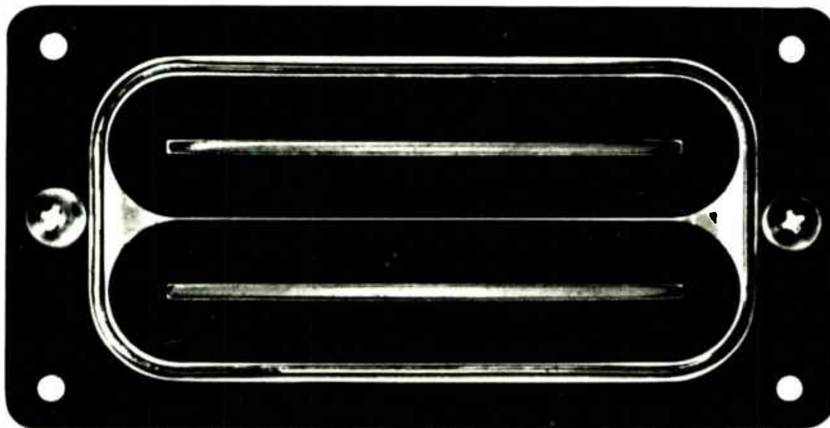

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member my life is in your hands/And woman hold me close to your heart/ However distant don't keep us apart," Lennon sings in "Woman." Ono gently reprimands later in the almost oriental "Beautiful Boys": "You like to fence in your world/And settle down when you're old/ You can run from pole to pole/And never scratch your soul/Don't be afraid to go to hell and back..."

As much as the album's lyrics are a document of the Lennon/Ono marriage, they are also a compelling vehicle for these characters and their nascent crisis state. The man *is* afraid of rocking the boat. Six of Lennon's tracks yearn their way through the relative lightness of the music with the protagonist's need to isolate and purify his life with his woman — isolate it, certainly, from its painful history and inherent fragility. From "I'm Losing You": "I know I hurt you then/But hell that was way back when/And well, do you still have to carry that cross?/ Don't want to hear about it..."

If John's cuts are the child in the man trying not to strangle the joy while grabbing it hard, Yoko's jagged, concentrated offerings are the counterpart and counterpoint. With a love as fierce as her partner's the woman is unwilling to let him hide out in a permanent search for a type of happiness that is, by its very nature, ephemeral. (Lennon warns son Sean of that same fleetingness in "Beautiful Boy (Darling Boy)".) She, too, is hearing her inner child, feeling the hunger her man currently wants to put behind him as filled: "Touch touch touch touch me love/I'm shaking inside/It's that faint faint sound of the childhood bell/Ringing in my soul."

Between the Lennon/Ono verities and this other "heart play," *Double Fantasy* is a work strong enough to absorb the blows leveled by some lazy songwriting and faceless session-men music making. Its emotional accuracy makes it even sadder that these themes won't be explored any further by this particular pair of artists. — *Laura Fissinger*

Neil Young
Hawks and Doves, Reprise HS 2297.

They don't come any flakier than Neil Young. He's written some of rock's best songs ("When You Dance") and some of its worst lines ("My head needs relatin', not solitude"), he's got umpteen albums' worth of unreleased material already recorded, but for his first album of the '80s, coming off a Big Theme extravaganza like *Rust Never Sleeps*, what does he do but release a short (29-minute), offhand, deliberately un-epic LP with the portentiously political title (and package) of

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Hawks & Doves. If it's a Statement, it's a pretty garbled one.

Oh, there are a couple of political songs. The last two cuts, "Coming Apart At Every Nail" and "Hawks & Doves," each espouse patriotism for the U.S.A. But "Coming Apart" devotes its longest verse to a slip-up at the DEW line (radar station) and argues that "The workin' man's in for a hell of a fight," while the title cut admits that "In history, we painted pictures grim/The devil knows we might feel that way again." Somehow I doubt that Ron Reagan is going to find a place tor Young in the Department of Cultural Affairs.

Along with the album's "message," everything else about *Hawks & Doves* is ramshackle. The melodies are straight out of Public Domain (Americana division), and the arrangements slowly gather momentum from the lone-guitar lullaby "Little Wing" (not Jimi Hendrix's song) up to the electric sorta-Cajun-sorta-hillbilly "Union Man" — which is in the same key and tempo as the last two tracks, undercutting them. Most of the songs ramble along from line to line, rarely looking back to see if they're making sense; the album's longest cut, "The Old Homestead," is a shaggy-dog vision complete with naked rider, prehistoric birds, a telephone booth and the moon.

Still, I'm not complaining. The best thing about Young isn't his occasional grandiose pronouncement — who needs him to tell us that "Rock and roll will never die"? — but the way his mind leaps, non-logically, to get at a half-articulated idea. Neither the music (simple) nor the lyrics (goofy) by themselves prepare you for the impact when Young insinuates, in "Little Wing," that "Winter is the best time of all," or the weird humor of "Lost In Space": "Losing you/I heard I was losing you/That's not the only thing that I got to lose." Neil Young's ramshackle, not-all-there, half-coherent songs are better because they *don't* add up, and his goofball-savant mystique is a classic of good old American individualism. Even if he is a Canuck. — *John Pareles*

Steve Swallow
Home ECM-1-1160

The album gets better as it goes along and finally turns, I think, into one of the season's best, but I still wish that Swallow's settings of the poems of Robert Creeley — who is sparser than the Japanese and a lot less informative — were a bit more tuneful and a touch more zany (or am I just longing for early Carla Bley?). What you get is a slightly effete album, nothing wrong in that, with some excellent blowing from Dave Liebman, Steve Kuhn

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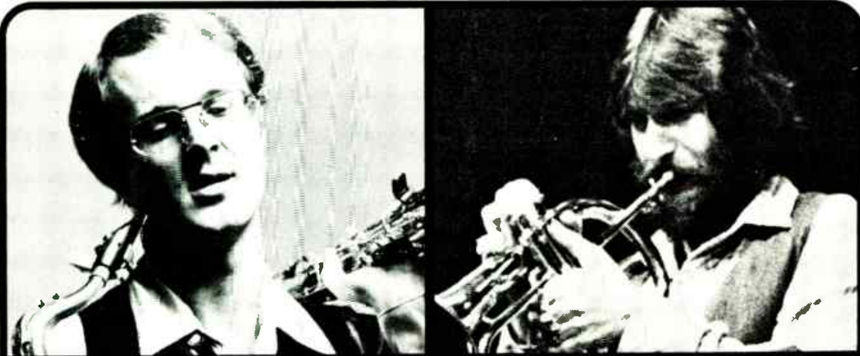

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at his most suspenseful and gnomic — catch his algebraic solo on "Colors" for example — and the shortest vocals in recorded history from Sheila Jordan, who employs the same broad vibrato she debuted on "Playground," to similarly ambiguous effect. Liebman sounds terrific, though I wouldn't have been able to identify him in a blindfold test — can that be Wayne Shorter, naw, George Adams, *Charles Lloyd?* — and I still wish Swallow would consent to play acoustic bass again once in awhile. The second side of the album, with its invitation, "Sure, Herbert, take a bite," its funkier themes and greater swing and humor, just about floors me so I say buy it.

The old jazz 'n' poetry nexus, no matter how easy to ridicule in beatnik skits (and ridicule ye who will, but I remember unsarcastically laughing my bottom off many years ago to a straight reading of "I am awaiting the rebirth of wonder" with a hip trio backup), has not be an unfruitful one, considering this album, Kuhn and Jordan's "Playground," Bley's *Escalator Over the Hill*, LeRoi Jones' "Black Dada Nihilismus" with the New York Art Quartet, Archie Shepp's "Malcolm," and perhaps most successful of all, the conjunction of Charles Mingus and Langston Hughes on an album which even Mingus' death has failed to make available again in America. Add also the current work of Thulani Davis, Michael Harper and the electrifying Jeanne Lee, take note of Joseph Jarman's superb book of verse entitled *Black Case* (still available?) and the next time you hear that someone has set the prophecies of Nostradamus to bebop don't laugh but get in line, there's a world of potential still to be explored. — *Rafi Zabor*

Charles Mingus
Something Like a Bird, Atlantic SD 8805

Ever since Mingus' death every jazz critic in the world, myself included, has labored in vain to write something adequate to our sense of the man's greatness and to suggest the size of the hole he left in us when he split. Still loved, still missed, still helping keep us alive, it's no sin against his memory to say that the albums that came out of his last recording session — *Me, Myself An Eye* was the first, and *Bird* is the second — aren't among his best. Nor is it surprising. Already confined to a wheelchair by the illness that would kill him in Mexico a few months later, Mingus was able only to attend the session, not play at it, and the new compositions his indefatigable creativity provided seem, with some exceptions, only half-used, sails only partly filled by the full wind of his

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creative fury. It must have been a strange gig. In the studio with the dying composer, how would a band, a set of soloists, work up the necessary enthusiasm and energy. The sun broke through at times: "Carolyn 'Keki' Mingus," the earlier album's ballad, sounds like a classic from where I sit, and some of the music from the new album rises to an appropriate height, here and there.

It's more of a blowing date than a composer's album. The title tune, all thirty one and a half minutes of it, is for the most part a series of solos on the changes of something like Charlie Parker's "Confirmation" broken up by some wonderfully dense and energetic ensemble melody lines — Mingus' usual big band idiom, roaring and farting, developing subtexts faster than you can count them, doubling back on itself to bite its own tail, digging in. The blowing is only intermittently successful — Ricky Ford, Ronnie Cuber, Pepper Adams, Bob Neloms, the alto contrasts of Lee Konitz, Charles McPherson and an unnaturally fleet-fingered George Coleman provide most of the fire — and the ensembles are played with some vigor. A good blowing date, all in all, with some great Mingus lines set too far from each other for maximum thrills. The album finishes with "Farewell Farwell," in memory of the painter Farwell Taylor, for whom the greater "Far Wells, Mill Valley" was written over twenty years ago. The best moments come from Ford, who has been boning up on his Dexter, Konitz, Jimmy Knepper and a telepathic Dannie Richmond (Larry Coryell also takes a silly solo with too many notes in it). It's hard to know how to feel about these last two albums. It's Mingus all right and some of the energy is there, but the music doesn't rise up and call you by your secret name the way it used to, and it's impossible not to feel sadder that he's gone. — *Rafi Zabor*

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Django Reinhardt / Stephane Grappelli

The Quintet of the Hot Club of France (1936-1937), Inner City 1104.

This new album, the first of three double sets from Inner City (who originally planned a ten-record set but then changed their mind), stands with the Savoy Charlie Parker albums and the Columbia Lester Youngs as one of the most important reissue series of recent years. It is incomprehensible to me that the work of the remarkable French gypsy guitarist, who was indeed, as Duke Ellington put it, beyond category, has only been available on good but expensive French imports or on execrably transferred and pressed domestic editions (the old RCA *Djangology*, now available on the budget Quintessence label, is the single satisfactory exception). Reinhardt's music is one of the unfailing sources of joy on the planet, and it's a shame that it's been bottled up for so long.

