MUSICIAN

TODD RUNDGREN

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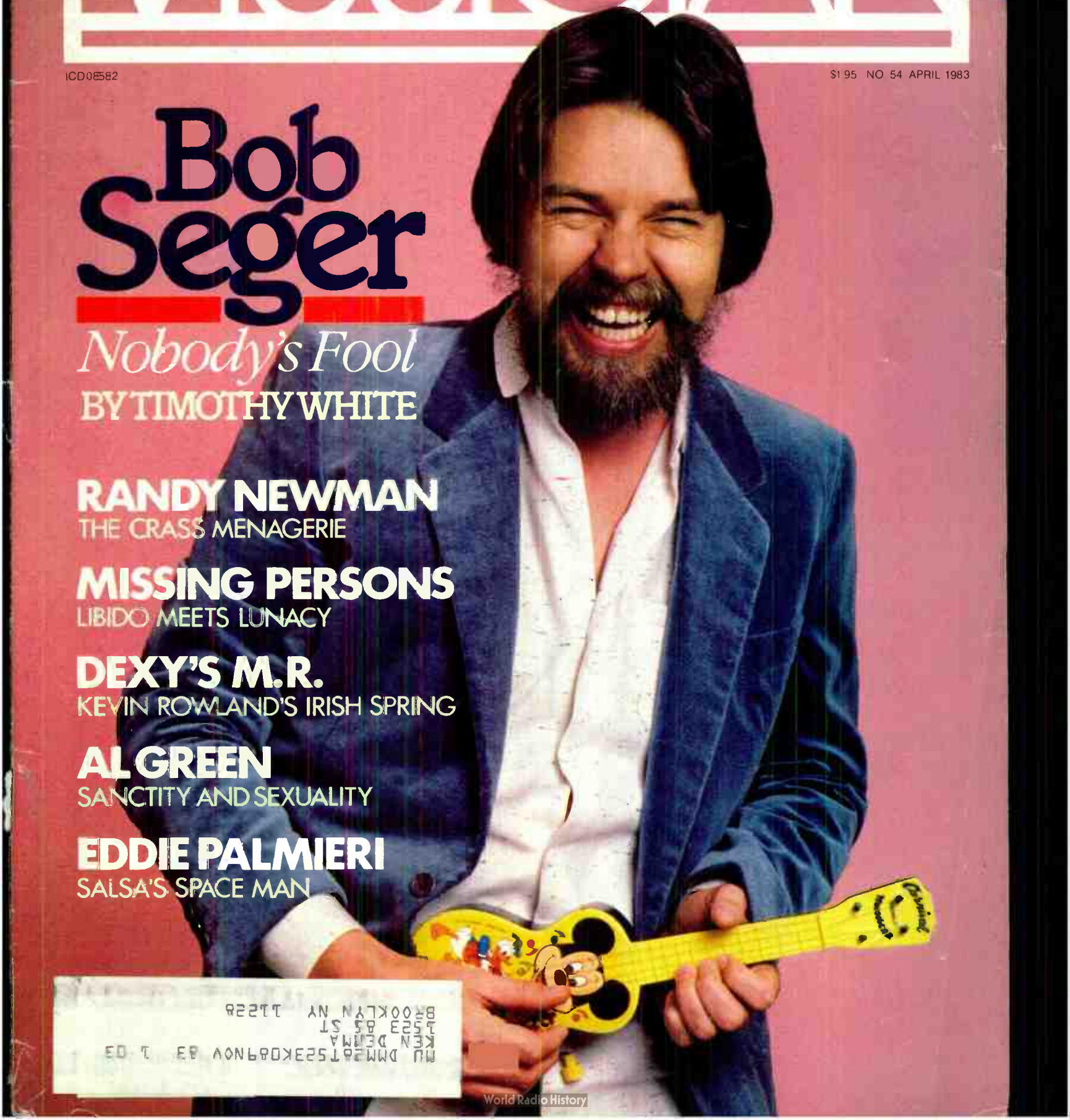

Bob Seger

Nobody's Fool

BY TIMOTHY WHITE

RANDY NEWMAN
THE CRASS MENAGERIE

MISSING PERSONS
LIBIDO MEETS LUNACY

DEXY'S M.R.
KEVIN ROWLAND'S IRISH SPRING

AL GREEN
SANCTITY AND SEXUALITY

EDDIE PALMIERI
SALSA'S SPACE MAN

World Radio History

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MUSICIAN

NO.54,APRIL,1983

Bob Seger's throaty, roadside rock 'n' roll roared out of the Motor City fifteen years ago, establishing him as an authentic, anthemic voice of the Midwest. Through the long lens of reflection and some regret, Seger talks with Timothy White about his renewed musical vigor, his change of sidemen, his rock friendships and the pleasures and perils of going *The Distance*. Page 50

Todd Rundgren has at least three major careers, any one of which most artists would be happy to enjoy: a hit producer for the Psychedelic Furs, Meat Loaf, Patti Smith and many others; a member of the acclaimed avant-rock group Utopia; and a solo artist whose experimental impulses vie with potent pop propensities. Bill Flanagan probes the many faces (and hats) of the Wizard of Woodstock. Page 64

Randy Newman, one of the most gifted musical chroniclers of American society, maintains a curious relationship with his songs' characters. This motley collection of freaks, jerks, losers and slobs, for all their ignorance and bigotry, possess a contemporary humanity and uneasiness Stephen Holden takes a look at rock's Archie Bunker and his latest LP, a portrait of a paranoid and paradoxical paradise. Page 72

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Cover Photo by Deborah Feingold

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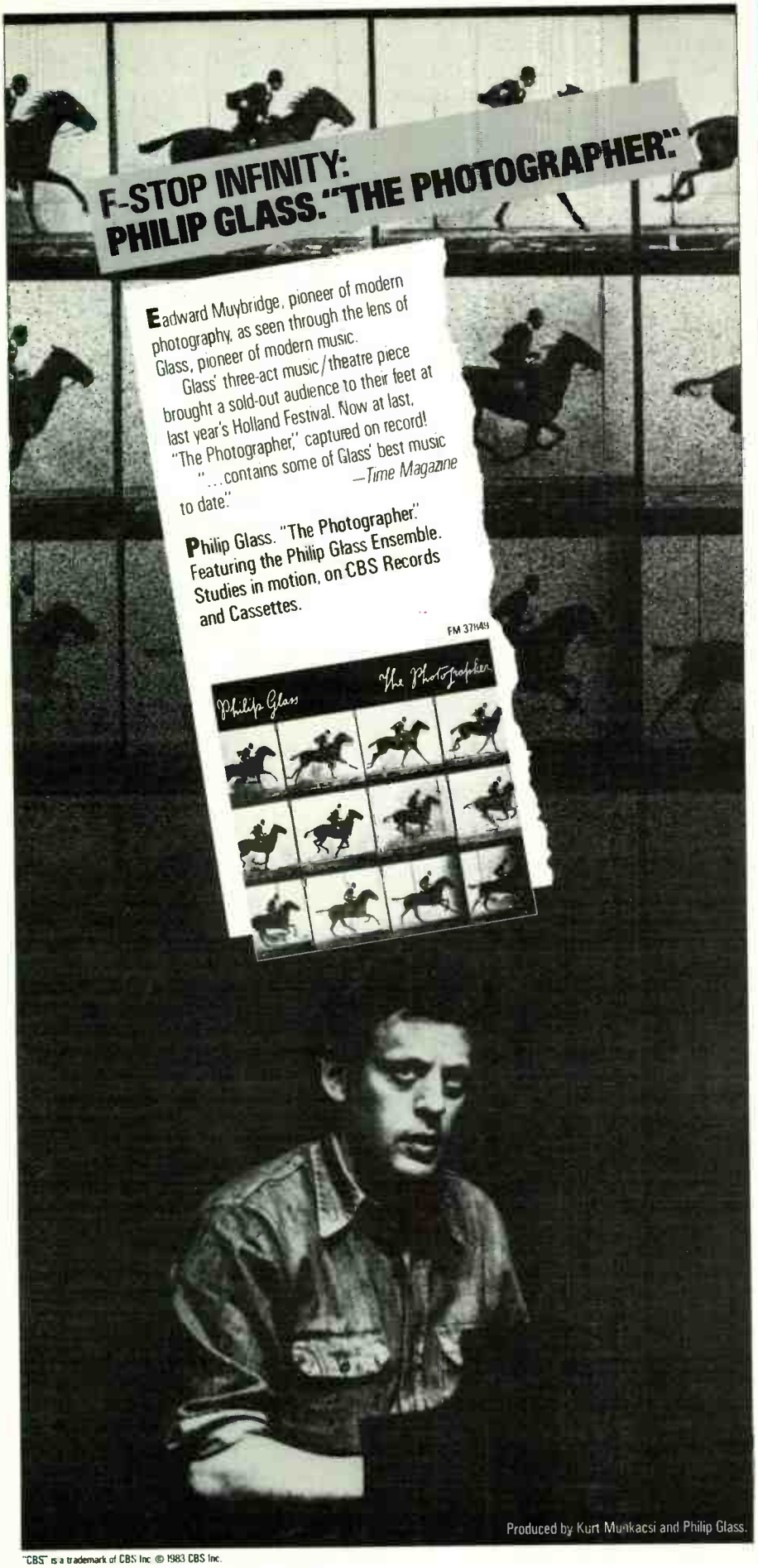

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Sam Holdsworth
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Vic Garbarini
Promotion Director
Paul Sacksman
Staff Photographer
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David Breskin Robert Fripp
J.C. Costa Brian Cullman
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Timothy White Francis Davis (Jazz)
Sales/Promotion
Scott Southard Richard Ellis
Geoffrey Davis (617)281-3110
Advertising Sales
Ross Garnick
Production Manager
Jane Winsor
Production
Hartley Ferguson
Terese Lind Sinikka Nogelo
Roz Kramer
Typography
Don Russell
Administration
Hyacinth Amero Michelle Nicastro
Mary Ellen Catanese Thom Darcy
Main Office/Production/Retail Sales
31 Commercial St., P.O. Box 701
Gloucester, MA 01930 (617)281-3110
New York Advertising/Editorial
MUSICIAN, 1515 Broadway, 39 fl.
N.Y., N.Y. 10036 (212) 764-7400
Circulation Manager
Donna DeWitt (212) 764-7562

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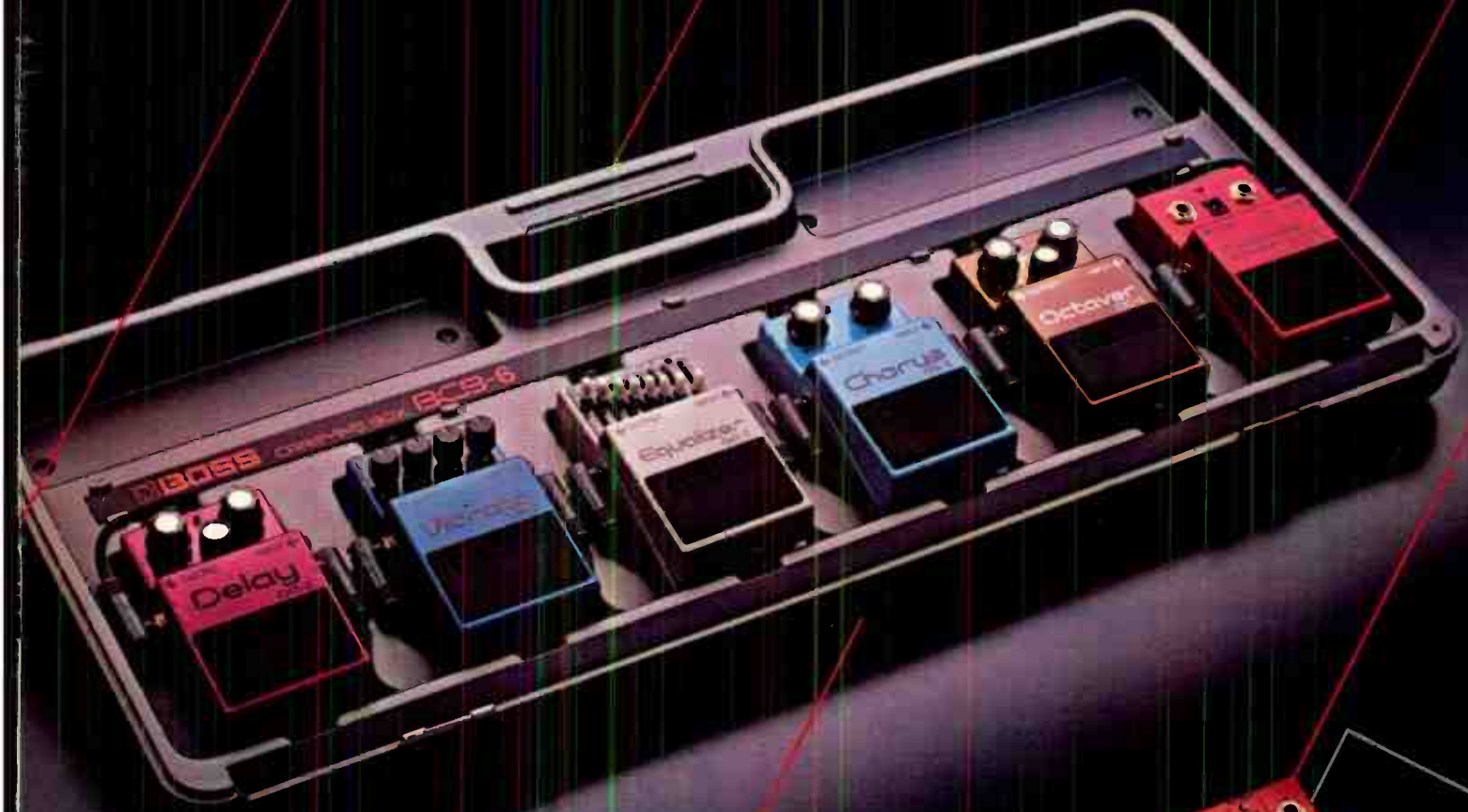

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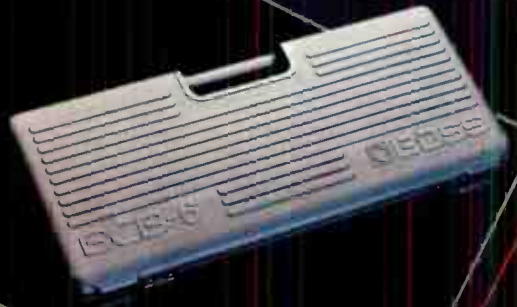

BCB-6 PSM-5

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Letters

THE JACKSON ANTIDOTE

Is there something wrong with you people? Not only do you have a fascinating interview with one of the most unpredictable, original musician/composers around, namely Joe Jackson, you actually feature a *nice* picture of him on your cover. And smiling, yet. Comments from other band members—something I hadn't seen in other publications—helped complete an entirely interesting article. Thanks.
Janet M. McGlynn
Philadelphia, PA

CONGENIAL COVER-AGE

After reading David Gans' interview, I was *very* impressed with Joe Jackson. If more songwriter/musicians had his attitude and creativeness, maybe we could have *songs* on the radio, rather than the usual rock 'n' roll industry nursery rhymes!
LeeAnn Jimmerson
Griffen, GA

CLEAR TRANSMISSION

My compliments to Vic Garbarini and the staff at *Musician* for allowing your readers a glimpse into the creative fires of Joni Mitchell. In the same way that magic may be created when an artist and his or her audience connect, Garbarini and Mitchell were really on the same wavelength. Keep up the good work.
David Lenef
Chicago, IL

SYNCHRONICITY STRIKES

I'm a fledgling artist/musician and, rather inappropriately, I work as a security guard at a large computer plant. I'm sitting here at 10:22 Thursday night reading your *excellent* interview with Joni Mitchell. I have just read the brief banter about Neil Young. Ironically, a new song of his comes on the radio. That's not enough.

I am just rolling my eyes across Joni's (sung) statement, "What is this thing called love..." and what should drift off the radio in *perfect synch* but Neil's nasal drone, "A little thing called love"!

To make the situation even more fun, I have just finished Carlos Castaneda's last book, *The Eagle's Gift*, and I am intrigued at the several references to Don Juan. Is this an omen?

On a more earthly level, I thoroughly enjoy your crisp, sophisticated approach to music news. You are an undisputed leader among magazines.
Todd Gilmore
Westchester, PA

COLOR-BLIND CONSPIRACY

I can certainly appreciate that James Blood Ulmer, as a black musician playing "black" music, is frustrated at not reaching a larger black audience. But that is no excuse for his insulting remarks about his present audience, and his theory of a sinister white conspiracy to keep blacks from hearing his music is pure rot.

Gregory Tate then adds that the problem is that the mass media won't give access to black experimental artists in this country. Come on—the mass media thwarts every experimental artist, regardless of color. I haven't heard Public Image Ltd. on the radio lately either. If there is a conspiracy, it is to keep the folks out who are, like Blood and PiL, making music that is daring and different and even disturbing.

The only way to discover experimental artists is to actively seek them out. That's what Blood's audience has done, and instead of being thankful, he has the nerve to belittle them. The truth is that "black folks" have the same opportunity to hear his music as "white folks." Why they are not interested in checking it out, if that is the case, is a question he should put to them.
Ken Hinman
Savannah, GA

JD UNDER FIRE

J.D. Considine's inference that Jerry Garcia has brain damage was uncalled for. I myself believe dope has hurt both the Dead and Garcia in recent years. After reading your magazine quite often for the last few years, I feel *Musician* has reached an unprecedented low.
David Smith
Gloucester, MA

JD REHABILITATED

I would like to congratulate Cheryl on the extraordinary intelligence displayed in her letter in the January issue. Calling J.D. Considine a "communist nazi leftover" demonstrated clearly her expertise on political matters, and her ardent support of Eddie Money showed her first-rate taste in music. Keep up the good work, Cheryl—and don't let anyone tell you that Mr. Mahoney has had any less social impact than, say, Darlene Love.
Andrew Walser
Naperville, IL

ROCK'S BITTEREST PiL

Thank you for your January interview with Public Image Ltd. It's about time a decent music publication gave them some of the attention they deserve. My only regret is that you didn't give them more. For the past year that I've subscribed to your magazine, you've dwelt on the so-called rock greats of the past (Floyd, Winwood, Young, Townshend, Clapton, the Doors and the Dead) and paid little attention to the music of the day. Is this the 60s or the 80s? Don't you think such anachronisms seem completely irrelevant? I do! Rock 'n' roll is dead and PiL isn't. Who would've ever imagined that little Johnny Rotten would be the last man standing, fearlessly peering through the doors of perception?
John Love
Atlanta, GA

COUGIE KUDOS & KICKS

Few artists have polarized our readership as much as John Cougar. In approximately equal measure (and with equal vehemence), readers congratulated us for finally giving Cougie a break and damned us for chasing commercialism. Rich Koehler of Houston thanked us for printing the article on consecutive pages so he could neatly remove them; he also felt compelled to cut up the cover and the table of contents to expunge all traces. On the other side, Lori Weston of Winchester, Virginia loved the piece, but took violent offense at Jock Baird's apparent glee that American Fool *had taken losses on the charts in Music Industry News. Baiting Baird with names like "Jock-a-roo" and "Big Bird" (as well as making references to jock itch), Ms. Weston impuned his heterosexuality by suggesting he was attracted to one of the Stray Cats. Despite the quality of the entries, however, the winner in the Cougie competition was this one:*

I need John Cougar's music and motorcycle philosophies as much as I need my head in a trash can (talk about symbolic photography). If I didn't know better, I'd think Cougar was the stupid kid in my study hall who wrote "School Sucks" and "The Doors Rule" on the desk. And to criticize the Clash for ambition! Give *me* a break. I'd rather know my rights than suck on chili dogs outside the Tastee-Freez. It's adults like John Cougar that make teenagers like me appreciate our parents.
Diana Son
Dover, DE

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music industry news

By Jock Baird

Elektra/Asylum Fallout
Further details and subplots about last month's Elektra/Asylum shake-up have emerged. The complete closing of E/A's Hollywood offices will be accomplished in the fall, leaving only senior "decision makers" on the West Coast. This includes senior vice president of A&R **Tom Werman** who was hired only a week before the reorganization. The move was abrupt; new chairman **Bob Krasnow** said he was offered the job only five days before the announcement. As part of the label's restructuring, Elektra/Asylum's accounting functions were given to Atlantic (immediate cost: thirty jobs) and its country arm in Nashville merged with Warner Bros. (cost: twenty jobs). Three vice presidents (marketing, promotion and international) have already left as well as a number of staffers.

Interestingly, the move puts A&R men at the top of all three WEA labels, along with Atlantic's Ahmet Ertegun and Warners' new president Lenny Waronker. Both the new E/A president **Bruce Lundvall** and Krasnow acknowledge their predilection for black music and jazz and plan to deemphasize the prototypical laid-back California rock that once dominated E/A's roster. Said Lundvall, "We are going to be a contemporary music company. We want to be on the cutting edge. Bob and I have always been involved with black music rather intimately." Warner Communications head **David Horowitz** reaffirmed E/A's equality in the WEA firmament: "Elektra/Asylum will remain an independent label, fully staffed in the A&R, marketing and promotion areas and on a par with Warner Bros. and Atlantic. Quipped Bob Krasnow, when asked why he moved so quickly instead of quietly laying the groundwork, "Quietly laying the groundwork in the record business? The only quiet thing I've heard in this business is the B-side of a bad record!"

In this age of record company consolidation, PolyGram has done just the opposite; president **Guenter Hensler** described PolyGram's new subdivision into five separate wings (rock, country, pop, black and classical) as "almost independent record companies. It provides more autonomy and shortens decision lines." Among the new senior veeps are **Jerry Jaffe** (rock) and **Russ Regan** (pop).

The Supreme Court heard arguments on the "Betamax Case" in a packed January 18 session. At stake is a significant ruling on the extent of a copyright owner's protection from private electronic reproduction of his work. A moment of levity occurred when Chief Justice Warren Burger announced that the absent Justice Brennan would receive a tape of the proceedings. A decision is expected in late May or early June.

Congress is not waiting around, however. The anti-levy forces have gotten "Right To Tape" bills introduced in both House (by Representative Tom Foley) and Senate (by Senator Dennis DeConcini). Before these come to a vote, though, the Senate version will be taken up by a reestablished Senate subcommittee on patents, copyrights and trademarks (it had gone out of existence after passage of the 1976 Copyright Law). Senator Charles Mathias will chair the new subcommittee. Other members include big-time Senators Paul Laxalt, Robert Dole and Orrin Hatch, so expect a lot of action.

Dire Straits' Mark Knopfler will produce **Bob Dylan**'s next LP, which will join a Dylan catalog recently augmented by a five-album set that includes unreleased material.... The new **Police** LP, rumored to be their best yet, is finally mastered. Entitled *Synchronicity*, its release has been delayed until late June because **Sting** has been chosen for a part in a major motion picture that was "too good to turn down".... **The Band** is re-forming this summer for a tour—minus guitarist **Robbie Robertson**. His replacement has yet to be announced.... **Bob Marley**'s last unfinished tracks have been completed by Island's **Chris Blackwell** and will appear shortly in a new LP, *Confrontation*. Speaking of Marley, *Musician* contributor Timothy White's extraordinary biography, called *Catch A Fire*, will be published in June by Holt, Rhinehart & Winston.... Detroit's avant-funksters **Was (Not Was)** have been inked to Geffen and will release *Born To Laugh At Tornadoes* this spring.... **Thin Lizzy** is disbanding after a last album and tour even as **Phil Lynott**'s fine solo LP *Old Town* is gaining momentum.... super bassist **Marcus Miller** (Luther Vandross, Miles) is playing most of the instruments on his new solo project, *Suddenly*.... **David Bowie**'s new LP is being produced by Chic's **Nile Rodgers** and features hot-shot guitarist **Stevie Ray Vaughn**.

Two factual errors were made in last month's column: former E/A chairman **Joe Smith** was mistakenly identified as the label's president, and new chairman **Bob Krasnow** was identified as previously being a vice president for Atlantic, rather than Warner Bros. Records.

Chart Action
Men at Work spent their fifteenth week calmly perched at number one, above the Stray Cats and Hall & Oates. Last month's dramatic ascent of Michael Jackson's *Thriller* inspired Bob Seger's duplication of the feat; both held tough at #4 and #5, having gently dislodged Pat Benatar to #6. Old-timers the Clash and Phil Collins hovered just below Toto (buoyed to #9 by nine Grammy nominations and a #1 single). Foreigner's greatest hits collection and an impressive performance by video stars Duran Duran flanked chart veteran Lionel Richie, down nine places to #11 but not out.

Chart losers included a big collapse by Led Zeppelin's *Coda*, and serious blows to Donald Fagen, Joe Jackson and Marvin Gaye. Ozzy Osbourne and Supertramp fared little better. Poor Joni Mitchell only got to #25 before slipping to #70. Chart comers are led by Neil Young's *Trans* and Golden Earring's *Cut*, with Christopher Cross and Journey about to enter the game.

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DEXY'S MIDNIGHT RUNNERS

The Irish Spring of Kevin Rowland

KEES TABAK/RETNA

BY MITCHELL COHEN

Some funny things happened between the first album by Dexy's Midnight Runners, a blaring, belligerent LP whose intent was declared by its title, *Searching For The Young Soul Rebels*, and their second, *Too-Rye-Ay*, an invigorating record that adds a distinct Celtic-folk inclination to the Dexy sound. The English group, led by Kevin Rowland, used a contract loophole to get out of one record deal and sign with a different label. The band switched its sartorial look from one based on the wardrobe of *Mean Streets* to one that makes them look like the cast of *The Real McCoys*. Most important, the band had an almost complete turnover in personnel.

Where *Searching For The Young Soul Rebels* was defensive—it began by railing out against bigotry towards the Irish and ended with the admonition, "Maybe you should welcome the new soul vision"—the new album is warmer. "Come On Eileen," the recent U.K. number one hit from the LP (in the nick of time, too; Rowland threatened to retire if the song didn't make it), is a jaunty seduction song totally unlike anything the Midnight Runners have ever done, openly salacious and nostalgic, with a croon-along chorus. At the same time, *Too-Rye-Ay* stays true to Rowland's insistence that music have purpose and intensity. Its statement of principles comes on the second song (after the introductory "The Celtic Soul Brothers"), "Let's Make This Precious": "First let's hear somebody sing me a record that cries pure and true/ Not those guitars, they're too noisy and crude."

"When I wrote that," Rowland says in between spoonsful of raisin bran, "I meant every word of it. That was foremost on my mind. Listening to the radio during '81 was driving me bleeding mad, hearing all that synth stuff. There were lines in that song which I didn't eventually use, which went, 'From now on, I'll refuse to listen to the radio/ I'll take earplugs wherever I go.' I really did want to do something that was precious. Also, it was swearing in the new members of the group, almost. It's got that call-and-response thing: 'You mean it?' 'Yes I do.'"

Among the incidents that led to the mass defection after the first album were a dispute over what single to put out, and Rowland's suggestion that the brass players take fiddle lessons. "Around about, I suppose, August or September '80," Rowland explains, "I started to get the ideas about using fiddles in an Irish way, to use them in a rough way, because our horn sound was really rough. I think it's really good to have one thing like that in front of the sound. It identifies it. So that was the idea, and I remember telling the first group about it, and they weren't keen on it, in fact. I asked a lot of them to learn to play the instruments. I can see now why they didn't want to. It takes years to play the violin."

Undeterred, Rowland went on to assemble a new edition of Dexy's, experimenting with different combinations of string instruments, such as cellos. "It was just sort of a haphazard approach," he admits. "Things didn't really start to click until I met Helen O'Hara. I met her at a bus stop near me. She lives just up the road, and, after much persuasion and deliberation, she eventually decided to come down and watch us rehearse, and when she did, she liked it. She got very much involved, and I said, 'Look, this is the sound I want. It's really rough, and it's quite high, it's not piercing....' She said, 'Oh. You need three fiddles.'" And so a string section, the Emerald Express, was thrown into the mix alongside the horns, accordion, banjo and other acoustic instruments, taking a contrary position (not for the first or last time for Rowland) to the dominant modes of pop. "I'm not totally against synthesizers or anything like that," he says. "It's just been done and done and done and nobody wants to change."

For the initial installment of Dexy's, which formed in mid-1978, Rowland and his then-partner Al Archer immersed themselves in the soul music of the 60s ("the most unhip thing you could think of in '78"), buying up classic Stax singles for ten pence in junk shops, locking

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themselves off from everything that was going on in contemporary music. But for his Celtic switch in direction, Rowland says, "I didn't suddenly start listening to loads of Irish music." Instead, he drew on what he'd remembered hearing at home ("Those Endearing Young Charms," a sentimental ballad that's quoted on the LP jacket, and which Rowland warbles a portion of as the album's coda, was a particular favorite of his mother), and relied on musical instinct.

Although Rowland asserts it was inadvertent, the intensification of the band's Irish identity makes a statement that is, as things stand in the United Kingdom, inescapably political. *Young Soul Rebels*' "Burn It Down" (a.k.a. "Dance Stance") made a chant out of a list of Irish writers—Beckett, Shaw, O'Neill, Behan—but *Too-Rye-Ay* goes further, starting with the LP's title and continuing with the traditional instrumentation, weaving the heritage into the actual fabric of Dexy's music rather than just taking a lyrical stand. "When we started to come through," Rowland says, "it was so obvious to everybody in the media that it was a big Irish thing. I just took pride in the fact that it was, and probably that a lot of people wouldn't like the idea.

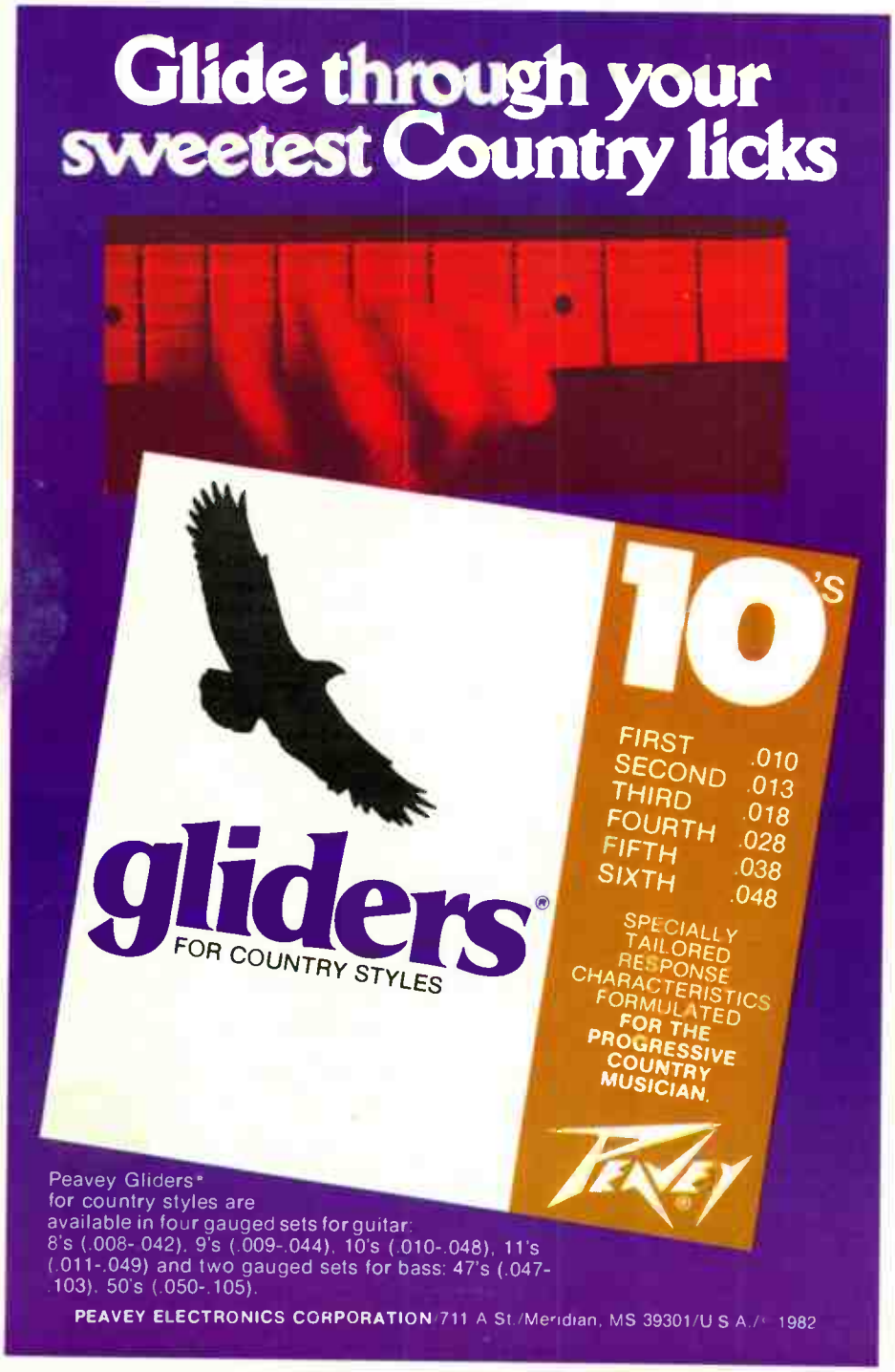
"There was a radio station in Birmingham, BRMB, that wouldn't play our record, 'Come On Eileen.' It was just after the Hyde Park bombings, and they said they wouldn't play it because of the feelings against the Irish. Incredible, isn't it? That's what we're up against."

Rowland's commitment to Dexy's Midnight Runners is a 180-degree turnabout from his first recorded band, the Killjoys, whose one single on Raw Records, "Johnny Won't Get To Heaven"/"Naive," was a venomous, hollow rant that strove to emulate the Sex Pistols. The sleeve of the 45 depicted a severed hand, razor blades, pills. Rowland, in retrospect, regrets his involvement with the Killjoys. "We got caught up in that whole euphoria of the punk thing for about six months. I thought I could be part of someone else's movement for a time, then I realized it was a bit of a con. I reacted very bitterly against it in mid-'77, and the Killjoys suddenly changed from being a hard-core punk band. We dressed really smart and did ballads like 'Dream Lover' and we rehearsed dance steps and everything, which the punks *hated*. My ideas for Dexy's started then."

By evading one rock movement and starting an outfit dedicated to the soul tradition, the Dexy's were heading for a collision with another trend in the fickle world of U.K. pop: a mod revival. The neo-mods who thought they had allies in the Dexy's (any band whose name suggested the use of amphetamines and who played in a style associated with the 60s black music had to have a touch of the mod spirit) were in for a surprise. It was on the Straight to the Heart tour (which was followed by the Midnight Runners' Intense Emotion Revue and the Projected Passion Revue, the first rock show ever to play Old Vic) that the Dexy's met the mods.

"We were playing in Birmingham, and we'd get all these mods turning up, and they used to shout things like, 'Bring back the 60s!' I'd yell back, 'Bring back the 60s?! What the hell are you going on about?' They used to wear all the clothes, and they sort of liked our music, but they obviously didn't like the way we looked. It was a temptation for us, 'cause we saw groups like Secret Affair, and they were making out to be a soul group and they obviously weren't. We knew that if we put on those suits and said we were mods...I'm really glad we didn't."

Dexy's fared no better at the start of the 2-tone era, to hear Rowland tell it. "We had that single 'Geno,' which got to number one, this before the LP was released, so all anybody had ever heard was 'Geno,' and all we were getting were people who expected about ten 'Geno's. They were a bit like the kind of Madness or Specials-type audience, which wasn't quite right for us. We were doing slow things like 'I Couldn't Help If I Tried' and 'I'm Just Looking,' and they really didn't want to hear that. I started arguing with the audience and saying, 'I'm not putting up with things like that!' It was a



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World Radio History

very frustrating period."

After the aptly titled Intense Emotion Revue tour, and in spite of the fact that the *Young Soul Rebels* LP had reached number one in England (America did not follow suit), came the split-up, a new band, and a new physical regimen ("We did actually train together. It was really disciplined"), and a costume change ("People said we looked like boxers dressed as monks"). "The music at the time did have a very spiritual edge, and that was reflected in the image. We were coming out with stuff like 'Until I Believe In My Soul' and doing like ten-minute versions of it onstage. And I did a song called 'Soon,' which is the beginning of 'Plan B' now, but I did get it without any music and it was almost like a hymn."

For all his zealotry—influenced, he admits, by the effect Catholicism had on him as a child, when he considered entering the priesthood—it all would be so much theoretical bluster if it were not for Rowland's ability to get what he hears in his head on record. "Every little bit is worked out. I'm constantly putting down ideas on tape, a bit of a tune, a bit of a bass line, a beat, and then I put them all together. I can work them out on the guitar or the piano or whatever, 'cause I can play those reasonably well. But mostly it's playing the chords through, humming people their parts.

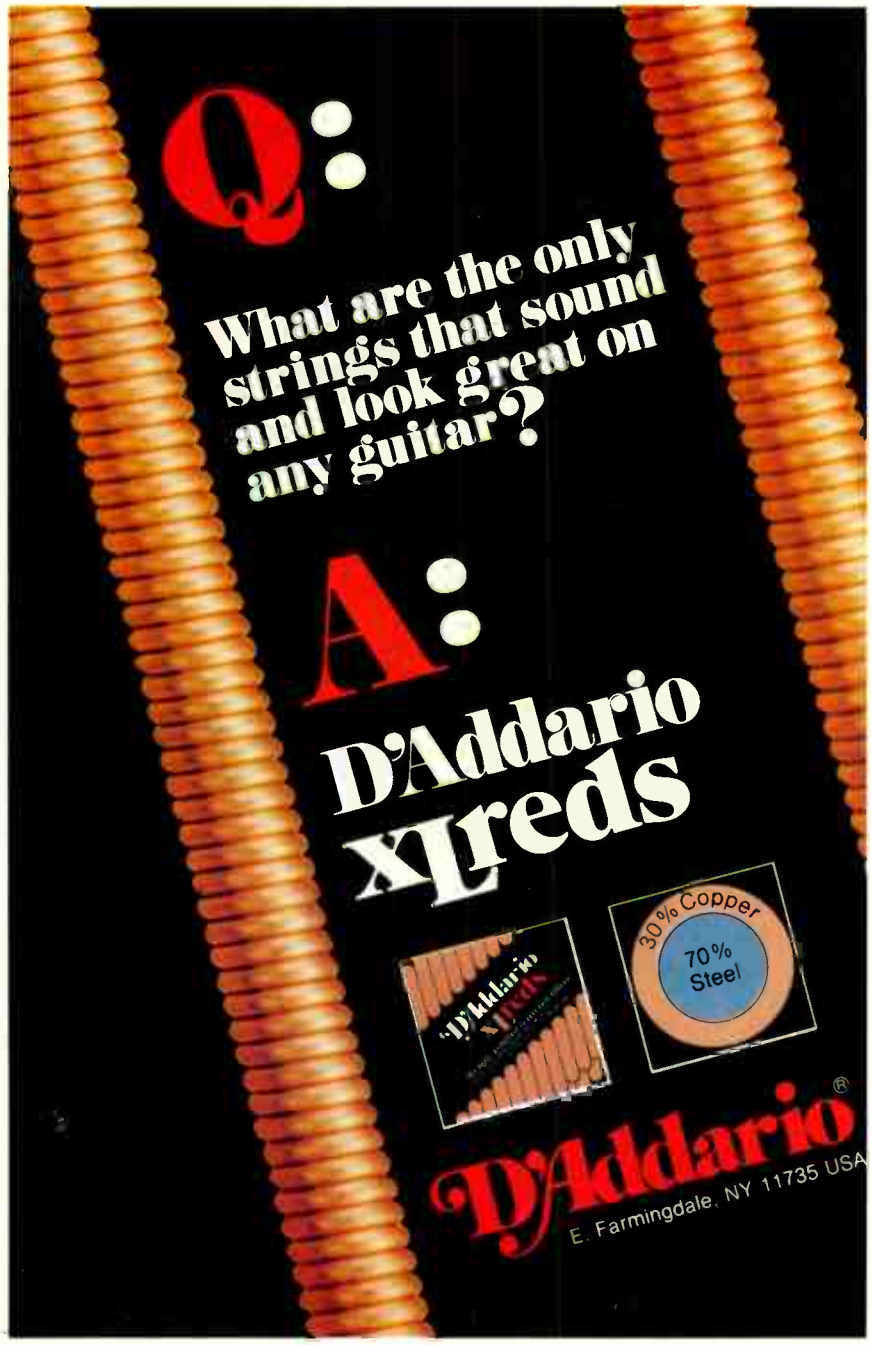
"It's just weird when you can't quite get it. I usually go for a compromise. I don't like to, but I have to. It's often then a case of the wrong instrument doing it, I've found. Sometimes I hear a tune and think, 'That can be great for brass,' and then, 'Maybe it'd be better for fiddles,' and you try out whichever one. There's always a danger of letting the concept get in the way of the music. I've done that before now. I was going to go totally over to fiddles. You can't do that, 'cause some things just sound better on the brass. It would be stupid.

"People seem to think there's some kind of conflict between arranging music and putting over lyrics with feeling," he continues, "but there isn't. The way you structure the music with the lyric is everything. It colors it, it accentuates words. Something you want to put over maybe isn't suitable for the previous passage of music, so maybe you want to take it right down to a heartbeat, just to get the feeling over as it should be. You need the right background for it, whether you're going to whisper it, or you're going to shout it.

"I like tunes. I like haunting melodies. I like beautiful arrangements. I like things that go up, and take you down. As a technical songwriter, people like Burt Bacharach, you have to admire the way they structure their songs. Cole Porter, Gershwin, even that bloke, what's his name, Bernstein? He did *West Side Story*? Those songs are great! Music from *Carousel*... Rodgers & Hammerstein. The corniest of stuff—I mean, I don't find it corny, but other people do—songs like 'If I Loved You.' Absolutely beautiful, convincing as well. The melodies are really well worked out. Most pop songs usually have about one idea, two ideas. These songs had about ten."

Much like one of his mentors, Van Morrison, who also started out in a raunchy rock band and then followed his own Celtic soul path, Rowland (who does Morrison's "Jackie Wilson Said" on the new LP) has a fearlessness, a lack of self-censorship. It takes a certain *chutzpah* to record a song (even a B-side) called "And Yes We Must Remain The Wild Hearted Outsiders," to hold nothing back. He doesn't come anywhere near Morrison's out-of-the-vapors genius, but his reckless nonconcern for how foolish, how sentimental, how fervent, how solemn he sounds is one of Rowland's most provocative characteristics. Although *Too-Rye-Ay* has its share of pratfalls, they're failures of concept and execution rather than failures made on the side of timidity.

"If these words sound corny, switch this off, I don't care," he sings on "I'll Show You," a song about young people with nerve and style who end up falling miles short of their potential, and in conversation, Rowland reinforces that lyric. "I take pride in the fact that I don't leave anything out. Whatever feelings come out, I just put them down. There were times when I thought, 'Ah, don't put that, that's close to the bone, people might find that a bit too much to take, a bit embarrassing. They don't want to hear that.' Then I think, 'Screw it, put it down. That's the pure feeling.' And I do."



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World Radio History

THE RETURN OF GARAGE PUNK

BY DAVID FRICKE

New Thrash from the Psychedelic Past

Wait a minute, this *can't* be right. In the front window of New York's venerable Folk City, a flyer advertising a night of new rock bands reads November 19. The last time I checked the calendar the year was still 1982, but the sound that smacks me right between the ears as I walk in the door is strictly 1967.

That's 1967, as in the Blues Magoos at the old Nite Owl Cafe (which used to be right next door); as in a cheesy Vox organ wheezing out trippy modal riffs amid the punky clang of rhythm guitars counting off a randy garage boogie beat while the lead guitar goes into a breathtaking fuzz-tone fit; as in the singer barking baby-you-done-left-me-and-I-got-a-psychotic-reaction lyrics in a steamy rock 'n' roll snarl that is vintage snotty Jagger via Sky Saxon; as in such moldy oldies and golden gassers as the State of Mind's "I Gotta Move," "Flashback" by Silk Winged Alliance and a ten-minute freak-out on "Frustration" by the Painted Ship.

Yet the singer, Eric Stumpo of the Providence, Rhode Island band Plan 9, looks less like Mick Jagger or the pouting pudding-bowl coiffed Saxon (the voice of the Seeds' "Pushin' Too Hard") than the violin player in Kansas, with his beary mountain man build and exploding frizz of brown hair and beard. The band's other singer, a balding hippie type who takes the lead on a corking version of the MC5's "Looking At You," is a dead ringer for Ray Collins of Zappa's original Mothers. Of the *four* guitarists, two sport classic 60s punk Prince Valiant hairdos and one, in a snazzy black turtleneck and sport jacket, looks like a big man on campus. While the girl pounding the Vox organ whips her long hair like an extra in an acid sequence from *The Trip*, the baby-faced seventeen-year-old bassist looks like he was still saying "goo goo" when the Music Machine were screaming "Talk Talk."

The next band, Washington, D.C. biker punks the Slickee Boys, are even more extreme—Blue Oyster Cult meets the Strawberry Alarm Clock, psychedelia after atomic radiation. Dressed in glittering paisley, mutant houndstooth pants and electric gold and orange sport coats (guitarist Kim Kane even has a long plaited pony tail brushing the base of his spine), they gas up original slammers like "Here To Stay" and "The Brain That Refused To Die" with the same mix of new wave drive, hard-rock moxie and 60s trimmings marking their resuscitation of Status Quo's old "Pictures Of Matchstick Men."

It is hard to tell whether this Folk City crowd—a weird collection of downtown bohemians, suburban party people and the idle curious, with the odd 60s purist in mod gear—actually recognizes the Slickee Boys' roaring encore, the Balloon Farm's comic acid rock hit "A Question Of Temperature." But the hearty cheers, raised fists and outbreak of wicked frugging down front indicate they at least know what they like. Who'd have thought they still make great garage rock like they used to?

