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48 The Lightness of Being Lyle Lovett

Fifteen years ago a singer/songwriter as brilliant as Lyle would have been a big-time rock star. But in 1989 the eccentric visionary has a better chance sneaking in through Nashville. His music is amazing, his band is out of this world, but what has it got to do with country?
by Bill Flanagan

28 Robert Fripp: Zen and the Art of Guitar

Hey, we've heard of teachers turned rock stars—but the other way around? Tips on real estate, spandex, silence and the Turkish method from the only hot guitarist who values mortarboards above Marshalls.
by Ted Drozdowski

12 John Fogerty Wins

by Scott Isler

18 Jackie McLean

by Joe Goldberg

74 Fleetwood Mac Music: Over 40 Million Sold

Sure, they're a platinum mint and a long running soap—but there's a Fleetwood Mac nobody's ever gotten close to. Till now. The inside scoop on a supergroup cursed by madness, cheated by crooks, addled by romance and torn apart by success. We visit Stevie Nicks' house for the Harmonic Convergence and firing of Lindsey Buckingham.
by Timothy White

62 Replacements Rule (In Spite of Themselves)

No more punk playacting. America's second best rock 'n' roll band get honest about their taste and their ambition. They have finally made the album they were always afraid of. Now they have to live up to it.
by Steve Perry

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MUSICIAN

A BILLBOARD PUBLICATION
FEBRUARY 1989 NO. 124

COVER PHOTO BY STEVE MARSEL; CONTENTS: LYLE LOVETT BY ALAN MESSER; FLEETWOOD MAC BY CHRIS WALKER RETNA

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World Radio History

DISCOVER THE NEW AGE OF JAZZ.

PUBLISHER
GORDON BAIRD
EXECUTIVE PUBLISHER

Letters

PRINCETHINK

YOUR ARTICLE ON PRINCE (Nov. '88) was the *best*. It questioned both sides of the long-rehearsed story. Thanks for the fair shake.

Wendi Jo Gill-Bailey
Nasadak, AK

STEVE PERRY, THANK YOU FOR at last giving due credit to such a magnificent composer and musician as Prince. I've been an avid Prince fan for years, and never before have I read such an eloquent article as yours. You summarized the essence of this artist, even the little details that only "purple boys and girls" would pay attention to.

Tracy Aranda
Carolina, PR

I ENJOYED THE EYE-CATCHING photo of Prince on the cover

of the November issue, only to find out that is where the excitement ended.

The article within was nothing that hasn't been said numerous times before. Topics such as the artist's attitude towards his music, coworkers, press and lifestyle via word of mouth and second-hand accounts hardly capture a glimpse of insight to the man behind Prince, or his true intentions.

Thomas Braam
Lake Geneva, WI

OF ALL THE ARTICLES I'VE READ about Prince (which have been plenty), this one really explained the things I want to know, not some silly rumors that I knew weren't true.

Marc Jucas
El Cajon, CA

STEVE PERRY MUST BE A MAN of considerable age! After all, to be able to state that Prince is supported by "the best band in the world" Perry must have spent a long life listening to an infinite number of bands. This being the case, we can all agree with his proclamation that "Prince is probably the most important rock musician of the '80s"????

Statements like these are so subjective that they detract from an otherwise informative article. If Perry were a guitar player his fingers would be permanently attached to his whammy bar.

Laurie Bradburn
West Greenwich, RI

NOW WHEN PEOPLE ASK ME what's so interesting about the guy in the purple underwear, I'll turn up the music and hand 'em Perry's article.

Kevin Moran
Huntington Beach, CA

NEWMAN CLUB

THANKS TO MARK ROWLAND for his introspective, humorous interview with Randy Newman (Nov. '88).

Please, Randy, don't go "pop" on us. You may not find yourself on magazine covers, but for those of us who appreciate a "thinking musician," your music will find a place in our hearts—and collections.

Randy Egan
Clovis, NM

RANDY NEWMAN SAYS THAT Bruce Springsteen is no James Taylor? No Chrissie Hynde? Hey, dig it, Randy. That's why we like him.

Joseph Nowlan
Boston, MA

CHOOSING HIS POISON

STEVE WINWOOD STATES *"Talking Back to the Night* was really an anti-drug album" (Nov. '88). I then find it incomprehensible that he would sell the title cut of that album to a beer commercial, since alcohol is the most widely abused drug in the United States.

Gregory Urban
Elkhorn, WI

SHORT SHARP J.D.

J.D. CONSIDINE DISMISSES Michelle Shocked in one sentence (?) and has the nerve to call *her* shallow. His "short take" on *Short Sharp Shocked* (Nov. '88) was an unjustified attack on an honest, witty and innocent artist.

Dan Ringler
Natrona Heights, PA

I'VE BEEN IN AGREEMENT WITH J.D. Considine's entertaining critical assessments far more often than not over the years. I was astonished, however, by his abrupt dismissal of Michelle Shocked's wonderful album.

I know you're the master of brevity, J.D., but could you possibly "extend" your review to explain why Michelle Shocked strikes you as "showy, shallow, shrill" as opposed to, say, Tracy Chapman, whom you've described as "literate," "tuneful" and "soulful"?

Jim Cogburn
Boise, ID

J.D. Considine replies: "Since you asked, what bugs me about Short Sharp Shocked *is the singer's smugly superior social commentary and her showy ain't-I-got-roots musical approach. Sounding on the whole like a 14-year-old who's just discovered Odetta, the nicest thing that can be said for Michelle Shocked is at least she doesn't preach as much as Billy Bragg. (Then again, I'll take his sense of melody over hers any day.)"*

INVISIBLE MAN

AN ADVERTISEMENT FOR Ensoniq Keyboards has appeared in your magazine titled "Power Tools for Live Performance." The ad portrays a backstage environment of roadcases stencilled "Dregs," and features an Ultimate Support keyboard stand, suggesting that this stand is one of the Dregs' "tools for live performance." We would like to point out that T Lavitz, the Dregs keyboard player, appeared onstage during their current tour with two Invisible keyboard stands. Mr. Lavitz is not an endorser of our products. He selected and purchased his Invisible "power tools" independently. Thank you for an opportunity to clarify this situation.

Don Lang
Invisible Products Corp.
Lynn, MA

DO NOT COLLECT $200

WEIGHTLIFTING, COLOR TV, choice of meals, conjugal visits and now music programs for cons ("Prison Roadies," Nov. '88). Who do I kill to get into jail?

Elvis Constello
Albany, NY

How about a light sentence for impersonating a rock star?
– Ed.

LANGUAGE PATROL

I HAVE NEVER HEARD ADELE Bertei's music, but I feel that the description of her looking "part waif, part slut" (*Faces*, Nov. '88) is not only inappropriate but does a disservice to all female artists by perpetuating stupid sexist stereotypes. Wise up.

Philip Stevenson
Washington, DC

RHYMING SPELL

Sometimes when one writes
in a creative vein,
Odd spelling is used as a
gimic.
But in a review of the
technical sort,
It's way off to misspell, say,
"mimmick." (p. 58, Nov.
'88.)

Matt Stevenson
Brandon, Man., Canada

Please send letters to: *Musician*, 1515 Broadway, 39th floor, New York, NY 10036

World Radio History

Faces

Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares ▼

A Record, a Title, a Concept

November 2nd marked the beginning of a triumphant North American tour for the Bulgarian State Radio and Television Female Vocal Choir, which has since played to sold-out houses from Montreal to Los Angeles. *Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares*, a recording of their mostly a capella music, has been selling at an astonishing rate for "alternative music." Their press packet bulges with breathless articles from scores of newspapers and magazines, and powerful testimonials by pop icons from Linda Ronstadt to Robert Plant. What is it about this music that suddenly captured the imagination of American pop and new-age music audiences?

The "hot new thing" is actually quite old. Not only has the record been drifting around for several years under different guises, but much of the music is largely a modern reworking of centuries-old Bulgarian folk songs. The power of the music still lies in the indigenous melodies and the women's richly varied and penetrating vocal timbres, although in the music's modern incarnation these melodies are cushioned by layers of sophisticated harmonies in large-scale vocal arrangements. "The songs are very archaic," says Dora Hristova, the choir's conductor, "and that's why they're so impressive.... This singing in chorus, however, is not characteristic for our folk tradition, but I think it is one of the best ways to preserve our folk music in a more modern form."