The Quintet of the Hot Club of France, which Reinhardt formed with violinist Stephane Grappelli and which also included two other guitarists and bass, was probably his ideal vehicle. A gypsy musician trying to find his way into jazz without sacrificing his identity could hardly have asked for better. It was light, it was flexible, it was adequate in the French virtues, and although there was no precedent for it in the prior conjunction of Joe Venuti and Eddie Lang, there had really been nothing like it before. In Grappelli Reinhardt found a foil for his own brilliance and a soloist who could help him carry the load. And Grappelli has his moments — though I think he plays a lot better these days — but they're just music, some of them better than the rest, some more interesting, some less. Django is something more than that, a special case. Each time his solo comes up it's as if a curtain had risen on the same golden moment again. Reinhardt loaded every rift of his music with creative ore; his invention was so comprehensive it could not help setting free the dazzle in everything it touched. Every note has its place and form and measure of light, there are min-

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ute syncopations and shifts of emphasis within virtually every phrase; cascades of melody are interrupted by brilliant doubletime runs and chordal eruptions, but the music seems less the result of technique — and his technique is formidable — than of a relaxed and undifferentiated delight in all the possibilities of sound. Though maybe it's enough to call his music charming and leave it at that. Reinhardt's music, while it lasts, makes everything else seem graceless and overwrought; it is a pure instance of genius at play. It makes life seem wholly satisfactory. It makes the eyes dance. When the great artificer created man and was pleased with what He saw, I feel sure that Django Reinhardt was one of the foremost eventualities He had in mind. — *Rafi Zabor*

Warren Zevon
Stand In the Fire, Asylum 5E-519.

My first suspicion about this album was Warren Zevon put it out to give himself some breathing room between studio records. (In a phone interview after his *Excitable Boy* was released, not realizing every Zevon lyric was slowly etched in blood and booze, I asked him if he had anything written for the next one. There was a long pause before he said, "That's a horrible thing to ask.") But even if that breather is part of *Stand In the Fire*'s reason for being, the result is a smoking, sparking and committed set of ten songs — two of them newly written.

The new songs are presumably etched in blood alone, because Warren has thrown off the booze monkey — thus the werewolf who was "drinking a pina colada at Trader Vic's" is now on Perrier in the live version. "Stand In the Fire" could use a wee drop of something; it's two-thirds of a good song about living inside rock 'n' roll, which means it blanches noticeably next to this LP's cover of "Bo Diddley's A Gunslinger/Bo Diddley," which takes command of the same territory with an imperious shrug.

"The Sin" is one of those songs in which Zevon works out with his private demons to the tune of a big bass drum (there's more than a little of the Stones' "Starfucker" in it). It works well, and so does the remainder of the line-up on this deceptively loose-sounding live document. Zevon makes a most prescient selection of his best slam-bang rockers, throws in a version of "Mohammed's Radio" that remains haunting despite some funny ad-libs, does full justice to his mini-drama, "Jeannie Needs A Shooter." A full-bore rhythm section and tangy guitar leads from David Landau and Zeke Zirngiebel are mixed just right against Zevon's boomtown-saloon piano playing. Zevon not only stands in the fire here — he keeps a cocky grin on his face as he does it. — *Fred Schruers*

Rockpile
Seconds of Pleasure, Columbia JC 36886.

This is the most anticipated debut album by a working group since the Band removed themselves from Bob Dylan's shadow to record *Music From Big Pink*. In fact, Rockpile has taken the woodshedding concept one step further to become the only rock band to establish themselves as a headlining concert attraction without having recorded as a group.

Seconds of Pleasure takes its forcefully modest place beside the previous solo outings of Rockpile's co-leaders, Dave Edmunds and Nick Lowe, but the record is a true debut in that the band's sound is defined here as a unit for the first time and is essential to the record's overall impact. It's a sound pared down to basics, but not in the fashionable sense of a group of demi-musical *artistes* covering their technical deficiencies with new wave "art." Rockpile completely eschews this kind of attitudinizing in favor of a no nonsense approach to rock 'n' roll as an end in itself.

Rockpile's humility offers far more than the audience identification that places them in the same school as Springsteen and the more proletarian of the Southern rockers — it's the key to understanding the group's internal coherence. Edmunds, Lowe and Terry Williams were virtuoso musicians leading some of England's finest bands a decade ago and back then the combined British fame of Brinsley Schwarz (Lowe), Man (Williams) and Love Sculpture (Edmunds) would have instantly marked Rockpile as a "supergroup," and would have certainly also spelt their demise. But these players have willingly set aside demands for top billing and solo space in exchange for a format that ensures their musical growth. In this sense they are a true *group* in the tradition of bands like the Beatles and the Who.

Rockpile's reputation has grown to the point where too much pressure of expectation has been placed on *Seconds of Pleasure*. The witty understatement of the title asserts the group's

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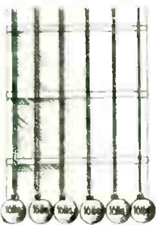

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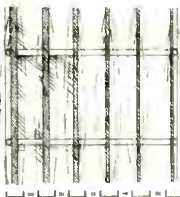

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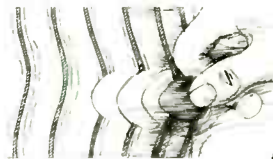

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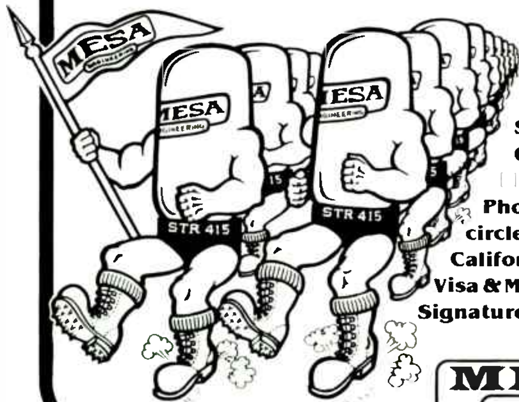

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philosophy and challenges those who, upon listening to the record and not hearing something revolutionary, declare the record an uninteresting rock revival hype. It has nothing to do with a revival of any kind. It is contemporary rock 'n roll, schooled on a quarter century of influences to be sure, but edited to its most compact and effective form. You can hear Williams straining to compress the long, hypnotic rhythmic structures he evolved with Man into the concise drum roll intro that blasts off the album's strongest cut, "Play That Fast Thing (One More Time)." Lowe's strong, melodic bass playing and brilliant songwriting would make him the leader of most other current groups, but here he fits perfectly into the tightly woven exchange established with Edmunds, whose precision guitar playing never wastes a note or lingers on a solo. Edmunds and Billy Bremner structure the group's two-guitar interchange with breathtaking logic and emotional sweep, especially on "Teacher Teacher" "Pet You and Hold You" and "Fool Too Long." It's this thoroughly professional give and take, the balance in which each part surrenders itself willingly to the overall effect, that makes Rockpile one of the great groups in rock history. — *John Swenson*

Prince — *Dirty Mind* Warners 3478. Prince Nelson has the look and the hype of a future superstar. From coast to coast he is compared to everyone from Jimi Hendrix to Smokey Robinson to Sly Stone, a nice parlay for a 21 year old fresh from the wilds of Minnesota. And the kid just might deserve it, at least as a musician. He plays a ton of instruments, including everything on this album, writes all his material and rivals Michael Jackson as black pop's reigning post-teen talent. All eight cuts on *Dirty Mind* suggest a musical intelligence and reach (falsetto soul, new wave rock, sophisti-funk) that says the Prince hype is justified. Not to forget that he is also one ass kicking live performer, as exciting and weird as he wants to be.

But folks, something has to be dealt with here, something that the rock press has glossed over and American radio is mulling right now. The boy has a *really* dirty mind. "Uptown," the single, is cute ("she just said 'are you gay'/kind-a took me by surprise"), but "Head" — whose subject is I think obvious — and "Sister, Sister," an ode to incest, are overt examples of a quite disgusting immaturity. Sex is no taboo subject in pop music; Mr. Nelson doesn't seem to understand that wit, understatement and style get one laid much more often than vulgarity. Bessie Smith, Louis Jordan, and a whole slew of blues artists got (and now get) mighty low at times; yet where they're sexy and sensual, Prince is naively adolescent. Makes all the difference, don't it? — *Nelson George*

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World Radio History

ROCK

The Damned come alive, Abba lights up, and Pylon gyrates. Darryl Rhoades records some songs from '76 and Stiff Little Fingers capture the Spirit of '77.

By David Fricke

SHORT TAKES

Human Sexual Response

Whitesnake

Any Trouble

The Damned

The Damned — (I.R.S.) A good Damned album. Hard as it may be to believe, the cool ghouls of British bondage-era punk are back at the head of the class with a surprisingly sophisticated entry that could be their *Hades Calling*. Among the strange yet somehow appealing bedfellows to be heard here are Captain Sensible's wall-of-sound guitars, resonant Beach Boy-o harmonies ("Billy Kid Games"), crash'n-'burn rockers, playful psychedelia like "13th Floor Vendetta," and the toe-tapping bombast of the modestly titled "History of the World Part I." Where the Damned used to be funny, now they're just plain fun. Who would have thought they had it in them?

Any Trouble — *Where Are All The Nice Girls?* (Stiff America) A damned good album, accusations of Costello cloning to the contrary. The closest this Manchester foursome actually come to ripping off the Bespectacled One is the unabashed simplicity of their sound — a seamless pub-rock mesh of ringing Rockpile-like guitars, crackerjack drumming, and singer-songwriter Clive Gregson's poignant warble. Gregson's aim is indeed true, although it is really somewhere between the versions here of Bruce Springsteen's "Growing Up" (studio) and Abba's "Name of the Game" (live). Gregson's impeccably crafted songhooks reel you right in to his three-minute dramas of loves won and adolescence lost like "Turning Up the Heat," "The Hurt," and his heart-tugging re write of Costello's "Alison," here titled "Nice Girls." With songs like these, Any Trouble's debut LP could be the 1981 answer to the age-old musical question — where are all the hit singles?

Pylon — *Gyrate* (DB) The South rises yet again. Like the B-52s, Pylon hail from arty Athens, Georgia. Unlike the comparatively frivolous bouffant bombers, Pylon make terrifyingly stark, brutally physical dance music, like Gang of Four with a drawl. While guitarist Randy Bewley strides the no-man's land between David Byrne's amateur six-string scratchings and the radical new harmonic equations of PiL's Keith Levene, the tribal stomp rhythm section of Michael Lachowski and Curtis Crowe underlines Vanessa Ellison's tortured Yoko-cum-Siouxsie vocalese with curiously melodic menace. Turn it up to ten and dance *this* mess around.