Confused critics, too busy chasing the Next Big Thing, dismiss it as "the new psychedelia." But Greg Prevost, singer with Rochester, New York 60s punk revival band the Chesterfield Kings, speaks for most of his fellow bands and record collectors when he calls it "the heaven that was 1967."

With a vengeance that surprises all but the most ardent fans, the 60s garage rock revival is off and running, fueled by a startling proliferation of new young American bands leaping forward into the past. Just in the last year, new singles and albums have appeared on mostly independent labels by the Chesterfield Kings, Plan 9, the Rain Parade, the Bangs (now called the Bangles) and the Salvation Army (the last three all from Los Angeles). The year before, Voxx Records—a subsidiary of 60s punk champion Greg Shaw's Bomp label—released a *Battle Of The Garages* compilation featuring sixteen new groups mining the garage rock vein, even putting a few of them on a national tour to support the LP.

The old-timers are also coming back for more. Singer Roky Erickson of seminal Texas acidheads the 13th Floor Elevators (best remembered for their '66 hit "You're Gonna Miss Me") released a bruiser comeback LP *The Evil One* on 415 Records in 1981. Responding to market demand, obscure Canadian band the Ugly Ducklings—whose 1967 album fetches up to $200 on the collectors' market—recorded a reunion album two years ago and still regularly play

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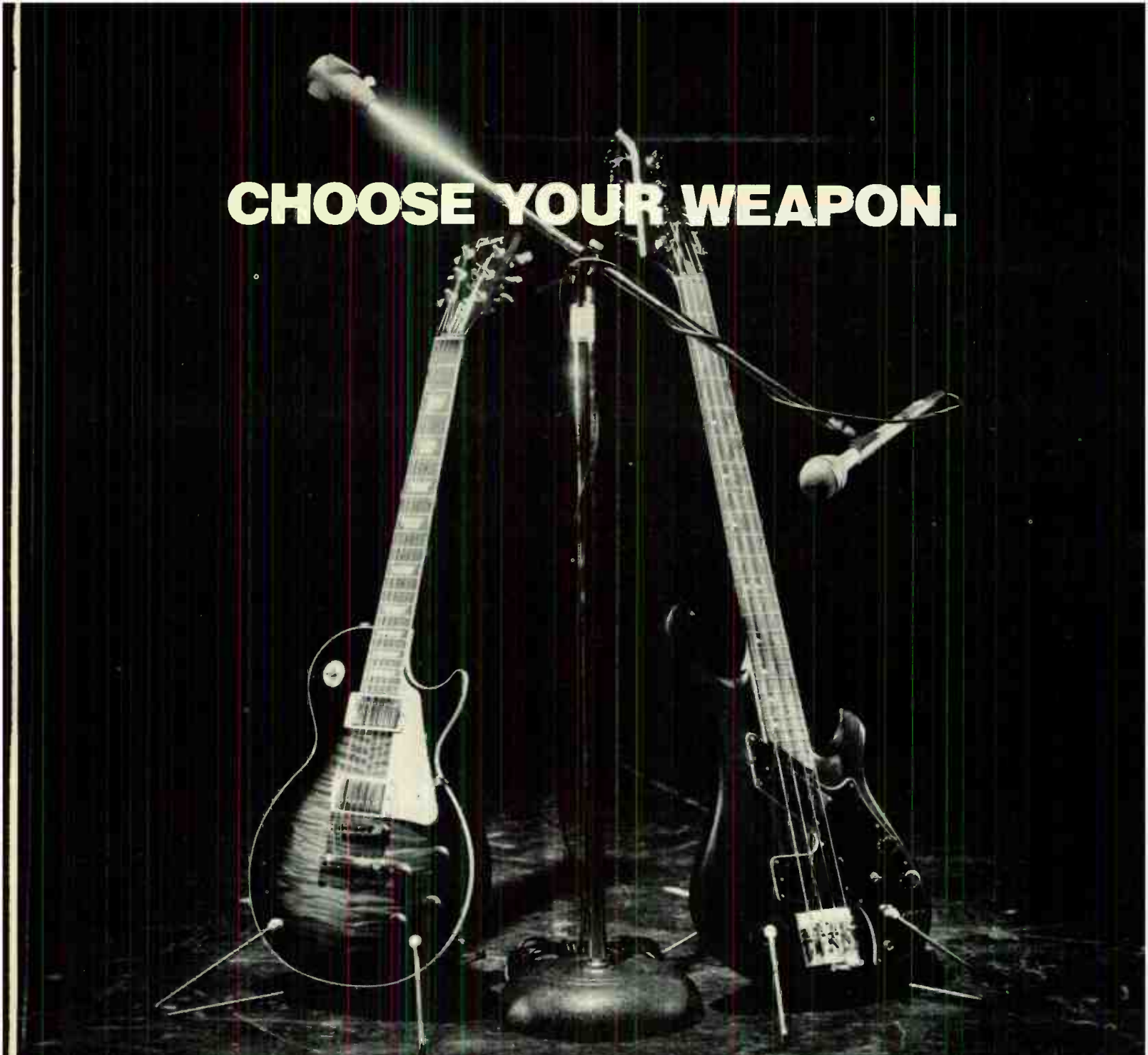

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Toronto clubs.

Concurrently, a run on vintage punk records has sparked a number of ambitious reissue programs. Rhino Records is busy churning out quality compilations of hits and rarities by 60s icons Love, the Beau Brummels, the Turtles, the Barbarians and the Box Tops. On the other side of the law, bootleggers are issuing collections of 60s punk obscurities faster than anyone can buy them. Modeled on critic/musician Lenny Kaye's classic 1972 *Nuggets* double album (a 60s primer, running the gamut from the Premiers' frat-rock hit "Farmer John" to naive psychedelia like the Magic Mushrooms' "It's A Happening"), they include ten volumes of *Pebbles*, four each of *Boulders* and *Psychedelic Unknowns*, and from England three sets of *Chocolate Soup For Diabetics*. Household names you're likely to find on these records: the 49th Parallel, Three Sixpence, Mouse & the Traps, the Lollipop Shoppe, the Chocolate Moose.

(Note: some of you may be a bit confused by the use of the word "punk" here. Punk today is usually associated with the 1977 safety-pinned likes of the Sex Pistols and black leather bruthas the Ramones. But the term "punk-rock" was originally coined by Lenny Kaye on the *Nuggets* LP as an umbrella category for the rebellious, usually amateurish bashing of the American garage bands that sprang up in the wake of Beatle- and Stonesmania, whether they were playing folksie pop, half-baked acid dementia or grunting high school lover man blues.)

Not surprisingly, 60s punk has served as a spiritual as well as a musical inspiration for many prominent new wave bands. Television often performed the 13th Floor Elevators' "Fire Engine" onstage. The Ramones, the Sex Pistols, Blondie and the Cramps all acknowledged a debt to their garage-punk forebears in style and thrust. More recently, New York-area groups the Fleshtones, the Individuals and the Bongos have all recorded albums with that same rhythmic drive, the fuzzed-up gutiars, and even forgotten instruments like the Coral electric sitar, using 60s sounds to dramatize the joys and frustrations of growing up fifteen years later.

"What else are you going to use to express them through rock 'n' roll?" demands guitarist Keith Streng of the Fleshtones, whose 1981 *Roman Gods* LP on I.R.S. is a stirring case in point. "It's not nostalgia. I just don't know a better way to say it."

"Way back before Lenny did *Nuggets*," adds Fleshtones vocalist Peter Zaremba, "it was set in my mind that Bobby Fuller's 'I Fought The Law,' 'Talk Talk,' and something as weird as the Stooges all had something in common. Style-wise, no. Bobby Fuller was really talented, as opposed to maybe the Premiers. But it was that spirit of rock 'n' roll, that spark. And that never goes out of fashion."

The timeless if decidedly amateurish quality of most original garage rock recordings can be attributed to the fact that garage punk was no fashion at all but a brief—1965-'69—violent collision of several other fashions and musical movements. The twang of surf guitars, airy folk-rock harmonies, the Stones-y grit of English R&B and the gullible mysticism of psychedelia are all found in the records of the period, often two and three at a time. For every distinct cop of the British Invasion kings like "Gloria" by the Shadows of Knight (a 1966 cover of Them's original hit), there was a dizzy experiment like the Electric Prunes' astutely commercial "I Had Too Much To Dream (Last Night)," a miracle of mixed rhythms, studio "trip" effects and punk blues raunch. In one remarkable single, "When I Arrive" by Florida's We the People (available on *Pebbles 7*), pristine Byrdsian harmonies are fed through dusky tremolo over a scrappy fuzz guitar break and war dance beat while the singer hisses, "Save me/ Save all my tribe/ And you'll hate me/ When I arrive." Huh?

But if most of these bands were hopelessly confused, it was because they did not play by the same rules as their top forty idols. To the small-time garage rock warriors, the lesson of the Beatles' and Rolling Stones' success—after all,

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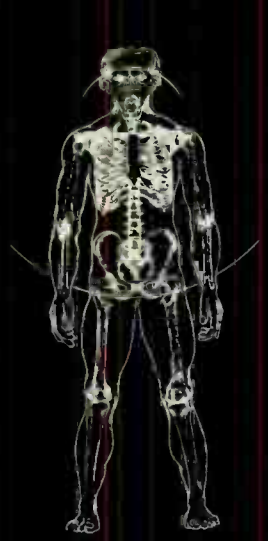

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they were neighborhood Liverpool and London punks once—was that anybody could do it. Girls and hip local reputations were reward enough to start. In fact, many of these bands actually released their singles on small local labels with limited pressings of often as little as 300 copies, mostly for the benefit of their hometown following. In one extraordinary case, only four copies are known to exist of "Don't Lie," a storming punker on Acropolis Records by the Midwest band Young Aristocracy.

Explains Bomp Records' Greg Shaw, "Everybody wrote off these teen garage bands as imitative crap. It appears now they represented an incredibly vital, regionalized music scene. What the kids had there was an amazing youth culture—bands they were either in or supported, fan magazines with a very local focus, local battles of the bands. And what is really exciting and important about pop music is that interaction between music and its audience. These kids were really involved."

The "kids" are still involved. The story of the Chesterfield Kings, for example, is that of young 60s punk disciples and record collectors who decided to form a band just to play the music they loved. "We wanted to play this kind of stuff," shrugs Greg Prevost, twenty-seven, with disarming naivete, "make a couple of records that would become collectors' items, because that's what we were into. We really wanted to just create our own collectors' items, hope that ten years from now some kid would discover what a neat record it was the same way we'd discovered great obscure old punk records."

The Kings—Prevost on vocals, bassist Andy Babiuk, drummer Doug Meech, Ori Guran on Vox organ and Rick Cona on a marble-topped Rickenbacker guitar with electric lights inside that light up during their version of the Blues Magoos' "We Ain't Got Nothin' Yet"—are strict purists. They play nothing but covers, concentrating on rare sides by local Rochester and Syracuse bands, and take the stage dressed to the 1969s, all shaggy dog haircuts and pointy Beatle boots. What's more, they actually cut most of their debut album *Here Are The Chesterfield Kings* (on the local Mirror label) in a garage, recording into two mikes suspended from the ceiling.

For long-time garage-punk thrashers the Unclaimed, time also stopped shortly after the release of "Psychotic Reaction." Singer Shelley Ganz actually went to the trouble of studying an old live video of the Chocolate Watch Band to get the lead singer's moves down pat. The band write originals, but Ganz says proudly, "You couldn't tell us from the Count Five or the Watch Band. It's not a matter of being a purist or jumping on a bandwagon. It's osmosis—I listen to nothing else and I've absorbed it all. I'm not rewriting 'Talk Talk' all the time. But if that's a ten, then I'm at least writing sevens and eights."

"It's a policy, kind of," says Prevost of the Kings' all-covers rule. "I feel that if we write our own songs, it's not honest. It sounds really dumb, but the way we look at it, the songs were written back then so we do them the way we would have done them back then. Even if we do a Stones song, we'll do it the way the Chocolate Watch Band might have done it. We like it that way, so what's the point in trying to improve it?"

Many of the new garage and psychedelic bands do not agree. Plan 9, represented by the very fab *Frustration* on Voxx, also play covers, though not exclusively and certainly not note-for-note. "I like to think I'm a more complex guitar player than the frameworks of the songs usually require," opines thirty-two-year-old singer/guitarist/leader Eric Stumpo, a record collector and guitar teacher (the other guitarists in the band are all former students). "They're simple and catchy, but they can be expanded. 'Frustration' is nothing more than three chords in two different orders. We can expand that as much as we want, make it ridiculously complex, and it still has that simple framework that holds it together."

Also consider the case of the Salvation Army. (They now call themselves the Three O'Clock after the real Salvation Army raised a stink about the name.) The mock day-glo cover of their debut album on Frontier, *The Salvation Army*; song titles like "She Turns To Flowers" and "While We Were In Your Room Talking To Your Wall"; and the odd backwards guitar solo suggest either severe acid damage or a novelty gag record. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth. The band plays with a raw punchy abandon, Clash '77-style, and profess a respect for classy production values drummer Danny Benair says will be demonstrated on their upcoming EP.

"This band doesn't just want to own crappy Vox amps with buzzes in them," declares Benair, who joined the group shortly after the album was made. "We take this style and put it out in a positive manner, which is pop songs with some strange twists. If we're trying to emulate anything, it's the production qualities of the late 60s with the Beatles and early Pink Floyd."

The startling thing about the Salvation Army/Three O'Clock is singer/songwriter/bassist Michael Quercio, at nineteen barely old enough to remember the original psychedelic rush of Floyd's "See Emily Play." His songs are not a lot of abstract nonsense in an ancient pop-art dialect but a natural expression—and dramatically engaging even in their rough demolike form—of his influences.

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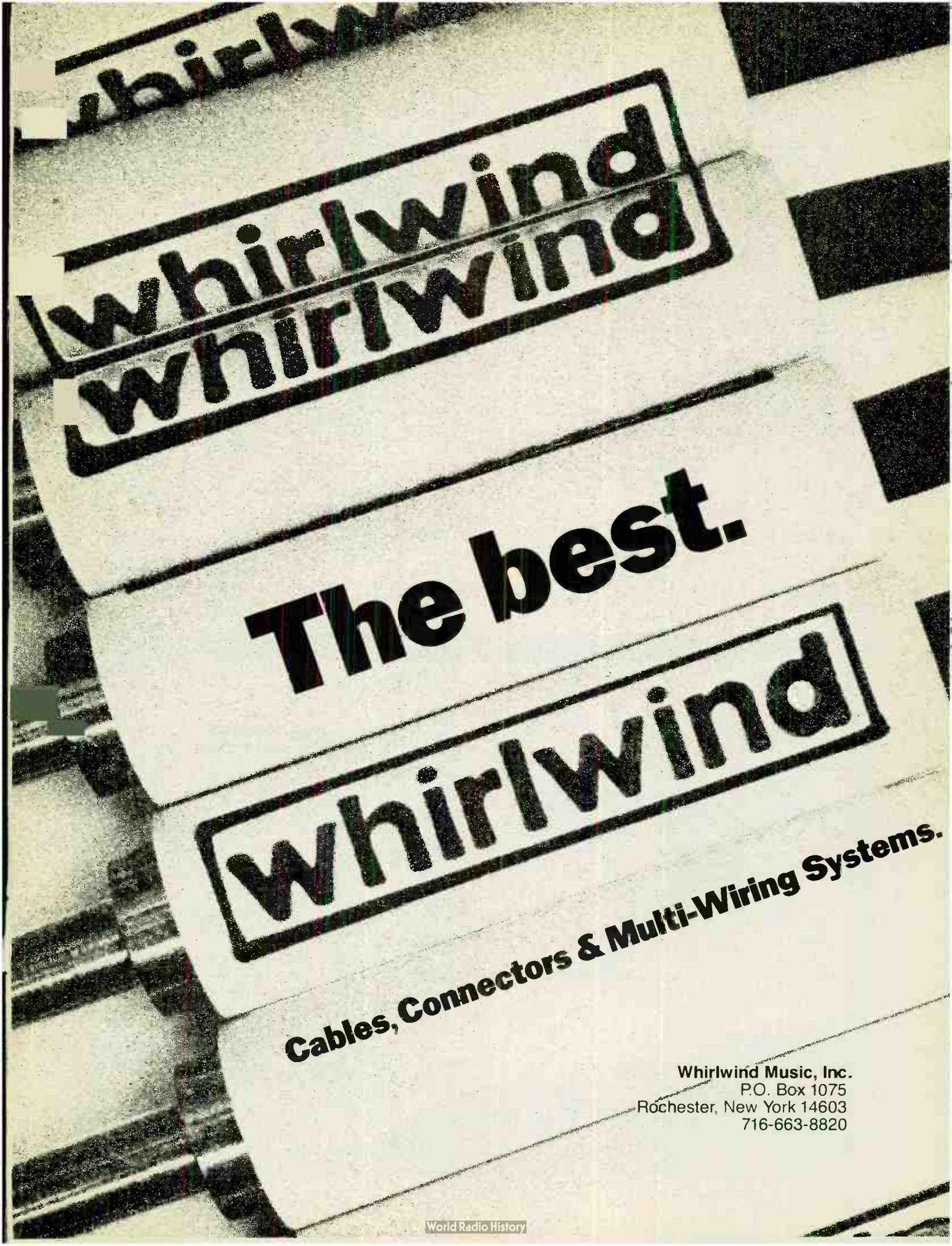

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Where most of his friends grew up digging AC/DC and Led Zeppelin, Quercio swears by the Byrds, the Left Banke and Pink Floyd, Syd Barrett-era only.

"He's real genuine about this," swears Benair of Quercio. "When he writes a song like 'Canteloupe Garden,' to him it's like writing 'You And Me Babe.' That's life for him. He's not being pretentious."

Which is something most new American underground music could do without. The stoic attitude of many avant-art bands and the white amphetamine noise of hard-core often sounds contrived, even more often just plain ordinary, next to the radiant ecstasy of the new psychedelic and garage punk bands. Reacting to the sobering threat of another depression, worsening job prospects and gathering war clouds, these bands and the fans that religiously come to see them are reaching back for their share of that lost innocence, a great time to be young that nobody saved for them.

Laugh if you like, but it's not going away. In 1979, the Unclaimed were the only working band in Los Angeles playing in the 60s garage style. Now Greg Shaw says there are more than twenty. Clubs have instituted 60s nights featuring these groups and old *Shindig* videos and the crowds come in the requisite flowered shirts and white, patent-leather go-go boots. Not that the kids, mostly twenty-one and under, are always hip to the origins. Danny Benair tells of one Salvation Army gig where they played a version of "Lucifer Sam." A fellow in the audience turned to the young teen next to him and said, "You know, that's an old Pink Floyd song." The teen screwed up his face in disgust. "Ugh, Pink Floyd?"

Harold Bronson of Rhino Records also sees the snowballing interest in the sales of his compilation albums. The Rhino reissues—a model of hit selections, choice rarities, stylish packaging and informative liner notes usually written with a fan's enthusiasm—average sales of between 10,000 and 20,000, continuing to sell consistently in catalog long after release. He also sees the effects of his reissues in more than just sales. Rhino has undertaken a vigorous campaign on behalf of seminal 60s L.A. band Love with a live picture disc, a solo Arthur Lee album and a sixteen-song *Best Of Love* LP. "Now," Bronson says proudly, "eight or ten artists have covered 'My Little Red Book' alone in the last two years.

"The thing that bothers me as a music fan," he adds, "is that there are so few new records I feel passionate about. I don't want to have to go back and listen to *Aftermath* by the Stones all the time. But I have to—there's nothing else that can touch it."

There is no telling how far the new garage rock can go. But Keith Streng of the Fleshtones has a pretty good idea. "You know what I was thinking would be really funny? You know how when punk came in, all these musicians jumped on the bandwagon wearing skinnny ties and whatever? If the garage thing keeps happening, they'd all start wearing Nehru shirts and these accomplished musicians would try playing like the Standells."

"Well," snickers Peter Zaremba, "they'd have to study long and hard."

A Selected Guide to Boss New Wax:

The Nuggets (Elektra, also reissued on Sire) — The album that started it all—again.

The Chesterfield Kings — *Here Are The Chesterfield Kings* (Mirror) The song selection says it all: fourteen covers, including the Chocolate Watch Band, the Painted Ship, the Sonics, the Turtles and the Moving Sidewalks.

The Salvation Army — *The Salvation Army* (Frontier) — Expect a new 12-inch EP under their new name the Three O'Clock.

The Bangles — *The Bangles* (Faulty) — More go-go than the Go-Go's, this all-girl troupe (until recently known as the Bangs) play a spritely 60s folk-punk with shimmering Shangri-Las harmonies and crisp ringing guitars. Their new 12-inch EP features four solid originals, but

continued on page 107

Photo by Martin Cohen

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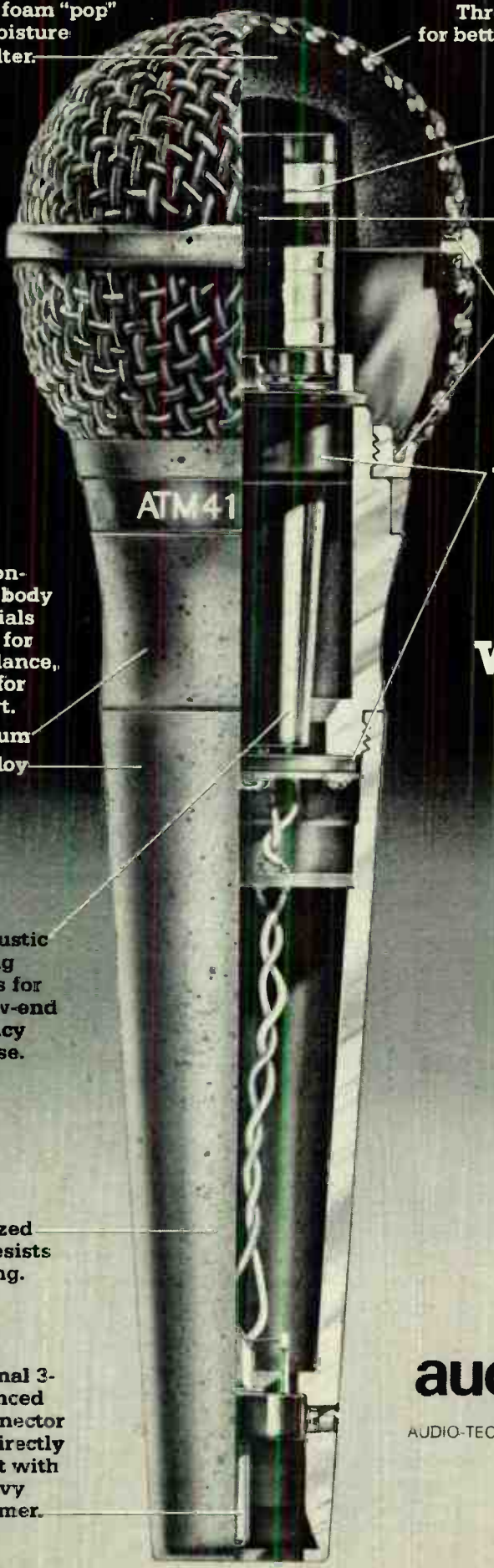

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Al Green

Sanctity & Sexuality on a Higher Plane

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Green has never regretted the switch to gospel that cost him his platinum popularity.

BY GEOFFREY HIMES

Listening to Al Green's three gospel albums for Myrrh Records is a disorienting experience. The songs are traditional hymns that have been sung in black Protestant churches for decades. But Green, the sexiest soul singer of the 70s, uses the same Memphis musicians, the same steamy syncopation, the same repertoire of husky, shuddering, guttural and squealing vocal comeons that marked his old hits. The lyrics may direct the listeners' eyes heavenward, but the music causes that devil's zone between the navel and the knees to undulate uncontrollably.

Green himself doesn't see the contradiction. "Yeah, it's different from other gospel music," he concedes, "but I think the message, the story is the same. Yeah, I believe so. You don't have to use the same format that has been used for the past fifty years. You can come up to 1983 to deliver the same message and do it with a bit of class and quality. The advantage is that you reach the broader audience of right now. Yeah. Their minds are elevated and expanded, so they see more things."

Just the same, Green insists that singing for the Lord is far more important than singing about some woman. "There's a tremendous, tremendous difference," he exclaims. "You have more to sing about, a longer period to sing for, with more spiritual concept involved. You are singing for an eternity from this moment on. Singing about a boy and girl is just for a certain period of time—scooby-dooby-doo—the music is going scooby-dooby-doo, and it's gone. But this, yeah, it's eternal, yeah, everlasting. The music comes out much stronger; yeah, there's more freedom; yeah, there's more movement attached to it to bring about that type of energy. Yeah!"

With each "yeah," Green's smile spreads a bit to reveal more blindingly bright teeth. With each "yeah," he pounds his big diamond ring on the coffee shop table. With each "yeah," you notice his shiny, sprayed curls and his crisp, tan suit dipping to the rhythm of a preacher locking into his evangelical groove.

Green, of course, is the preacher at the Full Tabernacle Church in Memphis. He is also one of black pop music's living legends. He sold thirty million records between 1971 and 1976 with a voice that caught that elusive tone glimpsed in an orgasmic squeal or "speaking in tongues" and milked it for top five hits like "Look At What You've Done For Me," "I'm Still In Love With You" and "Full Of Fire." Yet his career has always been shadowed by the conflict that has haunted nearly every soul singer: the conflict between gospel and pop, between religious parents and hedonistic fans, between lush heavenward harmonies and hip-swiveling syncopation, between a childhood in church and a future in the spotlights—between the body and the soul.

When the thirty-six-year-old Green

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with "God Blessed Our Love," a ballad that wavers between devout hymn and slow grind as Green finds heaven in the eyes of the woman he wakes up with. The tensions of reconciling these two pulls surfaced on the same album in Green's most-covered song, "Take Me To The River." Green despairs of ever finding satisfaction in love ("I don't know why she treated me so bad/ After all the things we could have had") and seeks a new baptism in the river ("Won't you cleanse my soul?"). Just the same, he couldn't let go of sex ("Love is a notion that I can't forget/ My sweet sixteen, I will never regret").

"I was born again in 1973," Green now claims. "Yeah, transfigured, transformed. It wasn't an incident that did it. No. People are silly when they write that. Nothing happened to bring me to Christ except coming into the knowledge of Christ and being transformed in mind and spirit on a particular morning. Like the old singers sing, 'There's one thing I know/ That I've been born again.' Right. That's all I can speak about, that it has happened to me. I'm a gospel singer now, and when it happened to me, I was singing rock 'n' roll."

But he didn't start singing gospel immediately. "No," he admits, "I had three years after that before I started the gospel, and two more years after that before I finished it." What happened in those five years? "The transformation was taking place. At every concert, at every gateway, every doorway, every time a stage light would come on, I had trouble delivering the message that was not on the transformation in my life. People were asking, 'What's happening to this guy?' But I couldn't explain it to them. Nobody would have believed me. Nobody wanted to believe me, because they wanted to deal with what they were dealing with; they wanted to deal with love and happiness and kicks and the whole thing, yeah Nobody wanted to deal with not doing it. No more champagne. 'We're not going to get stoned? Oh, man, please. Help.'"

All these conflicts came to a head in 1977's *The Belle Album*, the crowning artistic achievement of Green's career. Having finally split with Mitchell, Green produced himself and played guitar for the first time. He announced to the world—through eight brilliant, original songs—that Jesus had become the number one priority in his life. He insisted at the same time that he could love his woman physically as part of his spiritual love for the Lord. The whole album was addressed to a woman, Belle, as Green explained how she fit into his new priorities. On the song "Belle," he sang, "It's you I want, but it's Him that I need." Green then ascended into the most unearthly falsetto wail one is ever likely to hear, as if his body had finally given up all resistance to his

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Jeff Baxter's always been into instruments that musicians can afford. It's obvious that he's also been heavily involved at the leading-edge of recording technology

Besides telling you his feelings about Otari tape machines, there's just one other tip Jeff would like to leave you with:

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Vol. 83, No. 1

Intrigue, Adventure And Low-Cost Thrills From The Home Of Warner Bros. Records

From the I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT ART BUT I KNOW WHAT I LIKE School Of Criticism comes enthusiastic response to the **Rauschenberg** design for the new **Talking Heads** album. It represents noted artist Robert R.'s first excursion into album cover art, and incorporates moving parts and multi-colored plastics. Coming soon on Sire, David Byrne, Chris Frantz, Jerry Harrison and Tina Weymouth—the Heads themselves—are helping with production details. More later.

THE CHECK REALLY IS IN THE MAIL to Linda Ronstadt, Wendy Waldman, Jennifer Warnes, Bob Seger, Don Henley, Rickie Lee Jones, Arno Lucas, Leslie Smith, Lindsey Buckingham, Paul Simon and Christine McVie. The reason? All helped out with vocal tracks on the new **Randy Newman** album, ***Trouble In Paradise***. Trouble, indeed. It seems Randy thought they all performed as some sort of favor...

IDENTITY CRISIS TIME for **Yaz**, one of the hottest techno-pop bands this side of Greenwich (the one in England). It seems a Galveston (the one in Texas) Little League team owns the U.S. rights to their full name ("Yazoo"). What's a mother to do? The Sire album is ***Upstairs At Eric's***, the song is "Only You," and the Reader's Digest version of the band's name is Yaz.

AND ON THE SEVENTH DAY, **Black Sabbath** cut ***Live Evil***. Recorded live in Seattle, San Antone and Dallas, this specially-priced 2-LP set is not to be confused with a recent live release by a former member of the band. (Hint: his initials are O.O.)

IF MISPRINTS ARE THE OPIATE OF THE PEOPLE, **Neil Young** fans will be having an awfully good time with ***Trans***, his new Geffen LP. The album jacket and lyric sleeve feature a song not included on the recording—no mean feat, you'll have to agree. Between 30,000 and 75,000 misprints are in circulation, and if you look at this version upside-down and backwards...

CRITICS WHO PICKED **John Anderson** as one of the outstanding talents in country music can now come out of hiding. The title track from John's latest album, ***Wild And Blue***, has already topped the country charts, and it looks like an Anderson original, "Swingin'," is headed the same way. So who said the critics are always wrong?

ALBUM TITLE OF THE MONTH AWARD goes to **Todd Rundgren** for ***The Ever Popular Tortured Artist Effect*** on Bearsville. The runner-up, with points off for bad spelling, is **The Nitecaps**, the Sire debut album from the New York club band of the same name. The decision of the judges is final, so shutup and dance.

THE THE THE THE STUTTERINGS are rampant now that **The The's** debut maxi single on Sire, "The The," is making so many friends. Overheard at a party—Woman: "So what music do you listen to?" Man: "The The: The The." Woman: "The Who?" Man: "No, The The: The The." Woman: "Bye."

BRIEF NOTES Political awareness and musicianship are cohabitating in the person of John McLaughlin, whose new release, ***Music Spoken Here*** (Hablamos Musica), features "Blues For L.W.," a tribute to the leader of Poland's Solidarity union—The new **Soft Cell** record on Sire is available in a limited edition package featuring a bonus (i.e. free) EP. The title: ***The Art Of Falling Apart***—An independently recorded album, **Berlin's *Pleasure Victim***, generated so much enthusiasm in the L.A. area that it was picked up by Geffen for national distribution.

SINCE HE REFUSES TO CAPITALIZE on the name of the band he founded and leads, you may not connect **Ric Ocasek** and his solo debut on Geffen, ***Beatitude***, with a generic term for automobiles.

IF YOU'RE WILLING TO BE MISQUOTED, you can write to "This Is Advertising?" at P.O. Box 6868, Burbank, CA 91510. Any information on the significance of flamingos in Western culture will be greatly appreciated.

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impulses, spiritual or otherwise. For all its brilliance, though, *The Belle Album* was a commercial bomb. It was Green's first album to fail to break into the top hundred.

"I loved *The Belle Album*," Green now bubbles. "That was the kick-off, the initial thrust-off, the saying that I'm going to do it. I'm going to follow that. If you are really genuine, why don't you go for the real treasure? Now I know all about the financial treasure and that whole trip, but I ain't worried about that. I'm talking about the real treasure, Jesus." Wasn't that a difficult step to take? "Yeah, it was hard for me, because of what it takes to do it. And I wasn't hooked on anything—never was and never will be—I just did it because everybody else was doing it. But you're already up there at the top, all assembled and all the charade that goes with it. But that doesn't necessarily make or break a man, I found out." Is it possible to have both Belle and the Lord? "Yeah, if you have them right. If you find some Belle you like, and you know you like her, and you love her, marry her. And that'll be your Belle, and then you won't have to worry about the other Belles. That's right. Yes, yes. I have my Belle. Ding-a-ling-a-ling!"

In 1978, Green made *Truth N' Time*, a worthy enough footnote to *The Belle Album*. In 1980, he released *The Lord Will Make A Way*, his first album of traditional hymns, for Myrrh Records, a fundamentalist Christian label out of Waco, Texas that specializes in born-again rockers (Dion, Maria Muldaur, Richie Furay). With two horn players from his hit single days and the rhythm section from *The Belle Album*, Green cooked up the old sacred music with an unmistakable earthliness. He followed the same seemingly paradoxical approach on 1981's *Higher Plane* and 1982's *Precious Lord*.

This paradox was especially evident in his live shows, where Green would twist and shake about the stage as he unleashed purrs, grunts and squeals in the name of the Lord. He would hand out roses to admiring females near the stage as he often had before. He would back off from the microphone, shout gruffly, "His name is...," pause just enough, and then hit a pure, exhilarating falsetto note: "Jesus!" He would break into wild, improvised scatting that captured his indecision about conversion, so when he exclaimed, "I Can't Turn Around," there was no doubting it was a hard-won claim. These shows split gospel audiences right down the middle, as older, more conservative Shirley Ceasar fans would walk out on him, while younger, less inhibited fans would dance in the aisles.

"I can't help the way I move," Green protests. "I can't help about the message I must carry. No, it's something

continued on page 110

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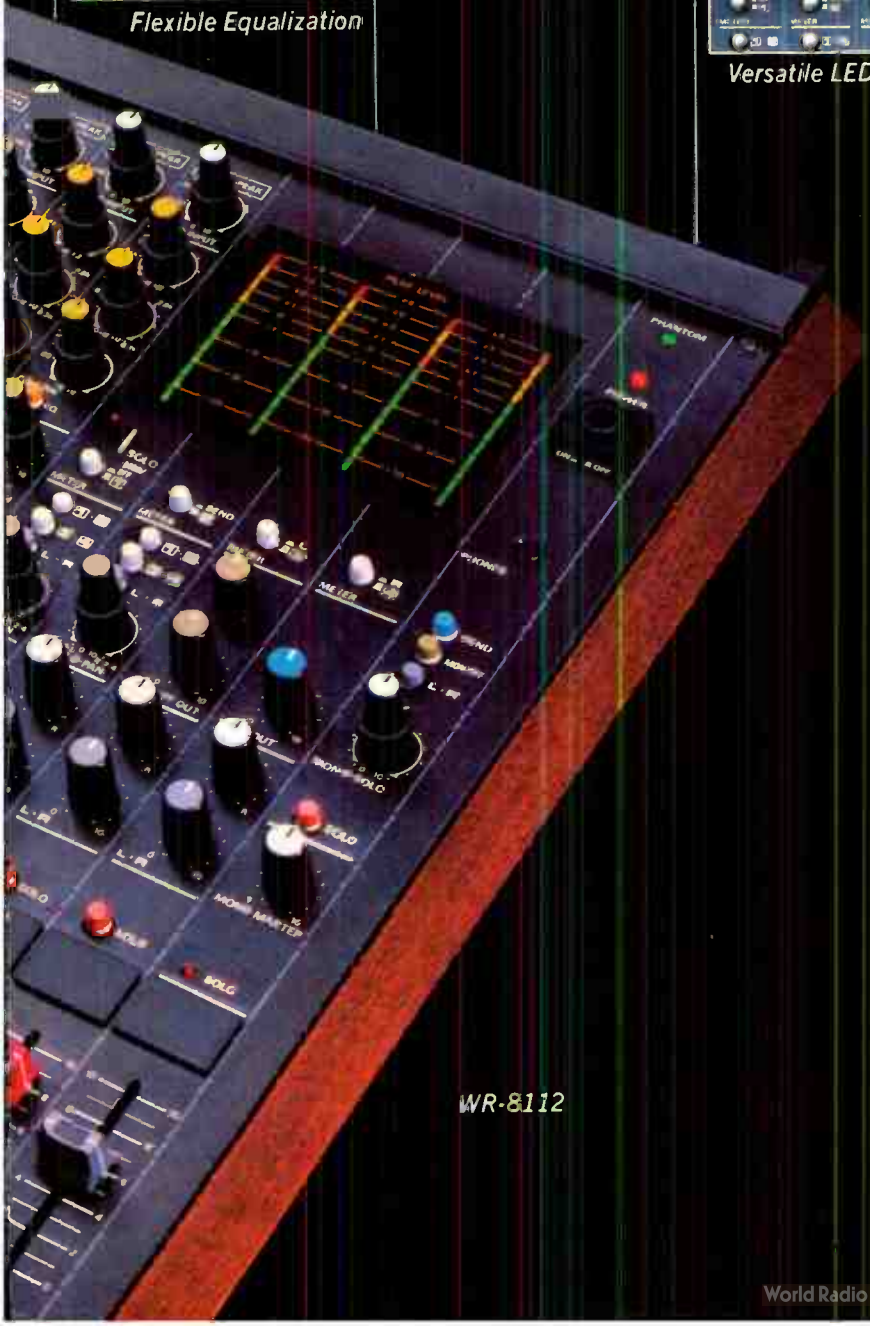

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Eddie Palmieri

The Times & Temper of Salsa's Space Man

TOM COPI

The incendiary Palmieri leads his all-star orchestra through a blistering *montuno* pattern.

BY TONY SABOURNIN & ENRIQUE FERNANDEZ

Eddie Palmieri wanted power and Carnegie Hall was aghast. The year's classiest Latin music concert, the March '82 double-bill of McCoy Tyner and Eddie Palmieri seemed about to degenerate into an onstage brawl. Tyner had played a jewel-sharp first set, punctuated by elegant solos from Chico Freeman and Arthur Blythe. The audience knew the Palmieri set would be different; "the Sun of Latin Music"'s romantic flamboyance and extroverted stage persona would contrast with Tyner's restrained intensity.

In this case, Palmieri's unpredictability had seemingly taken the wrong turn. Over his right shoulder he flashed the audience his most amiable smile; but the looks directed over his left shoulder at the sound technician were pure rage. He couldn't hear his piano over the cowbell and the brass. He wanted more power; he ran both hands down his face and clenched them into fists.

The orchestra kept playing while Eddie walked on and off the stage and the sound personnel hurriedly worked some adjustments. No improvement. Once he came back and touched a key and, worse: no sound. The inevitable almost happened: Eddie walked menacingly toward the technician, only to be stopped by trombonist Barry Rogers' firm hand. He walked off again. Finally, the piano was reconnected, the technician placed an additional speaker to the right of Eddie's bench; Barry tried a few bars of the *montuno*, and Eddie came back and sat down to play, adrenalin soaring through his veins.

One could not imagine such a scene happening during the first set; a blatant display of emotion would violate the *esthetique du cool* of the jazz world. Salsa, on the other hand, is *hot* dance music, meant to get your spirits up, or, in the parlance of the Afro-Cuban traditions that shape salsa, to have the spirits "mount" you. With such incendiary music it was no surprise that tempers caught fire that night. Chaos, tempers, improvisation: the stuff that Latin stereotypes are made of. This is what happens when you bring salsa to Carnegie Hall, right?

It only took two measures from Eddie's piano to get a listless rhythm section—bored and tired of listening to overextended solos—to turn on the sound. The pianist's extended index finger whipped the air like a flash, the cue for Rogers' trombone section to lay the initial barrage of harmonies. The reed section counterattacked with a syncopated harmony of their own, which, after four repetitions, brought in the trumpets' harmonies, syncopated against those of the others. Once these sections fell together, like giant pieces of a puzzle, the audience's mood started to change.

Someone yelled, "*Vaya Eddie*." Rows of legs bopped up and down, keeping time with the intensity of the music; then, upper bodies started swaying—some back and forth, others left to right. Eddie smiled, for real this time. He knew he had them. Not unexpectedly, the first body rocketed up from the chair, elbows flinging furiously to the side. Quickly, others imitated the move, while still some others, not quite as fitful, contented themselves by roaring their approval and clapping over the now-thunderous mambo coming from the stage.

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(and of the house) and enjoying the full-tilt power of a characteristically overmiked piano, Eddie burned. For all his jazzophile experimentation, his neo-romantic intros, his gift for musical complexity, Eddie Palmieri's forte is deep-down funk, *saoco*. For a few moments in a jagged concert, Salsa's Space Man came down to earth to do what he does like no other, play with the savage end of Latin music. "All the music that has dark sounds," said the Spanish poet Lorca, "has *duende*." Demon.

In the latter part of the 30s, the first Hispanic migration had already taken root in New York's Upper East Side with the flourishing Puerto Rican community, and with it, the music: guitars, African-derived percussion instruments, and, of course, vocalists. House parties were the rage. Incipient entrepreneurs would lend their apartments or rent someone else's as a dancing locale, hire a neighborhood trio, usually composed of two guitarists and a singer/maracas player, and split the gate with them, at the then-modest rate of five cents. When the parties, along with the musical groups, got bigger, guys like Federico Pagani took their acts and started throwing dances in halls.

On the record scene, RCA Victor was getting into the Latin countries, developing artists of the magnitude of the Mexican tenor Pedro Vargas and the Cuban singer Antonio Machin, also known as the sepian Rudy Vallee. Years later another Cuban singer, Miguelito Valdés, gained fame in his presentations with Xavier Cugat's orchestra (it was Miguelito who introduced the song that would propel Desi Arnaz into American households, "Babalu"). Famous trios, quartets and *conjuntos* (ensembles of usually five members or more) like "Piquito" Marcano's, Pedro Flores' and Antonio Machin's made their presence felt in the neighborhood circles. An orchestra like pianist Noro Morales' became so strong and widely accepted that it soon sprouted musical branches of its own: singer Tito Rodriguez left to form his own band, as did timbales player Tito Puente—the two individuals whose rumored rivalry was the center of many arguments, and the cause of even more promoters' headaches.

Another important ingredient in the development of Latin rhythms was already making its mark: Mario Bauzá. The Cuban trumpeter, a polished veteran when he arrived in this country at the age of twenty, had gathered enough experience in the big bands to eventually become trumpet and musical director of the Chick Webb and Cab Calloway orchestras. Bauzá, who also fostered the launching of Ella Fitzgerald's career by convincing Chick Webb to give her a chance, introduced a young and unknown trumpeter, Dizzy Gillespie, first to the Calloway Orchesta, and then to Afro-Cuban rhythms—not only through his teachings, but also by arranging the meeting between Dizzy and the late great *conguero* Chano Pozo, which led to the eventual creation of Diz standards like "Manteca" and "Tin-Tin-Deo." Finally, Bauzá joined with his brother-in-law Frank "Machito" Grillo, to create the band Machito & the Afro-Cubans.

It was Machito & the Afro-Cubans, together with sister Graciela, and Bauzá's musical direction and arrangements (along with those of René Hernández) who for over three decades set the pace that other big bands were to follow. And it was the triumvirate of Machito, Tito Puente and Tito Rodriguez, with a dash of Federico Pagani's promotional master strokes, that dominated what is known today as the Palladium Era.

The famous ballroom, once located at 51st and Broadway, managed to develop a following unequaled to this day. Not only did the best-dressed and most formidable dancers gather every weekend, but a strong Anglo clientele was attracted there by the "hip" scene, the catchy rhythms and, no doubt, the swaying hips of the *Latinas*.

The music had also evolved by then.