According to Yanka Rupkina, a member of the choir for over 25 years, "It is my responsibility to preserve my own style while singing music from all over the country. When I sing music from Strandja, I think about the people I am close to, about the forests, about the land, about my mother and grandmother, and about all the places that I have gone. You have to think about the music a lot, but the important thing is that your heart be in each performance—that's what makes it beautiful."

Bulgaria's professional folk choirs first came to the attention of Western listeners some 30 years ago, when a live recording of Philip Koutev's State Ensemble for Folk Music and Dance was released successively by French, English and American labels. The record had an enthusiastic following, but stayed safely within folkie circles and a newly emerging ethnic music audience. (Paul Simon was reported to be one of the first major pop stars to pick up on the early recordings, and has cited Bulgarian music as influential in his 1960s harmonies with Art Garfunkel.)

The same route was followed in 1987, as a recording by a Swiss musicologist Marcel Cellier found its way to French, English and American markets. Suddenly the music became a surprise hit, turning heads among cognoscenti and finally landing in the pop charts.

Why is this music so much more successful this time around? Perhaps the current wave of interest is attributable in part to a growing openness among pop music listeners that has been developing over the past 30 years. As we find ourselves singing less and listening more, it is only natural that our search for material to satisfy our appetite for fresh listening experiences should take us to the far corners of the earth—or bring the far corners of the earth to us. – *Ethel Raim*

NEVIN SHALIT

The Devil Makes Them Do It

You'd better believe that the Parents Music Resource Center, a.k.a. the "Washington wives," are still around. Indeed, with PMRC co-founder Susan Baker now sleeping with the Secretary of State, expect the group to flex its political muscle even more.

Baker and PMRC partner Tipper Gore (wife of Senator Al Gore) may have fired a new warning shot November 28. That day's *Washington Post* carried an essay by the duo charging that record companies have largely ignored a

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▼ FREDDIE MCGREGOR

Crosstown (Jamaican) Traffic

IAIN MCKELL/RETNA

Freddie McGregor has been singing for 25 years. But the 32-year-old reggae artist believes his work has just begun.

"Reggae is on the move again," he says. "First came Ziggy [Marley], then you have UB40, Aswad and Maxi Priest. Right now it's chaos on the reggae marketplace."

McGregor is odds-on Jamaican favorite to pick up where Bob Marley left off. Like Marley, McGregor takes his role as musical messenger seriously. But McGregor's message is softer than Marley's. The lyrics the "sexy dread" sings are just as likely to be about love as spiritual uplift. And his delivery is more pop than political.

McGregor is one of the few reggae singers to get airplay in Jamaica, where dub or "dancehall" rhythms have ruled since 1983. He has also breached the gap between downtown and uptown without losing his "roots."

Those roots were nurtured in Kingston's legendary Studio One and shaped by revered reggae producer Sir Clement "Coxsone" Dodd. "I was making money from music at the age of seven," McGregor says, recounting how he used to get "threepunce a song" for his rendition of "Roll Dumpling Roll," an old Jamaican folk tune. A move to Kingston and a long stint as Dodd's prodigy-cum-gofer exposed the young singer to the talent and tutelage of Bob Marley, Bunny Wailer and Ken Boothe; McGregor remembers Marley "lifting me up on beer boxes so that I could reach the mike."

Freddie McGregor has had a long struggle, but "knew suffering was a part of music." His move into the spotlight was delayed, he feels, by the fact that when Bob Marley died, there was no successor ready to ride the "riddim" on. "I haven't minded the wait at all," he says with a radiant smile. "Jah knows when the time is right, and it's right right now."

– Maureen Sheridan

voluntary agreement to place warning labels on albums with explicitly sexual or violent lyrics. The women also mentioned the "auditory pornography" section of the federal anti-porn law attached to the recent omnibus anti-drug bill. PMRC spokesperson Jennifer Norwood denied there was any implied threat in the reference.

Meanwhile, in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, two K Mart managers have decided to take matters into their own hands. Following the broadcast of Geraldo Rivera's television special on satanism, Ron Groves and Warren Pass removed records, audiotapes and videotapes from their stores; the records included albums by Def Leppard and Guns N' Roses. Coincidence?

Pass declined to discuss his reasons for the action, but declared, "I've had letters from all over in favor of it." K Mart national marketing coordinator Teri Kula says the parent organization neither encourages nor discourages such actions; K Mart managers "have the ability to determine, within the community, what type of products should or should not be sold." Asked if we don't have elected government to protect us from evil, Kula said she didn't wish to debate.

This land is your land.

– Scott Isler

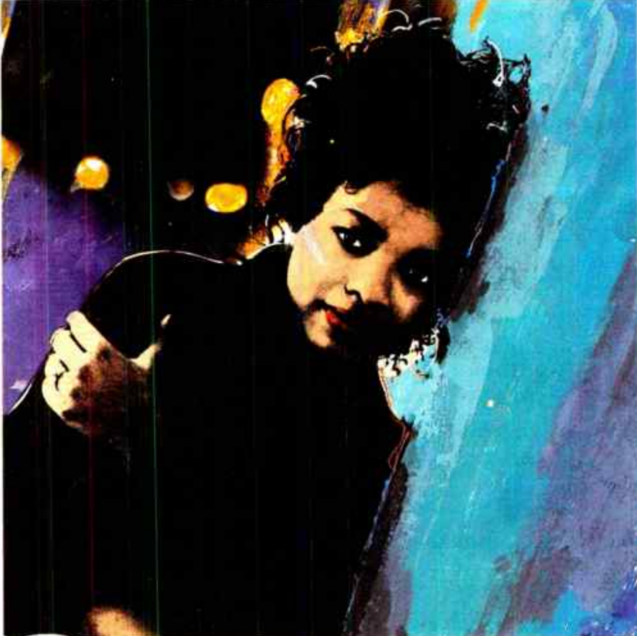
CHERYL "PEPSII" RILEY ▼

"My Child," Her Hit

This might be the dead of winter, but *Me, Myself and I*, the debut album by Cheryl "Pepsii" Riley, sounds like summer. Yes, it has its moments of wintry depth (like the title track, a song about suicide), but it is largely given over to sunny, state-of-the-street R&B/pop full of hooks playfully stolen from the likes of Madonna, the Temptations, Gladys Knight, D.J. Rogers, LaBelle and the quintessential one-hit wonder, William DeVaughn.

But with all that going for it, it's ironic that Riley's biggest—make that *only*—hit isn't even on the album. Okay, so "Thanks for My Child," her anthem of a single mother's determination, has not really been put in a song before. I think it has to do with Full Force as producers.... They gave me a lot of freedom in the studio. It was a learning experience."

Most critical, of course, is that the song plays to Riley's strengths as a singer. "I like the fast songs, the funky stuff," she says, "but I *love* ballads. I think that comes from my background: church. On a ballad, you get to express a little more emotion. You have more time to deliver this emotion—whatever you want the audience to feel, whatever you want them to believe this song is about. You can just pace it, whereas in an uptempo tune, it's like a race."



is on the album, but it's *not* the version radio has landed on like the marines at Normandy. That version, a 12-inch mix, is highlighted by a scathing dialog between the single mom and the papa who was a rolling stone. Riley says people are calling it the "Soul Sister Version," as in "'sisters got their necks rollin', and them eyes goin'.'"

The runaway success of the song, she says, is due to "a combination of things. I think it's the fact that the subject matter

She notes that "I've wanted to do this for so long. [After] all the things you imagine it's going to be, it's like...wow!" She adds that success has made life a little scary; her management has even made her give up the security of her day job. But if the success of "Child" is a guide, Riley won't want for security any time soon. In fact, look for a dramatic upswing in her sales next June. After all, ties are nice, but *this* is a Father's Day gift with teeth.

– Leonard Pitts, Jr.