The Monochrome Set — *Strange Boutique* (DinDisc/Virgin International) When they're not being terminally pretentious ("Ici Les Enfants," "The Lighter Side of Dating") or transparently smarmy (the punk muzak of "Espresso"), the Monochrome Set can make intriguing music, which on *Strange Boutique* isn't very often. No matter how tough or tight they play — note the weird network of guitars in "The Etcetera Stroll" and the fractured Farfisa jive of the title track — the Set smell of art school B.S., particularly in songtitles, Bob Sargeant's paper-thin production, and lead singer Bid's tiresomely droll crooning. The only thing stocked in this boutique seems to be the emperor's new clothes.

Whitesnake — *Live... In The Heart of The City* (Mirage) Timeless stuff, this. For all the noise made about the Deep Purple connection here, ex-DP singer Dav d Coverdale and his breast-beating macho mob stand waist-deep in the Anglo-electric blues-rock tradition that gave us Free, Spooky Tooth, Humble Pie, and most recently Bad Company. Jon Lord and Ian Paice add that extra shot of Purple passion on the high-speed "Take Me With You." But Coverdale sounds more like Paul Rodgers than HM screamer Ian Gillian and when Micky Moody and Bernie Marsden peel out on the respective axes, they bring back fond memories of Paul Kossoff. And it's got live, like headbangers want

Human Sexual Response — *Figure 14* (Eat/Passport) Where Rhoades gives you a good case of the guffaws, Boston's HSR are more likely to coax a knowing smile with punky hijinx like "(I Want to be) Jackie Onassis" and their application of Rich Gilbert's PiL-like guitar work to kindergarten rhyme in "Dick and Jane." With their clever lyric wordplays and intricate vocal arrangements, HSR come closest in concept and execution to another Beantown band, the late lamented Orchestra Luna. But HSR brandish a double-edged sword that is sharpest in the chilling "Anne Frank Story." With songs like that, who needs another version of "Cool Jerk"?

Fleshtones — *Up-Front* (I.R.S.) The only problem with this record is there isn't enough of it — five songs playing at 45 RPM. But this feisty New York pop'n-'punk quartet makes the most of their thirteen minutes here with the manic Bo Diddley bopper "Feel the Heat," a fusion of urban surf music and Yardbirds bluesbusting on "The Girls From Baltimore," another rousing original "Cold, Cold Shoes," the Stones' "Play With Fire" done as jungle boogie, and a pastiche of garage-band riffing called "The Theme from 'The Vindicators.'" If someone compiles another *Nuggets* album ten years from now, the Fleshtones deserve to be on it.

Queen — *Flash Gordon* (Elektra) In which Mercury the Merciless and his three cohorts threaten to conquer the universe with more of the Bohemian balony. Can no one stop them?

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World Radio History

JAZZ

Papa Joe, Artists House, some Pepper and Baker from the West Coast, and more fusion from Herbie and Chick, and some you'd never believe.

By Chip Stern

SHORT TAKES

Jo Jones — *Our Man, Papa Jo!* (Denon PCM YX-7525-ND). A most worthy tribute indeed for the Segovia of the drums. With stalwarts like Hank Jones (the Joe Dimaggio of the piano), bassist Major Holley (the fourth Chipmunk) and Jimmy Oliver (swaggering yet tender tenor) Papa Jo is able to re-orchestrate and further define the classic big beat of the 30s and 40s. Sounding at times like a runaway subway train, a tap dancer and a hootchie cootchie girl, Paper Jo cajoles, teases and edits each arrangement into an epiphany. Turn immediately to "Stompin' At The Savoy" and listen to the melodic miniatures he sculpts from the rims and sides of the drums, like a firefly gliding around an infant's cradle; this ultra pianismo solo sets you up for the band's final strike and Papa Jo's showtime figures around the set, which pretty much sum up his mastery — *and* it's in digital. Thanks, for the reverie.

Continuing this column's focus on independent labels we turn to the Don Quixote of the Indies, John Snyder's Artists House. Since being jettisoned from A&M's Horizon label, Snyder has attempted a radical re-structuring of the way artists and producer do business. The artists retain ownership of their music, in effect *leasing* their work for a specified period and receiving one of the industry's highest royalty rates; the packaging and production standards are intended to equal the quality of the music, a welcome change from the usual low-rent, Stygian jive afforded "jazz" musicians. Snyder's recording touch is dry, yet full bodied, retaining the clarity of each instrument's overtones and resonance, while maintaining a polite distance between them in the mix.

Needless to say this attention to detail involves a lot of time and expense, so while trying to establish high standards Artists House has been operating on a shoe-string, while recording artists as different as Ornette Coleman, Blood Ulmer, Jim Hall and Paul Desmond. Now they're aligned with sleeping giant MCA in a distribution deal; but can we hope that their custom label status will parallel the influential Warners/ECM arrangement? Well, there have been some hopeful signs. Besides having a lock on the adult contemporary/jazz market with Spyro Gyra, the Crusaders and Steely Dan, MCA owns the Impulse catalog and has just undertaken a massive, budget priced re-issue of the classic Decca series. I don't know what's in it because I couldn't wake anybody up at MCA long enough to even get a press release. But I daresay you'll find essential works by **Satchmo, Duke, Chick Webb, Fletcher Henderson** and **Lucky Millinder...** it only took them two years, but then half an ass is better than none. Still, I'd caution you to buy 'em up quickly, if you get my drift.

So what do we have in their first Artists House batch? **Art Pepper** — *So In Love* (AH 9412) and **Chet Baker** — *Once Upon A Summertime* (AH 9411), and they're as good as they've ever been on record. Operating out of California, Pepper and Baker were among the most lyrical, passionate (you'll pardon the expression) white jazzmen of the 1950s, heavily influenced by Bird (how could you *not* be, unless you were a Monk), but less overtly beholden to him — two really personal sounds. On *The Late Show* (Xanadu 117), recorded in 1952, Pepper is goosed along into boppish terrain by a young Hampton Hawes, and his sound is sensual, almost wistful; and though the tone and contour of his line reflects Bird, his rhythmic approach is different — more splintered. Early Chet Baker recordings portray him as an introspective, sensitive trumpeter with a pinched, pleading tone that has caused some revisionist to dismiss him as a Miles Davis clone; but then again, many horn players have pointed to Tony Fruscella as an influence on Miles Davis — so it's a two way street.

Still, by inference, Pepper and Baker were lumped with a bloodless West Coast jazz scene, so to underscore their stature as improvisers, Snyder has surrounded them with contemporary rhythm sections (Hank Jones, Ron Carter, Al Foster-George Cables, Charlie Haden, Billy Higgins for Pepper; Harold Danko, Carter, Mel Lewis for Baker). Pepper is clearly relaxed with his collaborators, who push the groove while still leaving the top of the beat for the altoist's hard, brassy flights and unsentimental blues figures; his ballad playing is probing, yet emotionally hesitant, while on the cookers he's given to bursts of Coltraneish freedom, as with the ending to "So In Love." Baker is more frugal lyrically, and his rapport with the late Gregory Herbert (who has something of Wayne Shorter's pensive dynamism) highlights this selection of ballads and blues (the angular Kenny Dorham tune "Shifting Down" and the more agitated Davis/Shorter composition "ESP"). Baker's harmonic notions are very active, and when coupled to his sumptuous, pale blue tone, more than compensate for an occasional moment of rhythmic shyness. Cool, committed and intelligent.

And now, it's "Be Kind to Fusion Time." This month's mystery guest is young **Rodney Franklin** (Columbia JC 36747) a prodigiously gifted young keyboardist whose reach exceeds his grasp. On one hand he has crafted a promising consort between funk jazz and the Philly International sound; when he grooves, like on the rhythmic gumbo "In The Center," he is, if not imposing, very likeable. But he spends too much time dawdling on that which is overly urbane and sanitized, approximating a gospel/Gershwin marriage that makes my skin crawl.

No fusion roundup would be appropriate without a visit from Uncle Herbie and Uncle Chick (let's squeeze their funny noses). **Herbie Hancock** — *Mr. Hands* (Columbia JC 36578), **Chick Corea and Gary Burton** — *In Concert, Zurich, October 28,1979* (ECM-21182). Readers of this journal and others complain about critic-type mutants who are out-of-step with jazz fusion and can't understand our take-no-prisoners attitude. As a person who loves all kinds of music, I find it difficult to appreciate condescending, uninformed, puerile drivel (even if it sometimes makes for good pop), and most fusion is an insult to anyone who loves jazz, rock and funk (and might even like to hear them intermingled). Herbie and Chic's nod to integrity involves an occasional plunge into high art; so bless 'em, and hopefully theirs will be counted as venal sins in the final reckoning. Herbie's newest involves a trip through the amusement park of past bands, and it's tantalizing enough (Jaco, Tony W. and Ron C.) to make me want to hear more, but only on

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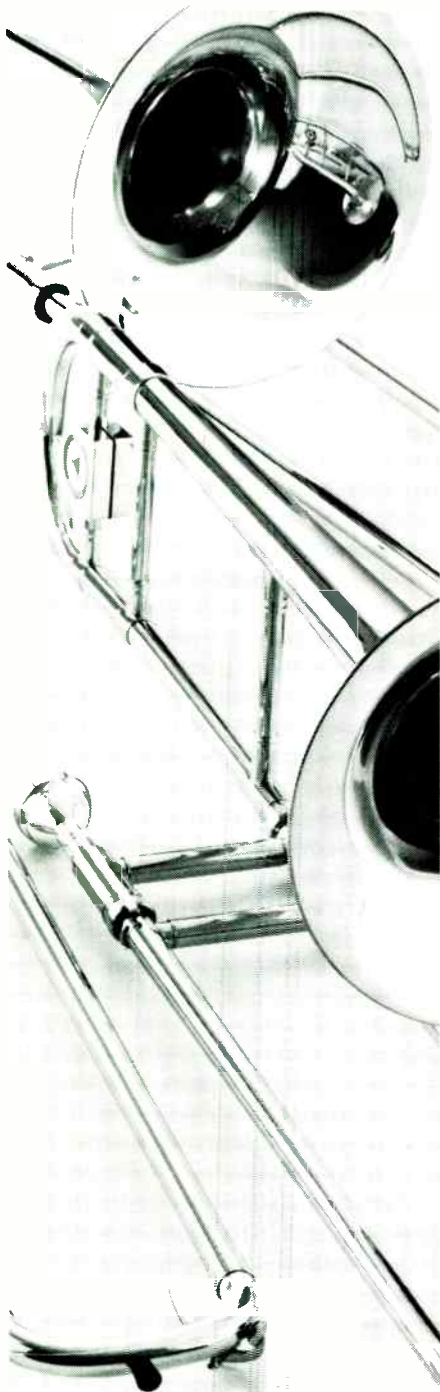

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HOLTON

"Shiftless Shuffle," with the original Headhunters, does he really deliver (do they ever, and check out Harvey Mason). No problems at all with Chick's latest, though. It's excellent, and cuts through the bad taste of past indulgences like a fine white wine. Corea and Burton conjur up an overwhelming harmonic intensity that is dynamically poised and rhythmically courageous — and never merely for the sake of show. Besides Steve Swallow's gracefully modulating compositions, and Corea's trademark Hispanic hotcha, there's a tune called "Bud Powell" that delivers everything you'd expect from that title. Gary Burton is ... well that goes without saying, and the recording is just as good.