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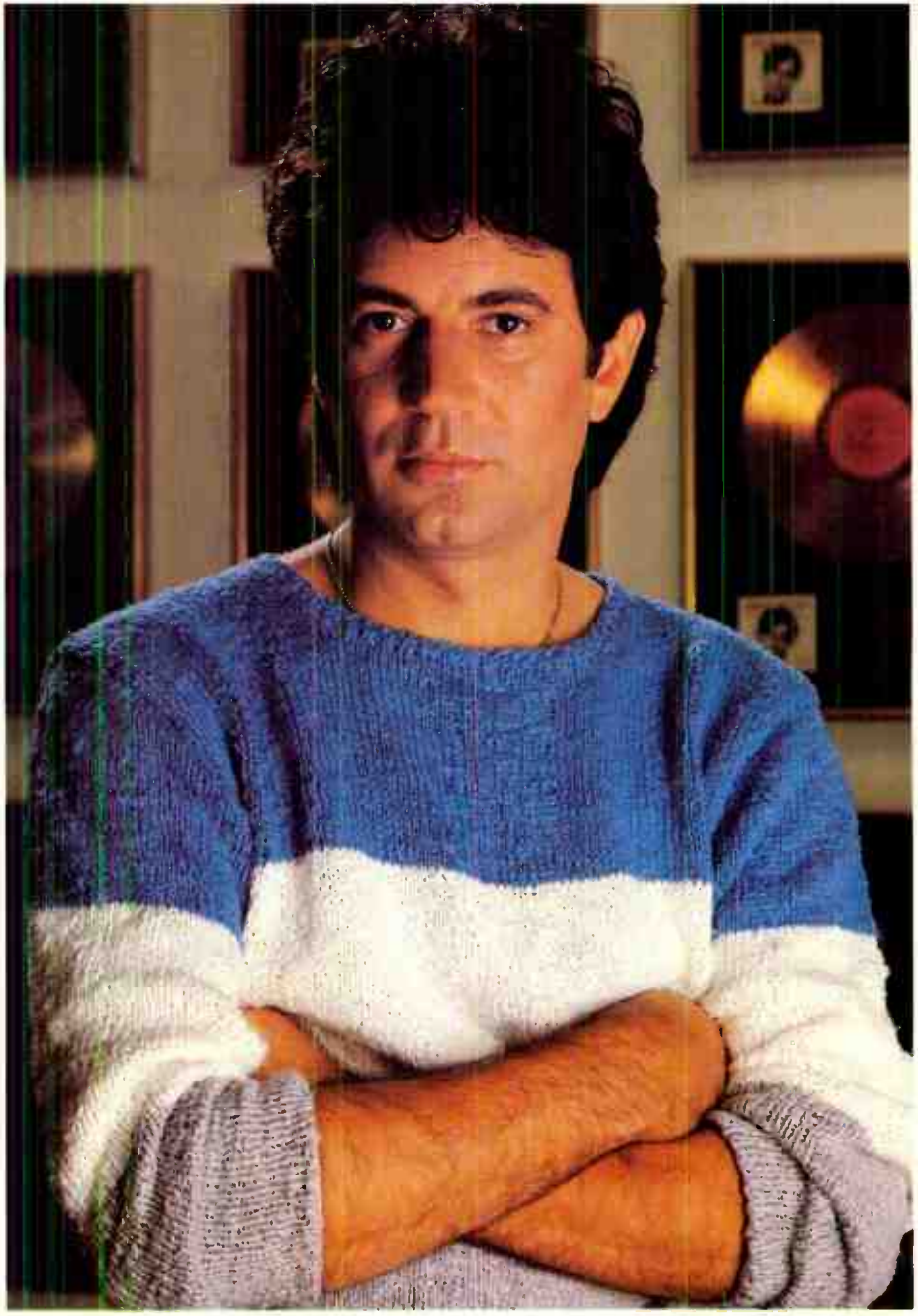

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Gone were the guitar-maracas trios; now the different African-derived percussion instruments, like the conga, bongos and timbales, blended their variations on a 6/8 beat with European brass, woodwinds, reeds and piano. The lyrics were in Spanish, but the music transcended language barriers with an energy that, even in its mellow, romantic moments, delivered a bubbly excitement.

Those were Eddie Palmieri's first musical recollections, absorbed from the 78rpm recordings of Machito, Noro Morales and Marcelino Guerra that his brother Charlie used to bring to the Palmieri household in the South Bronx. Between school hours and the time dedicated to help run his parents' luncheonette, eight-year-old Eddie somehow managed to put aside some free time to develop himself as a *timbalero*, making his professional debut with his uncle's group, Chino Gueits y sus Almas Tropicales, at the age of thirteen. Eventually, he decided to switch to the piano because, he claims, he noticed his brother Charlie, who was already striking out as a pianist, didn't have to carry anything heavy to work with him.

By 1955, Eddie was the pianist for Johnny Sequi & his Dandys in the old Caborrojeno Club at Broadway and 145th Street. "I got thrown out of there," he says, "because I used to hit the piano too hard. They even gave me a nickname then: 'Pancho Rompe-Teclas' (Pancho Keyboard-Breaker)." Nonetheless, his particular style was receiving recognition: Palmieri was immediately hired by Cuban bandleader/vocalist Vincentico Valdés, staying with his orchestra from 1956 to 1958. His next move put him on the top industry echelons of the time, when he was asked to join singer Tito Rogriguez's orchestra.

Now, at the center of the last years of the Palladium Era, Eddie Palmieri had finally found his forum, and he certainly wasn't about to waste it. The reputation earned with that band led him to form his first group, Conjunto La Perfecta. With his very first album, *Eddie Palmieri & his Conjunto La Perfecta* (Alegre Records), the bandleader began the long history of artistic and conceptual contradictions that have punctuated his career for the last two decades. Until then, bands generally recorded albums in one style throughout, be it big band, conjunto or trio. Side one of La Perfecta's debut album had an unheard of *conjunto* style of four trumpets; a brassier feeling when the *tres* (a guitar with three pairs of strings, the trademark of the conjunto sound) is substituted by two additional trumpets. To take this concept still further, side two waved goodbye to the four trumpets, and said hello to two trombones, a style only previously exhibited by the Alegre All-Stars and the late Ramón "Mon" Rivera. Even the album cover, with the band dressed in the required shiny suits and Mickey Mouse ties, manifested Palmieri's rock-the-boat attitude, this time toward the simplistic Latin album covers of the time.

In subsequent albums, *El Molestoso* (*The Annoying One*) (Alegre) and *Lo Que Traigo Es Sabroso* (*What I Bring Is Tasty*) (Alegre), La Perfecta was joined by Barry Rogers as lead trombone and by Mark Weinstein, José Rodrigues and flutist George Castro, known as "the sound." They combined with the sweet inspirations of singer Ismael Quintana.

Meanwhile, world affairs intervened: Fidel Castro's new Cuban regime and the severance of diplomatic relations with the U.S. deprived New York bandleaders of their source and forced them to adopt a character of their own. The phenomenon that would be called "salsa" was being born, namely, the hegemony of Cuban dance music in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, which had moved to New York with the Puerto Rican migration. In the cold northern city the Cuban origins mattered little; New York Puerto Ricans were (and are) more interested in Cuban rhythms than in their own native musical traditions, like the lovely *bomba* and *plena*. Here the music was neither Cuban nor Puerto Rican, but *Latin*. *Neoyoricans* like Eddie Palmieri would make Cuban music their own.

Of course, by appropriating Cuban dance music, Neoyoricans would change it. The hypnotic one-two-three/one-two *clave* remained, as did the Spanish lyrics and much of the instrumentation and orchestration, but something different was brewing: a

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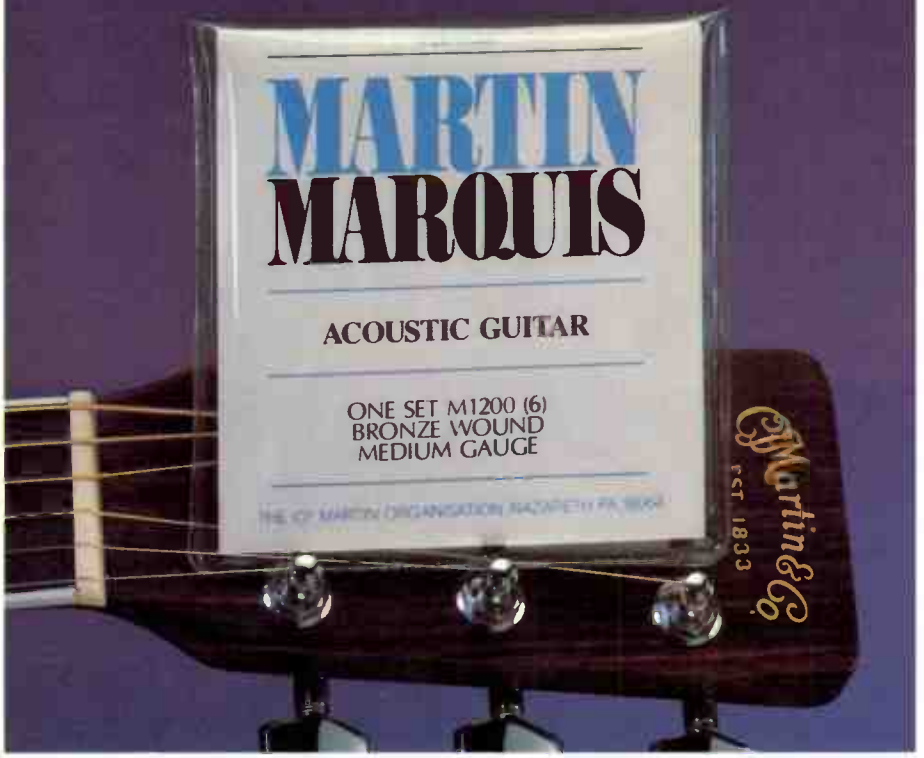

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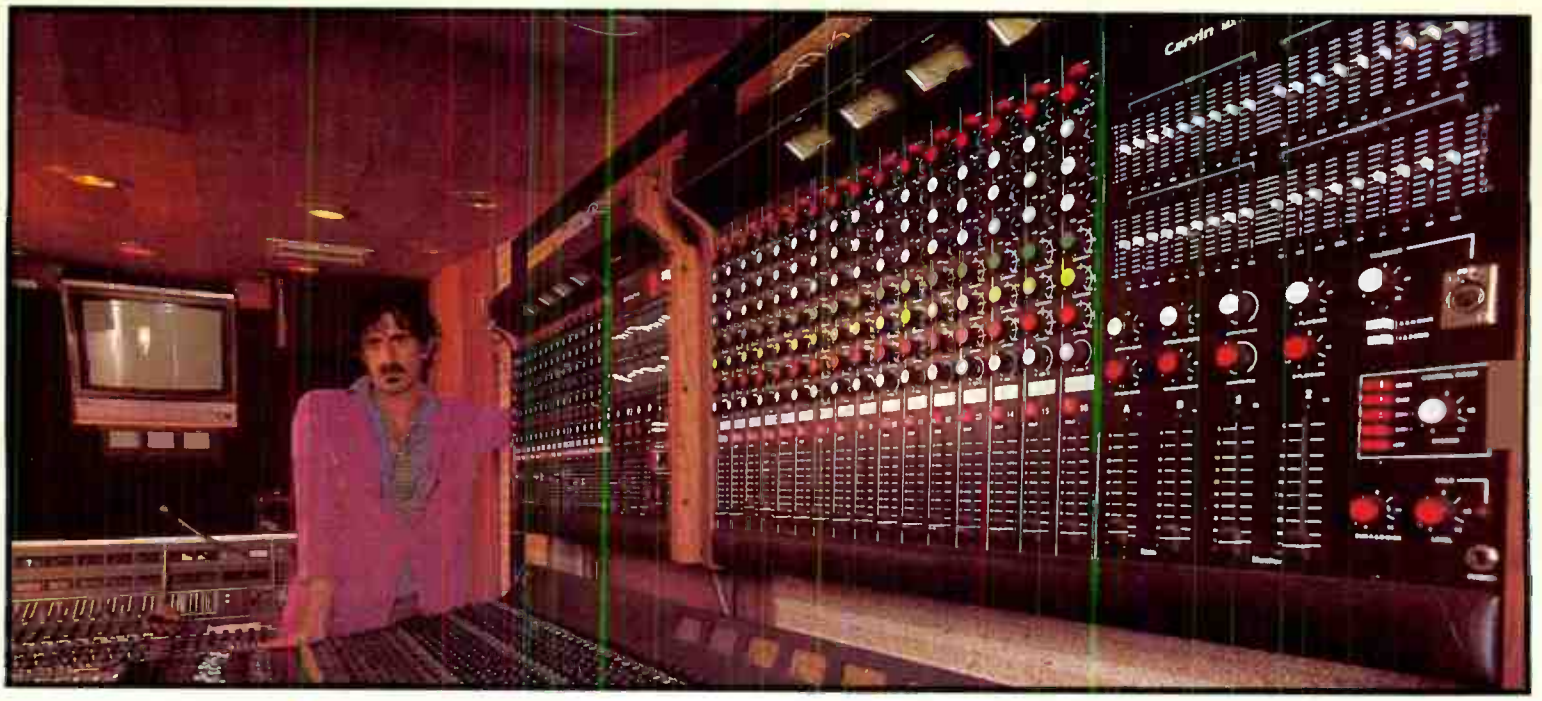

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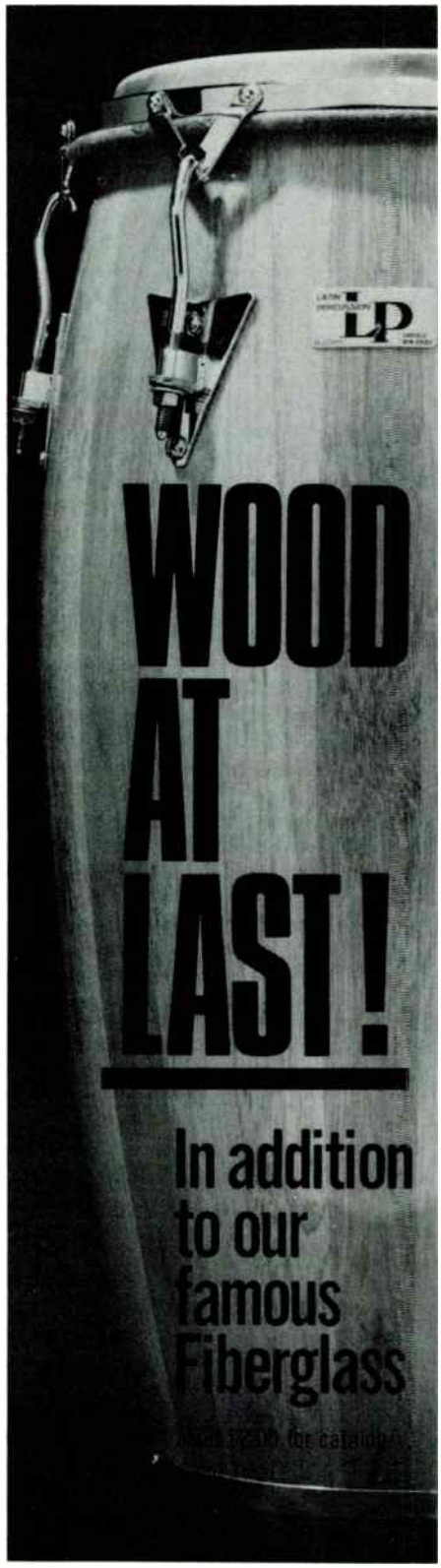

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sound of the big city, a North American sound, not just from the cross-fertilization of imaginative and generous musicians from both Latin and non-Latin camps, like Bauza and Gillespie, nor from the many, and often misguided attempts at crossover that would follow, but from organic influences, from simply being here, in New York, listening to its sounds, breathing and living its heavens and hells. Latin music put on dark glasses, no longer to escape a blazing Caribbean sun, but to be something very New York: hip.

Toward the middle of the 60s, the Palmieri sound had an identifiable shape and character. By 1965, La Perfecta had moved to the Tico label, and their second album on that company *Azúcar Pa' Ti* (*Sugar For You*) (Tico), released in 1965, flashes the best example of the new developments. Seventeen years later Palmieri had this to say: "You see, since the day we're born, we're told what to do. So I was always told to do a record in 2:45. I was trying to capture as closely as I could a live performance in a recording studio, which is the most difficult thing to do. And *Azúcar* was a breakthrough."

The pianist's own endeavors took a more melodic route in *Bamboleate* (Tico) with vibist Cal Tjader. *Champagne*, released in 1968, featured a number with English lyrics, "The African Twist," a product of the boogaloo craze of those days. Eddie speaks of them now as "a complete downer and a complete insult to the music and the direction that we were going." The "African Twist"? "We just used that as an experiment. I met the singer, Cindy Ellis, through Barry Rogers, who is a friend of her husband, Arty Jenkins. And that's how it came about. But I never really got into that boogaloo thing, and we suffered a lot in those years." Nonetheless, boogaloo flourished for several years: the "little one-two-five-four changes," as Eddie describes them, accentuated by the one-two-three/one-two of the Latin *clave*, took the market by storm, leaving many victims in its wake. La Perfecta, which disintegrated for good in late 1968, was one.

This didn't exactly temper Palmieri's drive. *Justicia* continued his interest in moving beyond *tipico*. His perception of the Latin stereotype, manifested by Leonard Bernstein's "Somewhere," rubbed its back against the ghetto-anthem title cut (co-composed by Eddie and Ismael). Palmieri's "peculiarities" now sparkled more frequently: "My Spiritual Indian," a blend of the African 6/8 and jazz, and even the slow numbers had their unique quirk, with the innovative addition, for Latin music, of an electric guitar.

In *Superimposition* (1970), Palmieri had already channeled his musical energy inward, for the growth of his group as a whole. Young, *Latino*, New Yorker blood was infused into the orchestra: bassist Andy González, bred in jazz influences, schooled in the old Cuban sounds; Nickie Marrero, an inventive percussionist; "Chuckie" López, sixteen-year-old bongo player; and veteran trumpet player Alfredo "Chocolate" Armenteros, former musical director of the Benny Moré Orchestra.

But if Palmieri was fighting an uphill battle to upgrade the quality of Latin music in New York, the business aspect was a downward slide. Tico Records, once a giant in the business, was succumbing quickly to Fania Records and its promotional and marketing skills, which gave the music its new terminology, *salsa*, (Spanish for "sauce"). New acts were hard to develop, and Eddie Palmieri's was the only one of the veteran bands still in its salad days. Yet, this period was somewhat unproductive for the pianist, with only "Pa' La Ocha Tambó," from the first *Live At Sing Sing* (Tico), to keep the faith of his followers lit.

Toward the summer of 1973, Eddie's days at Tico were numbered. Escaping from that commitment also seemed to mean a physical transformation for Palmieri. He became freer, let his hair and beard grow; he also showed a preoccupation with being a showman, an aspect sorely lacking in Latin music. His facial expressions became more marked. Now people went to see not only an excellent band, but also a pianist who'd solo with his eyes semi-closed, as if hypnotized in a musical trance, mouth open, sometimes groaning along the scales of the *montuno* of the moment. The solo's finale, more often than not, had Eddie kneeling in front of the piano, leading the mambos in by banging the keyboard with his elbows. The title "Salsa's Space Man" was born.

By this time the Space Man had created his own Mango Records. After the company went down, Eddie went to newly-formed Coco Records. The albums recorded during this period (*Sentido* for Mango, and *Live At The University Of Puerto Rico*, *The Sun Of Latin Music* and *Unfinished Masterpieces* for Coco) comprise, by most standards, the zenith of his career. The introduction to "Adoracion" on *Sentido* shows the most ethereal Palmieri to date. The variations of the different piano melody lines bounce against bursts of cymbals, high-hats, and quick strummings of the bass bow.

When the first Latin music Grammy was created in 1975, Palmieri was the first winner for *The Sun Of Latin Music*. For good measure, he repeated the feat again in 1976 with his *Unfinished Masterpieces*.

In spite of his bigger than ever promi-

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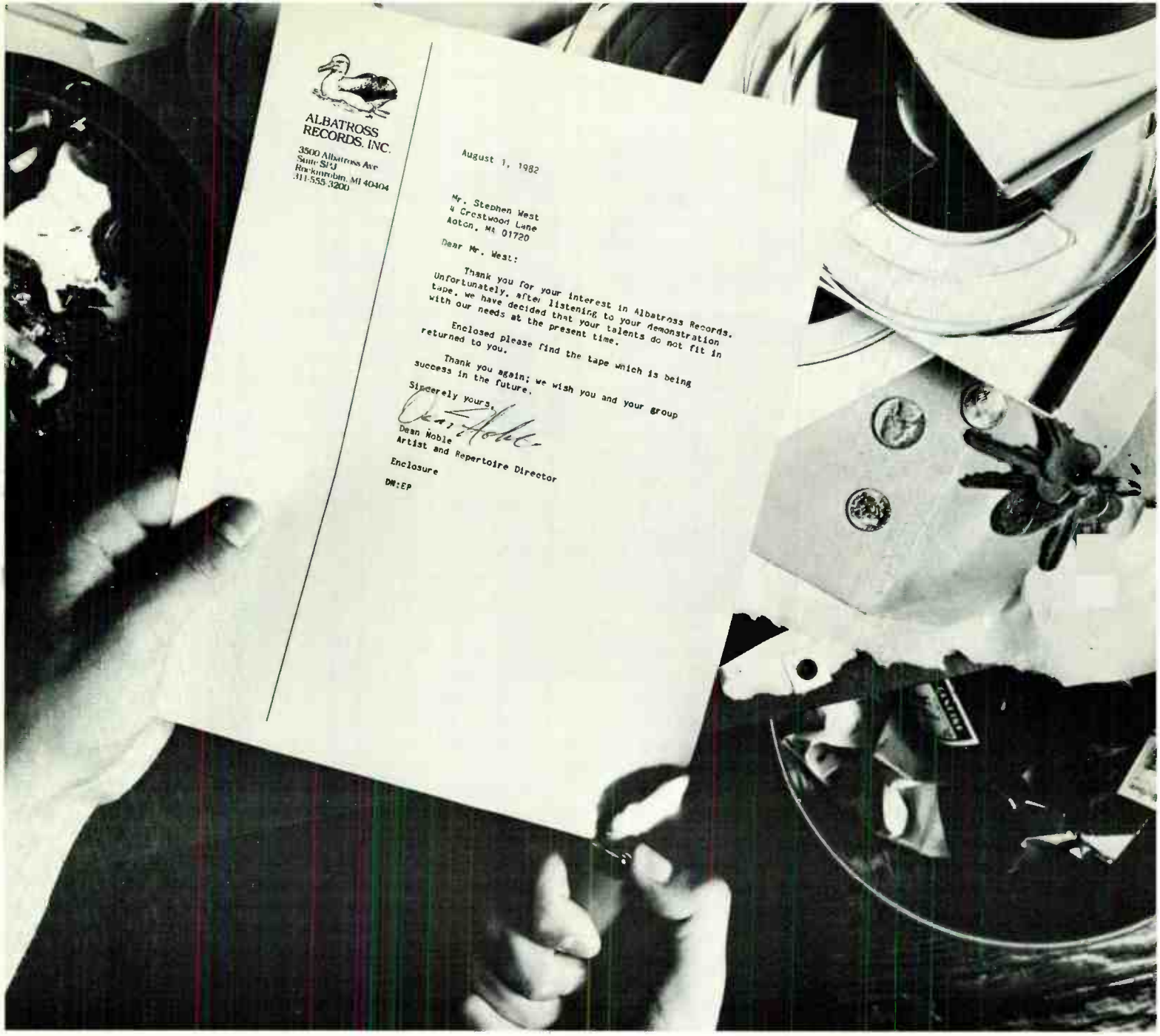

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The Reds

NEIL YOUNG

The publicity department at Geffen Records must be pulling their hair out. Having finished work on his groundbreaking *Trans* album, the newly-signed Neil Young pops up all but unannounced at Bay Area clubs with his band of all-star alumni. Returning from a European tour (before the LP's release) he decides to delete one track from the album after tens of thousands of covers are already printed up. As soon as the record is in stores he mounts a *solo*, mostly acoustic tour with a repertoire largely comprised of old standbys.

But Neil Young has built a career on being a walking contradiction. He obviously doesn't need publicists to succeed on his own terms. Success for Young means growth, rather than units sold, and on that score he would have to rank as one of contemporary music's biggest success stories. *Trans*, like *Hawks And Doves* and *Rust Never Sleeps*, represents another major step forward, although not necessarily in any one direction. And although ninety percent of his January 25 concert at the Cow Palace in San Francisco was comprised of tried and true favorites, the show was anything but a step backward.

Neil Young

Having recently compared his 60s and early 70s output to Perry Como in the rock press, Neil proceeded to play "Heart Of Gold," "Old Man," "Ohio," "Helpless, Helpless," and an hour's worth of older compositions, proving in the process that some things never lose their relevance. While Crosby, Stills & Nash seem to be desperately trying to recapture their former magic, Young appears to have one foot firmly planted in the past with the other securely in the present and an eye cocked toward the future.

Rather than take his audience on a chronological guided tour of his recorded output, Neil shifted gears abruptly about midway through the second set of his program—going from "After The Gold Rush" to "Transformer Man" in one fell swoop, exchanging his acoustic guitar and upright piano for a pair of sunglasses equipped with a mouthpiece connected to a Vocoder (operated by sidekick Joel Bernstein). The image of Young pacing from wing to wing in front of a set of unmanned synth-drums and keyboards, singing, "You run the show, remote control," in a voice from another galaxy, left most of the crowd puzzled and drew scattered boos from diehards who felt either confused or abandoned. The same people seemed more pacified when Young closed with his electronic-but-familiar version of "Mr. Soul" (also from *Trans*). Again juxtaposing organic and synthetic (acoustic and electronic) with his encores, "Comes A Time" and "Computer Age," he demonstrated the blanket critique that has followed him throughout his career: you either love him or you hate him, with no shades of grey in between.

I'm not sure I'm ready for a concert devoted exclusively to the new Neil, and I doubt that he is. But seeing Neil One meet Neil Two face to face onstage was one of the most interesting shows I've attended in recent memory. — *Dan Forte*

THE REDS

Some bands have all the luck. And some bands have none. The Reds, a punky metal foursome from Philadelphia with the patience of saints and the sound of a construction crew in Hell, have a little more than others but still far less than most. After two moderately successful independent singles, they said "I do" to A&M in 1979, leading the company's first rush of new wave signings after the debut upset victories of the Police and Joe Jackson. But A&M's promotion of *The Reds*—a nine-song, molten green-vinyl slab of atomic guitar fuzz and primal bawling that suggested Cheap Trick in analysis or Joy Division in a barroom brawl—was less than zero. The Reds are now into their third manager in five years, can barely get arrested in their hometown (where snotty upstarts are already dismissing them as old wave) and can only get their records released by the small but hardy Stony Plain label in Edmonton, Canada.

But their misfortune has only made the Reds meaner. Led by singer/songwriter/guitarist Rick Shaffer's ultra-distortion chords and raw fingernails-down-blackboard yell, the band recently beat a sparse, lethargic Tuesday night crowd at New York's Ritz senseless with a menacing confidence and ferocious passion barely contained by the grooves of their last two albums, *Stronger Silence* and last year's *Fatal Slide*. Bruce Cohen pushed his keyboards into overdrive, the serrated Suicide-like edge of his synth drawing blood from songs as hard as the three-minute bullet "Gone Too Far" and mutant Gothic shuffle "Slippin' So Tight." In the backfield, drummer Tommy Geddes and bassist Jim Peters (who bears a distinct resemblance in looks and the smart muscular clip of his playing to Jefferson/Tuna/SVT thumper Jack Casady) hammer down like an anvil rhythm chorus, anchoring to ground zero rock 'n' roll Shaffer's flights of rage.

What probably flusters A&R departments is that the Reds stand proud and uncompromising at a noisy disorienting intersection of big arena heavy metal and faster-louder hard-core punk. Like a tightly wired *Raw Power* Stooges, with Rick Shaffer substituting pointed anger and shattered-mirror screams for overblown Iggy excess, they combine fat power chords and dentist drill riffs—real AC/DC stuff—with brute breathless beat attacks, while Bruce Cohen deftly triggers sound-effects punctuation and paints dark keyboard brushstrokes with the wily atmospheric approach of Roxy-era Eno. And in Shaffer, the Reds have a writer who knows how to color his white noise with melody and rhythmic tone. Of the two new songs in the band's Ritz set, "All So Wrong" opened with a migraine tribal rumble and the guitar and keyboards in a police siren duet before breaking into a frantic Ramones-ish dash, Cohen's organ rippling under Shaffer's pained vocal. "Terror In My Heart" was harsh aggro-funk, a slice of heavy metal New Order with a jungle drum boogie distantly related to Peter Gabriel's current ethnic-bop experiments.

World Radio History

"Okay, it's all rockers form here on out," cracked Shaffer about two-thirds of the way through the show. And he wasn't kidding. "You Don't Know" from *Fatal Slide*, "Play The Game" from the criminally underrecognized *Stronger Silence* and finally "Victims" and "Self Reduction" from that A&M debut—all whiplash rockers, heavy enough for the hardiest headbanger, yet powered by a post-punk urgency and lyrical frankness that reaches peak intensity in the manic crescendo of "Self Reduction," with Shaffer's voice exploding in metallic shards of horror against a hypnotic synth triplet as his guitar goes into freak-out gear.

The Reds are not America's only underground warriors in distress. But for my money, they are among the best. The Reds deserve your green; you need the experience. A fair trade, I'd say. — *David Fricke*

DAVID LINDLEY

If you think the only entertainment you get at conventions is girls in skimpy bikinis popping out of cakes, you should have seen the eyes popping out of people's heads as guitarslinger David Lindley and his rock 'n' reggae hot rodders El Rayo-X kicked off the Saturday night get-down at the winter NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants) market in Anaheim, California this past January. In a show co-sponsored by *Musician* and *BAM* magazines (who provided a T-Bone Burnett jam with axe champ Albert Lee) with Ernie Ball Strings and DOD Electronics, Lindley knocked a hotel ballroom full of instrument retailers and manufacturers out of their buy-sell daze with an exhilarating set of cool party covers, bulldozing boogie with a giggle and percolating white reggae, all played on a highly unlikely collection of mostly extinct cheapo guitars.

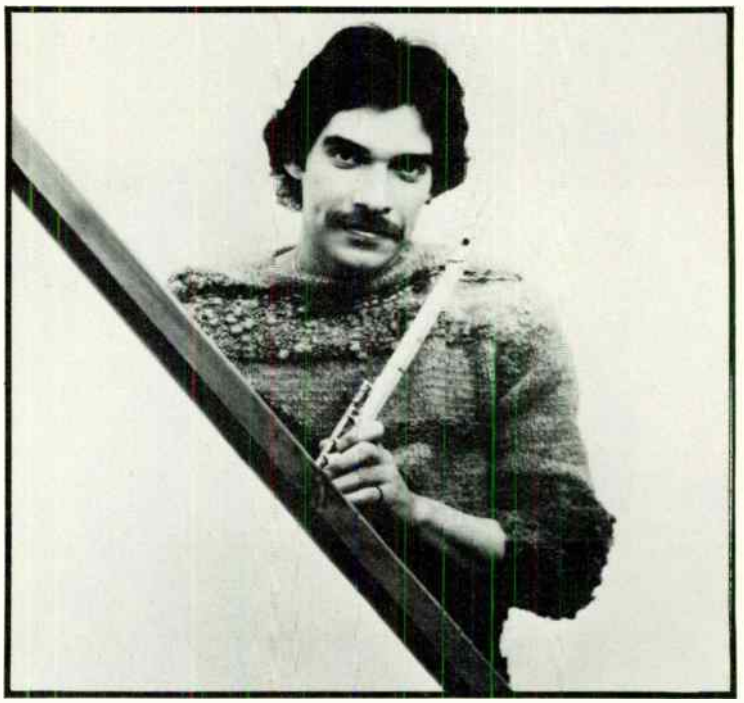
As a sideman, Lindley's art is his intuitive ability to draw out the quiet emotions of, say, Jackson Browne's songs with one tug on a rubbery blues riff or the gentle whine of a weepy slide run. But as a bandleader, his charm is the mischievous way he pumps up his chops and those of his superior band—second guitarist Bernie Larsen, bassist Jorge Calderon and ex-King Crimson drummer Ian Wallace—with garage-rock gems like "Wooly Bully" and "Twist And Shout." With the same flippance they displayed on their race through "Mercury Blues" and Etta James' "Something's Got A Hold On Me," the band transformed the middle of the reggae pumper "Rock It With I" into a slapstick dub section, then quickly snapped out of it with a sobering expertise. Such puckish arrangements highlighted both Lindley's humor (his reedy yodeling vocal style suggests a rock 'n' roll Hobbit) and his band's tight dancefloor attack.

It was guitar wars all over again when T-Bone Burnett got his turn. Leading his band through a rowdy selection of jamming tunes for the most part cut from the Chuck Berry/"Louie Louie" mold, Burnett maintained a manic vocal presence in stark contrast with the dazzling but calm collected Telecaster fingerwork of Albert Lee (on a brief recess from rehearsals for the current Eric Clapton tour). Burnett's old Alpha Band partner David Mansfield, certainly no slouch picker, gave Lee some hot competition and by the time Steve Morse of the Dregs and Arlen Roth joined the fray, it was every axe for itself.

I wonder, though, what Lindley would have looked like in a skimpy bikini popping out of a cake. — *David Fricke*

David Lindley

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE



Dave Valentin

DAVE VALENTIN

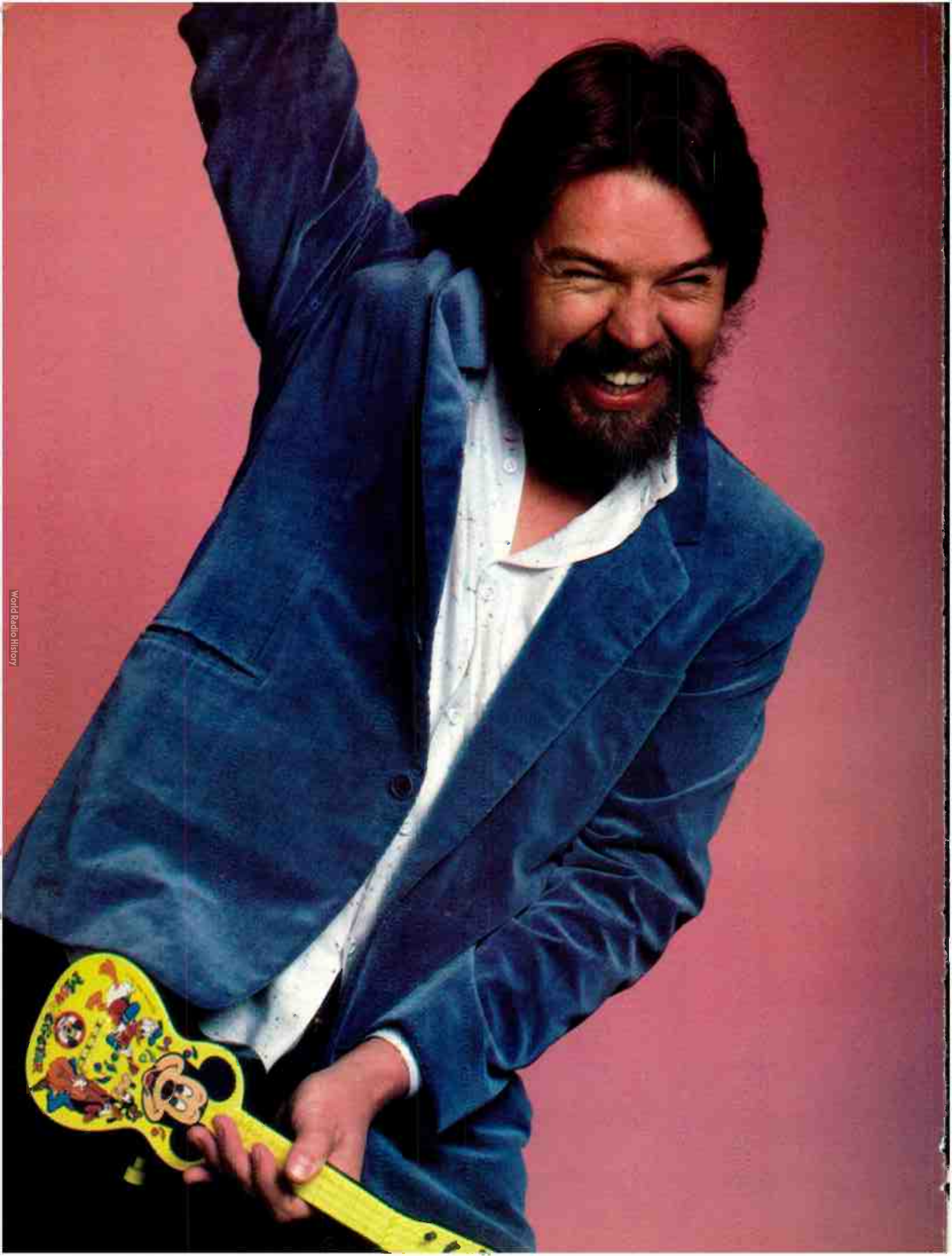
The dissimilarity in recorded and live performances by the same group has grown so commonplace that we no longer expect a group to duplicate "live" sounds only achievable through state-of-the-art technology. Generally, this is an engineering problem we sadly accept as insurmountable, a situation which can affect not only those second-rate performers who can't function outside the studio, but even top-notch acts who have by now become extremely conscious of their live image. Latin flutist Dave Valentin has come up with one answer to this dilemma—he simply gave up matching his recorded work to his live performances. His new record *In Love's Theme* (Arista) has a whole side (side one, to be exact) that is specifically designed for airplay, consisting of disco numbers with vocals, which "we never play—they're just there to attract the larger audience, get them sufficiently interested so they'll come down to the clubs. Once they're down here, we try to hit them with something more substantial."

A tidy summation, and an accurate one. Valentin in person sounds very little like he does on his records, where he is pleasant and at times engaging, but overly smooth and often superficial. In live performance at Seventh Avenue South in downtown Manhattan, he is energetic, emotional and very involved with music he obviously enjoys playing, even with his previously recorded material. "On the records, we are working out original compositions for the first time—we haven't yet had the chance to develop them by repeated playing in live performance," he observes. Valentin thus sees the live date as a workshop in which he can perfect his material; he also uses it as a forum to educate his listeners and sensitize them to Latin forms. Valentin's music is not *tipico* Latin dance music, nor is it Latin jazz of the bebop sort; it is a very personal and contemporary melange of Latin, jazz, rock and Brazilian influences with an immediate popular appeal. He has his own unique formula, much as Santana has his, for generating enthusiasm for Latin sounds in a decidedly non-Latin audience. Toward these ends he utilizes his charm, charisma and talent, plus the skills of some equally talented sidemen.

Most impressive are Roger Squitero (who is surrounded by a barrage of percussion) and piano stalwart Oscar Hernandez. Oscar plays often with Cojunto Libre, one of the foremost contemporary salsa bands. Hernandez provides a very solid underpinning for the group, while Squitero, who is in constant motion, creates an ever-changing background of textures through his adroit manipulation of various bells, chimes, gongs, shakers and other small percussion. The rhythm section also includes congas, trap set, bass and *tres* (a type of Latin guitar), and it swings with an airy freedom that readily communicates itself. A lot of the music is of undefinable form, sounding in turn like highlife, rock or samba. However, it soon creates its own form, which is both distinctive and rhythmically solid (although not in strict *clave* like traditional Latin music) Valentin's bag of tricks includes percussive effects, singing while playing, alternate singing and playing, bending tones, plus some fairly good work on a bamboo flute.

All in all, I found it a very enjoyable set. Although it's still uncertain how far Valentin's musical vision has progressed beyond getting an audience to really groove on Latin-flavored music, that achievement alone is sufficient recommendation. — *Joe Blum*

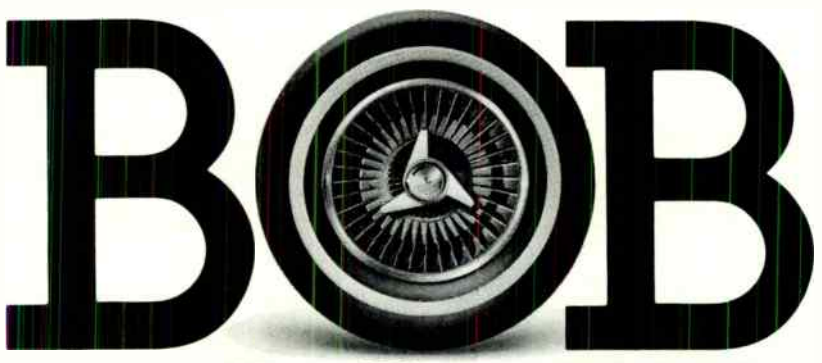
World Radio History



World Radio History

BY TIMOTHY WHITE

There was a time in Bob Seger's life when he was far happier for the things he *hadn't* done than for the things he had: gigs he'd decided to pass on, a demanding relationship that he refused to walk away from, songs he'd elected not to release. This curious mind-set of his crested somewhere around 1977, when, at the last minute, he pulled the title track, "Stranger In Town," off of his "go for broke" album, the crucial followup to *Night Moves*. That's right: he eliminated the very song for which his then-forthcoming LP had all along been named—hell, around which the damned record had been *conceived*. He yanked the centerpiece out of his album and threw it into a drawer somewhere, there to gather dust along with brochures for boats and dirt bikes that never got purchased, dream houses that never saw a foundation laid and potential humiliations that were somehow sidestepped at the last



BOB SEGER

THE ROADS NOT TAKEN

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

World Radio History

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

"I wanted to get away from two things on the new record: no medium tempos—all my hits!—and no nostalgia songs. The album is definitely a rock 'n' roll album. Six of the nine tracks are stone rockers."

possible moment.

A few months later, Billy Joel, one of the songwriters that Seger has always had a queer, fatalistic sense of, well, "accidental competition" with, came out with an album whose title track was eerily similar in name and intent, and the occurrence haunted Seger, the indecisive Motor City rocker by now afflicted with a drastic case of double-think.

Seger's song had been one about pursuit, and his negative fantasies seemed to be coming true, right before his eyes and ears. Joel had somehow eclipsed him with his *own* ideas.

"I think it's often in everyone's mind that there's always somebody better on the trail," Bob said at the time, using an Old West-styled analogy. "There's somebody coming to get you, take away what you've built up, and do you in, a faster gun of some sort."

He was talking about Joel, but also about the theme of the most famous Bob Seger track that nobody's ever heard, "Stranger In Town."

The sky was dark, it had rained all Sunday
Six bells tolled on the dawn that Monday
Sun rose red as he came riding in.
They blinked their eyes but he kept on comin'
They hoped he'd turn but he kept on comin'
Voices hushed and the strongest they gave ground.
The stranger in town
He's been running you down
He's been asking around
*There's a stranger in town.**

Long after Billy Joel's *The Stranger* had become Columbia Records biggest selling LP, long after *Stranger In Town*, stripped of its title cut, had gone on to ratify Segers hard-won success both artistically and commercially, long after *Against The Wind* and the live *Nine Tonight* collection cemented his status as one of the few guaranteed million-selling rockers in a dwindling marketplace, the question remained: who *was* the stranger stalking Seger?

The singer sips coffee in a Manhattan hotel room, in the last chilly weeks of 1982, scratching his grey-streaked beard and pensively pushing his fingers through his close-cropped haircut. It is eleven days since he completed *The Distance*, his solid workmanlike new album, in Los Angeles, and he finally feels he's found the perspective to face facts about the past.

"I was being chased by my own ghost," he answers softly. "For so much of my life, I had been afraid of myself. Now I've got the control I've always wanted, and I don't have any demons hunting me down."

He smiles, gulps from the steamy cup.

"I stuck it out and believed in myself when things were bad; I'm gonna enjoy myself now that things are truly good. It's been some kind of long-ass road, with doubts, mistakes, weirdness. Almost lost my girl, almost lost my perspective, have gone a little crazy and a little overboard now and then, but I've held on to the handle. Ahhh, but there's still one problem that really nags at me."

What's that?

He slams the cup he's been holding against his saucer. "I still drink too goddamned much coffee!"

Born on May 6, 1945, Robert Clark Seger is the second son of Stewart and Charlotte Seger. His late father (he died in 1968), a one-time bandleader who played guitar, piano, saxophone, clarinet and also sang bass in a barbershop quartet, was a medic for the Ford Motor Company when he decided to desert his family, running away from Ann Arbor to California. That was 1955. His wife and two sons landed in a one-room flat with a hot plate. Bob's older brother George took a job with the Wrigley's gum company and his mom became a freelance housekeeper.

When George went into the armed services, Bob held down a series of bleak jobs to keep their creditors at bay, and in his spare time, he fashioned a modest career as a singer in a series of bands with names like the Decibels, the Town Criers and Doug Brown & the Omens. One morning he walked into a storefront on Mack Avenue in Detroit to introduce himself to club owner/concert promoter Eddie "Punch" Andrews, Bob a sheepish-looking kid in "hitter's" garb: pointy shoes, leather, Brylcreem on top. He sang Andrews a "Gloria"-like song he'd written called "East Side Story," and they became partners for the next twenty years.

They raised the money ($1,200) to issue the tune on Andrews' own Hideout label in 1965; it sold 50,000 copies locally and Cameo-Parkway picked it up for national distribution. Seger organized a touring band to support the record and they'd drive up and down the Eastern seaboard from Tampa to Flint and back again, holding forth in any roadhouse that would have them. Gaining confidence, Seger found time in 1967 to drop in on Cameo-Parkway on the very day it folded.

Through the years and the beers and the near-brushes with all-out stardom, Seger knocked out singles that epitomized the very best in scrappy American rock 'n' roll, filled with the expansive, bull-headed bravado of the heartland. They weren't slick, they weren't always well recorded even by then-contemporary standards, but they delivered with a working class energy and a belief that was rank-and-file infectious: "2+2=?," a fierce anti-war rocker about a boyhood friend killed in Vietnam; "Ramblin' Gamblin' Man," one of the best Midwest car radio songs ever; "Heavy Music"; "Get Out Of Denver"; "Let It Rock."

Since then, Seger's become a rock stalwart often best known for his ballads, sung in a whiskey voice that was ravaged to a fine edge by six-nights-a-week stints backing up strippers in gin mills on the fringes of the River Rouge auto plant. He's made fourteen albums and expanded the parameters of rock dreams to include every factory boy who's longed to aim his V-8-fired ambitions at the heart of the night.

Never a fop, never a faddist, absent from MTV, as far from A Flock of Seagulls and Culture Club as a soul can unconsciously be, Bob Seger is the Keeper of the Gearbox. He's one of the seminal sources of the steamwhistle urgency and air-hammer ardor that burns through the best of J. Geils, Boz Scaggs, Foreigner and Tom Petty; that keeps Billy Squier and John Cougar mildly interesting; and that saves Steve Miller, Sammy Hagar and Loverboy from moral bankruptcy. He's the proletarian rock laborer that Men at Work are *really* breaking their backs to measure up to, and perhaps the only white singer

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who deserves mention in the same breath with Van Morrison.

When *The Distance* arrived in time for the Christmas rush, heralded by little more than few trade ads, people like Phil Collins, the Clash, Michael Jackson, Stray Cats and Led Zeppelin had to make room in the top ten for the Foreman himself. While the record breaks little new ground in terms of Seger's sound, the no-frills velocity of the music, heightened by Jimmy Iovine's wide-angle production, makes for an uncommonly invigorating and satisfying dose of vertical and horizontal bop. At thirty-seven, Bob Seger is still gaining ground on his own terms.