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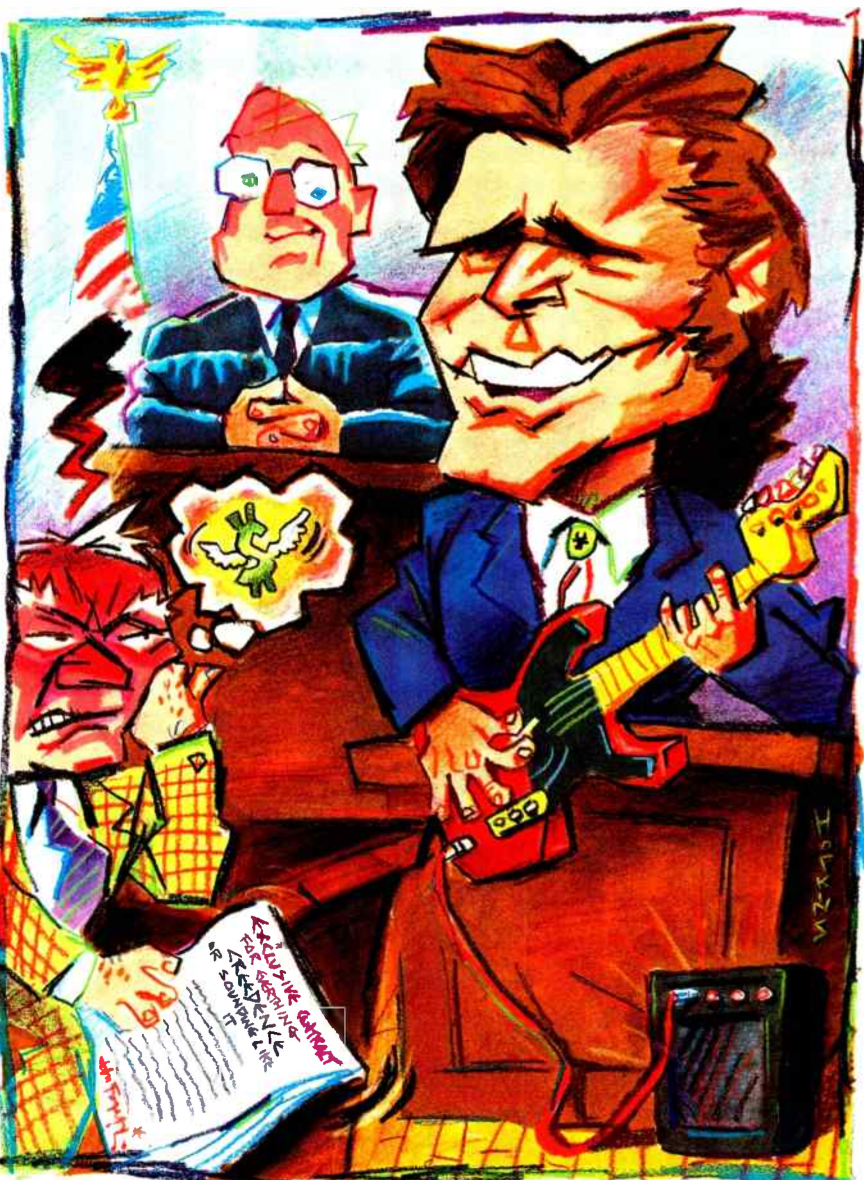
Fogerty vs. Fogerty

by Scott Isler

John Fogerty Stands Accused—of Copying Himself



JIM HOPKINS

It was a trial to make Lewis Carroll—or Franz Kafka—envious. The charge against John Fogerty was that his 1985 comeback hit, "The Old Man Down the Road," copied "Run through the Jungle," his own 1970 hit with Creedence Clearwater Revival. What's wrong with this picture?

Normally, an accusation of copying oneself wouldn't make it to any court outside of Wonderland. But the rub here is that Fogerty doesn't own his Creedence songs. Fantasy Records, Creedence's label, does—the result of a contract the band signed when they started out. Thus Fantasy, sensing more than a slight resemblance between "Run through the Jungle" and "The Old Man Down the Road," brought a copyright-infringement suit against Fogerty and Warner Bros., his current label, in 1985. The case went to San Francisco federal district court last October. After two weeks of testimony, the six-person jury deliberated under three hours before rendering a verdict: not guilty.

At what point do "stylistic similarities" cross the line of copyright infringement?

"Back from the dead once more!" a jubilant Fogerty exclaims 10 days later. He says he was confident all along: "I wasn't pacing up and down the hallways waiting for a decision or something. I'm just a believer in the truth. I know I didn't steal a song, even if it was my own song. I wrote a new song—quite distinct, as far as I'm concerned, from myself or anybody else's song."

The pre-trial hearings gave no clue that Fogerty would have an easy time. The judge ruled that, should Fantasy win, Fogerty would have to surrender all his songwriting royalties from "The Old Man Down the Road"—*without* receiving any compensation as the writer of "Run through the Jungle." The judge also dismissed a claim by Fogerty's lawyer that, as Fantasy had stopped paying Fogerty's songwriting royalties (the money was in an escrow account), he should be able to get his songs back.

Once the trial proper began, though, Fogerty felt on safer ground. He feels it was all over for Fantasy "when they presented their case. They never played the two records for the jury. *We* did! Two or three times."

What Fantasy did was program the two Fogerty songs into a sequencer—"I think a Studio One, Omega program," Fogerty recalls, with a Yamaha DX7 for sound generators. "Neither one was the real music from the record; it was just generic, what I call the bar-band version." Fogerty leaves the transcription of his music to others; as anyone who's tried to learn pop recordings from sheet music can attest, they're not always the same. Even Fantasy's courtroom keyboardist testified that the sheet music and lead sheet for "Run through the Jungle" weren't identical. "Their lawyer had determined which one was straighter," Fogerty laughs, "therefore closer to 'Old Man.' 'Cause 'Old Man''s whole premise is on the beats, whereas 'Jungle''s is all a push-beat attack."

After playing the versions of the two songs, Fogerty says, Fantasy "pulled their big 'a-*ha!*' laboratory test. They took the melody from the—'they took the thunder from the...,'" he laughingly lapses into the lyrics of "The Old Man Down the Road." "They took the melody

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from 'Old Man' and played it over the generic music for 'Jungle.' Gee, voilà! It almost kinda works! 'Cause they're both eight-bar structure songs except that 'Old Man' has a 10-bar chorus. But I wasn't gonna bitch at that point. Then they played their version of the 'Run through the Jungle' melody over the 'Old Man' music: Wow! It actually kinda fit! Course, later we put 'Bootleg' over it, and that fit too! I had a whole list of 'em: 'Who Do You Love,' 'Chooglin',' 'The Star-Spangled Banner'—things with the same kind of musical structure will start and end at the same time. It's just the way life is. It's not a surprise.

"Then they got to their weird part. They played everything all together: all parts of 'Jungle,' all parts of 'Old Man'—all the drums, all the bass. That didn't prove nothing! *Then* they took all the music away—all the background, all the smoke—and said, '*Now* we're gonna play the melody of "Old Man" and the melody of "Run through the Jungle" together with no musical accompaniment'"—first with different tones, then the same tone.

Fogerty was waiting for this. "You get to the second bar of each verse and things start splitting apart. One's going up, one's going down; one starts before, the other one ends later. I was sitting there smiling to myself, going, 'This is what this is all about; there's clearly two melodies there! So why are we all here?' I'm not gonna assume the jury made up their mind then, but I think it was all over. From then on, what they tried to prove was, 'Well, they might be a little different from each other, but John set out to do this because he's vicious.' I guess that didn't hold any water," Fogerty laughs. "You really gotta stretch your imagination to think someone would go to that much trouble."

Fogerty himself was set to testify on October 28, a Friday afternoon. He had set up his guitar and amp to give his musical evidence, but Fogerty believes Fantasy's attorneys "managed to stall all the rest of that day 'cause it was clear they didn't want me to get on the stand on a Friday, I guess leaving the jury with an impression of me over that weekend." When Fogerty did take the stand, to a packed courtroom on October 31, he gave an impromptu run-through of Creedence hits that Fantasy lawyer Malcolm Burnstein later charged unfairly swayed the jury: "It wasn't testimony," Burnstein said, "it was a performance."