Recommend a fusion record? Please try: **John Stubblefield** — *Midnight Sun* (Sutra SUS 1004)/**Stanley Turrentine** —*Mr. Natural* (Blue Note LT-1075). Stubblefield is a swaggering, visceral tenorist, like a modern version of Coleman Hawkins. *Midnight Sun* proves that even the most fervent of "jazz" musicians can deal with "marketable" music in the right setting — born again CTI, though it lacks some of Creed Taylor's production clarity. Footnote: good old Henry Threadgill provides the shifting title tune. The Stanley Turrentine set is the kind of good natured, blues drenched fusion that used to pass for "sell-out" back in the 60s — but with Lee Morgan, Ray Barretto, Bob Crenshaw, McCoy Tyner *and* Elvin Jones on his team do you want to pick a fight? Mr. T puts the butter on the modal popcorn Coltrane is known for, and there's an out-of-sight rendition of Lennon/McCartney's "Can't Buy Me Love."

Now, from Heartland, U.S.A., come two of the most oddball bits of revisionist country music (well ...) to pass by my nose in a month of Mondays: **Eugene Chadbourne** — *There'll Be No Tears Tonight* (Parachute P-013), available through New Music Distribution, 500 Broadway, NYC 10012) and **Andy Statman** — *Flatbush Waltz* (Rounder 0116). Guitarist Chadbourne's "free improvised country & western bebop" is really out there, though it pales at the touch of the oozing blip bleep mitosis he conjugates from time to time with reed maverick John Zorn; this is just one of the most hilarious records I've ever heard. Picture Charlie Parker and Charlie Christian passing for rednecks, without once looking down on their hosts ... maybe taking 'em for an occasional ride along high tension wires, all the better for digging on the patches of sagebrush and those long, long rows of corn. Chadbourne and Zorn bring a loving perspective and just the right touch of back porch sloppiness to tunes like Roger Miller's "Dang Me" — an anarchic, hell 'n holler classic. Andy Statman takes an instrument usually associated with country music — the mandolin — and makes it a citizen of the world, much more so than even David Grisman. Greek, Near Eastern, Jewish and Oriental dances and modes vie for center stage with Djangoish swing (naturally), modern string ensembles (of course), Tynerish modulations (what?) and Braxtonish picking (gee, whiz).

Ricky Ford — *Flying Colors* (Muse MR 5227). Now hey, I don't want you to get the wrong idea. You shouldn't infer from my remarks that Ricky Ford wipes the floor with Sonny Rollins, that he plays with more dusky warmth and bravura lyricism than Sam Rivers, that his rhythm partners (John Hicks, Walter Booker, Jimmy Cobb) makes him sound like the entire Ellington reed section simultaneously. No. Comparisons like that are odious, really do a great musician more harm than good, evade the issue entirely. I wouldn't hang that rap on him — "BEST YOUNG TENOR PLAYER" — the attention might kill him; I mean just because he fingers "Chelsea Bridge" into a dozen climaxes, traverses Monk's "Bye-Ya" as if *he* wrote it, "Take The Coltrane" without getting off at all the local stops ... ever hear of Ricky Ford?

Dannie Richmond — *Dannie Richmond Quintet* (Gatemouth 1004, 90 Madison Ave., Island Park, NY 11558); **Krystal Klear And The Buells** —*Ready For The 90s* (K2B2 Records, K2B2 2069, 3112 Barry Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90066; Ricky Ford is also in Dannie Richmond's band, along with heavyweights like Bob Neloms, Jack Walrath and a bass player (Cameron Brown) so good, so in tune with the ensemble, that you don't keep looking over your shoulder half-expecting Mingus to belch out of the mists and knock the chump off the bandstand. A vivid recasting of "Cumbia And Jazz Fusion" and some originals with the idiom-jumping stamp of the blues, all propelled by Richmond's pristine pinwheels of sound.

From the boring west coast come two albums that fly in the face of inertia. *Ready For The 90s* marks the return of master bassist Buell Neidlinger, whose credits run from Cecil Taylor and Frank Zappa to symphonies and studio work, and whose humor is reflected in sudden quotes from children's ditties like "Be Kind To Your Web-Footed Friends." With drummer Billy Higgins and trumpeter Warren Gale, Neidlinger and tenorist Marty Krystal have fashioned a group sound every bit as imposing as the Mingus Quartet with Dolphy and Curson (including some allusions to the stop-and-go chase sequences of "What Love"). Krystal's vocabulary includes a gorgeous tone, a cunning way of rising out of the center of the horn into controlled overtones, and an earnest, orderly lyricism uncluttered by cliches. In case you haven't taken the hint and bought a copy, there's also a 1961 trio with Cecil Taylor in all his Errol Garnerish splendor, chain whipping a 12 bar blues on a tribute to bassist Oscar Pettiford. ■

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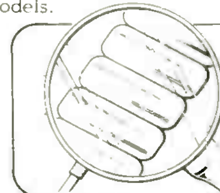

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Soul Revival *cont. from pg. 22*

Like most revivals the soul resurgence is more concerned with form than feeling. It is not insigificant that of all the performers I saw, only Clarence Carter offered any new, unfamiliar material (and that was a song, recorded as a 45, that could have been an outtake from any of his earlier sessions). And I suspect that most of the audience would have been terribly uncomfortable if they had been presented with anything unpredictable. Nor is the constituency of those crowds ignorable; they were loaded with just those people who are most alienated from contemporary black pop idioms. That is, the sort of music fan who believes that disco sucks, and has never been comfortable with post-Sly funk.

For just such reasons, pop music revivals are always untrustworthy. The revivalist cults invariably look for a reiteration of the old-fashioned moves without much regard for the old-fashioned motivation. Usually this has a lot to do with looking for an excuse not to deal with discomforting changes in contemporary style. Perhaps white hipsters are perennially destined to be wrapped up in black forms one or two convolutions behind black pop taste, to forever be reviving country blues just as Motown and Stax are hitting their stride, or reviving soul music just as Bernard Edwards and Nile Rodgers and Junie Morrison are making dance rhythms and post-psychedelic funk fascinating once more. Unless the soul revival can create a universe, where Otis Redding can co-exist with Junie Morrison, it represents a failure of nerve and an insult to the genuine artistry of both men. If Redding, by far the greatest soul singer of our times, was around today, I guarantee you he wouldn't be singing "Try a Little Tenderness" except in a medley used to deepen the meaning of his contemporary work. I'd also be willing to bet most of the soul revival fans wouldn't have stayed with him this long in any event. Ask Marvin Gaye. I don't mean that I would rather listen to the new Philippe Wynne album than to "634-5789" or that a lot of what's going on in the funk avant-garde doesn't strike me as the recycling of many of the worst tendencies of recent white rock. But somehow it seems valuable to struggle with what I don't like about those styles. After all, just dredging up the past won't do. What the Ritz audience couldn't understand was that when Wilson Pickett sang "Hey, Jude" that night, it was the only song in his set that *wasn't* part of the soul revival. M

Other People's Music *cont. from pg. 27*

and exhausting.

Back in New York, in between unreleased tapes of James Booker and Little Queenie & The Percolators, a friend from New Orleans plays an album by Vic Godard & Subway Set (*"What's The Matter Boy?"* on MCA, England). "It's a mediocre album by someone great," she explains, and she's right. Working with a totally faceless backing group and a production budget of (what sounds like) fifty dollars and lunch, Godard shines through as a wonderful songwriter with an unashamedly off-handed voice that crosses Ray Davies with Elvis Costello. The sound is reminiscent of Velvet Underground (circa "What Goes On," "I'm Set Free," "Some Kind of Love") and the Kinks, back when they were drunk but still in control. It's a songwriter's album, with the band and the production always in the service of the songs (without a life independent of them), but Godard has great rock and roll instincts, and with a real band and sympathetic production, his records could be gems.

An actor friend, to prepare for a role in a Chekov play, refused to listen to any music that was not Russian and had filled his house with Tchaikovsky, Scriabin, Prokofiev and Stravinsky. (My attempts at convincing him of Van Morrison's Soviet heritage failed dismally). The house filled with thick heartbreaking musics, all passion and drama, and by the third day we were drinking heavily (Stolchniya), walking back and forth through the kichen, and talking ponderously about Mandelstam's poetry, about the injustice of life, about why Nabokov never liked music, and, of course, about women.

Of all the records he played, *Alexander Glazunov: Concerto for Saxophone & Orchestra and Quartet for Saxophones in B-Flat Major* (Odyssey/Melodiya) was my favorite. Though known as "the Russian Brahms," his concerto and quartet (both written in the 1930's) are more reminiscent of Debussy's clarinet pieces, some of Gershwin's early romantic jazz stylings, and some of the more formal and orchestral releases on ECM by Jan Garbarek and Keith Jarrett (*Arbour Zena*). Written at the end of his life, the music is moody, fitful, and sweepingly sentimental, strong enough in its sense of romance to knock aside any intellectual arguments or objections and simply let the heart stand where it will.

When romance gives way to patriotism, there is always *The Soviet Army Chorus and Band* (Angel Records). Soldier songs, such as "Lenin Lived Here" and "Song Of The Machine-Gun Cart," as well as Western favorites like "Annie Laurie," are rendered in versions that are, unfortunately, unforgettable. There is absolutely nothing like marching around a Christmas tree to hundreds of over-eager Russian baritones chanting:

It's a long vay to Tipperary
It's a long vay to go
It's a long vay to Tipperary
And the sveetest girl I know-ho-ho.