MUSICIAN: *In the fall of 1981, you had come to a crossroads in your career. Having achieved consistent platinum-level success, you had pretty much decided that you wanted key changes in the Silver Bullet Band, that you were frustrated with the playing of lead guitarist Drew Abbott and drummer Dave Teegarden, and that you wanted a new producer, having worked recently with Bill Szymczyk.*

SEGER: Yes. I definitely wanted some changes, some new breezes blowing through the process of making my records. I felt I had done right by the band, set them up financially. We'd been together, essentially, since August of 1972, and *Nine Tonight*, the second live album, seemed like a fitting capper to our years together.

Bill Szymczyk had mixed the live LP with me, and then he wanted a break from producing for personal reasons, he wanted his own kind of breather from the rock factory. I said, "Look, I'm going to be starting on the new album, 'cause we're not going on tour, so I'm gonna find somebody else, and give you a breather." So Bill took an eight-month vacation, and I called Glenn Frey for suggestions for a substitute, but he was out of town. So then I called Don Henley, and I emphasized that I wanted a producer who was completely straight, who loved life, who was happy—hey, by the way, this was a reflection of my own attitudes those days, it had nothing to do with Szymczyk's style. Thought I'd better clear *that* up before we go any further.

Henley said, "Well, I just worked with Jimmy Iovine on the "Leather And Lace" thing with Stevie Nicks for her *Belladonna* LP and the guy seemed real hip, he gets great sound, he's real easy to work with and he's completely straight. Doesn't smoke, doesn't do anything."

I said, "Sounds like the guy for me," so I called him at Stevie Nicks' house in Arizona—this all happened one morning in August of '81. I felt funny about calling out of the blue, but when I did, he and Shelly Yakus, his engineer, were sitting by the pool—*and they were discussing me!* It was one of those *weird* coincidences. A Bob Seger song had been playing on the radio out there and Jimmy had said to Shelly, "God, I'd love to produce that guy and make his tracks as big as his voice."

Phone rings. It's me! "Wanna do my record?" "Yes!!!" he says, completely freaked. "I'm in! Send me demos and we'll start cutting." About six weeks later I had my first demos ready, "Even Now" and "Boom Town Blues."

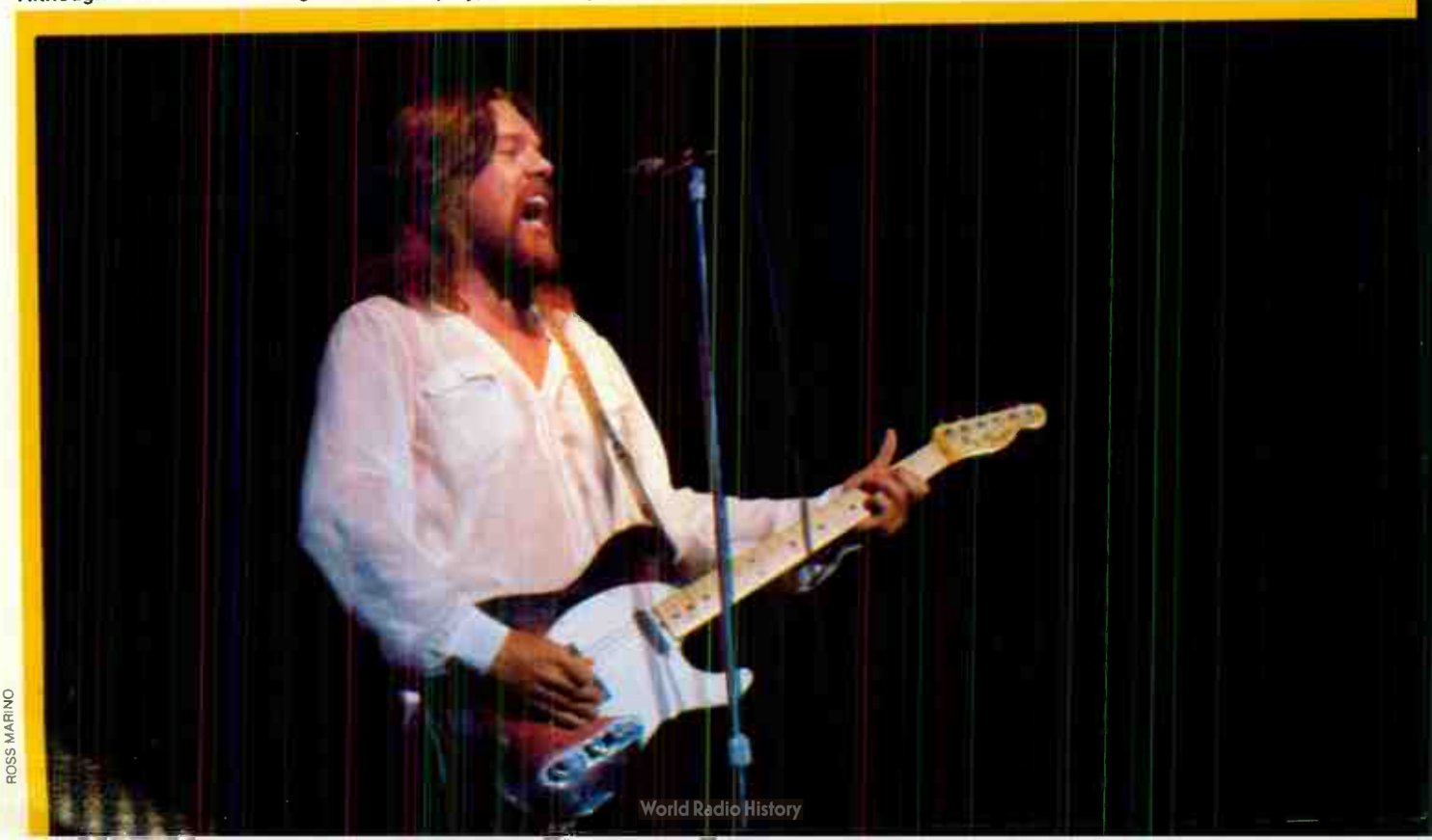
I told him about David and Drew and how I had decided I wanted to do this one for me. I had made them rich men, and seen the band through, but I had reached a point where they didn't play it the way I heard it in my head, and I wanted to use somebody else. He suggested Russ Kunkel, who he had used on Stevie's record. We couldn't get Waddy Wachtel on lead guitar, because he was on tour so I got Don Felder, whom I knew, and we started doing it.

The parting with Drew, to set the record straight, was ultimately a realization on both our parts that it was time for a mutual change. The guy's obviously a terrific guitarist; his playing speaks for itself—but if I ultimately feel the need to seek out new ways of getting the music that's in *my* head out and onto vinyl, I must go with that feeling.

Now, after weeks and weeks of auditions, flying people in from all over, we've chosen Don Brewer of the old Grand Funk as the new drummer; his playing has a fabulous edge and he's got such a string bass drum foot we've already nicknamed him "the Toe." Southerner Dawayne Bailey is on lead guitar. The rest of Silver Bullet— Alto Reed on saxophones, Craig Frost on keyboards, Chris Campbell on bass—is intact.

We didn't really spend that much time in the studio—a total of twenty to twenty-four days in the studio recording. I sent Jimmy about twenty-five songs, out of which we cut seventeen tracks. Eight of which he didn't like at all. He also didn't like some of the seventeen but I liked 'em so we cut 'em anyway. How the album progressed was, for the next nine months, I would mail him three demos once a month to California from Michigan, which I would make on an Otari 8-track

Although he'll write a few songs for radio airplay, most of Seger's material is written for live performance.



ROSS MARINO

World Radio History

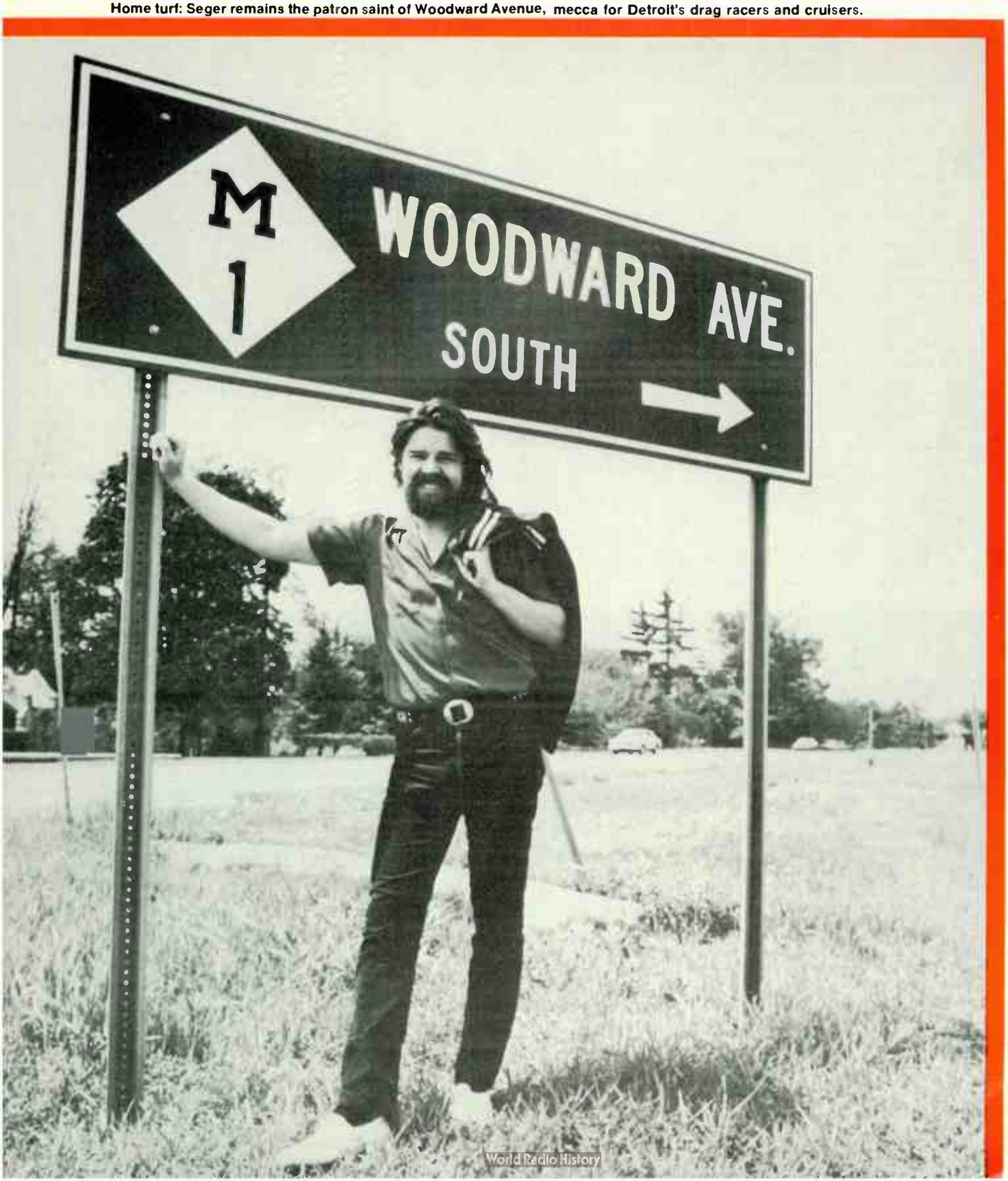
one-inch that I'd bought, an amazing Japanese machine—you could *cut* a record on that.

MUSICIAN: *I would have guessed that "Making Thunderbirds" would be the logical single, but out popped "Shame On The Moon." How'd you come to cut it?*

SEGER: I found it on a Rodney Crowell solo LP. Henley turned me on to Crowell, and I bought the album when I went and bought a Rosanne Cash album. I realized he was her producer—and husband—and I figured I'd buy his, too. I was knocked out by his record, with "Stars On The Water," and "Until I Can Gain Control Again." Around the time we were getting ready to go to L.A. to cut "Snow Today," "Thunderbirds" and "East L.A." I took the Crowell album over to Alto Reed's house to play it for him, and his girlfriend Monica was knocked out by "Shame On The Moon." I thought it was a man's song, but she made me play it four times.

We cut it in six hours, and got a miracle track. That and "Even Now" are the best tracks on the album—you can't find a hole in them; they're flawless. Also I decided to put it on the album so I could get away from "Bob Seger writes medium-tempo rock 'n' roll" for the whole record. I drew two lines on this record: no Bob Seger "mediums"—"Night Moves," "Still The

Home turf: Seger remains the patron saint of Woodward Avenue, mecca for Detroit's drag racers and cruisers.



MICHAEL N MARKS

World Radio History

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

"I must say that 'Night Moves' is my favorite song, overall. You have one of those tunes a career. Afterwards, it was a problem for me. I kept trying to out-write that song and finally said, 'No more.'"

Same," "Fire Lake"...all my hits!—and no nostalgia songs.

MUSICIAN: *But "Shame" doesn't really reflect the tone of the album at all. Who picked it as a single, Capitol?*

SEGER: Yeah. It was a big battle between that, "Even Now," "Thunderbirds,"—and actually they really wanted "Coming Home" for the Christmas season. Steve Meyer, the Capitol singles guy, thought "Home" was a number one record, but that was if the album had come out in November (the album was released in December). I wanted "Thunderbirds." Iovine wanted "Even Now." Springsteen, Stevie Nicks and Tom Petty all wanted "Even Now" when Iovine played it for them, screaming that it was a number one single.

Capitol didn't want to go that hard for a first single, we didn't want to go that soft with "Coming Home," so we compromised on "Shame On The Moon," which I felt might be a single somewhere down the line but I didn't want it to be the first one. It *is* kinda misleading, because the album is a rock 'n' roll album. Six of the nine tracks are stone rockers.

MUSICIAN: *From the sound of all this, people might think that you write strictly for airplay.*

SEGER: I write more for stage than I do for radio. And what I wanted this time was some new rock 'n' roll in the show and that's what I set out to do. Right at the top I said, "I'm gettin' *tired* of these songs." I write for performance more than anything else.

I generally feel that three album tracks are for the radio and the rest are for me. But everybody thinks I did all those ballads on *Against The Wind* for radio. They were just the best of what I had ready at that point.

MUSICIAN: *Did you write "Night Moves" for the stage?*

SEGER: No, I wrote that to be a hit single. I don't know if I'll ever write one as good as that again. One that I *did* write particularly for the stage—and nobody believes it—was "Famous Final Scene." I wanted to write a song that would stop the show dead with its sensitivity. There's always the exuberance of rock 'n' roll throughout a good concert, but I wanted to write a magical dramatic moment into the show. I got the idea from Henley's "Wasted Time," although his song was mainly about being stoned and wasted all the time. But I heard it in the concept of the whole relationship being wasted time. I decided to attempt to crystallize that instant in a failed relationship when two people realize, "Hey, this is it for us. So now how do we get out of this room?" And I had to *put* myself in that mental hole for a month. Oh God, I was horrible. I write most of my songs title-first; then back up and figure out how to get there. Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't. In that case I accomplished what I'd set out to do.

But I must say that "Night Moves" is my favorite song, overall. You have one of those tunes a career. Someone recently asked me why the Eagles broke up. I said, "Hotel California." They couldn't out-write that, and I think they knew it.

I milked "Night Moves" a little bit after that with "Brave Strangers" and "Against The Wind," but material of that nature became a problem for me. I kept trying to out-write "Night Moves," and finally said, "No more. I'm not *gonna* try to out-write it."

MUSICIAN: *Bob Seger is allegedly the nicest guy in the music business. Most good-natured sorts have bad tempers when they finally blow their tops. How about you? I'll bet you pop your cork on the road.*

SEGER: When I get mad, you'd better roll me away, because no one can stand it. I'm completely out of control. I'll throw this table out of that hotel window and have no thought as to who's in the street below. I get mad about twice a year, but not necessarily violent. I'm more scary to myself than anybody else. Jan (Dinsdale, Seger's girlfriend) doesn't get scared. *Punch* gets scared (laughter).

Onstage I get mad three or four times a year. If there's something I keep saying and saying to the band and it keeps going wrong, and if it's compounded by being physically tired, having a lousy night and the P.A. eating it, I've been known to stick my mike into the monitors to fry everybody's ears—SQUEEEEAAAALLL! The whole P.A. goes up in smoke. Very unprofessional. I try not to do that (grinning). But I've been known to.

MUSICIAN: *You may be one of the most prolific songwriters in rock—yet only a precious few of your promised gems and works-in-progress seem to make it onto vinyl.*

SEGER: I've got looseleaf notebooks, *stacks* of 'em, with lyrics in them! I have 100 finished songs in the can and 400 half-finished, dangling pieces like "Thunderbirds" was.

MUSICIAN: *Now, when you say you have nearly finished 500 songs, are you exaggerating?*

SEGER: No! I've been writing for eighteen years, and I've got every tape I ever wrote on, and every notebook. I've always worked on the premise that the ones you continually *remember* are apt to be the best ones. I've got one I've been working on, off and on, for six years, called "Quiet Wars."

"Fire Lake" was nine years old when it made it onto a record! "Nine Tonight" was written for *Against The Wind*, but it didn't make it on, after exactly 161 mixes over the course of two weeks! Then Irving Azoff wanted it for the *Urban Cowboy* album, and still I couldn't let it go. I said yes, but at the last minute I told Punch no, and my phone number was changed so Irving couldn't scream at me, since he had the jackets all printed up and the album at the plant, ready to be mastered! Finally, I gave in, and it became such a popular song on the road in 1980 that I felt compelled to name the live LP after it. (shrug, wheezing chuckle) I'm really something, aren't I?

MUSICIAN: *You'll tinker with tracks for the longest time before they finally come out on record. Any more old songs on the new LP?*

SEGER: "Comin' Home" was old. I did that in 1978 for *Against The Wind*, but I upgraded the lyrics for this LP. "Can't Hit The Corners No More," a song about the dread of getting old in rock 'n' roll, which was also intended for *Against The Wind*, is another perennial bridesmaid. That doggone song, it almost made it on this album! We remixed it and remixed it, and finally I decided I wanted to recut the track. When I played Henley the final album at his house, it was between "Can't Hit The Corners" and "Love's The Last To Know." He said, "Well, 'Love's The Last To Know' sounds finished, done; 'Corners' is a great, great song with a lousy track. Gotta recut that track." So that's what I'm gonna do.

World Radio History

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

"Springsteen's got fierce moral values and principles—chiseled in stone—and you have to admire him for that. He told me about ***Nebraska****, 'You have to try to leap that gulf between you and the audience.'"*

Another song that didn't make it onto the album was called "Elevator Button," my first attempt at reggae, which was about John Belushi. It had four guitars going "wanko-wanko-wow" in perfect harmony, with these wildass answer licks, and forty-five people at the end yelling, "PUSH! THE ELEVATOR BUTTON!!" Doing it over and over until it gets to be manic, like something on *Magical Mystery Tour.*

The idea of "Elevator Button" centered on this neurotic thing in Western civilization where we go up to an elevator and push the button. It lights up, telling us it's coming, but we can't wait for it, so we push it again. I use that as a metaphor for doing drugs and booze—you want life to be better faster, so you keep pushing the buttons.

MUSICIAN: *Belushi once said that you were one of the rockers he would most like to meet.*

SEGER: God, it's sad, real sad. I wrote that around August, right in the middle of the work. I had to do battle with Jimmy and Punch about that song, because they couldn't hear it, and I really did. I felt strongly about that song because of Belushi, and because of all the other people who have done themselves in. There was one line in the second verse that Henley liked: "Elevators go up/ They go down/ Some go real high/ Some go below the ground."

The idea was, if you keep pushing that button you're gonna end up real high or real dead. It was a subject I felt needed attention, that insane impatience that successful people can have, wanting to hurry the moment. I would have wanted that on the record more than "Coming Home." But the producer and the manager beat me down on that one. You have to give up certain things if you ever want to get the record out."

MUSICIAN: *Explain the concept behind* The Distance.

SEGER: Five years ago when I was watching *Annie Hall* I got this idea about wanting to make a theme album about relationships, *The Distance* being the distance between people, what goes on between them in a relationship, how they get close, how they don't get close and drift apart. "Even Now" is the closest song to my bone, 'cause it's about me and Jan and how we have weathered all those storms. "Little Victories" tells about our near breakup last year, a week and a half during which I thought the bond might be broken, and I sat around devastated. In the other ones, I drew upon my friends or upon bad moments with me and Jan, which every relationship has. We've been together eleven years, since around the time just before the *Smoking OPs* album in 1972.

The actual theme of *The Distance* runs through four songs: "House Behind A House," which is this little place behind my new house where I keep my gold records; "Little Victories"; "Love's The Last To Know"; and "Even Now." The rest of 'em are kind of quasi-thematic because I found it got real maudlin when I was writing only about relationships. "Thunderbirds" and "Boomtown" are like a separate little two-part novel.

MUSICIAN: *Will any of the deleted songs be used in the future?*

SEGER: I doubt it, because by 1984 they might not have any bearing on anything anymore. "East L.A.," "Corners," "Wounded Angel" will, but the really wild ones like "Elevator Button" may do away with themselves. I had a song for *Stranger In Town* about the oil crisis called "Kuwait" that's never seen the light of day. "We've Got Tonight" was a reworking of an older song I had called "This Old House," which dealt with totally different subject matter.

This almost was a double album. It came so close. I'll tell you, the fight that I had was that I don't think I've ever heard a great double studio album beyond the Beatles' *White Album* that couldn't have been a better single album.

MUSICIAN: *I think that most double albums don't get listened to, unless they represent, thematically and musically, an uncommon departure for an established artist. Even then, the fan might not care to digest it all.*

SEGER: There were three factors involved in my choice: ego, creativity, and the actual price of the record. The last one won out. I want my fans to get what I'm doing and it's a bad time economically to put out a double album. If we had kicked and screamed, we could have sold it for $11.98 or $12.98, but records cost too much now anyway. Six months from now, records are *not* going to be $8.98, and the reason they'll finally be able to do it is that they keep trimming superfluous people and trimming branch operations that they don't need. The only way this business is going to survive is with a $7.98 record.

MUSICIAN: *We keep coming back to this question of radio and the artistic control you apparently seem willing to give up in the matter of singles. What is your official position on this whole question?*

SEGER: Okay. The first single off my album, I always let Capitol pick, they're the ones who have to work it after all, and I don't feel uncomfortable with letting them handle the business of selling records. Radio always tells you that the second single will be based on response to the other cuts they program. Forty percent of the formats out there these days won't touch true rock 'n' roll. Joan Jett's "I Love Rock And Roll" climbed the charts purely on the strength of actual sales; it never got the airplay it deserved.

Capitol had chosen hard singles for me, from "Rock And Roll Never Forgets" to "Hollywood Nights" to "Tryin' To Live My Life Without You" from the last LP. At the same time, I'm not embarrassed by my mediums. At one point, it was a challenge to write them; then it became formulaic. In the final analysis. I'm grateful to people like Steve Meyer at Capitol. After having eleven out of eleven singles in the top twenty or better, I should be. "Shame On The Moon" was an awful strange selection singlewise, though. I concede that. It's a damn cowboy song! Do I look like a cowboy to you?!

Lowell George used to say that he didn't like any of his albums. His standard phrase was, "All I hear are the bad things." I'm the same way, so I turn the responsibility over to somebody with fresh ears.

I doubt I've ever made a record that sounds exactly like I envisioned it would, that's left me satisfied. The aural quality of the early records was not what it could have been, because Punch and I were learning by doing, but from *Live Bullet* on, they started to sound a hell of a lot better, and sonically the new record may be the best yet. Evaluating them musically, my work with the Muscle Shoals crew over the years has been of high quality but not explosive, while my own band's sound has

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ROSS MARINO

"Turn it down!"; disturbers of the peace Bruce Springsteen and Seger trade driving tips.

been consistently explosive yet not always pleasing to the ear. I'm still searching for that mesh.

I've got another dilemma going now—I haven't gotten into it yet—with this sponsorship deal on tours. If you can use it to lower your ticket prices, aren't you being good to your fans? But at the same time, I don't want to owe anybody anything. I've never done a commercial in my life and I don't want to start now. I've never done a video! (Smiles) I'm a hard case!

We were all set up for a million from Ford. they offered us a million, they would have gone to a million and a half, for a sponsorship. Maybe I'm talking out of school here, but that's what one guy came to me last year to offer—a million bucks in tour support.

I said, "I just wrote a song about how you guys don't make good cars anymore. (Booming laughter) Do you *still* want to sponsor me?"

MUSICIAN: *Tell me about the background to "Making Thunderbirds."*

SEGER: When "Thunderbirds" was originally written it was a slow blues, and if there's one thing Punch *hates* it's slow blues—I could never get one on a record of mine—so I was punking around with the Linn and I got a real great fast shuffle feel, so I put it on tape and started playing "Thunderbirds" with it, using the vari-speed, and that's how it came about. Before that, I had always liked the lyrics but not the overall song. This also goes back to one of the things that David Teegarden and I could never agree on: how he played power shuffles, which is a certain degree off regular time, creating a precise *drag* effect, so I set the Linn to sixty degrees off the beat with the heavy accent on two and four.

I wrote "Thunderbirds" around 1978, during the time of *Stranger In Town*. I had only the first verse and parts of the second verse. When I got into it this last time, I wrote the third verse, about plants being closed and people out of work.

Now, I had worked at General Motors after high school for half a day, putting rubber around the windshield glass, but it was cutting my hands, so I said forget it. It took me three days to get the job, but after a big lunch I went home. Four months later, back in 1964, I worked on the Ford assembly line for three weeks. I was eighteen or so. At Ford I was filling conveyors for automatic transmissions. You have a tray of these gears and things and you have to keep the rubber clasps on the conveyor full, and they come along at one mile per hour This was back in the late 60s, the heyday, and we were working nine hours a day, six days a week, with great pay for the time—$4.20 an hour plus time and a half for overtime. But you would feel dead at the end of the day.

For the song, I just tried to imagine what it was like in the 50s, because the working conditions were horrible in the 60s. At that time I was so poor I didn't have a car and I was hitchhiking to work. I had wanted to write a song about the production line in Detroit and make it a blues song, 'cause I remembered how blue I was. You'd become a robot, and nobody would ever talk to me at work because of the plant noise. You couldn't use earplugs because you had to hear bells for when the line would stop. The only time I had human contact was on my breaks and on my lunch.

MUSICIAN: *On this album and so many others, the image of the road as a place of release, reflection and the resolution of conflicts has always shown up in some form or other. Have you ever taken significant road trips that were non-musical in nature?*

SEGER: Jan and I make a lot of extended journeys by car, like the one we took to Maine last year. I always tell my friends that one of the best ways to resolve a conflict or a communication problem with somebody you love is to get in the damn car with them and go—away from telephones, TVs, everything that's distracting both of you from each other.

In July of 1980, I needed to get back in touch with myself and I climbed onto my bike and rode out of Michigan, straight to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, covering 300 miles a day. Jackson Hole was where my back muscles gave out. It was an experience of renewal, but sometimes a punishing one: nearly freezing to death in northern Minnesota—in the summer!—two days later having to strip down to just a pair of shorts in the 105 degree heat of South Dakota; roaring by myself through the Badlands, slipping past the Tetons. You're really embraced by nature and the elements in a way you just can't be in a car, and

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the vistas aren't chopped off by a roof or a sun visor. Out on the plains, you can see storms coming from hundreds of miles away, wondering if they'll swoop down on you or drift on by. The sun seems hotter, the cold seems sharper, the night seems deeper.

I'd stop somewhere once in a while and get recognized when I'd use my charge cards, and other travelers would come over and ask what I was doing way the hell out there on my own. "Hey, I'm just like you, pal," I'd say. "I got too damned pent-up and had to bust out too!"

MUSICIAN: *You've never made a video, never released concert footage to TV. Springsteen, another stubborn holdout, at least appeared in the* No Nukes *film and did a video for* Nebraska, *although he doesn't appear in it. Think you'll give in to the tube in 1983?*

SEGER: I suspect I will. I finally got cable the other night—it just reached my area, and after it was hooked up, I sat up and watched MTV until three in the morning. People have told me that it gets boring after about four days, but that will change, I guess, as they have more and more videos to program.

(Pensively) I want to do something special when I finally make the move, something on a good-sized scale. Something truly innovative. Maybe an elaborate tape using some trained dogs, which can be intriguing. Don't you sorta get off when you see a good, well-paced dog act? Actually, I have to say that I do. They've always been big in Michigan. Thing is, you don't ever see any good dog acts paired with rock 'n' roll.

(Silence, growing grin, huge burst of laughter) Boy, I sure had you going there for a minute, didn't I?

MUSICIAN: *Think you're funny, don't you?*

SEGER: Aw, come on. Just pulling your leg. Seriously, I'm checking it all out now. There's one thing about MTV that bothers me, however. You don't seem to see many black acts on it, not enough R&B and black music unless it's the syrupy stuff. Where are Marvin Gaye and the rappers? The best black video I've ever seen was the one that Grandmaster Flash did for "The Message." It was a tough, scary, brilliant piece of hip socio-political work. They showed it on a black cable station out of Detroit, but I doubt they'd program it on MTV. That's not right. I want to see everything on music television from country to MOR to rap music to ethnic.

MUSICIAN: *Career-wise, you've been accused of being a chronic worrier, a recording artist who doesn't like to let go of his records.*

SEGER: Frankly, I can get addicted to stress when I'm working on an album, and when it stops its *boring*. Near the end of the album I was almost looking for excuses to keep it going, touching up things that nobody heard, just being stupid. For me, the two big traumas in making a record are doing the lead vocals, and doing the mix. The writing can be fun, the solo and overdubs are fun, the rest is hell. I was worried about the album right up until the time I played it for Springsteen. He loved it, and I felt it was okay.

MUSICIAN: *Any more major changes in Bob Seger's life?*

SEGER: My favorite album for the Christmas season was Dire Straits' *Love Over Gold*, 'cause that's exactly what I've been living for during the past six months. You reach a point where you start to realize that there are things that are more important than money, like holidays, like birthdays, like anniversaries, like being with friends and family on those days. We could have gotten this record out in late November, but we stopped dead for Thanksgiving. Punch was not into that, but I had to yank him away and go home. Guess it's age, mellowing out. "Love's The Last To Know" reflects that especially. The first verse deals with the wanderlust that's always in the back of your mind in a relationship; the second verse deals with the realization that you get used to treating strangers better than the people who are closest to you—you take advantage of them. I've been preaching this to Punch, who's a solid workaholic.

I had to pull the plug on us when we were mixing because we had completely lost sight of the record. When we came back we used a young engineer named Greg Edward to mix seven of the songs because we could not hear them anymore.

Still, I had good recording experiences this time around, including singing on "Christmas In Capetown" for Randy Newman's *Trouble In Paradise* album. It's an anti-racist song, but it's tastefully done (smirking) because it's Randy. I also sang on "Take Me Back," which is kind of a half-assed "Night Moves" type of track about Randy's Los Angeles roots.

When I first showed up at the studio, Randy and I went out to get a burger at this greasy spoon and talk, and boy, he is an *opinionated* guy. We're sitting there eating and he says, "I gotta tell you something before you sing on this record. I got a song on this record where I really slam Bruce *hard*. It's called "My Life Is Good."

I said, "I like Bruce, I like you. Am I singing on *that* song?" He says, "Naww. I just wanted to tell you." He played the track for me and (wincing), it's a major rip; he uses Bruce's name, flat-out, no bones about it. There's no doubt about who he's talking about. I said, "Bruce does some great stuff!" He says, "Sorry, I don't hear it." I said, "Well, who *do* you like a lot?" He says, "Hall & Oates."

"Randy," I said, "it's okay, because I *hate* Hall & Oates."

MUSICIAN: *Was it tricky being friends with both Henley and Frey after the Eagles flew apart?*

SEGER: (Nodding gravely) Ummm, hmmm. It's not so bad now, but it was when they weren't talking. I think that Glenn had to make his solo record, finish it, put it out; then he could talk to Henley again. You have to know Henley: he is not as severe a personality as Glenn, who is very quicksilver and dramatic. But Henley has this enormous magnetism, and in order for Glenn to finish his record he could not talk to Henley because he knew what Henley was gonna say: "Let's keep the Eagles together."

Then Henley finally woke up and realized, "Hey, you're right, it should end, now is a good time to end it." And Henley's glad he made his own record. But at the time, he was very hurt.

MUSICIAN: *You seem to be getting considerable personal stimulation from your burgeoning friendship with Springsteen.*

SEGER: I'm finally getting to know Springsteen a little better and that's great. I'd met him briefly but I had never actually sat down and talked with him, and we spent time together recently in L.A., playing our new stuff for each other. He's an admirable guy, a good person to have as a friend. The first time I heard *Nebraska* was through Jimmy Iovine. They sent him a cassette and he said, "This can't be it; it must be roughs." Couldn't believe it was the finished record. Since I've lived with the record, I think it's great, but I didn't get it at first. Bruce told me, "You reach a point where you say, 'There's too much between me and the audience—there's a board, there's eq, there's a band, there's a manager.' You can leap that gulf completely by doing an album that's just you, a guitar and a piano."

MUSICIAN: *Have you ever thought of doing a homemade*

Seger Goes Guitar Crazy

I've got four Telecasters, with four different kinds of pickups: standards, Humbuckers, DeMarzios and a set of pickups that this fellow who works on all our guitars, Mr. Valdez, just sent me; he said, "MEESTER SEEEGER, DEEZE WEEL MEEK YOU CRAY-ZEE!" I also have three Ovation acoustics, the standard one of which I write on; I've got a Guild 12 acoustic; four Les Pauls, a Flying V and Firebird for historic purposes. I do a lot of my demos on my Bosendorf and Steinway grand pianos.

I'm playing a little more guitar lately; I've played rhythm on my albums and never credited myself, and I played lead on songs like "Her Strut," and a bit of "Horizontal Bop." At home I've started using a Linn drum computer, which helped me write percussion feels. In fact it helped me write "Making Thunderbirds."

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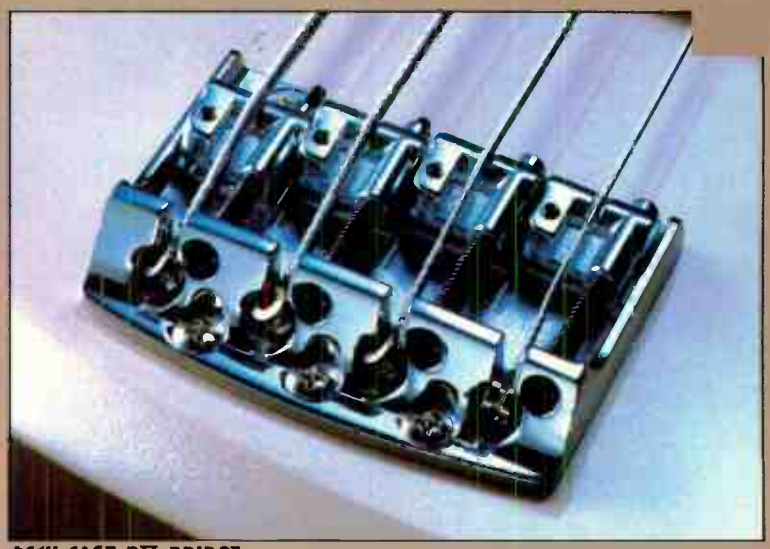
MUSICAL INSIGHT

SUPER J6 PICKUPS



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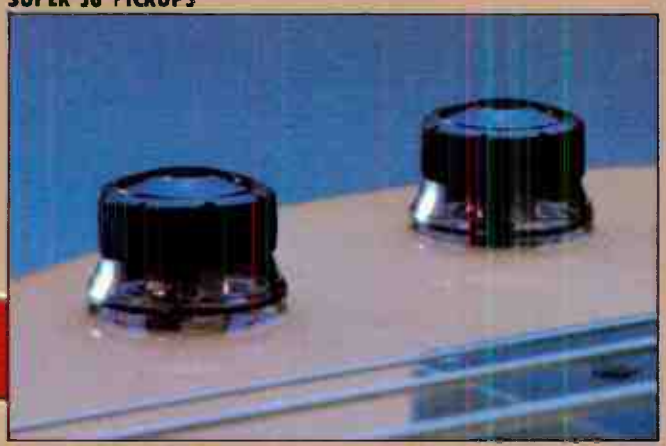

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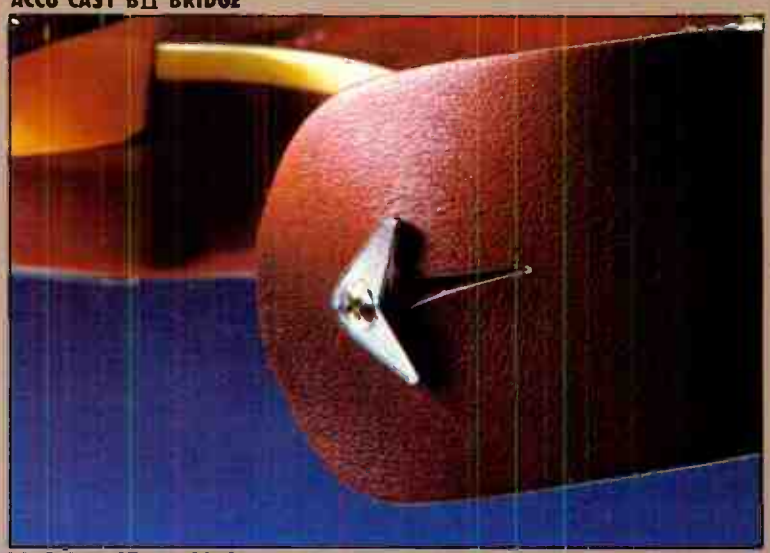

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record?

SEGER: No, because I'm a bad technician. But I have thought about producing my own record, along with a good engineer. I think I might do it next time. Bruce has gotten me to thinking about it. I once did a raw, acoustic guitar-and-piano solo album, of course called *Brand New Morning*; nobody bought it and as a result it got me out of my initial Capitol deal in the early 70s.

I played my new album for Bruce in L.A., where he's now holed up for the duration of work on his next LP with the E Streeters—which sounds real good, incidentally. I spent about six to eight hours with him in his car, driving around L.A., up and and down the hills. Funny thing is, when you just talk to Bruce for brief periods of time you don't get any sense of how deep he really is, since he's quite shy, very reticent. But when he loosens up, you really see that this guy is no dummy, that he's extremely bright.

MUSICIAN: *Ah, but is he a good driver?*

SEGER: (Laughter) I didn't really notice, I was too busy listening to his philosophies and to his album tapes. He's got fierce moral values and principles—chiseled in stone—and you have to admire him for that. He told the story behind *Nebraska*, and to see the dedication in his eyes and hear him speak about that record, it almost took on a life of its own in his mind.

We stopped at the top of Mulholland and played each other's records. I thought my tape deck was loud—his was *ungodly*. When we got to my stuff, me, Iovine and Bruce were in his car at the top of Mulholland in this little shopping center, and this was about twelve o'clock at night. And this girl, way at the other end of the shopping center—a good 200 yards—was standing on her lawn in her bathrobe. We woke her up! And she was waving at us, motioning, "Turn it down!"

MUSICIAN: *This account reminds me of the stories you've told about the moonlight parties you and your Michigan friends used to throw in farmers' fields back in your high school days. You've called them "grassers," and they were part of the experiences that informed "Night Moves."*

SEGER: See, that was back when I *enjoyed* parties. I enjoyed parties because I *wasn't* the center of attraction, because I got to talk to people one-to-one, I was just another person in the crowd. In truth, I'm more a watcher, an observer. Back in high school, I was the only kid with a leather jacket, slicked-back hair and Banlon shirts who wrote poetry.

I loved those grassers, though. It would be a row of cars in the high grass, around 1960 to '61, and everybody had their headlights on, so there was light to dance. One of our gang, Richie Gregory, had one of those vintage upside-down glove compartment record players; a place in Detroit called Crazy Jack's would install them, and they worked on gravity and didn't skip, even on bumpy country roads. Better than tape decks! They played 45s, and we'd be blasting 'em out: Ronettes, Crystals. When we ran out of records and we wanted to listen to the radio, we'd have eight million radios going and there'd be echo because they'd be out of phase.

It was a great, great time because you're under the stars, you've got music, and you're not bothering anybody. Okay, you're trashing somebody's fields (laughs), but we wouldn't drive through crops or anything. We had to ride over tilled ground, though, to get back there into the remote areas in order to duck the cops and the irate farmers with shotguns. Grassers were one of the rites of passage of high school life in Ann Arbor and in the surrounding farming communities.

MUSICIAN: *What was it like being fourteen or fifteen years old and essentially a poor kid in the Ann Arbor area?*

SEGER: Well, I suppose I tried to sort that out in *Night Moves*. The album as well as the song was basically inspired by *American Graffiti*. I came out of the theater thinking, "Hey, I've got a story to tell, too!" Nobody had ever told about how it was to grow up in my neck of the woods.

At fourteen, we were very poor, because my dad had been gone on us for about four years. I was in my junior year at Tappan Junior High, we were living in one room for seven months, my older brother George and I were sharing the bottom of a bunk bed, and my mom, who was working as a housekeeper for a woman with Parkinson's disease, was sleeping on top. Then George got a better job and we moved to a three-room apartment: two bedrooms and a kitchen. I never had my own room as a kid. Used to hold a radio to my ear at night, real low, to hear the Detroit R&B station or to pick up WLAC in Nashville.

Up until high school I was goody two-shoes, straight ahead, no problems, no trouble. Until tenth grade I was on the honor roll and in all the advanced classes. Then I cut my first record, "The Lonely One," with the organ player in Del Shannon's band and completely lost interest in school.

I grew my hair long right when the Beatles came in. I liked the Stones better though, since I was really into R&B. The first record I ever bought was "Come Go With Me" by the Del Vikings, and shortly thereafter I bought "Tutti-Frutti" by Little Richard and "I Want You To Be My Girl" by Frankie Lyman & the Teenagers. I would go to Liberty Music on Liberty Street in Ann Arbor and you could listen to records in a booth there before you bought them. I tried to be cool and not blow my cover by, say, listening for a half hour and then splitting after buying one single, which cost forty-five cents—a lot of money for me.

The first two years of high school I had the most fun in my life. Even though we were poor, I had all this free time after school and on weekends to mess around. Even on school nights I'd stay out. My mom was real liberal. We'd drink Hamm's beer and cruise around in Barton Hills, which was the rich suburb. The first night I ever got drunk was on eight bottles of sloe gin; that stuff was murder! Smoking pot was totally unheard of until I was nineteen.

Socializing—getting drunk, fighting, making friends—ultimately centered on the grassers. The only serious fight I ever had, I got beaten up badly. I had been seeing the girl of a guy who was in the army; she was supposed to have been waiting for him. I knocked out the guy's front teeth with the only punch I landed—and it was a back-handed punch! Even though he was a lot bigger than me, he never wanted to fight me again. The core of our clique consisted of about ten guys, most of them from the rough West Side, but I lived on the East Side. A few of those guys met bad ends, landing on junk or in jail. A tough scene. The first sexual experience any of us had was when seven of us went down to Detroit to see a hooker, and that went badly. Nothing got going, if you follow me. I was fifteen.

The grassers, though, gave you a feeling of freedom, release, you were out of the city and away from all that intense pressure to survive by your wits.

MUSICIAN: *What was the most people you'd draw to a grasser?*

SEGER: Maybe two hundred. Many, many times we'd have fifty to a hundred cars in a row, covering *acres*. But you'd have to be a couple of acres off the road to avoid being discovered. The best place to have them was between Dexter Road and Interstate 94, 'cause it was real desolate state land in between farms. The nearer to the expressway, the noisier you could be, because the traffic would help drown it out. We would go till four or five in the morning, but the real heavies, like Richie and me, would go further.

If the grassers were over before sunup, we'd just get back in the car, get a famous California Burger at the drive-in and then drive till dawn. DRIVIN' TILL DAWN (sighs). Ooooh, man. That's why it felt so good riding with Bruce again. He was like one of those people. Back then, we'd be sitting in the car, tuned into WHRV, saying, "Listen to *this* song!!" really getting off on the music, which was such a big, big part of it. It was what got us all together. And, of course, it's what got Bruce and I together. Riding with him, I could have gone till dawn.