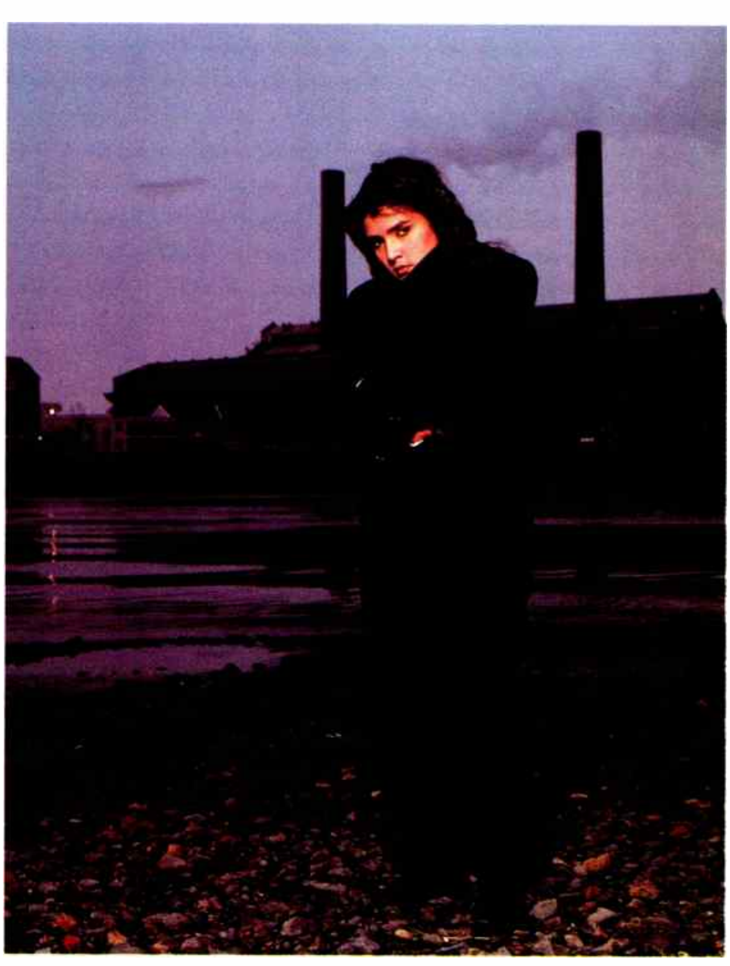
"It sounds so little-league to me," Fogerty says in response to that criticism. "It sounds like a kid out there at second base: 'Well, the sun got in my eye and I hit a rock.' For one thing, I didn't put on a performance. This was not a big yadda-ya-and-dazzle-'em, and I got all dressed up in my sparkly suit and shook my hips. I basically was sitting in a chair and illustrating how I write songs. It was a very basic premise 'cause we had demo tapes that actually showed where 'Old Man' began; there was a lot of documentation. I wanted to show why and what that meant. Was I supposed to get *him* on the stand to sing my songs?

"There were some hilarious moments. Their lawyers did not know anything about music. Both songs use, transposed to the key of C, a B-flat-to-C progression an awful lot; they were gonna make a big deal out of that. So he asked me, 'Have you ever used a second?'

"I didn't even know what he was—a second what? 'An interval of a second.'

"I said, 'I really don't know what you mean yet.' So he goes back to their table, their brain trust, which is really bad form. They all confer, he comes back: 'Have you ever used an interval that is a progression of a second?'

"What in the world? I know that their big deal is this seventh-to-tonic progression, so I'm kinda like helping a tourist from out of town: 'Oh, I think I know what you mean! You mean, have I ever



The Astonishing Debut Album

Produced by Peter Van Hooke and Rod Argent

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actually used an interval that goes up a distance of two semitones, a second!'

"He says yes. 'Well, actually it's not a second in the sense you're saying, but that's all right. You mean, harmonically have I ever used a step going upwards in two semitones, or two half-steps, like when you go from a flatted seventh to a tonic; that's two semitones.'

"'Yes.'

"'And you're asking me have I ever used that?'

"'Yes.'

"I looked at him and I said, 'Yes, I've used that.' Drumroll, please! It's like a diver on a 30-foot platform; I'm waiting, I'm waiting! But he doesn't say anything, and this pause goes on for what seems like a long time. I'm waiting for a big solar-plexus kapowie—this sin that I've used this progression in my music. I just looked at him finally and said, 'Gee, should I get an inoculation?' Which was levity maybe where it didn't belong, but I couldn't help it. He thought it was a big deal, and it was stupid. Geez."

Whether or not the Fogerty supernova blinded the jury, it didn't take them long at all to return a verdict in his favor. Still, Fogerty says, "It's kind of a bittersweet victory. In effect, Saul [Zaentz, Fantasy chairman] has gone ahead and done what he wanted to do. He did more damage than good. I think I will be restored eventually, but I didn't jump up and down like those slo-mo cams on sappy TV productions: 'Hooray, we won!'"

Let the music speak *"Talk Talk's most ambitious outing yet"* BILLBOARD MAGAZINE

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Fogerty's longstanding bitterness toward his former record company—Fantasy has "certainly done their best, over the years, to make my life as miserable as they can"—seems to be returned with interest. In 1980, Fogerty tried to sue Saul Zaentz for the loss of his Creedence song and record royalties; the money was in a Bahamian bank that dissolved. Zaentz in turn tried to sue Fogerty for malicious prosecution. Courts dismissed both these cases.

Centerfield, Fogerty's multi-million-selling first album for Warner Bros., included a song called "Zanz Kant Danz," about a "little pig Zanz" who'll "steal your money." The tune became "Vanz Kant Danz" after Fantasy filed a defamation suit against Fogerty and Warner Bros. Around the same time, Fantasy also launched the $40 million "Old Man Down the Road" copyright-infringement case.

Fantasy's rancor puzzles Fogerty's lawyer Kenneth Sidle. "I have never understood what could be their legitimate motive in these lawsuits," Sidle says. "They certainly have to be spending far more than they could possibly gain.... It's very difficult to see how they could have made much of a cost-benefit analysis here."

Warner Bros. attorney Vincent Chieffo believes the "Old Man" lawsuit "never should have been brought.... I don't think it had much to do with anybody really thinking there was copyright infringement. The jury didn't think there was one. It didn't take them long."

"Litigation like this is like wars," Sidle adds. "On a certain level, nobody wins."

Fogerty thinks he knows what's behind Fantasy's legal maneuvers. "It was clearly just harassment—another thing to make me mad and make me spend and lose money and time. It makes me angry. I got very angry a couple of months ago, hit a chair and broke my right hand."

If Fantasy is harassing Fogerty, the tactic is more effective than the company's legal arguments. Fogerty says that *Eye of the Zombie*, his second Warner Bros. album, "was made under a mental crush" due to the then-looming "Old Man" trial. "I did finish the album—a miracle of willpower and energy; the tour was organized and rehearsed. But instead of taking off for Memphis on a triumphant note—'Hooray, my first tour' and all that—I literally had to go to San

CONTINUED ON PAGE 97

World Radio History

In an age of disk and digital, why buy analog?

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The MTR-100's auto-alignment saves you hours of time by eliminating constant tweaking and re-tweaking between sessions.

that this new way will save you hours spent in non-productive time, the analog choice begins to make even more sense. You see, the MTR-100 features full Auto-Alignment that allows total re-calibration of the record and reproduce electronics. This means you can compensate for different tapes in a *fraction* of the time that it previously took, and your studio is not bogged down with constant tweaking and re-tweaking between sessions.

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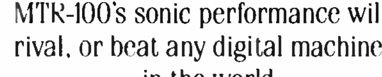

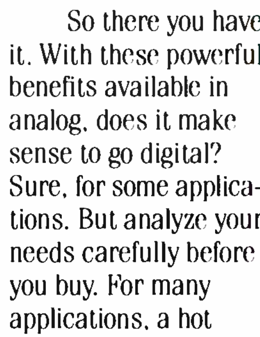

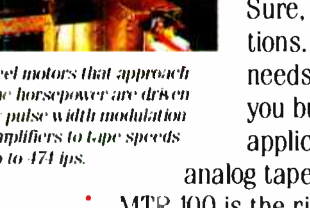

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Jackie McLean

by Joe Goldberg

Dr. Jackle Doesn't Work for Peanuts Anymore

He made his first record when he was 19. Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins and Art Blakey were on it. So were Walter Bishop and Tommy Potter, who played with Bird. Bird was at the session himself. Bird, who the kid used to follow around like he was God. Bird, who called up the kid's house one night, because he found himself scheduled for two gigs at the same time in different parts of New York (mythology notwithstanding, not even the great Charlie Parker could be in two places at once), and asked the kid's mother if it would be all right for the kid to play the first set at one of the gigs for him. Bird, being very proper, not asking the kid himself, but asking his mother.

The kid remembers being up there on the stand, playing, and seeing this motion near the back of the room, and people crowding around, and a saxophone held aloft above the crowd as the people pushed Bird himself toward the bandstand. Bird smiling, and paying him the agreed-upon fee, and telling him he had played well, giving the kid the greatest night of his life.

"America turns its back on its own music. In Europe and Japan people give us flowers."

He played with Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk and Bud Powell. He learned the songs by ear. "Everybody thought it was cute," the kid says now, "but Miles didn't think it was cute. He told me, 'You're a grown man. You've got to learn the chords.'" Miles, who had recorded with Charlie Parker when he was even younger than the kid, was justified in talking like that.

