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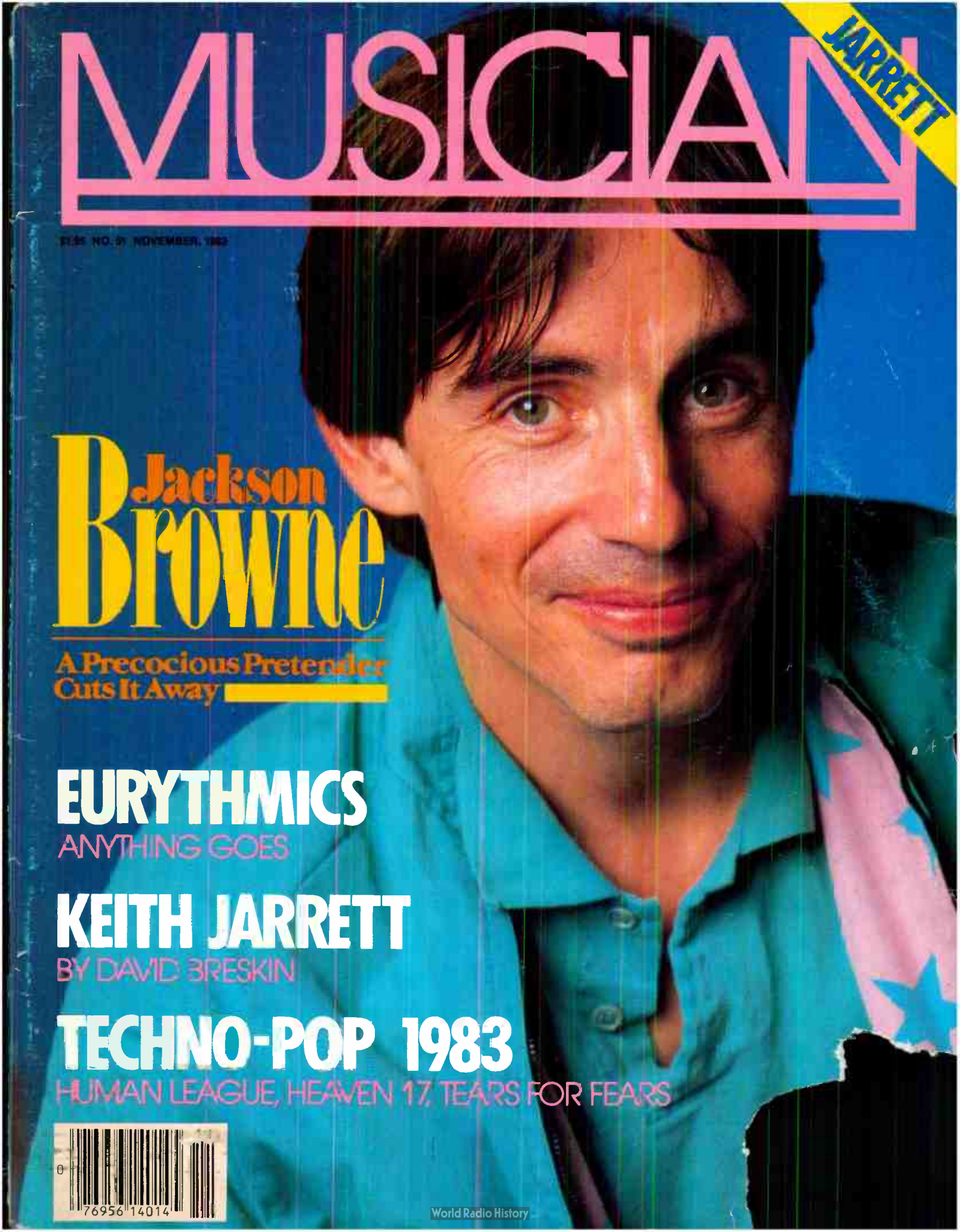
$2.95 NO. 51 NOVEMBER, 1982



Jackson Browne

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KEITH JARRETT

BY DAVID BRESKIN

TECHNO-POP 1983

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Subject: The Concept of Programmable Performance

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A BILLBOARD PUBLICATION

MUSICIAN

NO. 61, NOV., 1983

Techno-Pop, 1983 is a bright new world of gloss 'n' groove promising better listening through technology. But after a year, the revolution seems more one of form than of real content, leaving us with the same old pop in new clothing. David Fricke probes the sticky dilemma of the Human League and the alternatives explored by Heaven 17, Tears for Fears, Japan and John Foxx. Page 38

Jackson Browne threw out a distinguished career of thoughtful, shy sensitivity, deciding to get his hands dirty and sweaty with crunch-infested rock 'n' roll. Jackson talks with Bill Flanagan about his new bar band thrills, the power of the songwriter's art, *Lawyers* (and singers) *In Love* and other musical insights. Page 48

Keith Jarrett continues to amaze his followers and confound his detractors, but some new demons have lately been sneaking up behind him: the rampant spread of George Winston good vibes and the audience's confusion with Keith's escalating struggle with his stern muse. David Breskin explores the concepts, concerts and contradictions of Jarrett. Page 56

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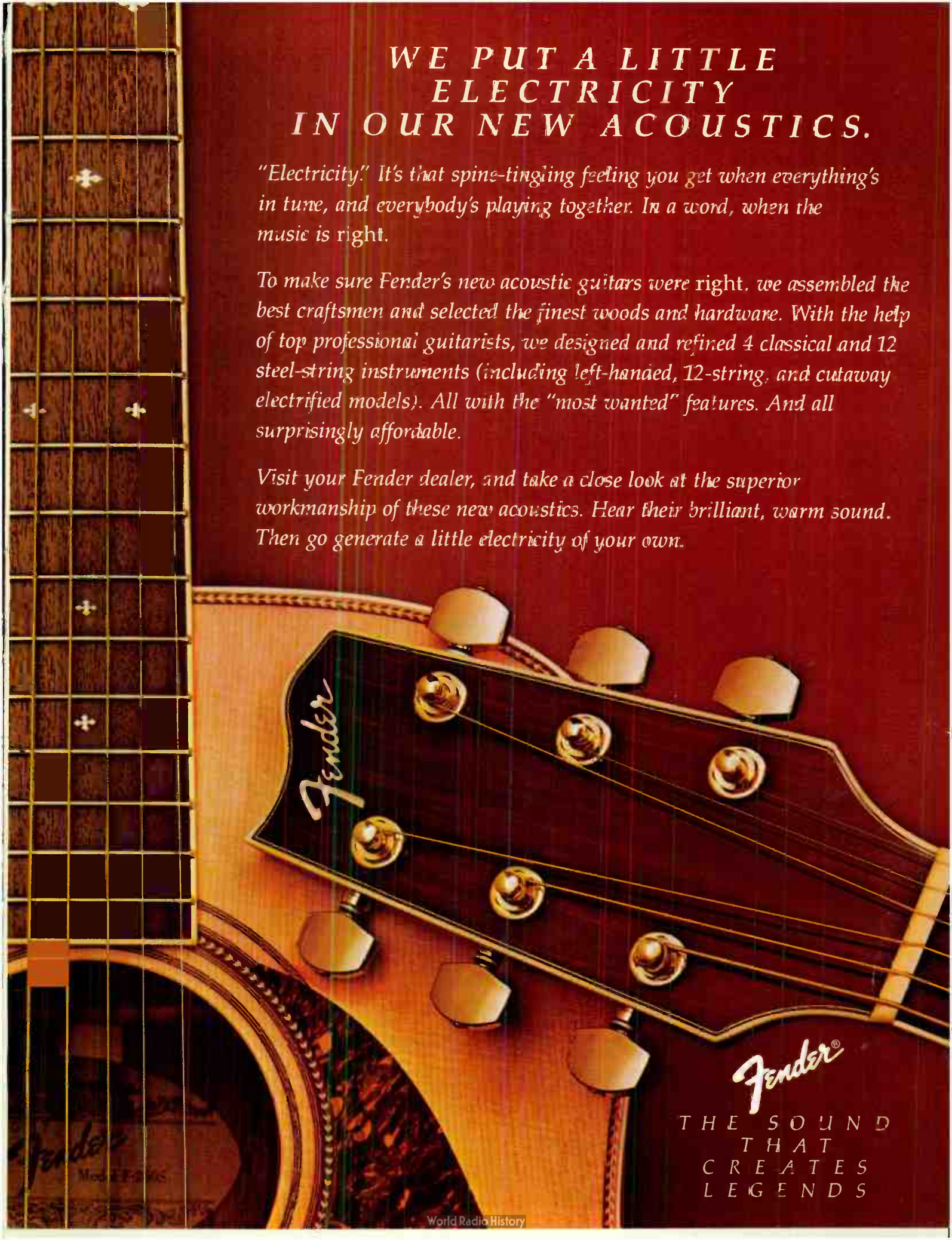

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THE SOUND THAT CREATES LEGENDS

music industry news

by Jock Baird

Some big money changed hands this month as the Rolling Stones signed a new distribution deal with CBS, promising four albums (one a greatest hits collection) and their back catalog for the eyebrow-raising price of twenty-five million dollars. The Stones reportedly bid up offers of sixteen million from present distributor Atlantic and twenty million from new high-roller MCA. Their new "raw and bluesy" LP, due shortly, will be their last for Atlantic; the first CBS LP may not hit the streets until 1985 and by the time the deal expires, the Stones will be pushing fifty. MCA took Bee Gee Barry Gibb away from RSO/PolyGram as a consolation prize, leaving the other two brothers Gibb to go on without him. MCA Records continues its facelift under the new Irving Azoff regime by "re-structuring" its New York office, firing some staffers and naming Arista A&R v.p. Bob Feiden to head its Gotham operation. Other executive reshuffling saw Sal Licata, who resigned the presidency of Chrysalis in protest over their distribution deal with CBS earlier this year, become a v.p. and general manager for Arista (who also bolted from indie distribution).

Stung by an injunction obtained by Schwartz Bros. keeping MCA from handling Motown product, the L.A. label reached a confidential out-of-court settlement with the mid-Atlantic indie distributor. Meanwhile, another distributor in the Southwest, Associated Distributors of Phoenix, lost its bid to get an injunction against Motown. A third suit by Dallas' Big State is unresolved at press time. In other high-stakes legal action, an important decision by a New York Federal Court gave American labels more clout in stopping what are called "parallel imports," imported versions on other labels of music for which an American label owns the U.S. rights. In finding against Scorpio Music Distributors of Pennsylvania, Judge Clifford Scott Green held that even though Scorpio had not imported the record directly, it was still culpable for copyright infringement. The decision is a big boost to a new offensive against parallels by the major labels.

During soundcheck for their transcendent Shea Stadium concert, **Sting** and **Stewart Copeland** of the Police put on a fierce wrestling match for the benefit of a startled BBC interviewer and camera team. (**Andy Summers** declined to join the fray, claiming, "It's okay. I'm the sissy.") A few days later, just prior to a show in Minneapolis, Sting began to experience severe chest pains. Rushed to the hospital and fearing a heart attack, Sting learned he had bruised a couple of ribs in the fracas. Talk about creative tension.... Other distinguished rock survivors include **Johnny Ramone**, who endured brain surgery after having his skull fractured by Seth Macklin, a guitarist with Sub Zero Construction. Macklin claimed he hit Johnny in self-defense after Ramone had discovered Macklin out with Cynthia "Roxy" Whitney, Johnny's lover of seven years. Johnny claims he was hit from behind and never saw it coming. A judge will probably decide who to believe.

Speaking of the Police, **Andy Summers** and **Jack DeJohnette** will get together to do an album early in 1984. Meanwhile, **Stewart Copeland**'s soundtrack to Francis Ford Coppola's new film *Rumblefish* hits a theater near you even as you read this. The film features **Tom Waits** in his third film role and an appearance and a musical contribution by rising zydeco star (and former filing clerk) **Queen Ida.**

Robert Fripp has gone back to some of his best Frippertronics tracks and recorded lead guitar work over them.... **David Bowie** is producing a new film starring Susan Sarandon and **Iggy Pop**.... **Stevie Ray Vaughan**'s charges of cheapness to the contrary, Bowie's guitarists **Carlos Alomar** and **Earl Slick** report the money for the tour was far better than the three-bills-a-night figure widely publicized .... **Captain Beefheart**'s video for "Ice Cream For Crow" was rejected by MTV but got picked up by another buyer: the Museum of Modern Art. The Captain declined to produce the next **Laurie Anderson**, which is proceeding apace without him .... **Peter Howard** replaced **Terry Chimes** as the Clash's drummer.... **Prince** has begun construction of a follow-up to *1999*.

Peter Tosh has had an eventful tour: after setting off a fire alarm and getting a visit from the fire department in Boston for excessive incense and smoke (ho ho!), Tosh cancelled a four-city tour of Israel because of an Israeli-South African arms deal. Instead, Tosh will play in Zimbabwe, his first visit to Africa....Brit guitarist **Robert Smith** (the Cure, Siouxsie & the Banshees) has formed a new group with Banshee bassist **Steve Severin** dubbed the Glove. **Siouxsie**, in return, formed the Creatures, promising a first single of Mel Torme's "Right Now".... **John Hiatt** is performing with **Nick Lowe** and **Paul Carrack** in England; Hiatt will appear on Carrack's next LP and Lowe's band will return the favor for Hiatt.

Chart Action

The Police managed to hold the top spot of the *Billboard* charts for the month despite a daring one-week recapture by Thrilling Michael Jackson. *Flashdance* and Def Leppard retained their third and fourth spots respectively while Stevie Nicks lost hold of #5, slipping to #9. Mega-leaps by Billy Joel, Asia (you were surprised?) and Jackson Browne, and a good solid push by the *Stayin' Alive* soundtrack filled out the top ten, anchored by the Fixx's surprise second-LP success. Taking some mild hits were Loverboy, Bowie, Donna Summer, with harder shots to Journey (snicker), Men At Work and Duran Duran. Good upward movement was shown by Robert Plant and Eurythmics (now at #11). Down in the twenties, Elvis Costello celebrated his first Hot 100 single ever while Men Without Hats and Taco also reaped the harvest of good singles. Stiff of the month: the much-ballyhooed Crosby, Stills & Nash LP, plummeting to #124. Phenomenon of the month: *all five* of the Police's albums were on the top 200.

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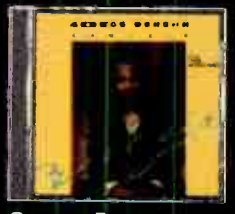
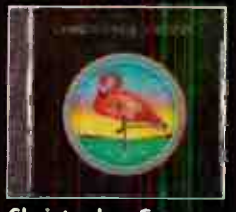


George Benson
Breezin

Asia
Alpha



Christopher Cross
Christopher Cross

Tanga Project

Jarreau
Jarreau

Linda Ronstadt
Greatest Hits Vol. 1

Quarterflash
Take Another Picture

LA Chamber Orch.
Janacek: Mladi

Talking Heads
Speaking In Tongues

Abba
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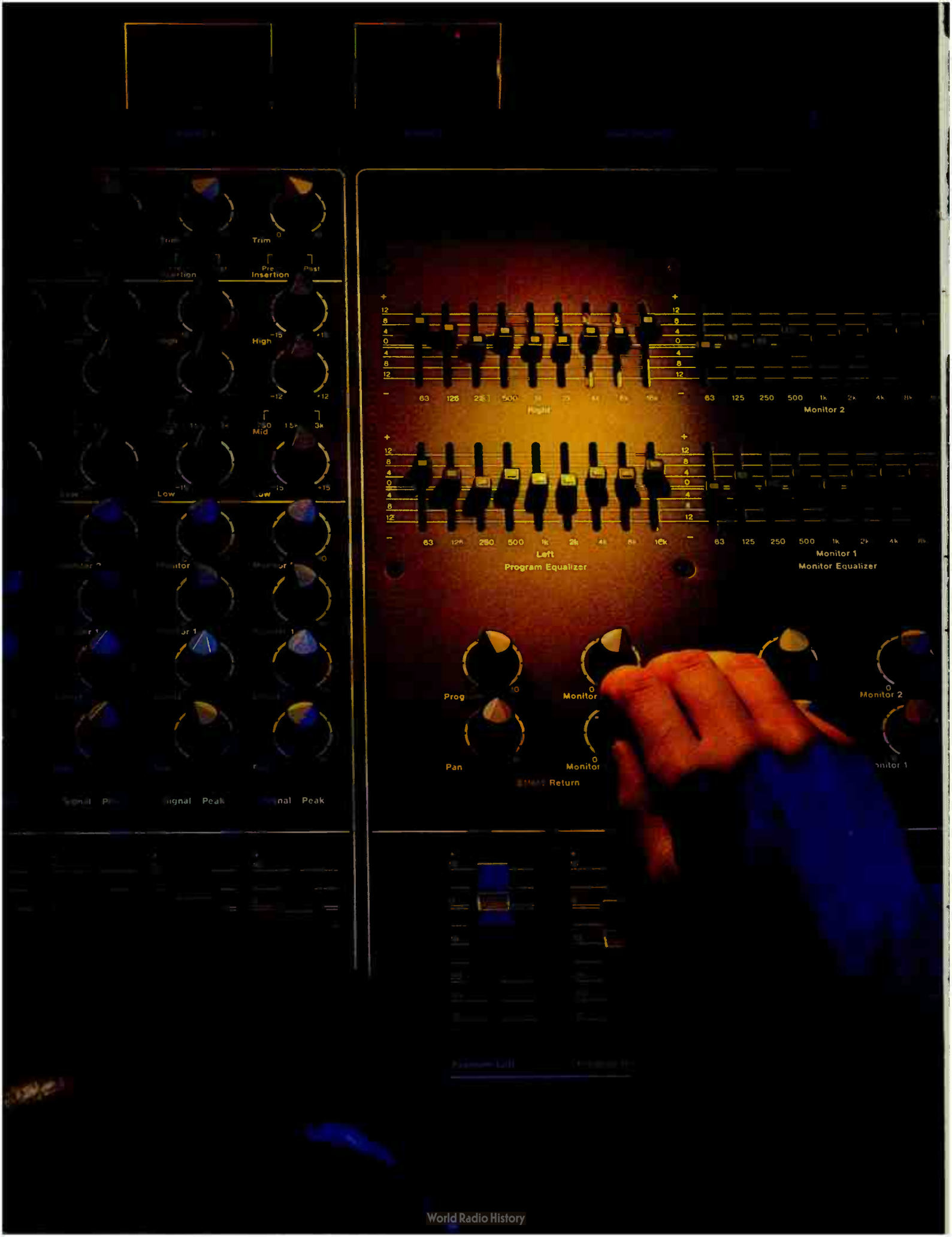

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Fender PRO SOUND

Translator

Optimists Against Overkill

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

'Tis well t'were done quickly: Larry Dekker, Steven Barton, David Scheff & Robert Darlington.

BY MICHAEL GOLDBERG

On a recent Monday, at about two o'clock in the afternoon, the four members of Translator walked into Studio C at the Automatt, a top recording studio in San Francisco, picked up their guitars and drum sticks and began to play. They ran through the song once. Then their producer, David Kahne, turned on the tape.

Two minutes, twenty seconds later, they put down the instruments and entered the control booth. The song, "L.A., L.A.," was finished. This first take would appear, with a minor overdub or two, on the band's second album (just released), *No Time Like Now*.

"Perfect," said Kahne, after the band listened to the playback.

"Should we run through it again?" asked bassist Larry Dekker.

"No," said Kahne. "It's *perfect*."

This is not the way you're supposed to make records in 1983. This *is* how Translator make their records. It just may be the secret of their artistic success.

"When David gets what he likes and we get what we like we don't usually ruminate over it too much," says vocalist/guitarist/songwriter Robert Darlington, who, wearing jeans, a denim vest and dark glasses, looks a bit like a 60s politico.

"There *is* such a thing as overkill," says Dekker, a softspoken young man. "There *is* such a thing as spending too much time in the studio and too much time on a particular song. When the energy of the song is gone, it doesn't matter how great the playing is at that point. It's a dead song."

There are no dead songs on either of Translator's two albums. Both *Heartbeats And Triggers* (their first album) and *No Time Like Now* are a rush of ringing guitars and intense vocals, ethereal, shimmering masterpieces. *Heartbeats And Triggers* was, to my ears, the best debut album of 1982. That record revealed Translator to be an original band inspired by (but not imitative of) both the classic 60s pop bands (like the Byrds and the Beatles) and more modern rockers (Gang of Four, Talking Heads, John Cale).

Translator combines jangling acoustic and electric guitars, lilting harmony vocals, romantic (at times naive) lyrics and traditional pop song structures with hard, angular rhythms and a sense of 80s urgency. Their sound doesn't so much recall the great bands of the 60s as evoke some of their magic. Hearing a piece of classic pop like "Everywhere That I'm Not" or the optimistic "No Time Like Now" makes one feel the kind of ecstasy one felt hearing "Paperback Writer" or "We Can Work It Out" nearly two decades ago. But because Translator writes songs about the 1980s, because they'll tackle contemporary politics ("Sleeping Snakes," a disarmament anthem) and use the troubled world of the 80s as a backdrop for even their most tender love songs, their material is as current as the latest headline about El Salvador.

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IT'S WORTH IT.

"The songs come from our reflections on our own lives, and that dichotomy (the tumult of the world; the shelter of love) is really present," says drummer David Scheff, a wiry character with the nervous energy of the late Keith Moon. "Everything isn't *just* politics or *just* romantic stuff."

Based in San Francisco, Translator, in collaboration with producer David Kahne (Romeo Void, Rank & File, Red Rockers) has found that working quickly in the studio gives their records a spontaneity and energy that many big budget, superstar projects lack. "I think part of the reason our records feel like the Byrds and early Beatles and those other records you mentioned is because they were done on the same budgets as those other albums, inflation taken into account of course," says Scheff. "Done kind of fast. You get the songs together. You go through a take. Does it sound good? Does it feel okay? Yeah!"

But perhaps even more important is Translator's identity as a *band*. They grew up loving the 60s groups that were real bands—four or five friends who happened to play music—and that group feeling is constantly present. "I feel like a lot of that is not because we're trying to be nostalgic or derivative of any kind of time when music was directly affecting us, but because we *are* a band that is true to the community. What does it mean to be a band?" asks Dekker. "I think that when 70s bands like the Eagles or Fleetwood Mac became very studio-oriented, they lost sight of the fact that they were playing together and that what really mattered was an energy there and not so much the ability to play dotted 48th notes."

Unlike many 80s new wave bands, Translator does not rely on synthesizers. In fact, although they have used a synthesizer for "subtle texturing" on a track or two, acoustic guitars really dominate their sound. "I think it helps the feel be more down to earth," says Scheff. "There's something about acoustic guitar strumming that frees me up playing the drums."

"We use it as a rhythmic thing in many cases, rather than have this big acoustic sound," says Darlington.

"I think it adds a certain fullness," says vocalist/songwriter/guitarist Steven Barton. "I mean we could talk technically: I think there are certain frequencies it fills up, also a percussive quality to it that comes through. It's a little more alive sounding to my ears...fuller."

Scheff, Dekker and Barton met while going to school at U.C. Santa Cruz in the early 70s, but didn't form Translator until 1979, after the three musicians had independently made their way to L.A. They ended up as a trio playing Barton's songs, but something was missing. One night Translator played a private party alternating sets with a band called Lies. At the end of the evening Lies' guitarist jammed with Translator. The guitarist was Darlington. Recalls Dekker, "Bob came up and played with us and we knew there was some magic in the air."

Within a few weeks Darlington joined the band. Then Translator beat their heads against the wall in L.A. Gigs were infrequent and the "music business" was impenetrable. They didn't care for the air either. "I remember driving with Steve on the freeway and we drove through a particularly bad patch of smog," says Scheff. "We both had tears running down our faces and we looked at each other and said, 'Let's get out of here!'"

Next stop: San Francisco.

Within a week of arriving in San Francisco, Translator showed up at 415 Records president Howie Klein's apartment with a demo tape. Klein was not impressed. "I thought they needed a lot of work," he remembers. But a few months later Klein changed his mind after a Translator performance at the Mabuhay Gardens, then San Francisco's hottest punk club. "I flipped out," says Klein getting excited at the memory. "They were like a cross between Talking Heads and the Gang of Four, two of my favorite bands."

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ALBUM TITLE OF THE MONTH AWARD goes (breathlessly, we might add) to **Carly Simon** for her new LP, ***Hello Big Man***. Carly rejoins producer Mike Mainieri ("Jesse" and "Take Me As I Am") for an album as broad as her smile—from ballads to reggae to rock & roll. The bad news is there's no poster in the package. The good news is there's a tape coming to the tube. And the best news is that Carly's back in town. Look and listen for "You Know What To Do." You always have.

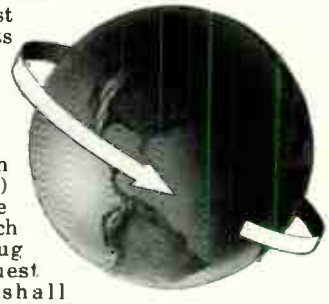
THERE'S MORE THAN ONE MANIAC OUT THERE... To be perfectly honest, you can get **Michael Sembello's** hit song "Maniac" (from the film *Flashdance*) on either of two albums. One is Sembello's own Warner Bros. debut, ***Bossa Nova Hotel***. The other has a Yalie on the cover. It's your choice, but *if* you decide to buy ***Bossa Nova Hotel***, we'll tell you a great story about the song "Maniac"—and you'll also get Michael's latest hit, "Automatic Man," along with nine other Sembello originals. Promise? Okay ...It seems *Flashdance* musical supervisor (and ace record producer) Phil Ramone was scouting material for the film. Already a Grammy Award-winning songwriter (with Stevie Wonder for "Saturn"), Sembello submitted a tape. It was, unfortunately, the wrong tape, and the song Ramone liked best was called "Maniac"—the story of a psychotic killer on a Halloween binge. Hardly *Flashdance* fare, but the lyrics were rewritten, the song was recorded and the collaboration continues on ***Bossa Nova Hotel***. And congratulations. You made a wise decision.

THE INVENTOR OF NEW WAVE? HEIR TO THE FOLK-ROCK TRADITION? Hardly. Just as easily as you can invent a category, **Jonathan Richman** can evade it. (The term "naive," as it's applied to the French painter Henri Rousseu, might be a good description.) ***Jonathan Sings!*** is the latest from Jonathan Richman and the Modern Lovers—it combines some aspects of a late '50s group sound with the declarative folk mode used by Jonathan in his solo acoustic shows. Childhood portraits and social commentary are offered with equal ease—no less than you might expect from a popular musician who writes, "I want to sing all over the world and have my records be in the 'International Section' of your record store, not far from Charles Aznavour and Maurice Chevalier, or guys like that." On Sire cassettes and records...

T-BONE BURNETT'S PAST TWO ALBUMS, Truth Decay (1980) and Trap Door (1982), are among the decade's most critically acclaimed recordings—the latter, according to *Rolling Stone*, "suggests that **T-Bone Burnett** is the best singer-songwriter in the country right now." This sort of praise should come as no surprise to those familiar with T-Bone's ability to blend substance, style, humor and consummate musicianship—a combination which is again evident on ***Proof Through The Night***. On this collection of eleven original songs, T-Bone and his band are joined by guest musicians Ry Cooder, Stan Lynch, Mick Ronson, Richard Thompson, Pete Townshend and Maskazu Yoshizawa. Songs like "Baby Fall Down," "Fatally Beautiful" and the solo acoustic "After All These Years" prove that T-Bone has what the Eighties require—***Proof Through The Night***.

THE MEN WHO SET THE STANDARDS are playing them. Pianist **Keith Jarrett** is best-known for his solo performances—dramatic demonstrations of his compositional and improvisational abilities. But on ***Standards, Vol. 1,*** his most recent ECM release, Jarrett turns his attention to some classic compositions—songs like Oscar Hammerstein's "All The Things You Are," Bobby Troup's "The Meaning Of The Blues" and the Arthur Herzog/Billie Holliday tune "God Bless The Child." With Jarrett on piano, Gary Peacock on bass and Jack DeJohnette on drums, the three members of an all-star jazz trio both set and explore *Standards*.

BORN TO LAUGH AT TORNADOES is (not is) the latest from **Was (Not Was)**. From its jazz and funk influenced beginnings, the band has (not has) evolved a sound which is (not was) more accessible, at the same time retaining the rhythmic virtuosity for which Was (Not Was) are (not were) known. Guest vocalists on the album include (fooled you) Mitch Ryder, Ozzy Osbourne, Doug Fieger and Mel Torme; guest guitarists include Marshall Crenshaw and Vinnie Vincent of Kiss. If you were **Born To Laugh At Tornadoes**, you'll appreciate Was (Not Was)—particularly the cuts "Smile," "Betrayal" and "Bow Wow Wow Wow." On Geffen...



THEY STARTED WITHOUT YOU... The Rubinoos started something in the (San Francisco) Bay Area a few years back, and it shows no signs of letting up. ***Party Of Two*** is the Rubinoos' latest mini album, produced, strangely enough, by Todd Rundgren and the members of Utopia. The music is punchy, fun and smart—listen for cuts like "If I Had You Back," "The Girl" and "The Magic's Back." Alone with the Rubinoos, it's a ***Party Of Two.***

ANOTHER DAY, another issue. Would whoever put us on that "adult product" mailing list kindly remove our name? "This Is Advertising?" is, after-all, a business venture, located on or about P.O. Box 6868, Burbank, CA 91510.

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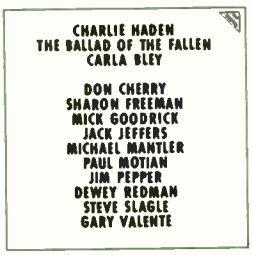

1/4-23794

CHARLIE HADEN
Ballad of the Fallen

Charlie Haden's new recording on ECM, *Ballad of the Fallen,* reunites most of the principals who recorded the legendary *Liberation Music Orchestra* album in the late '60s. Popular songs of revolutionary movements from Chile and El Salvador, and Spanish Civil War songs, all arranged by Carla Bley, are used as settings for improvisations by many of today's leading jazz players: Haden, Bley, Don Cherry, Dewey Redman, Paul Motian, Mick Goodrick, Mike Mantler, Steve Slagle, Sharon Freeman, Jim Pepper, Jack Jeffers and Gary Valente.

1/4-23793

KEITH JARRETT
Standards, Vol. 1

Pianist Keith Jarrett's performance standards are legendary. And so are the compositions he performs with bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Jack DeJohnette on *Standards, Vol. 1.* Jarrett, Peacock and DeJohnette rework five classics of the standard repertoire, including "All The Things You Are," "God Bless The Child" and "Meaning of the Blues." Musicians known for setting standards are playing them.

1/4-23795

JOHN SURMAN
Such Winters of Memory

English saxophonist John Surman's first two ECM albums presented rich tapestries of sound that spanned from English folk song to minimalism to red hot improvisation. On his newest album, *Such Winters of Memory,* Surman further explores these forms, as well as aspects of Indian and liturgical music, with singer Karin Krog and drummer Pierre Favre. It is a conception that *Downbeat* called "a brilliant and sundry canvas of musical temperaments, ranging from delicate to furious."

1/4-23790

JACK DeJOHNETTE'S SPECIAL EDITION
Inflation Blues

With his seventh ECM album, Jack DeJohnette once again showcases a new group and new musical direction. This Special Edition features John Purcell, Chico Freeman, Rufus Reid and Baikida Carroll, and the songs range from the composed, like the reggae title track, to the freer, burning music so closely associated with DeJohnette. *Downbeat* wrote, "DeJohnette again illustrates why he's one of the leading drummers of this era... This is a record of thrusting action..."

1/4-23792

MEREDITH MONK
Turtle Dreams

Newsday has called her music "23rd century pop..." And the *Village Voice* likened a recent performance of "Turtle Dreams" to a "cabaret from another planet." *Turtle Dreams* is the second ECM recording from Meredith Monk, one that should reconfirm the *Christian Science Monitor*'s claim that she is the "Voice of the future." With Robert Een, Andrea Goodman, Paul Langland, Julius Eastman, Steve Lockwood and Collin Walcott.

On ECM Records & Cassettes Manufactured and distributed by Warner Bros. Records Inc.

Less than a year after they had moved to San Francisco, Translator had a contract with 415 Records. And by the time 415 was ready to release Translator's first LP, the small independent label had signed a distribution deal with Columbia.

Unlike many bands that formed in the wake of the mid-70s punk explosion, they think of themselves as musicians—and take pride in their playing ability. "I read a little interview with Berlin recently," says Barton. "And one of the people in the group said, 'Yeah, I hope my musicianship never improves. I don't ever want to be a good musician because I think it would really wreck my writing.' And I read that and I thought, 'What a bunch of crap.' I mean to put these limits on yourself just seems...it's like something our parents would do."

"I've heard people say that kind of thing before and they always seem to be talking about chops," says Scheff. "And I just don't look at playing drums that way. I want my technique to always improve. I read about stuff, I try things out. I'm constantly working on it. But not so I can do this lick that Billy Cobham did. I integrate it into my style and try to become a better drummer and I can't see how that can possibly hurt me. I'm not doing it so I can flash people out. I mean I can play fast if I want to but that's not why I'm trying to be a better player. I just want it to be more musical. And the better you are, the more musical it is."

"I think the whole punk ethic was real important and I think it affected all of us," says Barton. "But one difference between us and some of the other bands is we didn't start playing music as soon as we heard the Sex Pistols. We had all been playing music for awhile."

Still, they don't let their commitment to musicianship become an end in itself. The band has an optimistic message to communicate. "It's not that we have a particular philosophical standpoint, we're not like the Stoics or whatever. But there seems to be a certain idealism and optimism...just kind of a feeling that things aren't totally shot, or if they are, that the future *might* hold some bright moments," says Darlington. "We believe in integrity. We believe in a lot of the stuff that was made really apparent back in the 60s. We still believe all that stuff is possible. A lot of people today think this whole thing is going to go down the toilet. We don't particularly feel that way. I don't think our music shows that or that we express that. We're usually really idealistic."

Part of that idealism is a belief that music can really change someone's life. Translator wants a response from their listeners. "You may as well write muzak if you don't want a response," says Darlington. "You may as well write elevator music if you just want people to stand

continued on page 26

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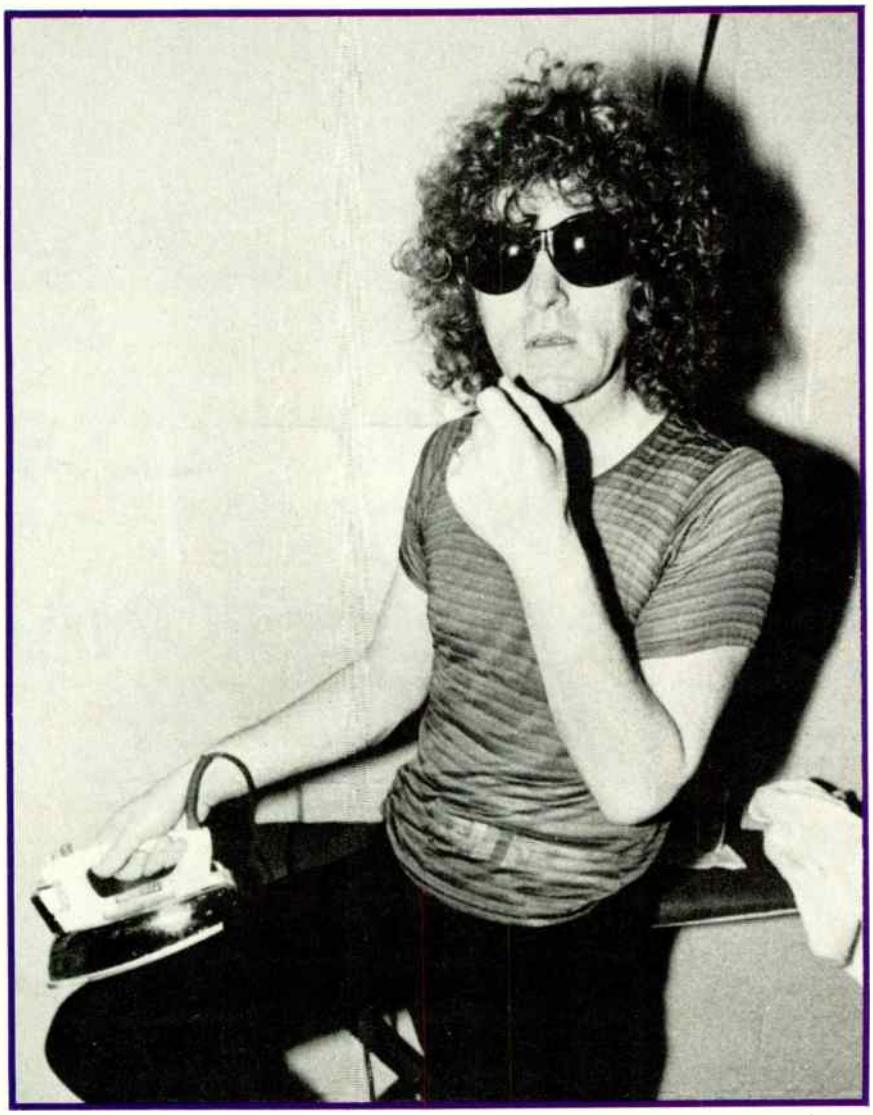
Ian Hunter

Soul Searcher Thinks for Himself

ANNE FISHBEIN/PHOTO RESERVE



Unable to iron out the contradictions of fashionable pre-punk stardom, Hunter left Mott.

BY BILL FLANAGAN

"I like to come home to it," the rock star enthuses. "It's great. It's a refreshing addition to my life which I didn't know before I came to America. I thought it'd be boring. But a couple of English guys over here told me, 'You want to check it out, it's not at all what it seems!' All of a sudden I was a fan."

Ian Hunter had discovered baseball.

Arriving at the expatriate Briton's home an hour's drive north of New York City, I find the rocker well into the Saturday afternoon Yankees game and anticipating an evening of cable TV homers. The new hobby is a useful release for Hunter, a writer who thinks too much and feels too deeply to ever be really content, and who admits that he must often get himself "blitzed" before the songs pour out.

"I'd dearly love to just play bass in a band," Hunter nods. "It's a pipe dream of mine to get lost in a group situation. The only reason I can't is because I'm so bossy. I always take over. I met with the other members of Mott last year to talk about putting our old videos and TV clips together with new interviews. Even then I could feel the old antagonism. Mick Ralphs likes to run things and so do I. It would be hard for me to be in a group.

"But yeah, it's true. I do think too much. That's why I'm out of it most of the time. Just to slow down. And that's why baseball's great. It's therapeutic. I can actually sit and relax."