MUSICIAN: *You mean you could have gone the distance?*

SEGER: (smiling) Yep. We could have gone the distance. Easily. M

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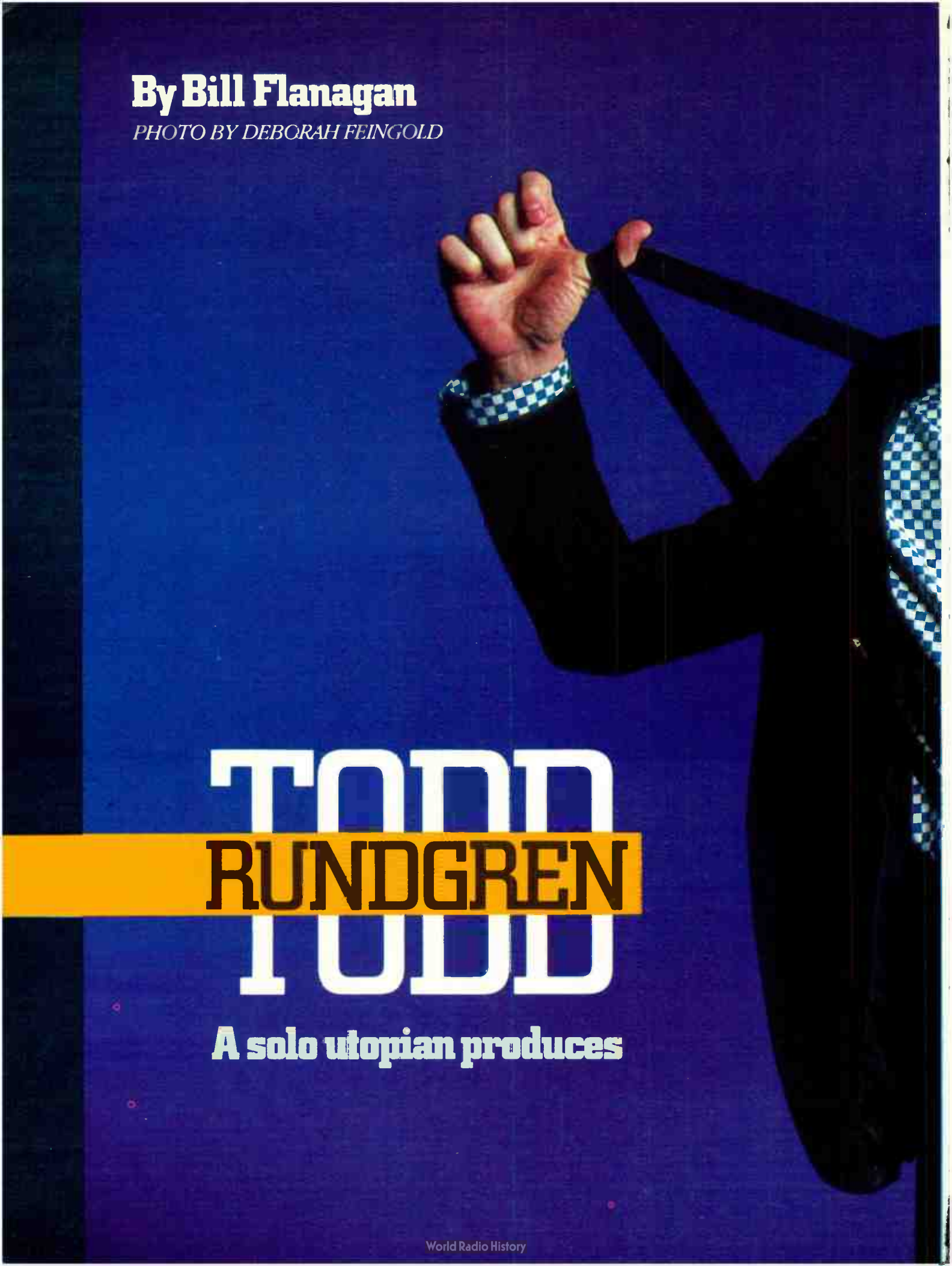

TODD RUNDGREN

A solo utopian produces

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When I start to record an album I get into a different mental environment," Todd Rundgren says. "I'm more attuned towards writing music than I am under other circumstances. I start to *dream* songs. I'll come up with songs when I'm awake as well, but a lot of the songs will be ones I dreamed and actually managed to remember when I woke up. A couple on the new album—'Bang The Drum All Day' and 'There Goes Your Baybay'—were dreams.

"If I've just had a dream about a song I'll go over it a couple of times in my head and try to pick out the chords. I have to try to figure it out that way before I go to the piano, 'cause if I hit the wrong chords the real sound will screw me up and start destroying the sounds in my head."

Somehow it is not surprising to learn that Rundgren keeps his subconscious working while he wrestles with Morpheus. No one has ever accused the lanky singer/producer/multi-instrumentalist of being lazy (in fact, chances are that no one has ever accused Rundgren of being less than the hardest working man in Woodstock, New York). As a record producer, Rundgren has recorded artists as diverse as Patti Smith and Meat Loaf, the Tubes and Shaun Cassidy, Hall & Oates and Grand Funk Railroad. His latest behind-the-boards suc-

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"I like to do my own records best, because I have all the alternatives at all times."

Rundgren counsels Psychedelic Fur Richard Butler on dynamics.

cess is the Psychedelic Furs' *Forever Now*.

As a member of the band Utopia, Todd has put out eight albums since 1974. In 1982 Utopia released *Swing To The Right*, a stinging indictment of the new conservatism, and *Utopia*, a collection of more traditional pop-rock. Whatever power he might wield behind the scenes, Rundgren is given no special billing with Utopia. He is—officially—one fourth of the group.

But no matter how quickly Utopia turns out records or how many LPs he produces for other artists, Todd Rundgren is best known as a solo artist, a man who not only writes and produces his records but often plays all the instruments. Rundgren's ability to turn out pop standards ("Hello, It's Me," "Can We Still Be Friends," "I Saw The Light") is only a bit less impressive than his willingness to ignore commercial considerations to follow artistic impulses. With outside productions paying the rent, Todd the artist feels no obligation to compromise his solo work. Thus the hit-filled *Something/Anything* (1972) was followed by *A Wizard, A True Star* (1973), an album of suites that mixed seven-minute songs with thirty-second fragments and random odd sounds. *Hermit Of Mink Hollow* (1978) found the artist back in the pop camp, while 1981's *Healing* was an album-length meditation on music's ability to soothe and to lead listeners inward. Like other muse-chasing iconoclasts (the Kinks and Neil Young come to mind), the same idiosyncrasies that frustrate his record company's attempts to turn Rundgren into a superstar endear him to a cult of hard-core fans.

Todd's latest album, *The Ever Popular Tortured Artist Effect*, is full of the sort of hook-filled pop his accountant must pray for. Yet Rundgren chose not to use this interview to hype his new product. Seated in a second floor lounge at Utopia Video, a Woodstock company he owns, Rundgren explained, "On *Healing* I set adventurous goals and came fairly close to them. It's always more exciting if you set out to do something experimental or adventurous, rather than doing something like my most recent album. A lot of people like the new record, but I am not as excited about it as some of my others. There was not as much of a challenge in making it. I knew that I was going to do a fairly simple, straightforward record. I guess that's what appeals to people. But in that sense there was something missing for me."

"*Healing* was a conscious attempt at psycho-acoustics. It came when people were getting into this idea that rock 'n' roll was the devil's music and the whole punk rock thing was designed to get people into an agitated state. I wanted to design music that would put people into an internalized state as opposed to an agitated state. At the same time, I wanted to avoid making muzak."

Asked if there is not a conflict between the successful hitmaker and the experimental artist, Todd shakes his head. "I'm aware that some people think there's a dichotomy," he says. "But to me it's just different aspects of the general eclecticism that I've always preferred in music. Most of my albums are like Broadway shows. All musicals are written with a variety of different material. They've got to have an up sort of dance number, a ballad, a novelty number. I want my records to be the same way, to have a variety of different aspects to them rather than concentrating on one thing all through the record.

"That's why after *Something/Anything*, I did *Wizard, A True Star*, a radically different album. With *Something/Anything* I had developed a songwriting formula that enabled me to crank those songs out in fifteen or twenty minutes. I got peeved at myself for doing it and, mostly, for not *recognizing* that I was doing it. After listening to the record I noticed that a lot of the material was not holding up for me. The reason was because I was not thinking enough about it. I was just cranking them out. So I knew I had to make a radical departure for the next album."

Of Funk and Furs

When rock stars talk about their artistic boldness, one often suspects they are making excuses for commercial failure. But Rundgren's devotion to musical exploration is particularly credible because his capacity for making hit records has been so firmly established. This, after all, is the guy who made Grand Funk a top forty band and personally bought Meat Loaf's contract from RCA at a time when no one in the industry saw any commercial potential in, in Rundgren's words, "this big guy singing melodramatic, Bruce Springsteen-epic kind of things."

It is when he talks about his productions of other artists that one gets a real glimpse of Todd's commercial sensibility. "Under normal circumstances, I don't produce singles for people," Rundgren asserts. "I produce albums which may contain singles. If I hear a song that I think is a single, I'll encourage them to do it in a way that doesn't *prevent* it from being a hit. But I can't guarantee that it will be. There are things you can do that will completely *destroy* the possibility that it will be a hit single, like being overlong or overly complex.

"Grand Funk wanted 'American Band' to be a hit single. I told the keyboard player to play that dinky little part, the *de-de-de-de* in the chorus. He didn't want to do it, but I think that was an aspect of the record that ultimately helped it become successful. I couldn't guarantee that that piano part would make 'American Band' a hit, but it simplified it and tied it down."

A more subtle contribution was Rundgren's sorting out of the Psychedelic Furs. The producer liked the material on the Furs' first two albums, but thought it was being lost as a result of what he calls the band's "banzai approach." "They had a lot of everything going on at the same time," Rundgren explains. "It became hard to distinguish the peaks and valleys in what they were trying to put across."

On *Forever Now* (Columbia), Rundgren encouraged the group, who had just trimmed away two of their six members, to

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spice up their record with splashes of horns, marimba, strings and other tonal colors. "I incorporated unusual sounds into the songs to give the album more variety," Todd recalls. "Part of the problem with their previous records, I thought, was this sort of homogenous din from one end to the other. I thought the songs were more interesting than that, and in order for people to be able to approach each one with a fresh head, you have to give each one a little different atmosphere—so people don't get numbed by the same sounds happening over and over.

"I remember one thing we had a bit of a tiff about. There's a break in the middle of the song 'Forever Now' with chimes in it. Richard Butler hated the chimes. Didn't want the chimes in at all. They had a guitar break in there.

"Ultimately I said, 'Richard, you hate the chimes? We can take them out in the mix.' Then we did the guitar break. When we mixed the song with the guitar break, it just didn't happen, just didn't sound right. So we wound up with a chime break instead of guitar in the middle of the song. It just set up the other sections of the song better to come down to that level and then come crashing back in again. That sounded better than crashing all the way through. But that was a little traumatic. Somebody had to give up his guitar solo in favor of a chime solo. Bands who are involved in every aspect of it sometimes can't tell what the effect of the song will be on someone who's never heard it before."

Another striking change Rundgren made in the Furs' sound was to bring Richard Butler's craggy vocals way up in the mix, while encouraging him to sing with a restrained intimacy. Although the band behind the singer may be bashing away, the listener always feels Butler is crooning in his ear. Todd is aware of this impression and credits it to psycho-acoustics. "The Pretenders have that same sound, where the voice is really up there," he observes. "Modern psycho-acoustics is a whole science." Todd laughs. "It's using the way the sound is constructed to give people the *impression* of something which, a lot of times, is not physically possible in the real world. At the same time, you want to do it in a way that isn't so distracting that it becomes a sonic anomaly, something you can't equate in your head.

"It's a question of constructing a space that allows the band to sound powerful *and* homogenous. You want the singer to be up front, but you don't want the acoustic spaces to be so far apart that it sounds like they're in different places. There's a lot of tricks—equalization and stuff—involved in creating that. Part of an individual producer's style is the kind of psycho-acoustic space they create in their records."

Patti & the Pragmatics

Two Rundgren productions that sounded quite different from his other work were Patti Smith's *Wave* and Meat Loaf's zillion dollar debut, *Bat Out Of Hell*. Asked if both LPs reflected a Jimmy Iovine influence (Iovine produced *Wave*'s predecessor, *Easter*, and did some remixing work with Meat Loaf), Rundgren agrees that those two artists did not fill his usual psycho-acoustic space, but offers a different explanation.

"Those were among the few cases where the act got involved in the mixing process," Todd sighs. "That's something I don't usually go for. I don't mind if they come in and approve the mixes, but to have five or six sets of hands in there is not, I think, the best way. I prefer to do the mixing alone and then have the act check it out. That's the way I did the Psychedelic Furs. It's impossible to have four people all telling you they want more of this and more of that until you eventually hit the top of the board. Every player always wants more of himself. They don't have a consciousness of the *gestalt*—only of their own thing.

"If an act has the material and the performance down, a producer can do almost nothing in the initial phases of making a record. He just makes occasional suggestions. The crucial make or break part of it is when you mix it all down, when you put it all together. A lot of times you can take stuff that doesn't sound too great and make it sound great by the way it's mixed. Just as you can gut something really good by mixing it poorly.

"To me, the most exciting part is when you've got it all in front of you and you start to put it all together. There's all the possible ways it can go and you're trying to get it into its most

First among equals; Utopia (from l. to r.): Roger Powell, Willie Wilcox, Rundgren and Kasim Sultan.

EBET ROBERTS

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ideal state. You don't have to deal with the day-to-day politics of making a record. You're just sort of like the painter at his canvas, the sculptor at his slab. For a producer that's the moment of ultimate artistry."

Rundgren recalls other headaches in the production politics of the Patti Smith and Meat Loaf sessions. Todd came into *Wave* figuring he was making the followup for an artist who'd just scored her first hit ("Because The Night"). He didn't know he'd be presiding over the Patti Smith Group's swan song.

"Patti sometimes gets herself into a stream of consciousness state," Todd observes, "like people in the Baptist Church. Whenever she did a record there had to be something of that in there. It might take several days of recording to capture the one moment when it actually worked. A lot of the trouble with *Wave* was getting her into that frame of mind, because her mind was somewhere else. She was about to take up residence with Fred Smith in Detroit and she really wasn't into the pressures of making an album. She just wanted to have a domestic kind of existence. It was a hardship for her to make that record. She knew it was the last one she was going to make and already had her mind on other things.

"It was hard for me as a producer because I think everyone else was more aware of this than I was. There was almost a reluctance to do the record since they knew it was the last one. They came in with almost no material ready. The band hadn't played together for months. Hadn't seen each other. They just came into the studio."

Rundgren says he never considered telling the Patti Smith Group what to play. "It would have amounted to musical miscegenation," he figures. "Our musical inclinations are obviously different. I couldn't go in there and tell them to play it this way or that way. It's their responsibility to come up with that part of it. It was not unpleasant but it was real difficult. Patti and I go back a long way together, so I couldn't deal with it as I might have if it were somebody else. I couldn't make demands of her as I might of somebody else."

What is impressive, listening to *Wave* today, is the gentleness with which Rundgren's production framed Smith's new vision of herself. Patti Smith the tough punk was suddenly revealing the childlike, innocent (and, in hindsight it's easy to say, the domestic) side of her personality. Rundgren may not have been able to shape Smith's sound, but he certainly allowed the artist to reveal a part of herself never seen before.

Producing Meat Loaf was an altogether different problem. According to Todd, he took on Meat Loaf (the singer) and Jim Steinman (the songwriter) when no one else would, and set about producing *Bat Out Of Hell* without even a record label. The pressure on the producer came from Steinman's insistence on detailing every small nuance of his compositions and arrangements. Given Todd's own artistic ego it is not hard to imagine the frustration this kibitzing caused.

"It was pressure," Rundgren nods. "Fortunately Steinman is a funny, good-natured guy. But it was annoying. What was more annoying was that they do a lot of things without telling you! Or they'd tell you something was going to happen and it wouldn't.

"They'd say, 'In two weeks we want to go and do such and such.' And it wouldn't happen. So I'd figure, 'Well, we'll get it together.' Then three months later, I'd find out they'd gone into some studio in New Jersey without telling me. I have a hard time working under those circumstances. They have an attitude that is, to some degree, user-ous. They use you when it's convenient, and when it's not convenient they'll just go off and use somebody else and won't even tell you."

Pragmatic, huh? "Yeah," Todd sighs. "It's a pragmatism that doesn't take into account even professional courtesy. It's just setting an objective without even considering what you have to go through to get there."

Perhaps the strangest tale of Steinman and Meat Loaf's pragmatism is this one: Rundgren and Steinman recorded all the instrumental tracks for what was to become the second Meat Loaf album while Mr. Loaf himself was touring. When the singer returned, he discovered, to everone's horror, that the road had run his voice so ragged he couldn't sing the new songs. The solution: Steinman (aided by session vocalists) sang the songs himself and the record was released as a Jim Steinman album.

Couldn't the album have been modified to include Meat Loaf? "For Steinman to even change a *key* is almost sacrilegious," Rundgren laughs. "He has visions down to the last detail of how he wants a song to be. A lot of the problem was that the songs on the first album were based on the highest note that Meat Loaf could sing. The rest of the song would pyramid down from there. But it was all designed to climax at some point at that highest note.

"So he did the same thing for the second album and in some cases, I think, even tried to go *higher*. And when Meat Loaf couldn't hit the climactic note, it screwed everything up. I think that rather than go back and rebuild the things from the ground up so that they climaxed at a different note, he just decided to do it himself."

What could be worse than producing an artist of such fanatical self-assurance? According to Rundgren, an artist with too little. "The biggest problem in producing," he offers, "is when the artist isn't strong enough to maintain their own musical personality. So it resembled *me* too much. The album I produced that got the most flak for that was *Remote Control* by the Tubes. There was nothing wrong with that record as a record. Everyone loved it. But it reflected *too* much of my influence."

Down the Up Staircase

Given the headaches of producing other artists, it's no wonder Todd relishes his solo ventures.

"Nobody's allowed to stop by when I'm making a solo record," the artist admits. "Unless I'm using an engineer. It's a personal thing for me. I don't like people spectating when I'm making my records.

"I like to do my own records best because I have all the alternatives at all times. It's not a question of dealing with someone else's alternatives or someone else's capabilities. You may want someone to do such and such a thing and they can't or won't do it. But I know what *I'm* capable of doing and within that realm I can have a lot of alternatives to choose from. That's the exciting part—actually making those choices, building something out of nothing, from a blank reel of tape."

How does he begin a solo recording? Does he start with a click track? "If there's going to be drums, you need some kind of rhythmic reference," Todd replies. "Nowadays I usually use a click track. I remember before *Something/Anything* I used to play the piano first and then add everything to that. That the piano would go in and out of time would be irrelevant.

"By the time I got to *Something/Anything*, I was starting with the drums. But not to a click track. I couldn't follow a click track and play drums at the same time. So I'd sing the song in my head and play the drums to *nothing*. Just play a whole drum part—all the breaks and everything—and lay on all the instruments after.

"It's especially difficult when you work by yourself. The way my studio's constructed, I have to run up and down stairs to turn the machine on and off every time I blow it. I'll get into the first couple of bars, screw it up, stop, and start all over again. This goes on for hours sometimes."

"I very rarely go in with completed songs. I have musical ideas that evolve interactively with the recording process. For me, just to go through that process is very exciting. I don't really finish writing the songs until after the tracks are all done. The vocals are the last thing I do on my own records, so almost everything I write has been recorded. I don't have songs just lying around."

Rundgren's solo records differ from those of other multi-instrumentalists playing all their own parts in that they are full of looseness and warmth. According to Todd, this is no accident: "I think it's because I try to approach all the instru-

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ments as a performer on the instrument rather than as a sideman for myself. I want to deliver something that resembles a performance. A lot of times the actual precision is secondary to that performance aspect."

Rundgren's lyrics reveal an evolution in his attitude toward women, from early songs like "Slut" or "We Gotta Get You A Woman" ("They may be stupid but they sure are fun") to recent work like "From The Neck On Up." But Todd underplays the sexist content of his early work: "'Slut' was a joke; it wasn't about women in general, it was specific. I mean, who has never met a slut? What woman hasn't met a woman she considers a slut? And in the same way, what man hasn't met a man he considers a womanizing asshole? It's the same thing—it's the female equivalent of a womanizer.

"In the case of 'We Gotta Get You A Woman,' a lot of people misinterpreted the line about being stupid by taking it out of context. The line was 'talk about *things*, they may be stupid....' What was stupid was the things; it was not intimating that women were stupid, but that certain things you get hung up on are stupid. That's something people always overlook, for some reason.

"I don't think I ever had a particularly sexist attitude, but I did at a certain point stop writing songs that were traditional love songs. I realized I was just doing that because that was what everybody did. Subsequently, I hardly ever write songs about male-female relationships. It's not something that's foremost in my mind. Most love songs are not love songs; they're sex songs. They're all about sexual and possessive aspects of male-female relationships, things that have more to do with sex than love. In fact, in many songs, it's interchangeable. 'Baby, I love you' is often really, 'Baby I want to screw you.' It doesn't mean 'I want to take responsibility for a long-term relationship with you;' it means, 'Baby, I love your body.' I don't write songs like that any more."

Utopian Democracy

Well, there's the yin and yang of it, rock fans. A top pop producer dealing with the technical, financial and personal complications of commercial record making juxtaposed against the introspective artist locked in his hideaway, chasing inspiration, the painter at his canvas, the sculptor at his slab. It would be a nice, even balance, a perfect journalistic tableau—if Todd didn't complicate things by his involvement in Utopia.

That group began as an oversized touring ensemble that gave Rundgren a lot of flash and smoke behind which to develop his unhoned skills as a showman and vocalist. As those skills improved, Utopia evolved into something more than T.R.'s Mahavishnu Mad Dogs & Englishmen. The band settled as a quartet, with Todd playing guitar, bassist Kasim Sultan, drummer Willie Wilcox and Roger Powell on keyboards.

The group's compositions are credited to Utopia, and Rundgren maintains that the band enjoys something close to democracy. Still, there has never been much doubt that Todd stands as first among equals. "I write Utopia's lyrics," Rundgren readily admits, "because I write lyrics more than anyone else. That's the way the band is—you do whatever you're qualified to do. Just because we have this quasi-democratic situation, you don't hold back and make somebody who can't do it do it. I have the greatest experience producing records, so I produce the records. I have the greatest facility for writing lyrics so I write the lyrics."

Rundgren then speaks eloquently of how important it is that a musician be able to interact with other musicians in an ensemble. But that fails to explain why he is a *member* of Utopia instead of simply an artist with a regular backup group.

"I don't want the responsibility of supporting a band personally," he replies. "If I decide I don't want to go out on the road for a year, I don't want to have to support everybody for that year. It's an unnecessary responsibility. The band has an evenly divided responsibility for its own support, which is a healthy thing. Everybody has some vested interest in the livelihood of the band, rather than a feeling that they're being supported, that they don't have to put anything extra out."

Utopia's problem of existing in Todd Rundgren's shadow recently came to a head when Bearsville Records refused to release *Swing To The Right* for a year and a half. By rejecting Utopia product, Bearsville kept extending Todd's obligation to the label (which would otherwise expire after *Swing*)—an obligation Rundgren maintains the label wanted fulfilled with Todd's solo work.

Finally Rundgren agreed to do two extra solo LPs for Bearsville (*Tortured Artist Effect* is the first) in exchange for finally releasing *Swing To The Right* and releasing Utopia from the label. The band then signed to Network Records and issed the three-sided *Utopia*. Rundgren will probably also join Network as a solo artist after giving Bearsville that last album.

Utopia the band is also a reflection of Rundgren's utopian philosophy: a sort of progressive humanism. "You want science to be able to solve people's problems," Todd explains, "you want *people* to be able to solve people's problems. You want war to disappear. You want poverty and hunger and disease to disappear. All that amounts to so-called utopia. Whether it'll ever happen is a moot point. If you don't have the *ideal*, then you are running around in circles, just grabbing at whatever is the most immediately convenient thing. You have to have that ideal in order to keep evolving—elevating to some degree."

Rundgren is aware there is a tension—if not a contradiction—between his dual philosophies. "The problem is that I've got these two things," he admits. "I've got Utopia, which is a communal thing, but at the same time I don't want to give up—and I don't think anybody else should give up—individual options. The individual has a responsibility to develop a philosophy that is truly personal: that reflects his or her own circumstances and evolution. People should not buy someone else's pre-fab religion.

"It's the dual responsibility people have in life," Rundgren adds slowly. "Unless you're a hermit and live completely alone, you have the responsibility of working things out with other people." He leans forward in his chair. "But at the same time you have the responsibility of working things out with yourself."

In closing, did Todd have any advice for up-and-coming musicians? "A lot of where I am is obstinacy and aggressiveness and paranoia and other weird things that you don't want to recommend that people have," Rundgren replies pensively. "It's just a question of the way you are. It all came together in me in this weird way. I don't want people to try to be where I am, because there's no guarantee that that's necessarily good for anybody."

The Wizard's Wands

"Starting with the guitar, I have most recently been playing a Fender Telecaster custom with some alterations. The pickups have been waxed and a special phasing switch added to the bass pickup—which was a little *too* bass-y. The machines and bridge were changed; I got a Schecter bridge.

"I've also been using, in recording, an Ovation 12-string with the special stereo pickup that splits so the even and odd strings are on either side of the stereo.

"On record I've been using an old Prophet 5. I recently got a Synergy keyboard which I haven't yet used on a record.

"I use whatever drums are lying around. We have some Ludwigs and some Sonars and maybe some others. I don't pay much attention to the drums. Cymbals are usually Zildjian because Willie (Wilcox of Utopia) has a deal with Zildjian. I use a LinnDrum machine in recording a lot.

"I use an old Hoffner violin bass. It has a real evenly tempered sound and it's very easy to play. If you have to play something fast it's more like a guitar than a bass. The neck is real narrow and the action is easy. I also use synthesized bass a lot.

"If they want to know anything else, tell 'em they have to listen to the records and guess."

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RANDY NEWMAN'S CRASS MENAGERIE

Stalking the Beast of Ignorance

"My characters aren't as intelligent as the audience," Randy Newman observes. "Anyone listening ought to recognize that they're better, more decent people than the ones I write about. And like anybody else, I like to think I'm *better* than other people."

Newman imparts his intellectual superiority theory as though it were his dirty little secret. And indeed, it is one of many paradoxes crucial to his art. A liberal-minded non-religious Jew, he uses racial epithets. A classically trained musician, he'd as soon emulate Fats Domino as Aaron Copeland. An erudite, voracious reader, he creates characters who are mostly unschooled common people. An intellectual in a non-intellectual field, a moralist in a philistine, commercial milieu, Newman presumes to be a cranky, idiosyncratic American conscience. While his lyrics twit us for our sins, his finest music celebrates our collective spirit in gorgeous melodies and arrangements that interweave rock 'n' roll with echoes of Stephen Foster.

In all of American pop there is probably no major songwriter whose sensibility is more divided, who seems condemned to mull aloud fundamental issues of race, culture, class and religion in America, never certain that his intentions are understood, or even that he fully understands them himself.

"It sure is weird how I tread the line between compassion and superciliousness, and I worry about it a lot," he muses. Indeed, there are those who are unwilling to separate Newman's voice from the voices of his characters and insist on being offended by his songs. The narrator of Newman's notorious "Rednecks," from *Good Old Boys*, 1974's song cycle about the American South, tosses all sorts of epithets, including "nigger." Some critics claimed that a white songwriter's use of the word, even in an ironic context, was inescapably racist.

In Newman's last two albums, the gap between him and his characters has narrowed, as he's turned his attention more towards America's

BY STEPHEN HOLDEN

SAM EMERSON

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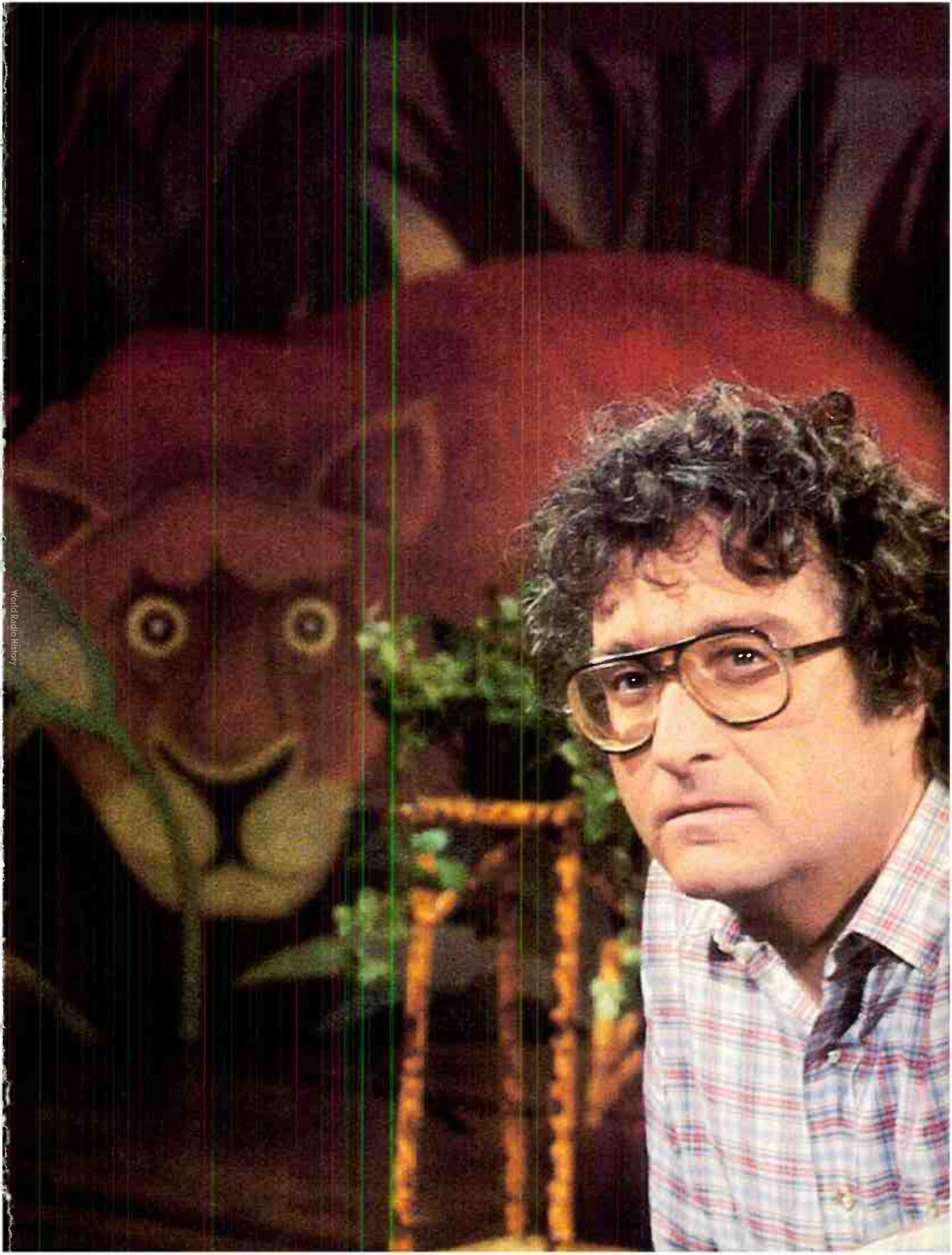

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present than its past, forsaking mythic distance for disturbing immediacy. Newman's newest dramatic monologues are smug and unpleasant in their tone and their characters morally obtuse. Do the complacent self-justifications of these small-minded bigots reflect Newman's underlying misanthropy?

Newman hopes not, although he agrees that the lines between author and character are not always clear. "I see 'em, I know what they look like. Of course, you can't do a whole person in three minutes, but in the best songs I can see what everything looks like. It's generally sort of me, but just more ignorant."

That Randy Newman should admit to even a passing resemblance to the warped denizens of his songbook comes as some surprise. These characters range from God, portrayed as sneering and careless in the atheistic "God's Song," to a steady stream of losers, freaks, jerks and slobs from the lower strata of American life. What could this tanned, craggy-faced, young (thirty-nine), professorial type lounging in his manager's L.A. office discussing his career in careful, critical terms have in common with Davy the Fat Boy, the star of an *Elephant Man*-like saga of carnival exploitation on Newman's fourteen-year-old debut album, or the doomed junkie couple in "Same Girl" on his brilliant new album, *Trouble In Paradise*? What links Newman with poor sharecroppers in Huey Long's Louisiana and corporate coke fiends in contemporary Bel Air? The only clue lies in his voice, a drawling, slangy vernacular that's somewhat racially ambiguous, a cross between a modern-day Mark Twain, a singing Jewish comic and a Southern black. No matter how vicious or down-and-out his characters are, Newman's voice perfectly expresses their point of view.

> *"In my best songs, I see my characters, I know what they look like. They're generally sort of me, but just more ignorant."*

Trouble In Paradise focuses Newman's storytelling skills on some new urban types, the people of L.A., Miami and Capetown—cities exuding the lazy, golden aura of a picture postcard fantasy. The LP's opening song, "I Love L.A." is in fact a paean to his hometown. Dismissing New York and Chicago as places where people dress like monkeys, Newman goes on to praise L.A. for its redheaded women and "born to ride" car culture, among other virtues.

But being a Randy Newman song, "I Love L.A." isn't all it appears to be. As the singer enthusiastically calls out the names of city thoroughfares like Century Boulevard, Victory Boulevard, Santa Monica Boulevard and Sixth Street, the approving chorus that responds, "We love it," sounds just a little too gung-ho for comfort.

"Have you ever seen those streets?" Newman explains with a chuckle, "they're all pretty nondescript."

Still, the chamber of commerce pitch man in "I Love L.A." is one of the album's milder characters. His more affluent Beverly Hills neighbor, who narrates "My Life Is Good," is more abrasively chauvinistic. When a teacher at the expensive private school his oldest attends tells him his son is an uncontrollable bully, he blocks out the information and starts to boast of his friendship with Bruce Springsteen. That very morning in the Bel Air Hotel, he claims, Springsteen offered to let him "be the Boss for a while."

Probably the album's most provocative character is the racist Afrikaner of "Christmas In Capetown." Shacked up with an English girl who needles him about apartheid, he tells her not to talk about things she doesn't understand. Finally exasperated, he explodes, "What are we gonna do, blow up the whole damn country?" The narrator's flagrant use of the word "nigger" makes the song a first cousin to "Rednecks," from Newman's *Good Old Boys*.

"Christmas In Capetown" is packed with details that suggest Newman researched the song on location: "You know my little brother babe/ Well, he works out at the diamond mine/ I drove him out there at five this mornin'/ The niggers were waitin' in a big long line/ You know those big old lunch pails they carry, man/ With a picture of *Star Wars* painted on the side/ They were starin' at us real hard with their big ugly yellow eyes...."

In fact, Newman's never been to South Africa. "I've read a couple of Nadine Gordimer books and seen some surfing movies from there," he says. "But I have no idea if the blacks have *Star Wars* painted on their lunch pails. A lot of the best stuff I've written has been about towns I don't know much about," he continues. "But I don't care if the details in my songs aren't accurate. In 'The Story Of A Rock And Roll Band,' which was supposedly about ELO, I got the group's history all wrong. But that was part of the point. What bothers me the most about 'Capetown' is that I don't have an Anglicized accent like a real South African. It would have been better performed by someone like Sting," he sneers.

Has Newman got something against Sting?

"It's hero stuff, bouncing around and looking pretty. I'm not into heroes," Newman grumbles. His jab at the Springsteen mystique at the end of "My Life Is Good" is also an expression of his antiheroic bias, and he allows that Ernie Watts' parody of Clarence Clemons is "really vicious." Newman is, however, a big admirer of Springsteen's album, *Nebraska*. "I'd never send up someone I really hated," he says. "I like some of ELO's music, too."

Newman's antiheroic outlook goes along with his intolerance for bigotry, snobbery and false pride, subjects he comes back to again and again. The narrator of "Mikey" is an aging hippie from San Francisco's North Beach who equates the influx of "spades, Mexicans and Chinamen" into the neighborhood with the popularity of techno-pop. "Whatever happened to the old songs, Mikey?/ Like the 'Duke of Earl'?" he whines.

Newman readily admits that there's something of himself in this character. "I've seen unreconstructed rock 'n' rollers in my age group who don't want to hear the Human League," he says. "And even though I admire all that fancy synthesized stuff and will do some of it, I have to admit that I like the old songs better."

A continual thorn in Newman's side is the fact that he's likely to be misinterpreted. Even worse, some songs people simply don't get. The most perplexing example was "Mr. Sheep," on his last album, *Born Again*. Adopting a savage sneer, Newman in this song addressed a modern corporate lackey as though he were some sort of puppet, calling him a jerk, ordering him to dance, and finally "baaaing" in his face.

"Everyone said I was picking on an easy target and making fun of the guy with the briefcase," Newman laments. "But I was really making fun of the narrator's whining, superior Nazi kind of voice."

Newman is also distressed that no one seemed to get "Half A Man," in which a trucker "catches" homosexuality from the drag queen he's been menacing with a tire iron. Then there was "Short People," Newman's one and only bona fide hit of four years ago. A hilariously ironic ditty detailing the alleged faults of people of less than average height, it managed to offend a good many people even though its irony was as pointed as it's ever been in a Randy Newman song.

"I don't know why, but bigotry has always bothered me more than war or pollution or anything else," Newman says. "Nowadays you hear racist remarks out here that you'd never hear before—about how something's wrong with the Mexicans and

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they're taking over. But even when the racial situation was supposed to be more hopeful, there was never much happening. I think racism is probably an insoluble problem."

Shy and cross-eyed, Newman will admit that he grew up feeling like an outsider, in a musical clan of Hollywood soundtrack composer-conductors and related movie people. His father Irving is a successful physician who used to play jazz clarinet and who dabbled in pop songwriting. But the clan patriarch, and the biggest influence on Newman's music was Alfred Newman, who died in 1970, having won nine Academy Awards for movie scores like *The King and I*, *All About Eve* and *Alexander's Ragtime Band*.

"Al was the best there ever was in the field, there's no doubt in my mind," Newman says of his uncle. "He and Nino Rota and Johnny Williams made movie scoring an art form. When one of my cousins got married not long ago, they played Mendelssohn and then something of Al's from *The Robe*, and objectively it held up.

"Like my uncle, I've got a weakness for Viennese music—for Bruckner, Mahler and some of Strauss," Newman says. "I like the waltzes from 'Der Rosenkavalier,' the slow movement of Mahler's Ninth Symphony, and some of Alban Berg."

Newman is as suspicious of French music as he is drawn to the German-Austrian tradition. "Schoenberg once said that either what the French do is music, or what we Germans do is music, but not both," Newman declares. "I like some of Ravel, but generally I don't like all this wisping around. I don't like it in Debussy, and I don't like it in Al Green or Smokey Robinson. With all those harmonic vagaries, the music wanders all over the goddamn place."

The interaction between European symphonic tradition and old time movie music on the one hand, and rock 'n' roll on the other, gives Newman's music a stylish breadth that's unmatched by any other contemporary songwriter. The influence of the former was especially prevalent on Newman's 1968 debut album, in which the brooding orchestrations for "Cowboy," "I Think It's Going To Rain Today," "Love Story" and "Davy The Fat Boy" suggested an American Mahler or Strauss.

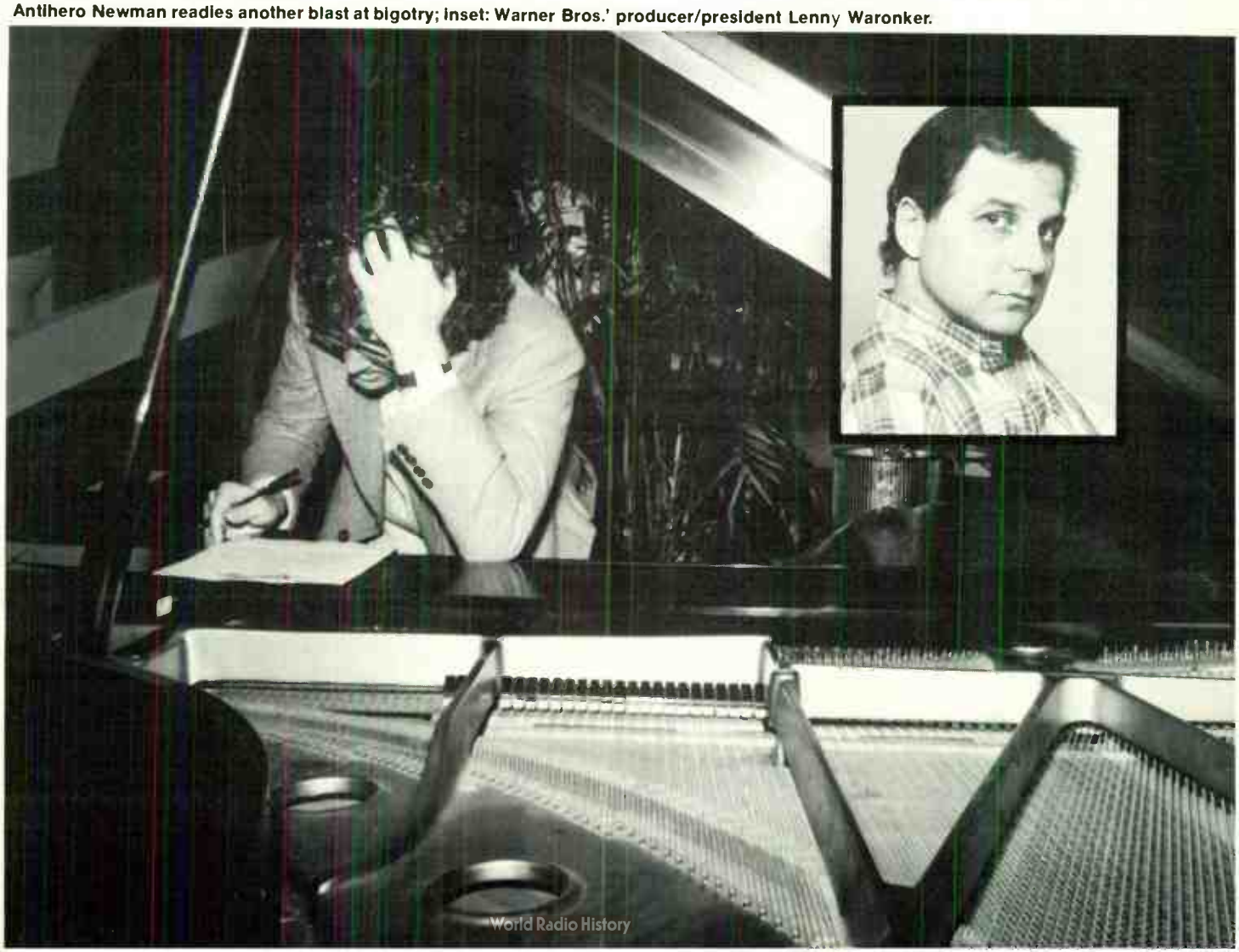
But on his second album, *Twelve Songs*, Newman made a complete about-face, plunging headlong into New Orleans-style rock 'n' roll. The most obvious influence, vocally and pianistically, was Fats Domino. Between the ages of two and twelve, Newman's family used to visit New Orleans in the summers, and the music soaked in.

"I've never figured out why I liked it so much," Newman says. "At one point I'd collected all the singles by guys like Ernie K. Doe and 'Frogman' Henry. But Fats Domino was always my favorite. I liked the way he played, his basic chord changes and his soft New Orleans accent."

Coming from such a musical clan, it was almost a foregone conclusion that Newman should make a career for himself in music, and by the time he started writing songs, at the age of fifteen, he had studied both piano and composition. His closest friend, from early boyhood to the present, has been Lenny Waronker, who has produced all eight of his albums, plus his soundtrack for the movie *Ragtime*.

Newman's and Waronker's families were close. Before founding Liberty Records—the small independent label that recorded Julie London and Eddie Cochran, among others—Si Waronker, Lenny's father, had worked under Randy's uncle Alfred in the 20th Century Fox studio orchestra. Randy's first songwriting job in the early 60s was with Metric Music, a publishing company owned by Liberty. By 1963 his career in the pop world had blossomed to the point that he cut a single, "Golden Gridiron Boy," for Dot Records. A lachrymose teen lament about a player in a high school band who watches his

Antihero Newman readies another blast at bigotry; inset: Warner Bros.' producer/president Lenny Waronker.



DEBBIE LEAVITT/PIX INSET—HOWARD ROSENBERG

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DEBBIE LEAVITT/PIX

Newman hard at work honing his morally obtuse L.A. smile.

girl chase after the high school hero, the song was an early, crude prototype in Newman's song literature of losers and outsiders. At this period in his life, Newman was studying composition at U.C.L.A. He eventually dropped out, a move he regrets since it left him deficient in counterpoint. Among his peers, Newman's idol in those days was Carole King. "She was the best songwriter of the time," Newman emphasizes. "Not just the best at what she did, but the *best*, period."

Newman began to have some minor successes with the Fleetwoods' "They Tell Me It's Summer," and covers by the O'Jays, Jerry Butler and Gene Pitney, among others. The streak of the bizarre that had always lurked behind his simplest lyrics became more pronounced in songs like "The Biggest Night Of Her Life," "The Debutante's Ball" and "Mama Told Me Not To Come." The latter, a naive kid's fractured impressions of a wild party, later became a number one hit for Three Dog Night. Newman also wrote a series of what he calls "hook songs" that did well in England. Two of them—"Just One Smile" and "I Don't Want To Hear It Anymore"—are highlights of Dusty Springfield's classic 1969 album, *Dusty In Memphis*.

Newman's career received a big boost from two prestigious cover versions of important songs—"I Think It's Going To Rain Today" by Judy Collins, and "Simon Smith And The Amazing Dancing Bear," which became a surprise English hit for Alan Price.

From their earliest days in the pop music business, the careers of Randy Newman and Lenny Waronker have been so inextricably linked that one wonders how far either of them would have progressed without the support and the encouragement of the other. Waronker, who's two years Newman's senior, has generally played the stabilizing older brother role in the relationship. And from the early 60s, he was Newman's biggest champion.

"When I was nineteen, I was working for Liberty Records in New York as a promotion man, and I was already convinced that Randy was the greatest," Waronker recalls. "My idols then were Leiber & Stoller. I met some people who knew Jerry Leiber and convinced Randy to come to New York to play him some of his songs. I was touting Randy like crazy and I remember that going up in the elevator, I was petrified. Randy played Leiber some tunes, and he was impressed. Though nothing specific came of it, it was a terrific boost, and when we left we were five feet off the ground."

Newman and Waronker have also maintained a playful adversary relationship that works for both of them as an ongoing aesthetic critique.

"Randy blames me for his inability to write a really emotional kind of love song, since neither one of us is particularly sentimental on the surface," says Waronker. "He claims that whenever he starts to get sentimental, I put it down."

"I don't think Lenny appreciated Billy Joel's 'Just The Way You Are,' Newman explains, "whereas I think it's pretty good except for the 'don't like clever conversation' part." Waronker, with his producer's ear, is a great admirer of the Police. Along with Elvis Presley, they're one of the only two acts he would have liked to produce.

"Since I'm the only person I know who doesn't dig the Police, I know they *must* be good," Newman admits.