The kid did other things. He played on Charles Mingus' *Pithecanthropus Erectus*. He played with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. He even used Ornette Coleman as a sideman once. Coleman played trumpet on that date, because the kid is an alto player, too. He has the *cry* in his sound more than any other saxophonist, with the exceptions of Coltrane and his own inspiration, Sidney Bechet.

He is John Lenwood "Jackie" McLean, professor of music and head of the African-American music department of the Hartt School of Music at the University of Hartford in Hartford, Connecticut, insurance capital of the world.

Not long ago, Jackie McLean came to Los Angeles for what is called "a rare West Coast appearance." They are rare because, until recently, Jackie says he had only been offered "peanuts" for playing in this country, as opposed to the fees he commands in Europe and Japan. Now that he is a professor of music he doesn't have to work for peanuts anymore, and he won't.

It had probably been more than 25 years since we last spoke. He remembered and said, diplomatically, "We used to be slimmer."

He looked plump and affluent in a seersucker suit and yellow tie. He walked around L.A.'s Catalina Bar & Grill, psyching himself up for the first set. A few moments later, he sat down to talk, and immediately turned to his life at the university. There had been a drug problem on campus, he said, but, with the help of a doctor, he had managed to clean it up. He's proud of that. "They thought they'd ask somebody who knew something about it," he added, referring to the fact that he, like many musicians of his generation, was addicted in the '50s.

Jackie is also proud of placing several of his students in bands—one of them, Phil Bohlen, in Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, of which Jackie is an alumnus. He has long had an ear for talent; Tony Williams was his drummer when Miles Davis found him. Two members of his current quartet are former students: bassist Nat Reeves and drummer Carl Allen. The pianist, Hotep Idris Salleta, comes from Capetown, South Africa. Occasionally, this lineup is augmented by Jackie's son Rene, who is also a saxophonist and has contributed several numbers to the book.

Like a star, Jackie gave the opening two numbers to the trio while we talked. That's when he first uses the word "peanuts." He has a bone-deep anger about what he considers the exploitation of musicians, excoriating club owners and record company owners from the old days (though he talks fondly of Alfred Lion, the founder of Blue Note, who died

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not long ago).

Then it was time for him to play. It felt like someone had fired an acetylene torch across the room. Jackie started out, first note of the first number of the first set of the first night, at a level of intensity that most players reach after they've played for hours, if they ever do reach it. The crowd let out a spontaneous shout, as if they'd just been given something they were starved for, and comported themselves for the rest of the evening more like patrons at a rock concert than a jazz club.

When the set was over, someone shouted, "Thanks for comin'," and Jackie replied from the stand, "Thanks for askin' me to come." A young woman at the table next to me remarked that she felt she was in New York in 1968.

The next set, if possible, burned even more. After a while, people started calling for old Parker blues, "Billie's Bounce" and "Now's the Time," but Jackie said he preferred to close out by going to "Section Six in South Africa" and playing a piece by Salleta called "Dr. Omar's Revenge." Before saying goodnight, Jackie made an impassioned, angry speech of a kind I hadn't heard since Charles Mingus used to make them 30 years ago in the Village. "America's music is *scorned* in this country," he said, and proceeded to list a series of iniquities, winding up with the striking indictment, "Thelonious Monk sat in his apartment and died."

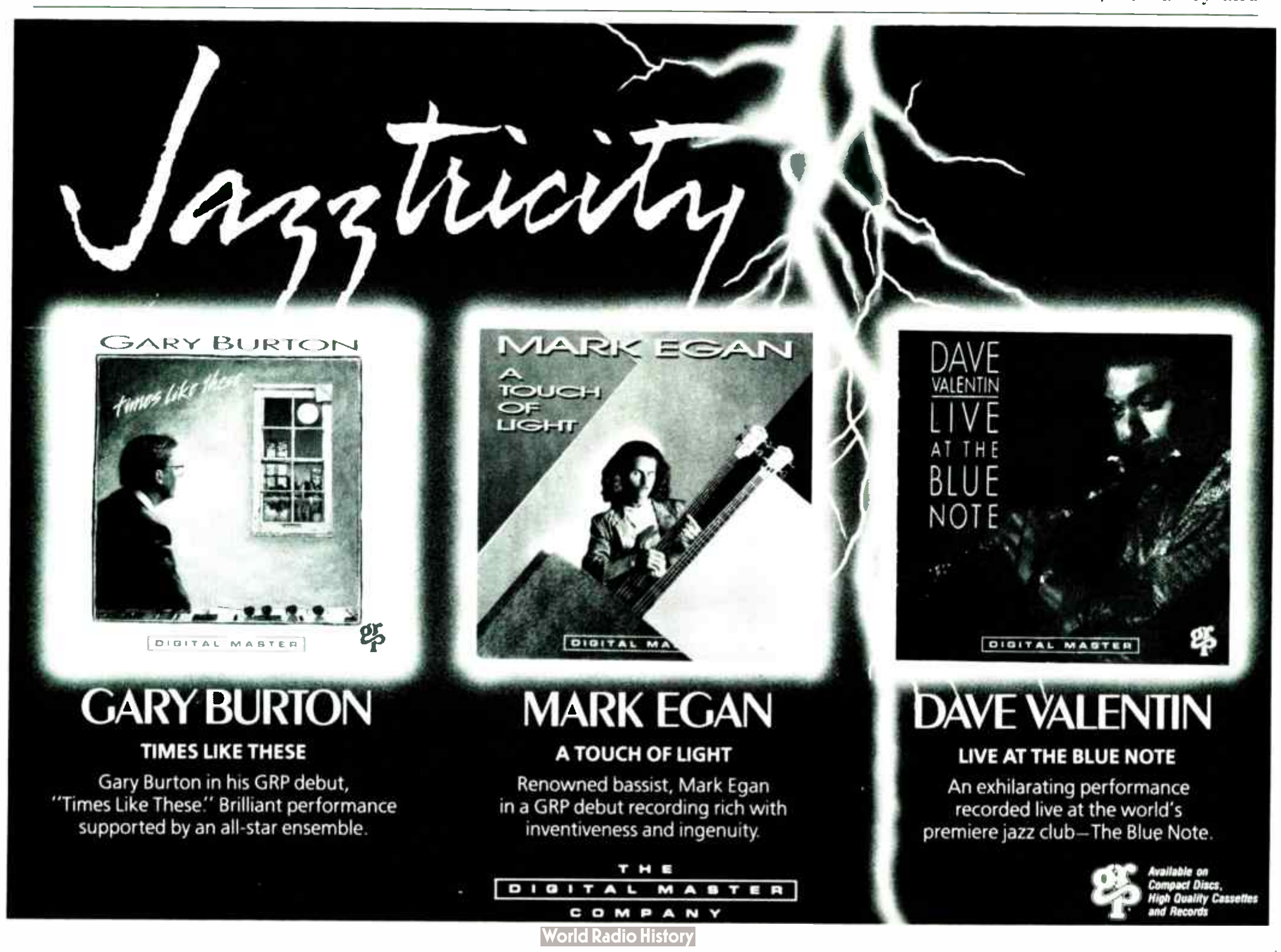
A few days later, I went to see Jackie at the hotel where he was staying. He had incense burning in the room, and seemed, unlike at various times in the past, very pleased to be who he was.

I quoted the lady who had mentioned 1968 in New York, and Jackie said, no, he was playing music of the '80s, with a different feel, a different intensity. He mentioned Miles, who he feels is playing the same as he always did, only in a different context. He thinks, though, that Miles, as he puts it, "forgets the cradle," by which he means the history of the music. His other favorite trumpeters are Kenny Dorham and Dizzy Gillespie, who is "outside the competition."

He has founded an organization called the Artists' Collective, a cultural center in the inner city of Hartford, for children too poor to be able to afford music lessons at mainstream institutions. It costs $15 to join, and $30 to $50 for a year's membership: The kids come once a week, take piano, music theory, martial arts and drama. In an old public school building in the north end of Hartford since 1972, it has become one of the major arts institutions in Connecticut. Bill Cosby is the national fundraising chairman for a plan to raise $7 million for a new building. At the moment, there are seven members—three saxes, two flutes, a drummer and a trumpet player—of a youth jazz orchestra that Jackie hopes will eventually number 20 pieces.