Hunter's demanding muse has led him on a long, wild ride. The night before our meeting, the rocker's face seemed to be everywhere. Switching on the premiere of NBC's *Friday Night Videos*, I saw a Hunter clip. When I switched to MTV, Ian was being interviewed and introducing songs. I opened *Newsweek* and read about the band he assembled to back tennis-stars-turned-musicians at a charity concert. By the time I got home Sunday morning, I was not even surprised to see Ian staring out from the Sunday arts section of the *New York Times*.

Yet I somehow think we take him for granted. Ian Hunter is one of rock's chronically misunderstood. His new album, *All Of The Good Ones Are Taken*, will be represented by the bright pop of the title single and the boogie of "That Girl Is Rock 'N' Roll." But the tracks that cut deepest—the blurry reverie of "Seeing Double" and the second, melancholy reading of "All Of The Good Ones" that closes the LP—will never be played

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on the radio.

Ever since Mott the Hoople's flash and glitter shocked the Woodstock nation, Ian Hunter has been a soul searcher with a punk image. Potential listeners who might love his introspective numbers still regard Hunter as a sort of boogie madman, even as boogie fans tend to be confused by the irony, profundity and melancholy of the writer's slow numbers. It's as if Rod Stewart's whole career had been represented by "Stay With Me" and "Hot Legs," while only the loyal cult knew of "Mandolin Wind" and "Maggie May."

Hunter, who abandoned British hero status for a songwriter's life in New York, has never gone out of his way to correct his image. He records what he wants and sells enough records to support his wife, baby and home. He enjoys a love/hate relationship with the idea of stardom. "I've been a down person ever since I was a kid," Hunter explains. "I never felt particularly *part* of anything. And as I get older that's proven to be right. I don't belong to any religion. I never liked the herd mentality. If everybody dug Led Zeppelin then I hated them. For some peculiar reason. I'm very contrary.

"When success stared me in the face with Mott, I said, 'To hell with that!' The very things you want...somehow my brain will do alarming things with. I don't know why. Me dad was the same. It's weird. Almost like, 'Oh, that's great. Get away from it!'" He chuckles softly and goes on: "I don't like designer clothes, you know? Just try to be yourself. If everybody's truthful, we're all pretty unhip. We all like things we're not supposed to like.

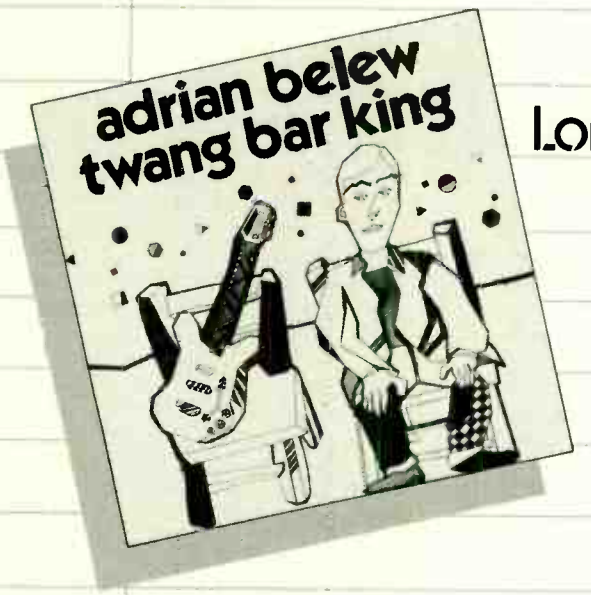
"During the Mott days I thought James Taylor was a really good musician, good songwriter, good singer. I loved Jesse Winchester's first record, and Leon Russell. All these people I wasn't *supposed* to love. Finally you say screw it. That's what I do now. I feel more alienated. In Europe that old herd mentality is still going. At the end of gigs I used to shout, 'Think for yourselves!' We're all supposed to love Cheryl Tiegs, we're all supposed to love David Bowie, we're all supposed to love—I don't know, you name it—Duran Duran. I automatically go the other way. I don't know why. It's really hard just trying to be yourself."

Wasn't it difficult for one so antifashion to find himself—in the glitter days—at the center of a fashion movement? "That didn't bother me," Hunter smiles. "That suited me. I was doing exactly what I wanted to do and liked it. What I didn't like was the inside stuff that was going down—the people grabbing for some vestige of responsibility for our success. I noticed it especially in America. I've been at parties where I saw people push each other out of the way to be two or three down from you.

"The kids were fine. The kids didn't bother me. Mott didn't bother me. Oh, there was infighting with the band which eventually came to a head and I left. But we were a *people's* band. An English people's band. I can remember those gigs as clear as day. You put your hand in the air—it wasn't any peace sign—and that was power. Everybody felt it. I would sometimes even cry about the incredible unity we had."

Hunter stares away. "But you grow up and you get a few checks in the mail and all of a sudden you don't feel that you can represent these people anymore. They needed somebody else. So I left. And now I just write songs." In late 1974, Ian Hunter quit Mott the Hoople, declaring their time had passed. In the next year he became increasingly depressed by the creative climate in Britain. Looking back now, the songwriter says he knew something was going to happen to upset the status quo, but couldn't figure out what. He watched the poor white kids and West Indians gathering around sidewalk speakers in Brixton, "trying to figure out how to put it together."

"The Pistols figured out a way to do it," Hunter maintains. "They took it to the extreme. All *I* could figure was to do a miserable slow record—like Pink



Long live the Twang Bar King!

Adrian Belew conquers music's frontiers with his new album, "Twang Bar King." Last year, his first solo LP, "Lone Rhino," knocked the rest of the competition out of the running. Now the "Twang Bar King" rules alone.

Produced by Adrian Belew

Tom Waits
Swordfishtrombones

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Floyd's last one—and I didn't *want* to do that. But the Pistols figured it out. The first time I heard the Clash, I thought, 'This has to be Brixton rock'—because that's where they were all mixed in."

By the time the Clash and Sex Pistols appeared in '76, Hunter had moved to New York. "My usefulness to the British kids was over," he says. "They didn't need me. They found someone else. I sensed it before it happened. From '76 to '78 all the English bands were saying, 'Come back, come back.' But I couldn't represent those people anymore. I would have looked stupid going back and wearing all the gear. I never wanted to be laughed at. I was scared by the way some of *my* heroes got old. I wanted to change, to be a writer. They still want me to play ninety miles and hour and go berserk. But I don't think that would be truthful. And I guess Lou (Reed) and David (Bowie) don't think it would be truthful. Don't get me wrong. I like to jump up and down. I ain't gonna stand there and look dignified. But I couldn't do the power stuff anymore. It wouldn't be honest."

So Hunter, like Bowie and Reed, made the transition from outrageous young rebel to punk father figure. The strangest result was *Short Back 'N' Sides*, the 1981 album co-produced by Hunter sidekick Mick Ronson—and Mick Jones of the Clash. Jones, it seems, was one of those young Mott fans with his hand in the air.

"It was an interesting record," Hunter says non-commitally. "I learned what I wanted to find out. I got to meet a lot of fascinating people."

But when I mention that Martin Briley, who played bass on the LP, said that he felt Jones fell short as a producer, Hunter opens up, revealing how illusions can be shattered when sons try to rehabilitate fathers. "Jonesy's Jonesy," Hunter shrugs. "We started out all right. We finished up with a great deal less respect for each other—I think largely due to his finding out that I was a normal guy. That screwed him right up. It's very hard to sit there and expound like some kind of hero. I don't do that. I guess what I was and what he imagined I was were two different things. That's why I won't meet Jerry Lee Lewis.

"Jones really wanted to work with me. So we worked. This is what he found out—that I'm the same as anybody else. And why I didn't like him is because he never sussed that! He never understood. He should have known better, he really should've. He evidently hadn't made plans for the fact that I might be a normal human being. That's why I avoid him like the plague."

Hunter seems most at home with the other iconoclastic rock veterans who populate the narrow corridor between New York City and Woodstock. Not long ago he assembled a band that included Paul Butterfield, John Cale and Todd Rundgren and played a benefit for victims of Agent Orange. These characters (like other locals: Rick Danko, Levon Helm, NRBQ) are the sort of life-long rockers around whom (Hunter's words): "You gotta be careful. You don't walk in and go, 'Blah, blah, blah.' They are distinct personalities and you've got to respect that. You keep your distance.

"You can't fall in and get on personal terms with me," the songwriter says. "Especially if you're younger. You can't. I've been through it. I'm here now. You ain't got that far. Wait till you have. And by the time you do you *still* won't know me because I'll be another ten years ahead of you."

An author whose curse is to be his own main character, Ian Hunter will probably always drive himself toward artistic truth at the cost of personal contentment. Throughout his public life he has paused at regular intervals to confess his soul. "The Ballad Of Mott," "Hymn For The Dudes," "Saturday Gigs," "Irene Wilde," "Old Records Never Die," "Theatre Of The Absurd" and other recordings play like pages from a scarred diary.

Given his contrary nature it's not surprising that Hunter's favorite solo album is also the one that sold the least—*All American Alien Boy*. That LP eschewed

ray manzarek

Carmina Burana

RAY MANZAREK OF THE DOORS COMBINES MEDIEVAL MUSIC WITH MODERN MAGIC.

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Hunter from previous page

rockers to deal with "God," "Rape," the loss of his British home, and similarly serious subjects. "That one took on a lot of stuff," Hunter says. "And it got away. I do have to blame the record company for that. You'd be surprised at the number of responses I get from that for the amount of copies it sold. Quite extraordinary.

"But here I am now. Always a bit to the left when I shouldn't be, always a bit to the right when I shouldn't be." He chuckles. "It's the never-ending saga of Hunter."

Translator from pg. 18

there and talk while the music's being played. I definitely feel that I want some response. That's what songwriting and communication is all about. If you didn't want a response then why go out and do it publicly?"

On the other hand, sometimes the response from the public, and especially the critics, can be trying. "It is frightening. You're constantly having to put yourself out on the line with the possibility of mass rejection and all kinds of other things," says Darlington. "We are all kind of shy and quiet people and we just don't say, 'Screw the critics, what do they know?' It's like you're putting yourself right up there and begging everyone to throw something at you and hopefully you'll do something that'll cause them *not* to throw something at you."

"Or throw something *good* at you," laughs Scheff.

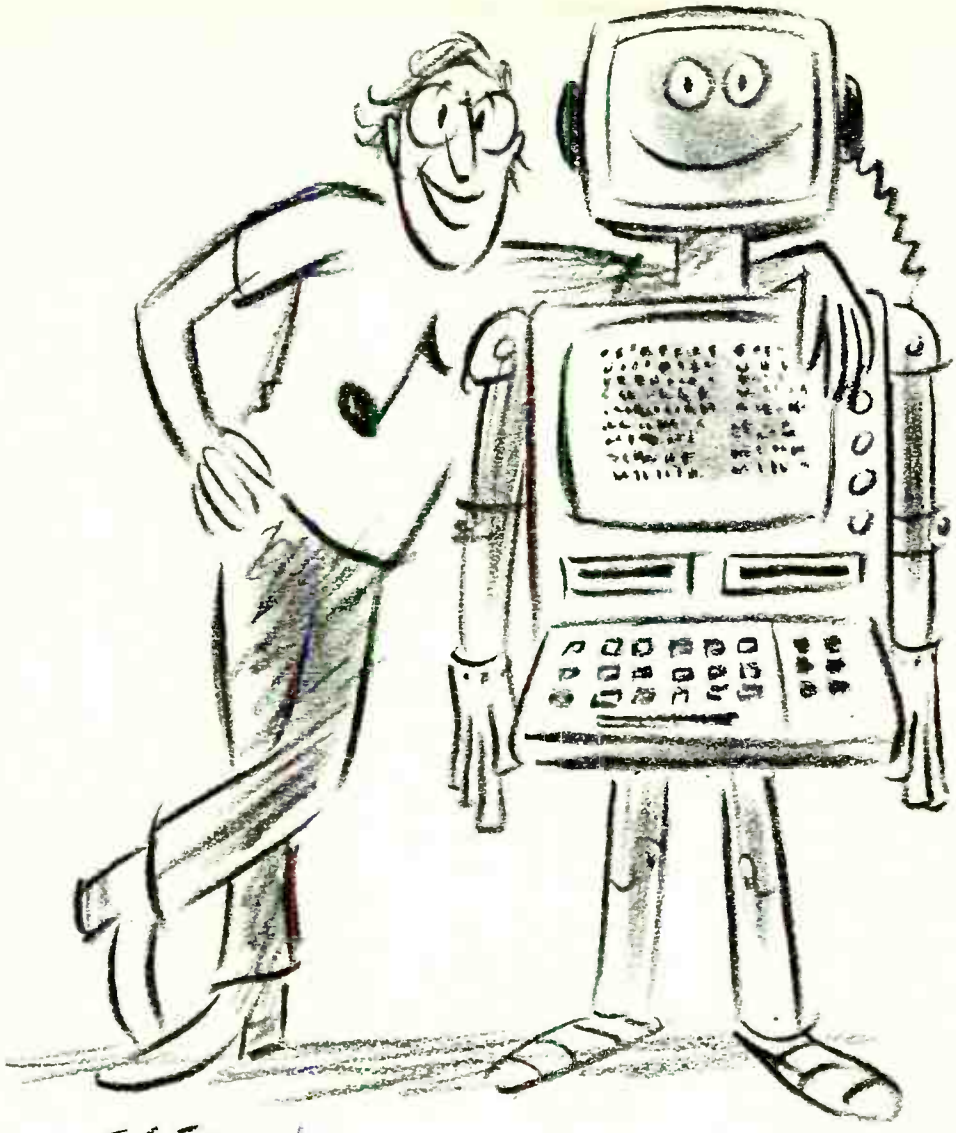
Translator Vibrators

Steven Barton plays a Gibson Les Paul 1974 (a reissue of a '59 Les Paul) through a Marshall 100-watt lead amp and Marshall cabinet with four Celestion speakers. He also plays a Stars Guitar from Stars Guitar in San Francisco (which he won). He uses G H S Boomer medium gauge strings.

Robert Darlington plays a 1971 Telecaster through a Gallien Krueger head and a Miller cabinet with four Celestion speakers. He runs the guitar through an MXR chorus. Both Barton and Darlington use Ovation electric and acoustic guitars when recording.

Larry Dekker plays a 1981 Fender Precision bass. He also has a 1966 Hofner but doesn't use it much anymore. Dekker puts his Precision through a Peavey Mark 3 with graphic equalizer, two Bullfrog modular projection cabinets (with 15-inch Electro-Voice speakers) and a cabinet with 15-inch and 8-inch speakers in it. Dekker strings his bass with G.H.S. Boomer long-scale regular gauge bass strings.

David Scheff plays a 1958 Rogers black Holiday model set with a 9-inch deep Slingerland magnum maple snare drum, Slingerland hardware, a Rogers seat and a Sonar bass drum pedal.



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FACES

ALAN VEGA

ART FOR POP'S SAKE

EBET ROBERTS

When Alan Vega declares, "I'm an artist, man," in his Lower East Side patois, he's matter-of-fact, not boastful, like a native New Yorker who might acknowledge subway conditions to an outsider rather than plow right through the turnstile to catch the next train downtown: "I just do it, man."

Vega has tenaciously kept on keeping on, even though, for most of his decade-plus career as the vocal half of drone-duo Suicide and more recently as solo performer, hardly anyone paid attention. But the Ric Ocasek-produced *Saturn Strip* could change all that. Ocasek, a fan, friend and one-time producer of Suicide, has helped restate the electro-rockabilly of Vega's solo debut in surprisingly (as opposed to slavishly) commercial terms. Backed by members of the Cars, Ministry and his touring band, Vega is finally in sync with the times, which, in retrospect, always seemed to lag behind him.

After all, it was during the mid-70s, as part of Manhattan's "downtown" scene, that Vega and cohort Martin Rev decided "the guitar is dead" and stripped their sound to voice and electronic keyboards. "It looked so obvious to us," Vega recalls, but they were in the minority. Suicide was lean and mean, an extremist's vision of what ? & the Mysterians could have been, and their volatile shows became ritual exchanges of abuse between audience and band. When Suicide opened for the Cars at L.A.'s Universal Amphitheater, Vega recounts, "they were throwing their sneakers at me before I even opened my mouth.

"It was rough," he admits now. "Suicide took a lot out of me. I didn't know how hard it was until I started working with the band. But it wasn't even the bottles, it was what was coming from inside me. Suicide was like a living work of art, abstract expressionism onstage, a very physical, emotional thing. We never were a bar band, yet we had to play a bar band circuit to make bucks. And that took a lot of the spiritual quality out of it."

Suicide captured that quality on their barely distributed final single, "Dream Baby Dream," in which they proved that they could mesmerize as well as alienate. And it was echoed in the haunted rock of *Alan Vega*, a 1981 collaboration between Vega and Texas guitarist Phil Hawk that made Vega something of a European star with his "Jukebox Baby" single. Vega says he wrote more accessible music "to save our ass," but that didn't prevent Suicide from dissolving shortly after the album's release. Vega wasn't simply out to please the public after that, though; 1982's *Collision Drive* reversed the Suicide equation: guitars were in, keyboards were out.

Saturn Strip is a more obvious successor to *Alan Vega*, although its best moments were the least calculated in the studio. The apocalyptic "Wipe Out Beat," which Vega dubs "Jim Morrison meets the Cars," combines a snippet of a lengthy jam by Ocasek & Co. with one-take vocals of Vega's streetwise sci-fi lyrics. The strikingly plaintive vocal and melancholy keyboards of "Je T'Adore"—"a new kind of love song, like *Last Tango In Paris* or something, man" were inspired by real-life romantic frustration. Vega says he'd been arguing with his girlfriend over the phone—"You can almost hear the tears rolling down"—just before he was to do the vocals for the song, which Ocasek, not one for candid emotion on vinyl, wanted to scrap. Vega convinced him to record it and play keyboards, and the resulting performance celebrates love in an unexpectedly bittersweet way. This sort of interplay between the impassive Ocasek and the impassioned Vega is essential to *Saturn Strip*: this-year's-model dance tracks are transformed into inimitable personal statements.

Vega has been sculpting for as long as he's been singing, and just as musical

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THE ANIMALS

STILL CAN ROAR

"It doesn't surprise me when I see the fifteen-year-old kids in our audience," Eric Burdon remarked about the young crowd which had just packed Pittsburgh's Stanley Theater to witness the original Animals'—keyboard wiz Alan Price, bassist Chas Chandler, guitarist Hilton Valentine and drummer John Steele—first tour in seventeen years. "Chuck Berry and Muddy Waters reached me when I was fifteen and they seemed ancient. Times have changed, but it's still the same cause and effect. The kids are

ANNE FISHBEIN / PHOTO RESERVE

reaching out for something and our music touches them halfway."

Times have surely changed since "House Of The Rising Sun" topped the charts in 1964, signaling that there was more to the British invasion than sweet Merseybeat harmonies and establishing the blues-belting Burdon as a prototype for today's hard rock vocalists. Since the group's demise, Valentine and Steele had dropped out of music while Chandler went on to discover Jimi Hendrix and a successful management career. Both Burdon and Price have actively pursued performing careers with erratic success; since the mid-70s neither has had any albums released in the United States.

One thing that hadn't changed since the early days was Burdon's role as centerpiece. His black leather pants and gray T-shirt stood out from the band's white, high-tech garb, delineating the contrasting chemistry between Eric's seemingly possessed vocals and the group's understated playing. But changes were evident. Where once Price's keyboards dominated, the instrumental focus had now shifted to the rock-solid rhythm section of Chandler and Steele. With mixed results four additional musicians were added to the Animals' line-up. If Zoot Money's synthesizer doodlings proved superfluous, sax man Pat Crumley's excellent baritone and tenor—his interplay with Price's piano on "Trying To Get To You" was a high point—brought an extra dimension to the Animal's reconstituted sound.

The years have brought an extra dimension to Burdon's singing. Gone was the youthful insolence, the aural sneer that characterized the Animals' recording of "Bring It On Home," as Burdon transformed the time-tested material into personal anthems of a rock 'n' roll survivor.

The Animals' finest moments, however, came with the strong material from their new I.R.S. album. Perhaps moved by the young audience's enthusiasm, they ripped through the new songs with a virginal inspiration that climaxed on "The Night (It's Always Too Long)," their recent single. Other maiden numbers, the funky "Prisoner Of Light" and the venomous "Favorite Enemy," hit the same intense mark, as the Animals demonstrated rock's rejuvenating energy while shattering any museum-piece expectations.

Backstage later, Burdon commented on the new album: "I was reluctant to do it after the problems with the other one (the aborted '77 comeback project, *Before We Were So Rudely Interrupted*). But when I realized the guys were going to tour, we were going to do a video and that I.R.S. was going to promote us, I was persuaded. My opinion is that this should be a one-of project, but we'll see." As for the sight of all those teenagers grooving to the rock 'n' roll played by forty-year-olds, Burdon noted, "We're programmed to think only in terms of youth by the other media, but music's the one thing that can bridge those gaps." For a night, at least, he was quite right. — ***Frank Joseph***

THE BELLE STARS

A LITTLE RESPECT, PLEASE

Any time Rodney Dangerfield needs a refresher in "getting no respect," a chat with the Belle Stars should do the trick. There are few better targets than seven women onstage in a rock 'n' roll band, especially when they keep having new pasts to live down.

Even Clare Hirst, the most recent addition (a year-and-a-half ago) to the seven-woman band, was a tad suspicious on answering their *Melody Maker* advertisement: "I'd heard of the Belle Stars before," she recalls, "and I knew that they were the ex-Bodysnatchers (a 2-Tone female group that never jelled). Anyone who'd heard the Bodysnatchers knew that they couldn't play. All of them freely admitted that they couldn't play back then, but it's a shame because it still lingers on and that was a long time ago."

To make matters worse, three of their early singles were covers of classic songs, recorded more or less at the insistence of Stiff Records. "We took a lot of stick for that, because then people just thought—'Oh, they're a copy band who don't play on their records,'" says Clare.

Now that the Belle Stars are two self-penned singles further towards stardom ("Sign Of The Times" and the non-LP "Sweet Memory," both British hits), the shame and disrespect has abated somewhat. The Belle Stars' originals are a result of a cooperative method of composition—all seven share the credits, rare indeed in the ego-ridden rock 'n' roll world. "It's a sort of chaotic way to write," says bassist Lesley Shone, "and it used to take us quite a long time with that system to get anything out. We just get together in groups, twos or threes...say if I've got an idea for lyrics, I'll take them around to Jenny (McKeown, the lead singer) just to hear her sing them and that's the start. But along the way we've learned about what the others might want. So instead of seven different ideas, we're tending to come up with more of a band identity now that everyone's been doing it a while."

That identity still remains an appealing admixture. Throughout the Warner Bros. debut, *The Belle Stars*, the rhythms of drummer Judy Parsons and bassist Shone both percolate and punch; guitarists Stella Barker and Sarah-Jane Owen chicken-peck their chords with a Motown finesse; saxophonists Hirst and Miranda Joyce alternately underscore, soar

JANETTE BECKMAN

and even skim a jazzy ether; and singer McKeown hits notes from nice to nasty (to borrow a phrase from Tina Turner).

Yet, as Hirst observes, "The records are produced well but are a ways from the live show." In their U.S. debut at New York's Danceteria, the band was far more free-wheeling, spirited and fun, even while fighting a dodgy sound mix and a case of American premiere jitters.

For their next LP, which the band is currently composing in London, they promise, as Clare puts it, something "more adventurous," taking their cue from the success of "Sweet Memory." Recalls Clare, "That song was originally intended to be a B-side, and we cut it after doing two other songs with the producer saying, 'All right, girls, let's get this one down and wrap it up.' So we laid it down pretty much as we do live, and it came out better than any of the other tracks."

"Basically," adds Lesley, "the band is there to play music we enjoy—each and every one of us—and to be aware of what the other wants." With that sort of respect for the music and each other, we won't be able to kick the Belle Stars around much longer. —***Rob Patterson***

TANIA MARIA

BEYOND BRAZILIAN

Elegant ease could describe Tania Maria's first two Concord Jazz albums, *Piquant* and *Taurus*, as it does most Brazilian music available to us north of the border. You know the place—beaches shadowed by mountains and speckled with swaying palms and pina colada-sipping beautiful people. Paradise! The Brazilian-born pianist/vocalist finds both truth and misunderstanding in the stereotype. "Brazil is the most controversial country in the world. Everybody thinks that the samba is a very happy song. It's not true. The rhythm is happy, but the lyrics, ninety percent are very sad. Brazilian music can be very serious, but at the same time we have a joy, a happiness that others don't. And we don't have the same kind of people problems because in Brazil everybody is the same. We have a racial problem but is only economic, not," pausing and slapping her arm for emphasis, "skin."

As a child, Maria studied classical piano before developing a teenage interest in Brazilian pop. However, a recording by Oscar Peterson opened her ears to jazz and no amount of social pressure or even law school could sway her. She labels herself a rich person because she's open to all kinds of music, and seems intent on reconciling these varying attitudes within the span of a performance.

"I don't have the talent to be a classical musician. I am not a disciplined person. In jazz I can invent all the time. But, jazz musicians were very few when I left Brazil for Europe nine years ago." She adds that women pianists/singers/composers were even rarer in a "Catholic society where musicians are marginal. For a man it is difficult. For a woman it is almost impossible."

Maria, as a woman, a jazz artist and as an American musician, is now free to ply her trade. Her brand of Afro-Brazilian tropical funk, most evident on her newest recording, *Come With Me*, prodded the patrons of New York's Village Gate into frenzied, gleeful shouts. Maria skillfully textured styles and moods, often introducing songs with serene piano flourishes, then lashing out with sharp staccato figures. Her grooves hinted at boogie woogie and avant dissonance with Tatumesque facility and rapid, alliterative, percussive riffs that gave the sambas a distinctive hard edge. By evening's end, Maria had shown a command of jazz, samba, funk and salsa, the latter two of which she attributes to "the shock of America. If you go in the streets of New York you can make music. I receive this kind of noise and I put it in the music."

As for her husky-voiced, barroom scatting, Maria doesn't think she's much of a singer: "An onomatopoeia 'Badodadiscudidadudau,' if you're going to make an analysis, means nothing. It's rhythmic. It may be a new way to communicate and I think people enjoy it because they can do the same. Music in my way is forty-five minutes of happiness. If I don't have this, it's not good for me and it's not good for the people." — ***Don Palmer***

MINOR THREAT

HARDCORE HAPPINESS

The music of Minor Threat has great humor, an ultra-physical beat, and the pace of a ride in the front seat of a roller coaster. It's music keyed for driving through the heart of a big city, or for skateboarding down a smooth suburban conduit. This is startlingly fun stuff—and that's disconcerting, given the band's bleak outlook.

For starters, this Washington, D.C. hardcore band christened straight-edge, the world-view summed up by the opening lines to one of their songs: "I don't smoke/ I don't drink/ I don't fuck/ At least I can fucking think." The idea, as singer Ian MacKaye puts it, is "moderation." Releasing a single and two EPs since 1981, they are major figures in the hermetic world of hardcore. Their new EP "Out Of Step" is magnificent, a mine-sweep of the

continued on page 34

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THE FEELIES

CRAZY RHYTHMS RETURN

The Feelies have always been an anomaly in "new" rock. Not the kind that you always read about in rock magazines but a *genuine* anomaly. Because at the same time (circa 1979) you were reading about all those dozens of groups whose snarling/withdrawn figureheads would mumble their contempt for the "rock 'n' roll lifestyle" and the "rock star syndrome" while simultaneously getting hyped and receiving wild fan adulation, the Feelies actually stuck to their stated principles and didn't get famous. After all, a group who claimed to not like playing Manhattan gigs too often because they got "really bad headaches going through the Lincoln Tunnel" could hardly be expected to pull off a national breakthrough, no matter how much attention had been lavished on them by an enthusiastic press.

And sure enough, they didn't. Guitarists Glenn Mercer and Bill Million, along with bassist Keith Clayton, drummer Anton Fier (who has since worked with Pere Ubu and the Golden Palominos) and percussionist Dave Weckerman stopped playing as the Feelies less than a year after the 1980 release of their first (and only) LP, *Crazy Rhythms* on Stiff.

Million and Mercer then proceeded to involve themselves in a myriad of projects centered in Million's basement mini-studio. They contributed music to Susan Seidelman's acclaimed film "Smithereens" and quietly went about becoming founders and/or close associates of a number of different bands: the Willies, the Trypes and Yung Wu. The culmination of all this activity was last spring's "Music For Neighbors" series at the Haledon Peanut Gallery in hometown Haledon, New Jersey. Seven weeks, seven bands; each band revolving in the Mercer-Million orbit. The series was capped off by an interesting surprise: the May Day reunion of the Feelies, followed by a date at Maxwell's in Hoboken on May 30.

Why they decided to perform together after such a lengthy hiatus is anybody's guess. It certainly wasn't because they had a surfeit of new material; the only new number their fans heard at either show was a cover of Brian Eno's "Kings Lead Hat." The rest of the set consisted of all the songs from *Crazy Rhythms*. For the most part, these numbers eschew traditional song structure and present themselves as exercises in dynamics. A quiet introduction slowly and inexorably builds into a thundering two-chord drone punctuated by guitar solos and percussion fills while the bass and drums (ably manned one night by Stan Demeski) maintain a hard, fast beat; a few lyrics are perfunctorily muttered and eventually the whole thing just fades out, a self-generated vortex. Exceptions to this rule include the amphetamine rave up "Fa-ce-la" and the almost folky "Original Love." Mercer alternates deftly between fluid, sinuous lines and machine-gun bursts of screeches and yowls, squeezing every nuance he can out of his Stratocaster.

Both shows were fine—Mercer and Million jumped around like hyperactive schoolboys in the grand old Feelies tradition, the songs still had their drive and verve—but there was something missing. One came away with the sense of having seen an artifact instead of a band. Madame Toussaud's wax Feelies—push a button and watch 'em play "Moscow Nights." Well, that's great, definitely a boon for those who didn't get to see them in their heyday, but still something of a disappointment. Three years is a little too soon for nostalgic revival. If the Feelies decide to pick up the ball where they dropped it, let's hope they take it somewhere new. — ***Glenn Kenny***

TOMMY KEENE

SUBURBAN FRUSTRATION

Tommy Keene is a typical Washingtonian, rife with contrasts. His music is cosmopolitan, drawing on the cultured influences of Bowie, Roxy Music and the Who, yet it retains an almost provincial naiveté that keeps his writing and his stage performances fresh and honest, unclouded by gimmickry and poses.

Onstage, Keene, boyishly handsome in a mod suit, inspires a dozen comparisons. He spins and wiggles like Ray Davies, leaps like a young Townshend, and sings determinedly while attacking his guitar with a crazed passion, flashing images of the '77 Jam. Yet his melodies, danceable and infectious, and his mood are purely the product of personal experience.

"I *am* influenced by some of the very important bands of the 60s," remarks Keene, "but I'm not ripping them off verbatim. If you've submerged yourself in music for sixteen years, it's bound to come out. Although I draw on a lot of British music, my music has a lot of Americanness to it that probably comes from living in Washington all my life." Keene's songs are abstract portrayals of emotional scenarios. Unlike the bleak economic/social climate of the U.K. which inspires bitterness and anger, life in the American suburbs arouses in Keene a much subtler frustration: the product of constantly being told how well-off you are, but still feeling discontent...and not understanding why.

As a performer, Keene is driven by a commitment to put his ideas across as intensely as possible—which leads to a rather frantic pace. Visually, his band is a bit in-

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e from previous page
gruous balding veterans of D.C.'s w-defunct R&B standards, the Razz nd Billy & the Shakes. But once they start to play, they ignite a throbbing, explosive instrumental challenge to Keene's reedily expressive vocals while painting a solid backdrop for his stunning splash of corporeal pyrotechnics.

It's not all po-faced stuff. Inherent in the conflicts behind Keene's lyrics is a determination that the expectations of joy will be fulfilled. While verbalizing the anguish of a fractured romance, Keene's melodies soar hopefully, a rebuke to his own self-pitying confusion.

"I'm not interested in using my music as a vehicle for social or political commentary. Everything is totally emotional. I write in first person so people listening can see themselves in my songs. It's easy to whine about a blatantly miserable situation like unemployment in England," he maintains, "but it takes a lot more sensitivity to recognize your *own* demons." — ***Khaaryn Goertzel***

Threat from pg. 30
landscape for hypocrisy and lies, in which the only way out offered is to hide deep within yourself (a suggestion made mockingly).

Copping from the Sex Pistols the fat-bottom beat they copped from Mott the Hoople and glitter rock, and scoring their dynamics like Kiss and AC/DC, Minor Threat sound neither like punk nor heavy metal. Playing recently at Manhattan's Gildersleeve's, they were fast and expansive, telegraphing in the music a willed faith in the future that the lyrics steadfastly deny. Singer MacKaye is a natural. Rubber-faced (more like Gumby than David Johansen) and moving like a *Mensch* who'd just been pulled out of the audience, he projects every line with gestures that not only express everything but install an irony that no lyric sheet could ever convey.

"I think hardcore, punk or whatever it is, could last for many, many years," MacKaye said from the porch of his Arlington, Virginia house. "But it's like, the soul could die and the body live on." Drummer Jeff Nelson elaborated, saying: "We have all the natural aspirations to get big, but we're already feeling what it's like to be a big band, and it's pretty weird." The group is in a strange position: they are dubious both about the movement they helped to form and about their stature in it. The best thing they've ever done is the last song on "Out Of Step," which has a chorus that goes, "We don't care/ We don't pose/ We'll steal your money/ We'll steal your show." They are saying, if we can't blend into our audience, we'll make the distance between us trivial by seeming nothing more than shysters. What makes this so poignant is that, for a moment, they really do seem to want not to matter. But they do. Minor Threat are routinely, I am told, on the verge of breaking up. I hope it's not before they've pursued their contradiction a good deal further. — ***R.J. Smith***

Vega from pg. 28
trends are catching up with him, the current demand for what can best be described as "urban primitive" art has brought new buyers for the crosses he constructs from sidewalk junk and adorns with lights. His found-object sculptures are indicative of his indefatigable, get-on-with-it spirit. Where there's a will, there's a way. Or, as he puts it, "I've gotten used to making things without having anything. Each thing is a universe in itself," he explains, with mock profundity, lifting the Coke can he'd been drinking from and tapping it. "You could work a year on *that* sound alone." — ***Michael Hill***

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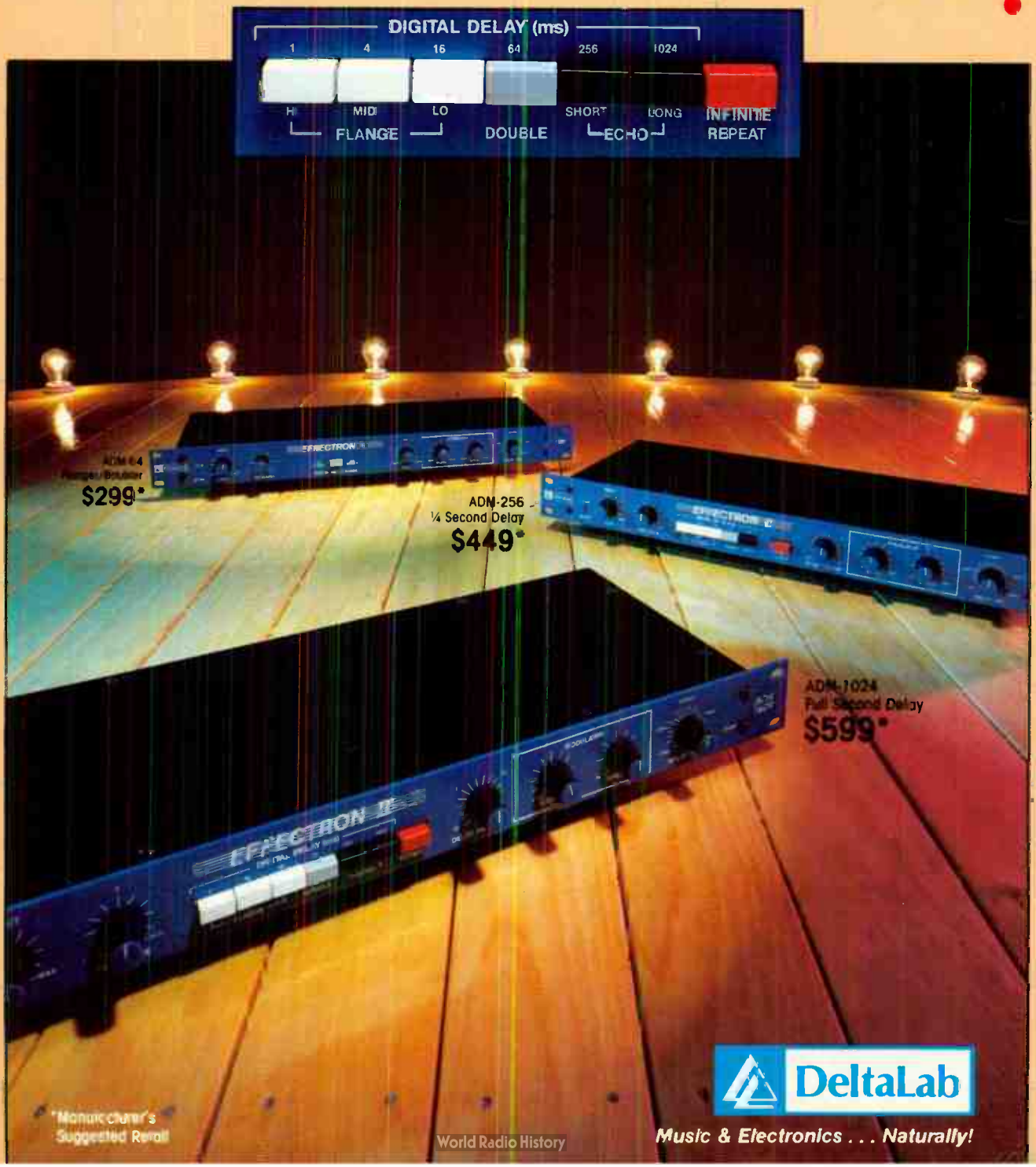

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THE SECOND COMING

THE HUMAN LEAGUE

POP

BY DAVID FRICKE

PAA RETNA

TEARS FOR FEARS

1983

A revolution in form, not content, leaves the new pop radicals groping for heart and soul.

The June sun rising high over the crescent-shaped beach at Weymouth, England beats down on the same scene every summer. Pale vacationers—mostly from London, about two hours' drive away—converge on this southern coastal resort for the pleasure of turning beet-red under the sun, washing down their fish 'n' chips with a dish of melting ice cream and taking holiday snaps of the youngsters on the donkey rides. Not far from the donkey dispatch on the beach is a creaky old merry-go-round, the ornate rusting pseudo-Victorian decorations on its hood glowing like tarnished old family jewels in the white sun.