Predictably, Newman is much more attuned to lyrics than is Waronker. He admires Neil Young for his ability to write about nature and Bob Dylan for his songs about women. He much prefers Elvis Costello's singing ("he's a great singer") to his lyrics and listens to Prince and Devo "seriously." Among the great pre-rock songwriters, both Newman and Waronker agree on George Gershwin as the premier pop melodist. The pre-rock lyricist Newman most admires is Lorenz Hart. And while he didn't care for *Sweeney Todd*, Newman ranks Stephen Sondheim as one of the three or four top lyricists of all time.

Newman, who has never written for the theater before, recently finished a rough first draft of a possible Broadway musical, which *Saturday Night Live*'s Lorne Michaels is interested in producing.

"It's a version of *Faust*, with none of the dignity and profundity of the original," Newman admits. "Faust is a kid at Notre Dame, and God and the devil make their usual bet. My heaven is sort of a Hawaiian-style tropical paradise. If the devil wins the bet, he gets to move back up there and build his palace of filth. Needless to say, God wants to win, and so He cheats."

After running Warner Bros.' A&R department for more than a decade, Lenny Waronker was recently named president of the label. It was the first time since the 1960s that a major record company appointed a creative talent rather than a businessman to the presidency.

Waronker scarcely fits the image of the modern record executive as a colorful, egotistical vulgarian. Soft-spoken, terse and utterly lacking in pretensions, he talks about records in the cool analytical tone of a craftsman who is immune to hype. Waronker joined the label's A&R staff in 1966 and had his first hit the following year with Harpers Bizarre's version of "The 59th Street Bridge Song." Among the artists Waronker has produced or co-produced are Gordon Lightfoot, Arlo Guthrie, Maria Muldaur, Ry Cooder, James Taylor, Michael McDonald and Rickie Lee Jones. But far and away his most important artistic association has been with Randy Newman. It was Waronker's records with Newman that impelled Rickie Lee Jones to seek him out as the ideal producer of her music.

Newman's Warner Bros. debut in 1968 was only Waronker's third production for the label, following Harpers Bizarre and Van Dyke Parks' critically acclaimed *Song Cycle*. The Newman-Waronker collaboration continued with *Twelve Songs* (1970), *Randy Newman/Live* (1971) and reached a peak in 1972 with *Sail Away*.

Sail Away didn't sell very well, but its critical impact furthered the possibility that singer/songwriters like Newman were ushering in a new golden age of pop. The successes of John Lennon's and Paul Simon's early solo albums, Joni Mitchell's *Blue* and *For The Roses*, Carole King's *Tapestry* and Jackson Browne's debut suggested that the matured rock generation would produce a pop-rock equivalent of the Gershwin-Porter-Rodgers-Berlin-Kern tradition, in which the central artifact wasn't the song but the record album.

"It didn't go that way, did it?" Newman says, with a sigh. "I could have kept doing stuff like 'Davy The Fat Boy' and 'Sail

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Away,' and Joni Mitchell could have kept doing 'Blue.' But rock 'n' roll has got the power of the beat. There's nothing cerebral about that power. Rock is only five percent literature. That's why I've been so unsuccessful."

Lenny Waronker sees the early 70s heyday of the singer/songwriter from a different, but no less nostalgic perspective. "Those were crazy days," he recalls. "There was a sense that you couldn't or shouldn't do anything that had been done before. A lot of people got caught up in it, but nobody talked about it. There was no fear of breaking the rules, no concern about sales. You just didn't think about those things. And then it stopped and became a business."

Newman followed up *Sail Away* with the equally prestigious but commercially unsuccessful *Good Old Boys* in 1974. Three years later came *Little Criminals*, with its freak hit, "Short People." Newman's music, which had tilted toward the symphonic on *Good Old Boys*, began shifting back toward rock on *Little Criminals*. Released in 1980, the still more rock-oriented album, *Born Again*, received the most tepid reviews of any Newman record.

Newman acknowledges that *Born Again* was a rough album to make and that it was possibly too mean-spirited. But both he and Waronker believe that its mean-spiritedness was and still is an accurate reflection of the times. And while Newman can pick on a hundred little points to criticize in *Trouble In Paradise*, he and Waronker both feel that it's their strongest collaboration since *Sail Away*. With its expanded geography that runs from South Africa to Vietnam to Miami and with songs like "Same Girl" and "Real Emotional Girl" that balance the jokes with a stabbing pathos, the album is larger in its scale and its ambition.

In fact, *Trouble In Paradise* has something of the aura of a swan song. Now that Waronker will be spending most of his time in executive suites and hardly any time in what he calls "the trenches" of the recording studio, is this most distinguished collaboration. which flouts industry formulas, nearing its end?

"As a producer, I'll try to do one project a year, probably with Randy," Waronker says. "I have a real commitment. Randy was the first person I talked to about making this move when it was offered, and his response was that I must do it."

One of the most impressive accomplishments of *Trouble In Paradise* is the way Newman and Waronker have pooled their finely tuned literary and aural sensibilities to create musical soundtrack-portraits in which the arrangements add details that the lyrics merely imply. The steamy lounge ambience of "Miami" enhances the narrator's aura of sleazy, sponging hedonism. An amusingly skewed parody of Eurodisco on "Mikey's" amplifies the narrator's sense of a world tainted by cheap music and undesirable people. The Randy Newman-Paul Simon duet, "The Blues," uses Simon's little-boy-lost pathos against itself. "'The Blues,'" explains Newman, is about "that kind of maudlin songwriter ethic. It was inspired by this kid on *Fame* who's always so miserable and sensitive." And the narrator of "I'm Different," who insists that he's a special and probably a better person than ordinary mortals, is seconded by a dumb girlie chorus that emphasizes the cretinism of the two-chord melody.

Not the least of the album's triumphs is in the inclusion of an honest-to-goodness love song called "Real Emotional Girl."

"I didn't mean it to be peaches and cream," Newman protests. "But that's the way people take it. The guy is supposed to be relating confidences that he shouldn't talk about. But people think he's simply trying to figure the girl out. Originally I had the lines, 'She turns on easy/ It's like a hurricane,' as 'She *comes* real easy,' but absolutely everyone was offended."

Newman shrugs, baffled, but not displeased. "You know, one reason I got so successful in Europe is that they think my songs are anti-American. But I like Americans," he confides.

"You'll ride on a plane and sit next to someone, and the odds are they'll be interesting to talk to. I don't have a jaundiced, cynical view of people at all, and I never have. I write about America, but it's too big for me. Maybe I'm not smart enough to say what I think about it." Ⓜ

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For more information contact RolandCorpUS, 2401 Saybrook Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90040.

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Maximum Output Level	Balanced +24 dBm max. Unbalanced +20 dBm/0 dBm (Level Selector at 0 dBm/−20 dBm)
Load Impedance	Balanced: over 600Ω Unbalanced: over 10 kΩ
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80 MISSING PERSONS

Three Zappa alumnae trade pure technique for seasoned techno-pop and thereby avoid starvation. Freff joins Missing Persons on the road for some conversation and some T&A (technicalities and analysis, that is).

P L A Y E R S

84 NEIL GERALDO

A study in six-string unpredictability, one of AOR's most inventive guitarists will do *anything* for his singer/spouse Pat Benatar.

P R O D U C I N G

85 ROGER BECHIRIAN

The engineer/producer of Elvis Costello, Nick Lowe, Dave Edmunds, Squeeze, Lene Lovich and other British new music heavyweights details the studio essentials of his sonic staccato assault, a bright, urgent crunch in which punk meets pop.

P L A Y E R S

86 STEVE DOUGLAS

A list of this sax session ace's past employers would include rock's best, from Presley to Spector to Dylan. A reedy look behind the greatest hits of the 60s.

I N S T R U C T I O N

87 ARLEN ROTH

A distinguished guitarist and, through his extensive *Hot Licks* program, an instructor to thousands, Arlen Roth proves that teaching is a learning experience.

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MISSING PERSONS

BY FREFF

I read the music papers. I know what's happening, right?

Wrong.

Case in point, a band from Los Angeles called Missing Persons. Some cynical writers have called it this way: three ex-Zappa sidemen sell out, go "Holly-wave," perform music calculated to be Commercial (and child's play next to their past efforts), put a sexy woman in outrageous costumes up front, and coast to stardom by pandering to the tastes (or lack thereof) of America's adolescent multitudes. Right?

Wrong.

...I mean, the *bones* are there. There are three ex-Zappa sidemen—drummer Terry Bozzio, guitarist Warren Cuccurullo and bassist Patrick O'Hearn, now teamed up with keyboardist Chuck Wild. And there is Dale Bozzio, Terry's wife, who has been known to appear onstage in industrial plastic bras and miniskirts made out of old 45s. And the music they play isn't as esoteric as some of their past work. But those are just facts, not truth. Truth is what a collection of facts actually *means*...and by that standard, not much of what has been written about Missing Persons is true.

Actually, these people have never prostituted themselves or their music, have paid their dues, and now, after the most successful D.I.Y. approach since the Police, are facing harder work than ever before. Seeing Missing

GLEN WEXLER

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Front: Dafe & Terry Bozzio; back (l. to r.): Chuck Wild, Patrick O'Hearn & Warren Cuccurullo.

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Persons in concert confirms the fact that they're making music that they *want* to make, without pandering or playing by anyone else's rules. Consider the stretched-out and offbeat rhythms of "U.S. Drag," an observation of suburban America inspired by William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*; Warren Cuccurullo's guitar, roaring, weaving, singing its way through the changes of "Windows"; Dale Bozzio toying with the audience's minds (and no denying it, their libidos, but what's rock 'n' roll without a sexual side?), as she shifts from crazy and lost in "No Way Out" to openly raunchy in "I Like Boys"; Chuck Wild's perfect choice of tone colors in his keyboard parts; Patrick O'Hearn's lanky, lunatic dance whenever he straps on his bass, and the demon throb he makes with his synths;

Dale Bozzio's libidinal lunacy counterpoints Warren Cuccurullo's virtuosity.

and through it all, holding it together, wilder than on the record, Terry Bozzio's drumming...powerful but always perfect, precisely in control, like nothing so much as the musical equivalent of a *samurai* movie.

The crowd loves it, and demands three encores. The band gives them what they want.

Dateline: Gainesville, Florida, where I catch up with Missing Persons in a seemingly deserted Hilton Hotel. There's a tour bus parked outside, a copper and black-leather monster that has clearly seen better days. (The bus company's name for it is the Defiance, but the band calls it the Leather Lung; guess who's right.) I meet Tim Goodwin, the tour manager, who touches on the basics: tonight's gig at the Islands, a 1,200-seat club, set a local record by selling out two days before the show; Capitol says *Spring Session M*, the band's LP, is at 430,000 units and climbing, about to go gold; "Windows," the latest single, is moving up the charts; and the band is exhausted. They've worked nonstop for months, but it's paying off—in L.A. on New Year's Eve they played for a sellout crowd of over 15,000, their biggest gig yet. Tim is thoroughly professional, covering these preliminaries with me while simultaneously fielding long distance calls and hassling tour minutiae. Finally he breaks free long enough to show me the inside of the bus—even tackier than the outside, but more economical and far less tiring transportation than a daily roller-coaster of airports and rented cars—and then tracks down bassist/synth bassist Patrick O'Hearn.

Patrick's role in Missing Persons is hard to understand for fans of his flashier work with Zappa and others. Eighty percent of the time he isn't playing electric bass at all, but synth bass, bent over his keyboards at the back of the stage, looking like a *nouveau punque* auto mechanic fixing a particularly stubborn carburetor. It doesn't track. Why should somebody with his chops start playing two-finger style on a whole new instrument? (He's better now, actually, having devoted himself to keyboard exercises, but when he began it was pretty grim.)

Why? Simple. It's the *sound*.

"I was always fascinated by how keyboard players could make all those really nice sounds, while I was restricted on the bass to just patching in a phaser or a fuzztone. You know, post-Love Generation effects. And the Minimoog gets an *incredible* bass sound, much stronger in some respects than a standard electric."

He grew up with music. His father and mother had a combo, his aunts played, his uncles played, everybody played... "Sort of a perverted Osmond situation." By the time he was out of high school he was an accomplished electric and string bassist playing Pacific Northwest gigs for show names like Carmen McRae and Jack Jones. His musical and personal friendship with Terry Bozzio was forged in San Francisco, where they played together in a string of Bay Area garage bands and combos, and in black and Latin clubs. "There were all these people who were ready to punch you in the eye, until they'd heard you play your first set—and then you just couldn't have enough drinks bought for you." Their paths diverged when Terry made it into Zappa's band, but rejoined a year later in Los Angeles. Zappa had just returned from a European tour and fired everyone but Terry. Patrick, playing in L.A., came by the studio during the *Zoot Allures* sessions to visit. Zappa saw the acoustic bass Patrick was carrying home from his own gig, and asked if he could "really play that doghouse." For the next two and a half years Patrick and Terry held down the rhythm end of things for Frank. But Zappa sidemen have this way of being frontmen-in-waiting; and eventually they split to pursue their own vision.

It didn't happen. What they got, instead, were dramatic changes.

First there was Group 87, which started as an attempt to get their friend Mark Isham a record contract as a horn player. It turned into a band, released one great but virtually unknown album, and fell apart. Isham surfaced as a film composer (he is currently scoring Disney's *Never Cry Wolf*). Terry left to join U.K. and ran into a series of brick walls. When he linked up with John Wetton and Eddie Jobson in that trio, he expected to be involved in composing, but that didn't happen. So he resigned himself to being their "exciting rock drummer," having fun on tour in a kind of mercenary way, and moving on.

"Warren and Dale had brought me a tape of something they were working on, called 'I Like Boys,'" said Terry, picking up Patrick's narrative, "and it blew me away. Here was something I thought could be really big. And with our backgrounds it ought to be a snap to get a deal. We couldn't miss! But the tape went out and people passed, and passed, and passed...somehow, inside, we knew the music was good. And some of our friends liked it. But everybody in the business *hated* it." Terry bottomed out in January of 1981, when he had to resort to giving drum lessons, and borrowing two months' rent from his father. "It was very hard, when people like Ian Anderson would call up and say, 'Come play the drums for me!'...and here I was, starving, facing bankruptcy, piddling along in a band that was going nowhere. And I knew none of the people I'd played with before would appreciate what we were doing. See, we've tried to be individually and collectively different from anything we've ever done before. We didn't want to flaunt chops. Technique should never outshine your musical ideas, and that's where I feel we've gotten hung up in the past."

Despite the abuse, they stuck with it, and time is proving them right. When the

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same four songs that everyone had passed on were released as an independent EP, sales took off in the L.A. area (fueled by playing everywhere they could, even if only to forty people, and making their stage visuals as surreal as possible—something that goes for all of them, not just Dale). Capitol eventually picked it up, substituting one new song, "Words," for a Doors cover, and in that form it has sold over 235,000 copies, becoming the most successful debut EP of all time.

For Patrick O'Hearn, Terry Bozzio's U.K. exile was the time in which he took on his third instrument after electric and acoustic bass: hit between the ears by Kraftwerk and Brian Eno, he wanted to work with synths. First he got a Micromoog. Then he got turned on by the duophonic Arp 2600, and bought one of *those* (a "true classic," he carries it on the road with him for use in his hotel room, and rereads the manual once a month). By the time he rejoined Terry in Missing Persons, his interest was total. "There's very little electric bass on *Spring Session M*. Mostly I played the lines on a Minimoog or the Arp 2600, directly to Terry's drumming. There was no click track, and no overdubs to speak of, except for a few sound changes." Still and all, he hasn't lost his love for the electric bass. He just treats it differently. "I approach it more now as a guitar, using it to outline chords, playing it more melodically."

At the afternoon sound-check I get to examine his stage setups. A Minimoog and Micromoog are side by side, plugged into a Kelsey board and two Cerwin-Vega disco cabinets. ("I think I blew the horns on them long ago, but they've got two 18-inch speakers so they can take all those chewing oscillators on the low end.") His bass is a Carvin, an instrument he positively loves, bi-amped with Carvin amps into an Ampeg SVT bottom with two Gauss speakers and a Carvin cabinet with four 12-inch speakers. For effects he uses only an MXR digital delay.

Barely controlled confusion—that's standard operating procedure at a sound-check. Each club's lighting and P.A. systems differ, so every night is a fight to get ready for showtime. The members of Missing Persons handle it with a professional cool that belies their tiredness. Chuck Wild practices silently under headphones, hanging back. Patrick gently plays slow, swelling chords on his Carvin, breathing out calm over the swarm of roadies. Warren Cuccurullo hits a power chord and is appalled at how loud it is. His usual settings are just too high for a place this size. Also, one of his pedals has gone microphonic, squeaking like a banshee. Tweak. Discuss. Test. Try again... Terry strikes one drum at a time, over and over, shouting questions and comments at the soundman out in his booth, who has to shout too, because there's no talkback in the monitors. One bass drum won't cooperate. It's too flat-sounding, not as warm as the other. Also, his vocal microphone is distorting when he sings certain notes. More swarming, more fixing; it's a long process, hard on anyone's patience, and absolutely required by this band full of perfectionists.

Terry's stage and studio equipment changes. Right now it's made up of two Tama bass drums, Tama snare and hardware, a full set of Remo Roto-Toms, closed high-hat and various Paiste cymbals (most of them doubled, like a high-hat with a china, which gives him a "white noise synth-type sound"), a set of four Syndrums and a Synare used to trigger a Simmons Claptrap. He also has pickups on his Roto-Toms that are used to drive Simmons electronic drum modules, allowing him to mix electronic and acoustic percussion in various ways.

As for recording technique, he mostly bows to producer/manager Ken Scott's standard. "The toms are miked by Neumann-87s, the bass drums with RE-20s...the main thing that makes a drum sound, to me, is the ambience of the room. So far we've worked in the Chateau in Los Angeles, which is very small, and the way we've gotten the ambience is by leaving the doors open and putting mikes in the lobby and bathroom."

Singer Dale Bozzio has the worst problems to cope with, in terms of stage sound. First, she's got a massive drum kit in one ear and a Marshall stack in the other. On top of that, the frequency range of her controversial voice (an 80s funky/mutant Betty Boop to fans, a "kinky squirrel in heat" to detractors—in any case, unique) is often masked by the guitar; some of her vocal tricks are very quiet, requiring huge amplification; and stage monitors are directional, tough on someone who's got to move around. But these are day-to-day standards. Tonight there's a special added bonus difficulty, just to make it worse. Unlike many singers, Dale prefers to hear her echo and harmonizer effects in her monitors. Since the band's music treats the vocal line as an integral link with the guitar and drums, instead of having it ride on top, hearing how she *actually* sounds can make or break her phrasing. Tonight she'll have to do without, because the house system simply doesn't have enough sends.

The members of Missing Persons travel with extensive recording facilities. Terry carries a Prophet 5 and a Fostex 4-track tape machine with him on the road. Chuck has a huge roadcase with an 8-track recorder, 4-track recorder, cassette deck, 8-channel board and analyzed playback system built in. He keeps it backstage at the gig and works on ideas for musicals and soundtrack tapes for plays. Warren travels more simply with only a practice amp consisting of four devices velcroed onto a one-foot-square plate of plexiglass: a Boss Chorus, an Ibanez analog delay, a power supply and Zeus mini-amp.

Onstage, Chuck's keyboards are a Rhodes Chroma, a backup Minimoog and an OB-X modified to have 192 programs and programmable volume (holdovers from when he was playing both bass lines *and* keyboard parts for the band, and couldn't spare a hand to adjust anything). He uses a Tapco stereo board, one side for his stage sound and the other as a keyboard send to the house. For effects he uses a Boss Chorus, MXR and Ibanez analog delays, MXR Phase 100 and flanger, and Morley volume pedals.

Guitarist Warren Cuccurullo's custom-built pedalboard/mike stand is loaded with effects: two A/DA flangers, a Super-fuzz, a Fuzz-face, Morley Wah/Volume and Echo/Volume pedals, an MXR Phase 100, and a Peterson Strobe unit with mute switch (for silent tuning). The signal that goes into all this wiring comes from a gorgeous gold and black instrument, custom-made by Performance Guitars, with dirty and clean channels, three pickups controlled through a five-position switch, master volume, and one-band parametric eq. His strings of choice are Maxima Golds, which he changes every two or three sets. For amplification there are two Mesa-Boogie Mark IVs on the 10-watt setting, with Groove Tubes, which go through two Marshall cabinets with eight 12-inch Celestion speakers. Warren is fascinated with Indian music and its approach to sustaining notes. He uses an E-Bow to approach his ideal, playing around it by picking notes with his index fingernail, then sustaining harmonics with it and using the flat of his hand against the strings, below the bridge, to do whammy-bar effects and bend his piercing high notes up as much as a fifth.

"You're not gonna tell anybody how I do this, are you?" he asks. "Aw, go ahead. I'm coming up with new stuff all the time."

For all their talent, taste and confidence, it still galls Missing Persons to be branded by the philosopher-kings of the rock press as a sell-out. Terry Bozzio sums it up in a tone of voice that's quiet, but somehow even more forceful than his drumming style. "There's a conscious approach to be as diverse as possible, and still be accessible. You have a choice in this business of either fitting into the avenues available to you or else not being heard and starving. We *don't* fit into category B. We want to be heard, we want to make friends with our music. It's going to be our own thing, and I'll have my wife and my best friends with me...." He smiles. "And you know...it's just one of those things you can't stop with an army." M

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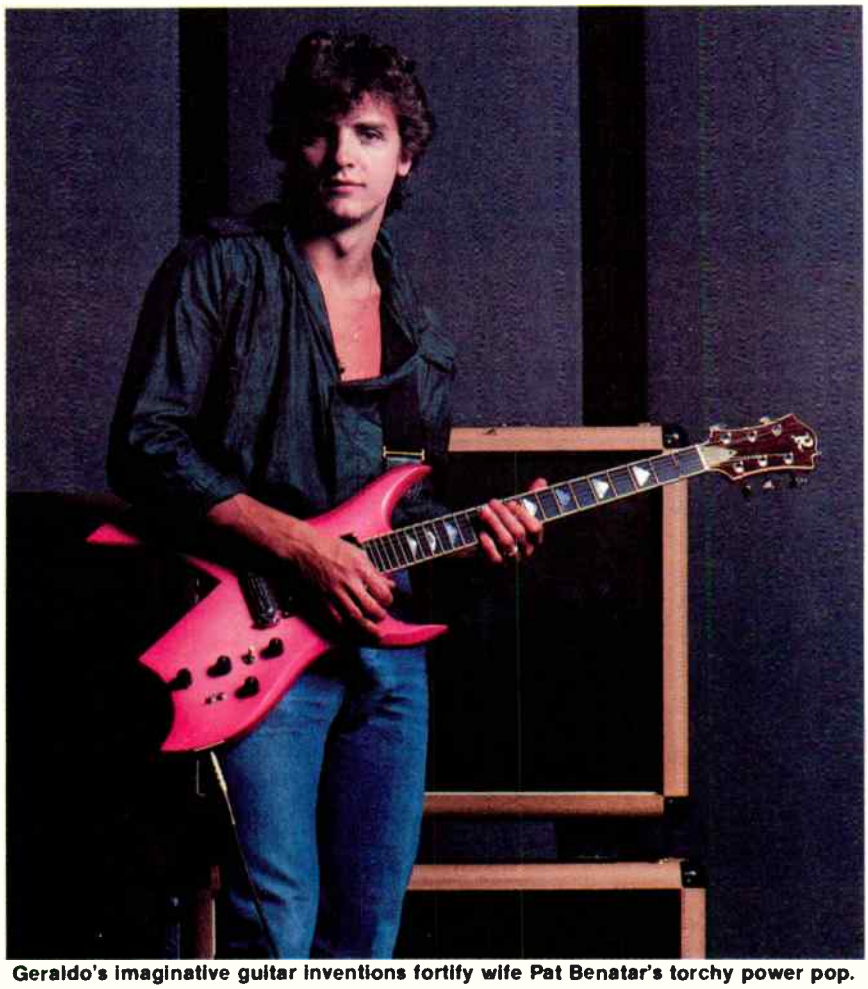
P L A Y E R S

THE UNPREDICTABLE NEIL GERALDO

Benatar's Guitar Takes Chances

BY STAN SOOCHER



ANDY CAUFIELD

Geraldo's imaginative guitar inventions fortify wife Pat Benatar's torchy power pop.

At the beginning of each show on Pat Benatar's recent tour, her five-piece band is hidden from the audience by a cloth tunnel-like cocoon. When the music starts, the cocoon drops away to reveal an uncluttered stage set bathed in pink light. In the middle of all this, Neil Geraldo—Benatar's guitarist and husband—flits away at his instrument like a butterfly that has just gotten his wings, feet touching the ground only to launch the agitated acrobat back into the air.

"When I'm jumping around like that I do play a few bad notes," a disheveled Geraldo admits in his hotel room the afternoon after a strenuous, leap-filled show at Manhattan's Madison Square Garden. "My hand accidentally slips from time to time and I'm forced to grab the guitar wherever I can. But that can also mean hitting a great note that totally surprises me. On our first couple of tours I spent hours trying to figure out what I had played on the album. I could never remember. Now I say the hell with it. Each song comes out sounding different each night. Taking chances is what makes the music worthwhile for me."

As a member of a band whose music might sound calculated to do no more than catch the attention of the corked-up ears of AOR radio programming chiefs and the fans of 80s ennui megabucks rock, the thirty-year-old Geraldo's style is based, after all, on simple melodic and chordal structures dominated by Benatar's torchy, heavy metal pop vocals. But since the release of her 1979 debut, *In The Heat Of The Night*, and through a successive stream of hits that has included the gritty bouncer "I Need A Lover" and the backstreet wailer "Shadows Of The Night," Geraldo's unpredictable twists and turns on electric lead have served as the shot in the arm that has kept the group from falling into the bottomless pit of recycled rock clichés.

On *Get Nervous*, the band's latest Chrysalis LP, Geraldo's role has increased even more. He contributed both songwriting and production skills. And the addition of keyboard player Charlie Giordano in the place of rhythm guitarist Scott St. Clair Sheets has spurned Geraldo's already syncopated guitar technique into a more rhythmically rooted revelry. But Geraldo claims that his input is influenced as much by his wife as it is by his own musical expertise.

"Pat actually has more of a guitarist's mentality than I do," Geraldo claims. "I worry more about whether or not all the lyrics can be heard. She's always asking for more guitar. So I look at a guitar solo as a continuation of Pat's melody line rather than an egotistical extension of myself. I know that at the end of my solo Pat is going to be coming back in screaming, tearing people's faces off, and I have to be able to get out of it with enough authority to meet her at that level."

Geraldo has incorporated this same sounding-board approach into his production projects, which last year included overseeing *Ignition*, the debut solo album by ex-Babys' lead singer John Waite. "As a producer I like to sit back and take the long view," Geraldo explains. "I don't believe I should be telling the artists what to do. Let them tell me what they want to hear. I don't even consider myself a guitarist when I'm in the studio. A lot of times when we reach the point of needing a guitar part for one of Pat's sessions, I'll turn around and yell, 'Guitar licks. All right, guitar licks!' Then I realize, 'Wait a minute, that's me. I'm next.'"

Nevertheless, Geraldo is unlikely to overlook his guitar for very long, since it is his primary tool for writing Benatar's band arrangements. On drum parts, for example, he sits down with sticksman Myron "Tyrone" Grombacher and chunks out rhythm patterns for the group's songs which Grombacher then embellishes with his tom-tom and bass drum heavy percussion fills. Bassist Roger Capps' "gritty, dirty and down" bottom, as Geraldo describes it, permits the lead guitarist to concentrate on playing three-note chords and twin- or single-note solos in the upper registers

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of his guitar.

Geraldo originally developed his syncopated guitar style while listening to Motown hits on the radio when he was growing up in Cleveland. "I've always thought of myself as a singer in one of those Motown songs, only I'm using the guitar to translate the timing," he says. He also studied the rockabilly work of early Elvis Presley guitarist Scotty Moore and the blues-rock style of Indiana guitarist Lonnie Mack.

When he finally left Cleveland in the mid-70s after a stint with a popular local band named Lovers' Lane, Geraldo gravitated towards New York where he wound up playing guitar and piano on Rick Derringer's *Guitars And Women* album. During the sessions, he became friendly with producer Mike Chapman of Blondie fame who referred him to Chrysalis Records. At the time Chapman and the label were helping newly-signed singer Pat Benatar form a recording group.

"Pat was unsure about what she wanted on the first album. We were all unsure," Geraldo reveals. "But as a hungry club musician I'd learned to be versatile enough to cover all bases on guitar. To a large degree, that's why *In The Heat Of The Night* turned out to be such a musical potpourri."

Today, most of Geraldo's guitar work is performed on a red and white 1961 Fender Telecaster with Seymour Duncan pickups. For the cleaner, lighter sound heard on songs like "Looking For A Stranger" from *Get Nervous*, Geraldo turns to a tan and brown 1963 Fender Stratocaster. On rave-ups like the Beatles' "Helter Skelter" he uses a Gibson Les Paul for a bright, scratchy sound. All of Geraldo's guitars are strung with GHS medium-gauge strings, which he attacks with Herco picks flipped to the sandy side. And he is currently designing a Neil Geraldo model for B.C. Rich Guitars. But he doesn't have a guitar room in his Tarzana, California home, "just a guitar closet."

On the road Geraldo travels with a Framus acoustic that cost him ninety-nine dollars. "The guitar doesn't sound that great but I've written some pretty good songs on it. It's a superstitious thing," he muses. "I figure if I carry it around with me maybe that magic will happen again."

Onstage Geraldo's amp setup consists of three Marshall 100-watt Combos with two 12-inch EV speakers in each. One amp is a spare, one is played dry without any effects and the other is run through both an Eventide Harmonizer and a Super Prime Time Lexicon. In the studio Geraldo adds a Roland Jazz Chorus 120 amp to his lineup which, he says,

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P R O D U C I N G

ROGER BECHIRIAN'S SONIC ASSAULT

Producing the New British Aristocracy

BY JIM FARBER

It is the unfortunate lot of most record producers and engineers to be known, at least in pop stardom terms, usually by the company they keep. So to know Roger Bechirian is to hear Elvis Costello. And Nick Lowe. And Dave Edmunds. And Squeeze. And Lene Lovich, Rachel Sweet, Wreckless Eric, the Undertones and quite a few other crucial players in the British new music revolt.

Bechirian deserves better. This modest, rather cheery Englishman has not only been a main mover behind one of current rock's highest quality cliques—the sprawling Stiff-related family of maverick talents outlined above—but his engineering and production technique have helped articulate and heighten the pure pop, punk spirit and vivid imaginations of his five-star clientele. Starting as an engineer at Eden Studios in London in the late 70s, Bechirian's lucky break came during Stiff's first flowering when he mixed some tracks by Wreckless Eric and Jona Lewie. Then in March '78, he engineered Dave Edmunds' *Tracks On Wax 4*, and Nick Lowe brought him along to twist the dials on his own *Pure Pop For Now People* and Costello's revelatory *This Year's Model*.

The sound Bechirian got on that last album is perhaps the most remarkable of his career. The drums are relentlessly slappy, the organ is chilling, and every note is made to stand at attention. As the ultimate staccato assault, the sound *itself* is the hook.

"A lot of it is the drum sound," explains Bechirian, taking a break from producing Nick Lowe's latest opus at Rockfield Studios in Wales. "Pete Thomas' snare drum was tuned real high, which nobody was doing at the time. The toms sounded like dustbins, real metal crashing. And the bass drum was just a flap, like flicking at a piece of paper. I put that all together, over-eq'ed it, and got something really different. To that, we added an overcompressed bass guitar sound.

"So we didn't need to go crazy with overdubs, to add extra sounds. With those basic dynamics, the sound was already there. That record would just leap out of the loudspeakers, even at low volume."

Bechirian worked with Costello up through *Trust*. On that album, the credit reads "Produced by Nick Lowe in association with Roger Bechirian," although the latter claims that his upgraded credit line was more a certification for work he'd done all along for Costello rather than a sudden expansion of input. "I feel very proud to have worked with Elvis," he says. "He does have a lot more to say than just pop (oriented) records. I enjoy making pop records more than anything else. But I feel more important working with Elvis."

Costello returned the compliment when he offered Bechirian the plum co-production job on Squeeze's *East Side Story* in 1981. According to Bechirian, "Elvis basically did the arrangements. He's very good with that. And I acted as producer. We went into that album wanting to get a very different sound for Squeeze, a brighter sound. The band was quite scared at first, but in the end they liked it."

One of his first solo production jobs was the 1979 debut album by punky Irish popsters the Undertones. The record was a joyous onslaught of crunchy, simple guitar riffs, like an Irish Ramones. Bechirian laughs that the wonderful rough-edge feel of the record was "probably the sound of the amps falling to bits at the time." The band's third album, *Positive Touch*, which he also produced, was far more adventurous. It had a slicker studio sound with more echo and the songs went through more complex changes. Bechirian figures, "I went a little crazy. The album was too much of a departure."

That might have something to do with his preproduction technique. "Usually I don't like to rehearse with a band. I prefer to use tapes of the new songs, listen to them at home at full volume with plenty of drinks and make notes of things to change and add. Then in the studio with the group, we pick the songs to bits and work them up." For *Positive Touch*, however, Bechirian admits he only heard two of the Undertone's new songs before going into the studio. "They would just play me a song and we started turning it inside out."

Bechirian's other early Stiff projects included records by avant-disco diva Lene Lovich and Ohio sweetheart

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P L A Y E R S

STEVE DOUGLAS' HOT SAX

A Session Superhero's Greatest Licks

BY DAN FORTE

CLAYTON CALL

Douglas' sax solo statements on seminal 60s hits have helped define rock 'n' roll.

There is very little in Steve Douglas' beach front studio apartment to indicate that he is a professional musician, much less the man some have called rock's greatest living saxophonist. Next to an unassuming stereo lies an even more modest record collection and a flute displayed more as decoration than a tool of his trade. The framed candid photo on the wall looks like any grainy snapshot of old friends, except that these old friends happen to be recording mastermind Phil Spector, his chief vocalist Darlene Love and his arranger Jack Nitzsche. The only two gold records Douglas has on display (in the bathroom) give an idea of the range if not the volume of his twenty-five years in the recording industry. On one wall hangs *The Best Of The Lettermen*, which Steve produced. Across from it sits Bob Dylan's *Street Legal*, on which the saxophonist played.

Terms like "greatest" are, of course, subjective, and one would have to comb through the musicians' union's files to figure out who has logged the most hours, but it's a safe bet that no session saxophonist can match Douglas for diversity and versatility. His resumé of recording credits reads like the evolution of rock itself: Elvis Presley, Duane Eddy, the Everly Brothers, B.B. King, Stevie Wonder, the Beach Boys, the Ventures, Sam Cooke, Aretha Franklin, Bob Dylan, Sandy Nelson, Keith Moon, Jefferson Starship and virtually every Spector-produced group from the Ronettes to the Ramones.

Although he didn't begin teaching himself sax until age fifteen—having studied trombone, bassoon and violin in school—the forty-three-year-old Douglas admits, "I took to it pretty fast." He was at least fast enough to earn a spot in Duane Eddy's band shortly after graduating from high school in Los Angeles. "I wasn't that good a player, really, when I got the job with Duane," he states, "but the one thing I could do was shape a tone pretty well. I'd just play along with old R&B records—Lee Allen, Sam 'The Man' Taylor, Willis Jackson, Plas Johnson. I learned all those R&B sax solos just like the records. I could play every nuance of Clifford Solomon's sax solo in 'Honky Tonk,' which every sax player had to know. I can heartily recommend learning to play by listening to records; it's real good training."

After a year's worth of touring and recording with Eddy—including such instrumental hits as "Forty Miles Of Bad Road," "Peter Gunn," "Cannonball" and "Yep"—Steve decided to stay in Los Angeles where he was already in demand as a rock sax soloist on sessions. "I always did have a knack for working out clever little lyrical solos," Douglas allows.

One of the producers who began relying on Steve's sax solos was an underclassman he'd known at Fairfax High, Phil Spector. When Spector began producing the Crystals in New York, he called Douglas to do sax overdubs. When he relocated his Philles label in L.A., he asked Steve to contract the studio band for all of his sessions, beginning with the Crystals' "He's A Rebel." As with so many Spector hits, Douglas' baritone sax break is as much an integral hook as the song's melody, its lyrics or Spector's Wall of Sound production. "I remember that particular session," says Douglas, "because I had three hours to work out what I was going to play while Phil was running down the band over and over. I've always tried to work up solos that were complete statements, little stories, unto themselves. I think one of the unique things about that one was that it was on bari; Phil might have suggested that. It was kind of 'chicken' style, and I had been doing that with Duane Eddy. I listen to that stuff myself and I'm amazed that I was so developed back then, because I'd only been playing for a few years."

Steve describes the atmosphere of the Spector sessions as "great, because we knew we were cutting hits. You could feel it. They were real different sounding records. The idea of spending three hours on one track was just unheard of back then. Also listening back at the high levels Phil liked was another first. You'd go deaf in the booth. I felt the same way about Brian Wilson's sessions—they were special; Brian was special. He certainly worshipped Phil. He would hear the finished song in his head, the whole production. I don't think Phil would particularly, but he'd work towards it, shaping it. Brian almost always knew what he wanted. The only time we spent was pulling it out of his head and getting it down. Phil spent a lot of time fine-tuning the overall sound, with a whole lot bigger instrumentation, of course."

Douglas contracted every Beach Boys record from their second LP to "Good Vibrations," utilizing the same basic band he employed for the Spector sessions—Hal Blaine on drums, Ray Pohlman or Carol Kaye on bass and guitarists Tommy Tedesco and Glen Campbell, among others. Carl Wilson played on most of the Beach Boys dates, as did Dennis Wilson on occasion. But in Steve's words, "It was obvious that Brian had ideas that these guys couldn't cut at the time."

In 1964, because of a growing lack of confidence in himself as a player, Douglas went to work as a staff producer for Capitol Records, producing thirteen chart singles in his first year as an A&R man. One of his biggest successes came when Bobby Darin generously gave a relative unknown, Wayne Newton, a song that had been written for Darin, "Danke Schön."

In 1968, the stresses of the music business caught up with Douglas, then only twenty-nine, and he had his first heart attack. Three years later, several of his business ventures (including a studio and a record label) failed, and Steve moved to Vancouver to woodshed, adding flutes and recorders to his woodwind arsenal. In 1976, Douglas, a student of transcendental meditation,

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recorded one of the first "meditation records," *The Music Of Cheops*, inside the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt. "We had a microphone pinned on my lapel," Steve details, "and one taped to the sarcophagus in the room, and the engineer was down a passageway with a portable Nagra 2-track."

In 1978 he went on his first rock tour since his stint with Duane Eddy, this time playing with Bob Dylan. His reeds can be heard as the featured solo instruments throughout Dylan's *Live At Budokan* LP, recorded three days after the band was put together. Around the same time, Steve was also reunited with former colleagues Phil Spector (on albums by the Ramones and Leonard Cohen), Jack Nitzsche (who introduced Steve to Mink DeVille, for whom Douglas produced *Le Chat Bleu*) and Brian Wilson (appearing on the Beach Boys' *15 Big Ones*). Currently, he can be found playing in Ry Cooder's band, on tour with Eric Clapton.

Now living in the Bay Area, Douglas hooked up with the Berkeley-based Fantasy label and released the highly-acclaimed *Hot Sax* album last year. The LP was recorded live to digital with drummer John Kincheloe and the dual synths of Scott Mathews of the Durocs and Tim Gorman, who recently toured with the Who. Douglas himself employs saxophones, flutes and bass recorder to provide a unique sound that Steve feels is "electronic and organic at the same time."

Douglas' main horns are his French Selmer Mark VI alto sax, a King Super 20 tenor, Selmer Mark VI baritone and a very old Buffet soprano. He also owns the white plastic Grafton alto that used to belong to Ornette Coleman. Although he's very particular about a horn's "action, how easy it is to move around on, the eveness of it, and the scale that's built into it," he sometimes travels with only his mouthpiece. "I don't really care what they give me," he admits, "because I can make the same sounds out of almost any horn. The mouthpiece is where all the sound is formed. The expression is all in here, in the way you move your breath." On his alto Steve uses a stock "student model" Brilhart mouthpiece; on tenor he prefers one custom-made by Fran Newman.

As saxophonist and producer, Douglas' favorite microphones are Neumann U-87s or U-67s. "I have a very bright setup when I record, and a lot of engineers will ad eq and brighten the hell out of microphones, which thins it out so much. I try to get the engineer to come out in the room and listen to what I sound like out there. If they just record what's coming out of the end of my horn, it's usually pretty good."

I N S T R U C T I O N

ARLEN ROTH: TEACHING/LEARNING

Confessions of a Player/Instructor

BY ARLEN ROTH

LISA FURGATCH

The more a teacher opens up to a student, believes Roth (at right), the more both will gain.

The first time I knew something special was going on was when I was around twelve. I'd been taking some classical guitar lessons from a great guitar teacher in Greenwich Village who'd become far too busy raising her child to teach. Not to mention that she was upset that I'd given in to playing "I Saw Her Standing There" on my four-pickup Ideal rather than Villa-Lobos' "Prelude In E Minor" on my acoustic Favilla. Her well-intentioned idea of how to get out of this mess was to send me to a real beatnik teacher who was apparently her idea of East Village cool. He'd help me in the bluesy directions I was already headed in.

Well, I got to the guy's place, went up the obligatory five flights of stairs and proceeded to get him out of bed—in his underwear. He then received a phone call that must have lasted a good forty-five minutes in which he talked to someone about the chick he'd been with the night before—not totally uneducational. This all took place, by the way, with him eating an entire salami right in front of me, making the "lesson" almost unbearable.

Then came the clincher. With about two minutes remaining, he *did* take notice of me, asked me to play some of what I'd been into. As far as I can recall, I played some little blues licks I knew and most likely the Byrds' lick to "Feel A Whole Lot Better." There was a garlic-tinged moment of silence, then he encouragingly proclaimed, "Hey, you're better than me, get outta here!"

Needless to say, I'd had it with teachers after that experience. Yet it instilled in me a confidence that what I was learning by ear *was* valid and was most likely the best route to go. I soon further realized that the actual *doing* was the next higher plateau in learning.

After three years of playing alone to rhythm tracks in my own head (*nobody*, it seemed, in the entire Bronx was interested in the music I cared about at that time), I busted out with my own power-trio called Steel. I was just about seventeen and this largely instrumental band gave me the forum to express myself night after night, with no worry about the finances involved (not yet, anyway). I was, in essence, learning while I was performing—the start of a process that has not stopped to this day.

After I was "discovered" up in Woodstock by people who actually made *records* ("superhumans with immortality at their fingertips" was my perception of them at the time), I found myself continuing the learning process by having to interpret the music of these artists as their back-up guitarist. Several times I'd go on tour with someone like Eric Anderson, Happy & Artie Traum, John Herald or Tony Bird, barely knowing a single tune as we'd hit the stage. That first verse and chorus I so elegantly "layed

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out of" was actually my chance to learn that song! There's nothing like learning and communicating your interpretation of the tune right in front of an audience, especially when wild applause would follow your solo or upon the announcement of your name.

Okay, so I had a taste of what it really was like to be out there—to get recognition, applause, reviews, acceptance and, most of all, a belief in my playing I'd never known before. But when you're nineteen and relying on the next phone call from an artist whose career is slipping fast, you wanted to make some money. Enter teaching, right? Never mind that I still couldn't read music. Nor did I have the foggiest notion of how I got the sounds out of the guitar that I did. All I knew was that when I held the instrument, I was at home and its language was available to me at all times. Sure enough, students began to ask, "How'd you do *that*?" and "Why can't *I* sound like *that*?"

Well, step aside "learning while *playing*" and enter "learning while *teaching*!" Analyzing one's own playing after years of experience is quite a challenge. I'd have to be frank with my students. After all, they still thought I played well; I was just new to putting it into words. They showed great patience though, which I'm eternally grateful for. And at that time taking a lesson with me meant taking a long subway ride up to my parents' house in the Bronx. (One student from Virginia who knew me through an album I'd played on took a lesson from me while in New York visiting the Bronx Zoo!)

I also taught a slide guitar course at the Guitar Study Center in New York City at that time, but lasted only one semester due to the lack of personal attention I could give to each student. *You* try listening to twenty slide players at once! That was around the same time that I wrote my first book, *Slide Guitar*, mostly while on the road with John Prine. It was another chance for me to analyze a style I had so naturally fallen into playing over the years, and became something many students came to study from me. One of my more difficult challenges came in 1975 when my best friend came to me wanting to learn slide guitar only—from scratch.

But it was around this time, at the age of twenty-three, that I began to resent my teaching. I felt that my career had reached a point where I had tasted a little fame and recognition, yet was once again banished to the day-to-day ritual of teaching licks to some players who'd turn around and make more money than I with the knowledge I'd passed on to them. I didn't feel I was merely instructing; I bared my soul each time I taught. It was, for me, the only way. I also bared my soul when I played, and was unfortunately doing that in musical situations that were just as frustrating at that time. These were times of emptiness, poor relationships with students and a general frustration that I'm sure all player/teachers must go through sometimes.

Then I went on the road with Art Garfunkel in 1978, with a band whose members were very supportive of each other, creating a very healthy musical environment for me to exist in while not always having to be giving something away. Soon after, my first solo LP was released and I developed more self-esteem and confidence in my musical direction. I maintained a few good students then, but my main thrust was towards becoming more of my *own* man. Eight months after Garfunkel's tour I became Phoebe Snow's guitarist and musical director. Phoebe hardly ever came to sound-checks, so after thirty cities I started singing at the sound-checks. After all, having about half a million dollars' worth of Showco sound and lights is not a bad way to practice!