It was shortly after that, paint and dropcloths notwithstanding, I moved back into my apartment and set up my stereo and bought the Clash album. M

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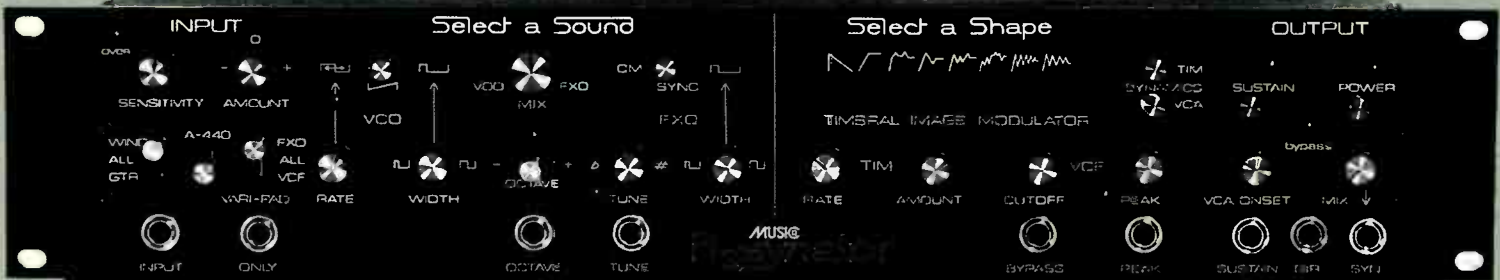

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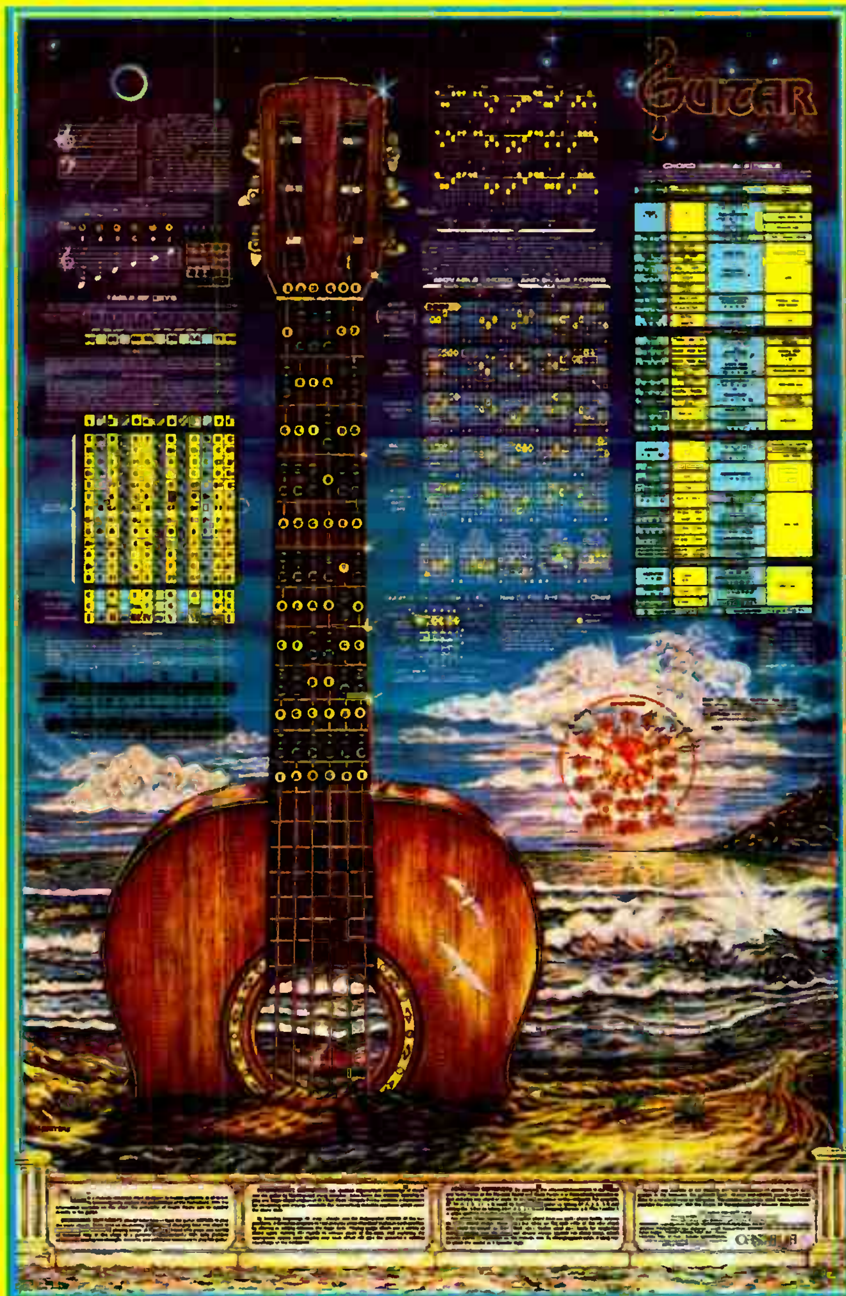

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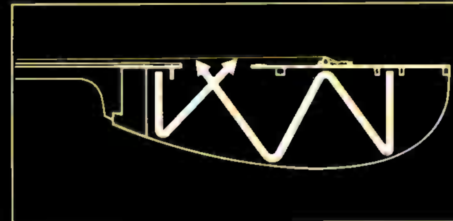

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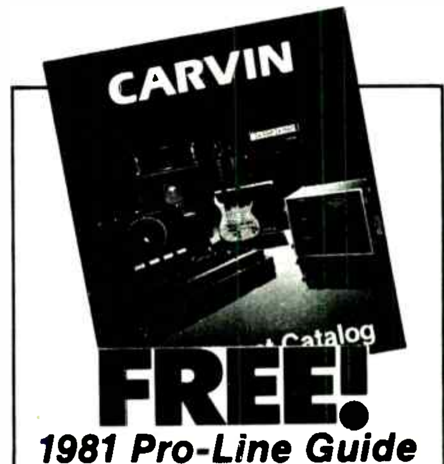
Austin *cont. from pg. 18*
their two indee singles reveal. You'll be hearing from them. Also prominent are the Gator Family, starring local movieola diva Sally Norvell, who over what's probably the most brutal powerchording in town delivers both vocally and visually onstage, managing to remind you simultaneously of Debby Harry, Janis Joplin, the best of Grace Slick and the worst of Patti Smith while retaining something distinctly her own. Their single also is unrepresentative — sounds more like Blondie than justice warrants. F-Systems are another hot local band with a female lead singer, with a style of their own emerging in staccato attack of guitars and synthesizer; I thought their lyrics most suited my own Manhattanite-style anomic hostility till I found out they are all based on old B horror flicks' plots. Oh well. The Re/Cords, who are probably the most popular local band yet to play nationally, have just released their first album, an infectiously fun collection of songs about things like teen orgies and going in debt on Master Charge. Almost the first New Wave goodtime band, they've also distinguished themselves by trooping around places like Austin's State Capitol building, getting on the Six O'Clock News playing something they call "Acoustic Folk Punk."

Also interesting are a couple of local bands specializing in generic linkups. The Delinquents are a sort of New Wave surf band whose single, "Alien Beach Party," was selected by England's *New Musical Express* as Single of the Week when it was first released. I was impressed enough by them to want to work with them on my own upcoming recorded-in-Austin album, which probably means I shouldn't say too much more about either them or it. Finally, there is Brave Combo, who are truly wonderful both live and on their recently-released EP. They've already played New York several times and I predict will be either the next hot breakout from this region after Standing Waves or forced to shuffle home in ignominy 'cause nobody anywhere wants 'em 'cause they play *punk polkas*, no kidding, and damn good too. Most people probably think they're too hip for polkas, but you sure can bounce your booty to those suckers.

So that's it. I should stress that this is of necessity no more than a gloss, snapshots of one of the richest music scenes I've ever encountered. I'm not sure exactly why it is that Austin, rather than New York or L.A or San Francisco or London seems to be shaping up as the most fertile spawning ground of popular music in the dawn of the Eighties. Maybe it has something to do with the legendarily laidback lifestyle, which initially seduced me and finally drove me back to New York. All I know is that, in the months ahead, you're going to be hearing a lot of great music from this part of the world. I hope I gave due credit to those few I was able to mention here. M



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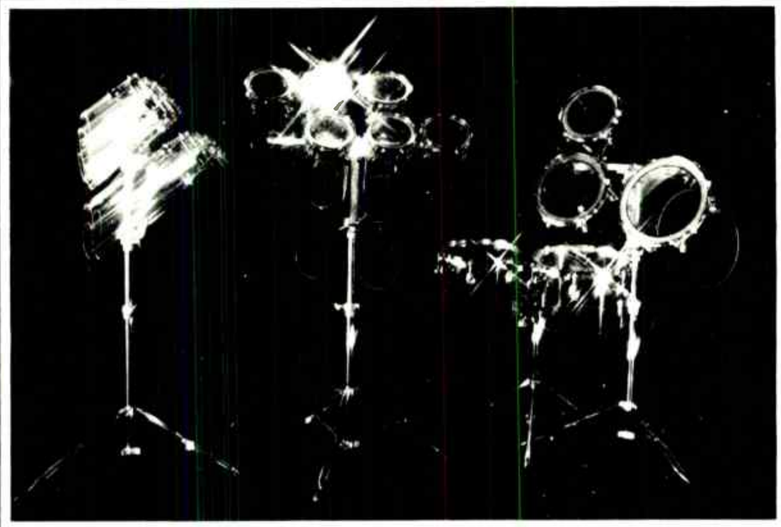

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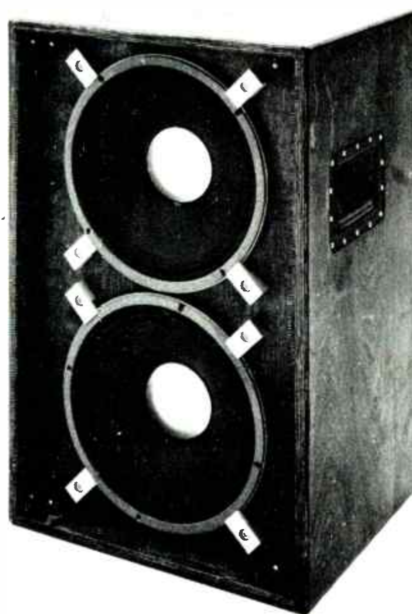

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Winwood *cont. from pg. 47*

another it detracted slightly from what the band essentially was. A lot of Americans I talked to thought it hurt us, but that band with the Muscle Shoals guys was fantastic. They didn't force anything on the band, and they were such great musicians. The band did start to get very complex at that point, however, because there were all kinds of personalities to deal with. Lots of growing pains.

MUSICIAN: Could you ever imagine working with the original lineup again?

WINWOOD: Well, to be honest, when I see other groups do this it puts me off badly. Obviously, when a group reforms they're forced to turn out the old shit, and they're just fatter, and a bit balder, and a bit longer in the tooth — I think it's just the worst thing. I'm not saying for Traffic to get together again would necessarily be like that, but that aspect of it, I find obnoxious.

MUSICIAN: Would you like to work with a band again?