SIMON FOWLER RETNA

HOWARD ROSENBERG

HEAVEN 17

Underneath, the kids shriek with delight as ceramic ponies gallop in their circle to a merry summer tune. Only this year it's not the asthmatic wheeze of a calliope blowing strains of "Lady Of Spain." In 1983, this merry-go-round is spinning to the electronic beep of the Human League's "Don't You Want Me"—the seven-minute *dub* version.

Back in London, busy Oxford Street jumps to the same modern beat. Inside record shops and small Indian boutiques alike, shoppers browse to the saucy bounce of the League's latest single "Fascination" as well as New Order's propulsive transistor-funk raver "Blue Monday" and the robot heartbeat of "Nobody's Diary," a new synthetic torch song by Yaz. In a Wimpy hamburger bar, chirpy English birds take lunch orders to the thump of the Thompson Twins' "Love On Your Side." And if every record on BBC's Radio 1 isn't one hundred percent synth-pop, nearly every other record moves to the automatic snap of a drum machine or sports dramatic synthesizer effects in its monster 12-inch remix.

In AIR Studios, four stories above Oxford Circus, Human League vocalist Phil Oakey—a surprising sight in faded denim and week-old beard—looks down on the lunchtime crush of office workers negotiating the clotted traffic and groans. "English pop is *rubbish*," he snorts derisively. "Basically, no one is interested in music. It's this huge industry of leeches who are out to get all the little girls down there. They get them to buy all the pop magazines, not because there's any music in them, but because there's a cute poster of Kajagoogoo inside.

"I'm not convinced there's even a 'cutting edge' of pop, or that pop's even that important anymore," he continues, steam practically coming out of his ears. "There's a shallowness about this music, about these new groups, a shallowness they think they got off the Human League. Look, we were the first group to come after the punk thing and openly admit we wanted to make good pop records.

"But all these groups now who want to be the new Human League—there's something missing, isn't there? It's like they sound like computers themselves. People said the same thing about us, sure, but I always thought we had some real good songwriting in there somewhere. But these other groups...it's like they've programmed their synthesizers with *our* songs."

Now-defunct Oriental mystic magicians, Japan.

PETER ANDERSON

Oakey asks about one particular British duo, Naked Eyes, currently being exported to the U.S. as the country's latest synth-pop rage. He hasn't actually heard their record, a gutless sub-League treatment of Sandie Shaw's sweet 60s ballad "Always Something There To Remind Me," but everything he's heard about it really annoys him—the singer's anonymous gray croon, the heartless snap of the rhythm box, and that irritating farting French horn sound in the chorus. Oakey sighs and lifts his eyes to the ceiling as if to say, "Oh, God, the things they're doing in our name."

Phil Oakey and the Human League are not entirely without blame. On *Dare*, the group's wildly successful 1982 album, they basically programmed their own synthesizers with choice bits of Abba and came up multi-platinum around the world. But *Dare* and its number one single "Don't You Want Me" were responsible in their own modest way for accelerating the only decent pop revolution since the Sex Pistols uprising of 1977. Together with Soft Cell's seedy electro-cabaret treatment of the 60s soul classic "Tainted Love," the Human League records once and for all took the experimental chill off electronic music and made it not just safe but quite enjoyable, at times even exhilarating for moms, dads and little kid brothers.

The League's peppy fusion of simple pop charms and all-synth technology also suggested possibilities recently taken to highly original extremes by the Eurythmics on *Sweet Dreams (Are Made Of This)*, a marvel of natural sounds and electronic manipulation, and New Order's recent single "Confusion," an extraordinary synthesizer-street funk collaboration with producer Arthur Baker. Compared to these, all *Dare* really had going for it was some very clever song ideas (the melodramatic begging chorus and male-female bickering of "Don't You Want Me"—sort of twenty-first century Paul & Paula), the confectionery harmonies of Joanne Catherall and Susanne Sulley sandwiching Oakey's deep hammy tenor and Martin Rushent's astute production. Rushent's shrewd deployment of The League's electronics gave *Dare*'s traditional pop maneuvers a bright, futuristic gleam that blinded everybody with science.

Therein lies the rub. The 80s British synth-pop explosion legitimized by *Dare*—Kraftwerk, Suicide and Eurodisco king Giorgio Moroder were already gathering the dynamite eight years earlier—is not a revolution of pop expression or commitment. That is quite obvious from Gary Numan's android Bowie ripoffs, the dilettantish disco prance of haughty duos like Blancmange and the superficial New Romantic landscaping of recent Ultravox product. This isn't even a revolution of pop language, merely of its technology. The prime architects are not musicians but scientists and technicians inventing and re-inventing electronic instruments with greater capabilities and, as important, affordability. John Foxx, original Ultravox singer and electro-pop solo artist, figures it this way: in pop music, "electronics is just another way of saying the same thing."

That is one reason the Human League have still not, at this writing, issued a followup album to *Dare*. Earlier this year, the group scrapped three-quarters of a new Rushent-produced album because, simply, it was all *Dare* and no daring; the same sly studio technique and smart song ideas but with none of *Dare*'s spanky freshness. "Well, it wasn't all his fault," Oakey admits sheepishly. "I mean, it didn't help that I went in to him and said, 'Martin, let's do an LP exactly like the Jacksons now.' He was trying to take *Dare* a step on; I was completely obsessed with these Jacksons albums I'd gotten, and naturally he got a bit confused."

Oakey laughs good naturedly, but he can hardly be heard over the electronic funk ka-*boom* that suddenly erupts in the studio next door. Pretenders/Roxy Music producer Chris Thomas is at the console, toying with a rhythm track for still another new Human League LP. After the group's amicable

split with Rushent (Oakey: "He still helps us with ideas and shows us how to work new instruments"), Thomas was hired to help the League try again. His trial run was the successful remix of "Fascination," salvaged from the Rushent sessions, and Oakey couldn't have been happier.

"We had these discussions about how wooden the bass drum sounded and that was a complete eye-opener for me. I never thought there was such a thing. We were using computer drums, after all. So he decided to put something on it that made it sound more real, not just echo, but a real natural sound. He fed the bass drum sound on 'Fascination' out into the studio to loosen it up with just ambient noise and it sounded great. He also did a manual mix instead of a computer mix, which you'd normally expect from us. And it sounded great."

Sort of putting more humanity into the Human League? "That was the idea, yeah."

The Human League doesn't have much choice. There is a dry, quiet air of finality about *Dare*'s all-machine approach, a sense of terminal success about the project that still haunts sessions for the new LP. Oakey admits, "It's very difficult to go further than *Dare* and still be doing good pop songs, which is the most important thing. I want us to sound comfortable and rhythmically correct without being forced. Like my dad rang up over 'Mirror Man' (the catchy Motown cop on the recent *Fascination* EP) and complained, 'That sounds like machines to me. Why did you release that record? That's the first one that really sounded like machines to me.' That really worried me."

One corrective measure took an unpredictable turn. On "Fascination," there is one ascending core riff on which the song spins, a weird quivering line that at first sounds like the record's spindle hole is way off center. It is in fact played by the League's main instrumentalist Jo Callis on a Roland guitar synthesizer and was meant to actually sound that way. "Lots of people in Britain sent their records back to the stores because of that," Oakey shrugs. League bassist Ian Burden says his mother thought "the record was stuck or something."

All of which leaves the League caught between *Dare* and a very hard place. Not only are tiresome hacks like Naked Eyes yapping at their dragging heels, but able peers like Yaz's reclusive keyboard whiz Vince Clark and Heaven 17 (featuring original League co-founders Martyn Ware and Ian Craig Marsh) are experimenting with different R&B forms and outside sounds—and charting with them. Meanwhile Oakey and the League are ankled to the literal electronic sound that made them rich. (Oakey notes that British sales of the "Fascination" single paid for the entire trashed Rushent sessions.) And they are hindered by the very thing that made electronics so appealing to the League in the first place—a critical lack of instrumental proficiency.

"We've never composed with electronics," Oakey argues. "We compose on keyboards or maybe Ian will come up with something on a bass and Jo will do something on guitar. We then put the song on a machine, put it through a computer like the Roland Microcomposer or a Synclavier, basically because we can't play it fast enough and get it right. We compose the standard way and apply what happens to be the fashionable sound." He smiles bashfully. "We were very lucky that the sound was fashionable when we were capable of doing it.

"The early Human League got into electronics because we didn't have any choice. No one could play anything else." Oakey, a former hospital attendant, was once told by his ex-wife that he couldn't sing a note. Martyn Ware and Ian Craig Marsh were computer operators in Sheffield; Oakey figures all they did was push the buttons they were told to.

"In those days, it was much more important to us that we had tape recorders than that we had synthesizers. The fact that we had a two-track Sony and you could bounce from one track to the other meant that we didn't have to have five people trying to get in time with each other. If we'd been about in the early days of Elvis Presley and had to go out there and everyone had to play right and sing together, we couldn't have done it. Even now, this Human League couldn't do it. Well, maybe Ian Burden could do something with his bass, Jo Callis with his guitar. But that's about it."

"It's very difficult to go further than* Dare *and still be doing good pop songs, sounding comfortable without being forced."

So the group can't really play and Oakey confesses as a singer that his mid-range is quite pathetic. So what then can the Human League really do? According to Phil Oakey, the Human League exists through their songs and the performances are simply the best they can do with them.

Oakey grins sheepishly. "It is, isn't it?"

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Martyn Ware and Ian Craig Marsh would be quite amused by Phil Oakey's account of how they got their first synthesizers. "Martyn started out as a guitarist at one stage. But he got his synthesizer because he stopped going out with a woman he wanted to marry. She got rid of him or something. And he had nothing to spend his money on, y'know, he had a lot of money and quite a good job. So he went and got a synthesizer because Ian had already built himself one and Martyn had to beat that. But Ian didn't go out, didn't drink and didn't smoke, so he had lots of money, too. So he got an even bigger synthesizer to show Martyn."

So much for art and concept.

Ware would like to add something to that, though, something you probably don't know about the formation of the original Human League in Sheffield in 1977. "You say electronics to some people and they think of white boys with synthesizers playing the *Best Of Kraftwerk*," grumbles Ware, relaxing in the spare modernist comfort of his London flat, the renovated second floor of a townhouse a short walk from Portobello Road. "In fact, black R&B bands have been using synthesizers since the word go. They've been on Supremes records in the late 60s. I have a Rose Royce album here from the mid-70s that's got synthesizers all over it.

"You've got people like Prince, that last Marvin Gaye record. It's been happening in the black field much more than the white field, on a popular basis rather than an experimental basis." And here comes the punch line. "You know, Donna Summer's 'I Feel Love' was a major inspiration for Ian and me starting the Human League. That's true. I don't think anything's surpassed that record in the pop field either. As a pure electronic song, nothing's surpassed it."

As two-thirds of Heaven 17, Ware and Marsh are really trying. They suddenly bolted from the Human League in 1980, catching Oakey and the group's visual director Philip Adrian Wright completely by surprise, because they saw no creative future in Oakey's vision of the group as an automated hit machine. Ware and Marsh saw greater challenge in reconciling that same impersonal technology with the bold emotional thrust of their favorite soul records, to use the tension between the two as an instrument in itself.

"Absolutely!" agrees Ware excitedly while Marsh and the group's hunky blond singer Glenn Gregory, all hooded eyelids and cool romantic urbanity, sit around the room, nodding

"But all these groups who now want to be the new Human League—it's like they programmed their synths with our songs."

sagely. Ware cites "Come Live With Me" and "Temptation," a brooding Europop ballad and a breathless rush of modernist Philly International disco respectively, from the latest Heaven 17 album *The Luxury Gap* as typical examples. "We did remixes of those tracks with producer David Kershenbaum and his impression of the tracks was such that he took away all of that tension we're talking about. He replaced it with a very lush sound, I mean *incredibly* lush, which was exactly the wrong thing. I don't know why, but we seem to annoy people with our music for certain reasons we don't fully understand."

That "annoyance" factor is the very thing distinguishing Heaven 17 (also operating under the corporate disguise British Electric Foundation) from both the synth-pop mob and the upstart white British funk army led by the candyass likes of Haircut 100 and the highly transparent duo Wham! With a nerve backed up by informed studio technique and bolstered by dancefloor imagination, Heaven 17 program their electronics for a human physical response, encouraging it with doses of real Earth, Wind & Fire brass on the funky "Key To The World" from *The Luxury Gap* and those radiant Gamble-Huff strings on "Temptation." The group's strong lyrical undercurrent of political dissatisfaction further stokes the boiling electro-disco pace and jazzy acoustic piano interruptions of the *Gap*'s "Crushed By The Wheels Of Industry." At a time when there's a lot of talk from young British lions about a new funk synthesis and big futures in electronics, Heaven 17 are doing something about it.

Their beginnings are humble enough. In the original League, Ware and Marsh had only two Korg 770s and a Roland System 100 to make all their noise. Ware remembers laboring for days trying to get decent bass and snare sounds out of the Korg because they had no rhythm machines. "We never actually did get it right," he admits, laughing. The League's debut recording, a raw experimental 1978 7-inch called "Being Boiled," was recorded on that two-track Sony Oakey mentioned, with no mixing.

After the 1980 split (Ware and Marsh appear on two early League LPs, *Reproduction* and *Travelogue*), the rebel duo recruited Gregory and retired to a makeshift eight-track studio in Sheffield where they cut the propulsive psycho-funk single "(We Don't Need This) Fascist Groove Thang," a major English hit and an improbable technical success. The sequencer on the Roland System 100 and an electronic touch-sensitive pad, a primitive forerunner of Mattel's popular Synsonics electronic drum kit, kept up the song's absurdly fast beat. The rattling milk bottle noises came also courtesy of the Roland (Ware: "We were actually looking for a tambourine sound, but never found it.") and the chord sequence was done on a Jupiter 4 synth.

Heaven 17's ability to make inspired, subtly innovative pop on garage gear has only inspired them on to bigger toys. But unlike many of their British synth-pop peers who are content to let their machines do all the work, Ware is proud of the fact that Heaven 17 has moved even farther afield, mixing and matching hard-core electronics with not just natural sounds but offbeat arrangement notions. On "Let Me Go," from the group's eponymous American debut LP, Ware and Gregory recorded seventy-two tracks of backing vocals, careful to mix them down into a moody male choir "and not a drunken football crowd."

Even more ambitious was the 1982 import album *Music Of Quality And Distinction* released under the BEF umbrella. Ware and Marsh paired off eight unlikely singers—including Tina Turner, Gary Glitter, old Manfred Mann man Paul Jones, Billy McKenzie of overmannered U.K. pop futurists the Associates—with bizarre covers of Glen Campbell's "Wichita Lineman" (a cowboy Roxy Music treatment), "Ball Of Confusion" by the Temptations (Turner cooking hot and nasty over BEF's roaring synth-funk fire) and Bowie's "The Secret Life Of Arabia" (like *Low* sucked into a black hole of haunting rhythm). It didn't always work—let's face it, Gary Glitter doing "Suspicious Minds"?—but even the album's bomb tracks suggested interesting combinations of vocal expression, instrumental voicing and electronic puppetry.

Ironically, Heaven 17's desire to color their electronics with a natural glow, like the meaty blast of a real trumpet or the trembling whine of a Stradivarius, has taken an even more technical turn with Ian Craig Marsh's purchase of a Fairlight digital computer synthesizer. So what if Britain's Musicians Union is mounting a battle to ban synthesizers on the shaky grounds that it deprives working musicians of their rightful paychecks? The first thing Heaven 17 plans to do with it is to replace studio orchestras—at least on their records.

"Doing the orchestra bits," says Glenn Gregory, "for *The Luxury Gap* was murder. We had these string players in there, being paid handsomely to play what we wanted and they couldn't have cared less. They were completely disinterested in the music."

"That would have been the ideal time to have some journalists in the studio," pipes in Ware, visibly bristling with anger as he recalls the session and how much money they wasted on it. "Because that orchestra approached our music in a much more sterile fashion than anything we do in the studio. They were reading off sheet music and doing it badly, and then leaving it unfinished at the end unless they got paid a quarter-hour overtime rate."

Ware eventually had his revenge. The group had to do a remix of "Temptation" for a *Top of the Pops* TV appearance and used Marsh's Fairlight to replace all of the strings. "We did it better, it sounds more powerful," Ware gloats, "and it only took us an hour and a half."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Of England's top synthesizer pop acts, Tears For Fears are one of the most satisfying and infuriating of the lot. Musically, they represent an artful compromise between pure electronics and classic pop instrumentation, blending slick synthesizer gimmickry with hypnotic staccato guitar effects and sensitive piano figures on their recent Mercury debut *The Hurting*. Roland Orzabal, twenty-two, the songwriting and principal instrumental half of Tears For Fears, insists he can't stand pure electronic music anyway, an alarming admission in a genre dominated by the stern Teutonic presence of Kraftwerk.

"There are two saxophone solos on that album that mean more to me than the whole record," he says with desperate conviction, brushing back the braided strand of pseudo-dread hair hanging quail-like over his forehead as he settles into a sofa in his record company's London office. "I remember one of them; Mel Collins (ex-King Crimson, no less) was trying to get this part for hours. It took ages because the ranges were so high. Then we asked him to play his saxophone, anything he wanted to, during one passage. He did that solo straight up and we were just stunned. His expression, his ability to play and express himself through that horn—it was incredible. Because there was nothing in the way."

Orzabal and Curt Smith, his singing and bass-playing

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partner, actually came to synthesizers quite by accident. Ex-heavy metal freaks who embarrassingly admit that the first live concert they ever attended was a Motorhead-AC/DC noise fest, they got their first taste of the electronic life cutting a demo two years ago for "Suffer The Children," a song that eventually appeared on *The Hurting*. The studio in Bath, England where they were recording happened to have a Synclavier and a Prophet 5. And the engineer David Lord, a veteran of several Peter Gabriel albums, knew how to use them.

"What I do now is use the synthesizer in a very labored manner," Orzabal admits, "to synthesize different musical ideas, to arrange them and bring them together. I create color and atmosphere. It's more detached, I agree, than playing the guitar. It's not straight from the heart. It does go through a long labored process; it is a second-hand way of making music. But it's the only thing we can do."

How seriously can we take Tears For Fears' oppressive lyrical fixation with adolescent pain and, in specific, Arthur Janov's primal scream theory? In the recent tradition of English pop's Cult of the Sad Young Men, inspired by the tortured post-punk introspection of Joy Division, Tears For Fears are obsessed with their own troubled youth, dissecting with almost masochistic glee their sundered romances and smallest psychological tremors like transistorized James Taylors and Jackson Brownes. Tears For Fears are at least capable of turning a good pop phrase, like the dizzy Philip Glass-like marimba prance of "Change." But they represent even in that agreeable way an increasingly disturbing trend in English pop, of young discontent poets (Modern English and Bauhaus are more Bowie-esque examples) wallowing in their own smug emotional paralysis. Sure, Johnny Rotten said there was "no future." He didn't say to enjoy it.

"That is something that interests me," says Orzabal of Janov's scream psychology. "And when you're interested in something, you tend to adopt that language. Take a line like this one from 'Mad World'—'The dreams in which I'm dying/ Are the best I've ever had.' Now people think, 'Oh, he wants to die.' But that's not it at all. Dreams are there to relieve tension. The heavier the dream, the more your tensions will be relieved. So the dreams in which you come closer to death are your biggest tension relievers. Do you call that nihilism?"

Orzabal also insists Tears For Fears' electronic approach is perfect for getting their emotional concerns across. "John Lennon did an album based on Janov's primal scream theory, the *Plastic Ono Band* album, and I think ours is similar in that it's about the same thing. He did it, I suppose, in a more real way. But it was in a way, just piano and voice, in which I don't think he communicated to a lot of people. It could have been a lot more successful."

Orzabal's naivete is unnerving. Forget that *The Hurting*, which never even cracked the U.S. top 30, has not sold half enough to overtake the Lennon album, if that is indeed his measure of success. It is his implied contention that synthesizers, with their glib, often stiff imitations of natural instruments and the human dynamics required to make them truly expressive, make violent emotions like Lennon's Janov-rooted outbursts easier to take.

"Oh, yes, if we had done it like Lennon, who would have enjoyed it?" he argues. "I don't think you can always put emotions like that across in a real way. Pop music, in a lot of ways, is detached, just like synthesizers. It's a means of expression. But I think through competence and through working at it, through exploring all of the possibilities of these instruments, you can get it as near to your heart as possible."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

In spite of heavy importing of British records into this country and the Anglophilic frenzy of most KROQ-inspired radio stations, most Americans have not heard just how close to the heart some of these British synthesizer acts have really come. Consider Japan, an intriguing band of late 70s glam-rock

MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA

Humans Phil Oakey, Susanne Sulley and Joanne Catherall.

brats with raggy New York Dolls thatch haircuts who eventually smartened up and in 1981 glided into a haunting synth-based style of Oriental mystic disco that still radiates powerful magic even after the group's breakup last year.

"Ghosts," an absorbing electronic meditation from their last studio album *Tin Drum*, is one of British synth-pop's most unlikely artistic successes. Seemingly random but actually carefully orchestrated clumps and shards of electronic sound pop in and out of deep black space, decorating in an oblique prismic way the simple hymn-like chord structure of the song and David Sylvain's choked Bryan Ferry-ish vocal. This is not something you whistle while you work, but its dark mood and quiet concentrated tension—like a hushed Buddhist temple prayer—are extraordinary in a genre as brittle and off-hand as synth-pop.

"Electronic music is something that really bored us," asserts Japan's bassist Mick Karn, now a solo artist. "The *Tin Drum* album is where we finally succeeded in making electronic music sound ethnic, to produce sounds on the keyboard that actually sounded like real instruments—*kotos*, bamboo flutes, things like that. We were more interested in making exotic sounds, even random noises with the keyboards rather than play melodies or straight chord structures. 'Ghosts' is the best example of that."

Even in his native Britain, John Foxx is an unknown soldier in the fight against the synth-pop automatons. After leaving Ultravox in 1979 (he founded the pioneer electronic art-pop band back in 1974), Foxx immersed himself in what he calls "a design project" inspired by the minimalist technique of Kraftwerk and Tomita, recording on 8-track equipment with a modest battery of synths and rhythm toys. That album *Metamatic*, released in England in 1980, is recognized as a synth-pop landmark, a one-man wonder of articulate electronics and strange melodic charms for which Foxx is often hailed as the movement's big daddy. Gary Numan has always cited him as a primary influence and electronic LPs in the *Metamatic* mold are common news in the U.K. rock comics.

Since then, Foxx, now thirty, has issued a second solo LP *The Garden* with a third ready to go, recently prefaced by a catchy, danceable single called "Endlessly." A quiet unassuming gentleman with a voice that barely rises above a whisper, he nevertheless enjoys a good chuckle at all this talk of a synth-pop revolution in Britain or anywhere else. "It's just another form," he insists. "It makes the music sound different, but the content of the music is very similar. With pop music, you're talking about something that serves specific generations of say, twelve- to twenty-five-year-old people who always have the same or very similar emotional needs."

He isn't upset either about the contention that synthesizers discourage instrumental proficiency by providing whole

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"I use the synthesizer in a very labored manner. It's more detached than playing the guitar; it's not straight from the heart."

orchestras with the flick of a switch. "The musicians who aren't much good at playing other instruments—they will always be the best ones in the new field because they take to it like ducks to water, because they have no inhibitions. You'll find that a pianist or anyone who's been classically trained has great problems coming to terms with new things in pop because they don't realize how ingenious one tiny shift in a straight 4/4 beat can be. That's what pop music is all about, elegance and simplicity.

"Also, when you hear a record, I think it's important to feel that *you* could have made that record, that it is saying something you want to say and how you'd want to say it. You've got to feel enmeshed in the music. Like, for instance, when all those bands in the 60s came out with their guitars. All the kids said, 'Well, I can play that if I got a guitar.' So everybody got a guitar. It's just the same thing all over again."

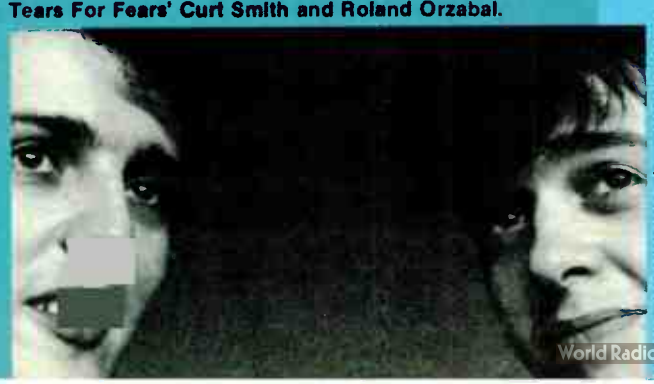
It is a noble idea, but it doesn't make Phil Oakey feel very good. The one thing that made the Human League unique—their simple ingenuous application of technology they really didn't understand to songs everybody could love—is now the norm, a norm that is now threatening to become as dreary and predictable as the Journey-REO sludge that it replaced. Back at AIR Studios, just before joining Chris Thomas and the rest of the League for another eight-hour recording session, he is seriously considering the possibility that the Human League were much more important as an idea than as a band.

"We were important," he says with resignation, "as a song—'Don't You Want Me'—and that was about it. Now we've got to pull ourselves together, write more solid stuff and record it a bit better, then go out and learn how to play it properly. We have to present ourselves as an honest group doing our songs instead of what it was before. It was six of us coming together after the original League split, putting together in only six months ten songs we had.

"Hey, we didn't know what we were doing. We made everything up as we went along. Hopefully, we have learned enough about our instruments, our own abilities to make a better album, be more consistent and perform so people will see this is a real group."

Otherwise, that merry-go-round on the beach at Weymouth may not be playing their song next year.

Tears For Fears' Curt Smith and Roland Orzabal.



STEVE RAPPORT/RETNA

SYNTH-ETICS

The Human League's synthesizer collection has not changed that much from the one listed on the inner sleeve of *Dare*. They still rely heavily on a Roland System 700 and Korg 770 although they have moved up from a Roland Jupiter 4 to a Jupiter 8. A LinnDrum still counts the beat and they often call on a Yamaha CS-15 and the humble Casio VL1. For the Chris Thomas sessions, they hauled in a PPG Wave 2.2 computer, and while they still use a Roland Microcomposer MC-4, Oakey is quite taken with the Synclavier digital computer synthesizer which he has managed to squeeze into his London bedroom, together with a 24-track recording set-up. He's not only got an Otari 24-track tape machine and an Amek desk in there, but he has installed an effects rack with some Eventide harmonizers, eight Kapex noise gates, a British spring reverb and two MXR digital delays whose model numbers "I can't remember for the life of me."

The humbler Heaven 17 cut their demos on a TEAC 4-track Portastudio. Keyboards include a Roland Jupiter 4 and Jupiter 8, Roland System 100 synthesizer, and a new prized Fairlight computer synthesizer which may put their Roland MC-4 Microcomposer out of work. The group's cool funk boogie is the combined product of a LinnDrum, a Roland Bassline and Roland Drumatix along with assorted tambourines, cowbells and a vibraslap. Ian Craig Marsh notes proudly that except for the Fairlight, all of their equipment fits in the back seat of his sporty English sedan. "Plus two people," adds Glenn Gregory. "One of us takes a cab."

For two young serious romantics with no previous synthesizer experience, Tears For Fears have turned into real tech hounds. Curt Smith's main axe is a Steinberger bass put through a Roland amplifier and an MXR 27-band graphic equalizer. Roland Orzabal sticks with a new model Fender Telecaster onstage which goes through a Boss compression sustain, a Korg digital delay, the same MXR equalizer as Smith, and into a Roland JC-120 amp. In the studio, he plays a new Fender walnut Strat and a Gibson Firebird guitar. Orzabal's favorite keyboard is the PPG Wave 2.2, although the Prophet 5 and Roland JP-8 also get good workouts. The group also uses a Yamaha electric grand piano put through a chorus and is quite excited about their latest purchase, an Emulator.

Orzabal is also co-owner of a new 24-track studio with the group's auxiliary keyboard player Ian Stanley. Hooked up with a Soundcraft 24-track board is an Otari 24-track tape machine with no capstan. Outboard gear: Roland graphic equalizer, Lexicon 224X, MXR and Urei compressors and an MXR pitch transposer.

John Foxx's London studio, The Garden, is also well-stocked. The room is outfitted with Eastlake monitoring, 800 watts a side, and the 24-track Amek desk (35 channels that can double up to 70) is hooked up to an MCI 24-track tape machine and a 2-track mixdown model. Effects include an MXR flanger, Lexicon digital echo, Eventide harmonizer and a Revox tape machine for tape delay effects.

Foxx's keyboards amount to a Roland Juno 60 and Jupiter 8, a Polymoog and Minimoog, an Emulator and a Fairlight. There is also a Roland MC-4 Microcomposer and he still uses his old ARP Odyssey quite often. But his prized keyboard is a 6-foot Yamaha concert grand piano ("I love the feeling of playing it. I go down and play it at night sometimes.") He keeps time on a LinnDrum, a Movement Systems drum machine and a Simmons drum kit that he triggers with the Linn. His main guitar is a nondescript Fender but Foxx is also quite fond of a battered old twelve-string acoustic "that is great for recording because it has a neutral sound. You can do anything to it, treat it any way you want and it sounds beautiful. Just put a mike in front of it."

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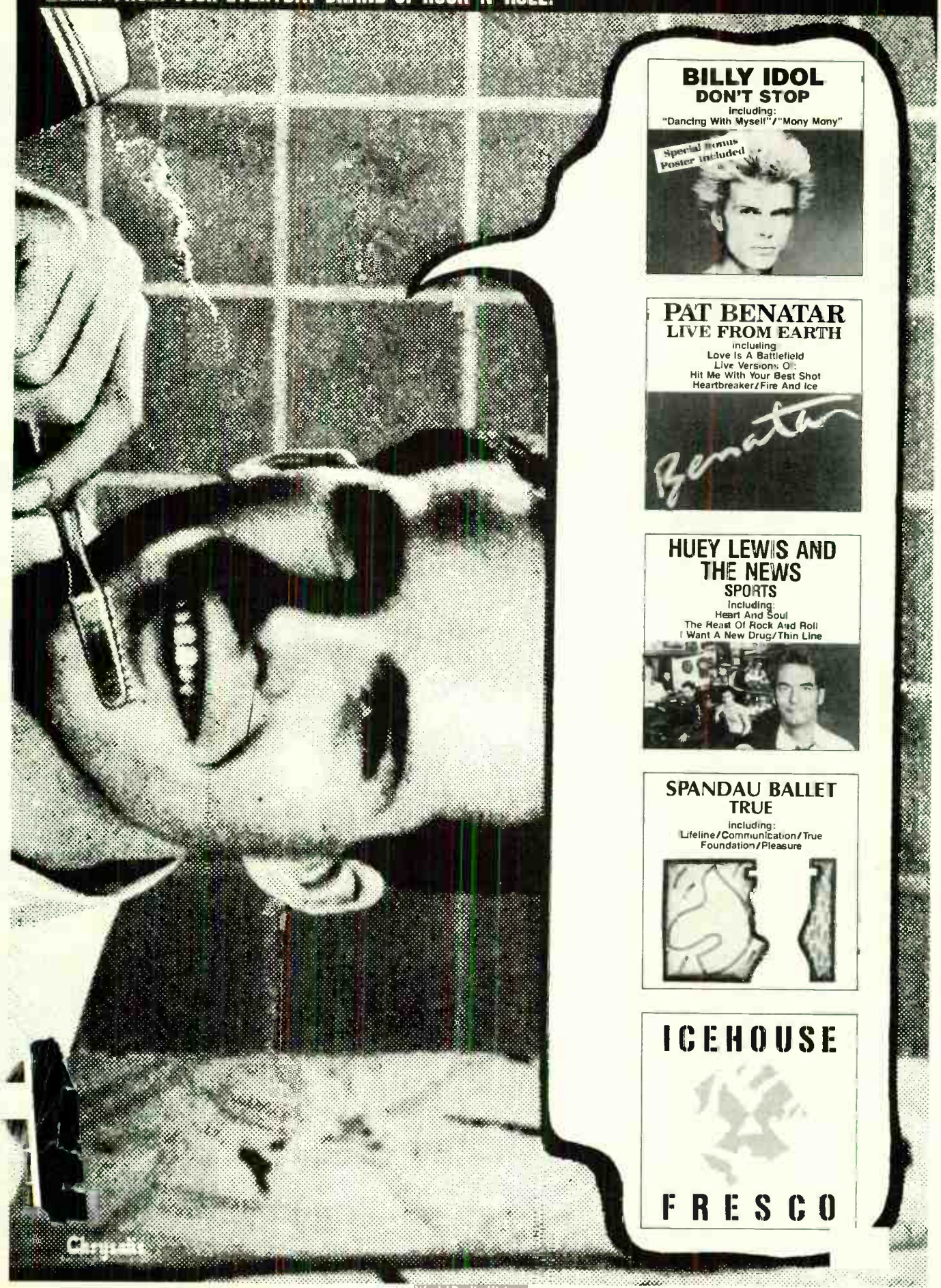


BILLY IDOL
DON'T STOP
including:
"Dancing With Myself"/"Mony Mony"

PAT BENATAR
LIVE FROM EARTH
including
Love Is A Battlefield
Live Versions Of:
Hit Me With Your Best Shot
Heartbreaker/Fire And Ice

HUEY LEWIS AND THE NEWS
SPORTS
Including:
Heart And Soul
The Heart Of Rock And Roll
I Want A New Drug/Thin Line

SPANDAU BALLET
TRUE
including:
Lifeline/Communication/True
Foundation/Pleasure

ICEHOUSE

FRESCO

Deborah Feingold

The Ballad of *by Bill Flanagan*

Bar Band Browne

Wherein a sensitive young soul finds rock 'n' roll and lives happily ever after.

Jackson Browne shook hands with the last beaming fan, signed the final autograph and climbed onto the tour bus for the trip from the concert hall to the hotel. Strikingly thin, with his new haircut exposing rather prominent ears, Browne looks younger at thirty-five than many rockers do at twenty-two. With the youthful appearance comes an open West Coast manner that makes it easy to think of Jackson as one of the boys.

Until the driver switches on the radio and the DJ introduces "The Pretender," that is. As close to the bone as any description of

frightened people selling short their dreams, the song is a forceful reminder of Jackson Browne's stature in American rock. As the lyric on the radio spins out, the composer stares silently out of the window. I wonder what he's thinking. After he's autographed his way through a crowd at the hotel, I ask Browne what went through his mind as "The Pretender" unwound.

"I was thinking that we should have played it faster."

In 1983, you see, Jackson Browne is a rocker. He's been inspired by his friend Bruce Springsteen ("Just seeing him play looks like such unbelievable *fun*. Seeing Bruce's shows is like being shown how it's done; how to rock.") and by a growing sense of his band as a unit.

On a summer night in Columbia, Maryland, Browne steps out onstage in a turquoise leather jacket and kicks into his 1982 pop hit "Somebody's Baby." During two hour-long sets and three encores Browne plays acoustic guitar on only one song ("For Everyman"). The rest of the night leaps from the all-out exuberance of "Boulevard," "Running On Empty" and a souped-up "Doctor My Eyes" to driving electric versions of Browne's deepest songs, "Here Come Those Tears Again" and "Sleep's Dark And Silent Gate." But the real rock 'n' roll news is the group of seven songs from Jackson's new album, *Lawyers In Love*. Except for "Say It Isn't True," a parent's meditation on war, all of the new tunes jump and shout.

DAVID GAHR

Nineteen-year-old Jackson hanging in the Village.

A big part of this progression must be credited to Browne's band. After working for several years with a large group that included session aces Bill Payne, Rosemary Butler and Danny Kortchmar, the singer decided to consolidate his resources. Keyboard player Craig Doerge, bassist Bob Glaub and drummer Russ Kunkel simplified and streamlined their rhythm section, eschewing slick licks for a tighter ensemble sound. Backup singer Doug Haywood, who played bass in one of Browne's early bands, assumed multiple responsibilities: he now covers second keyboards, guitar and occasional bass in addition to harmony vocals.

But the real blessing in disguise came when guitarist Kortchmar was too busy to go out on the road. Second guitarist Rick Vito was promoted to the lead spot and Browne assumed rhythm duty. To cement their guitar partnership, Jackson also assumed the rhythm spot in Vito's L.A. club band. Lugging his amp onstage and plugging in, Browne learned Vito's songs and held up his end of the Chuck Berry covers. It was the star's first experience playing in a bar band. Soon Glaub and Kunkel were also in on the gig.

"The more we played together that way," Vito recalls, "the better we got to know each other musically. Jackson worked out a lot of guitar parts that he once would have left to me or Danny. And he found he could play them with more ease than he anticipated. He's actually a really good rhythm guitar player. And he takes pride in that, I think."

From the bar gigs Browne and his band would head over to their downtown L.A. rehearsal studio where recording gear was set up to capture what would become the *Lawyers In Love* album. "The songs that I ended up finishing for the record," Browne explains, "were the ones I'd go home at night *wishing* I could play with Ricky, rather than some other ones that couldn't be played in a bar. I'd like to make music that you can dance to. I'd like that a lot. We did a video of "Tender Is The Night." God, it was fun to watch the people in it dancing to that song. I was afraid they wouldn't be able to! I sat there chewing my nails down to the cuticles waiting for them to set up the shot. And these people danced so *beautifully*. I thought I'd like to do something that would be a get-off for them."

It's been a long journey from the early albums that established Jackson Browne as a sensitive singer/songwriter to the dance-rock ambition of *Lawyers In Love*. The one constant has been the singer's almost obsessive desire to test his own limits; to do "what I'm not supposed to be able to do."

Our conversation took place in the week before the August release of *Lawyers In Love*. Jackson and I began talking in Maryland and finished in Massachusetts. Along the way we tried to sort out how the child in these hills who wrote about sailing off to utopian islands evolved into a man who prefers to see the world through a downtown window.

MUSICIAN: *The people who buy your records feel that they know you well. Are you the person who comes through those songs? Are there aspects of yourself that you hold back?*

BROWNE: I'm sure there are things I've kept out. Yeah. I know it. Friends of mine have told me. Right after my first album came out I said to one of my friends, "Roger, I know you don't really care for my songs." He said, "No, no. It's not that. But, gee, you leave so much out! Remember the time...." I can't tell you what he was referring to. It was largely debauchery. I said, "I should write about *that*?" But then I thought, well, yeah, maybe so. I began to include the stuff that he was talking about. But, yeah, there's a lot of stuff I leave out.