When that tour was over, I released my second LP in 1980. After the good reviews, airplay and performances, a different kind of student began to seek me out. They were more serious, more respectful, and in general, stayed around a lot longer. My longest standing student and dear friend, Jan London, called me up extremely late one evening while I was previewing my record on a little college radio station in New Jersey. We made an appointment for a lesson, and we've barely missed one since.

It was during this period that something profound started to occur. Giving lessons started to truly feel like receiving as well. I don't really know why, but something was being projected by me that made students keep coming back for more. I suppose my higher level of artistic realization was helping to relax my earlier resentment toward teaching and this was part of the big change. Sure, there were still the students who'd milk me dry, with no feelings of reciprocal thanks, but somehow I now knew that it was *their* problem, not mine. I was receiving far too much positive feedback from the majority of my students to be brought down by the negative minority. This all made me a better player as well, because I got so in touch with what I was doing that I tapped new resources in my playing that were yet undiscovered by me. I feel sorry for a teacher who can't open up musically to students because *both* learn so much from the process. Don't worry about creating a clone—if that's what's holding you back—because I went through that feeling and it's a waste of energy.

I still teach privately when I can, but my ability to reach literally thousands of students through my taped lessons for *Hot Licks Instruction Tapes* has increased this kind of contact by leaps and bounds. One Hot Licks student recently came down all the way from South Carolina to meet and play with me when I was performing at the Atlanta NAMM convention. One has a responsibility to absorb these wonderful moments; they're the true culmination of making someone else's music more meaningful to them. And it makes you better as a player and a person. You learn to give more, in your playing and your teaching, and after all, music itself is no more than one continuous learning experience passed on from one person to another.

I decided to ask some other musician friends about this phenomenon. I wanted to know if there were any moments in their careers as players/teachers/students that had a particularly profound effect upon them and their music. The two guitarists I spoke to come from completely different generations of music, yet their recollections have striking similarities.

Legendary jazz guitarist Tal Farlow says that when Coleman Hawkins' famous tenor sax solo record of "Body And Soul" came out, "my far-out harmonic limits were somewhere near sixth and ninth chords. That was the time I met a customer in the local music store who was playing that new record over and over, all day long. He was completely gassed by it. While I thought it was great music, I was much less enthusiastic about it, primarily because I was a guitarist and was not able to relate Hawkins' music to anything I could do.

"When I introduced myself as a guitar player, this cat said his name was Charlie Baxter, that he played tenor sax, and coincidentally, a little guitar himself. Before long, we had borrowed two guitars from the store stock and Charlie was playing these chord changes, on guitar, and in D flat, as well.

"I still remember having the feeling of having found something new and exciting. Such was the novelty at that time, the revelation that those harmonies were available to me, too."

Steve Morse of the Dregs says seeing the great classical guitarist Juan Mercadal perform was something that changed his life. He discovered Mercadal was teaching at the University of Miami, so he concocted a scheme to get into that college. This influence has stayed with Steve ever since, and is a

continued on page 111

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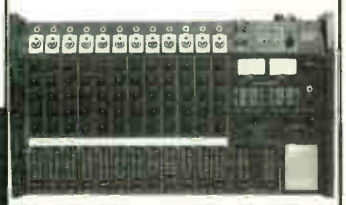
Ibanez has introduced the DM1000 Digital Delay, enclosed in a 19" steel casing, with a new approach encoding-decoding system and digital processor, providing time delay ranges of 1.75 to 900mS with full bandwidth for all delay ranges. The DM1000 input is useful to a variety of instruments and sound reinforcement applications. Three types of output—dry, mix, and inverted mix — make possible various stereo operations. $449.00. East: Hoshino (USA) Inc., Box 886, Bensalem, PA 19020, (215) 638-8670. West: Chesbro Co., 327 Broadway, Idaho Falls, ID 83401, (208) 522-8671.

The highly acclaimed **Rhodes** Chroma synthesizer now has an interface for the Apple II. At last, the musical instrument industry has created a combination of entertainment and computer technology that those interested in both music *and* computer technology can understand and enjoy at a relatively low price. A lot of computer/synthesizer enthusiasts have been waiting for the technology and the sound. For in-depth information on the entire system contact John Shykun at Fender/ Rhodes, 1300 E. Valencia Drive, Fullerton, CA 92634, (714) 879-8080.

VMX12 **Integrated Sound Systems**' new mixer for sound reinforcement and production. Each channel has XLR mike and ¼" phone line inputs, and both can be used simultaneously. Wide band, musically useable bass and treble controls with a ± 15 dB range are provided for each channel as well. Peak overload indicators show overload of input and eq stages. The pan is continuously variable for precision localization, special effects and recording. The headphone output allows for remote monitoring. Dual three-band equalizers with center detent provide corrective equalization for speakers and rooms. $749.00. ISS, 29-50 Northern Boulevard, Long Island City, NY 11101, (212) 729-8400.



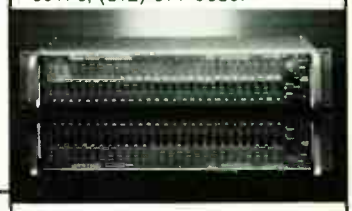
Fostex has a new 2-Channel Gated Compressor/Limiter, Model 3070. Gain reduction is accomplished by a VCA circuit, controlled by pulse width modulation. By varying the length of time this electronic switch is open or closed during each cycle, signal energy is reduced without distorting the program. Compression ratios, attack times and release times are continuously variable. Other features include a noise gate function with independent threshold setting, LED displays indicating gain reduction in calibrated decibel readings, and dual mono or "linked" stereo modes. $400.00. Fostex, 15431 Blackburn Avenue, Norwalk, CA 90650, (213) 921-1112.

Hohner's P-100 Portable Keyboard is polyphonic, has 12 voices, 8 rhythms, arpeggios, one-finger chords, is smaller than a guitar and is lightweight. It plays through an amplifier, through its built-in speaker or privately through plug-in earphones. $595.00. Hohner, Box 15035, Richmond, VA 23227, (800) 446-6010.

Soundcraft U.S.A. has announced the introduction of the Series 400B, a new series of general purpose mixing consoles, available in two formats and two sizes. Both formats are fully modular, include phantom power supply and feature 4-band sweep-frequency eq. The Standard format, available with 16 or 24 inputs, features 4 auxiliary sends, 8-track monitoring, subgrouping, a set-up oscillator and 100mm ultra-smooth faders. The Monitor format, also available with 16 or 24 inputs, features 8 discrete mixes for on-stage monitor-mixing with a master channel level control, which can be assigned via a pan control to a stereo mix bus for side-fills or front of house mix. Soundcraft U.S.A., 20610 Manhattan Place, Torrance, CA 90501, (213) 328-2595.

Lexicon's new PCM-42 has very long delay, memory option, a crystal based delay timer, and a metronome indicator and clock that can be programmed to a precise fraction of the delay period to generate tightly woven, multilayered, rhythmic beds and completely new sound-on-sound effects. The PCM-42 has 16 kHz bandwidth, input overload protection and Lexicon's proprietary digital encoding system. Lexicon, 60 Turner Street, Waltham, MA 02154, (617) 891-6790.

Phase Linear adds a new 27-band Graphic Equalizer to its professional products line. The E27 utilizes state-variable filters to achieve amplitude change independent of bandwidth. This design ensures one-third octave equalization throughout the adjustment range. It eliminates the tendency to broaden bandwidth at small adjustment settings. Phase Linear, 4136 N. United Parkway, Schiller Park, IL 60176, (312) 671-5680.



A $795 polyphonic keyboard from **Sequential Circuits** is designed to provide string, brass, piano, and organ sounds (solo or ensemble) to working musicians for the right price. The Prelude offers the convenience of preset programming in conjunction with variable envelope, modulation, and eq controls. Each of the four basic instrument presets offers three voicings that can be played individually or summed to create timbres. The Prelude also lets the user play more than one instrument sound at a time for ensemble-like effects. SCI, 3051 N. First Street, San Jose, CA 95134, (408) 946-5240.

Tom Tom Stand mounts for **LP** timbales and timbalitos permit them to be used as conventional tom toms in a standard drum kit setup. Pictured with the CP327 Power Tom Tom Stand are 14" and 15" and 12" and 13" LP Timbales and a set of LP Timbalitos. This arrangement used over a bass drum in place of or in addition to traditional tom toms is one of the newest trends in percussion today. Latin Percussion, 160 Belmont Avenue, Garfield, NJ 07026, (201) 478-6903.

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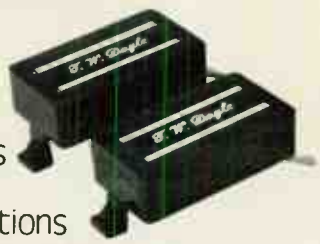

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RECORD REVIEWS

U2

War (Island)

War seems to me to be the strongest of U2's three LPs, both musically and lyrically. It's that rare concept album that holds up (with minor lapses) from beginning to end—perhaps because these four Irishmen have a more intimate acquaintance with war and suffering and the resultant unquenchable yearning for peace than most other modern-day rockers, the Clash included. When Bono Vox sings, "There's many lost, but tell me who has won," he's not just really saying something—he's said it all. And the music, pumped up to majestic proportions by producer Steve Lillywhite, backs him up. U2's guitarist, The Edge, is a master of slash-and-drone, and his ringing chords reverberate through every track (check particularly the soaring, neopsychedelic "Like A Song" and the ferocious "Two Hearts Beat As One"). Add to this the resounding rhythm section of drummer Larry Mullen and bassist Adam Clayton, and you have a band that's able to put real power—not just run-of-the-mill AOR roaring—behind Vox's wailing laments.

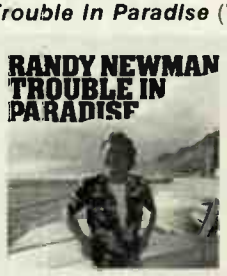
What's perhaps most encouraging about *War* is the extent to which U2 have been able to breathe some air into their monolithic sound. Thus, the modal whomp that's at the heart of their attack here recedes a bit to allow some welcome instrumental detailing—the elegant bass pulse of "As The Seconds Go By," the chattering guitar figure of "New Year's Day," the free-booting drums on "Sunday Bloody Sunday"—along with the more characteristic muscularity of a track such as "The Refugee." This loosening up, while in no way vitiating their considerable power, has made them a lot more likeable on a human level.

U2's problems in the past have had to do with song composition and lyric writing. On *War*, they've definitely come up with the goods songwise: such tracks as "Sunday Bloody Sunday," "New Year's Day," the folkish "40" and the lush, almost glossy "Surrender" are real and memorable tunes, not just artfully arranged drone jams. Lyrically, however, there are still some clinkers. "Angry words won't stop a fight/ Two wrongs won't make it right," is a banal observation (from "Like A Song"); and "Rise up, rise up with wings like eagles" and "I'd cross the sky for your love" (from the rather scattered "Drowning Man") are hardly better. And when the singer is reduced to a line like, "I don't know how to say what's got to be said" (on "Two Hearts Beat As One"), the cynical listener may be tempted to suggest that he come back later, when he's found out.

But this is quibbling. *War* succeeds impressively on the strength of its tempestuous sound, its haunting harmonies and its heartbroken litany of humankind's unceasing inhumanity. I mean, these guys don't pull any punches: "As The Seconds Go By" nails international terrorists of every political stripe—and we've been waiting a long time for that one. — *Kurt Loder*

Randy Newman

Trouble In Paradise (Warner Bros.)



As pop music's reigning ironist, Randy Newman invariably attracts more attention for the things he says than for the form in which he chooses to say them. That imbalance may be redressed by *Trouble In Paradise*, where Newman puts his considerable musical talent to the task of refining and gilding mainstream pop expressionism instead of merely subverting it. His gift for seductive—and deceptive—melody is here buttressed by arrangements as deftly layered and orchestral as the soundtrack from *Ragtime*, along with a brighter production and generally fewer funereal tempos than usual; even Newman's laconic, bluesy phrasing sounds more sprightly. And additional vocals from ringers like Linda Ronstadt, Bob Seger, Paul Simon, Christine McVie, ad infinitum, lend a touch of top forty pizzazz, along with evidence of the respect Newman commands from musicians with far more luminous pop star credentials. Lonely at the top indeed.

To this celebrity coffee klatch Newman takes a finely honed scalpel, the better to dissect some shrewdly observed social cadavers. This time Dr. Newman's subjects are linked less by time and place (*Good Old Boys*) than by myopia; their most notable common characteristic is a singular ability to stand reality on its head. They sing the praises, for example, of three modern meccas ("I Love L.A.," "Christmas In Capetown," "Miami") without ever acknowledging their seamy undersides, and in the process reveal only a fool's paradise. But Randy never mocks such naifs. He would rather identify with them, slip into their personas, and give each voice the freedom to gag itself. Which is what usually happens: "I'm Different" becomes a narcissist's manifesto; "The Blues" unmasks blues posturing (Paul Simon's guest vocal neatly underscores the point), while "Song For The Dead," employing a Vietnam motif, buries its promises along with the victims. The apex of these grand delusions is achieved on "My Life Is Good," a psychotic *tour de force* in which the boorish protagonist fantasizes meeting Bruce Springsteen, who in turn bestows his mantle as "the Boss."

Such garish satire could easily turn loutish, but for Newman's steadfast refusal to render moral judgment, his Lardneresque feel for colloquial gab, and, especially, a wry, graceful wit that ranges far beyond the bounds of lyrical *bons mots*. Ernie Watts' twisted parody of a Clarence Clemons sax solo on "My Life Is Good," for instance, reveals far more about Newman's dismay at rock mythology than the incredible vignette which precedes it. And the strutting guitar riffs and bubbly good cheer which propel "I Love L.A" also provide a salient comment on that city's unquenchable Babbitry. That its irresistible hook of a chorus might also help vault its composer toward the stardom he's managed to elude all these years is just the sort of

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parenthetical irony Randy Newman could admire. — *Mark Rowland*

Earth, Wind & Fire
Powerlight (ARC/Columbia)

Maurice White has never been ashamed to wear his heart on his hip, but his hop, skip and bump homilies, rather than being simply another attempt to get the world singing in perfect harmony (pass the Coca-Cola, please), are actually an extension of black spirituals—as are many of his choral devices, leads, harmonies and backbeats. White's genius is in synthesizing these spirituals with R&B, acid rock, jazz (modal and big band), doowop and ethnic rhythms into a high-tech, multitracked, cast-of-thousands *pop* format. Some would contend though, that, in recent years, all of this has been *sublimated* beneath the pop gloss, and for all the new fans this strategy has garnered, older followers yearn for the explosiveness of their live shows and the crackle of albums like *Open Our Eyes* and *That's The Way Of The World*.

So *Powerlight* stands as a testament both to White's absolute mastery of production and EW&F's renewed vigor as a band. *Powerlight* is EW&F's finest, most consistent album since the untimely death of co-producer Charles Stepney (who was to White what Billy Strayhorn was to Ellington), yet while it manages to mitigate both the strut and sheen of past and recent work, it is neither nostalgic nor formulaic, but a real evolution. Guitars are no longer as present in the overall mix (although there's a hot, skanking intro to "Heart To Heart"), and while the drummers still key the breaks with offbeat accents and sudden turnarounds, on *Powerlight* they provide centrifugal force rather than catalytic syncopations. *Powerlight* is dominated by Larry Dunn's synthesizers, waves of vocals (sounding very much like synthesizers) and brash, punchy horn syncopations—functioning in the call-and-response manner of preacher/congregation or the sections of a big band.

Powerlight constantly segues back and forth between expressions of love and desire, between lightness and darkness ("Freedom Of Choice," a, dare I say it, protest song, echoes the resentful, determined overtones of early EW&F and post-Sly Motown). *Powerlight* is framed by the opening (single) "Fall In Love With Me" (featuring White's gruff but kindly midrange) and the harmonically adventurous choruses of the closing invocation "Miracles" (gush, but God, what righteous gush). All the way through, short instrumental interludes and Robert Greenidge's slithery steel drums (featured on the Eastern-tinged "Spread Your Love" and the gospel-y "Side By Side") provide a kind of Afro-Eurasian subtext and commentary to the coffee-colored, velvet melange of pop balladry ("Straight From The Heart," a churchy showcase for Phillip Bailey's aching yet manly falsetto leads and minor key choruses) and dance workouts (the pistol-hot exchanges and unisons of "Heart To Heart").

Clearly, White's ambitions transcend mere pop, but often in the past, his dense tower of Babel tended to spoil your appetite in a sweet swelter of details and conceits. Now, rather than obscuring the music, White & company's details unfold in a more controlled, contrapuntal manner. This isn't to say that EW&F is all the way home or that detractors will start speaking in tongues, but Maurice White's congregation is still the slickest jubilee in town. — *Chip Stern*

Eric Clapton
Money & Cigarettes (Warner Bros./Duck)

What is an Eric Clapton, anyway? Aging white bluesman hanging on until the next top ten single? Romantic balladeer in search of a permanent niche in the new pantheon of MOR perennials? Or, least likely of all, a guitar virtuoso who must inevitably explode across the instrumental scene once again as he did nearly two decades ago with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers?

Clapton's latest solo venture, *Money & Cigarettes*, is indeed a very serviceable and well-intentioned effort with a solid supporting cast of leading musicians (Albert Lee, "Duck" Dunn, Roger Hawkins, Ry Cooder) but it still begs the question of EC's ultimate place in the scheme of things. The original material ranges from tougher, focused, uptempo rockers ("Shape You're In," "Ain't Going Down") to unabashedly sentimental, if not downright syrupy, ballads like "Pretty Girl" and "Man In Love." These songs are largely distinguished by the polished instrumental interplay of Clapton and his veteran colleagues, particularly Cooder's precision lead guitar flurries. The vocals are pleasant if unremarkable and the material kind of grows on you. So what's not to like?

Nothing. But repeated listenings of this album only reinforce the nagging impression that there is nothing here to ignite the imagination or lodge permanently in the collective memory. And this doesn't mean twenty-minute flaming guitar extravaganzas a la *Layla* either. Just *something* of consequence to hold on to.

As always, Clapton's choice of blues material—Sleepy John Estes' "Everybody Needs A Change" and Albert King's *piece de resistance*, "Cross Cut Saw"—is immaculate. But his interpretations only add to the confusion. Estes' tune is given a lilting pop treatment and the guitar work on "Cross Cut Saw," something a Clapton fan might look forward to, given the fact that King exerted a powerful influence on his early work, is curiously muted. All of the neurotic bends and stinging releases are there, but cushioned under an anesthetic layer of signal processing.

I must admit to being totally ambivalent about this album. Clapton's heart is obviously in it, to the extent that it still can be, and his instincts are good. But even disregarding the sometimes arbitrary standards of excellence one invariably ascribes to musicians who've fundamentally changed the way you look at life through music, the reasons for listening to Clapton seem less compelling with every new album released. Then again, none of this should surprise anyone who read Clapton's *Musician* interview last year, in which he admitted his fear of being swept away by the power of his own muse, his fear of "never getting back." Eric concluded it was best to stay clear of that kind of thing until he's sure he can handle the results—which he admits he's not yet ready for. Considering the fate of many of his 60s contemporaries, we should at least give him credit for recognizing his own limitations and his instincts for survival. Maybe someday.... — *Jean-Charles Costa*

Ray Charles
Wish You Were Here Tonight (Columbia)

It's been twenty years since Ray Charles recorded *Modern Sounds In Country And Western Music*, two landmark albums that surprised and outraged a lot of folks ("What's this—a *Negro* singing hillbilly songs?!") with versions of "I Can't Stop Loving You," "Your Cheating Heart" and other C&W immortals. The mere passage of time will lessen the impact of *Wish You Were Here Tonight*, on which Charles again interprets the tunes of some popular Nashville writers.

Nevertheless—and I may be dodging lightning bolts after saying this—the new one, Charles' first album for Columbia, may well be better than some of those old ABC/Paramount recordings. It is at least earthier; for one thing, the Mitch

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Miller-esque vocal choruses that steered "I Can't Stop Loving You" and others so perilously close to the middle of the road are largely gone. What's left is a simple, restrained country band, a few horns and strings and Ray Charles, who can raise even pedestrian material from mediocrity to something close to brilliance.

For a taste of what this album is all about, try "Ain't Your Memory Got No Pride At All?" The length of the title alone tells you this is a country song, and sure enough, here's ol' Buddy Emmons on pedal steel. But the steel's graceful twang mingles so effortlessly with the blue notes of Ray's piano and the inspired gospel wail of his vocal that the total package is really neither fish nor fowl. Crossover, hell! Charles isn't doing anything other than what comes naturally.

Elsewhere, the title song features perhaps the most moving vocal performance here; who else can shift with such ease and lack of pretension from utter world-weariness to emotional catharsis? Meanwhile, Ray's delivery on Tony Joe White's "3/4 Time" is thoroughly relaxed and randy. George Jones' "I Don't Want No Stranger Sleeping In My Bed" is appropriately jaunty, while Micheal Smotherman's "Shakin' Your Head" matches banjo/fiddle rave-ups with bluesy piano comping. And on the ballads, Charles avoids the tearful, self-pitying tendencies that doom so many lesser singers. Hey, they don't call this guy "the Genius" for nothing.

It doesn't all work. "Let Your Love Flow" has a lot more drive than the Bellamy Brothers' milquetoast hit version, but it's still a stupid song, and a couple of others are hardly instant classics, either. Still, Ray Charles is such a great singer that *Wish You Were Here Tonight* can be nothing less than a gas. Bartender, set up another one. — *Samuel Graham*

Herbie Hancock
Quartet (Columbia)

Although it was cut in a Tokyo studio rather than in concert, this double—heavy on playing and produced with a light touch—gives us a thick juicy slice of the now-historic tour Wynton Marsalis made with the Herbie Hancock Trio two summers ago. The tunes are all good jamming vehicles, including old standards like "Well, You Needn't" and "Round Midnight," and more recent standards like "The Sorcerer." The playing is superb, and the recording is digital—so if you need an added inducement, there you have it.

Taking it man by man: Hancock emerges marvelously undamaged from any of his more commercial ventures, playing the long-lined solos and intricate voicings which are in no way as easy to duplicate as any fifty million Hancock-influenced pianists might have you believe. Tony Williams, no longer a kid, plays with a solid and (yes!) unobtrusive maturity, using all the right colors, shadings and tempo changes to match each musical occasion. Ron Carter is still covering ground he mastered years ago, yet you sense he's still exploring. Listening to him, I'm reminded of what so many musicians have told me, that you never exhaust the possibilities of even relatively simple chord patterns.

Which brings us to Marsalis. I can hear how profoundly these players have influenced him, particularly the way they vary their approach throughout a tune. Marsalis doesn't just play—he works and reworks his ideas, plus he knows what *not* to play, which is half the battle. Born into a musical family, given the best education and plenty of opportunity and publicity, Marsalis has taken some knocks from those who feel he's had it too easy. Wynton, however, is not basing his future on publicity; he has talent, and

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The ability of the Doctor Click to read live tracks allows sequencers, drum machines and synthesizers to play in sync with the varying tempos of a human drummer or a built click track.

The ability of the Doctor Click to accept external clocking or either of the types of FSK sync to tape codes allows sequencers, drum machines and synthesizers to be synced to any existing track.

The pulse shaper circuit turns a pulse from an instrument into a trigger waveform allowing synthesizers to sync to a drum fill.

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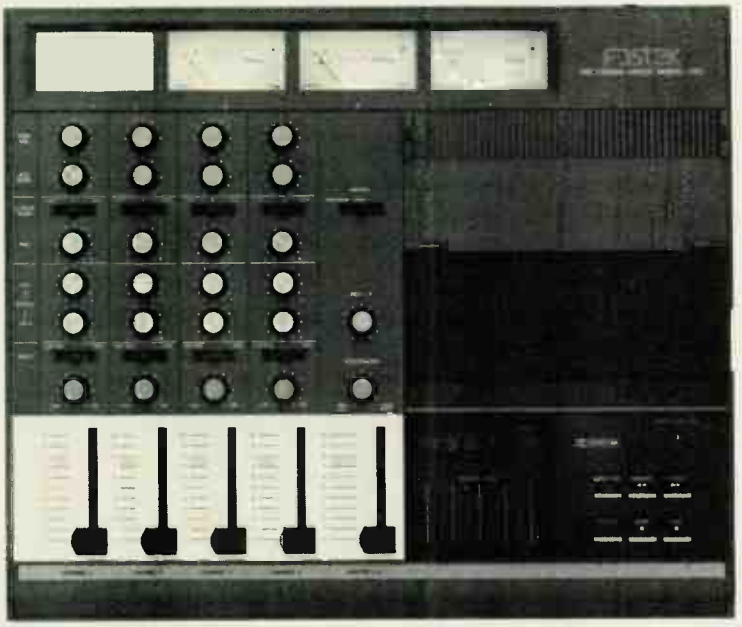

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he works his ass off. Just listen to any of these cuts and you'll hear more trumpet creativity than any twenty-one year old should rightly have. The backlash will be short-lived. A great record—all four sides. — *Joe Blum*

The Yardbirds
The Yardbirds (Epic)

That resounding crash you just heard was the sound of the bottom falling out of the record collector's market. All those poor suckers who forked out up to a hundred dollars for the European import single of "Happenings Ten Years Time Ago" (with picture sleeve) to get the impossibly rare B-side "Psycho Daisies" will not appreciate the care Epic took to tag the song, among the Yardbirds' most elusive recordings, at the end of this new compilation.

Then again, anyone willing to spend the rent money on a Yardbirds record simply loves the Yardbirds, still the most misunderstood and underrecognized of the English 60s R&B invasion punks. And anyone who loves the Yardbirds will be happy to see them get their just, if rather belated, deserts with this repacking-plus of the group's 1966 LP, *Over Under Sideways Down*.

At the risk of sounding like an out-and-out Epic ad, check out these features. You get the original English "Roger the Engineer" cover with guitarist-bassist Chris Dreja's pen-and-ink doodles (right up there in contemporary art with Charlie Watts' surreal cartoon strip on the back of the Stones' *Between The Buttons*). The stereo tracks are crisp and clean while the mono ones stay that way. And to further antagonize collectors and bootleggers, the LP includes two rare "Roger" tracks excised from the American *OUSD*—a cocky, thinly disguised rewrite of Slim Harpo's "Scratch My Back" called "Rack My Mind" and an even cockier copy of "Dust My Broom" billed as "The Nazz Are Blue," which appeared as the "Happenings" B-side in the U.S. and features the hogcalling Jeff Beck vocal that could put hair on an ice chest.

The fourteen performances on *The Yardbirds*, a full seventeen years young, also throw into rather sharp relief all this fashionable blather about "new music" and the synth-pop apocalypse. However addled their Gregorian psychedelia (the moddish meditations "Turn Into Earth" and "Ever Since The World Began") may sound now, however archaic their reliance on Chicago blues forms may seem compared to the sleek plug-in funk of the latest British invasion, there is a manic frenzy in Beck's violin-

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PICK HITS

DAVID FRICKE Hot: **Chesterfield Kings** — *Here Are The Chesterfield Kings* (Mirror), **Def Leppard** — *Pyromania* (Mercury), **Ric Ocasek** — *Beatitude* (Geffen), **INXS** — *Shabooh Shoobah* (ATCO), **Velvet Underground** — *And So On* (Plastic Inevitable bootleg); Cold: **Philip Lynott** — *The Philip Lynott Album* (Warner Bros.); Live: Neil Young, Universal Amphitheatre, L.A.

TIMOTHY WHITE Hot: **Bob Seger** — *The Distance* (Capitol), **Papa Michigan & General Smiley** — *Downpression* (Greensleeves), **Michael Jackson** — *Thriller* (Epic), **Dexy's Midnight Runners** — *Too-Rye-Ay* (Phonogram), **Marvin Gaye** — *Midnight Love* (Columbia).

VIC GARBARINI Hot: **Phil Collins** — *Hello I Must Be Going* (Atlantic), **U2** — "New Year's Day" (Island 45), **Eddy Grant** — "Electric Avenue" (Epic 12-inch), **the Yardbirds** — *The Yardbirds* (Epic), **Abba** — *The Singles* (Atlantic); Cold: **Neil Young** — *Trans* (Geffen); Live: **Ronald Shannon Jackson** — The Bottom Line, N.Y.C.

J.D. CONSIDINE Hot: **Ebenezer Obey** — *What God Has Joined Together* (Oti import), **Indeep** — *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life* (Sound of NY 12-inch), **Little Steven & the Disciples of Soul** — *Men Without Women* (EMI), **Herbie Hancock** — *Quartet* (Columbia), **Fad Gadget** — *For Whom The Bells Toll* (Mute Import 12-inch); Cold: **Garland Jeffreys** — *Guts For Love* (Epic).

FRANCIS DAVIS Hot: **World Saxophone Quartet** — *Revue* (Black Saint), **Albert Ayler** — *Swing Low Sweet Chariot* (Osmosis), **Doc Cheatham & Sammy Price** — *Black Beauty* (Sackville), **Sonny Rollins** — *Reel Life* (Milestone), **Lee Konitz & Wayne Marshall** — *Lee Konitz & Wayne Marshall* (Atlantic); Live: **Henry Threadgill**, Lush Life, N.Y.C.

like guitar scrape on "Over Under Sideways Down" and the galloping harmonica-feedback-guitar ballet in the middle of "Lost Woman" that can still knock the stuffing out of a dozen Soft Cells. Fronted by the defiant white punk Delta bray of the late Keith Relf, the Yardbirds subverted the pop of their day with a passion, arrogance and suicidal disregard for top forty chart laws (when was the last time you heard anything like the Jeff Beck-Jimmy Page acid-guitar rain in "Happenings Ten Years Time Ago" on either AM or FM radio?) that sounds far more urgent even now than the frosted Motown of the latest Human League single.

The Yardbirds doesn't rewrite history; it just straightens it out a little. Together with its flood of memories, it also brings a rush of adrenalin as hard as anything you'll ever get from AC/DC or the Dead Kennedys. And if nothing else, this album just saved me a hundred dollars. — *David Fricke*

World Saxophone Quartet
Revue (Black Saint/PSI)

The World Saxophone Quartet (Julius Hemphill, Oliver Lake, David Murray, Hamiet Bluiett) is one of the few groups of its era to master the trade secret of the great swing bands of the 30s and 40s: precision is the quickest and surest method of inducing ecstasy. And as modernists, they've come to realize that the cooperation that makes precision possible is never more necessary or exhilarating than when an ensemble is improvising collectively.

If it's easy to understand the attraction these four multi-reed virtuosi felt for one another upon forming the group five years ago, it's even easier to appreciate both why they trusted the union would work and why it almost did not. By the late 70s, the unaccompanied performance—long the exclusive domain of pianists—had become a vehicle of self-expression for saxophonists too. Lake's piercing *a cappella* soprano intro to "Hymn For The Old Year," Bluiett's bittersweet baritone prologue to Murray's "Ming" and Murray's own smeary tenor build-up to "David's Tune" all recall the WSQ's origins in the solo saxophone concept, while scrupulously avoiding the windy excess that has characterized so many endeavors along these lines, some of this band's included. But aside from Hemphill's bobbing stoptime choruses on Bluiett's gangbuster blues "I Heard That," these intros are the only solo passages on the WSQ's fourth LP, and in each instance, the soloist makes his greatest impact the moment the other horns collide with him.

The level of invention is even higher on the pieces on which no single voice dominates at any time, particularly the four Hemphill compositions on side one. Hemphill uses the ability of each group member to double on flutes or clarinets to optimum vantage on "Little Samba" and "Affairs Of The Heart," and proves himself a master of illusion on "Slide" and "Revue," massing the four saxes in such a way as to summon up a big band's dynamic contrasts, its velvet textures, its houserocking heat. Even in this assembly of equals, Bluiett's wedgelike section work leaps out at you, and his new-morning tone poem "Quinn Chappel A.M.E. Church" brings the album to a lovely close.

Revue is a worthy successor to the almost flawless *WSQ*, even if it inevitably lacks some of the earlier record's breakthrough feel. Here's a band that makes such long-postponed ideals as true collective improvisation and the reconciliation of traditionalism and experimenta-

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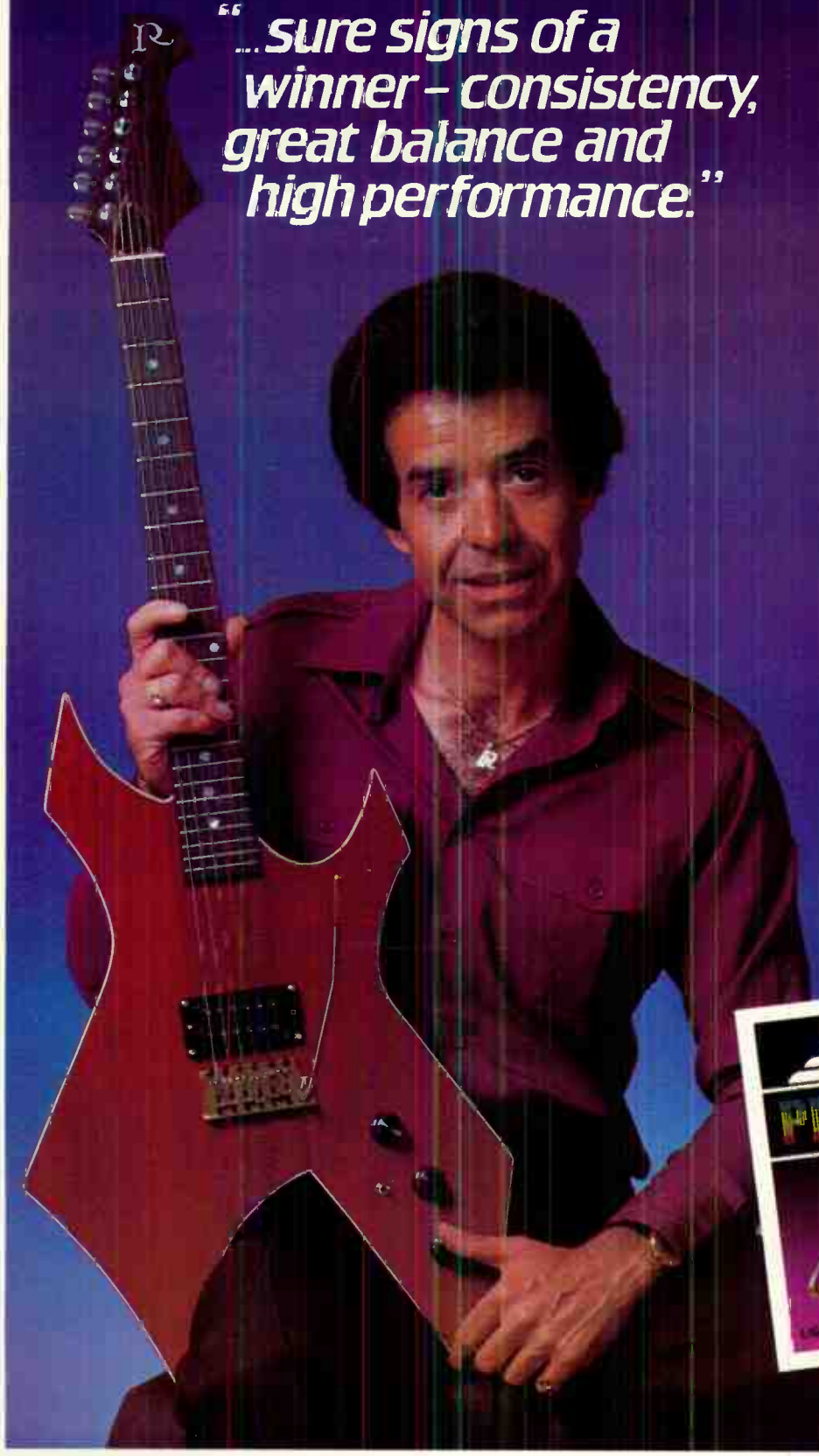

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tion seem just within reach. If you care about jazz at all, you'll want to chart their progress. — *Francis Davis*

John McLaughlin
Music Spoken Here (Warner Bros.)
Tony Williams
Once In A Lifetime (Verve)

Once In A Lifetime is the sound of three equally gifted pioneers charting new ground. *Music Spoken Here* is one exceptional bandleader and a support group uneasily testing the waters. What bridges the thirteen-year gap between recordings is McLaughlin's virtuosity and commitment to experimentation. Continuing the approach of 1981's *Belo Horizonte*, he weds his acoustic guitar to a synthesizer-dominated jazz-rock band. The results of this meeting are never as daring as the concept itself.

McLaughlin still writes attractive themes, but with their repetitious vamps and ultra-fast unison passages for synthesizer and guitar, his compositions sound like generally familiar lightweight fusion fare. The severe limitations of the Players (as his three-quarters French unit is billed) also dull the impact. Slumming classical pianist Katia Labeque acquits herself wonderfully on Steinway during "Brise De Coeur," her structured duet with McLaughlin, but forced to improvise on her revved-up Synclavier II, she quickly falls prey to scale-ridden clichés. She and fellow keyboardist Francois Courier, with their "progressive rock" synthesizer voicings, have yet to comprehend that strange sounds can't make up for lack of ideas. The rhythm section is not immune either. The potential of the acoustic bass hasn't been tapped, and there are times when the drummer doesn't have a clue where the beat is. Still, McLaughlin saves the day. When the band cushions his pristine flamenco-tinged fretting, particularly on the more ruminative second side, it finally gives some focus to a still underdeveloped project.

The roots of McLaughlin's new music, like those of all fusion, can be traced to the turbulently beautiful playing found on the Verve double, essentially a reissue of *Emergency!*, the first Tony Williams Lifetime LP. Prodded by the kick-ass beat of Williams' drums and Larry Young's darting organ, McLaughlin cuts loose with a raw intensity and aggression that would define electric guitar playing for the next decade. The jazz inventiveness of the band equaled its rock energy. Here's where fusion all began, and where many feel it should have stayed. — *Steve Futterman*

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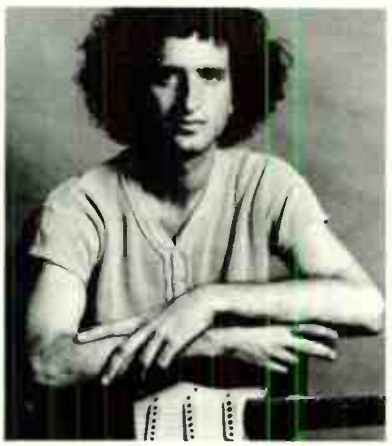

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ROCK

By J.D. Considine

SHORT TAKES

Prince Nico

Bill Wolfer

Spooner

The Pool

Prince Nico Mbarga & Rocafil Jazz — *Free Education* (Rounder). More great music from Nigeria, but with a few differences. Unlike King Sunny Ade's *juju* music, where fluid percussion and swooping guitars provide an almost avant-garde sense of texture, Prince Nico's highlife style leans toward intricate guitar filigrees and busier, though equally straightforward, percussion. And while Fela Anikulapo Kuti's social criticism has verged on sedition, Prince Nico thinks the Nigerian government is doing a great job educating the masses. In all, cheerful, buoyant dance music nearly as infectious as *Sweet Mother* was.

Phil Lynott — *The Philip Lynott Album* (Warner Bros.). This is an exceptionally literary album, full of wry juxtapositions, biting irony and startling confessions. Unfortunately, while this would make for great reading, it turns out to be pretty lame listening, largely because Lynott's melodies are so ethereal they seem to evaporate on the way to the stylus. Except for when the occasionally overblown arrangements drown them out, that is.

Neal Schon & Jan Hammer — *Here To Stay* (Columbia). Neal Schon and Jan Hammer seem like such a natural combination, it's hard to understand why their albums aren't more satisfying. The last one was a nice attempt at jazz that disintegrated into pointless noodling; this one cuts down on the noodling, but inexplicably offers refried Journey in its place (I thought solo projects were to get away from that lot, Neal). Still, Schon does more with Hammer's acid-jazz boogie riffs than Jeff Beck ever did.

New Order — *New Order* (Factory). A strong, danceable EP from the folks who made extreme depression fashionable again. While it's heartening to track the band's textural development across the five tracks of this compilation, it would have been even nicer to have seen that progress matched by an interest in something a little more upbeat, like normal romantic relationships, say. Or even a few good melodies.

Bill Wolfer — *Wolf* (Constellation). That Bill Wolfer used to play keyboards for Stevie Wonder and the Jacksons ought to give you an idea of his chops; that he turns in a powerful synthesized cover of "Papa Was A Rolling Stone" should give you an idea of his nerve. He's got a lot of smarts, too—while his electronics allow him to play one-man-band, he left the singing to Finis Henderson and Stevie Wonder-sound-alike Jon Gibson. Put all that together, and you've got the sort of debut album that makes you eager for a followup.

Garland Jeffreys — *Guts For Love* (Epic). Wasn't this guy supposed to be one of rock's best and brightest? If so, you'd never know it by this one. Shoddy, rambling melodies; flatulent arrangements; and vapid, maudlin lyrics are but a few of Jeffreys' problems here and his sappy singing and half-hearted backing band only make matters worse. Completely lacking the vitality and street smarts that made *Escape Artist* so thrilling, *Guts For Love* will make you wonder why Jeffreys even bothered.

Falco — *Einzelhaft* (A&M Import). Talk about your left-field hits! *Einzelhaft* (translated, it means "solitary confinement") is the last thing you'd expect from a German synth-rock band. Its poppish melodies and tastefully understated electronics are as hummably addictive as any U.S. radio hit, while the German-language rap "Der Kommisar" could be a sure-fire number one.

Spooner — *Every Corner Dance* (Mountain Railroad). Ten tough little tunes mixing mainstream melodicism with garage band primitivism. The production, by Shoes guitarist Gary Klebe, adds just the right amount of sheen to smooth out the band's rough edges and give the album a startling precocity. But mostly it's the straight-from-the-heartland honesty that makes this music worth coming back to. (Mountain Railroad Records, P.O. Box 1681, Madison, WS 53701)

Various Artists — *Cruisin' Ann Arbor* (Ann Arbor Music Project). Not being familiar with the Ann Arbor scene, I can't attest to this compilation's accuracy, but its mix of bar band verities, brave visions and occasional pranks seem credible enough. While a lot of it sounds similar to Anyscene, U.S.A., It Play's vivid David Byrne-isms, and Peter Madcat Ruth's harmonica and *kalimba* blues fusion are distinctive enough to make me consider braving the Michigan winter sometime. (AAMP, P.O. Box 8044, Ann Arbor, MI 48107)

The Pool — *The Pool* (Moment). One-man bands frequently amount to little more than a bad case of "Look ma! No sidemen!" But not Patrick Keel, a.k.a. the Pool. Instead of merely laying down the tracks all by his lonesome, he applies his single-mindedness to an attention to detail and nuance that makes his sound surprisingly rich. From the Police-like pastels of "Sing" to the neo-disco of "Dance It Down," Keel's five-song EP deserves repeated listening. (Moment Productions, P.O. Box 12424, Austin, TX 78711)

continued on page 105

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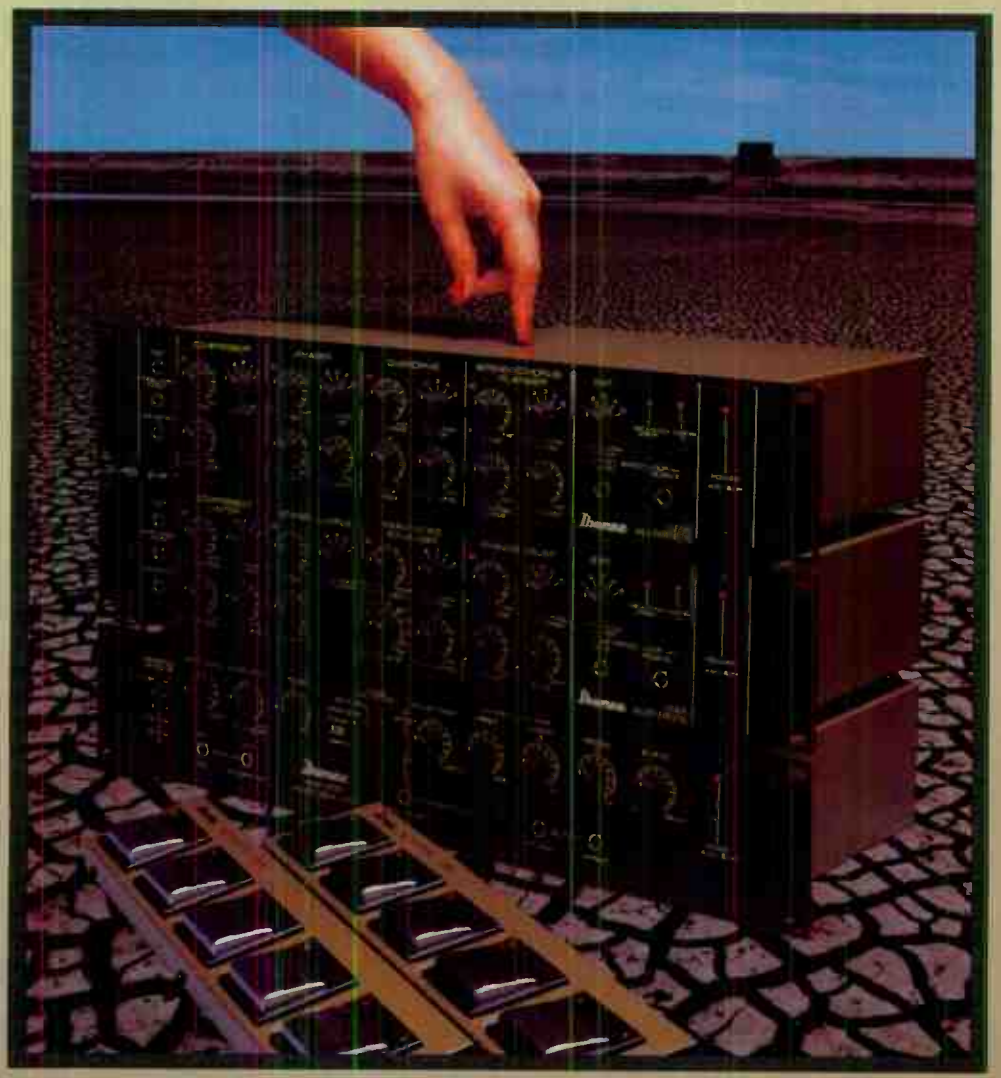

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World Radio History

JAZZ

By Francis Davis

SHORT TAKES

Sonny Rollins — *Reel Life* (Milestone). The bad news is that the brief "Solo Reprise" which ends the record (but which I listened to first) is just a throwaway, not the unaccompanied *tour de force* we've long awaited from Rollins. But the good news is that everything else here is pretty wonderful. There's a modal bop relay race which emphasizes that Jack DeJohnette anticipates the tenorist's mood swings better than any drummer since Max Roach, and two peppy funk riffs that suggest guitarists Yoshiaki Masuo and Bobby Broom are better foils for Rollins than anyone had a right to expect. Also: a saunter south-of-the-border in lieu of still another trek to the Caribbean, a dreamy "My Little Brown Book," and the most oddly angled Rollins solo in years on a line called "Best Wishes." Like everyone else, I too wish he'd record another Saxophone Colossus, but I'm more than willing to settle for this.