WINWOOD: Yes, definitely. In fact, I'm putting together a band now that I hope to record and tour with. You've got to have that live thing to keep open your communication with the audience. It's like what I was saying about Blind Faith before. When I got back to Traffic after that and we went out on the road it was such an incredible relief, because when we played a lousy gig people KNEW it was lousy, and would respond accordingly.

MUSICIAN: If you met yourself again at 16, what advice would you give yourself, or anyone else starting off in the music world?

WINWOOD: Not to be misled by fads and fashion. There's this thing, especially in England, this insatiable need to be hip to the flavor of the month, if you know what I mean, which I think has to be avoided, especially as there's been so much of it over the past 20 years. Music has got to find an equilibrium. I personally think people are told what to like, and that obscures the essential quality of the music. People often kid themselves, but I believe that deep down inside everyone knows what's good and what isn't. The other thing I'd advise is that people take advantage of the new technology and get used to recording as much as possible, even if it's just at home, because basically the tape doesn't lie.

MUSICIAN: One last question: how does it feel to be doing interviews again?

WINWOOD: Oh, this was fine. No problem. Last week some guy in London kept me for over 4 hours . . . He said he wanted to go over every detail in my life, "What were you doing when you were 8 years old" — pretty thorough. I told Van Morrison about all this and he told me his secret for dealing with it.

MUSICIAN: What was that?

WINWOOD: He doesn't do interviews.

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Psychedelic/Punk *cont. from pg. 38*
kids were stuck with only the corpse of hippie music to listen to, Heavy Metal and Progressive Rock. Much worse than this, even, was the grimness and bitterness of proletarian life in a society and economy much older and more diseased than ours has ever been. All the early punks ranted on about no jobs, no hope, no future, no nothing because that's what they saw all around them — and so they quite literally spat in its face. What is common to both these spontaneous reactions, then, is an extraordinary disgust and despair out of which comes a galvanizing solidarity and anger.

Look at how the Jorma Kaukonens and the Jimi Hendrixes approached *sound itself:* like Steve Jones (Pistols) or Mick Jones (Clash) or Pete Shelley (Buzzcocks); they conceived of it as something to be fueled and revved and built — the louder and harder the better. The best "acid-rock" challenged all restraint and was as noisy and arrogant and grand as punk itself. Though it was not at its best all that often, it's as plain as the nose on Pete Townshend's face that the will behind it wanted to push beyond any kind of limitation in volume, style, or substance. The down and dirty roots both eras share is clearest when one compares the two representative embryos: the Avalon Ballroom in San Francisco in 1966 and the Roxy in London in 1976. Both were, equally, International Palaces of Sweat and Funk, ultimate dance - until - you - drop - then - drop - something - and - dance - some - more joints. Whether the typical guy or girl had hair to his/her toes or no hair at all, safety pins in cheek or American flag on eyelids, he/she/it was shouting and shaking and feeling transformed, part of something different and special that spoke only him or her, and was made by people very much like the bugger in question, people he could easily imagine himself as.

Finally, here's the coup de grace, the smoking gun of a direct historical connection: the final crescendo of the late Sixtie's thunder and din in America were two bands from the grimy heartland of industry, Detroit. One was the avowedly "revolutionary" MC5, and the other was the Psychedelic Stooges (they shortened the name before the first LP), featuring a seventeen-year-old singer named Iggy Pop. Every observer of British Punk at its founding traces it roots and inspiration directly to these wild, white-noise hippie bands of 1969. The Sex Pistols made this very clear by releasing only one non-original song during their entire active career: an epic version of the Stooges' "No Fun". The evidence is in — the punks were nothing but the unexpected bastards of the flower children. What a family. Case closed.

So now it's 1980, and we're very far from that rare unity, a joining of music and listeners, when one reflects, speaks for, *is*, the other. To tout a disparate bunch of cultish English bands with no social base, no raison d'etre other than just playing, as akin to a great ecstatic flash-fire in the history of pop is ridiculous. All the light shows in the world will not reclaim that moment when the youth (comfortable, white) of America emerged from their cocoon. A "psychedelic revival" has about as much validity in and of itself as Beatlemania — and one would hope that after Dec. 8, 1980 people will realize the disastrous consequences of a morbid fixation with the dreams of youth. Honor the dead, honor their testament of those who *could* see for miles — move on. M

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Collector *cont. from pg. 96*

copy of an album by one of these groups, the Rising Storm, from Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. This collector would probably be willing to pay similar money for an album by the Ones (from Lowell, Mass.), the Elektras (from the St. Paul School at Concord, New Hampshire), Kenny and the Kasuals (from Texas), the Litter (from Minneapolis), the Foul Dogs, and onward perhaps ad infinitum. These records were made in such small quantities and were so poorly distributed that no one to the best of my knowledge has been able to assemble a comprehensive list of what exists. But one thing is certain: If you own a local-label edition of a mid-'60s unknown-group item, you may be sitting on a record worth a lot more to a German collector than anything the Beatles ever did. M

AACM *cont. from pg. 34*

excellent use of the spotlight that is now theirs.

It is theirs largely because so many of the AACM's *first,* and founding, generation have left. And not only have Bowie, and drummer Steve McCall, and the AACM's father-figure Muhal Richard Abrams headed for New York's now appreciative canyons; so have such dazzling new contributors as trombonist George Lewis, reedman Chico Freeman, and McCall's colleagues in

In fact, the major challenge facing the AACM in recent years has been coping with this rewrite of Exodus: this matter of maintaining a strong base in the city that birthed and strangely nurtured the music, despite the fact that many of its practitioners have split. "Chicago is culturally dry," Jarman once told me. "But that's what we've been given, and we have to deal with it. The main spirit of the AACM remains in Chicago, no matter who comes and who goes." Nonetheless, today only about half the AACM's membership roster lives in Chicago. And even though the AACM is widely respected on an international level — the abbreviation itself has become an impressive post-nominal plum, like "Ph.D" or "O.B.E." — the local scene is much what it has been for the past 10 years.

Musically, the AACM's younger members — many of them alumni of the much-praised AACM School — are supplying a regular stream of worthy concerts and are at last branching onto records, too. What's suffering, however, is the range of extra-musical tasks the AACM had set for itself. Over the last couple years, the organization has seemed less organized than before. The annual Summerfest concert series has suffered from poor (at times nonexistent) publicity, a failure to check the sound, poor lighting: a host of those details that must be handled with care to best display the music. And the AACM School — numbering Ewart, Freeman, Lewis, and many others among its grads — is moribund.

An intriguing step forward came in the summer of 1980 when a Chicago educator and former brass man named Walter Strickland — who once played with Sun Ra, and also jammed with Abrams and Jarman in the 60s — was selected to fill the new post of AACM executive director. Strickland's salary was covered by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and he arrived with plans to turn the AACM's business side into . . . well, into a business.

"Artists have that stereotype of being disorganized and naive about business and it's ridiculous to perpetuate it," he said at the time. Strickland brought in a CPA to go over the ledgers, began a fund-raising drive, started work on a health maintenance/insurance package for the AACM members, and began eyeing sites for the AACM School, saying, "There is a commitment to the school among our members, and we want to make it functional again." The status of these plans isn't yet known: the AACM refused comment for publication, saying only that a news release was being prepared for mid-winter. (This should not be construed as an attempt to hide anything; the organization just isn't talking

continued on pg. 112

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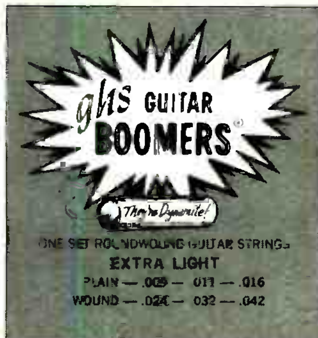

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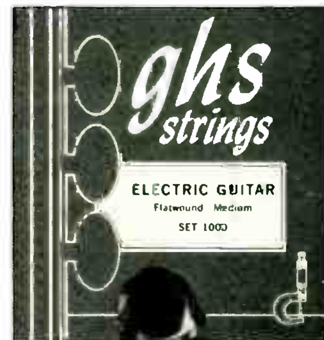

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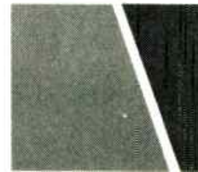

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STUDIO

CONTEMPORARY HARMONY/RON DELP

PEDAL-POINT

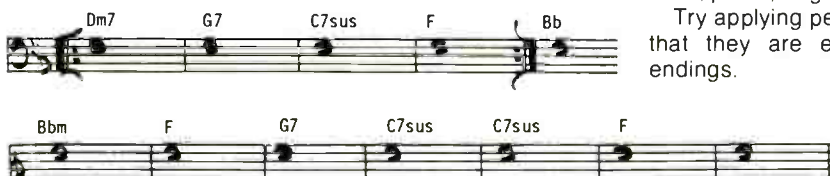
We've been talking about chords that occur with a note other than the root in the bass. There is a related situation where two or more chords happen with a single note in the bass (either repeated or sustained), and that's called *pedal-point*.

Pedal-point goes back a few centuries and the word "pedal" refers to the organ pedal which can hold a bass note while the hands play melody and chords above.

A few issues ago I used an example from the Blues Brothers' "Gimme Some Lovin'" where the I and IV chords change while the tonic of the key remains the bass note. In the key of G the chords are G and C, the bass note is G:

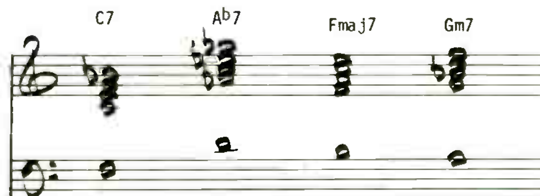
Another example I used is from "On Green Dolphin Street" where a C is kept in the bass while the chords change above it:

In both of these tunes, the pedal-point is a part of the song, but you can employ the technique in any song you like as long as it fits musically with the chords and melody. For example, Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely:"



Holding the F through the entire song is a little tedious, so you might want to go to actual roots on the bridge — but you get the idea.

In most cases, the pedal-point note that works the best is either the root or 5th of the key. And the only time a pedal note will sound flat-out bad is when it produces a b9th (minor 9th) interval with a chord tone above it. Here are some examples:



To remedy the situation you can alter the note of the chord which is causing the b9 interval in most cases. In the 1st example above you could change the C7 chord to C7sus; in the 2nd and 3rd examples, flat the 5th of the chord (if it won't conflict with the melody). In the 4th example there isn't much you can do except change the chord entirely if you can get away with it.

A pedal-point can last for one or two bars or as long as you like. As with every other harmonic technique, do what your ear says sounds best.

Trombone, baritone sax, cello, timpani, tuba and synthesizer are good choices for pedal notes. Or you can have bass, piano, or guitar do a tremolo, or just repeat the note.

Try applying pedal-point to a few tunes, and I might add that they are extremely useful on introductions and endings.