MUSICIAN: *I suppose the real turning point for your subject matter was* Running On Empty, *with a couple of songs about cocaine and one about self-abuse.*

BROWNE: (laughs) Yeah. Right. I have a friend, a martial artist in Japan, who was telling one of his students what a sensitive and spiritual guy I am. And the student, who was from northern England, said, "Right! Writing about cocaine and wanking off. Real spiritual guy!"

That album was, for me, a way of relaxing about the whole thing. About playing and everything. You cut a song and that was it. Two of them, "Running On Empty" and "The Load Out/Stay" were recorded at the place we played tonight. We had talked about "The Load Out/Stay" in a hotel room weeks earlier. But we'd never played the song, never worked it out. We got offstage here and had done three or four encores. I said, "I don't know, what should we do?" Russell (Kunkel) said, "Let's do 'Stay.'" And that was the best it ever worked. It never really worked again on that whole tour. That was when I really started to like arranging songs. The night before, in this hotel, Danny Kortchmar and I stayed up all night trying to do something with "Running On Empty." We went to the sound-check

> *"The songs I ended up finishing for the new record were the ones I'd go home at night wishing I could play in a bar."*

and arranged it. And that night we recorded it. That excites me. And I'd like to do that again.

That's what I did with this record, keeping the recording machines downtown all the time. Now it's become more of a real studio. But we recorded a lot of this album set up for stage. "Somebody's Baby" was recorded with monitors in a room with no isolation at all. Just set up for stage.

MUSICIAN: *Was there any thought of putting that song on this album? It was a hit.*

BROWNE: There were two schools of thought. I didn't think that song would have gotten on this album anyway. That's why we gave it to the movie. We had it half done and Cameron Crowe, the guy who wrote *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, needed a song. And he's an old friend of mine. So I said, "Well, this'll be fun." Then somebody said to me, "Listen, are you kidding? You're going to put an album out and 'Somebody's Baby' won't be on it? I like that song and I expect it to be on your record!" So I told everybody, "Okay, we'll put it on."

One night I said, "Okay, put up 'Somebody's Baby.'" Then I said, "Take it off." After almost a year making this album, I listened to it once and said (disgustedly) "Get it out of here!"

MUSICIAN: *You knock out "Somebody's Baby" and it's a hit. You do "Stay" for the first time and it's a hit. You arrange "Running On Empty" at sound-check, cut it that night and it's a hit. Yet you take three years between albums. Imagine if Dylan had had your attitude in '65: "I could do 'em really fast but I think I'll wait three years." Are you shelving a lot of songs?*

BROWNE: No, actually they don't get finished. And I don't think there's any comparison between me and him.

MUSICIAN: *I'm trying to make you feel guilty.*

BROWNE: You don't have to. I feel like a real slouch. Watch me sit here and make all these promises, rash oaths. I would really like to work at a faster rate. Sometimes I think there must be something wrong with my concentration. I know I have lousy work habits. I have a lot of distractions going on in my life. Or I don't have a lot to say! I agonize over this. I've got a lot of things *started*. Sometimes I'll be working on something and I'll get a great idea and instead of stopping work and writing the new song, I think, "I'll do it later." It's foolish. I should know better. Having worked out a lot of things internally with this album—both with the band and in my own way of thinking—I'd like to go ahead and make another one right away.

MUSICIAN: *In the late 60s, a number of your friends and peers got album deals—often recorded your songs—while you were passed over. Frustrating?*

BROWNE: It was an education. Everybody I knew made a record before I did. When I was *seventeen* friends of mine started making records. The band I had been in (Nitty Gritty Dirt Band), the people I lived with, my friend Steve Noonan, all the people I hung around with and I'd been singing with in clubs made records. And almost without fail—the Dirt Band did okay—everybody took gas. They had to record songs written by their producers' uncle or published by so-and-so or give up their own publishing. They had to compromise themselves. In the end, not even they liked what they'd put out.

The only thing worse would be to put out something you don't like and have it become a real hit. Then you get all the.... No, no. That's nasty.

MUSICIAN: *Go ahead.*

BROWNE: I was going to say that you get all of the Bobby Sherman fans or Barry.... There's all those people out there making music! You wonder who buys those records! There are a lot of people who really like bad music.

> *"I like saying two things at once. It's the way we live. We exist in situations all the time where we say one thing and do another."*

MUSICIAN: *A lot of people only buy one album every six months and play it just a few times. However, they may all buy the same record. I think that's got to be it. I don't think there are folks who run to the record store all excited, scoop up the new Manilow and six similar albums and run all the way home and really get into it.*

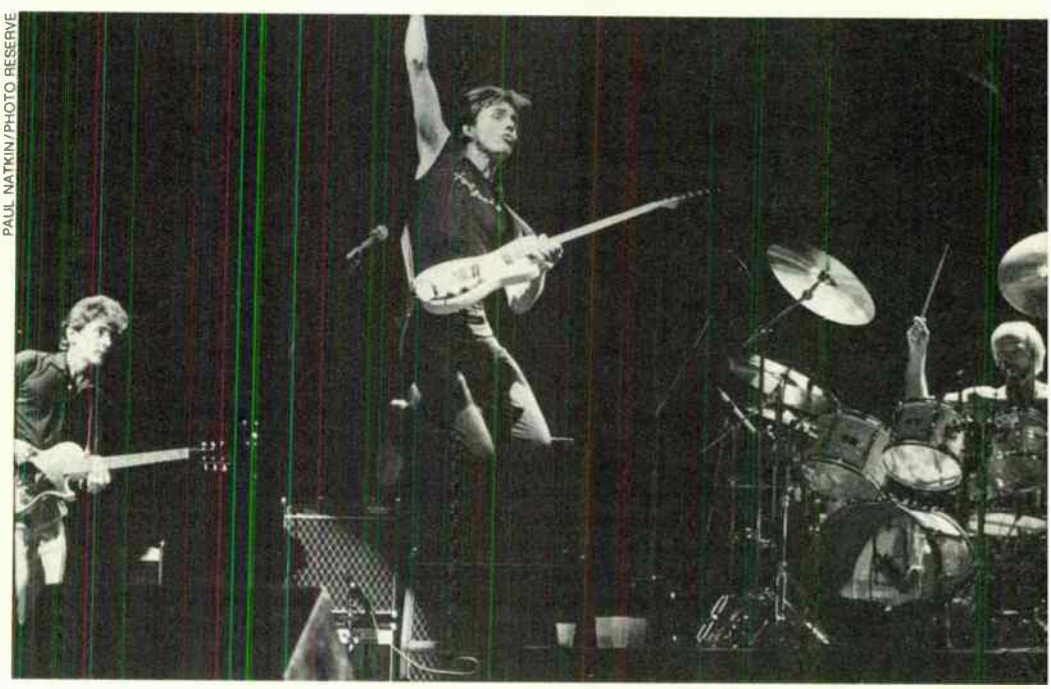
BROWNE: Of course there are! There are people who are totally into Barry Manilow! He's got people who feel about him *exactly* the way my fans feel about me. (laughter) And *that* is a humbling thought, I assure you. That will keep you from getting too excited about your own stardom. You realize that there are many people in the world who don't feel music very intensely. They don't love it, it's not a big thing to them. It's like wallpaper.

I can't buy furniture. But I have friends who always have beautifully designed furniture in their homes. I lived in a house for five years before I had any furniture! People would get up after a night of sitting on the floor and say, "Hey, this has been great but—look—call me when you get some furniture." And they'd leave holding their backs. I'd be sitting at the piano. I don't *notice* these things. I guess there are people who feel the same way about music.

MUSICIAN: *Sure. But to keep it in perspective, look at the taste some musicians have in painting or film. I know guys who are tuned into every nuance on a Miles Davis record or a Coltrane solo who will look at a Matisse and say, "Eh? What's this? I prefer Leroy Neiman."*

BROWNE: (laughs) Yeah. There was all that mail in *Rolling*

Rick Vito, neophyte rocker Browne and Russ Kunkel work on their heavy metal moves.



PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Stone because Spielberg very humbly said that he felt Scorsese made art while he made commercial films. And all this mail came rushing in saying, "Hey! The hell with Scorsese! We like what you do!" I mean, that's fine if you like that. Stephen is a great movie maker. But Scorsese *believes*.

MUSICIAN: *In "Cut It Away" you speak of being haunted by a dream of what you wanted life to be. Haven't you pretty much managed to fit your life to the dreams you designed?*

BROWNE: Oh no, no.

MUSICIAN: *That will come as a disapointment to those who emulate you—who figure that if they were where you are, they'd have control.*

BROWNE: That's backwards. You live a life. You don't fit your life to an ideal.

MUSICIAN: *Sure, but you have dreams to begin with. You have the dream of accomplishing a certain thing.*

BROWNE: You take your cues from life.

MUSICIAN: *You set out to do something and did it. At the age of sixteen or seventeen you must have wished....*

BROWNE: But those accomplishments were not an end to anything. They were just the process of becoming. You can't decide how your life will be in advance and then make that happen. I don't think. I mean, if you can, I've been *burned*.

You're talking about making people into heroes. I guess we need them. I have my heroes. But the things you think of your heroes aren't really quite true. It's a mistake to imagine that they have this wonderful life and all this control. They may be able to do one thing really well, but what you don't know is that they completely blow it on some other scale. That's definitely true of me.

I meet people who gather around the bus and want an autograph. It's like a human garden. There's all kinds of people out there. There's smart ones and not-so-smart ones and some who are completely in awe and others who have a more realistic grasp of things. But the phenomenon only means one thing: I've got to get through them to get to the hotel. They're all people who would go out of their way to meet *me*. So there are many kinds of people missing. My closest friends, the people I find most interesting, are the people who can help me. Nobody who thought I was a hero would be of any use to me at all. I could never possibly turn to them when I need help—which is most of the time.

> *"'Lawyers In Love' is a nasty, snotty little song, but it makes me happy. That's what this whole country looks like to me."*

Who you choose as role models, as your personal heroes, has a lot to do with who you are. And for that reason I sort of dismiss people who pick *me* as one. What could they possibly know? LISTEN, YOU'RE MAKING A TERRIBLE MISTAKE! THIS ROAD LEADS NOWHERE! IT'S A LOT OF TROUBLE. I put myself in Lowell George's hands for a while. Made him my tutor. And he very good-naturedly accepted. Since he had studied with a lot of Orientals, both musically and in the martial arts, he adopted that big mean Sufi sort of approach: "Okay, if you want to know what I know, you've got to do that and that and that. And when you're through doing that we'll talk about it." He called me the student prince because I was so willing to learn. I was such a scout all the time.

MUSICIAN: *Lowell told me he would be content to be a sideman in your band. So the teacher had some respect for the pupil. (Jackson looks startled, then smiles sadly.) You dealt with Lowell's death in "Of Missing Persons." You've dealt with death in four or five songs.*

BROWNE: Somebody said in a review of *Hold Out*, "Has there ever been a Jackson Browne record where someone doesn't die?" Warren Zevon told me that he'd had this sort of conniption fit at the airport. He had what amounts to a *grand mal* seizure. I think it was because of an herbal remedy given to him by a Chinese doctor friend of mine and David Lindley's. Chinese medicine—we're talking very sophisticated drugs made with herbs. You're supposed to drink half a cup of this tea, get under the covers and sweat it out. Well, Warren, of course, says, "If *half* a cup will make you better...." So he drinks cup after cup of this tea. Then he's going to get on a plane and go to New York! He has a seizure!

And he told me, "As I went down clawing the air and as they stuffed something in my mouth to keep me from swallowing my tongue, my last thought was, 'Oh, God, please don't let me die and have Jackson write a song about me!'" (laughter)

It was horrible! I had come from the Lowell George memorial concert! I was right in the middle of writing "Of Missing Persons"! I was three sheets to the wind and just gotten through crying my eyes out with Billy Payne and Paul Barrere. I left there and went up to Warren's house and he said that to me. I was just about to sing "Of Missing Persons" to him.

Just for that I will definitely write a song about Warren.

MUSICIAN: *Whether he dies or not.*

BROWNE: *Especially* if he dies.

MUSICIAN: *Doesn't it give you a sort of unfair advantage in a relationship that you can crystallize your position in a song and have many people hear it and accept your side?*

BROWNE: It's not a *real* advantage. In fact, it takes so long to do it that it's not an advantage at all. It's not of any use and it's not real. A song is static. It's just a nice thing that you can do. You can write somebody a song and tell them how much something means to you. I think it's unfair that such significance can be put on it.

If there's a woman who knows that (the Police's) "Every Breath You Take" was written for her—what impact! To hear that song everywhere you go! It's a powerful song and a beautiful song. *That's* kind of unfair. But I don't know if you could call what Sting has an *advantage*. I assume if you talk about an advantage, you're talking about gaining something. And here he's obviously not. It's simply an incredible song.

MUSICIAN: *In "Say It Isn't True" you repeat, "There always has been and always will be war." That sort of blows away a lot of your dreams of a better day coming.*

BROWNE: No, no. I think two things exist in that song. I'm also saying, "Say it isn't true," that there always has been and always will be war. When people say there always has been war, what they're really saying is, "And there always will be." That's the complete thought. But I have that other voice saying, "Say it isn't true." I like saying two things at once. I think it's the way we live. We think two things at once. We exist in situations all the time where we're saying one thing and doing another, knowing one thing and behaving in the opposite, having a belief and doing something else. That's true with "Downtown," too. On the one hand talking about the rats and the impending struggle for our cities and also saying, "I feel all right down there—I like that." I think it's a positive statement made without looking away from what does exist.

"Say It Isn't True" is many things. It's a question, it's an entreaty, it's almost like a prayer. Some of these songs have moments that are like a litany or a prayer—or in "Tender Is The Night," a benediction. From the repetition. For me. Just for me. I don't mean that I'm trying to do that with an audience. But because of the repetition, night after night I get to focus that way, again and again.

MUSICIAN: *I understand that both sides are represented in "Say It Isn't True," but the disclaimer in the title is completely overwhelmed by the cold power of saying, "There always will be war." Especially from someone who once held out the*

possibility of a better world drawing near.

BROWNE: But those songs you're referring to—"For Everyman" and those—were considered big bummers when they came out. I think that the possibilities and optimism in those songs were overlooked. What I always used to hear was, "You're so down all the time, they're depressing." But I think it's depressing for some people to even look at some of these things. On the other hand I know lots of people who just want music to be fun or diversion.

MUSICIAN: *To a kid, the idea of getting on a boat and heading off to build an island utopia is a great dream, marred only slightly by the possibility that the people you leave behind may blow each other up*

BROWNE: The idea that people got close enough to actually be able to do that made it a very tempting thing. But it is infantile. I remember sitting with my pals in the park when I was twelve or thirteen, entertaining each other with descriptions of an imaginary island where we could have all the stuff that we wanted and none of the stuff that was going on in our lives would happen. But if they actually let you go do it....

MUSICIAN: *You'd probably end up killing the Indians.*

BROWNE: Sure. Brando's got an island, they say. But I don't think he's hurt the natives. He's *gone* native. He's revered, he's an elder, he's a big fat guy with a *mumu* on. And they all feed him and sit in his lap.

MUSICIAN: *He's Kurtz.*

BROWNE: He's Gauguin! Gauguin was very difficult for anybody to get along with. He was considered very brilliant but "Get out of here!" So he went to Tahiti. The natives there called Gauguin "The White." They loved him and gave him a wife and said, "You can come over to our house for dinner any time you want. We dig you." And he dug them. And *nobody* dug him. He didn't dig anybody else, either.

MUSICIAN: *Well, the natives didn't speak French.*

BROWNE: They didn't know him, is that what you're telling me? But they gave him this...wife. They said, "Here. Take Peggy Sue. She's a little strange. Don't ever leave her alone." Did you know that Paul Gauguin played guitar? He was always begging for guitar strings which used to rot quickly in the tropics. "Can you send me strings of a little better quality? They go so quickly!"

Actually the line from "Running On Empty," "Running into the sun," was from an idea for a song called "After Paul Gauguin." You know how they do paintings in the style of an artist and sign them "after so-and-so"? I was going to write a song about running into the sun after Paul Gauguin.

MUSICIAN: *You used that same image in "From Silver Lake."*

BROWNE: You're right. It's the image of running after them. I stopped doing "From Silver Lake" when I wrote "For Everyman." It's on that same subject. The idea of leaving and never coming back, sleeping "in the dust of some ruin." My friends who went and slept in the dust of those ruins are back here pounding the pavement, trying to take a serious crack at accomplishing something. That song's a conscious amendment. I knew when I wrote "For Everyman" I would never sing "From Silver Lake" again. "I Thought I Was A Child" was a footnote to "A Child In These Hills." I did that a lot on my second album. Then I thought, "Now what'll I do on my third album? Comment on the songs on my second?"

MUSICIAN: *When you look back on your early work, do you ever feel uncomfortable with a face you put on that, in retrospect, wasn't honest?*

BROWNE: There are songs I'm not comfortable with, yeah. There are two varieties. There are songs where I now say, "That's not what was going on. Why did I say that? That's not where I was at." Then there are the ones where I say, "God! That's where I *was* at! I'm glad I changed." I'd be embarrassed to sing them now. I couldn't sing "Ready Or Not." To me, that I was joking about this woman getting pregnant speaks of the fact that I was not relating, was not handling, was not dealing with what was going on in my life. But once again, that's where

ANNE FISHBEIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Jackson really sticking it to the designer jeans set.

I was at. I get half way through the song and instead of just saying, "Isn't this a mind blower"—which would have made it a better song—I started screwing around. And it ended up as if, "Well, okay. I'll just go along with this pregnancy and see what comes." It was a false resolution.

And it's not so funny. The whole bit about the washing machine. To joke around in a song—the song lasts a long time. It's not such a good idea to make a small joke in a song that's going to be around for a long time. Neither of us was domestic in the least. And there was nothing at all designing about her moving in with me. I mean, I didn't buy her a washing machine. That was all bullshit. It made a cartoon out of something that was very real. And I think I would have rather written a real song about it. It's a cute way of talking about getting pregnant. But it's not a good song.

MUSICIAN: *Does it embarrass you when your son hears it?*

BROWNE: Oh, no. A record is just a record. Meaning an account. There are records and then there are *records*. Webster's says a record is just an accounting of something that happened. Like a log.

And then there are *records*. Each of us—me and my closest friends—hopes to make a *record*. There are records I love that are not good songs but are great records. Bert Berns and Jerry Ragovoy and Phil Spector and the Beatles made *records*. Records that stay records. "Walk Away Rene" is a good song but it's not a good record. I think a lot of my records are that way. They're not so well made. People were making magnificent sounding records from the beginning of rock 'n' roll. Elvis' records, all the Motown records. Motown made those records the way they made the '55 Chevrolet. It's still beautiful and it still drives. I don't think I used to hear any of what I hear now in those old records. I heard all those old songs but I didn't really pay attention. I didn't stand up and take notice of anything until Bob Dylan. I *liked* the Beatles; you heard them all the time. But I wasn't really aware of how clever, how well made, some of those records were.

LYNN GOLDSMITH

Jackson composing his dance smash, "Of Warren Zevon."

But record-making stuff can get in the way of writing a song, too. A lot of times in an arrangement you'll say, "This *sounds* great, let's do it!" It may be a great effect but it may not make it a good song. And I think in most cases I have to try to write the song. But I find I'm really attracted to record making.

MUSICIAN: *I think you may underestimate how good a record your first album was. It's still really evocative. Just as I love the Motown punch, I love the warmth in some of the early 70s albums. The feeling you get from* The Band *or* Moondance.

BROWNE: Those are great records! "Look Out Cleveland." Those are classic records. But my first record....

MUSICIAN: *Is really good. You just don't hear it objectively.*

BROWNE: I've heard it, I've heard it.

MUSICIAN: *You're too close. I mean, Van probably listens to* Moondance *and says, "How could I have put the sax in one speaker and the piano in the other? It's terrible!" Everyone hears their own mistakes.*

BROWNE: Van Morrison. (sighs) He's a giant, really great. I was really into Van Morrison before I made my first album.

MUSICIAN: *The little Van thing you did on* The Pretender *was in "Your Bright Baby Blues." When you sang, "Baby if you can hear me/ Turn down your* radio."

BROWNE: (sings) "There's just *one* thing." Yeah. That's like (sings "Caravan"), "Radio" bop bop, "radio" bop bop, "that's enough!" There are times when I consciously do that. I listened to him a lot. But I don't think it's so obvious to very many people. I'm pleased that you saw that.

MUSICIAN: *Now, "Lawyers In Love" is a* record. *It's got the catchy hook, it's got the falsetto vocal, it's got the little synth line. When that comes on the radio, it sounds like a record.*

BROWNE: Yeah. I want to make records. But I always think of this thing John Lennon said: that he was an artist and did not want to become a craftsman. I think about that sometimes. Because, of course, that is the danger. The better you get at making records and using the studio, the more likely you are to do those things. I don't think John Lennon ever stopped being an artist. But I don't think even he realized how great a craftsman he was. I'm looking for that balance. I want to do what I haven't done yet, and I want to do what I know how to do well.

MUSICIAN: *Might you now be inspired to write a long, slow acoustic song but deliberately shy away from doing so?*

BROWNE: Well, I think my tastes now run to music that's a little more eventful. But there's nothing more repetitious than the melody to "Say It Isn't True." There's a reason for that. The emphasis is on the real hypnotic quality of the track and the words. There's no avoiding the words.

But some of the other melodies, like "Lawyers," are more melodious to hum. I'm pleased if that sounds like a record. That's definitely what I wanted. I wrote that song with the band at my disposal. Doug made up the organ part and everybody went, "Yeah!" Danny made up his part, Craig made up the ba-doom, ba-da (keyboard flourish) and Bobby and I made up the (hums staccato rhythm) as almost the last thing. Everybody made this music together, although I was driving. And there was a time when no one liked that song! Everybody was saying, "Get it out of here!" Everybody was disappointed because it wasn't really a *song*. And they didn't know what it was *about*. Some people like the melody or the track better than the words. They thought I was really going left with the lyrics. Just tonight some guy asked me what it was about.

MUSICIAN: *The song is kind of holier than thou.*

BROWNE: (with mock aloofness) You're offering a criticism?

MUSICIAN: *Well, putting down lawyers wearing designer jeans in singles bars is sort of petty.*

BROWNE: It's a nasty song! It's a snotty little song! But I'll tell you—it makes me happy (laughs). There are times when that's what this whole country in this period of time looks like to me. Is everybody *really* gonna become a Pepper? Is everybody gonna become Calvin-ized and go bopping? It's really got more to do with TV than singles bars. I'm not even really against designer jeans. But at some point you've got to say, "Can anybody besides me hear the... strangled cries?" I think it's pretty accurate. It *is* kind of a condescending song. That's the way I feel. It's a modest proposal.

MUSICIAN: *It seems to me that a guy as heavy as Jackson Browne ought to pick a heavier target to go after. Reagan or El Salvador. "Lawyers" is too easy.*

BROWNE: See, it's not supposed to be a heavy song. It's supposed to be funny. It cracks *me* up. There's a lot of satisfaction to singing those lines. Most of the lawyers I've met love that song. *They* think it's funny. I don't think anybody feels victimized by it. Maybe that means I haven't really done my job. Because I don't have a lot of angry letters from lawyers. When Randy Newman wrote "Short People," he was inundated with mail from short people. But it's not really a vicious song. I know some people measure their potency, their power, in terms of

their ability to be vicious. It seems that the 80s is the era of draw blood, take no prisoners.

But I think maybe you're right. If I considered myself really heavy, I would want to go after the big subjects, Ronald Reagan and El Salvador. There's just something about the big serious questions that does not make me want to sing. I think "Power" by John Hall is about as good a song about different forms of energy as you can find. (laughs) But at the same time, it limits it to a *song*.

MUSICIAN: *You used to rival Smokey Robinson for your meticulous sense of rhyme. I mean, on your first album when you need a rhyme for "world," did you say "girl" like everybody else? No. You said, "unfurled."* Everything *rhymed perfectly. And you've lost it, Jackson. Now you'll stick anything in there. Now you'll rhyme "world" and "unfold."*

BROWNE: To begin with, I've already *said* "world" and "unfurled" and I'm not going to say it again at this late date. There are only a few words that rhyme anyway. "World" and "unfurled" are two of them. You know what? I thought that if a particular line rhymed, it wouldn't mean as much. "I'm alive in a city in a country in the world / And I want to go on living, want to see my life unfold." That's a sentence, a feeling, and a thought. If it rhymed it wasn't going to mean as much.

I learned that from Jack Tempchin, who has gone out of his way on many occasions to *not* rhyme. I'd say, "Jack, why did you say 'neon sign' when you needed a rhyme for 'night'? Why not 'neon light'?" He'd just laugh. It was obvious—he wanted you to see a *sign*, not a light. And I liked that. I filed that away.

See, I don't think anybody but you notices that it doesn't rhyme. I think people are too busy listening to what's being said. You can rhyme to a fault. Often when I don't know where I'm going in a song I begin *rhyming*. Then I think, "Come on, cut it out. These sounds rhyme but what does it *mean*? Talk about something real." ◻

The Browne Bombers

Jackson's main axes are a G&L with an aqua-colored neck and a guitar built for him by Rick Oblinger of Schecter (basically a Strat). Noteworthy about this guitar is that the center pickup is missing. "I started playing G&Ls and I really liked the two pickups," Jackson explains. "I don't like a third pickup in the middle because that's where my pick goes and it gets in the way. I like the G&L Wang Bar because it's raised in a way that lets me dampen the strings very easily with the heel of my hand."

Browne also uses a Jazzmaster on "Lawyers In Love" and a Silvertone six-string bass on "Call It A Loan." "I had the Silvertone converted from a four-string to a six-string. David Lindley got that idea from John Sebastian. You don't put bass strings on it, just very heavy guitar strings. It's tuned and played like a regular guitar." Browne's acoustic is a koa wood Takamine, custom made by Hirati of Takamine.

Rick Vito plays Jackson's Rickenbacker model 800, a three-quarter-size guitar with lap steel (horseshoe magnet) pickup, on "Cut It Away." Vito usually plays a custom-made Telecaster with Schecter, Fender and humbucking pickups. Rick also sometimes pulls out a big black hollow-body Gretsch Chet Atkins and uses a 1957 Les Paul TV (like a Junior) model for slide. The guitarists all use Howard Dumble amps.

Russ Kunkel uses Yamaha drums and Paiste cymbals. **Bob Glaub** plays a Fender Precision with EMG pickups. Flag built his bass amp cabinets and they hold six 12-inch EV speakers. **Doug Haywood** chooses a Hammond A100 organ, a Wurlitzer 200A and a Roland Juno 60. He also occasionally picks up a Stratocaster guitar. **Craig Doerge** relies on a Roland Jupiter 8, a suitcase Fender Rhodes and Jackson's Yamaha C3 concert grand (bolstered by a Carl Countryman pickup). On "Stay" Craig whips out a Minimoog and sends it through a Roland Space Echo.

The most mysterious sideman is piano tuner **Jeff Sova**, who sneaks up onstage a couple of times a night and plays another Roland Jupiter 8 or a Yamaha CE-25. Jeff and Craig put their faith in Yamaha power amps, Doug believes in Hafler. All end up in Tangent mixers.

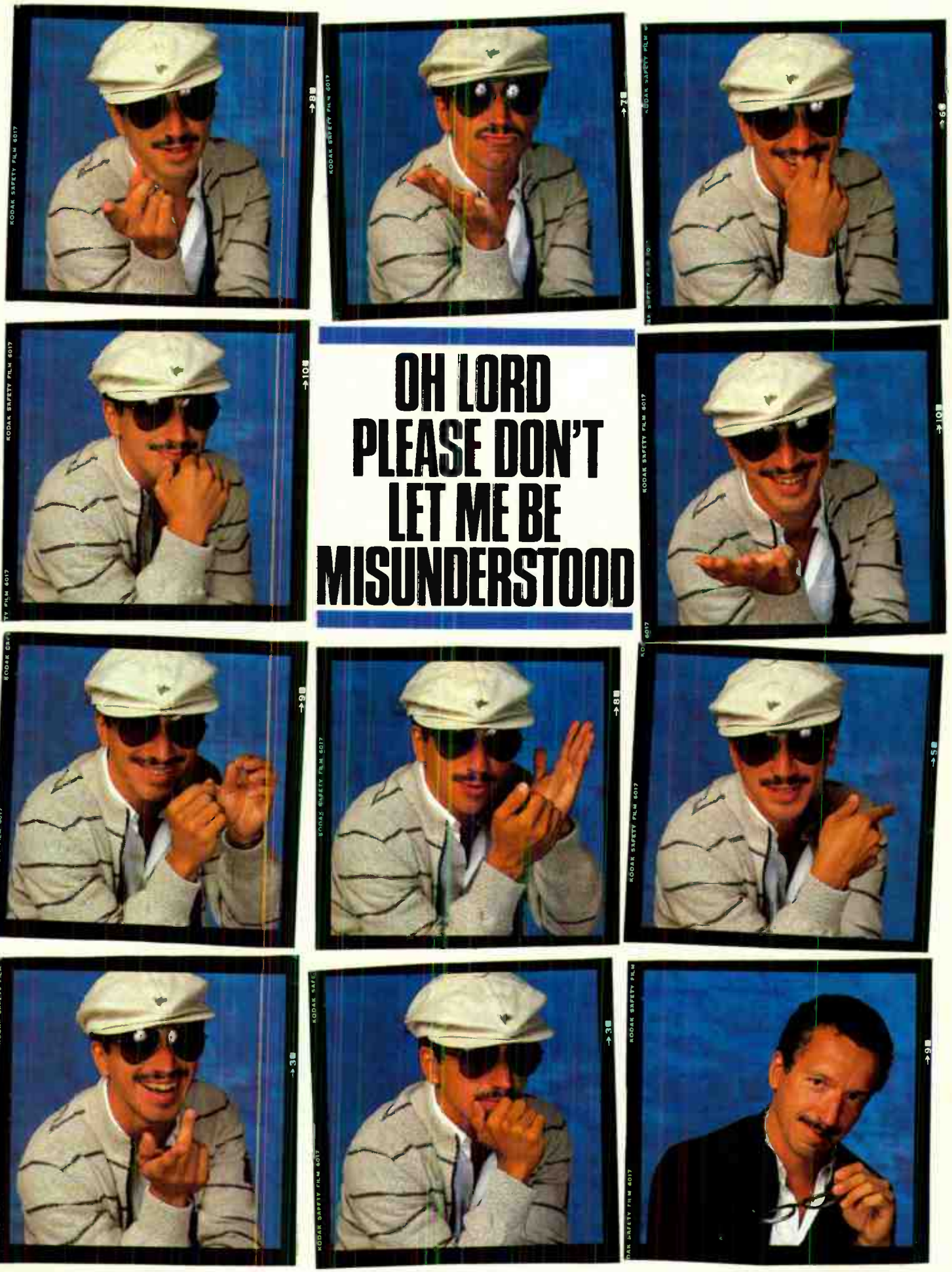
BY DAVID BRESKIN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DEBORAH FEINGOLD

KEITH JARRETT

It's simply scandalous, but I'm telling you it's true.

In liberal-arts college dorms and suburban bedrooms, in big city apartments and bleached beach houses across this country, a goodly number of adolescents and young adults, for a period of a few years in the middle of the last decade, did willfully engage in certain indiscreet acts (back scratching, seductions, sweet nothings and the like) while under the influence of certain most-serious improvisations on the pianoforte. Now although the aiding and abetting of such acts through Romantic pianistic suggestion is not in-and-of itself a federal, state or local crime, the improvising party in question would surely not fancy his art being used for such duplicitous purposes. Such are the hazards of being an artist: you just make the stuff, people gonna think 'bout it and do with it what they wanna.



"There's a much different quality of energy on my most recent solo work, more contrapuntal, less harmonically interesting."

This is one of the sobering thoughts on my mind as I tool along Interstate 80 in my ECM-rented Hertzmobile, heading out of New York City towards the greener pastures of the Delaware Water Gap, where Keith Jarrett grows. The "Back Scratch Fever" phenomenon came to mind as I reflected on George Winston, that bearded granola-bar of a solo pianist, who, according to his label (Windham Hill), currently outsells Keith Jarrett ten to one. Perhaps to explain his popularity, Mr. Winston said recently in *New Age* magazine that while recording he "envisions a person in a car looking at some nice scene, or a couple making love. I mean, those are the things I use music for. Music is like sound incense." Mr. Winston also muses, "I sort of see art, music, as making a phone call to all the people I have ever loved." Driving to Jarrett's, I wonder if George Winston has MCI.

And how does Keith feel about all this? He has released something like twenty-two discs of solo piano in the past ten years (quite a phone bill!) and I don't think a person-in-a-car-looking-at-a-nice-scene has been responsible for any of it. No, Jarrett is alone out there, *up there*, alone with his remarkable gifts and his questionable tactics and his angst. It's been years since Jarrett played with a working group—the American quartet with Redman, Motian and Haden died in '76, the Scandinavian foursome with Garbarek, Christensen and Danielsson folded in '79—and though he strode out of solitary confinement in January long enough to record an album of "jazz" standards with Jack DeJohnette and Gary Peacock, his solo work remains his *raison d'etre*. And not only Jarrett plays Jarrett, but Jarrett plays Bartók and Barber and so on.

By the time I pass Netcong, New Jersey, I'm compiling a shopping list of adjectives to describe Jarrett's solo work: radiant, mythic, humorless, excessive, extravagant, fearless, self-absorbed, self-serious, selfless, lucid, bloody, organic, confessional, verbose, facile, yearning, pat, philosophical, spirited, melancholic, Olympian, desperate, generous, precious, delirious, warm, encyclopedic. I stop at "encyclopedic" (where can you go from there?) and begin to question how many of my—and many other folks'—reservations about Jarrett's solo improvisations come from not the music itself, but rather his pretentious posturing (lecturing audiences on proper comportment); his pious tone (a lot of talk about the "blazing forth of a Divine Will"); and the reverential rhetoric which sometimes accompanies his solo work (1982's triple *Concerts* contained a somber black book with an essay comparing Keith to Orpheus and Proteus, and a long poem, "A Garden For Keith Jarrett," which reads in part: "The four continents, Europe, Asia, Africa/ And of course America formed the corners/ Of this immovable symmetry,/ And when you had closed the creaking gate behind you, Jarrett,/ You found yourself in a paradigm/ Of Eden"). It is difficult, if not impossible, to listen to music openly after consuming such Deep Thoughts.

Oxford, New Jersey could not be mistaken for Eden, but here I get out to make a phone call for final directions to the Jarrett Homestead. ("Too complicated once you get that far," said Meredith at ECM in New York. "You'd better call Keith.") Down a dirt road by a lake, long driveway running parallel to a gurgling stream, up some stairs past a converted barn/studio stuffed with grand pianos, and on to a patio where the squeeze is tendin' the plants. "We better not talk here," Keith says, "the plants may not like the conversation." Okay. We head up to a large, rolling lawn in back of the white house and sit by the pool. As we make small talk before plunging in, I notice two things: one, gray has begun to infiltrate his close-cropped black hair, and, two, he possesses the smallest ears I've ever seen on a grown man. Nothing like a little Irony to go with your interview on a sunny June afternoon.

MUSICIAN: *To start with I'd like you to discuss your feelings about solo piano and the concerts. Your most recent interview indicated that you were really frustrated with the genre, and very negatively influenced by the success of your "imitators" and the "confusion" this has caused among listeners.*

JARRETT: I'd been trailed by George Winston almost everywhere I was playing. I know that some possibilities have opened up since 1972 that would not have opened up had there not been someone doing what I did. It wouldn't have had to be me. This creates a common thing: the door opens, and some people—rather than open their own doors—just walk right in. There's no way to talk about this without sounding *personal*, but it isn't a personal feeling regarding solo concerts—it's not a grudge or a resentment—it's a sadness I feel about *other* people. How confused a naive listener must be? Let's not say a naive listener, let's say a pseudo-intelligent

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Jarrett allows himself a few "interesting" moments with Gary Peacock (seated), Jack DeJohnette and Manfred Eicher.

listener: the listener who is capable of hearing the right thing at the right time and dealing with it exactly as he would had he heard the wrong thing at the wrong time, depending on what's "in" and what's "out" at the moment for his friends and the rest of society. And so my frustration with solo concerts is that what I'm doing isn't being heard now...the job I'm doing is not cutting through.

MUSICIAN: *Because the spirit has turned into a form? A "movement" that's giving people a set idea of what it's about before they even walk into the hall?*

JARRETT: Because I've created my own expectations when I originally meant to dispel them. And I'm still dispelling *my own* expectations of the concerts. Unfortunately, the audience won't hear something that's happening now that wasn't happening last year because their expectations are overwhelming—they overwhelm their ability to really *be there*.

MUSICIAN: *Other than George Winston, are there others who you feel are treading the same ground?*

JARRETT: Well, he's an obvious example for a few reasons beyond him. His company (Windham Hill), the way it's pro-

duced, the cover designs, the whole thing. I don't like to name names but I have to name him because he's so graphic to me. And the implications of his music are interesting, because it's used for meditating, for relaxing, for falling asleep, for having conversations during—the exact opposites of my reasons for playing. If someone can fall asleep or meditate while the music is going on, to me that's spiritually not right. That person should be able to deal with silence, that person shouldn't need my music. So here's a guy (Winston) who has been considered—with a lack of historical perspective—to be doing the same thing as I, but just with a different vocabulary. That's been written in reviews....

MUSICIAN: *So, what do the critics know?*

JARRETT: Yeah, well the critics seemingly don't know much, but neither do the listeners.

MUSICIAN: *C'mon, you've felt in the past that it was the naive listeners, the unschooled, untutored listeners, with no formal musical backgrounds, who actually hear the most.*

JARRETT: Yes, when it comes to the process of improvising, they're the people who are sure they don't know anything about it, so they'll be much more able to hear the *process* itself. He or she will really be ready for what's happening. Now the musician thinks he knows all about it, so he won't be hearing the process, he'll be hearing, "Oh, he did interesting things with this voicing," or, "Oh, he's staying in A minor.

MUSICIAN: *You've said that next year will bring fewer solo concerts, that you are searching for, I'll quote you, "a positive way to affect a smaller amount of people at once rather than to completely confuse entire populations."*

JARRETT: I don't mean that I'll play for smaller audiences, for 500 people instead of 3,000; I mean more like two or three people in the rest of someone's life (laughs). The problem is, people have started thinking about the music as the end. If the music is good one night, that means: okay. And if it's not good: not okay. One night, a good experience; the next night, a not-so-good experience. Well, I'm not interested in perpetuating that kind of "pleasant" experience, even for myself.