The life in Hartford is obviously important to Jackie. "It's nice," he said, "to have respect and something to fall back on when somebody offers you $50 to play a job. In the old days, I had to take any job that came my way in order to feed my wife and take care of my three children. This university job has given me some dignity: I'm a full professor, I'm tenured, I'm chairman of the African-American music department, we're offering a degree in African-American music. We don't call it a jazz degree because the curriculum that I'm teaching involves more than jazz. We teach about Paul Robeson; he's not a jazz musician. We teach about Toussaint L'Ouverture; he's not even a musician. We teach about the great pre-dynastic African empires."

I asked Jackie if he is teaching what another school might call Black Studies. He answered with some heat: "It is *not* Black Studies. What I'm teaching is for every student to learn. Every student should know that life, humanity and



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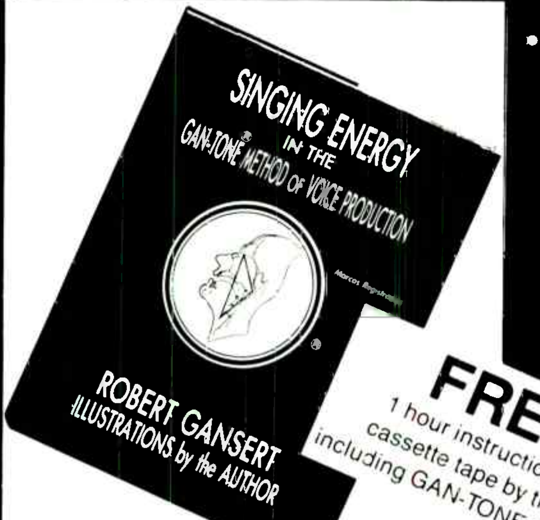

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civilization as we know it began in Africa. That the Africans stood alone at the door of civilization, when there *was* no Europe. Europe was still locked in ice. This is what I teach. I bring some dignity to my ancestors.

"The other thing I teach my students is that we're all related. We all come from a single mother and father way back in antiquity. I teach against racism and for a humanity that's all-related. That's the history side. The music side is incredible. We've had Ron Carter, we've had Dexter, Woody Shaw, Gary Bartz—we have workshops every Thursday."

Does it bother him, now that he's not a kid anymore, and there are new young alto players coming up?

"It doesn't bother me, it inspires me. It bothers me when there's nobody out there. When I only had Sonny Stitt huntin' me down and choppin' me up on the stage, when he used to find me and play all over me and I used to go home and practice some more and try to make myself better—I like that competition. I like the fact that there's four or five young alto players out there that I have a great deal of respect for. It doesn't bother me at all."

He had spoken at Catalina of one of his own mentors, Thelonious Monk. But weren't most of Monk's later troubles brought on by himself?

"None of this is his fault. These institutions that they're building now [cultural centers named for Monk are going up in Washington, D.C., and, in association with Duke University, in Monk's home state of North Carolina], they should have had them when he was alive. They took the hat and the ring of Magnum P.I. into the Smithsonian yesterday. What about Charlie Parker's saxophone? What about Lester Young's saxophone? They don't have any of that stuff in there. They might have one of Louis' trumpets in there. But America has turned its back on its own traditional music. It makes us look very stupid when we go to Europe and go to Japan and have people bringing us flowers, giving us the best rooms, giving us the most wonderful treatment. It's ridiculous, you know? And that's another reason why I want to stay in the university, because I've been educating hundreds and hundreds of non-playing students that take our courses.

"I didn't go to Japan until 1964. And I'll never forget. The day we arrived, the plane landed at the airport and the door opened, they had the sound of Kenny Dorham's trumpet filling the airport. We got off the plane, Kenny and I, Roy Haynes, Reggie Workman, Freddy Hubbard, Benny Golson, Cedar Walton—and I remember, I had on a dirty raincoat, and my heels were all run down, I'm kind of seedy comin' into this place, and people were coming up to me with tears in their eyes saying that they were so glad to meet me, and could they have my autograph? Some girls came and gave us flowers. It was incredible. I had never been treated like this.

"Same thing when I went to France. Even the guy that stamped my passport, he didn't know Jackie McLean from a hole in the ground, but when he saw that I was a musician, he was very pleased to welcome me to France. He asked me what I played, and when I said that I played jazz, a big smile came on his face.

"These experiences have helped me to be a musician. I don't know if I could continue to take the exploitation and the disdain that Americans seem to hold for this music. I'm talking about since the '50s, because prior to that, when I was a kid, jazz *was* the popular music. But it's like Fletcher Henderson and Don Redman never existed, and those were the guys that set the big band in motion. The swing era was just a redefining of what had happened in 1925, with the early bands, a spin-off from those huge string orchestras that James Reese Europe

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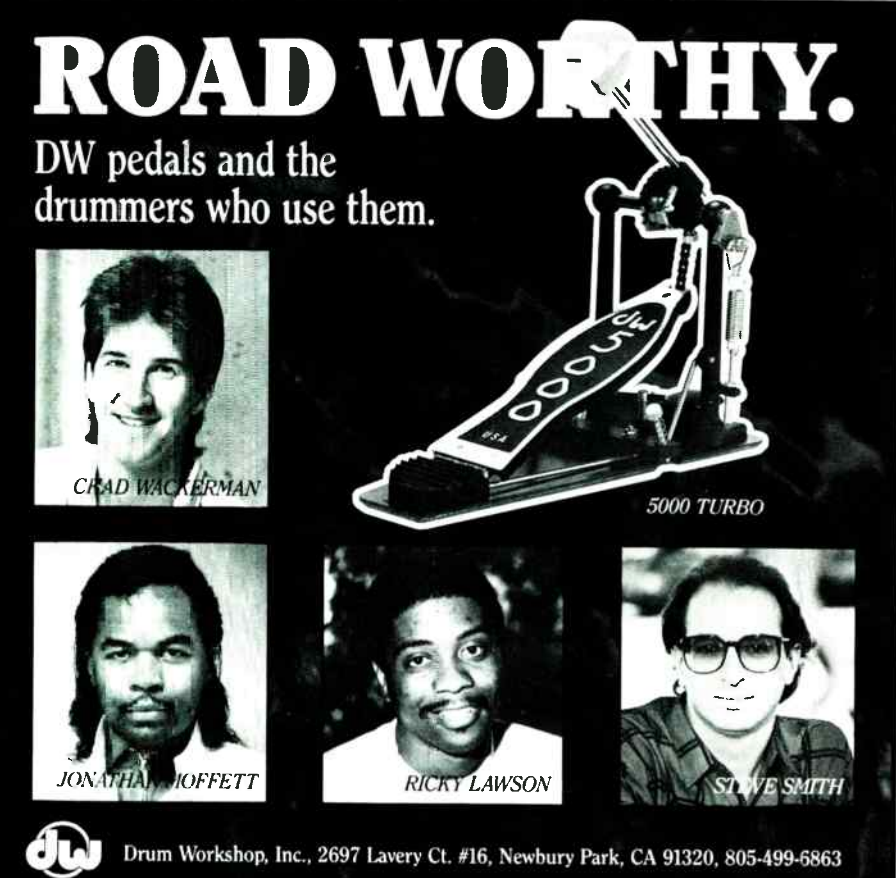

used to have, and, of course, the big symphonic orchestra that Paul Whiteman had. America keeps redefining black music, giving it another name and creating its own royalty."

I asked him how he came to be at the University of Hartford.

"It was at the end of the '60s, all that turmoil was going on, all those great men were shot down, the streets were being set afire and the Black Studies programs were happening. Some students went to the dean of the Hartt School of Music and wanted someone to come and teach them some musical things that were related to black culture. They had a list. Herbie Hancock was on that list, Sonny Rollins, myself, some other people. Those other guys weren't interested, so when they came to me, I said, 'Sure, I'll come up.' I did a concert—at that time I had a band called the Cosmic Brotherhood. I started teaching one day a week, and commuting back and forth. On Tuesdays I was teaching a beginners' improvisation workshop, and a history course starting with my period—1945 to the present.

"I must admit that I knew nothing about anything before that. Of course I knew who Duke was, and Louis, but I really didn't have a good understanding of the history of this music. I was inspired in those early years to do some studying. I called up LeRoi Jones, Ken McIntyre, some other guys that were teaching in schools, and they helped me, gave me a bibliography of things to study. My program grew from one day a week to two days a week to a small department, and I finally moved to Hartford in 1970, and it took me nine years to get full department status, with a degree program and a chair.