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STUDIO

GUITAR/JOHN AMARAL

BLUES GUITAR PART 2

Last month we started the subject of Blues soloing with an introduction to pentatonic scales and their applications. I cannot overemphasize the importance of thoroughly exploring their tonalities and melodic possibilities. They are basic to practically every musical style. Learning to use them produces much insight into the geometric organization of the guitar and provides a basis on which to build more technically advanced scale and arpeggio fingerings. I'm going to assume that you are quite familiar with all the pentatonic forms and their tonalities, so continue to review last month's column.

This month we will start to analyze and develop Blues progressions starting with the most simple which will grow eventually through Major Blues, Bebop, and beyond. It's very important not to miss any steps in this evolution, so be sure to explore each modification as we proceed; you should be able to play over each example as they get more harmonically advanced. I would appreciate any comments or personal approaches of your own which you can address to me at *Musician* or to Berklee College of Music in Boston.

The Blues began as a synthesis of a number of aesthetic forms: field hollers, church harmony, African pentatonic melodies, and AAB song form. We are not going to trace the Blues historically or theoretically, but through practical musical examples, so we're going back to the late 1800s with the first two examples which are 8 Bar Minor Blues: "St. James Infirmary" and "House of the Rising Sun." Tape the progressions and improvise using the indicated E La Pentatonic scale.

ST. JAMES INFIRMARY

| E- A- | E- | E- A- | E- B7 |

| E- A- | E- | C B7 | E- |

HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN

| E- G | A- C | E- G | B7 |

| E- G | A- C | E- B7 | E- |

Around 1900 the 12 Bar Blues emerged as the most prominent and musically rich form, the best example being W.C. Handy's "St. Louis Blues." The 12 Bar Blues form is divided into three 4 bar phrases. The first states a theme, the second traditionally was a melodic repetition of the first with different harmony, and the third phrase was an answer to the first two.

There are four basic approaches to playing over this progression. You can play Do Pentatonic on each chord root as it changes (G Do Penta, C Do Penta, D Do Penta). Second, you can play La Pentatonic on each one (G La, C La, D La). Third, you can switch from G Do to G La wherever your ear tells you that it's appropriate. Last, you can used a combined scale of G Do and G La, and treat the progression as one mode.

ST. LOUIS BLUES

1. G DO — C DO — D DO; 2. G LA — C LA — D LA; 3. G DO & G LA COMBINED

| G | C | G | |

| C | | G | |

| D7 | | G | (D7) |

The next example is an 8 Bar Blues which you can treat harmonically in the same way as "St. Louis Blues." The interesting feature of "Bring It On Home" is that instead of proceeding immediately to the IV chord as in W.C. Handy's tune, it goes to the V chord after the tonic G chord is stated.

BRING IT ON HOME

| G | D7 | G | C |

| G | D7 | G C | G (D7) |

The last example is a Spiritual with a Blues flavor. The #IV diminished chord followed by a I chord with its fifth in the bass is typical of Gospel music whereby it found its way into Blues. Although the proper scale is C# Diminished, you can get away with G La Pentatonic.

JUST A CLOSER WALK WITH THEE

| G | D7 | D7 | G |

For listening to these types of Blues, check out the playing of New Orleans and Chicago traditional bands and such players as Louis Armstrong and Kid Ory. Also check out Blues guitar players like Blind Lemon Jefferson and Lonnie Johnson. So long until next month.

Next month: Blues Part 3.

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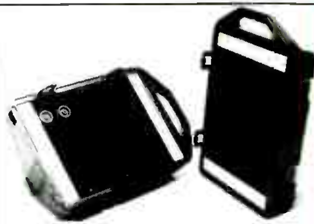
Star Instruments has just unveiled the Synare Bass Drum capable of producing short, medium, and long bass drum sounds that are tunable with a single control. The new electronic drum has a unique double, triple and repeat function which permits a drummer to create double and triple bass sounds from a single instrument. AC powered and self contained, the 8 inch drum head can be mounted on a tom or bass drum stand. Star Insts., Box 145, Stafford Springs, CT 06070.

The **Rhythm Tech** Tambourine is designed with the player in mind. Its patented configuration places a cushioned grip within the frame's overall center of gravity. This puts more of the instrument's perceived mass in the player's hand, and that creates a significant improvement in technique and endurance. Recording and stage professionals helped Rhythm Tech develop an optimal jingle formula. The result is a clear, distinctive sound that holds its own in today's multi-track environment. Rhythm Tech, 511 Center Ave., Mamaroneck, NY 10543.

ARP Performance Series Mixer, ARP 8, is advertised as "the Mixer you probably couldn't have afforded five years ago." Some of its features are: 8 Channels; Stereo Outputs; Monitor and Effects Submix Bus: Built-in Analog Delay for echo; two 7-band Graphic Equalizers; 3 bands of Equalizers on each of the eight channels and 3 VU Meters. Arp Instruments, Inc., 45 Hartwell Avenue, Lexington, MA 02173.

Sequential Circuits introduces a monophonic synthesizer, the Pro-One. Employing older brother The Prophet's electronics and voicing, the Pro-One's features include: 2 VCOs with sawtooth, square and pulse width wave and pulse width wave shapes; extensive modulation and double modulation capabilities; C to C3 octave keyboard; built-in digital sequencer with 2 sequences and up to 40 note storage between them; arpeggiator for up or up/down arpeggios; pitch and mod wheels and other great synthesizer stuff including internal *digital* interface to hook the instrument up to most home computers. Sequential Circuits, Inc., 3051 North First Street, San Jose, CA 95134.



Peavey Electronics has announced their new "Mini Monitor" System. This system is a lightweight, extremely portable public address and monitoring system designed for situations where a minimal amount of equipment is required and where ease of handling and operation are major requirements. This system may be used in a vertical/conventional manner, or may be placed on the floor and used as either a 30 degree or 45 degree monitor. A very efficient and cost-effective molding process enables our uinque double-wall, high-density polyethylene/plywood construction to form a rugged, roadworthy and economical package. Peavey, 711 A St., Meridian, MS 39301.

Modular Sound Systems introduces the **Bag End** cabinet line. A modular concept with over 40 different models allows wide versatility in matching the system to the application. Uses range from sound reinforcement to studio to professional musical instruments. Cabinets are constructed from top grade 13 ply birch plywood with a dark walnut oil finish. All hardware is flush mounted to allow for easy stacking, transporting, and storage. A 9 ply birch cover is provided for storage and handling. Machined aluminum speaker mounting hardware and expanded steel grills securely hold and protect the speaker driver, yet are designed for quick easy access. Enclosures come loaded and pretested with JBL or Gauss drivers. Bag End, Box 488, Barrington, IL 60010.

Washburn introduces the "Festival Series" Electric-Acoustic. The Festival Series guitars utilize a revolutionary high output tone generator which minimizes feed and string noise, while eliminating the need for a pre-amp and battery. Deep body and shallow body models offer varying degrees of volume, bass and projection depending on the musician's needs. Volume and EQ controls are mounted in a rosewood ring on the upper bout for fast, easy access. Three 6-string and three 12-string models are available from $449.00. Washburn, 1415 Waukegan Road, Northbrook, IL 60062.

GHS Strings has added two new sets to its line of classic guitar strings. The sets are claimed to deliver an especially brilliant tone due to the special design of the bass (wound) strings. According to GHS the crucial factor in designing a wound classic string with brilliant tone is achieving the proper ratio between the thickness of the nylon core and the thickness of the metal cover wire. GHS research discovered by building up very thin strands of nylon in various combinations, the exact core sizes created can then be combined with exact cover wire sizes to produce strings with exceptionally brilliant tone. GHS Corporation, 2813 Wilber Ave., Battle Creek, MI 49015.

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What's more, the new P-Bass is built for a long, carefree life. Efficient electronic circuitry and a single PC board. Epoxy finish brass hardware. And approximately 1,200 hours of battery life.

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write only one book every twenty years, others guys produce fifteen a month...and I don't think one's better than the other. I'm just a different kind of guy. I don't produce them every week.

Pop Music

I *love* commercial music! I like commercials on the TV. I don't sit and watch them but as a form, if I had to do anything on TV, it would be in the style of the commercial. I like pop records. I like Olivia Newton-John singing "Magic," and Donna Summer singing whatever the hell it is she'll be singing. I like the ELO singing "All Over the World." I can dissect it and criticize it with any critic in the business. And put it down or praise it or see it from a sociological point of view or anthropological point of view...or any fuckin' point of view, whatever. But without any thought, I *enjoy* it. I just enjoy it! That's the kind of music I like to hear. It's folk music. I always said it and it's true. It's folk music. That's what I'm doing, folk music. I'm not intellectualizing it. I'm not arranging it into a symphony and making it into a phony art form and calling it pop opera. Right? I'm just doing the music I enjoy. And now I'm enjoying it and it comes in the form of pop music to me. If it came in the form of painting, I'd be painting.

Walls and Bridges was the last record I made. I've already compared it. It's light-years away. Because *Walls and Bridges*...it's the same as cooking...anybody can cook rice but few can cook it well. And cooking is a manifestation of your state of mind. So is the music. There's craftsmanship in *Walls and Bridges*. There's some good. And there's the semi-sick craftsman who put together the thing. But there's no inspiration and there's misery. It's miserable. It gives off an aura of misery. Because I was miserable. So now I'm not miserable so this new album will give off an aura of not being miserable.

A Beatles Reunion

I never wanted to talk about it, you know. None of us did, really, so we would just say something glib or something just to shut people up. We couldn't say "Never," because then it would be like Ringo said once, "You're a bad guy if you're the one that says never," and God knows what would have happened anyway, right? Nobody knows what's never, it's a long time...but then it goes "RINGO SAYS NEVER," big headlines, or "JOHN SAYS NEVER" or "PAUL SAYS NEVER," so nobody wanted to be the one to say "Maybe" because then every time you said "Maybe" somebody took an ad out in the paper saying "I'm the one who's bringing them back together." So there was nothing to be said about the Beatles — it came to a point where you couldn't say a damn thing — whatever you said was something wrong — it's like being in a divorce situation, you know, you can't say anything about your ex-wife because you're in court and anything you say can be held one way or another against you or for you — so that was the situation. And the point about the Bangla Desh concert or any of these events is that if the Beatles wanted to get together, *they* would be the first to know, not the last to know. And they would be the ones that ran it, promoted it, and owned it, and it would not come from some third party outside of the four guys themselves. Whatever it was that made the Beatles the Beatles also made the Sixties the Sixties. The Beatles were whatever the Beatles were. And I certainly don't need it to do what I'm doing now. It could never be. Anybody that thinks that if John and Paul got together with George and Ringo, the Beatles would exist, is out of their skull! The Beatles gave everything they've got to give and more, and it exists, on record, there's no need for the Beatles — for what people think are the Beatles — the four guys that used to be that group can never, ever be that group again even if they wanted to be. You mean if Paul McCartney and John Lennon got together, would they produce some good songs? Maybe, maybe not. But whether George and Ringo joined in again is irrelevant. *Because Paul and I created the music, okay?* Whether it's relevant whether McCartney, Lennon and McCartney, like Rodgers and Hammerstein — instead of Rodgers and Hart or instead of Rodgers and Dingbat or whoever else they worked with — should be limited to having worked together once, to always have to be referred back to that is somebody else's problem, not mine — I never think about it. What if Paul and I got together? What the hell would it...it would be *boring*.