MUSICIAN: *And so for you the frustration is that the process is going unnoticed and it's the final "product" that's being judged. You're afraid that you're playing just to make people feel good—and if you give them pleasure, they will have a good experience, and if there's no pleasure, they don't like it.*

JARRETT: That's very clearly and precisely true. And I'm not in a place to deliver that. I'll tell you what's freaky. I tape all these things for myself, just to keep a record. Sometimes I've written songs from parts of concerts. The last tour, I knew while I was playing the concerts how vital they were. If anything, they were far beyond anything up until then; the energy level was higher, the awareness was broader, I was hearing everything that was happening rather than a nice little melody here and there and wondering what to put under it. Every sound was a part of the experience. Well, I *hate* the tapes.

MUSICIAN: *Why?*

JARRETT: The music wasn't interesting.

MUSICIAN: *Not interesting in retrospect?*

JARRETT: Not interesting to listen to.

MUSICIAN: *But wasn't it interesting to play?*

JARRETT: No, it wasn't interesting on any level. It was just absolute—total involvement.

MUSICIAN: *Well, to say something is "interesting" or "fascinating" and to say that it is "boring" both come from the same point of view, the position of standing outside something and looking in—not truly being involved with something....*

JARRETT: Right.

MUSICIAN: *Which means that when people are "fascinated" by something chances are that it's no more of an experience than when they're "bored."*

JARRETT: And for listeners, pleasure is interesting and no pleasure is boring. But whatever the hell I did on this tour wasn't either of those. I mean, it was boring as a result of not being interesting, if we think of those as flip sides. And on these

"I feel there isn't anybody who's handled success better than I have, in my knowledge of history in the modern world."

tapes, it's boring to me. But my duty is to struggle, to struggle with the impossible on the stage. That's why the singing and the crazy sounds and the movements are there. I'm searching for something to *connect* to other people who are still strangers. And is there something? Now that's the right question. Does this music, this process, get to the point where there is no music which would represent the feeling behind it? And that I do believe is true. And that's where lying begins.

MUSICIAN: *Have you ever thought of stopping? Walking away from the piano?*

JARRETT: Oh, I've thought of that as early as 1965, '66. I was playing at Slugs with Charles Lloyd and I was sure I'd stop playing the piano in another year, publicly. Because I was happy with one note—that was my reason at the time. It's a hard question, because though I'm aware of all these problems, there's nothing on the level of how I feel sitting at the piano that suggests I should stop. It's a very difficult question. I'm supposed to be a pianist (laughs).

MUSICIAN: *While you're on the subject of your audience, I'd like to talk about your relationship with it and what seems to me to be a paradox. At the same time that you make a good case that everything happening in the concert hall is part of the music, that every person there affects the music, and that it's a participatory event in which you are not "performing" so much as being a channel, at the same time you also have a habit of lecturing audiences about coughing, demanding absolute silence, no laughing, etc., and when any of this happens you stop playing and throw a fit. So the paradox to me is: isn't the coughing, the laughing, the tension of a squeaking seat part of the music to begin with, and if it's going to affect you, why not let it affect you and the music and continue with it...?*

JARRETT: Because I can't deny its presence. If I could, I'd continue to play. I could continue only if the person who coughed became conscious as soon as he or she coughed (laughs). There is a sharing going on, but if everyone shared equally, then anyone could be onstage. And a cough from a cold doesn't stop the music, a baby crying doesn't stop the music. In fact, I've been in places like Tunisia where they don't have a tradition of going to concerts, and I played a free open-air concert where there was a carnival next door. And none of that sound was wrong or *against* the experience.

It's mostly that people can't deal with themselves, can't control their own quiet. As a result, George Winston records are meditated to. People would like not to cough—I know that—but they want me to make them not cough by playing an interesting enough thing so they're interested enough not to be nervous so they don't cough. I'm not interested in therapy. I mean, I expect something from them also.

MUSICIAN: *The form these concerts have taken—and you've done hundreds of them, nearly fifty this year—has been described as "organic." If they were truly organic wouldn't there be times when you'd be done with a piece in six or seven minutes and likewise, times when you'd play for two hours straight? Yet that doesn't happen. The concert conforms to a format, two pieces, roughly forty-five minutes in length.*


I. SHIMIZU

Really, can George Winston do this?

JARRETT: And this is a real sticky problem. I can't take responsibility on myself to stop after seven minutes because all I'm going to do is create furor. I'd rather keep the seven minutes and play on for forty-five totally meaningless minutes.
MUSICIAN: *Then you're just surrendering the process to give the audience exactly what you say you don't want to give, a "product."*
JARRETT: No, no. See, there's already so much misinterpretation about it that I don't want to be like John Cage to people, "Wow, that was fantastic! He stopped after seven minutes and we expected forty-five."
MUSICIAN: *I thought you didn't care what all these opinions are. If it feels right to you on a given night, why not do it, and think, "Screw it if they loved it that I stopped, and screw it if they hated that I stopped. I stopped because that's what the music demanded." Plus, I'm not saying to end the whole concert there. You could go on and play another, separate piece.*
JARRETT: Yeah, but I don't feel that way about an audience. I don't feel like "screw them," because they're involved in the same thing I am. They just don't understand as much about it as I do. It's like a child. You say, "Now I want you to concentrate on this for forty-five minutes," but if the kid's attention-span is only seven minutes, he or she stops after seven minutes and you're not gonna be upset. He or she has to learn.
MUSICIAN: *You're avoiding the issue, I think. If the solo concerts really have organic form, you stop after seven minutes if you've said it in seven minutes.*
JARRETT: (long pause) Well...that would be ideal. Yes, it would be ideal, if I could do that. But I don't think it's possible. Imagine what would happen backstage if I stopped after seven minutes.
MUSICIAN: *Instead of one intermission there could be two or three, or why not no intermissions if you felt like playing one long, long piece?*
JARRETT: Wait, wait. Let's take intermission for example. I usually don't want to ever play the second set.
MUSICIAN: *You're drained?*
JARRETT: Usually I've *said it*. Not to mention in seven minutes, but maybe in forty-five. Starting is a very difficult thing. Impossible. Then you get to something that's happening and you want to keep it happening by letting it happen. That's even harder than starting. If I achieve that during the first set, then I have achieved what I meant to do that night and there's no reason for a second set. Not to mention encores.
MUSICIAN: *I suppose it's because it's how you make your living. And I would add that you make quite a good one.*
JARRETT: Well, it turned out that way for a while, yes. But what do you do when, by the sheer appropriateness of whatever you're doing, it becomes historically timely? Most people haven't seen the success I've had and they have an envious feeling about it. I would like to say to those people, "Enjoy whatever situation you're in now because the pressures of being successful and still being an artist are greater than the pressures of not being successful and being an artist."
MUSICIAN: *Very few artists handle success as well as they handle failure. How do you feel you've handled it?*
JARRETT: I feel there isn't anybody who's handled it better than I have, in my knowledge of recent history in the modern world.
MUSICIAN: *Do you worry about the dollar?*
JARRETT: Well, I was robbed by my business manager and that just happened last year. And he had been doing it for four years. And it amounts to a lot of six-figure sums. So basically I'm broke, as we sit here.
MUSICIAN: *Was it a handshake between you or a contract?*
JARRETT: A handshake. He was a friend, an out-of-work friend.
MUSICIAN: *How do you feel about the experience?*
JARRETT: I feel that I could easily get into the same situation again. I can't do anything differently. I needed all the time I had, all the energy I had to make the music. Until you have an experience like this, you don't know how much more negative it can be than *not* having money, because it means things about people, not just things about money. I mean somebody who was that close to me; he was a trustee of my kids' trust funds and he stole their trust funds (laughs).
MUSICIAN: *Are you litigating, taking his ass to court?*
JARRETT: Yes, we're trying to attach property he has.
MUSICIAN: *I think one of the happy circumstances of the 70s was that all these jazz artists were jumping on the fusion bandwagon going for the big bucks and many not finding them, and there you were with just your piano pulling fifteen grand for ninety minutes, alone, traveling with your suitcase. Something unique about that.*
JARRETT: Yes. For instance, I went on this last tour wondering why I set up so many solo concerts for this year. Did I do it so that I could become solvent again? That's the kind of question I wouldn't have if I didn't get paid so much.
MUSICIAN: *Is it still between ten and fifteen grand a night?*
JARRETT: No, it's not so high anymore.
MUSICIAN: *Why not?*
JARRETT: Because there isn't an audience.
MUSICIAN: *What's changed?*
JARRETT: (laughing) They're off meditating with George Winston. No, I think simply what's changed is the music. Most of the people who would have filled up a large hall, say 6,000

seats, most of them have heard me play maybe a half-dozen times since their favorite album, let's assume it was *The Koln Concert*—okay, beautiful melodies, nice, wonderfully played, interesting recording, etc.—but people can't tell what they're hearing now. They're hearing a much different quality of energy on the most recent solo work. It's more muscular, there's an overall awareness rather than a melody/harmony awareness. More contrapuntal, less harmonically interesting. *Less interesting.* If I have a goal, it's to be less interesting (laughs). And so I end up with less people. That's the main reason, I think. People are tired, too. And they watch more TV than they did ten years ago.

MUSICIAN: *That statement about being less interesting connects to your statement in the book accompanying your* Munich/Bregenz *solo record that you don't want to be a stylist, you want to be the very opposite of unique.*

JARRETT: Yes, true....

MUSICIAN: *And if you extend that thinking farther and farther and so on, what you end up with is silence.*

JARRETT: That's right. *But,* the energy in silence can be made physical. The newer concerts are almost exactly like the piano—whatever it is—through it I am able to try to go even further into the process of hearing, of listening, and also show actively how incredibly vital the silence is. In a way that's what it's about: how active is the silence, how completely nothing is the action.

MUSICIAN: *I think people might be blocked from hearing these things because you've become, in a bizarre sort of way, a pop star. You know, people see you swimming in your pool in* People *and the like, and they lug all this cultural baggage into the hall when they come to see you.*

JARRETT: Oh yes, it makes it harder. It makes it worse. On the other hand, there are not many alternatives. I mean, how else would I get an audience?

MUSICIAN: *Glenn Gould gave up playing concerts.*

JARRETT: Well, yes, but what I'm doing now—the solo concerts—needs an audience. There are solo albums in studios, but they're not like people getting together to make music.

MUSICIAN: *Why not get together with other musicians?*

JARRETT: Because I am alone. I'm very much alone in terms of my relationship to music. I don't know anybody who knows what I'm talking about if I talk long enough (laughs). Except sometimes I don't, either. If you were going to work with other people, you would always have to be careful how permanent you made the arrangement, because unless everyone is unlimited in their scope about this, the limitations come very quickly in a group.

MUSICIAN: *Yet you choose to work with others to record these standards.*

JARRETT: I knew Gary and Jack had gone through standards as I had in the prime of our lives, and they became second nature to us. Like a cocktail pianist knowing two hundred tunes, all the bridges at the flip of a coin. I thought we could all share this as a tribal language we were given; a world of wonderful little melodies, and still, we're living in 1983. We had dinner the night before the session and it was like the way you'd have dinner before a conference, as if you were the people who had to deliver the information to a conference.

I talked about our spiritual involvement in something that is not our own. Something beautiful that is not ours; and we will make it ours, but we will not try. And what we ended up with is incredible: I think some of the songs' melodies have never been phrased as well as on this record.

MUSICIAN: *Will this yield more than one album?*

JARRETT: There's a second record of standards and a third record of some freer type things from the same session.

MUSICIAN: *But no plans for a working group?*

JARRETT: No, I don't think it would work. There's a funny point when something isn't potential anymore. Making a permanent thing out of it makes it too serious—like, here we are going "arty" again. Then it becomes "interesting" again, which I don't want. [*By press time, however, Jarrett had booked the trio into the Village Vanguard for a week.*]

MUSICIAN: *You are not interested in shaping young musical minds or by leading others in any way other than by example?*

JARRETT: I think that's correct. If there's anything that interests me in a group context, it's the few times I've played, mostly percussion instruments and little recorders, with untalented, young, not-very-knowledgeable people. Non-musicians, people who might not have ever picked anything up. That interests me much more than forming a group with other "interesting" musicians.

MUSICIAN: *Don't you miss the democratic tension of a working group? Because some of the moments I value most in your music are not solo, but rather when I feel that tension between you and other musicians, exploring those group "limitations." It brings out something different in you.*

JARRETT: I think what you really mean is that it's easier to hear. Because it's so easy to attach to the ego what one person is doing. I mean, ultimately we are alone. We must deal with that. And dealing with that is not as much *fun,* and some of the things you hear with the groups are fun: the fun of being able to relate to something and not care what that is, and just take it. But when you play alone, whatever you hear, you can't have fun with because you just have it to yourself.

MUSICIAN: *So what's wrong with fun? It's one of things we were put here to have, no?*

JARRETT: I miss it. I miss the joy of it in solo work. I'm going through that while I'm playing, you just can't hear the joy. It doesn't come out the same.

MUSICIAN: *Ultimately we may all be alone, but we came from others, we're shaped by others and we live with others....*

JARRETT: But we're stuck with ourselves. Everyone should play a solo concert. No matter what the result, just to try. You can't really talk about it unless you do it. Andre Previn was asked what he thought of my solo albums and he said, "Anybody who plays for forty-five minutes must be able to come up with *something.*" So he obviously hasn't done it.

MUSICIAN: *There's a feeling out there, which I think you know about, that there's a capital T on Keith Jarrett's* Truth, *like it's better or higher than my truth or Joe Blow's truth or another musician's truth. It's intimidating to people. What about it?*

JARRETT: It's a good question. What should I say other than, "This is the truth"? What would be a nicer word? Yes, everyone has truths of their own. Just because I say, "This is true" doesn't mean that the truth is gonna bite you. Some good poet whose name I can't remember said that the more personal something is, the more universal it is.

MUSICIAN: *Let me also broach the issue of Con Ed and what it has wrought on the musical landscape. It's now about ten years since your major anti-electric music proclamation.*

JARRETT: I think my argument is more persuasive today. Today there are a lot more "interesting" things happening with electronic music than there were ten years ago. And I think it's probably more dangerous than it was then.

MUSICIAN: *What do you mean, dangerous?*

"My duty is to struggle with the impossible onstage; that's why the singing and the crazy sounds and movements."

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Optional Ebony Model Synclavier II Keyboard

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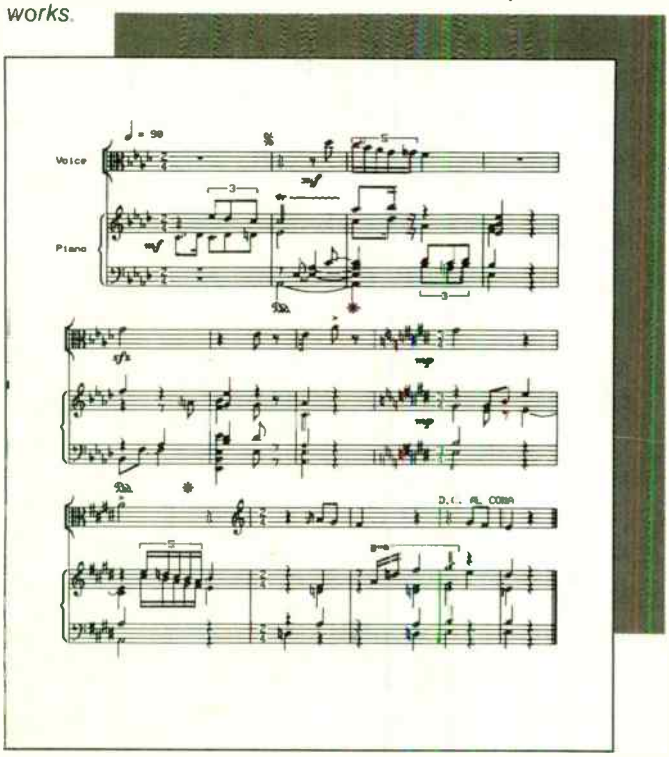

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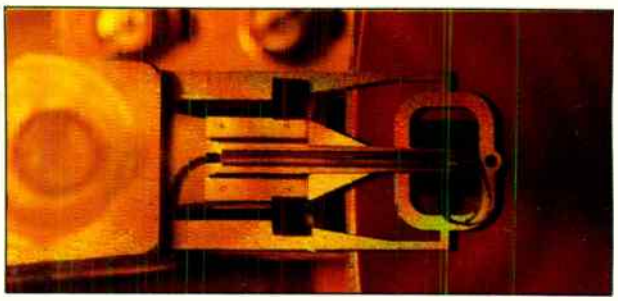

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"If someone can fall asleep or meditate while the music is going on, to me that's spiritually not right."

JARRETT: I mean it is a kind of poison. Something that takes your connection from the soil away is a poison. I think that for a long, long time it will be a lot of fun, and then at a point electronic music will either go away or it will be all that we have. If it's all we have, then the poison has done its job. People are not able to listen to acoustic music after they've heard electric music. I know this is true for me; it's a very difficult, difficult thing to get used to.

MUSICIAN: *Why poison? Why an image of sickness and death?*

JARRETT: Because it's something people are doing to themselves.

MUSICIAN: *Is electric music closing people up to feelings they can no longer have?*

JARRETT: Let's talk about how it affects me. I've seen myself fall in love with it, just like everyone else. For minutes at a time, not years. It is a very seductive thing. It sounds fine, what can be wrong with it? I want to make clear that I am aware of that feeling. And so I think I've had to make more or less of a *decision* and I don't think about it any more.

MUSICIAN: *My God, Keith, it sounds like you're an idealistic teenager denying yourself* Playboy *magazine.*

JARRETT: (laughs hard) Well, I would think I would.

MUSICIAN: *That's a puritanical notion.*

JARRETT: Why? Do you know how bad fluorescent lights are for you? People have only known this for a few years—and there were people trying to figure out why they felt so bad, why the headaches? Could it be my job? Well, they finally found out that their bad feelings were connected to fluorescent lights. Now what is the worker supposed to do? Desensitize himself? What I'm saying about electronics is not that I get *only* pleasure from it and have to decide not to think about it; pleasure is always there as the initial feeling. It's like, "Oh, wow, we can do anything with this sound. It's so *open*."

MUSICIAN: *What do you become desensitized to?*

JARRETT: I feel first of all, there doesn't need to be art. Even acoustic music is, in the end, a secondary thing to the spirit that animates it. Likewise, the painting is not the most important thing; it's what the painter does to paint it. So I don't understand why we have to take ourselves so far away from basic, close, organic substances that are already far enough away in acoustic instruments. I know ulimately that it's a poison that either can get worse or get better and if it gets better we're lucky.

MUSICIAN: *Lightning strikes the earth about eight million times a day, and in that lightning there's electricity, which is just as much of this natural world as the wood for the piano and the metal for the saxophone.*

JARRETT: To think about it doesn't make any sense.

MUSICIAN: *It's a feeling you have, is what I'm getting at, not a rational or logical decision.*

JARRETT: Right. If I were under a fluorescent light all day and you told me that it was made up of this ray and that ray and it's in the sun too....

MUSICIAN: *And the sun gives us skin cancer....*

JARRETT: And we're left with nothing but words and words and words. You don't plug in lightning do you?

MUSICIAN: *No, but I've never bumped into a Steinway grand while walking through a forest either. I don't mean to be irreverent here, I'm just trying to locate the source of your problem.*

JARRETT: Oh, it's *my* problem?

MUSICIAN: *Your problem with the experience and current dominance of electric music.*

JARRETT: The source, the source is how it affects my physiological nature. That's why the thinking, in the end, doesn't mean very much. But I assume that if people were hip, they'd check that out, the way they started to be hip to fluorescent lights. What I'm saying isn't to avoid electronic music or regress from it, but to confront it.

MUSICIAN: *When you see the new wonders such as the Synclavier or the Fairlight or Apple computer/keyboard hookups, is there no temptation?*

JARRETT: No. Where's the struggle involved in composing? Where's the physical involvement in the whole process? It becomes so simple physically, and the result will be parallel to the input. From the beginning of keyboard instruments to the the piano, every innovation was based on how much physical input you could make use of. After the piano, less and less and less. Turn volume knobs, push buttons. There's no touch, and if there's no touch, it's synthetic.

Everyone says, "But you made a record on electronic instruments!" Well, I enjoyed playing with Miles' band. Oh God, does that destroy my feeling? I even have an answer for that? Miles' playing was so strong and he didn't want a pianist to play the piano, so if I wanted to play with Miles—which I did—it wouldn't be the piano. In fact, I didn't like his previous band that much. I thought he could use a little...kick.

MUSICIAN: *Have you gone to hear him since his comeback?*

JARRETT: No.

MUSICIAN: *Do you actually go out and hear other music or listen to it at home?*

JARRETT: Not often. I'm so disappointed as a rule, I find myself thinking what I could have accomplished if I hadn't gone.

MUSICIAN: *What disappoints you: the failure of musicians to live up to their potential, failure to connect to you emotionally? What's not happening out there?*

JARRETT: Commitment to something other than the marketplace. Even Miles suffers from being committed to the marketplace. Much, much too much.

MUSICIAN: *Is it fair to say that at one point you were quite influenced by Ornette Coleman?*

JARRETT: You can say that. When I heard his playing, it was like hearing a friend. It was a shared way of looking at melody and line. It works out to seem that way because I used players whom he had in his band, but they were players who also had a relationship to the line.

MUSICIAN: *What do you think of Ornette's post-'76 electric music?*

JARRETT: I haven't heard it. And one reason is that Charlie Haden always tells me not to hear it (laughs).

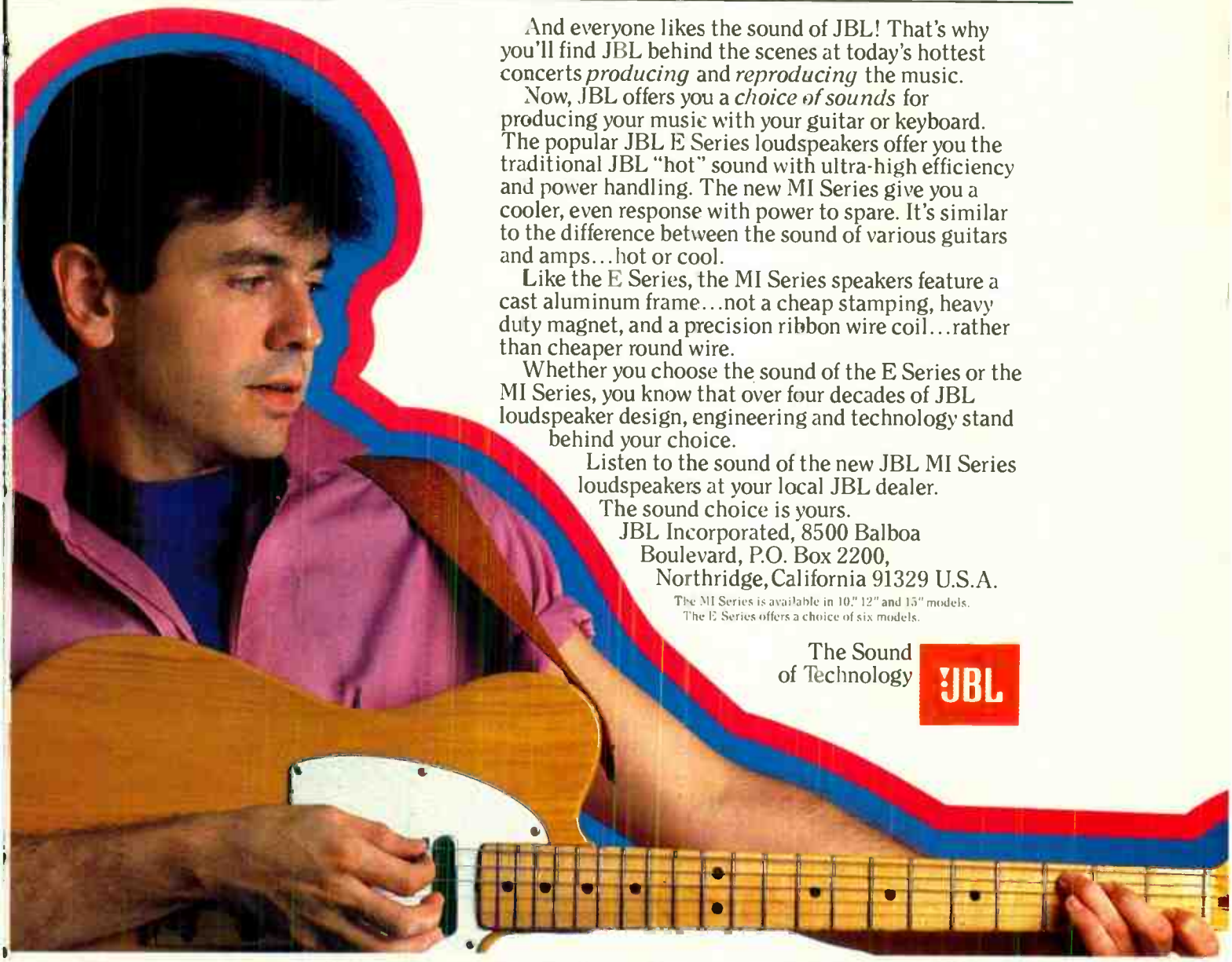
MUSICIAN: *Is there nothing out there that impresses you?*

JARRETT: What impresses me most in the last few years is the tendency to hear, see, to have played more authentic instruments in the performance of Bach, Handel, whomever. I haven't heard players—modern Western music players—who have knocked me out. Most of the music I've heard recently has an electric instrument of some sort in it, or a synthesizer, and as soon as I hear this, I just know how easy it is. Even when the music's great, I am simultaneously aware of how little time it might have taken to make it happen, how few people might be in the studio—even though it *sounds* big—how little physical involvement anybody has in it even though it sounds intense. I don't care how "interesting" it is.

MUSICIAN: *I suppose then that the ultimate hemlock is the drum computer. Taking the world's oldest instrument, requiring the most physical exertion, and transforming it into buttons.*

JARRETT: You know what I wonder? How do these musicians who are into electronics *get rid* of their musical feelings, if there's no effort between thought and reality, from concept to

Some like it hot... Some like it cool...



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Keith's son Gabriel, picking up a few polytonal pointers.

existence? And the Synclavier is actually that (laughs). I mean, you have to touch a few things. To me, no matter how "good"—and I use that with quotation marks—how "good" the music might be from that process, the process itself is the poison. And the poison will be seen at some future date as having corrected itself or we will become desensitized and immune to it. And in the latter case I hope I'm old enough not to live through it.

MUSICIAN: *Speaking of physical effort, do you ever think of losing your hands?*

JARRETT: Yes. In fact, I hope to get insurance soon. I can do it, but I don't really believe in insurance. Two years ago, I sprained my thumb while skiing, and that made me aware of my hands in a way I wasn't aware of them. But if I lost one, that would be it. Obviously, I could write. I've been saving most of my writing for the future anyway, because the physical thing—the playing—is not going to stay there forever.

MUSICIAN: *You are an artist who seems to have continually felt misunderstood. How you would "profile" yourself.*

JARRETT: The profile would be simple: there's a core to life, an essence, from which everything on the surface of life comes, and I, as an artist, have decided, perhaps not so consciously in my early twenties, that no one was dealing with that core. They were dealing with the surfaces. We can talk about electronic music as being textures and surfaces and nothing else, because there is no core there. A core means something tied to the earth, such as a human being to be committed and involved in the thing for there to be any possibility of showing a personal center—that is indeed a universal center, which everyone can feel, too. Everything else is a trick.

MUSICIAN: *I don't think that statement is going to keep you from being misunderstood, and it seems that you wrestle with this problem yourself: I mean, do you explain your art, as you did on the last solo record by way of essays by you and a critic as well as that poem, "A Garden For Keith Jarrett," or do you leave the music be, let it speak for itself in its own language?*

JARRETT: The ideal thing would be to take it away completely. By elaborating on it I'm making something more important than it is. Then again, if I say nothing, except, "It's about the music"—that's not really right either. What would be right would be to erase the whole thing and only have *now* to talk about. And this is basically what I do when I play a concert.

What to do is to erase it up to now. I've got these symphonies and all these records and now I can get on all the red telephones across the world and say, "Burn all the albums I've ever recorded up to now." And then I could guarantee you one thing: all the misinterpretations would begin to fade.

MUSICIAN: *Did you see the film* Diva*?*

JARRETT: No.

MUSICIAN: *The opera star, the diva, refused to record. She would not allow her voice to ever be documented, reduced to spinning around and around in a circle. We talked earlier about not performing, which goes against what you say your solo work needs. What about not recording? That's the single way to only have a* Now *and never have a* Then.

JARRETT: But the only way to do that is not to have a single record. And, well, for me, it's already too late. M

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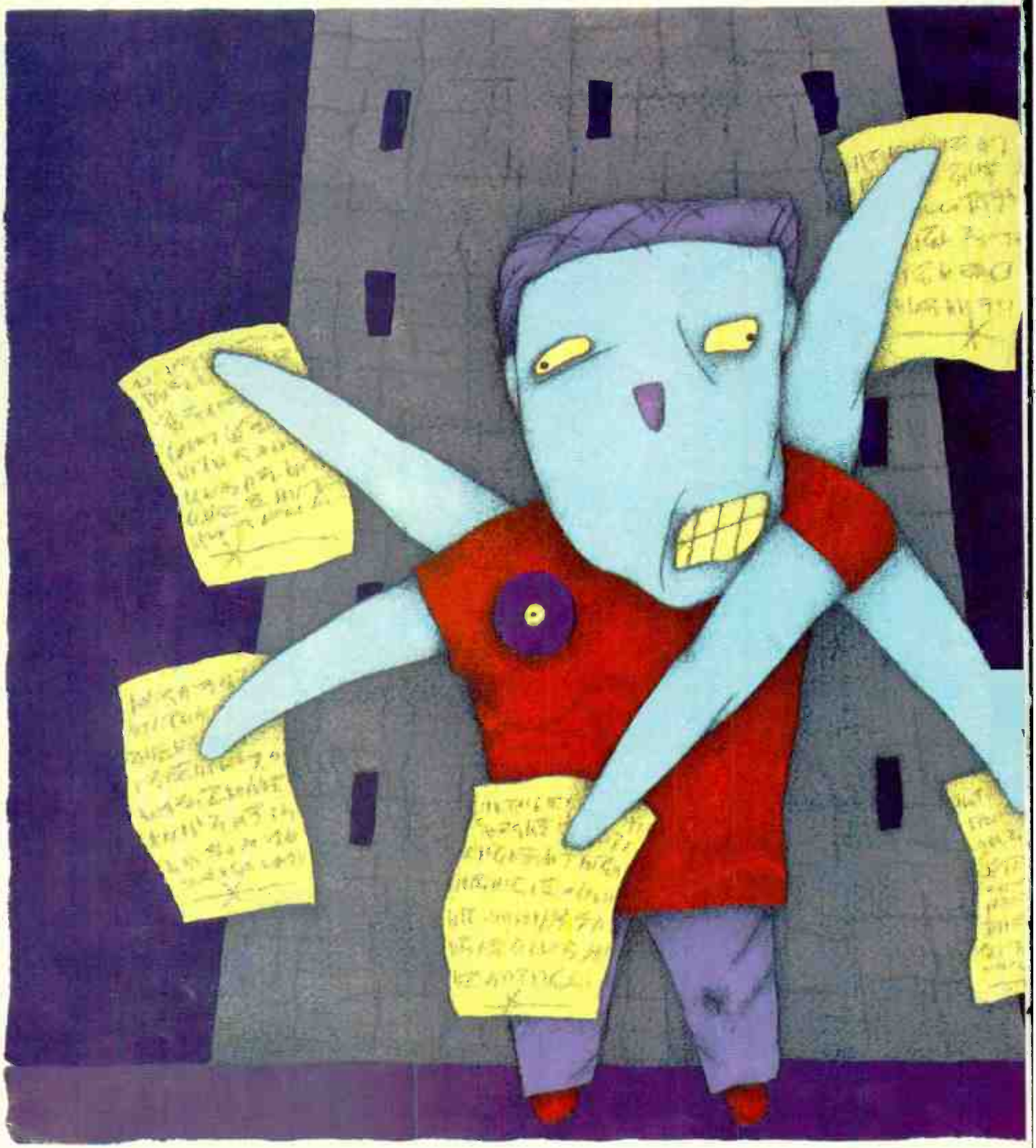

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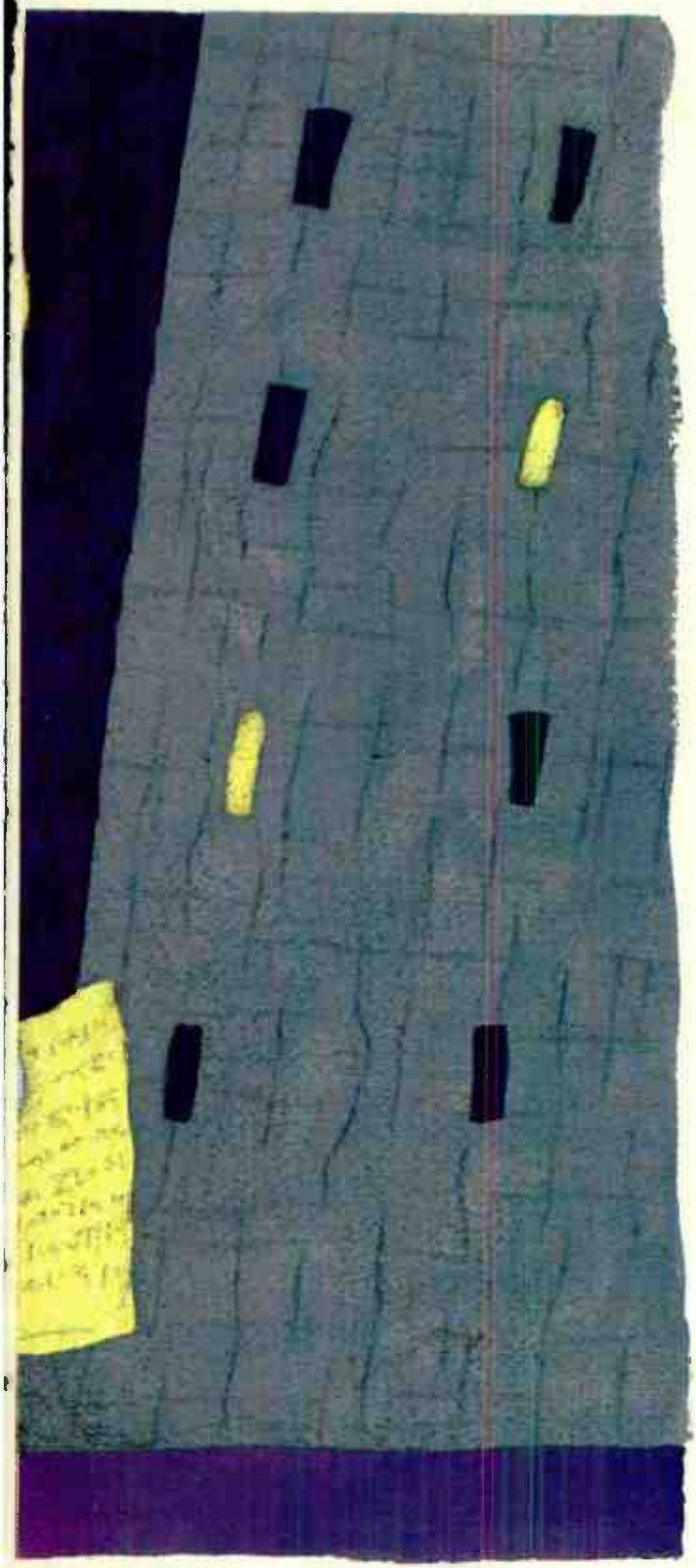

BREAKING IN BUSTING OUT

CONTRACT NEGOTIATION AND RE-NEGOTIATION IN THE 80s

Rock 'n' roll lawyer Brian Rohan punched David Geffen in the Polo Lounge in the Beverly Hills Hotel. Geffen reeled backward into the lap of David Begleman's protegé, Sue Mengers. The next day Rohan received more than forty congratulatory telegrams. Deal making and deal breaking in the record business can get rough.

Recording contracts are made to be broken. After a struggling pop artist has achieved a degree of stardom, the album deal that seemed fair when it was signed takes on a foul appearance. Audit reports disclose how much more

than the artist the record company is making. Talent raiders at cocktail parties reveal how much more money the star could get by switching companies. The stage is set for renegotiation or confrontation. The artist feels taken advantage of, and the record company executives fear that the same thing is about to happen to them. A deal is no longer a deal.

Sometimes they work it out calmly. The players quickly learn the rules of the game. Contracts signed when the company had all the leverage must bend under the weight of the artist's newfound gold and platinum. Almost all record companies renegotiate, even if they don't admit it. It's usually cheaper than letting the courts settle disputes. In most cases, the artist gets more dollars and the company gets more albums. But sometimes it's not that easy. The artist may want too much. The record company may desperately need cash from this commercial success to pay for the many failures it's underwritten. Money might not even be the problem. Creative people can be touchy if they don't like what you've done to their songs. After all, music isn't all business.

With emotions flaring and dollar signs beckoning, the artist summons a lawyer, the company calls forth its legal department. The artist commences a lawsuit to force the company to bargain. The record company seeks an injunction and pontificates on the sanctity of contracts. Careers and companies have fallen in such battles.

Ask a music industry person about the deal making process and you might not get an answer. Many refused to be interviewed for this article, insisting that the subject is too sensitive for public airing. Lawyers worried about breaching client confidentiality. People wanted to know who else was talking, presumably to gauge the propriety and wisdom of their own candor. Some people told us to "screw off."

A spectrum of views was finally collected from attorneys, managers, record company executives and a Harvard Business School professor. This is a story about the death of contracts in the recording industry, and the evolution of unwritten rules which guide and maintain the personal relationships that are really the foundation of the business.

DEAL MAKING

When Clive Davis signed Janis Joplin to Columbia Records in 1967, shortly after the Monterey Pop Festival, Janis was relatively unknown. She wanted to have sex with Clive to consummate the deal. Davis refused, choosing instead to satisfy his lust for tape editing by splicing her passionate studio recording of "Piece Of My Heart" into a hit single. Janis was satisfied although she didn't get what she wanted.

Unknown artists can't always get what they want. They submit to lopsided deals in return for the record company's taking a risk on them; it's a big risk, a "crapshoot" according to Davis, now president of Arista Records. Only sixteen to twenty percent of individual releases sell well enough for the company to break even. If the albums don't sell, the record company gets stuck with the tab. But artists don't always think about that, according to Freddie Gershon, a former lawyer who is vice chairman of the Stigwood Group, which owns RSO Records. We visited Gershon at his magnificent mahogany and marble offices overlooking Central Park, where we were served Perrier in Cartier crystal stemware. He compared Jacqueline Suzanne to Gustave Flaubert, and entertained us with stories about the biz.