"It was worth it. I got some kids in there that'll make your hair stand up. This woman who told you she felt like 1968, in 1993 she's gonna hear *these* kids. The music's going to have another intensity, another kind of feeling to it, but it's going to be from the same thing.

"The music I play is no different than what Sidney Bechet was trying to reach. It's the same thing. That level of intensity, the proficiency on the instrument, and that *sound* the man had on that soprano: He's an incredible inspiration to me."

The kid who first heard Charlie Parker on Trummy Young's recording of "Sorta Kinda" when he was working in his stepfather's record store is still learning from the older masters. The kid who played on *Pithecanthropus Erectus* now teaches the evolution of man, and his

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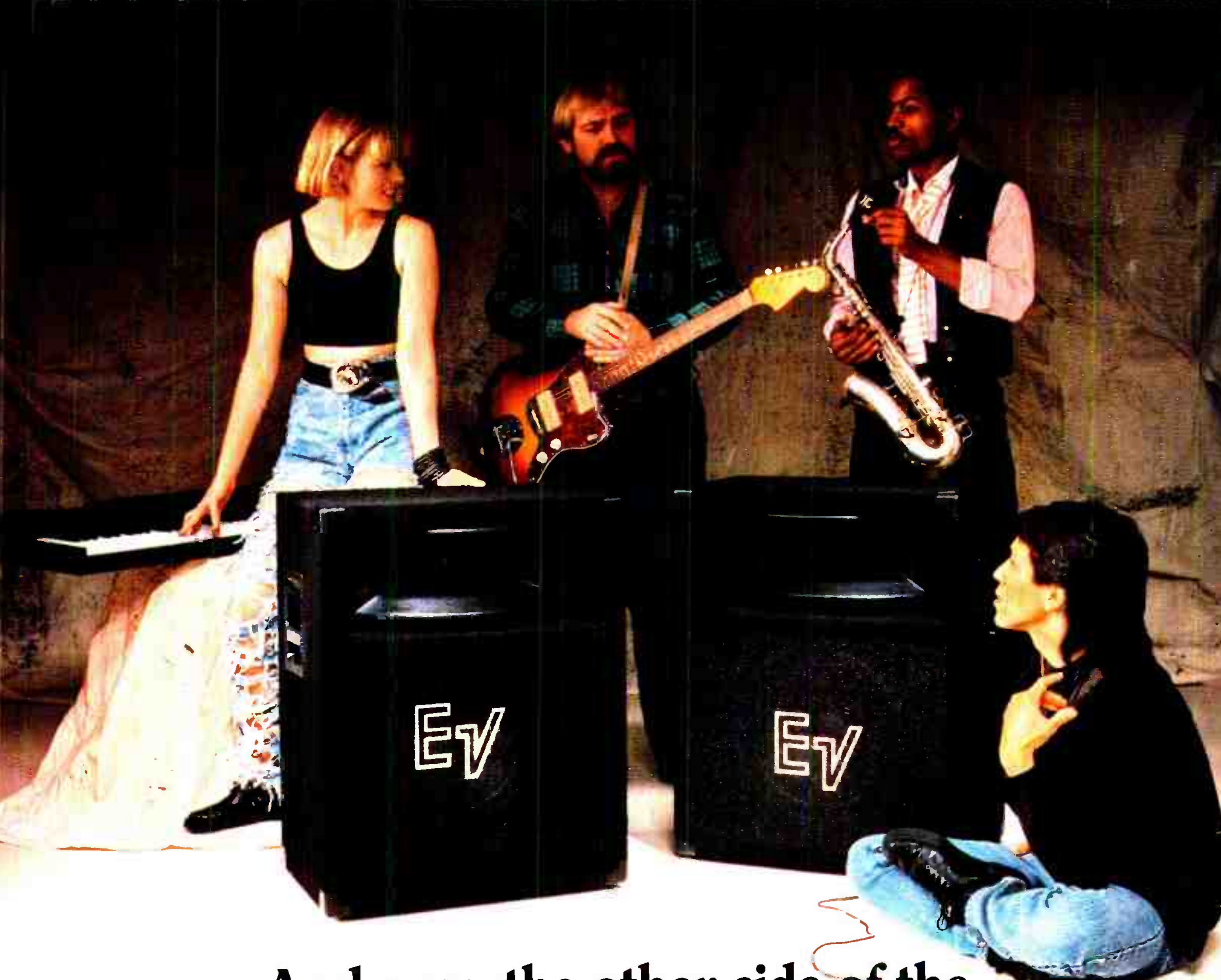

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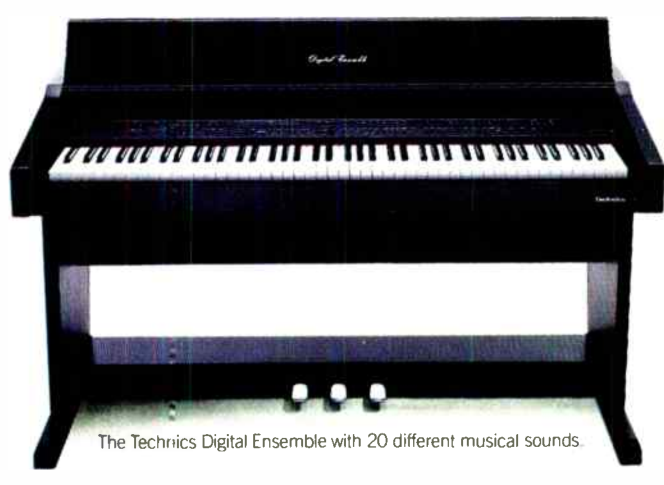
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World Radio History

"Whenever a musician is interested in self-expression you know it's gonna stink."

property so that my music company is financially based on property.

In other words, I'm going into the marketplace to act as a working musician in full view of the public around the world. That doesn't happen quite in Guitar Craft, where there's a small amount of visible performance in proportion to the work that actually goes on.

MUSICIAN: *During last night's performance in the church, there seemed to be some nervousness among the players: furtive glances, apparent discomfort. What was happening?*

FRIPP: I expect people were very nervous. [*smiles*] That'd be a quick guess.

MUSICIAN: *Any reason for that?*

FRIPP: Yes, egotism. Egotism. When you appear in public, the assumption is that you're afraid. What are you afraid of? That people will see who you are. Well, who am I? This creepy, self-involved, bad-tempered, nasty little piece of work—in full view of everybody. As soon as one appears onstage, everything is visible. It's impossible to hide. Nevertheless, the attempt to hide will generally be there. So there'll be furtive glances, false smiles, intense nodding—all these masks of performance.

Now whenever a musician is interested in self-expression you know it's gonna suck. Even if you were deaf you could see self-expression. [*contorts his face, Springsteen style*] It's a simple thing. Whenever self-expression's involved, the musician's concerned to play the music. When the music plays the musician, things really begin to happen. And this is where a rock 'n' roll audience is always far, far better than any, because they're instinctive, they're on their feet, and they can cut through the pretensions of the performer very quickly. The disadvantage there is if the audiences want their pretensions honored, one gets trapped in the cycle of adulation, titillation, vampirism, all that stuff.

MUSICIAN: *The way you seat the members of the League in performance seems carefully arranged. Is their positioning determined at all by the compositions they're playing?*

FRIPP: In terms of the performance last night, the parts in the particular pieces dictated to a considerable extent where people were sitting. If we're working acoustically it governs it far more. But from time to time, for the purpose of an exercise, it may be that the pieces stay with the seats, so that that seat has that note and if the person moves to that seat they have to know the note that goes with the seat. That will be an exercise in attention.

MUSICIAN: *Given the size of the League, how much improvisation is possible in its music?*

FRIPP: They can play any note they like provided it's the right one. If we all know where everyone else will be, no one has to be there. To improvise, one must have a fluidity of execution as well as common vocabulary. It's no good for a rock player going into a jazz world and expecting he will be compatible.

MUSICIAN: *What tends to be the most common mechanical weakness of players who come into the course?*

FRIPP: Force. Learning craft is a way of effortlessness. People work far too hard. Life is far easier than we make it. To play guitar, we actually have to do very little. But I don't know why we find it so hard to do very little.