Albert Ayler — *Swing Low, Sweet Spiritual* (Osmosis). Jazz plus heavenward gazing usually equals bullying piety, but here the combination yields something altogether more humble, more tortured, more genuine. Recorded in low fidelity in 1964, this finds Ayler playing songs of doubt and affirmation, both spiritual and secular. It's a historically important find, obviously (it confirms Ayler's lineage from Sidney Bechet, for one thing), but it's a deeply moving experience as well, and it's provided me such succor these last few weeks, I sometimes wonder how I did without it until now. (From New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York City, NY 10012.)

Mingus Dynasty — *Reincarnation* (Soul Note/PSI). **Johnny Dyani** — *Mbizo* (SteepleChase). I know, I know—Mingus' involvement and intensity are tempers which elude the Dynasty. But on how many recent LPs will you hear soloists as distinctive as Ricky Ford, Jimmy Knepper, Roland Hanna and Richard Williams investigating themes as memorable as "Ecclusiastics" and "West Coast Ghost"? And need Mingus have lived forever to insure his music would always be played? If it's the spirit rather than the letter you want, you'll love Dyani, a south African bassist who shares Mingus' love of slapstick polyphony, his political conviction, and—most important of all—his ability to ignite a supercharged atmosphere that roils a good soloist (altoist Dudu Pukwana here) into exceeding himself.

Doc Cheatham & Sammy Price — *Black Beauty* (Sackville). Subtitled *A Salute to Black American Songwriters*, this is a vital retelling of Tin Pan Alley history by two septegenarians who speak from experience—trumpeter Cheatham and pianist Price. It's a wonderful record, destined to become a classic, I think. It makes me happy to be alive and proud to be an American, and I'm not being facetious.

Billy Bang — *Invitation* (Soul Note/PSI). **Charles Tyler** — *Definite Volume 1* (Storyville). Bang is the first important violinist to emerge from the new jazz since Leroy Jenkins, and his brand of gritty romanticism points to a welcome return to basics. But his newest quintet LP is disappointing, despite some torrid playing by pianist Curtis Clark, altoist/baritonist Tyler and Bang himself. Tyler's quartet LP—the first in a projected series of club dates from Europe—is another urgent reminder that this exemplary improviser has gone unsung way too long.

Gary Burton — *Picture This* (ECM). Let others criticize Burton's quartet albums for their sameness—I applaud their consistency. This one (with Jim Odgren's watery alto again replacing guitar) kicks a little harder than most of its predecessors, though its two ballads—one each by Mingus and Carla Bley—are as languid and as delicately shaded as you've come to expect.

Walt Dickerson — *I Hear You, John* (SteepleChase). *Life Rays* (Soul Note/PSI). Dickerson is a vibist who approaches his solos with a bordering-on-megalomania intensity reminiscent of Coltrane or Cecil Taylor, and he can sweep you along with him if your powers of concentration are anywhere near equal to his. He also has a habit of disappearing off the face of the earth, so catch him while you can. The SteepleChase offering is a duet with alert percussionist Jimmi Johnsun; the Soul Note a trio with Sirone and Andrew Cyrille. Both are equally absorbing, though the former is perhaps more subtly explosive, the latter much better paced.

Jemeel Moondoc — *Judy's Bounce* (Soul Note/ PSI). He's the most promising young altoist to come along in quite a while. The presence of Ed Blackwell on drums underscores the debt Moondoc still owes Ornette Coleman, but his many additions and substitutions to the formula indicate he's well on his way to some startling conclusions of his own. His fourth LP is the first to do justice to his lean penetrating sound, and the first on which he's had the benefit of a rhythm team as stellar as Blackwell and Fred Hopkins. Recommended.

Steve Lacy — *The Flame* (Soul Note/PSI). The cuts on which the sopranoist is joined by drummer Dennis Charles and pianist Bobby Few are hair-raising enough to make me wish the trio had gotten together for an entire album, especially since Few's solo track is splashy and uneventful, and Lacy's two unaccompanied ventures, full of eyebrow-raising moments as they are, are not quite up to the level of those he has recorded elsewhere.

Peter Erskine — *Peter Erskine* (Contemporary). Freed from the binds of Weather Report, he proves himself a lively drummer whose real allegiance is to Milesian hard bop. A solid if unspectacular effort, with Kenny Kirkland, Bob Mintzer, Eddie Gomez and the Breckers, among others.

Ron Carter — *Parfair* (Milestone). Carter coaxes a pleasing variety of tones from his piccolo bass, and his rhythm section attends to his every whim. But I think this record might have been even more satisfying had Carter seen fit to delegate to pianist Ted Lo some of the solo space he appropriates for himself.

Red Rodney — *The 3R's* (Muse). So called because the risible bop trumpeter is joined by young rajahs Richie Cole and Ricky Ford. But it's the unbilled Roland Hanna who nearly walks off with the show on what is probably one of Rodney's last dates for Muse and certainly one of the very best.

Charlie Rouse — *Moment's Notice* (Storyville). The first U.S. release of a 1977 Dutch import—rich balladry and fits of hard bop pique from a veteran tenorist who somehow never received the recognition a decade and a half with

World Radio History

Monk was supposed to bring a man. With Hugh Lawson, Bob Cranshaw and Ben Riley.

Tete Montoliu — *Boston Concert* (SteepleChase). Like many virtuosos, the Catalonian pianist's something of a show-off, and he clearly enjoys the live audience here almost as much as they seem to be enjoying him. Some of his runs are marred by needless embroidery, but they're tossed off with enough charm and quiet conviction to make this double a most engaging way to pass an hour and a half.

Gary Windo — *Dogface* (Europa). **Bob Reigle** — *The Marriage Of Heaven And Earth* (Aardwoof/NMDS). **Bert Wilson** — *Kaleidoscopic Visions* (AuRoar/NMDS). Three tenors making leadership debuts. Windo's an ex-Carla Bley sideman whose prankish, R&B-flavored LP is centered around a canine conceit. Some high-spirited playing, though the jokes wear thin with repeated hearings. Wife Pam and members of NRBQ are among the huge cast of characters helping Windo put on the dog. I find the overdubbed, unaccompanied and conceptually ambitious title track of Reigle's album more hellish than earthy or ethereal, but the extended quartet performance on the reverse side (with Steve McCall on drums) establishes Reigle as an accomplished player, and a writer and bandleader of promise and scope. Wilson, for years a fixture on the Bay Area free jazz scene before migrating to the Pacific Northwest, is a forceful blower with roots in Rollins and late Coltrane. He's long deserved his own record, and it's a good one for the most part, with a Seattle bassist and drummer providing firm support and the energy level and the cover graphics making me think of early-70s loft goings-on.

Meridith D'Ambrosio — *Little Jazz Bird* (Palo Alto). **Shirley Horn** — *Violets For Your Furs* (SteepleChase). Two tasteful singers who ought to be working what we in the business call "the good rooms." D'Ambrosio's a newcomer; some of her material's a touch precious, perhaps, but her phrasing is delightfully intimate and lazy, and her accompaniment (Phil Woods, Hank Jones) is first-rate. Horn's been around longer, though she's hardly better known. She's an abiding favorite of Miles Davis, and her mastery of mood and tempo tells you why. But I think she'd be more in her element in a quiet club than in front of the sated jazz festival crowd she faces here. M

Rock from pg. 102

Simple Minds — *New Gold Dream (81-82-83-84)* (A&M). As noxious as it sounds, Simple Minds are the dance-rock Genesis, and quite listenable to boot. How so? Because instead of going for the sort of wide-screen epic approach that leaves Genesis seeming

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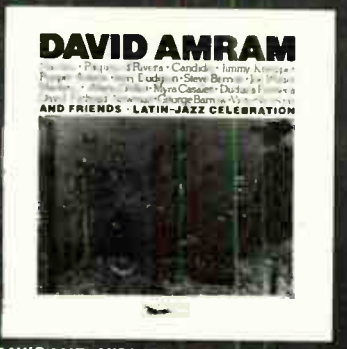

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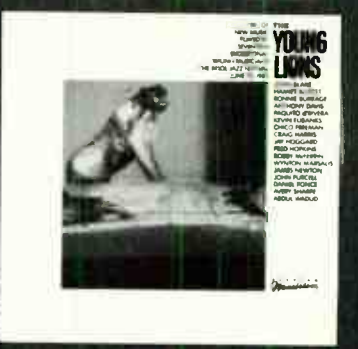

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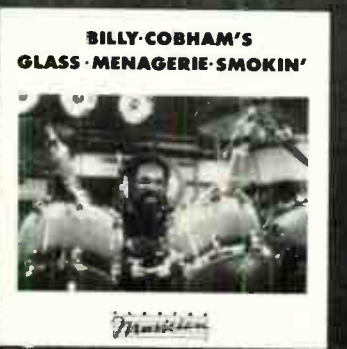

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Billy took his new high-energy, electric band to Montreux last summer and came out SMOKIN'! Hear GLASS MENAGERIE at full throttle on "Chiquita Linda," "Some Other Kind" & "Red Baron".

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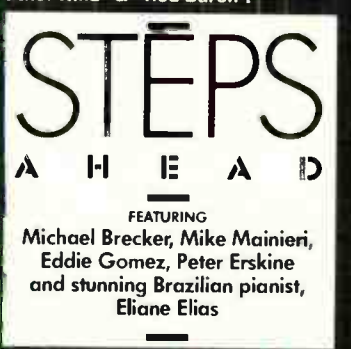

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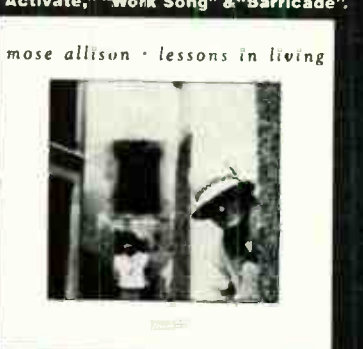

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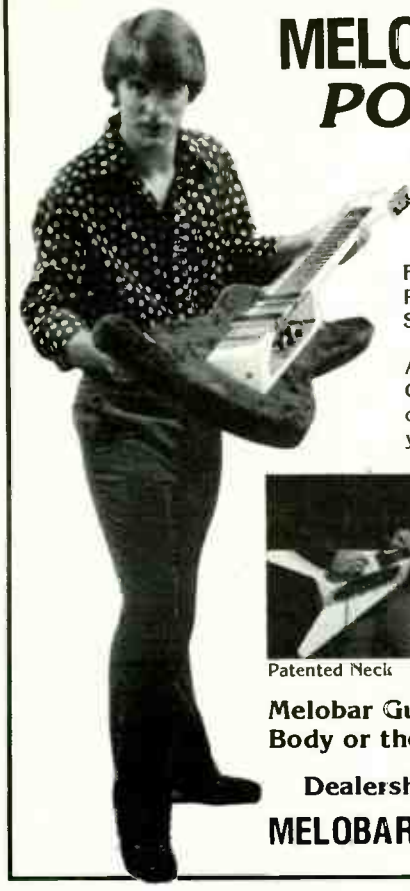
so pompous, Simple Minds counterpoint their instrumental expansiveness against a lean, funk-based pulse to create merely the *impression* of grandeur. Now, *that's* progressive!

Kiss — *Creatures Of The Night* (Casablanca). Pointlessly loud, sophomoric and utterly without redeeming social value, this is the best thing they've done since *Destroyer*. Just tell 'em you're buying it for your kid brother.

The Call — *Modern Romans* (Mercury). An impressive blend of brave words and bold music, this album establishes the Call as a contemporary group actually doing what the Doors were reputed to have done. Not that they're sound-alikes—lead singer Michael Keen sounds more like a macho David Byrne than the Lizard King—but the Call does achieve the same sense of drama and challenge the Doors went after. Only the Call do it without the bullshit factor.

The Nitecaps — *Go To The Line* (Sire). Despite their fire-breathing live reputation, the Nitecaps come off as rather effete on their vinyl debut, in part due to the unfortunately close focus on Jahn Xavier's heavily mannered vocals, but mostly because the too-focused production doesn't give the music the grit it needs to sound credible. Too bad, because the songs show a lot of promise despite their obvious reference points, and the approach is a lot more believeable than most post-pub-



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rockers.

Synergy — *The Jupiter Menace* (Passport). Sure, Larry Fast steals every sci-fi movie music cliché in the John Williams catalog, but he's no copycat. *He* does them on synthesizer!

Original Cast Album — *Little Shop Of Horrors* (Geffen). If anybody had told me that an old Roger Corman grade-Z horror flick about a man-eating petunia would make a great musical, much less a musical built around the girl groups sound, I'd have suggested they pass their delusions on to a qualified psychiatrist. Yet *Little Shop Of Horrors* makes the transition from mediocre screamer to a Spectorized *Sweeney Todd* and comes up smelling like a rose. Just don't sniff too close....

Skyy — *Skyyjammer* (Salsoul). Although Skyy's fusion of funk aesthetics and hard rock hamfistedness still makes for great party music, there's nothing on *Skyyjammer* that can match the sexy audacity of last year's "Call Me." "Moving Violation" comes close, and the others don't miss by too much, but it's going to take a lot more than jammin' to keep this groove going. M

Garage from pg. 24

they've been known to cover Love, the Seeds, Simon & Garfunkel and the Merry-Go-Round.

Plan 9 — *Frustration* (Voxx)

The Acid Casualties — *Panic Station*

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Various Artists — *Battle Of The Garages* (Voxx) — Contestants include the Unclaimed, Slickee Boys, Billy Synth & the Turn-Ups and the United States of Existence.

DMZ — *Relics* (Bomp) — Scorching 1977 recordings by defunct Boston garage punk warriors (their latest Sire LP is a junker). Also recommended is the 12-inch EP on Ace of Hearts by DMZ offshoot the Lyres.

Plasticland — A superb Midwest trio who deal in deep psychedelia—Sid Barrett-style. Pink Floyd is their specialty—with wit and imagination. They have two singles ("Mink Dress," "Mushroom Hill") and an EP (*Vibrasonics From Plasticland*) on their own S-Cadillac label.

Sounds Interesting Records in New Jersey will release an as-yet untitled compilation of new garage-rock bands in early '83. Featured are the Fuzztones from New York, the Slickee Boys, the Chesterfield Kings, Oregon's Miracle Workers and from Pennsylvania, the Shout and the Limits.

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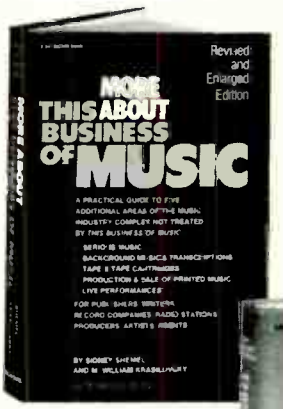

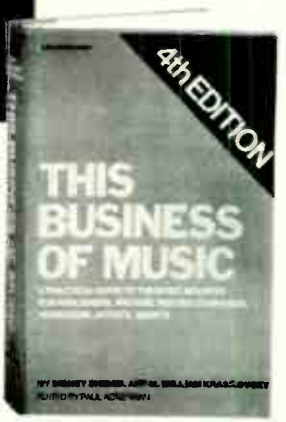

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World Radio History

Green from pg. 34

that's assigned for me to do. I can't explain about how you reach out and touch somebody without the extension of your hand. I love roses; I give the roses, yeah, and I bless the people."

Reportedly weary of the confines of his Memphis congregation and the gospel show circuit, Green found a way to reconnect with a pop audience. Last fall, he and Patti LaBelle (another powerhouse, church-trained singer who has veered back-and-forth between sanctity and sexuality) were cast as the co-stars in Vinnette Carroll's gospel music theatrical revue, *Your Arm's Too Short To Box With God* at Broadway's Alvin Theater. The show featured a contrived modern dance version of the Crucifixion story and lots of gospel singing. Green, for his part, improvised some preaching before his numbers and soon had the uptown audiences shouting and waving their arms to his down-home preaching. As he sang "Me And Jesus," Green picked up his floor-length red cloak and stutter-stepped across stage and let loose with a piercing squeal of glee.

"You just say the music in a way that it appeals to you," argues Green. "That's the way people are. I listen to the music. I listen to gospel; I listen to rock 'n' roll; I listen to everything. I have to, in order to keep up." Isn't there a contradiction in those musics? "Yeah, there's tremendous message contradictions, but as far musical contradictions, not so much. The message in pop music is, 'Hey, let's all freak out. Hey, let's all go out and get steamed.' That's all. It's drugs, girls, fornication, adultery, the chicks on the corner and everybody, the whole trip. Now the message of the gospel music is more, 'Let's Stay Together,' 'Love And Happiness,' 'Your Arm's Too Short To Box With God.' God, unity, strength, pray together, stay together, that whole trip."

Does he turn his back on his own pop music? "No-o-o-o!" he exclaims. "I'm proud of our past. We sang about the love message, not the trip-out business. We sang, 'I'm still in love with you for the good times.' I think we were blessed in many ways to have had such a past as we had in pop music, and I don't turn my back on it at all. There are so many lines to be drawn, and I don't like to draw any, no. If people want to dance, I think they ought to dance. A young girl came to me the other day and asked if she could ride horses and be a born-again Christian. I said, 'Hey, you feel like riding horses, ride one.' You know, you feel like going to the bowling alley, go. I don't see anything wrong with going to a bowling alley and throwing a ball at some bottles." At this, he breaks up into giggles.

"If it troubles you," he picks up again, "maybe you got a problem in the first place. Yeah. There's a lot of that stuff that people like to hang onto. If you do this, you can't be a good Christian. Well, a good Christian in the mind of one person is an evil person in the mind of another. Yeah. We've been singing about love, God is love, for thirteen years now. I know a lot of people who are familiar with my past and accept it readily and who also accept our future. So we are stepping back into the future. Whew, that's a heavy statement, isn't it? We are stepping back into the future. I just thought of that myself. Yeah. We are stepping back into the future. My granddaddy would love that. He'd say, 'Bam! Tell them, boy.'"

Geraldo from pg. 85

"gives me the cleanest sound I can get. I crank up the gain until it distorts and the compression kicks in. Then when I hit a note hard, you don't even hear it. You hear the aftermath of the note instead."

Despite Geraldo's preference for a relatively uncomplicated instrument setup, he is not intimidated by the continuing flood of technological innovations. He believes a guitarist has an obligation to stay on top of new developments in order to both expand the dimensions of the instrument and keep it from becoming an antiquated symbol of simplicity past.

"A keyboard player can utilize a steel drum setting on an Oberheim," he points out. "That doesn't bother me as long as I can plug drum sequencer circuitry into my guitar. I'm not a purist in terms of having a guitar sound only like a guitar. An instrument is a tool of interpretation and should be flexible enough to be able to encompass whatever it is the musician wants to interpret."

These avant techno-garde ideas have not stopped Geraldo from seeking out more traditional acoustic stringed instruments from countries such as Russia, Japan and China. He's convinced there are endless ways to experiment with even the most basic sounds. "I can take a stringed harp and put it through a harmonizer, bring it up or down two octaves and run that through a delay of some kind. Then, instead of playing an arpeggio, strings could be popped while I double it with a guitar run through my normal rack. That would be grand. It's something I'd like to try."

Geraldo starts to shift impatiently on his hotel room couch, ready to return to the Framus songwriting session interrupted by this interview. "Let me put it this way," he announces, reaching for his instrument. "When it comes to guitar, I'm ready to try *anything*."

Bechirian from pg. 85

Rachel Sweet. He explains that one way he was able to get that authentic early 60s Little Eva feel to Rachel's voice was by using a German microphone called a Sound Star. "It's actually an amateur microphone, used a lot for neighbor-

World Radio History

hood theaters. It's also popular for miking drums. But I use it exclusively for doing vocals with Nick and Elvis and often for miking guitar amps. I carry one around with me for every session." He also notes a mike preference for Neumanns and AKGs.

Of the English and European studios he has worked in, Bechirian says his favorite is still Rockfield, Brit pub-rock mecca and home of Dave Edmunds and Nick Lowe's greatest hits. The control room actually sits between two studio rooms, "one semi-dead and one totally live." The arrangement allows him to record musicians in both rooms simultaneously, often combining drums and guitar amps in the live room with more guitar amps in the "semi-dead" room (he usually runs the bass guitar directly into the board). Bechirian is also fond of Rockfield's huge outdoor courtyard (the studio is a converted country manor in deepest rural Wales) to record vocals at night. "You get a nice reflection, a natural resonance in the open night air."

Rockfield's Trident TSM 48-channel mixing console gives him "tons of facilities" although he is also quite taken with Solid State Logic's new computerized Total Recall desk (actually he likes the layout of it; he insists on mixing all his records manually). Among his favorite effects he counts the "good plain reverb" of old EMT reverb plates and a demonstration model of a German Quantec room simulator—"It simulates the acoustics of any room you want but it's incredibly realistic"—that he lugs around with him to every session. And he will only mix on king-size JBL 4350 speakers at excruciating volume.

Besides producing Nick the Knife's next fab frisbee and Nick's missus, Carlene Carter's new LP, Bechirian's time is currently taken up with a new studio trio called Blanket of Secrecy for whom he plays keyboards and produces. Their self-titled debut LP on Warner Bros. was, he admits, a conscious attempt to be "more American." Vocalist Pete Marsh can sound a bit like Foreigner's Lou Gramm at times and yet the record is hardly a crass commercial cash-in. It has the same bold bright sound Bechirian is known for, plus lots of strong hooks. But one of the ironies of Bechirian's career is that while his pop productions may be pure, they have not had tremendous success on American radio.

"What I really want to do is come over to America and spend a year there, just see what it's all about. It's very difficult for someone sitting 3,000 miles away to decide what's good for American radio. These days I'm buying more American records and just listening to the changes. But overall, though a lot of new stars have come along, the basic sound has been the same for the last ten years. It's a bit depressing actually. Nobody there seems to be trying anything different these days."

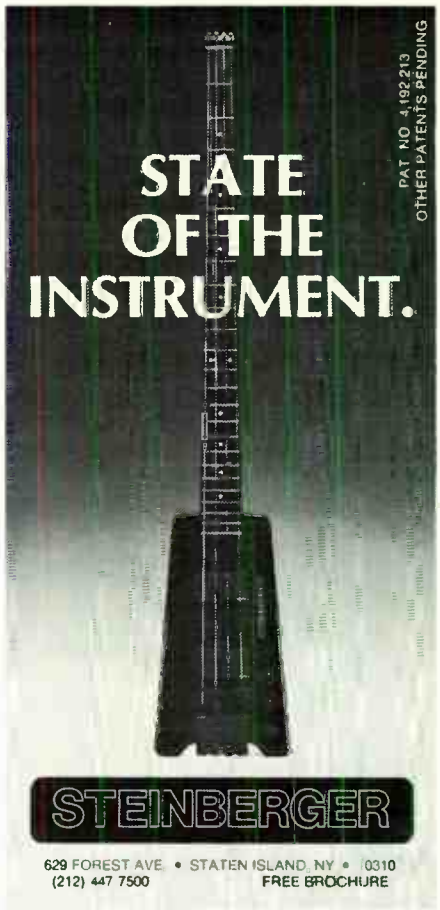
But count on Roger Bechirian to keep giving us fresh sounds and hopefully make them marketable as well. Next year's model may be just around the corner. M

Roth from pg. 88

big part of his unique sound. He was also lucky enough while going to college to see John McLaughlin, still with the Mahavishnu Orchestra, at a concert that was moved to the school cafeteria due to an outdoor rainout. He'd heard that McLaughlin was hot, yet had not really heard how hot. Well, Steve was totally blown away by his playing, finding it to be "the perfect blend of power and melody." That experience became a major inspiration.

For a bass player's perspective, I called on R&B specialist Jerry Jemmott, whose credits include work with B.B. King, Aretha Franklin and Roberta Flack.

"As an instructor, my goal is to guide every student to become better than myself. The foremost aspect of music that the bassist must learn is the 'groove.' In creating this magic you must have the three C's: courage, confidence and conviction. Courage to begin or change the groove, confidence to develop and expand upon it, and the conviction to put your heart and soul into it till the end. I find that teaching, playing and learning all help to keep life and



World Radio History

music fresh. I remember the great Richard Davis saying, 'Don't make music your life. Life comes first, and your music is an expression of it. In other words, construct a well-balanced and happy life, and the time you spend on music will have more meaning and direction. With this approach, virtues such as patience, consistency and perseverance will develop, and practice and playing will become more sincere.'"

So there you have it. As far as Tal Farlow, Steve Morse, Jerry Jemmott, myself and countless others are concerned, the learning, playing and teaching experiences are forever intertwined —so much so, that I really wonder if there should even be such names to sub-divide what is really one lifelong adventure.

Arlen Roth is a guitarist, performer and author who has spent the last fourteen years touring, playing sessions and recording his own solo albums. He produces Hot Licks Instruction Tapes, *a cassette guitar course, and Doubleday will publish his fourth book,* Arlen Roth's Electric Guitar *this fall.*

Palmieri from pg. 46

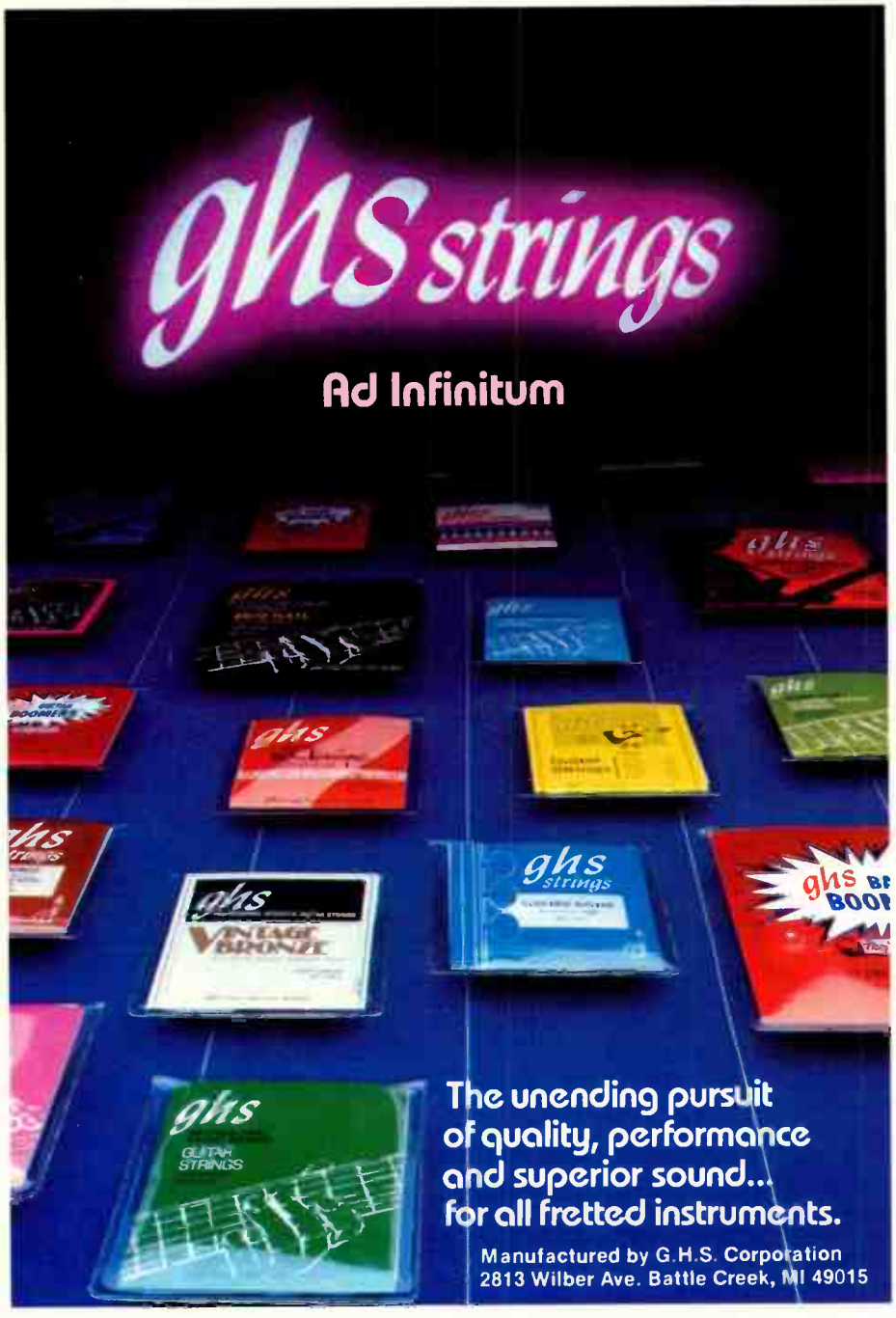
nence, Eddie Palmieri was not happy; most of his unhappiness stemmed from Coco's decision to release *Unfinished Masterpieces* against Eddie's wishes. He gave as a reason for his refusal the fact that "it wasn't ready yet." The situation gave way to a series of suits and countersuits between the artist and the label, which prevented Eddie from signing with any record company until Coco was declared officially out of business.

His next step would be CBS Records and the possibility it offered to enter a "megabucks" market. The only album that resulted from this relationship was *Lucumi Macuma Voodoo* (Epic), produced by ex-Blood, Sweat & Tears drummer Bobby Colomby. Although accorded the benefits of CBS' power in the business, *Lucumi* failed to meet the sales standards of Palmieri's past hits. His new audience, hungry for someone to explain Latin rhythms in Anglo terms, found themselves confused by Palmieri's new interest in different variations of Joseph Schillinger's mathematical permutations theories. And exactly how warmly was this album received at Black Rock? The bandleader answered that on a radio interview: "I walked into the PR guy's office, and they were doing some sort of promotion for Teddy Pendergrass. And all I saw around the office were little teddy bears. Hundreds and hundreds of them, spread all over the room. I knew then the label wouldn't understand what to do with my music."

When the contract with CBS was finally dissolved, Palmieri had already entered another period of creative inactivity. His sporadic presentations were still main events, but the consistent excellence of years past was left behind, his presentations considered, at best, uneven. One particular low was during a Madison Square Garden performance where Palmieri's legendary reputation of not doing soundchecks became evident when, with over 19,000 souls present to watch the Sun of Latin Music close the two-day festivities, the rhythm section was barely audible. Worse yet, during one of Eddie's fabled solos, the engineer turned down his piano and raised Charlie Palmieri's organ, forcing the public to applaud more to the visual antics of Eddie's elbows banging against the keyboard than to Palmieri's virtuosity. He rebuts any mention of personal negligence by insisting, "What's the point of doing soundchecks in such concerts when there are a lot of bands playing? By the time my turn comes, the sound person wouldn't know the correct sound levels for my band anyway."

A more positive development was that Eddie began gathering some of the familiar musicians' faces of years past: Vitin Paz, Jose Rodriguez, Mario Rivera, "Chocolate" Armenteros, Ronnie Cuber. Ismael was even back doing vocals. Eventually, Barry Rogers, who had left Eddie's band to pursue his own group Dreams with the Brecker Brothers, came back to the stage early in 1981. All the ingredients were within grasp; all that was needed was a recording contract, and that was taken care of when Palmieri signed with Barbaro Records, Fania president Jerry Massucci's new label.

On September 1981, the LP *Eddie*



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World Radio History

Palmieri from pg. 46

Palmieri (Barbaro) was released, and by the end of the first month it had become the industry's hottest seller. With arrangements by the same René Hernández of the Palladium days, as well as by Francisco Zumaqué, the album is a reflection of what Palmieri calls his "Errol Flynn-Porfirio Rubirosa mood": Baroque fugues blended with the mambo layers; old *danzones* (Cuban rhythms of late 1890s) mixed with intermittent bursts of the fiercest trombone-sax-trumpet mambos Palmieri has recorded to date. All in all, 537 studio hours, a work that he calls, "the one LP you must listen to again and again if you want to know what Latin music is about."

The release of this album also coincided with the emergence of a more active Palmieri. He was playing more often at "selected" events, like the ones his personal manager and friend José Luis Prego would put together at Magique discotheque or the Peppermint Lounge. And, of course, on shows of such magnitude as Eddie's promoter Ralph Mercado's Madison Square Garden extravaganzas, and the first anniversary of the Village Gate's "Salsa meets Jazz" Monday series at Carnegie Hall, where Eddie's former mentor McCoy Tyner was the opening act. But it wasn't until his recent appearance at one of Mercado's "Salsa's Perfect Combination" shows at the Garden that Eddie encountered his most demanding challenge of recent years.

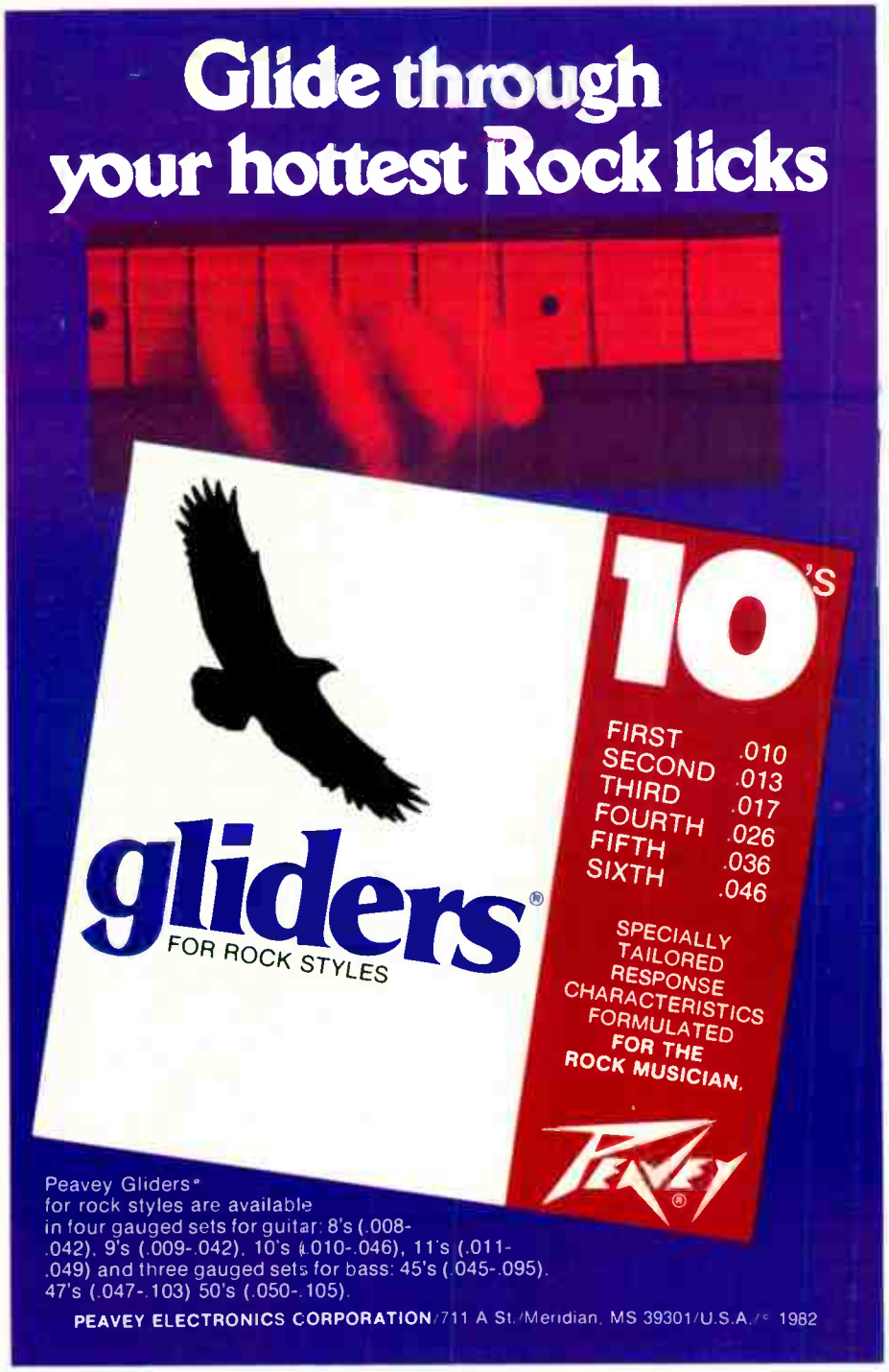
A crowd of over 18,000 hardly expected the Sun of Latin Music to *open* the show for singer Cheo Feliciano—a spiritual reunion of sorts since Cheo had performed occasionally with the pianist after the breakup of La Perfecta. It was time to rise to the occasion. The stress caused by the situation was evident backstage, where a tanned Palmieri, fresh from a concert tour of Puerto Rico, paced nervously between a limousine and a van, sweat pouring from his face.

After Eddie opened with a couple of numbers with Ismael Quintana, including the crowd-pleasing "Vámonos Pa'l Monte" ("Let's Go Back To The Mountains"), the audience received Cheo Feliciano with a loud roar. Once again, the special magic was felt, this time, though, with a large dose of suspense. Instead of performing "Páginas De Mujer" ("Pages Of A Woman," a commercial hit in New York), Palmieri chose to play "El Dia Que Me Quieras" and "Ritmo Alegre," the most classically inclined cuts of the album. The Sun of Latin Music shed some special rays that night. Before beginning his piano solo, he asked the audience for some *clave*. As moved by an unseen metronome, the many hundreds of hands in that section gave a one-two-three/one-two strong enough to spread through Madison Square Garden.

Palmieri's hands quickly moved into a *montuno* pattern, followed by the familiar left-hand *montuno*, this time punctuated by classical modulations. When it was over, the mambo, cushioned by a saxophone section playing the woodwind lines, erupted. Rogers' trombone led the brass attack, every stride perfectly synchronized with the open spaces of the saxes and trumpets' lines, fueled by an unyielding rhythm section whose every member tried to outdo each other in intensity.

With more than half of the Garden on their feet, cheering wildly, dancing and savoring every single note, Palmieri couldn't stop. Waving off Feliciano's cue to the final verses, Eddie's closed right fist moved in rising concentric circles, calling the troops around for another round of mambos. They did just that. Once the leader signaled for the *corte* (the percussive break preceding the mambo), the band proceeded all over again to lay the intricate lines of "Ritmo Alegre"—only this time, a bit more precise, more synchronized, with an even sweeter, goose-pimple-raising swing than the first time.

The crowd roared as the final chords signaled the end of the set. Palmieri got up from his stool, smiled, and, putting a hand over Feliciano's shoulder, walked off the stage smiling. He knew his public was his again. Eddie Palmieri disappeared into the dark corridors of the Garden backstage, the taste of triumph still fresh on his lips. The magic had been among us once again. M



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PHASOR 595

The DOD 595 Phasor is a six stage regeneration phase unit with up to 1080° degrees of phase shift. The DOD 595 produces all the classic phase shift effects, along with a broad spectrum of regeneration phase shifting. Three controls are provided on the DOD 595 Phasor allowing a wide range of colorful sounds.

WAH FILTER 545

The DOD Wah Filter 545 is a bandpass filter that can be swept across a portion of the audio range. The peak frequency of the 545 is determined by the level of the input, the stronger or louder the signal, the higher the wah effect. By varying playing techniques the 545 will act as a touch controlled wah—wah adding expression to all types of instruments.

DISTORTION 555

The DOD Distortion 555 delivers a wide range of useful effects from a warm tube type overdrive effect to a hard driving distortion or fuzz sound with a long sustain. The 555 can give the presence of a powerful sound without loud volumes, making the 555 a useful effect for all types of performances.

DELAY 585

The DOD Delay 585 uses the latest bucket brigade technology to electronically simulate echo and reverberation. The Delay 585 is completely electronic and requires no mechanical or moving parts, making it totally maintenance free. The Delay 585 provides continuous delay times from 60 to 300 ms (milliseconds) with a dynamic range greater than 90 db.

STEREO CHORUS 565

The DOD Stereo Chorus 565 is a time delay effect. The chorus effect of the 565 is accomplished by mixing the original voice with a delayed voice whose pitch varies slightly from the original. The DOD 565 also includes a synthesized stereo output allowing the use of two amplifiers to produce a realistic stereo presence. Because of the tonal characteristics produced by the 565, its applications are many.

FLANGER 575

The DOD Flanger 575 produces its comb filter type of effects through the use of time delay circuitry. Using short delay times, the 575 can produce a wide range of effects from regeneration flanging and chorus to quivering vibrato, and many melodic effects in between. The 575 has a dynamic range greater than 90 db with a very wide frequency response, making the 575 a natural for studio or stage.

COMPRESSOR LIMITER 525

The DOD 525 Compressor Limiter makes all signals which pass through it have the same average output level, regardless of the original input level. In other words, the 525 squeezes a wide dynamic range into a much smaller one. This gives an instrument more sustain by increasing the gain as a note decays, adding a more even, unbroken professional sound.

DOD ELECTRONICS CORPORATION
2953 South 300 West
Salt Lake City, Utah 84115
Telephone (801) 485-8534

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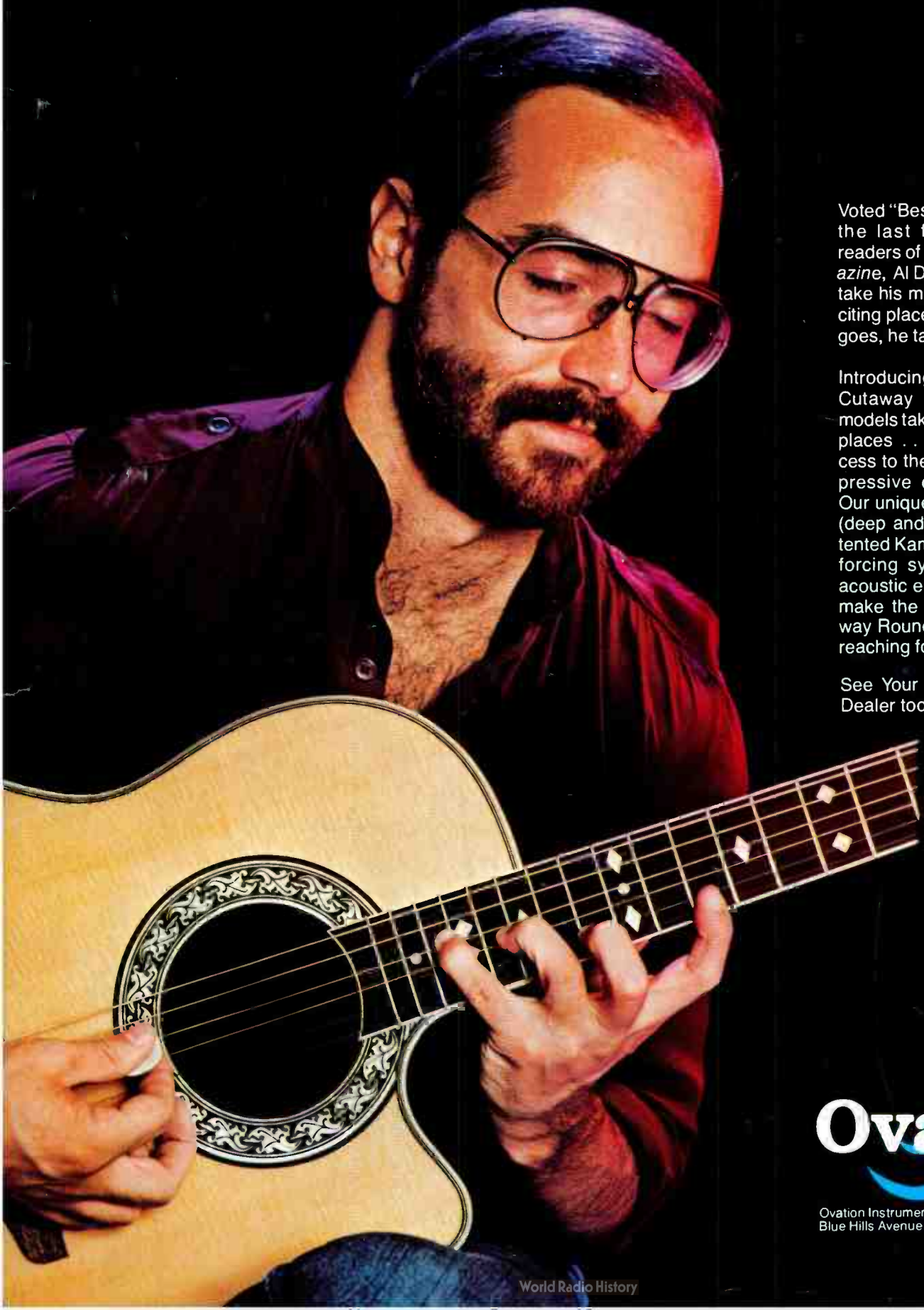
THE OVATION CUTAWAY: REACH FOR IT.



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