"I remember Andy Gibb's first hit single. Andy sat over dinner with Robert Stigwood," Gershon said, "and said, 'Well, you owe me $1,290,000, Robert.'

"Robert said, 'What are you talking about?'

"Andy said, 'Look,' and he took out his little scrawl. 'I was coming over here in the limousine, which you sent for me, and I calculated that I sold one million records, and I saw them selling at Sam Goody's for $1.29, so one million times $1.29 equals $1,290,000.'"

Gershon smiled. "Robert said, 'Ah. Deja vu from your brothers. Listen, there's the cost of the vinyl, and the cost of the paper, and the cost of the package. And then we have to apply the cost of recording, and allow for all the records that were never really sold, which were given away as promotion, to prime the pump, to make sure people heard you.' So Robert went through all that and Andy didn't really understand; he was devastated. But he trusted Robert."

Many new artists recognize that they never get close to the gross receipts from their record sales. But they don't always realize that their recording deals are designed to reduce risk and channel the lion's share of any profits to the company. Each member of a hot group like the Go-Go's might be pulling in only fifty to eighty thousand dollars on a platinum album, while the record company could make anywhere from one to one and a half million dollars. Arguably, the million dollar difference is needed to cover the company's losses on all its other "baby acts" that don't make it. But a new artist that's hot can't worry about others who fail, since he or she can cool off at any time.

To understand the one-sidedness of new artist deals, you have to understand how they work. Lawyer Allen Lenard, whose clients include Ronnie Milsap, Tom Petty, Supertramp, Al Jarreau and the Gang of Four, says that "Record companies normally want a long-term employment relationship with the agreement tending to be optional on their side, so that they may commit to do one or two albums to begin with and then after that everything else is pursuant to some option. The agreement usually extends beyond the reasonable expectation of an artist's success, on terms that are generally low and more favorable to the record company."

Although Clive Davis wouldn't speak to us, we drew the following description of a typical contract from an affidavit Davis filed in November 1981 in the contested bankruptcy of singer/songwriter Willie Nile:

> *Each artist contract that Arista enters into provides for compensation in essentially a similar manner. The artist is entitled to receive union scale payments for services rendered at recording sessions. The artist is entitled to receive royalties based on the sale of records. The artist is frequently guaranteed certain advance payments. Arista also agrees to advance to the artist the costs of actually recording each album. The artist is not obligated to repay any of these advances, but such advances are recoupable from future royalties earned by the artist. Again, based upon my knowledge of the record business, this system of compensation, with some variations, is and has been standard in the industry.*

By determining that recording costs will be recouped from the artist's royalties rather than from gross receipts, the record company gets to keep a big chunk of what is theoretically the artist's share of the profits. This is true even if the album goes platinum and the company has recovered its investment many times over.

For example, suppose an artist is entitled to receive a one dollar royalty per album and that 130,000 albums are sold. Assume the company has incurred $275,000 in fixed costs on the album—$150,000 in recoupable costs, including a $20,000 advance to the artist, and $125,000 in non-recoupable costs like promotion. Assume also that the company's gross profit per album (before fixed costs are deducted) is $1.50, or $195,000 in total.

The artist earns $130,000 in royalties, all of which is kept by the company and applied to the artist's $150,000 recoupment obligation. The company takes the $130,000, adds $195,000 in gross profit and subtracts its original investment of $275,000. The bottom line is that the company recovers its entire fixed

cost of $275,000 and nets $50,000 profit while the artist keeps the $20,000 advance but gets no royalties and remains unrecouped to the tune of $20,000, which the company can apply against royalties earned by the artist on the next album.

Thus, recoupment has two effects, according to Allen Lenard. "It delays the payment of royalties, and it puts the burden of repayment ultimately on one side. Additionally, a record company is at a profit substantially sooner than the artist recoups. I don't find the logic in that and never have."

Recoupment is only one of an artist's worries. Recording contracts are filled with other legal landmines designed to sabotage an artist's bottom line. Record companies don't pay royalties on what they call "free goods," records supposedly given away to retailers to promote the artist's album. In most cases, there ain't no such thing as a free good. One attorney called "free goods" the "biggest crock the record industry has going." In a recent law journal article entitled, "How the Music Industry Slump Affects Record Contract Negotiations," legal reps Lee Phillips and Jody Graham state the point more delicately but with equal candor, "The record company may, in fact, adjust its wholesale price to its retail distributors on the remaining records to offset income allegedly lost from such 'free goods'...."

Other attorneys for artists told us their pet peeves about record contracts. Emily Shenkin, attorney for the Go-Go's, took a poke at the packaging deduction provisions which decrease the retail price against which the artist's royalty percentage is applied. She pointed out that ten to fifteen percent is taken off for LPs, but it's twenty to twenty-five percent for cassettes, even though they're cheaper to package.

And there are problems more serious than this kind of profit-slicing. "Record companies cheat artists all the time," said Leonard Marks, a fierce litigation attorney who has charged into the battle on behalf of the Beatles, the Bee Gees and Peter Frampton. Marks is also the guy who helped business manager Mike Appel force Bruce Springsteen into a hefty cash settlement in 1977.

Sitting in his Madison Avenue office, Marks looked pensive. He chose his words carefully, speaking slowly to be sure we were writing it all down. "The accounting by many record companies is generally dishonest. If artists could afford to audit record companies, and if record companies would open their books, I think we'd see more evidence of cheating.

"The accountings that record companies give to artists are confusing. And companies do not open their books in such a way that accounting can always be properly audited. They also withhold large sums that are due to artists, play games with reserve policies, and often don't pay artists on the theory that it is cheaper to borrow money by not paying an artist than by borrowing from a bank and having to pay the bank interest."

Marks' West Coast counterpart is attorney Don Engel, a record industry litigation lawyer based in Beverly Hills. The Bronx-born Engel's famous clients include Olivia Newton-John, Sammy Hagar, Donna Summer and Elton John. Recently Engel filed a complaint on behalf of the Beach Boys, claiming that Warner Bros. Records cheated the Boys out of $700,000. Here's an excerpt from that complaint:

Upon information and belief, Warners, as a part of its general policies and practices applicable to all or most of its artists, consistently and purposefully understates the royalties due to artists when it renders accounting statements, makes payments to its artists of substantially lower royalties than are due under their contracts based upon such accountings, and purposefully does so to realize greater income at the expense of artists and with full knowledge that such activities are in breach of its basic obligations to artists with the purpose and intent of retaining as much additional profit as possible; when and if an artist is able to overcome the obstacles and demonstrate a right to additional monies, Warners generally "negotiates" a "settlement" which enables it to retain a portion of the wrongful gain and at the same time secures the use of artist's monies without payment of interest.

But Bob Biggs of Slash, which has a distribution deal with Warner Bros., said, "I have had nothing but straight accounting from Warners." And David Berman, vice president and general counsel of Warner Bros. Records, said, "I must admit that I am upset with the allegations in that complaint. Warners has a reputation for honesty and fair dealing."

Recording deals are designed to reduce risk and channel the lion's share of the profits to the company.

Fair or not, record companies are not the only ones responsible for one-sided deals with new artists. Lawyers and managers whose livelihoods depend upon the artists they represent, frequently are accused of having conflicts of interest. These conflicts range from revealing their clients' cocaine budgets to actually being on the company's payroll.

The artist's situation can be even worse without a lawyer. Teena Marie claims that she had no attorney when, in 1976, Motown executives signed the then twenty-year-old singer to recording, management and publishing deals. She recently retained Don Engel, who says Marie's last two albums sold over one million units between them, generating two million dollars for Motown. In contrast, the singer has received only about $160,000 and her royalty account is in the red to the tune of $200,000.

Engel brought a lawsuit to rescind Marie's Motown contract. His papers allege that Motown president Berry Gordy discouraged Teena Marie from seeking independent legal counsel. As a result, the contract that Marie signed with Gordy was "simply unconscionable" according to an affidavit filed by Irving Azoff, who formerly managed the Eagles, Stevie Nicks, Dan Fogelberg and Boz Scaggs. The court was sympathetic to Teena Marie and refused to allow Motown to extend her old agreement for another seven years, although Marie could not record for her new label, CBS, until the Motown agreement expired this past April. (This exchange has an ironic footnote: former artists' manager Azoff, known for being hard on behalf of his clients, recently became president of MCA Records, the distributing arm of which recently signed up Motown's distribution—which now makes Azoff and the "unconscionable" Berry Gordy business associates. Now that Azoff's on the other side of the fence, it will be interesting to see how he deals with MCA acts.)

Last September, in a lawsuit involving Jim Croce's estate, a federal court held that an attorney has a duty to tell an artist to get her or his own lawyer. This ruling is likely to cause many law firms that represent both artists and record companies in the same transactions to reassess the wisdom of this policy. To understand the scope of the problem, consult *The American Lawyer Guide to Leading Law Firms* and look at the client list of some of the major record industry legal mills. Potential conflicts of interests abound.

DEAL BREAKING

Every man has a right to break his contract if he chooses.
—Oliver Wendell Holmes

Record company executives are no fools. Every time they sign a deal with a new artist, they know that truly successful artists will try to break their contracts. Shedding the first contract is an initiation rite almost every rock star goes through. "The record company becomes a mere conduit for the successful artist's product," says Michael Porter, a Harvard Business School professor who also manages a rock musician.

If they treat each other with patience and respect, artists and record companies can satisfy their mutual desires. When Joan Jett renegotiated an oral agreement with Boardwalk, it was a private affair. When Aerosmith renegotiated its deal with Columbia Records in midstream, no publicity was generated. That's the way it should be.

Nat Weiss, president of Nemperor Records, said that "It's been the state of facts for the past fifteen years: if an artist turns into a superstar, it's in the record company's best interest to sit down and renegotiate more records out of that artist and give back a much better deal."

But "it has nothing to do with the agreement being unfair at the beginning," said David Berman of Warner Bros. "When that renegotiation takes place, there is a *quid pro quo*. There are either more albums involved, or the duration of the term may be extended. Higher royalties are not a gift."

Companies aren't always flexible, however, and artists aren't always reasonable. Artists have been known to demand more money, not only when their royalties are low, but also after they've blown their cash on partying. They may also want their record company to underwrite without recoupment the cost of producing music videotapes at $50,000 and up for a three- to five-minute shot. That's pretty stiff for an industry which is only now recovering from a severe slump that started back in 1979. Even though all record companies renegotiate when they have to, there has been a trend since 1979 toward stubbornness, and ultimately, litigation. "The economics of the industry has changed," Arista's general counsel and vice president Michael Pollack told us. "What a company may have done in 1975, they might not do today."

"Litigation is a big part of the record business," Don Engel told us. "Record companies change their contracts practically every time an important case is brought or an important decision comes down. I know for a fact that when we file any of these prominent suits, the complaint is on the desk of every attorney in town who represents record companies."

Lawyer Leonard Marks, who calls litigation "stylized warfare," said that "litigation often becomes a negotiating tool. And in many cases the threat of litigation is more effective than actually litigating, because no one wants to get bogged down in the unpleasantness and cost of a courtroom battle."

Emily Shenkin agrees. "It's nice if you can catch the company doing something wrong so you have a little club. It will make it easier to renegotiate."

Los Angeles attorney John Mason's firm, Garey, Mason and Sloan, has represented Elton John, Olivia Newton-John, Sammy Hagar and a slew of other stars. Mason offered some examples of legal theories commonly used by artists to terminate their contracts. "Prove that the contract was invalid from its inception. The grounds for that would be fraud or misrepresentations of facts, inadequate representation in the negotiation of the agreement in the first place, or conflict of interest. For termination, you might try...well, in one case we did use failure of consideration in that the record company did not properly promote and market the record. That would be difficult to prove. Another one is failure to exercise an option."

Any theory will do, really. Because the main idea is to force the other side to bargain. "There are very few litigations in the entertainment industry that involve moral questions," Leonard Marks explained. "It's a business. Most litigations involve taking money out of one side's pocket and shifting it to the other's."

For example, back in January '83 the Go-Go's wanted more money, fast, and I.R.S. feared that the band might go-go elsewhere to find it. Miles Copeland, head of I.R.S., had Leonard Marks obtain a temporary restraining order to keep them in line, which prevented the group from terminating its contract and hampered any chance of making a deal with a different record company.

The Go-Go's hired a special team of litigators at Donovan, Leisure, Newton & Irvine, Mobil Oil's attorneys, to spend an entire weekend preparing their argument that I.R.S. was late in delivering advances. A court hearing was scheduled for Friday, January 28, 1983.

But Emily Shenkin negotiated a deal for the Go-Go's with I.R.S.'s attorneys which was signed on January 25. Terms of the new deal included an additional live Go-Go's album for I.R.S., higher royalties for the band and a compromise on advance money claimed to be immediately owed.

The court documents filed by I.R.S. and the Go-Go's apparently detailed their past financial arrangements, and were kept sealed by mutual agreement. If a settlement had not been reached, the papers would likely have been revealed after the January 28 hearing, and the financial guts of I.R.S. would have spilled into the public domain. It could have easily turned into a lengthy, costly, vitriolic mess.

"You can get into what I call commercial matrimonial cases," Marks said. "They have the same heat, intensity and emotion that you get when a marriage breaks up. I wouldn't recommend litigation lightly to anyone. It's really a last resort if there is no other way of obtaining the objective."

Don Engel concurs. "There is no performer whom I've ever represented who hasn't been told by me in one form or another that litigation is the last resort," he said. "It is extremely expensive. It is extremely taxing on everyone emotionally, including me, and particularly on the performer."

Leonard Marks represented the Bee Gees in a suit against the Stigwood Group which was settled in 1982. Stigwood president Freddie Gershon said, "I think the most painful and unnecessary aspect of the lawsuit, and ultimately the real cause of the Bee Gees' distress as well, is that they accused Robert, a friend of fifteen years, of personally 'stealing' their money as one of their allegations. Robert asked them if they

believed that. They said, 'No.' Robert asked them if they read the complaint prior to its service and filing and they said they hadn't, but they were told you had to do this kind of thing to get a satisfactory contractual arrangement.

"When artists start lawsuits, they really are not ready for them. We, at least, are accustomed to the emotional battling, the working through the nights on affidavits and the hysteria of making motions."

And as the fighting escalates, so does the hysteria. In a suit between Donna Summer and Casablanca, the record company's attorney told the judge, "The first point I make, your Honor, is that this is not some solitary, poor individual who has been taken advantage of. This is a woman who is as calculating, predatory, manipulative and greedy as I can find." Summer's lawyers responded in kind about Casablanca's Neil Bogart. But the judge was having none of it. "The protestations of virginity from all sides in this case leave me largely unmoved," the court declared. When she was dickering with Warner Bros., your client knew you claimed an exclusive."

The judge refused to issue an injunction forbidding Summer to perform for Geffen Records. Injunctions appear to be becoming increasingly difficult for record companies to win against artists. "Injunctions," said Leonard Marks, "are like nuclear weapons in litigation situations. If you obtain an injunction at an early stage of the case, that will often be the end of the case." The injunction keeps the artist away from the recording studio and prevents his or her music from reaching the public. Some courts think that it's fairer for the companies to be compensated by a cash payment.

But in some cases, the companies can't even obtain a cash payment. The reason is that bankruptcy is being used by certain artists as a tactic to break their contracts and avoid paying damages. The artists say they need a fresh start, but the companies say they are scooping a free lunch.

The record companies are concerned enough to call in bankruptcy lawyers to change their contracts. According to Joe Eisenberg, a prominent L.A. bankruptcy attorney, "All of a sudden, record companies are starting to say. 'Hey, what if an artist goes bankrupt? How do I structure a transaction? How do we do these things?'"

Tom Petty, Angela Bofill, Willie Nile, Meatloaf and David Clayton-Thomas are just a few of the stars who have used bankruptcy to rearrange their contractual obligations. Nile's bankruptcy allowed him to bolt from Arista and join Geffen Records. Clive Davis argued in an affidavit submitted during the bankruptcy proceedings that such a precedent will result in record companies signing fewer new artists. But Davis may have been crying crocodile rock tears, for if some promising malcontent uses bankruptcy to break a contract with David Geffen, it may well be Clive Davis waiting at the courthouse doors to sign 'em up.

The point is that bankruptcy and other legal tactics are certainly abused in some cases by recording artists, but it is also true that the record executives perpetuate and magnify their own problems by taking talent from each other. Mo Ostin of Warner Bros. and Walter Yetnikoff of CBS each met with the Bee Gees while the group was battling with Stigwood, offering various deals that they would sign if the Gibbs were free of RSO. And Yetnikoff struck again by signing Teena Marie in August, 1982, before Motown could even file its lawsuit against the singer. "As much as the record companies scream when they are the recipient of this attack," says Don Engel, "I haven't found any reluctance by any record company in negotiating with those of my clients who are in litigation."

Attorney Lee Phillips told us that it is not uncommon when artists switch record companies for the new company to "indemnify the artist against any losses and cover the legal fees that may be incurred in defense of the case with the first company." And according to another lawyer, Peter Paterno, "Certainly when I've represented an artist involved in a dispute, I've asked the other record company to either help with legal fees or indemnify them."

"You can get into commercial matrimonial cases, which have the same heat, intensity and emotion you get when a marriage breaks up. I wouldn't recommend litigation lightly to anyone; it's a last resort."

The record industry is caught in a vicious cycle. Since 1979, companies have been making less due to decreased sales. They respond by signing fewer new artists and making their deals more one-sided. Then they renegotiate less, forcing artists to resort to the courts more often. Courts are reluctant to grant injunctions, litigation is costly, and other companies are more willing to grab artists from competitors. After grief and expense, the artists get better deals, and the companies they bolt from lose valuable sources of income. Then the cycle starts again.

Money solves a lot of problems. Before the slump, when companies had plenty of cash, the system ran smoothly. One-sided deals were renegotiated when unknowns achieved stardom. If the record industry recovers, as it appears to have, the system may return to its former harmony.

But no matter what happens to the economy, companies that attempt to squeeze value out of artists' pockets will find that they are hurting themselves in the long run. Successful artists won't take such treatment for long. Instead of sitting tight, they'll be bustin' out.

NO MORE LOONY-TUNING

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THE WORKING MUSICIAN

The Instruments, The People, The Process

76 EURYTHMICS: ANYTHING GOES

Milk Bottles! Grunts! Subway feedback! Home recording was never like this. Annie Lennox and Dave Stewart share their intimate studio secrets and tell the unusual story of their rise to Sweet Dream stardom. Freff reports this is a duo to watch.

P R O D U C I N G

82 RICK JAMES' PERFECTIONISM

Can that be Mr. Outrageous himself behind the board, demanding every detail be flawless? You bet. Rick James parks the party outside when it comes to producing the Mary Jane Girls' debut and his own new *Cold Blooded*.

S T U D I O S

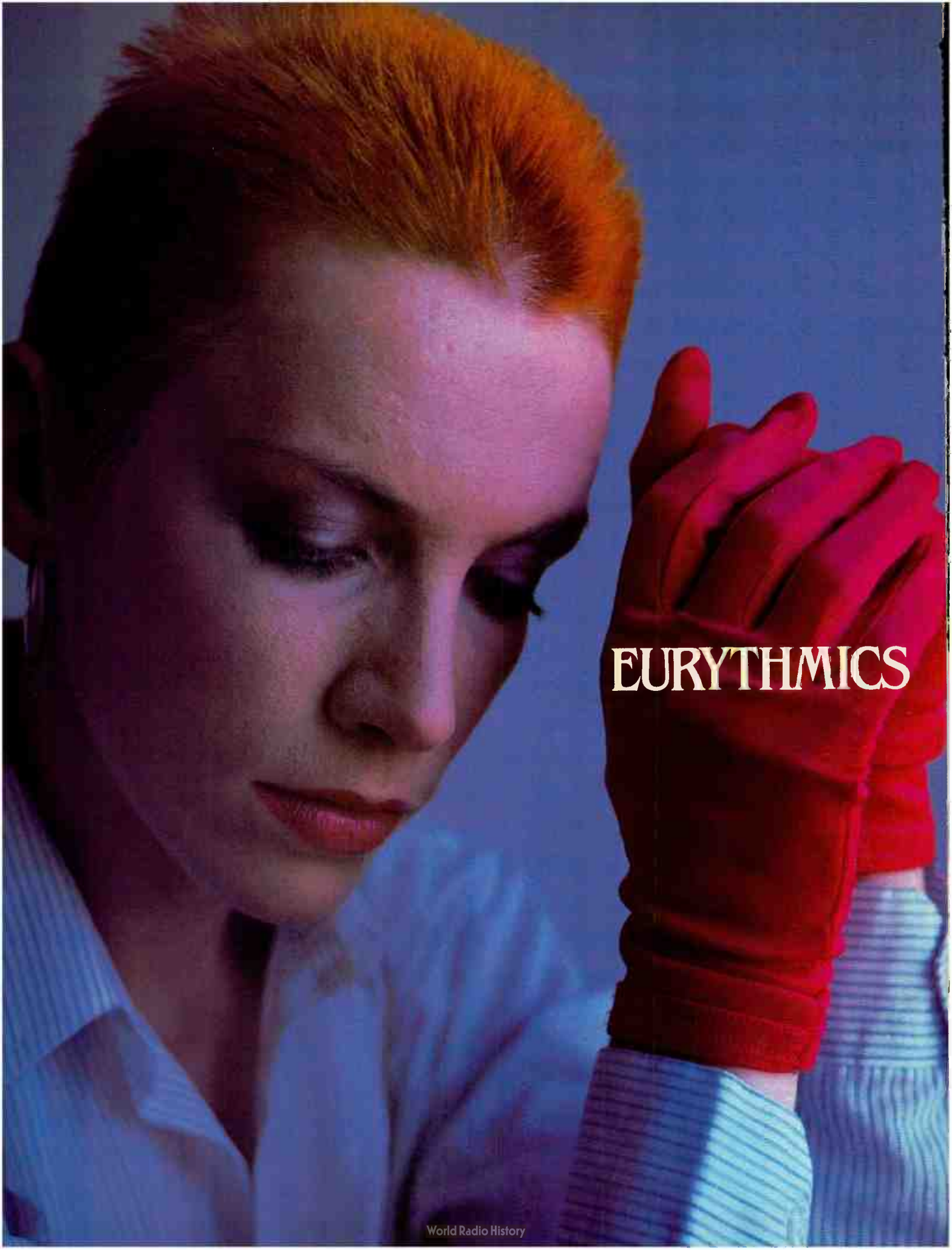
88 STEVEN STANLEY: "YOUTH SOUND"

The boy wizard of Island Records' Compass Point Studios, "Youth Sound" is the toast of Sly & Robbie, Tom Tom Club and the B-52's.

D E V E L O P M E N T S

92 YAMAHA DX SERIES

FM digital synthesis brings digital without a mortgage to the gigging musician. With a few reservations, Freff falls for a DX7.



BY F R E F F

ANYTHING GOES

By now you've heard "Sweet Dreams (Are Made Of This)" on the radio. Maybe you've even bought the album of the same name. And I will bet good green American folding money that you think Eurythmics is a synthesizer band, and that Annie Lennox does the singing and Dave Stewart does all the playing. Why shouldn't you? I mean, it's what all the reviews say. It's what the bio from RCA, their record company, says. It also happens to be dead wrong.

Of course, lack of truth has never derailed a convenient preconception. But when the truth is wild and eccentric and even a little *revolutionary*, ah! That's quite another thing.

So read on. And next time you hear "Sweet Dreams," remember to listen for the milk bottles.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

There's a certain standardized ritual to the making of a record. You do your demos, work out arrangements with the band, practice until you've got them down cold, and then Go Into The Studio. There you spend an hour getting the drum sound together (only an hour, if you're lucky), an hour on the bass, an hour on the guitar, another hour trying to regain the enthusiasm you had when you'd walked in four hours before, and finally, frustrated and sweaty and *beaucoup* bucks poorer, you walk out with a take you can't stand but which the engineer assures you can be "fixed in the mix." Only it never can.

Dave and Annie found a better way.

Actually, they didn't have much choice. After splitting from the Tourists in 1980 and making *In The Garden*, their first album as Eurythmics, at Conny Plank's West German studio, they ran into nerve-shattering management troubles. By the time everything settled out and they were free of that entanglement, they were also free of useful things like money and a recording contract.

Desperate times call for desperate measures. "I dressed up like a businessman—I had a briefcase and everything—and I went down to our local bank manager," recalls Dave. "I told him that Annie and I were going to do something absolutely amazing and that the bank should invest in us. I made the point that most bands spent thirty thousand pounds just recording one album, but that we could buy the equipment we needed for seven thousand and then make all the albums we wanted." The bank manager didn't know a microphone

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DEBORAH FEINGOLD

from a macramé, but Dave's figures and track record and sheer *chutzpah* convinced him that the chance was worth taking.

Of course, Dave never mentioned the fact that they'd never engineered a recording studio in their lives....

Their "studio" was a dingy, v-shaped warehouse attic. No acoustical tiles, no drum booth, no double-sealed glass window; they played and sang in the same room with their tape deck and mixing board, which were a TEAC half-inch 8-track and a cheap, used Soundcraft, respectively. For microphones, they had two Beyers, which they used to record everything—Annie's voice, trumpets, percussion, the piano—and for outboard processing gear they had a handful of old effects boxes, a space echo, and one (count it, one) spring reverb.

They made the *Sweet Dreams* album with that. Go and listen to it. It sounds like it was recorded in the finest of two-hundred-dollar-an-hour rooms, instead of a place most people would barely credit with demo capability. Raw talent and no pressure from the time clock are two reasonable explanations for that disparity, but at the heart of the record's sonic success is a different attitude about recording. No more "fix it in the mix." Instead it was *get the sound right*, no matter how long it took, and then record it flat. And if it didn't sound right later, scrub it and do it again.

Having fun counted, too. That's something Annie and Dave learned from Conny Plank, back when they'd been working on *In The Garden*.

This is how Dave remembers it: "Conny and his partner Holger took me aside one day to show me what they were doing—all these weird, obscure experiments. They'd make rhythm tracks out of tape loops of pinball machine counters, and add a bass drum even though they couldn't play drums, and then they'd play some kind of scratchy violin part all the way through and I'd say, 'what the hell, that sounds *terrible*.' But they'd never use it like that. They'd kind of switch it in and out, and then run it through a space echo, and phase it...and it would sound really great. Compared to that, everything I'd ever done in a band seemed boring. I could see them running around, rubbing their hands with glee, and getting real excited—and these were forty year-old men! They were like kids with paint pots and a blank canvas. They could do *anything*."

Annie and Dave started doing anything, too. And a whole lot of people came round and caught the bug. The Specials recorded in the attic, as did Jimmy Destri and Clem Burke of Blondie. To them, it was toytown; a place to relax and go crazy. In and around recordings for *Sweet Dreams* the most bizarre sessions went on, such as improvisational jams with Clem Burke on drums, Adam Powell of Selector playing dub bass, and Dave's stepfather (an ex-Jesuit priest turned Buddhist) exclaiming haiku poetry in French. Dave even started dragging total strangers in off the street, people who had never even seen a tape deck, let alone thought of recording a song, and setting to work with them. "This is a synthesizer, and this is a tape echo, and when you press this button then...."

"Dave and I almost split up the day we wrote 'Sweet Dreams.' I'm very negative and he's very positive. But we were having a terrible time and I couldn't take it anymore."

I trust you begin to get the picture. Just to make it concrete, here are a few examples from the album:

—There's lots of stuff you'd guess was synthesizer that isn't. That string sound in "The Walk"? A Farfisa Combo Compact through the spring reverb. The clinking counterpoint in the chorus of "Sweet Dreams"? Milk bottles pitched to the right notes by filling them with different levels of water. And the weird, rattling feedback along with the rain noise in "The City Never Sleeps" is just that: feedback. To get the environment they wanted, Dave and Annie bought subway tickets and stood on the platform, recording the trains going by with a little Walkman-like tape machine. When they got back they found they didn't have any open tracks left on the Teac, so to get the trains into the song, they added them directly into the 2-track master during mixdown. The clicking of the wheels caught Dave's ear. To him it sounded a little like guitar feedback. So he grabbed his Gretsch Country Gentleman, plugged it in, held it in front of the monitor speakers so it would pick up on the clicking and start feeding back for real ...and he submixed that in, too.

—That same trick was used for most of Annie's multiple harmonies. Since there were no clear tracks, she sang them *during* mixdown, standing next to the mixing board with earphones on.

—Part of the rhythm track from "Love Is A Stranger" is an unusual, on-the-downbeat grunting sound. That's a reverb-processed chef from a neighborhood restaurant, one of the novices Dave pulled in off the street.

—All the piano on the record is there by fortunate coincidence. The floor below their attic was occupied by a frame-making company, owned by a man who was an avid pianist; so avid, in fact, that he'd installed a grand piano in the shop so he could practice before work every morning. Annie and Dave got permission to use it after hours. They ran their two Beyer mikes down on long cables, set up a talkback system so they could cue each other, and then played all the piano parts by flashlight (the regular lights having been shut off at night).

—Many, many, sound chains. Even though their Movement Audio Visual drum computer (an English instrument not in general release yet) used digitally-recorded drums, they weren't quite right. So, Dave says, "we'd do things like send the snare out to trigger a white noise, send the white noise through a phaser, and send just the phased version of the white noise through a repeat echo...or something like that. Sometimes we had the most outrageous connections. A real engineer would have been appalled."

But it worked. Two world-wide hit singles and a hit album, followed up by a three-song EP ("Who's That Girl?") that has so far sold 400,000 copies in England and Europe alone.

All that success, of course, has meant expansion. Not long ago, Dave and Annie bought an old church and converted it to a 24-track studio, complete with goodies like a Lexicon delay and a Harmonizer (though they still have only two Beyer mikes). Question of the day: will extra trackspace kill that wild, simplicity-enforced creativity?

Apparently not. *Whew.*

"We're still banging metal bottles together. I mean, the very first thing we recorded in the place," laughs Dave, "was a ukelele submixed with a Roland Juno 60. It's all in the brain, you know, not in the equipment."

If there are two things that Annie and Dave unquestionably agree on, it's a) they are total opposites, and it's that difference that makes Eurythmics work, and b) by the time a song is finished, they can't tell who did what anymore.

What a package of contradictions! Dave is the techno-whiz, usually starting songs from the simpler bottom end, coming up with a rhythm and a bass line, sketching in the rest with punchy, brass-section chords. Annie instinctively tackles it from the top, with lyrical bits of poetry worked out in exercise books, and melodies and chord changes carefully written down in music notation.

But there are exceptions. Like "Sweet Dreams," the song they're best known for.

"Dave and I almost split up the day we wrote 'Sweet Dreams,'" says Annie, in her quiet Scottish accent, remembering a particularly bitter point during their between-contracts period. "I'm very negative and he's very positive. But we were just having a terrible time and I couldn't take it anymore, and I said so. And he said, 'Okay, fine, you don't mind if I go ahead and program the drum computer then, do you?' I was lying on the floor, curled up in a fetal position or something and he programmed in this rhythm. It sounded so good that in the end I couldn't resist it. I sat down behind the synthesizer and *fam!*, the riff came. I got that, said, 'Oh, that's good,' and we put it down."

And then she improvised the lyric. Into the microphone. With the tape running.

That's right, improvised. What you hear when you put your stylus down in that song's groove is Annie Lennox's first and only take (except for the part about "hold your head up" in the chorus; that came later).

Annie is responsible for about ninety percent of the lyrics. Dave says he "likes her lyrics better." She tends to take phrases everyone has heard so many times they don't hear them anymore, and then twist them around; examine them from new angles; pull out fresh meanings. They also serve double-duty as statements to herself.

"Eurythmics music is bittersweet. I can't sing something that's just cliché anymore, because just to say 'I love you' is too profound. It's too intimate, really, too sacred a thing to say in a song."

Of course, the true test of a song's strength is how well it survives translation into another musical idiom. Only the valid ones, the pure ones, can make that crossover. (Can you imagine a reggae "Volare" or a country-western "Camelot"? Sheer horror.) So far, Annie and Dave's tunes are making the leap just fine, and they're the ones kicking them over the boundaries. I told you earlier they weren't just another synthesizer band. Right now there are three different recordings of "The Walk" available in England: the "soul" version that's on the LP, a heavy disco adaptation ("a little bit like Grandmaster Flash," says Annie), and a solemn gospel and grand paino version, in which all the synth lines are sung by a choir.

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Total opposites Dave Stewart and Annie Lennox: *Candide* meets charisma.

"We're quite variable," says Dave, "and we could go...well, anywhere. In three years' time we might make an album that's just acoustic 12-string, four cellos, and Annie's voice, doing traditional Scottish folksongs. You can call everything Eurythmics. It's not really the name of a band. It's the name of a project."

Good as Eurythmics are on record, eccentric and inventive and involving, as good as all that—they're better live. *Lots* better. I got my first hint at the soundcheck for their show at the Kabuki, a theater at San Francisco's Japantown. Soundchecks are incredibly revealing, mostly because of the desperation factor. They are innately futile. The game is not to make the sound good, but to isolate and solve as many problems you can at each new gig and pray that only two or three emergencies will come up during the show. And as if the standard troubles weren't enough this time around, there was also a mobile recording truck from the Record Plant downstairs, taping the show for later broadcast on the BBC. Pressure.

And you know what? It was hardly noticeable. Annie fulfilled her self-characterization of negativity at first, seeming a little down, but she perked right up when a gift of flowers came in from fellow RCA act Jefferson Starship. And Dave...well, Dave was utterly unflappable. One minute making out a

"Eurythmics music is bittersweet. I can't sing something that's just cliché anymore, because to say 'I love you' is too profound, too intimate and sacred to say in a song."

detailed set chart with song times for the guys in the mobile, so they could change tape reels without missing anything, another minute cheerfully cranking out a Beatles improv on his guitar, vamping with the band's three backup singers. An incredible variety of music flowed from his fingers as he checked effects settings and monitor levels. Blues slide work. Richard Thompson's "Calvary Cross." Funky rhythm riffs. Some classical finger picking.

The man can *play*. And Annie's voice live is stronger and more dramatic than on record. Even at soundcheck, clearly saving herself for the evening's show, she eclipsed the album versions of the songs they ran through.

Where had they *come* from. Annie's got the simpler story. (That should warn you about Dave's.) Growing up in Aberdeen, Scotland, she never had a lick of training as a singer, except for the usual church choir experiences. But when she was seven, she started studying piano, and at eleven she picked up the flute. By the time she was seventeen, she'd qualified for the Royal Academy of Music. "On the first day I arrived I discovered that I really hated it. A lousy place, totally lousy. But it was my way of getting away from the provinces, and I was so young and naive, I couldn't think of any alternatives." She stayed for three years.

"I'd been taught that there was a perfect phrasing, a perfect sound, a perfect dynamics. But there is no perfect. The most perfecting thing is to express *yourself*, totally, but nobody teaches you that. I think for most trained musicians, it's just a job. I learned that there and it was horrible."

Annie's turning point came when she moved into the flat of a friend who had a stereo. She'd never had records; there wasn't money for them. But now she had this collection at her disposal, and she made a discovery, and a rediscovery: Joni Mitchell, "the first woman who ever wrote anything really potent," and Motown. Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye. "Ma Cherie Amour" and "Heard It Through The Grapevine." The songs she'd danced to as a teenager in Aberdeen and loved, without really comprehending what they were. Those tunes started to sing again as an escape from the instrumental regimen the Academy was forcing on her. "It was quite a relief to find a place within me that was pure expression. At the time, I remember that I used to think, *I'm just black* and everything would be all right. It sounds odd, now. But it was like a place to be, mentally. When I'm frightened, and nervous, and really searching for someplace safe, then that's where I go. It's my ground base."

She needed it more than once, after she left the Academy. Survival was a string of jobs as waitress and bookstore clerk, music a succession of failed connections and bad deals. (At one point, she almost shared management with the Bay City Rollers, and unlikely connection if ever there was one.) And then, in 1977, she met Dave Stewart, who promptly got her in to see a music publisher he knew, proclaiming her "an amazing singer," even though he'd never heard her.

That's Dave all over. I could write a book the size of *War and Peace* and not cover Dave Stewart's life. He's rock 'n' roll's Candide, hurtling from disaster to exploit to disaster, always convinced that this is the best of all possible worlds. Dave got his start in music learning Mississippi John Hurt and John Fahey from records, then Dylan songs, and finally T. Rex. When he was fourteen, he stowed away in the back of Amazing Blondel's van after a gig. Anybody else would have been promptly on his way back to hearth and home when discovered the next morning, but not Dave; he spent the next six weeks of school holiday traveling with the renaissance-music band, being taught pavanes and galliardes on the lute. By the end of the tour he was playing a few tunes to open for their show. Great experience. So what if he had to sleep in the back of the van with their pet Great Dane? Later on he opened for Ralph McTell; founded the band Longdancer, which was signed to

continued on page 96

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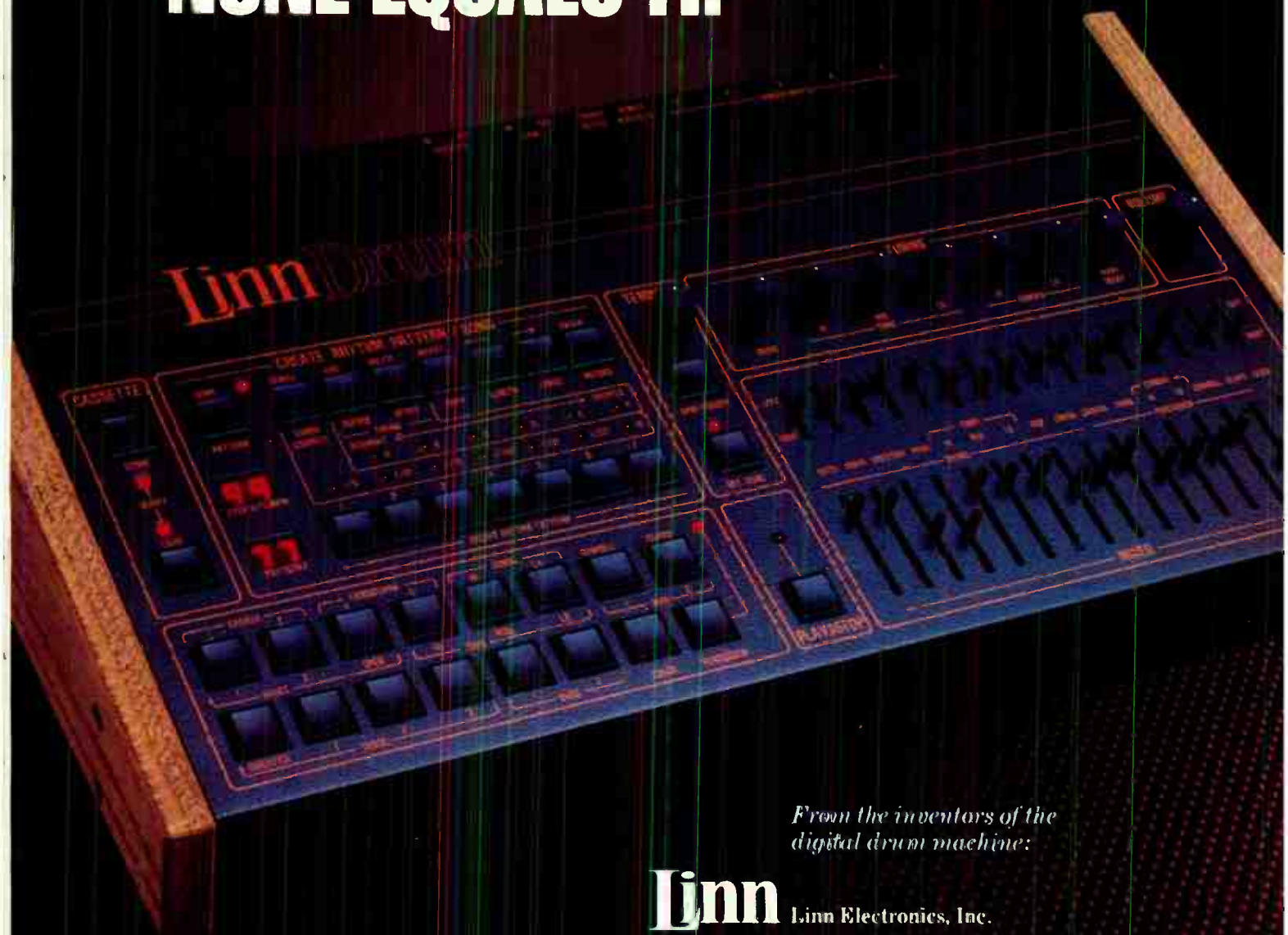

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P R O D U C I N G

RICK JAMES' PERFECTIONISM

Another Side of Mr. Outrageous

BY MICHAEL GOLDBERG

CHESTER SIMPSON

James at work under spartan conditions producing the Mary Jane Girls' *All Night Long*.