Coming Home

"I never know what I'm talking about until a year later when I see what I'm writing. Some of it, even the Beatles stuff, when I hear it now, I think, Oh that's what...and I think Dylan once said it about his work — he was really talking about himself — a lot of it in the early days, it was "him" and "you" and "they" that were doing things, but really when I look back on it, it's *me* that I'm talking about. And so, yes, you could say it was overwhelming, that I actually felt out in the universe you know, disconnected, and so I converted it into that. But it also could be a short story about when we were physically separated in the early seventies, you can apply it to that too — although I wasn't thinking that at the time. It described that situation, too, of being kicked out of the nest and being dead. Or being not connected is like being dead. There's that difference — being alone and being lonely is two different things. Something I've learned in the past ten years. What I did in the past ten years was rediscover that I was John Lennon before the Beatles, and after the Beatles, and so be it.

One moment — the actual moment when I remembered who I was — completely, not in glimpses — I never really lost complete touch with myself — but a lot of the time I did, for long periods of time...I was in a room in Hong Kong, because Yoko had sent me on a trip round the world by myself, and I hadn't done anything since I was twenty. I didn't know how to call for room service, check into a hotel — this sounds — if somebody reads this and they think, Well, these fucking artists, or These bloody pop stars, or These actors, you know, and they don't understand...the *pain* of being a freak...Yoko said "Why don't you do this?" I said "Really? By myself? Hong Kong? Singapore?" I said "But what if people bother me?" — and well I had a big excuse for it you see, I had to isolate using Being Famous as an immense excuse. An incredible excuse. For never facing anything. Because I was Famous — therefore I can't go to the movies, I can't go to the theater, I can't do anything. So sitting in this room, taking baths, which I'd noticed Yoko do, and women do, every time I got nervous, I took a bath. It's a great female trick, it's a great one. I must have had about forty baths...and I'm looking out over the Hong Kong bay, and there's something that's like ringing a bell, it's like what is it? What is it? And then I just got very very relaxed. And it was like a recognition. God! It's me! This relaxed person is *me*. I remember this guy from way back when! This feeling is from way, way, way back when. I know what the fuck I'm doing! I know who I am — it doesn't rely on any outside agency or adulation, or nonadulation, or achievement or nonachievement, or hit record or no hit record. Or anything. It's absolutely irrelevant whether the teacher loves me, hates me — I'm still me. *He* knows how to do things — *he* knows how to get around — *he* knows how to form a group — *he* knows how to do everything he wants to do — WOW! So I called, I said, "Guess who, it's ME! It's ME here." I walked out of that hotel, I just followed the workers onto the ferry, nobody noticed me...this is an aside thing: somebody asked a very famous actress, and I've forgotten who it was, somebody like Carole Lombard, somebody really big from way back, and maybe this story came over Johnny Carson — but they asked her how one actress couldn't get down the street without being recognized and the other one could, when they were both equally famous. And she said, "This is how I do it," and she demonstrated. She walked down the street as Carole Lombard, and everybody turned their heads — and then she walked down the street as nobody. And that works. I CAN get around. If I'm supernervous, I send out a vibe. "Here's a nervous person coming!" so they're going to look round because of this vibration that's walking past, and then afterward say "It's somebody famous." Because some people are like that anyway. So I got out, and I

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got on the ferry. Looking around. It's like a thrill, I'm walking around all by myself, and I'm in the middle of the Far East, and all these people are going to work, you know there's Europeans and Chinese and everybody and they're all just going to work and we get along over to Kao Lung, and I just followed the crowd because I didn't know where the hell I was, having never seen anything — I've just been in a hotel in Hong Kong, and I just wandered around, and when I saw them dispersing into offices or different things, I just went into the little cafes and ate, [gestures] this and that, "Give me two" and all that bit, then I went to the stores and I bought things — I did that for a few days because I didn't try and adjust to their time, I was always up at five o'clock, watch the sun come up and walk out and wander round Hong Kong at dawn. And it was just fantastic.

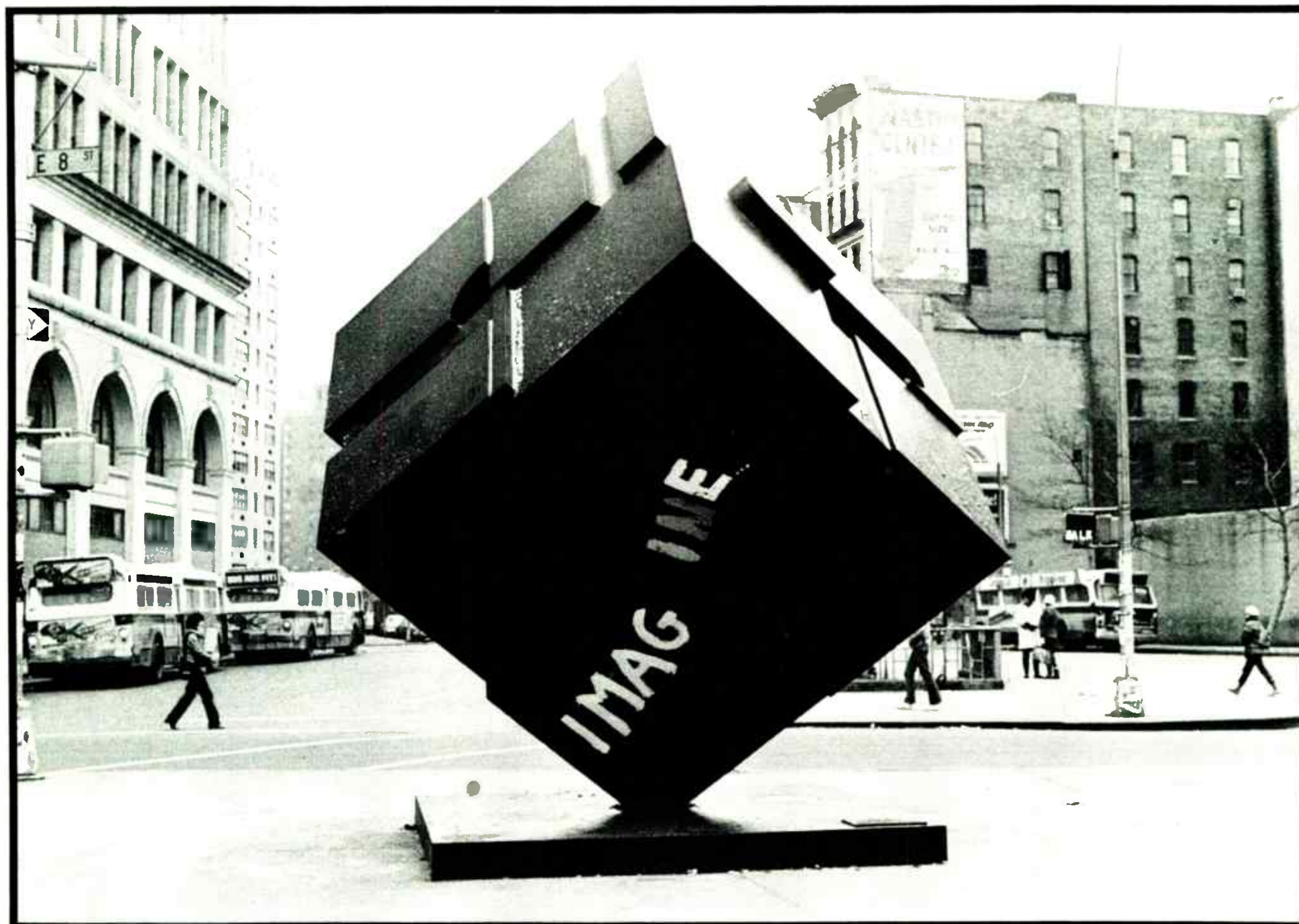
I loved it! I loved it — that's what I rediscovered, the feeling that I used to have as a youngster, I remember another incident in my life when I was walking in the mountains of Scotland, up in the north, I was with an auntie, who had a house up there, and I remember this feeling coming over me, you know, I thought, This is what they call poetic, or whatever they call it. When I looked back I realized I was kind of hallucinating. You know, when you're walking along and the ground starts going beneath you and the heather, and I could see this mountain in the distance, and this kind of FEELING came over me — I thought, This is SOMETHING. What is this? Ah, this is that one they're always talking about, the one that makes you paint or write, because it's so overwhelming that you want to tell somebody, and you can't describe it, you can't say "There's this feeling that I'm having and the world looks like... and it's sort of glowing... and there's a..." so you have to try and paint it, right, or put it into poetry or something like that. Well it was that same kind of thing. But it was recognition that the thing had been with me all my life. And that's why maybe I got a little like that when you said about Putting the Boys Back Together Again — it's irrelevant you know! Because the feeling was with me before the Beatles and with me after.

Watching the Wheels

That's what I'm saying — what "Watching the Wheels" is saying — all these teachers, which you can call critics, media, friends-in-the-business, other singers — that have all been commenting about me for eight years, they've all had something to say about me, I'm thrilled that they're all so concerned, but there isn't one of them that hasn't made some remark about one way or the other — so they're all talking. Now to me, it just sounds like the teachers — if I look through my report card, it's the same thing. "Too content to get a cheap laugh hiding behind this," or "Daydreaming his life away." Am I getting this from those rock and rollers and these rock-and-roll critics? And the do-gooders and the rest of them? Well, it's ringing a bell in my head, I'm sitting there picking this up, because I ain't doing nothing, I'm watching the wheels, everyone's talking about me, I ain't doing nothing. "Lennon sit up," "Lennon sit down," "Lennon do your homework," "Lennon you're a bad boy," "Lennon you're a good boy," what the hell is this? I heard this before somewhere... I heard it at school! So this period was that — to reestablish me as me, for myself. That's why I'm free of the Beatles. Because I took time to free myself. Mentally from it, and look at what it is. And now I know. So here I am, right? That's it! It's beautiful, you know, it's just like walking those hills."

"Some people are saying that this is the end of an era, but what we said before still stands — the eighties will be a beautiful decade. John loved and prayed for the human race. Please tell people to pray the same for him. Please remember that he had deep faith and love for life and that, though he has now joined the greater force, he is still with us."

— Yoko Ono, December 1980



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