The four women stood in the semi-dark recording studio. "Okay, let's go," said the producer.

On cue, the women sang soulfully to a lush, romantic track, "Woo-ooh. Come on, take me a little higher."

"That felt better," said the producer. He had been working on this particular line for nearly an hour. "Double that. Same way." The Mary Jane Girls repeated the line. Then it was on to the chorus.

"I want you to get the exact phrasing that I sing, as if you heard it on the radio," said the producer. "You (pause) are (pause) my (pause) heaven," he sang.

The women repeated the line, sounding like angels. The producer didn't think they sounded quite that heavenly. "Sing it more like *girls*, with more sensitivity," he said.

The line was repeated. "You're a little flat, Cheri," said the producer. "If I could have less of the track," said the short, curly-haired singer with the movie star face. "No problem," said the producer.

The line was repeated. The producer didn't like it. The line was repeated again. The producer was still unhappy. "I want more *sweetness*," he said. "Think that high, sensual pitch."

After another take, the producer told the singers to take a break. They sat on the floor of the studio. The producer called two of his musicians over. He played back the problem line so that only the vocals could be heard. The three of them thought that the 'my' was wrong. They listened one more time. "Ow!" shouted the producer. "The 'my' *is* off."

Three hours later, the background vocals for "You Are My Heaven," which would appear on the Mary Jane Girls' debut album for Motown, *All Night Long*, were completed.

The producer—who painstakingly crafted the entire album the way he worked on this song, going over every note, every vocal inflection, every guitar riff, drum beat and bass line—was Rick James.

Yes, *that* Rick James. The Rick James with the braids and the flashy clothes and the raw sex-appeal. The Rick James of "Super Freak" and "Give It To Me Baby" fame. The Rick James who has denounced MTV as racist. The Rick James who is known for his "women and drugs," for a flamboyant and excessive lifestyle that has landed him in the hospital more than once. *Mr.* Outrageous.

Here in the studio, that Rick James didn't seem to be around. Certainly the man looked like the self-proclaimed king of funk 'n' roll. But this Rick James wasn't spending any time partying. This Rick James wasn't drinking anything stronger than coffee. He was not surrounded by groupies. This Rick James wasn't putting on a performance for hangers-on—he hadn't even let any into the studio. Aside from this writer, the only people present were members of his band, the Mary Jane Girls and his engineer, Tom "Super" Flye (who engineered several of Sly Stone's records a decade ago). This Rick James was the level-headed guy who had written and produced six albums for himself, three for his Stone City Band and one for singer Teena Marie during the past five years. He had revived the Temptations' career by writing and producing "Standing On The Top" for them. He'd sold over ten million albums. This Rick James was all about making music.

"Well, Beethoven was a lunatic, too," he said, flashing a grin. "His image was completely maniacal. The Rick James character has been personified into something that I don't completely understand. I'm not Rick James all the time and I wouldn't even want to be. 'Show business' has taken all the most extreme aspects of Rick James and put them in a wild and crazy environment which I created and which has been promoted that way in people's minds. Which is cool. But I don't try to live the character, because the bottom line is music, and I think people know that there's another side of Rick James. They realize that he couldn't create the music he creates if he was as much of a lunatic as people think."

James' records are as creative and musically substantial as anything you might care to compare them to. Equally adept at pulling off a candlelight ballad

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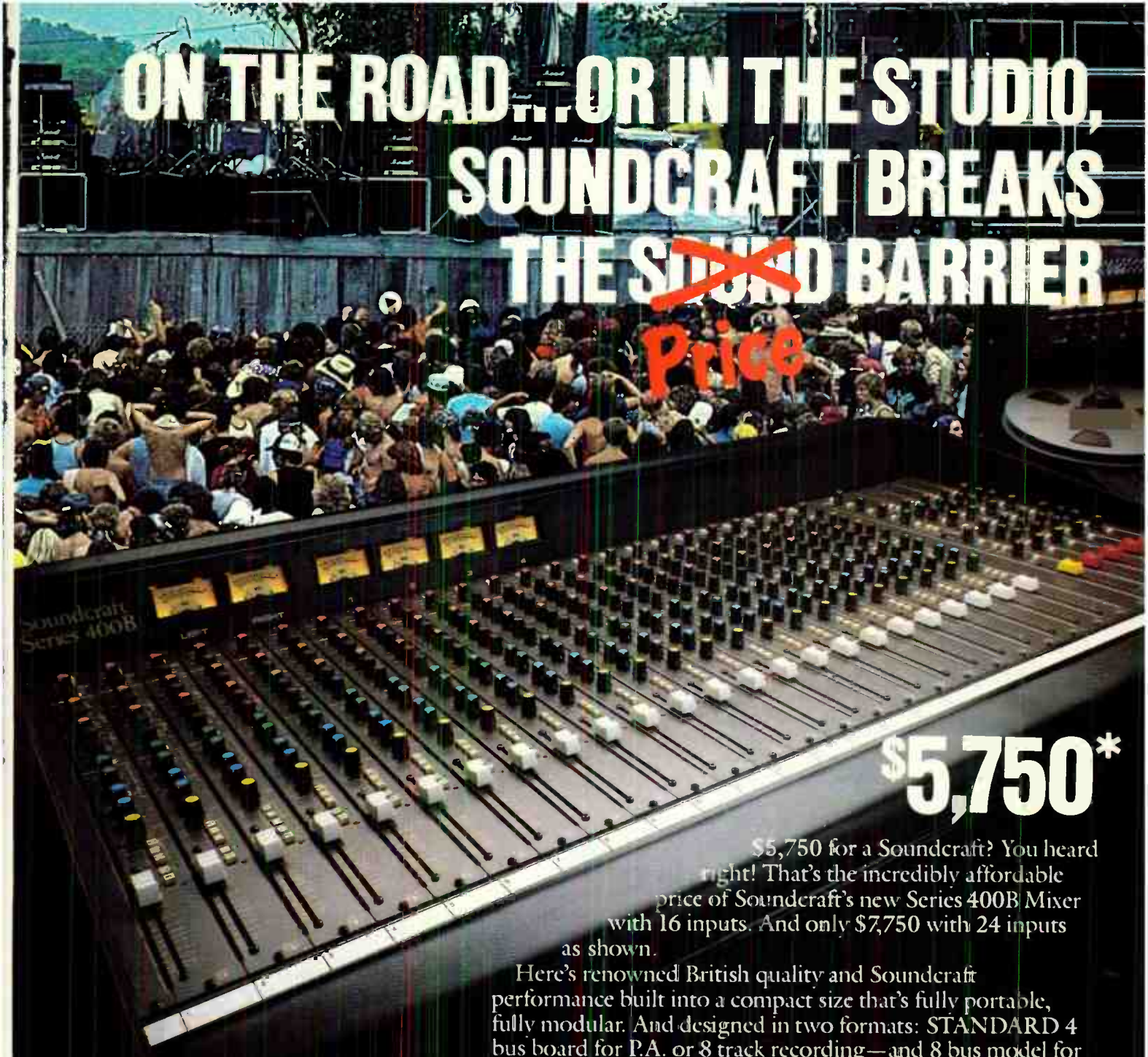

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or high velocity funk, full bore rock 'n' roll or a moody tale of heartbreak, Rick James' six albums show a gifted songwriter/musician/singer/producer. His masterpiece—to date—is *Street Songs*, an album that documents life in the ghetto with a *cinema-verité realism*.

James usually comes up with his material quickly. He wrote half of the Mary Jane Girls' album in one day. "I rented a mobile home and drove up from L.A.," says James. "I got out and came in the studio and just wanted to create. One of the women wanted a rock-punk-funk tune, so I just sat down and wrote 'Jealousy' in five minutes. Another woman needed a ballad and I wrote 'You Are My Heaven' in five minutes."

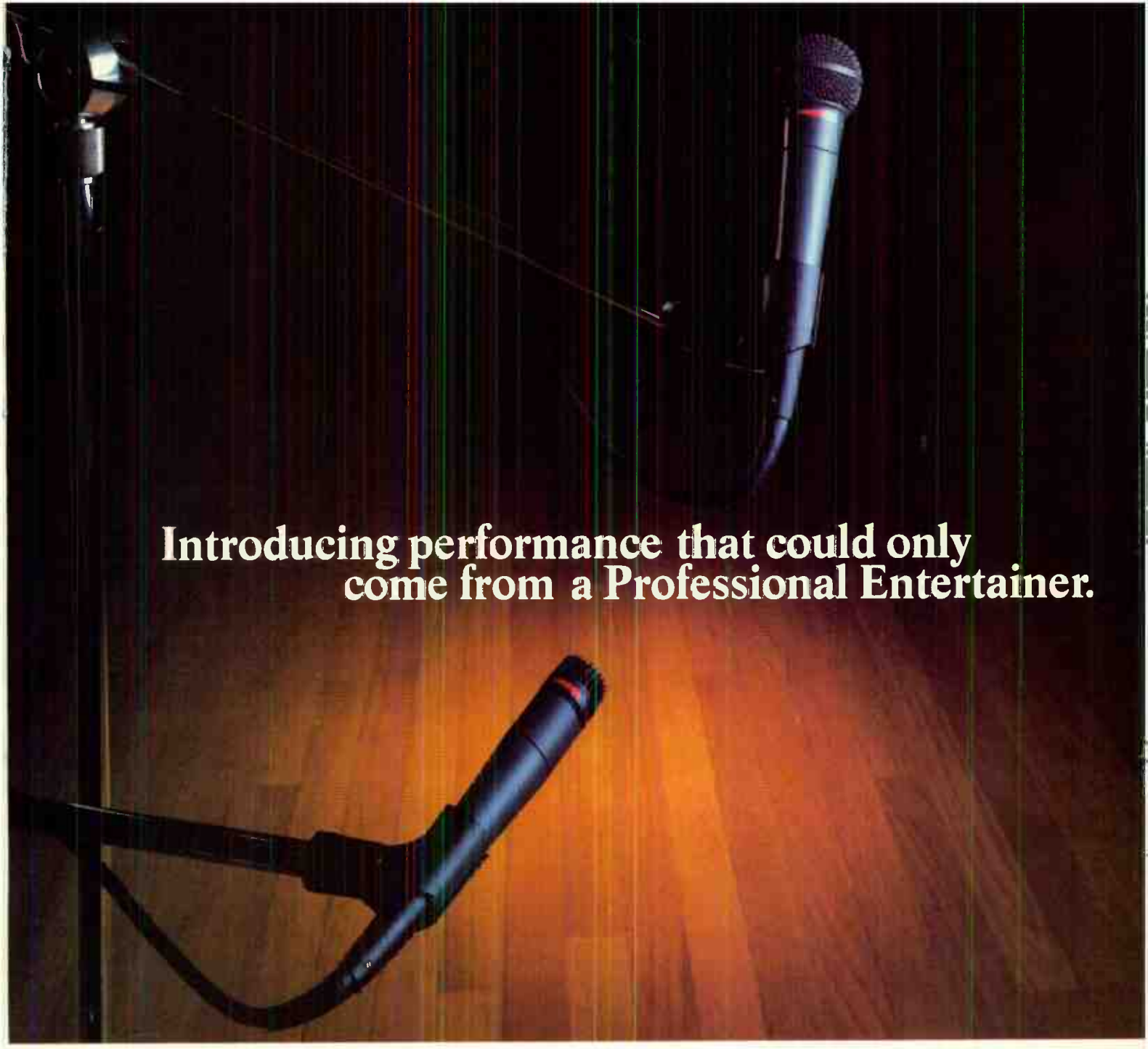
And how, exactly, *does* James write? It's an intuitive process. He may come in with a few ideas, but the actual creation of the songs often takes place spontaneously in the studio. "For 'Jealousy' I programmed this rock 'n' roll beat on the drum machine (an Oberheim DMX), picked up a guitar and came up with the melody. I recorded it with just guitar and drum machine. Then I overdubbed a bass. The guys (members of the Stone City Band) were around and I got them to listen, then got them to play the parts. That's how that came up."

He wrote "Super Freak," his biggest hit, as an afterthought. "I wanted to write a silly song. I was in the studio and everything else for the album (*Street Songs*) was done. I just put 'Super Freak' together really quickly. I wanted a silly song that had a bit of new wave texture to it. So I just came up with this silly little lick and expounded on it. I came up with the bass part first. Then I put a guitar on it and keyboards, doing the 'ehh ehh,' silly keyboard part. Then I found a tuning on my Oberheim OB-Xa that I'd been wanting to use for a long time—it sounds like ghosts. And I put a very operatic vocal structure on it 'cause I'm really into opera and classical music. You probably hear a lot of that in my music. So I put (sings in a deep voice) 'She's all right,' very operatic, sort of funny, stuff. 'Give It To Me Baby' was another silly song. Matter of fact, most of my songs that are hit records are silly. Most of my serious stuff is stuck on albums."

Once James has the basics or "skeleton" of a song, he begins to "color it." For "Give It To Me Baby" he overdubbed off-the-beat toms which, as he says, "made that song." For "You Are My Heaven" he used an Emulator to add a touch of sitar. "I'm thinking about what the lyrics are going to say. I'm thinking about the spaces in between. I'm thinking about coloring it without confusing it."

Some of that coloring—especially James' use of harmony vocals and strings—comes from an unexpected source. Rick James is a big fan of classical music—a favorite piece is Brahms *Concerto in D Minor*—and he frequently draws on those classical influences. "By listening to people like Tchaikovsky and Beethoven and Mahler and all these people, you get a feeling for air. White music is oriented from the sky, from an ethereal place. That's where classical music comes from. Black music is rhythms, drums. So you have the earth and sky. To know the sky, you have to know the earth and to know the earth, you have to know the sky. So by learning classical and even taking movements, not plagiarizing or stealing them, but just knowing how a movement might go on a funk level or a rock 'n' roll level is an important thing. That's what made the Beatles so great. George Martin's adaptation of classical feeling onto rock 'n' roll revolutionized music."

Though James himself frequently plays the "rough" guitar, bass, drum and keyboard parts when he's writing in the studio, he has the members of his band redo them when he cuts the actual record. James is no fan of the one-man band approach to recording. "I think people who indulge themselves with playing all the instruments are fine, up to a point. With me, I do it to get the point across to my band, then I let them sit down on the same parts, cause it's their



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P R O D U C I N G

STEVEN STANLEY: "YOUTH SOUND"

Common Sense at Compass Point

BY ROY TRAKIN

KRIS PUSZKIEWICZ

No tech hound he, R&B and pop freak Stanley just likes to "screw things up a bit."

Island Records' fabled Compass Point studios in Nassau is home to Sly & Robbie and a rotating roster of all-stars, including Steven Stanley, a twenty-five-year-old Jamaican, who sits alongside Alex Sadkin as one of the two chief engineers for the studio's myriad projects. Young Stanley has recently added the latest efforts from "that little ole dance band from Athens, Georgia," the B-52's and the "other half" of the Talking Heads, Tom Tom Club, to his production credits. With a self-declared "instinctive, common sense" approach to music, Stanley's naive yet complex production touches provide the sophisticated inner weave for each group's sometimes cloying, child-like nursery rhymes.

"I do not use many electronic effects," he insists. "I make sure the human element stays on top and the rest is underneath. Except when it's necessary to get freaky, then I go wild... BAM! BAM! BAM! Most of the time, melody comes first, though. The effects are just coloring. I mix like I'm painting a picture."

Stanley gestures with his entire body as he talks, often groping for the right words to express what he's thinking, his gentle patois lulling the listener into its lilting rhythms. He got his start in the music business as a seventeen-year-old electronics student working in Kingston's only 24-track studio, owned by an Oriental who introduced Steven to the basics. "I'd never seen a recording studio in my life," marvels Stanley. "I just used my head to figure everything out, from the tape machines to the mixing board." Along the way, he picked up pointers from leading Jamaican engineers like Errol Ross and Willie Lindo. Four years ago, Wailer keyboardist Tyrone Downie, a good friend of Stanley's who dubbed him "Youth Sound" because of his age, turned Steven on to someone looking for an engineer to assist in manning a then brand-new studio complex in the Bahamas. That gentleman was Island president Chris Blackwell, and Stanley hasn't looked back since.

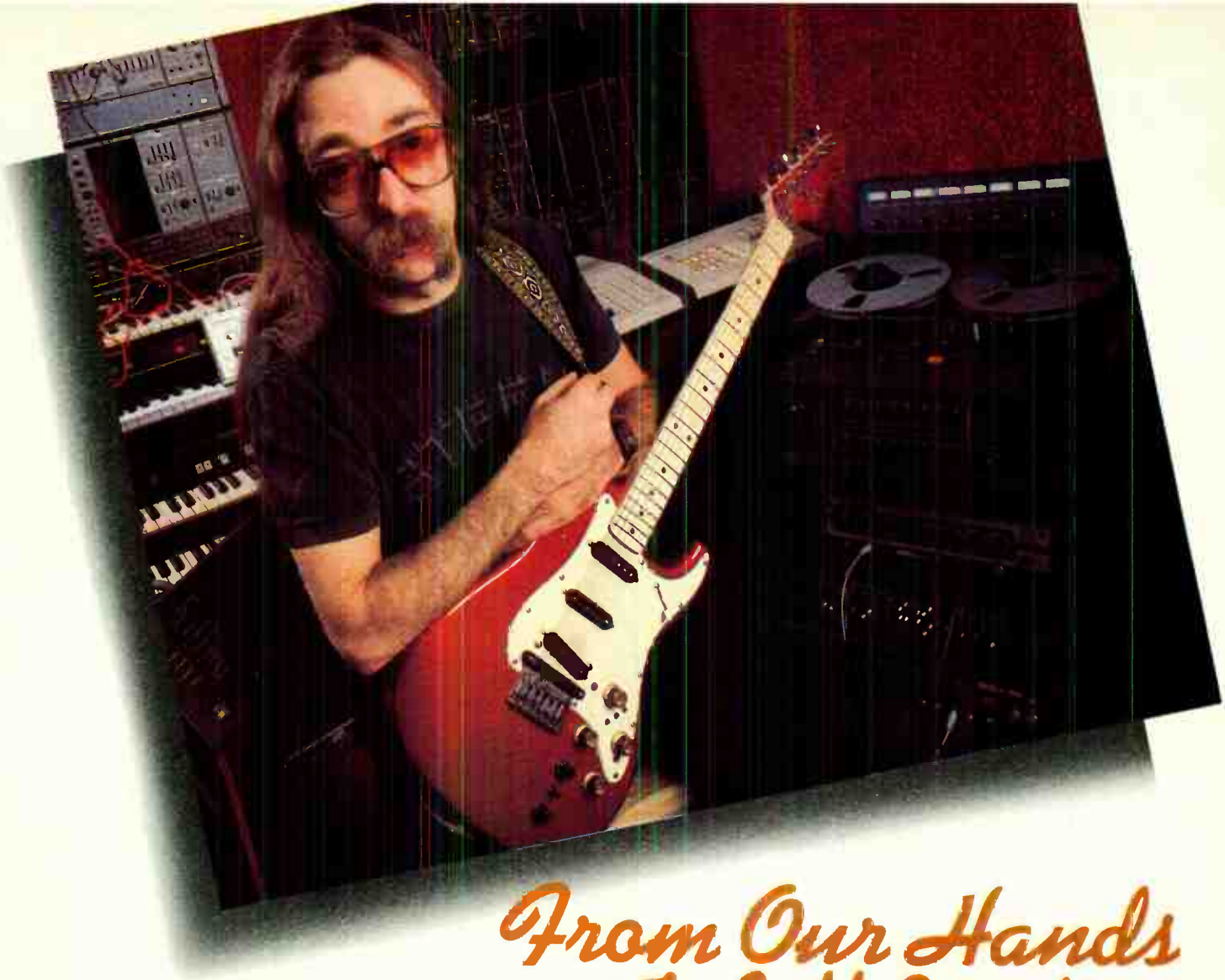
"I'm not really technically oriented," he admits. "I just like to screw things up a bit." Going against the grain of reggae, the dominant musical form in his homeland, Stanley is an avowed "R&B and pop freak." His patented use of delays, phasers and harmonizers leads toward a streamlined, modern, almost disco sound, but his innocent playfulness prevents the music from hardening into the freeze-dried syndrome that afflicts so many synthesizer outfits. His transition from engineer to producer was, not surprisingly, a natural one.

"I always felt the same. It's just people started called me 'producer' and giving me points," he laughs heartily. "I do the same things I did as an engineer. I give ideas where there's a problem, but only after I've thought it out by myself. If it's a good idea, I'll speak. Otherwise, I keep my mouth shut."

Steven Stanley's first co-production credit came on the Tom Tom Club's unexpected, off-handed smash debut. Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth even revealed that Stanley was responsible for coming up with the signature synthesizer hook which fuels the hit single, "Genius Of Love." *Dit-dit, da-da, dit-dit*.... "I was fooling around on a Prophet synthesizer one night alone in the studio," he recalls. "I play better then because I can concentrate. It just came out and it sounded great. I have the ability to know when something just fits. That first Tom Tom Club record was done layer by layer, one by one. Drums first, then bass, then the keyboard, then Adrian Belew's guitar, which added a rock element. I came up with that keyboard riff after the drums and bass to the song were already completed." Stanley likens producing to "knowing which bad parts to take out and which ones should stay in because they feel good." He compares his production on the new Tom Tom Club album, *Close To The Bone*, to the densely detailed James Rizzi cartoon on its cover. "There are a lot of little gimmicks on it," he giggles delightedly. "I like to put a slight delay on the drums and repeat it all the way through. Just enough for you to feel it, but not enough to really hear it loud. It's below, tickling you. I play with the rhythms, bend them a bit."

Just as he toys with disparate musical influences, like the variation on the James Bond theme in Tom Tom's "Bamboo Town." Or "On The Line Again," where Stanley achieved a sensurround atmosphere by recording the different vocal parts in various sections of the studio, including the vocal booth, the echo chamber and a carpeted room. "And then everyone would come together for the line, 'We're gonna put on the dog,' because it didn't sound exciting when only one person did it. If you're talking about 'we' and 'putting on the dog,' you're talking about a party. You have to make it sound loud, dramatic," he says.

While the Tom Tom Club have recorded their first two albums by improvising in the studio, the B-52's came into the Compass Point sessions for *Whammy!* well prepared, according to Steve. "Except for the Yoko Ono song,



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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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which was supposed to be an experiment," he says with a straight face but with a gleam in his eye. "It was just two words, so there was not much to do. Y'know, 'Don't Worry!' So, I gave each member of the band a track apiece and they just jammed all over the place. And, when they finished, I just listened for the best parts to edit together. That song was like working on a jigsaw puzzle."

The light-skinned Jamaican with the modified Afro has a reputation as an expert mixer, which he demonstrated on the "party EP" he re-mixed for the B-52's a few years back. He recently did the same for photographer Lynn Goldsmith's "Will Powers" project. "Sometimes people will want a hot mix, but with the sound they have, it is impossible to get one," he winks. "Most of the time, I like it when a record sounds terrible. When you're finished, you're more proud of the effort. To me, the Will Powers stuff was miserable in the beginning. I don't think the other musicians respected Lynn as an artist. I had to tighten up the rhythms, fatten up the beat. I used the LinnDrum and recorded my own handclaps to do that. A lot of people played on that record. I just put things where I thought they should be. And took things out that shouldn't have been there. It's the easiest way to make a record."

Steven Stanley's carefree approach belies his acute sixth sense of what feels right, allowing the final result to seem as effortless as a breezy stroll along a palm-strewn shoreline in the Bahamas. Steven Stanley has come up with the perfect summer sound for a new generation of beachniks. Ⓜ

A Compass Point Checklist

What follows are the individual pieces of equipment Compass Point producer/engineer Steven Stanley makes most use of in creating his distinctive production quirks. He prefers real drums to rhythm machines ("They're more natural, loose") and frequently uses the delay in tandem with a harmonizer for repeating lines in varying keys. As for the strengths of Compass Point, Stanley admits it's in the "vibes" and the communal living atmosphere it offers. "We have what everybody else has, maybe less," he says. "What's most important is the way you go about using the equipment to get the sound you want."

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HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE YAMAHA DX SERIES

FM Digital Synthesis Makes Its First Big Splash

BY FREFF

DX's 9 and 7, the first new breed of affordable, potent digital synths.

There have been a few unquestionably Great Keyboards in rock 'n' roll, the classics that set the standards everything else must be measured against: the piano, obviously; the Fender Rhodes; the Hammond B-3; the Arp 2600 and the Minimoog; *maybe* the Prophet 5, though the vote isn't completely in yet.

Now Yamaha's DX9 and DX7 are upon us, the first FM digital synths that are a) programmable, and b) sold at gigging keyboard prices, and there has been some talk about placing them on the list of Greats. Well, I wouldn't. Not just *yet*, at least.

I don't mean to sound harsh. In fact, I think the DX7 and the DX9 are damned good instruments, excellent buys at $1,995 and $1,395 respectively, and I'll back that up with a cash down payment on a DX7 just as soon as I can. But good, even *very* good, is still short of Great.

FM Explained

Just what is this FM synthesis stuff, anyway? FM, whether in synthesis or behind the call letters of your favorite radio station, means Frequency Modulation: the act of taking one basic waveform, called a *carrier*, and modulating it with one or more other waveforms, which are naturally enough tagged *modulators*. In FM synthesis you can have a number of carriers and modulators, called *operators*, and you synthesize with them by adjusting their settings and arranging them into different modulation patterns, called *algorithms*.

In the DX series, each operator is the same: a digital sine wave generator and an eight-part EG, or envelope generator (these are very loosely similar to the VCO and ADSR in an analog synth). The pure sine wave from a single operator is the most boring sound in the entire universe, but you never use single operators—on the DX9 you trigger four at once, in one of eight algorithms, with every keystroke. On the more complicated DX7 you trigger six operators at a time, in one of thirty-two possible algorithms. All this modulation changes the carrier waves from boring sines to complex, irregular waveforms that change over the course of a note, much as the waveforms of natural sounds do.

In theory, this technique should allow you to synthesize just about anything. In practice, of course, it falls a little short. And controlling it is tough. Even tiny alterations in operator settings or algorithms can cause sometimes unpredictable changes in the final sound.

A Tour of the Panel

The controls on the DX7 and DX9 are simple, consisting of two sliders, a liquid crystal display for setting levels, and a lot of flat, color-coded contact switches. On the front panels of both instruments are diagrams of the eight-part envelope and the available algorithms. Some other things they have in common are headphone and breath controller jacks, a complete set of MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) connections, pitch bend and mod wheels, and footswitch inputs to control volume, sustain and portamento.

The DX7 has more operators, more algorithms and more features. It holds thirty-two presets in memory, and can access another sixty-four from a special memory cartridge; the DX9 holds only twenty, and uses cassette tape. The DX7 also has velocity and aftertouch sensitivity, plus extensive keyboard "scaling" to make your harmonics change along with pitch, in a way similar to acoustic instruments. Both instruments are sixteen-note polyphonics, and both, of course, have that much-touted FM sound.

Thumbs Up

Ah, that sound. It definitely has presence. (I'll even take the Fender Rhodes sound on the DX7 over the real thing, which is no small compliment.) There are some fine presets—brass with a bit of breath in the attack, gongs and organs and tubular bells, a really nice "plucked Rotosound" bass—and the instrument's capacity to fine tune and vary them proved simpler to use than I had expected. The liquid crystal displays (LCDs) in both offer a lot of information and, especially in the DX7, some very nice prompting. I like the fact that you can not only create and store sounds, but give them the names of your choice, which read out on the LCD.

I also like the fact that you can set your operators however you want them, and then change algorithms, which changes the sound (sometimes wildly). It's a great first step towards creating

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your own voices. In a DX7 you have ninety-six available presets, as long as you keep a ROM cartridge in the slot, and thirty-two available algorithms to bounce among. That's *three thousand and seventy-two* different FM sounds you can play at the touch of a few switches. Not all useable, by any means, but what a paint box of tone colors to start from!

Thumbs Down

The sound is problem number one. I know I just said that it's good. Maybe even great. But FM is not superior to analog synthesis; it sounds *different*, not *better*. There's a certain metallic ring, a sheen to the sound that's always there, especially as you move up in pitch to the highest notes on the keyboard. This is wonderful for brass or gong or harpsichord presets, or for the tine noise from a Rhodes, but it's a lot less pleasant on tone blocks and drum and woodwind sounds. And no matter how much I tried, in the time I had with the instrument, I could never get rid of it completely. Minimize it, yes, but no more. It reminded me a bit of the old solid-state versus tube argument, with FM being less "warm" sounding than analog. (The instruments I played, however, were programmed in Japan for Japanese tastes; the sounds programmed for the American market may be warmer and less metallic.)

The presets are problem number two. These may be great instruments for creating synthesizer voicings, but you'd never guess it from the presets. I went through over a hundred on the DX7 and found a dozen I loved without question; another twenty that could be made to work with some tweaking; and over ninety that were either mediocre variations on the good ones, or musically useless. Does anybody other than a film scorer really need a preset that sounds like a referee's whistle? Or a clarinet that sounds like the "clarinet" on a Casio? Of course, changing the presets is not difficult at all: if you're fooling around with a new sound and lose your way, the original sound you altered, either the preset or the ROM cartridge- or cassette-induced one, can be instantly brought back to refer to. (The LCD also double checks you before you finally erase a sound by asking, "Are you sure?")

Problem number three: human factors. Sure, the keyboard is comfortable—but I wish it had more spring, so the aftertouch would have the feedback it needs? The LCD gives you lots of information and prompting, but is only readable in good light (in concert I think it would prove difficult or impossible). And why choose colors for the switch coding that don't read well against the dark brown of the instrument's body? My own suspicion is that Yamaha was so intent on keeping the DX keyboards hidden until they were ready for release that they may have skimped on getting

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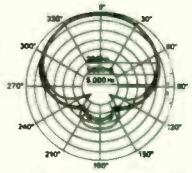

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Yamaha from previous page

enough field criticism on the prototypes.

The Upshot

The DX series is already a sales success. Yamaha can't keep up with the initial demand. And the problems are being worked on: the presets are being redone (people who already have their DXs will get the upgrades free); memory expansions are available; and software packages tc link a DX to a home computer through its MIDI are being written. I've seen some of those. They're so powerful they're positively scary.

And somewhere in the innermost bowels of Yamaha, the design of the generation beyond DX has begun. We'll see it in about three years. Maybe that next one will turn out to be the Classic. I hope so.

In the meantime, the DX7 and DX9 are close at hand, ripe with tremendous untapped potential and unquestionably affordable. If the players who buy them can whip them into line, despite some minor design flaws, then FM will get a chance to rise or fall on the strength of its considerable merits. ▣

Eurythmics from pg. 80

Elton John's Rocket Records for 56,000 pounds (money the band squandered in six months of living like drug-fogged lords at a fancy hotel—"record? We were supposed to make a record?"); ran a record shop into the ground and worked with a ten-piece soul band; joined an offshoot of Osibisa; spent a solid year on acid, inventing his own language; left his wife to run off with a member of the Sadista Sisters and her baby; got into three car crashes; was held prisoner at gunpoint by a German promoter; was deported from Holland; suffered multiple collapsed lungs and a major operation....No wonder soundcheck couldn't faze him.

Up onstage for the show, now. Eurythmics on the road is an eight-piece band. Dave alternates between straight and bottleneck guitar (run through an Ibanez mutli-effects rack and a little practice amp of unknown English vintage); Roland CSQ-100 sequencer and SH-09 hooked into a space echo, and a Tascam Portastudio. The Portastudio serves more than one purpose. On its various tracks are recorded drum patterns, sequencer runs, vocal choir effects. Dave fades them in and out as he wants, augmenting and ornamenting the songs. Sometimes the drum pattern can be heard by the audience; sometimes it's sent strictly to the band's drummer, giving him a reference beat for his own exertions on a full Simmons electronic drum kit, plus real snare. The bassist snaps and pumps furiously, humanizing the beat. The chordal keyboardist (Dave plays mostly bass lines and single-note riffs) keeps texture happening with a Prophet 5 and a Juno 60. The backup singers bring in the damndest simultaneous hints of cabaret and Motown. And of course...Annie. Annie who is pulling out all the stops.

Listen. This is the heart of it. David Bowie would be thrilled to have as much stage presence as this woman has. When she comes striding out in her white suit, white pants, white cap and red gloves, and whisks off the plastic mask she is holding over her face to reveal a misty red stripe of make-up across her eyes (she's worn it in concert before but it's *perfect* for this place, very Japanese), it's like she's twenty-five feet tall. Even when she sinks down so low on the stage you can't see her beyond the audience's bobbing heads, you're still somehow aware of her. She's got the gift. And the real miracle is she's not yet at her prime...that next time around she'll be even better.

"No matter what, music is still a very powerful form of communication, whether it's being bought and sold in a marketplace or what. You still have this bottom line...does it mean something to people, does it hit home, does it *cut*?"

Annie said that after the concert, trying to reconcile success and art. But I think they gave their own best advice to the audience and themselves in the version of "Sweet Dreams" that was their final encore. On the album, it's a cynical song, with the emphasis on the verse. Onstage the focus shifted to the chorus, which they belted out like an anthem: "Hold your head up."

Words to live by. Thanks, and amen.

20 reasons why the QSC Model 1400 should cost more. And why it doesn't.

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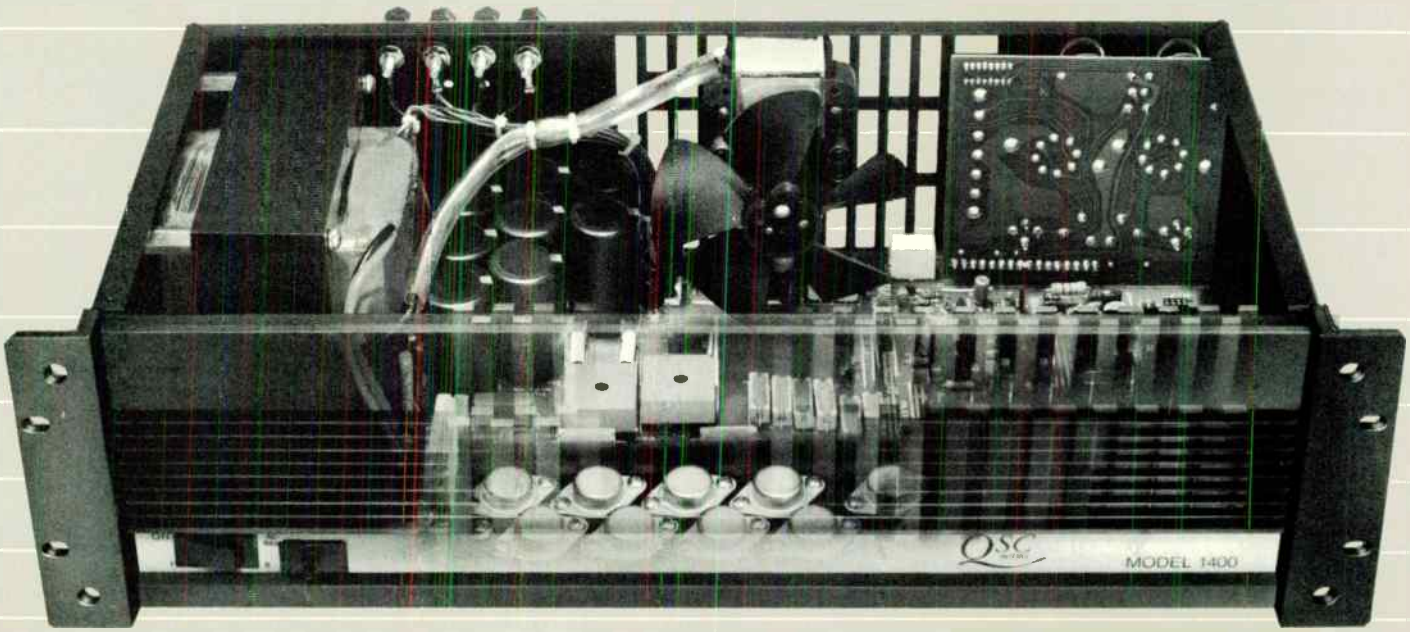

James from pg. 86

Stone City Clubs

Rick James plays a Music Man bass and an '82 Fender Telecaster in the studio and onstage. He runs direct through the sound system or into the board. He also uses a variety of synthesizers, including an Emulator, Korg, Oberheim OB-Xa and Arp Axe machine. Guitarist **Tom McDermott** plays an '82 Charvel (Strat-style) and an '81 Schecter (Strat-style) onstage through two Mesa Boogie Mark 2 amps and Music Man bottoms with four 12s in each. He uses a Yamaha 1005 delay, a Boss chorus and a Maestro Echoplex. In the studio, Tom also uses a '53 Telecaster, '68 Gibson ES-335 and an '82 Fender Strat played through a Scholz Rockman or Mesa Boogie amp.

Bassist **Oscar Alston** plays an '80 Alembic, '82 Zon, '80 Music Man and '80 Fender Precision basses. Keyboardist **Levi Ruffin** plays a Minimoog, Oberheim OB-Xa, Moog Liberation, Fender Rhodes, Arp Axe, Emulator, Crumar String Machine, Sequential Circuits Pro-1. Keyboardist **Erskin Williams** plays an '81 Yamaha CP-80 electric grand, Fender Rhodes and a Hohner Clavinet. Oscar, Levi and Erskin all go through the board, live and in the studio. Saxophonist **Daniel LeMelle** plays a Selmer tenor, Selmer alto and King Super 20 alto as well as an Armstrong French open-hole flute. Drummer **Lanise Hughes** plays Tama drums.

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Fear, the bands represented on *Slash—The Early Years* (the Blasters, Gun Club, X, Dream Syndicate, Rank & File, Violent Femmes, along with the afore-mentioned two) are not hardcore bands per se. Rather, these bands attempt to find solutions to the existential crisis that the L.A. punks expose. Strategies vary. The Blasters ("Border Radio," "Long White Cadillac") and Rank & File ("The Conductor Wore Black") went back to re-examine older traditions (rockabilly, Bakersfield country, and early rock 'n' roll) to attempt to extract the essence of what was vital and true in that music. The Dream Syndicate and Vi-Femmes' (Wisconsin boys, but like Devo, L.A. in spirit) traditional reference point is Lou Reed & the Velvets. We expect L.A. bands to latch on to such surface features as Steve Wynn's Reedian whine, the synthetic twang of Phil Alvin of the Blasters, and the raw, velveteen jangle of Wynn and Precoda's guitars (Neil Young meets Tom Verlaine). But what's unexpected is the essential *purity* of it all. There's just too much of themselves radiating through for the serious listener to worry about the Velvets tag. Let's face it: everything in L.A. is affected to some degree, but in L.A., at times, affectation and integrity can somehow coexist. Think of it more as a regional

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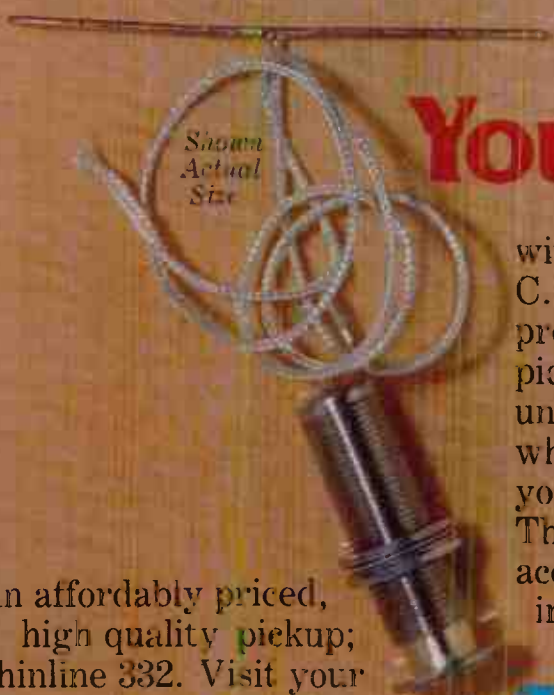

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accent than as a character defect.

Which brings us to X ("Los Angeles," "White Girl"), easily the least referential, most self-possessed of the city's bands. The unvarnished purity of Exene Cervenka and John Doe's vocals convey the courage of those with the guts to hope and affirm, in the full consciousness of just how shitty it is out there. "The World's A Mess: It's In My Kiss" from their first album nicely reflects their spirit of romantic realism. Their spacious harmonies, combined with guitarist Billy Zoom's hyper-deranged Chuck Berry runs, evoke a hardcore Jefferson Airplane. Their latest Elektra album, *More Fun In The New World*, illustrates how much they've grown and how little they've changed. With the notable exception of drummer D.J. Bonebrake's loping, off-beat rhythms and an occasional rockabilly rumble from Zoom, X's recent fascination with country music continues to manifest more as a spiritual than a musical influence. "New World" and "We're Having Much More Fun" maintain their rich, melodic and harmonic structures while racing along at hardcore velocity. "Make The Music Go Bang" practices what it preaches, celebrating the virtues of action over inaction ("I hate people who sit and whine..."). "I Must Not Think Bad Thoughts" is a wonderful excoriation of the smug, new music mentality. "We're the last American band to get played on the radio," they sing with heartfelt passion. "*Please* break the (Black) Flag." That X have maintained that passion, sincerity, and a knowing innocence (as opposed to dangerous naivete') over four albums is a cause for hope. More than any American band, X have remained true to themselves. I wish them luck, for all our sakes. —***Vic Garbarini***

Jack DeJohnette's Special Edition
Inflation Blues (ECM)

Tuneful melodies, cloud-soft wind harmonies and spirited interplay distinguished the first pair of releases by drummer Jack DeJohnette's two-sax freebop quartet Special Edition. The cooking and harmonizing are rich as ever on the group's third LP, but most of the tracks lack the attractive heads we've come to expect from DeJohnette. On "Starburst," for example, the solos ultimately erupt out of a droney, closely-intervalled intro; on "The Islands," guest trumpeter Baikida Carroll starts things moving with his solo; while on "Slowdown," it's rubber-toned bassist Rufus Reid who dives in first and stirs up everyone else.

Not everything here is organized so

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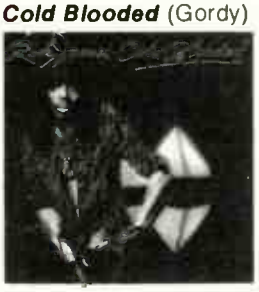
loosely. A gentle march and a bossa nova dance cheek to cheek on "Ebony," then DeJohnette's overdubbed piano buoys solos by Chico Freeman's daydreamy soprano and John Purcell's nimble, full-bodied flute. But the most tightly structured piece is also the most disappointing. With its stilted reggae rhythms and DeJohnette's tin-eared crooning of his own lyrics, "Inflation Blues" comes off sounding like John Mayall meets Jump Up, though the saxes' floating background chords and slippery little solos beat Oliver Lake at his own game.

Still, *Inflation Blues* is a fine record, even if it doesn't boast a theme as memorable as *Special Edition*'s "Zoot Suite" or *Tin Can Alley*'s "I Know." It's the horns that make this Edition Special. Freeman and Purcell plunge into simultaneous improvisation with no fear of getting in each other's way. Both can honk with gusto, but complex harmonization also seems to come naturally to them. As usual, the leader's clean rhythm glues the centrifugal improvisation together (though I miss his erstwhile partner Peter Warren's knack for making the most elementary bass lines throb irresistibly). And Baikida Carroll's broad trumpet strokes thicken the sax mix, ensuring blowing meaty enough to satisfy even the most ravenous freebop fanatic. — ***Kevin Whitehead***

Rick James
Cold Blooded (Gordy)



On *Cold Blooded*, Rick James is nearly restrained, down-playing his cartoon character outrageousness and punk-funk bombast in favor of a pose somewhere between smooth 'n' sexy Marvin Gaye and sensational 'n' sleazy Prince. His everlasting Super Freak has become so familiar that James has had to enlist famous help to broaden his range: Smokey Robinson, Grandmaster Flash, even actor Billy Dee Williams. With Robinson, who joins him for a duet on "Ebony Eyes," he's sincere; with Williams, who sweet-talks over "Tell Me (What You Want)," he's suave. With Flash, who does a "Message"-style doom rap in the middle of "P.I.M.P. The S.I.M.P.," he's streetwise. In between, he's the same old Slick Rick who wants to get it on (and on and on and on), as "Doin' It" and "U Bring The Freak Out" make clear.

James is no longer the delirious bandleader barking commands like "Temptations sing!" in a go-for-broke funk frenzy. "Cold Blooded," the first single, is downright terse: James does a slow burn over a spare arrangement that offers as much room to move as Sly's "Thank You

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(Falettinme Be Mice Elf Again)." James almost sounds like he's making it up as he goes along; "There's no dictionary *book*," he emphasizes, as if he just felt a rhyme coming on, "to explain how you look." "Ebony Eyes" immediately follows "Cold Blooded," and it's a little like a one-two punch; thanks in large part to Smokey, it's the one successful ballad here (Billy Dee should stick to the silver screen). While it's not as spine tingling as James' "Fire and Ice" duet with Teena Marie, he convincingly echoes Smokey's trademark tenderness.

Much of *Cold Blooded* is disposable, though. "1, 2, 3, (U, Her And Me)" offers the thrill of forbidden pleasures, but lacks the eroticism of Prince's far subtler "When You Were Mine"; "New York Town" is a gratuitous tribute to Manhattan, a fantasy that seems to contradict the grim tale of "P.I.M.P. The S.I.M.P." (No matter what RJ says, I'm sure the upwardly mobile preppies who now occupy Studio 54 might be a little surprised to see him come strutting in.) "Unity," the final track and closing message, seems as tacked on as the moral-of-the-story epilogues of *Mork And Mindy*. We know Rick would really rather go on about unity of the face-to-face variety, and there's nothing wrong with that. After all, some things never go out of style.—***Michael Hill***

Was (Not Was)
Born To Laugh At Tornadoes
(Ze/Geffen)

For an album that boasts such a pointedly diverse array of vocalists — would you believe Mitch Ryder, Mel Torme, Doug Feiger and Ozzy Osbourne, among others? *Born To Laugh At Tornadoes* certainly manages *not* to be a singer's record. The problem isn't a matter of performances, because from the beginning of Sweet Pea Atkinson's angry delivery on "Knocked Down Made Small" to the final bit of vibrato in Mel Torme's performance of "Zaz Turned Blue," there isn't a poorly-sung note on *Born To Laugh*. Rather, what frustrates the listener is the way the Brothers Was take this choral bounty and squander it.

A typical example is "Bow Wow Wow Wow," the Mitch Ryder feature. An up-tempo rocker undoubtedly meant as a nod to the Was Bros.' Detroit roots, its pumped-up R&B pulse is so packed with such obvious devices as the "Devil With A Blue Dress" I-IV-I keyboard flour-

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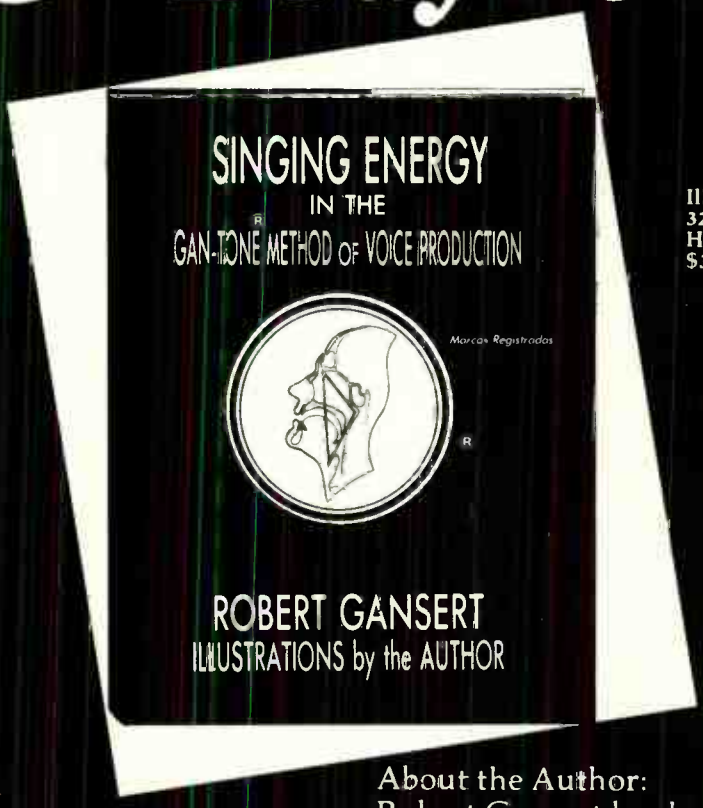

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About the Author:
Robert Gansert has been a performing vocalist for over twenty years, and has been featured in numerous concerts and recordings. His work has been internationally acclaimed. He is currently a noted instructor at the Carnegie Hall studios.

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ishes that the actual inclusion of Ryder almost seems redundant. Yet strangely enough, the vocals are placed so casually in the mix that one might well suppose that the Was fraternity figured the vocals weren't any more important than any of the other window dressing.

Elsewhere, as on Ozzy Osbourne's coolly wicked sing-song treatment of "Shake Your Head" or Doug Feiger's Rundgrenesque performance on "Smile" or even the group effort of the Was two, Felix & Jarvis on "Empire Brain Building," the pleasures of the voice take a back seat to the ingenuity of the engineers, as track after track is filtered, delayed and harmonized. Eventually, the point becomes clear—it's not the singer, or even the song that matters, but the cleverness of the Men Called Was.

But how clever is that? Plenty, if you take note of the way the Wases (the Were?) play style for irony, context for meaning. The light, tropical rethink of "Out Come The Freaks" is an inspired twist even if it *is* something of a self-administered pat on the back, while the quick shifts that power both "Empire Brain Building" and "Jason Blew In From Peoria" are as impressive as they are amusing. Yet if it's meaning or content you want, all you'll find on *Born To Laugh* are facile rhymes and self-impressed puns, because *Les Freres Fut* have nothing to say, only an idea of how to say it. They may think that will let them laugh at the weather, but in the event of a real storm, I think you'll find their smirks make for lousy umbrellas. — ***J.D. Considine***

Indies from pg. 101

Start's mini-LP *Look Around* immediately takes the lead by virtue of the young trio's fragile schoolboy vocals gliding nervously over impulsive punky rhythms and pop-ish clusters of twangy guitar and Farfisa organ. If Start's harmonies slip a little out of sync on the perky opener "Empty Rooms" or the record's limp production leaves too many gaping holes in the group's already spare trio sound, lose yourself instead in the locomotive wheatfield psychedelia of "Saw Me At All" and the spooky rush of "Night Song." Even Allen Ginsberg's guest vocal drone can't spoil the spirited jump of "Little Fish/Big Fish."

On their second album *No Price On Earth*, issued on their own Ramona label (P.O. Box 701, Lawrence, KS 66044), crosstown Lawrence rivals Thumbs refine those same 60s-rooted pop virtues with a cutting lyrical wit—"I'm The Jesus" and "(I Almost Feel Like) Facin' The World"—and a bright aggressive sound that suggests Graham Parker fronting Dylan's *Highway 61* band. Then again, Dylan could never get

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up a frat-party stormer like "It Won't Satisfy," vocalist Steve Wilson braying in a deep pool of echo flanked by burbling organ and Kevin Smith's snarling guitar. In quieter moments like "The Payload," Thumbs also expand on Parker's serrated romantic intensity with clever cross-references like brassy Springsteenish harmonica and Wilson's choking, desperate vocal, sounding at times almost like Ray Davies in tears.

Cut from much harder chords is *Hootenanny*, the second nuclear blast of maniac punk boogie by Minneapolis' the Replacements. Like their priceless Twin Tone Records debut *Sorry, Ma, I Forgot To Take Out The Trash*, *Hootenanny* is at once a bullseye satire of U.S. hard-core's myopic fury and a testament to the immortal power of fuzz guitar shriek and suburban teenage angst. The hoodoo Velvets-like mantra "Willpower" (Paul Westerberg's raw pleading vocals jolted by guitarist Bob Stinson's white noise outbursts) and the brief charming modal guitar instrumental "Buck Hill" prove that the Replacements are nobody's fools. Still, you'll enjoy having your screws loosened by mad rave-ups like "You Lose" (which sounds like the Ramones in a hurry) and the hilarious Beatles pastiche "Mr. Whirly." I mean, "Oh Darling" Sex Pistols-style? (Twin Tone, 445 Oliver Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55405)

Cut to Los Angeles, where the year is now 1967. The city's latest new psychedelic offering is *True West*, a five-song EP by a young quintet of the same name on Bring Out Your Dead Records (no kidding) (P.O. Box 160951, Sacramento, CA 95816). They immediately show their true paisley colors with a boss cover here of Syd Barrett's "Lucifer Sam," all angular side-swiping guitars, frantic bad trip vocals and murky echo. But True West go about their plundering with such forgivable earnestness and bald enthusiasm—the double-time padded cell freakout "I'm Not Here," the Om feedback chant "Steps To The Door"—you can't help joining in.

Jason & the Nashville Scorchers work a similar magic on their hometown sound, roughing up truckstop country music with maverick punk urgency on their new Praxis Records mini-album *Fervor*. There is certainly plenty of that to spare, with "I Can't Help Myself" and "Both Sides Of The Line" revved up like Blue Oyster Cult knee-deep in cowpies. But like a Tennessee version of the Blasters, the Scorchers re-invent their chosen form with a body of strong original songs by Jason Ringenberg, emotive literate works that cleverly turn on the reverent authenticity of Warner Hodges' guitar and pedal steel motifs. In the bittersweet ballad "Pray For Me Mama (I'm A Gypsy Now)," Ringenberg expertly balances Southern religious guilt and white trash desperation, later slipping into the gray autumnal resignation of "Harvest Moon" with its sweet Flying Burritos harmonies and shuffling boogie rhythm. (Praxis Records, 152 Kenner Avenue, Nashville, TN 37205)

The Scorchers also sing pretty convincingly of "Hot Nights In Georgia," which is no surprise since they're quite tight with Athens, Georgia's R.E.M. Love Tractor's *Around The Bend*, that Athens band's second outing on the DB label (432 Moreland Avenue N.E., Atlanta, GA 30307), won't change their minds. In their own quiet subversive way, Love Tractor ignites the hard oblique funk rhythms and spiraling bass and guitar patterns common to most Athens bands with a glassy instrumental radiance unspoiled (except for three tracks here) by vocals. There is a strange refractory glow to the intricate brittle guitar sculptures of Michael Richmond, Mark Cline and Armistead Welliford, throwing back altered images of acid-fuzz riffs, country gentleman twang and wah-wah pedal space in "Paint" alone. Even the vocals work here since they are never obvious enough to disturb the weird ebb and flow of the Love Tractor mix.

The big money talk at the New Music Seminar would have you believe that the punk underground has finally come up for air. No way. The current British invasion has only forced American music further underground. Dig in. There's a revolution at stake. — ***David Fricke***

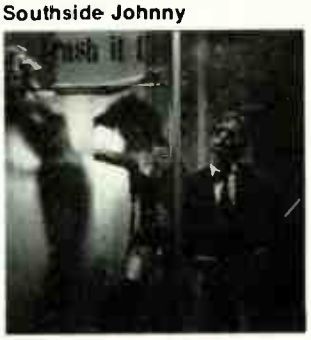
ROCK

SHORT TAKES

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

AC/DC

Southside Johnny



Rufus & Chaka Khan

Kissing the Pink

Southside Johnny & the Jukes — *Trash It Up!* (Mirage). For a guy who until recently still preferred mono over stereo, Southside Johnny Lyon sings pretty well with synthesizers and a drum machine. Perhaps that's because, thanks to Nile Rodgers' production smarts, the Jukes have retained their bar-band grittiness while taking on the latest in dancefloor technology. That would explain why the cover of the Rascals' "Ain't Gonna Eat My Heart Anymore" still cuts like a knife over the smoothly sophisticated rhythm bed. It's nice to hear dance music with roots every now and then.

The Tom Tom Club — *Close To The Bone* (Sire). Speaking of roots, say hello to Chapter Two in *The History of Preppy Dance Music*, in which Muffy discovers that rhythm isn't everything, but forgets to tell Chris and Tina. Meanwhile, Chris' brother Roddy comes up with some droll stuff about "The Man With The Four-Way Hips," saving the day by reminding everyone how long it's been since the B-52's were any fun.

AC/DC — *Flick Of The Switch* (Atlantic). With the band handling its own production duties, *Flick* manages to avoid the all-punch, no-nooks trap that tripped up *For Those Who Are About To Rock*. In fact, *Flick* is probably the band's most consistent album to date, with the chunky beat, muscular guitar lines and throat-straining vocals meshing perfectly track after track. But even though all the songs are good, none of them are great, and frankly, I'd still take "Highway To Hell" and an album's worth of filler over this kind of competence any day.

Altered Images — *Bite* (Portrait). An amusing title for an album this toothless. Sure, "Don't Talk To Me About Love" is a great single—producer Mike Chapman ought to be good for *something*—but the rest of the album is so shallow and proficient it's hard to believe these guys were once compared to Siouxsie & the Banshees. Then again, when was the last time you saw Siouxsie on *American Bandstand*?

The Bongos — *Numbers With Wings* (RCA). This five-song EP is far more cohesive than the group's indie debut, but every bit as charming. The title cut is typically catchy and obscure, but both "Tiger Nights" and "Barbarella" push the band into new territory, the former going acoustic without getting soft, the latter really rocking out without turning heavy. In short, more than enough cause to wonder why RCA felt it had to be cautious with this band.

Marty Robbins — *A Lifetime Of Song* (Columbia). Thanks to hits like "El Paso" and "The Hanging Tree," most listeners assume that Marty Robbins was more western than country, but this remarkable retrospective, compiled by archives ace Greg Geller, shows that Robbins mastered every style, from the Mitch Miller bounce of "A White Sport Coat" to the Presley-like rock of "That's All Right." Considering that Robbins' influence extends to such unlikely corners as George Thorogood and Stan Ridgway, an introduction this handy shouldn't go ignored.

Gang of Four — *Hard* (Warner Bros.). File this one under "What Happened to These Guys?" With idealogue and drummer Hugo Burnham gone, the Gang of Three move headlong into mainstream R&B, getting lost along the way and arriving instead at terminal mediocrity. If you perhaps thought that Andy Gill's greatest strength was as a singer, not a guitarist, you might not mind the resulting mish-mash, but otherwise, remember to give this a wide berth.

Steve Nieve — *Keyboard Jungle* (Demon Import). Imagine if Claude Debussy had been a boogie-woogie pianist, and you might have an idea of how the solo album from Elvis Costello's pianist sounds. The music here isn't as busy as Nieve's work with the Master has been, despite a penchant for classical quote-dropping and other musical puns, and although some of Nieve's piano tactics seem a bit off the wall, they manage to work anyway. How else could Nieve set up a dreamy 6/8 pattern, call it "Al Green," and leave you anticipating the opening bars of "Call Me"?

Agnetha Fältskog — *Wrap Your Arms Around Me* (Polydor). Abba by any other name would still sound as effete.

Rufus & Chaka Khan — *Stompin' At The Savoy* (Warner Bros.). Actually, Chaka Khan with Rufus would be more like it, given how faceless these boys have become. But who cares anyway? The new studio songs are so forgettable you may not even remember that there's a fourth side, while the live versions of the back catalog add nothing to the originals but tedium and a sense of weariness. So how about a Chaka Khan live album, with a band that cooks the way she does?

Cheap Trick — *Next Position Please* (Epic). Good performances, adequate songs and absolutely no sense of their own identity makes this one of the most frustrating albums this band has ever made. Producer Todd Rundgren man-

continued on page 119

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JAZZ

BY FRANCIS DAVIS

SHORT TAKES

"Can't repeat the past?" he cried incredulously. "Why of course you can!"

He looked about him wildly, as if the past were lurking here in the shadow of his house, just out of reach of his hand.

F. Scott Fitzgerald
The Great Gatsby

Fantasy has issued another thirty titles in its Original Jazz Classics series, swelling to seventy the number of vintage Fantasys, Prestiges and Riversides available in facsimiles of their original jackets. As was true of the first group of OJCs released last winter, a majority from this second installment duplicate classic sessions already available on Prestige and Milestone twofers. But there's a greater sprinkling of esoterica in this batch, including four albums never previously reissued in any format domestically.

The most important of these is *Reflections*, which in 1959 announced **Steve Lacy**, the soprano saxophone and the collected works of Thelonious Monk as forces to be reckoned with in the 60s. The first time (but hardly the last!) that anyone other than Monk himself had tackled a whole album's worth of Monk compositions, this remains one of the thorniest and most insightful of all Monk investigations.

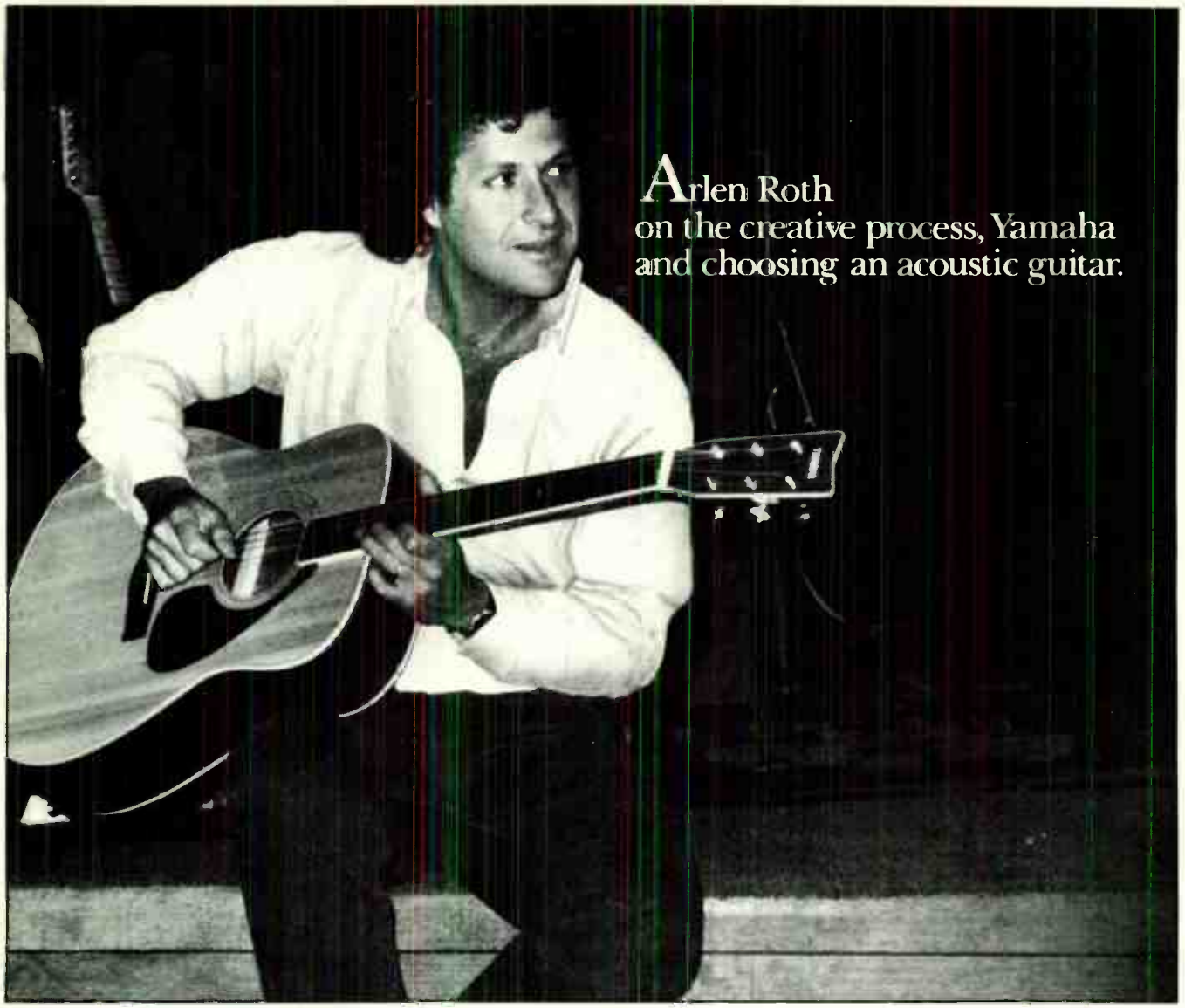
Brew Moore and *Modern Music From Chicago* are mid-50s Fantasys that had become so scarce that Fantasy had to borrow copies from collectors in order to reissue them. The former is a relaxed club date led by an economical tenorist of Prez-ervationist leanings who recorded all too infrequently; the latter celebrates the first meeting on record of bubbling trumpeter **Red Rodney** and the versatile **Ira Sullivan**, who have lived together happily ever since, on and off. Sullivan sticks mostly to tenor and to bebop on this one, which is fine with me.

Altoist **Phil Woods** is an infinitely more expressive soloist now than when he recorded *Woodlore* in 1956, but the reissue of his first effort as a leader is rewarding nonetheless, both for its spurts of youthful promise and the hindsight that here was one case in which youthful promise was ultimately fulfilled.

Among the most intriguing items in the latest crop of OJCs are five titles culled from the vaults of Jazz Workshop and Debut, short-lived labels originally owned by **Charles Mingus**. Familiar as the music may be, probably only a handful of listeners under the age of thirty-five have ever before seen the original covers of *Mingus At Bohemia*, *Mingus Town Hall Concert*, *Jazz At Massey Hall*, *Blue Moods* (**Miles Davis**) and *Bird At St. Nicks*. It was *St. Nicks* that led to the proliferation of **Charlie Parker** concert LPs following Parker's death in 1955. The low fidelity, the excision of all solos save Parker's, and Parker's levitating genius distance him from his surroundings, making him seem more phantasmagoric than ever. But the vibrant Bob Parent color shot that adorns the cover establishes Parker's corporeal presence better than any other photo of him I've ever seen and is worth the price of the album all by itself.

Ultimately, it's the music that counts, of course, and included in this OJC release are records that belong in every serious jazz collection, in one form or another—*Jazz At Massey Hall*, *The Unique Thelonious Monk*, **Sonny Rollins**' *The Freedom Suite*, **George Russell**'s *Ezz-thetic*, and the MJQ's *Django*, to single out a few. But the covers exude their own aesthetic, their own aura of romance, especially when exhibited together, one after another along the wall of a record shop. Here, after all, are the gods of modern jazz—Parker, Mingus, Monk, Davis, Rollins, Coltrane—in the characteristic poses that advanced their deification. Here too are illustrations which reveal something about the way the music was perceived by its early adherents, while reacquainting us with the eccentricities of 50s commercial artists like Mad's Don Martin, who did the claustrophobic sketches for *Art Farmer Septets* and *Miles Davis Plus Horns*. To those of us who began listening to jazz after 1960, all of it—the music, the photos, the graphics, the colorful logos, even the sometimes shortsighted liner commentaries—amounts to an inherited memory, a beckoning into a Golden Age that narrowly eluded our clutches as it recedes forever into history. Record collecting, once it reaches the terminal stage of bidding top dollar for original covers, strikes me as a peculiarly boyish compulsion. But the fact that items mass-produced in one decade can become competitively sought after collectibles a few decades later intrigues me no less than any other student of consumer culture, and, besides, like the aging boy I am, I'll take whatever opportunity I can to fill in the gaps in my collection. And at the low suggested price of $5.98 a record, the OJCs are an excusable enough indulgence.

PolyGram Classics is another entrant in the facsimile sweepstakes, having imported a hundred or so premium-priced Japanese reissues in the last three years. Now, PolyGram unveils its French Line—French pressings of Verve LPs from the 50s and 60s identical to the originals in every detail, except that recording dates have thoughtfully been added below the liner notes. The first dozen French Liners are an uneven lot, with three towering above the rest—*Stan Getz Plays* (with wending Getz solos among the most adventurous he's ever recorded, and nudging accompaniment from Duke Jordan and Jimmy Raney), **Dizzy Gillespie**'s *The Greatest Trumpet Of Them All* (with colorful octet writing by Benny Golson and Gigi Gryce framing Gillespie solos mind-boggling enough to make you table your case for Armstrong or Eldridge or Davis or whomever till some other time) and **Billie Holiday**'s *Songs For Distingue Lovers* (with an unvanquished Holiday haunting six familiar standards, Ben Webster's chivalrous tenor close behind her). Also in the release are exemplary albums by **Tal Farlow** (*Autumn In New York*), **Mel Torme** (*Torme*), and **Rahsaan Roland Kirk** (*Now Please Don't You Cry Beautiful Edith*—and hey, wasn't this a gatefold first time around?), as well as fair-to-middling ones by **Bill Evans**, **Oscar Peterson**, **Jimmy Smith**, **Astrud Gilberto** and **Ella Fitzgerald** with **Count Basie**. Lastly, *Jazz At The Hollywood Bowl* is a concert double with lackluster Fitzgerald and Armstrong offsetting utopian piano solos by Art Tatum and a rousing jam featuring Roy Eldridge, Sweets Edison, Flip Phillips



Arlen Roth
on the creative process, Yamaha and choosing an acoustic guitar.

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PolyGram has also imported French pressings of the five-record *Ella Fitzgerald Sings The George & Ira Gershwin Songbook*, a perfect collection in every respect. Ella's in lovely voice, the Nelson Riddle arrangements are sacharrine-free, and the words and music are as witty and as poetic as any written in this century.

Other noteworthy reissues have piled up in recent months, including:

Shelly Manne—*& His Friends* (Dr. Jazz/CBS). Minor masterpieces from the 40s which surface every so often, worth getting while the getting is once again good. Manne's unobtrusive drumming and Eddie Heywood's nimble piano are the factors uniting three different sessions, with stellars like Johnny Hodges, Barney Bigard, Ray Nance and Don Byas in the front lines.

Coleman Hawkins—*Thanks For The Memory* (Xanadu). Hawkins qualifies as leader of this compilation of 1944 peer group confrontations because, a) he's the only musician present on every track; b) he plays magnificently; and c) the robust solos of fellow tenorists Auld, Byas and Webster confirm that, prior to the advent of Lester Young, Hawkins had no peers—only progeny.

Teddy Wilson—*Time After Time* (Musicraft). Wilson's piano solos are so polished on the surface and so sturdy in their harmonic underpinnings, and his '46-'47 trio, quartet and octet were such smoothly interactive groups that this reissue would be an essential purchase even if it didn't include the surprise bonus of four ravishing ballads by a very young Sarah Vaughan.

Curtis Counce—*Carl's Blues*; **Helen Humes**—*Swingin' With Helen* (both Contemporary). As Contemporary reactivates its back catalog, it becomes increasingly evident that West Coast jazz wasn't always so tepid as we've been led to believe. A hard bop quintet as dynamic as any back East (save for Silver's, which had better writing, and Blakey's, which had a never-ending parade of precocious young soloists, not to mention the father of the genre on drums), the Counce group boasted personable soloists in trumpeter Jack Sheldon, tenorist Harold Land and pianist Carl Perkins, as well as unflagging rhythm twins in drummer Frank Butler and the bassist/leader. Meanwhile, Californians had discovered by 1960 what it took New York cafe society until the mid-70s to realize—that Humes was one of the best of the big band singers, and that she was even better with an intimate small group.

Another record that's given me no end of pleasure this month is from the past,

though it's not a reissue: On *New York Improvisations* (Elektra/Musician), pianist and taskmaster **Lennie Tristano** rifles through standards with a bassist and drummer in his Manhattan studio in 1956. It's a pity that music this knotty, this rigorous, this luminous (and this well recorded), had to wait some twenty-five years to reach ears outside the Tristano inner circle of disciples and hagiographers. The irony of the Tristano parable is that posthumus release should gain him a visibility denied him in life.

Rock Shorts from pg.114

ages to pull enough hooks from the sound that *Next Position* should keep Cheap Trick alive to the next album, but if these guys don't get ahold of their sound soon, why bother?

Glenn Branca — *Symphony No. 3* (Neutral). The theory is that Branca's fusion of classical structures and rock dynamics will lead us into the art music of the next century, but I sure hope not. Branca's use of the extended overtones available to rock instruments is a neat trick, neat enough to make me wish he could figure out something better to do with it than imitate Olivier Messiaen. Like maybe drawing from the dynamism of rock, instead of just the volume.

Kissing the Pink — *Naked* (Atlantic). Right now, the last thing anybody needs

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Classified

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Rock Shorts from pg. 119

is another arty synth band with a dirty name, but Kissing the Pink manages to be that rare exception, a synth band whose fondness for pure sound extends to sturdy melodies and intricate textures. Maybe it's because the singers can really sing, or maybe because the playing is kept functional and concise, but *Naked* turns out to be the sort of album even technophobes will likely embrace. Metaphorically speaking, of course.

The Smithereens — *Beauty And Sadness* (Little Ricky). I like the way their Beatlesque approach slips almost imperceptibly into a dance-rock groove, and am impressed by the way Alan Betrock's skillful production furthers the illusion by providing a semblance of period sound. I just wish that this EP featured some songs that made the effort worthwhile.

MC5 — *Babes In Arms* (ROIR cassette). Welcome back to the birth of heavy metal, back before the Brits got ahold of it and turned it into meaningless ritual. This superb retrospective, spanning from 1966-'70 and including outtakes, live recordings and other esoterica, forms the sort of document every dedicated rock fan should own, tracing not only the birth of a sound but the ongoing articulation of one of rock's essential energies. Tough, nasty, noisy and totally committed, this is the sound that has filled garages and coliseums for nearly two decades, presented in its original form. Don't pass it up. (ROIR, 611 Broadway, New York City, NY 10012)

Stephanie Mills — *Merciless* (Casablanca). Mills becomes more of a stylist with each album, and with material as strong as this—check out her confident rendition of Prince's "How Come U Don't Call Me Anymore?"—she sounds like she'll be on par with Gladys Knight before we know it. So why doesn't this album excite me more? Could it be that producers Gary Klein and David Wolfert need to lend Mills some more muscle? Or does her vocal potential just leave me expecting too much?

Jonathan Richman & the Modern Lovers — *Jonathan Sings!* (Warner Bros.). It's great that Jonathan Richman wants to be rock's great innocent, but does that mean he has to sound like he hasn't been toilet trained yet? Somebody point this guy toward Sesame Street.

Howard Devoto — *Jerky Versions Of The Dream* (I.R.S.) Rock 'n' roll doesn't get much more arch than this, which is a damned good thing. Devoto's post-Magazine vision is so skewed toward irony that it verges on myopia, while his word choice is enough to convince anyone that literacy is a bad thing in ambitious rock artistes. In short, your every prejudice against arty rock albums confirmed in ten songs.

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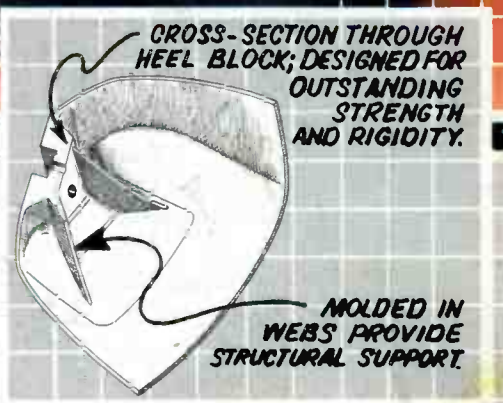

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