MUSICIAN: *It seems that revelation may have come to you through working on your picking technique, which has always been your primary strength.*

FRIPP: I think it's a specialty, yes. I'd been playing guitar for about a year-and-a-half and it was so obvious that no one had figured this out: The plectrum guitar is a hybrid system. It's a combination of banjo playing and classical guitar playing. When guitars became popular in the late '20s and early '30s—the trendy thing to have in a dance band—banjo players were stuck. There were various attempts like the tenor guitar, which was a small-bodied guitar with four strings and tenor banjo tuning that one would thrash away on. But that didn't quite happen. So you had the Spanish guitar, with metal strings so it was a bit louder. But the right hand was never really, really considered. The main function of the right hand was to enable the guitar to be heard above 10 other pieces in a dance band.

So there I was at 12 in 1958 and it was so obvious that there was no codified approach for the right hand for the plectrum method. So I had to begin to figure it out, and I remember the very first time I began something on my own initiative. It was on a piece by Dick Sadleir called "Study in 3/4." It was so banal that I began to arpeggiate the notes in the chords, and it was still fairly simplistic but it sounded a little more musical. Then I moved on to the *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* by Tarrega with a pick. The essentials of all of this were established by the time I was 17 or 18. The refinements have come since Guitar Craft began. There was a knowing in the hand through doing it for years which I consulted. It's interesting. My body knew what was involved, but I didn't know about it.

But it was very difficult because the only authority I could ever offer was my own. You know all those guitarists on the front of *Guitar Player*? They're all wrong. You know Hendrix?

Fripp, Fripp; "Robert has been trying to find the right way to work with Toyah."

RAY RETNA EBET ROBERTS

World Radio History

MARK HOLMES

"Within Guitar Craft is the first time I've been able to live in a sane world."

He didn't know how to hold a pick. Clapton? He doesn't either. Beck? Hasn't a clue!

Well, you can't say that to young guitarists. If you're the only person in step in the marching army, one can believe one to be in error. On acoustic guitar, because the production of sound is very critical and you can't rely on electricity to produce anything, it has to be right. And none of the above players can actually produce that well on the acoustic guitar. That might be a little contentious, but at least now there are more than one player that can appear on the cover of *Guitar Player* magazine. [*He gestures to his students.*] They operate in different ways, but nevertheless owe some kind of token allegiance to this basic position.

See, there's variations on it. This is my position here. [*Wrist perfectly parallel to strings, fingers tucked.*] The downstroke is a release from this [*drops wrist down in a straight plane*] and a return. It doesn't go this way [*He smiles, then waggles his wrist back and forth exaggeratedly, playing to his students*], the Turkish method. [*They erupt with laughter.*] It doesn't quite go this way, either: This is the New York method [*bold, wild swings*]. And here's the West Virginia method [*holds wrist up at a sharp angle, bites lower lip*].

MUSICIAN: *It seems that most guitar instructors favor your "Turkish method."*

FRIPP: Yes. [*His smile spreads to a smirk.*] It helps to have it dressed in spandex. You see, performance has very, very little to do with playing an instrument. An obvious case: When you think of Madonna, do you think of her singing? Now with Hendrix you might think of his guitar playing, but you're also remembering this man who set fire to a guitar. And it may be that the visual appeal of the Tai Chi master is not equal in appeal to the heavyweight contest. But I would prefer to see a Tai Chi master do nothing, superbly. I can see the appeal of two large men attacking each other, but only just.

MUSICIAN: *Is there a danger for your students that they'll leave Guitar Craft sounding like Robert Fripp and not themselves?*

FRIPP: [*drolly*] No hope at all, I'm very happy to say.

MUSICIAN: *So you won't need to go back to real estate after they've graduated.*

FRIPP: I was brought up to take over my father's small real estate firm and I actually worked for him for three years before I recognized that I'd gone almost as far as I could go. So I went off to Bournemouth College to take a degree in estate management so I'd be away from the office for five years. Pursuing an education was more in step with my personal needs, but after a year-and-a-half of that I could no longer be a dutiful son.

The concerns of the musician are music; the concerns of the professional musician are money. Dion [a student] walked into my study not long ago and found a professional musician at work. Was the guitar even out of its case? I was surrounded by correspondence, laptop computer, lights flashing, printers running...

MUSICIAN: *What have you learned about your own playing, or yourself, through teaching the Guitar Craft program?*

FRIPP: Pick one of those.

MUSICIAN: *Okay, your playing.*

FRIPP: [*A long pause as he considers.*] The main thing has to do with remaining limber. See, I spend a minuscule amount of time actually concerned with my work as a guitarist, and if I could

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"You know Hendrix? He didn't know how to hold a pick. Clapton? He doesn't either. Beck? Hasn't a clue!"

remain limber—in motion—working out all the time, my playing would be much more fluent. As it is I gear up each time. If I'm out of gear three days, three days' hard work will get me in action. But if I were limber I wouldn't need three days. What can one do about that? One seeks a situation where the business structure is more established so that most of my concerns can come back to the life of the musician proper.

MUSICIAN: *Now, what have you learned about yourself through Guitar Craft?*

FRIPP: I think to have faith in my personal voice, which is to have faith in who I am. In Guitar Craft there's a context where a sense of one's self is supported and validated but not judged, and if it's off-base it's fairly obvious to all. Whereas in the life of the professional musician, there's so much manipulation that if one has a sense of something, it's very often queried through someone whose personal interest is contrary to your own.

For example, suppose you're a very successful rock guitarist and you're working 200 nights a year in stadia of screaming people that are sucking up to you, and in one sudden flash you see that something is profoundly wrong with all of this. It needn't necessarily be, you understand, but you see that all this is so off-base. And you turn to the roadies and you say, "Is this mad?" And they say, "No," thinking, "I'm not writing myself out of a job and all the money and all the girls." "No, this is great." So you say to the manager, "Is this mad?" And they say, "No, wonderfully sane," thinking, "We'll keep him at this for another two years. He'll crack by then, but he'll last that long." Then he goes to the record company and says, "This is mad." And they say, "Mad, boy? Mad? You're up to 3.5 million." And the very genuine insight into the madness of the situation is negated at every turn. Whereas the honest approach of the roadie is, "Mad? Of course it's mad." The honest approach of the manager is, "Mad, yes. Utterly silly." And the record company: "Yes, it's a profound contradiction which can't be reconciled with a sane world at all." Then the guitarist says, "Ah, I was right." And then he can go back and do it, knowing that it's mad. Madness in the marketplace, but not governed by the madness of the marketplace. Nothing on the outside has changed, but everything on the inside has changed. Within Guitar Craft is the first time I've been able to live in a sane world.

MUSICIAN: *In instructing the program, have you patterned your role at all after Gurdjieff or J.G. Bennett, whose teachings have influenced you?*

FRIPP: No. I never met Mr. Gurdjieff so I can't tell about him. Mr. Bennett was my teacher, and he still is in a sense, but I have to act with my own experience. I have to be myself. It took Mr. Bennett 70 years before he could be his own man, and meanwhile he upset virtually everyone. But when he was 70 he spoke to a younger generation who spoke to Mr. Bennett speaking his own voice. And he was a remarkable man. No one who wasn't touched by Bennett at that time can ever see what the man had. You can read the books, but any prannie can write a clever book pretty well. But if you see a man speaking on a platform, if he's hollow you can see through him.

MUSICIAN: *Well, there's a perception of you running the Guitar Craft courses as a sort of Western guru of guitar.*

FRIPP: Yes, and that's why I can't really talk to a *Guitar World* magazine, because it comes out as "Zen and the Art of Guitar Playing." I got a letter yesterday from a very nice Irish journalist and he enclosed a review of Elan Sicroff's album I produced. And in it he says it's not surprising that Robert Fripp has produced this because he's an advocate of J.G. Bennett's ideas. [*sighs*] I'm not an advocate of Mr. Bennett's ideas. I recommend Mr. Bennett's ideas to virtually no one. I'm an advocate of Guitar Craft, I speak for Guitar Craft. But Mr. Bennett would be inappropriate for nearly everyone I know. Not for me. But I'm not an advocate for Mr. Bennett at all. So a lot of damage can be done like this, a lot of damage.

MUSICIAN: *When the League played the East Coast this past spring, there was a student named Martin Schwatke who sat up front and did, essentially, nothing. You told the audience in Boston that he was the expert in silence. What was that about?*

FRIPP: Martin's role was to continually supply silence and remind those onstage of the power of silence. He reminded us of the role of the musician, which is to clothe the silence in sound. That's what music is, silence clothed in sound. You must also have a vocabulary with another person that they understand in order to speak to them. Coming back to this, Martin came to me just before the performance in the church last night and said, "Shall I provide silence?" And I said, "Yes, but this time

FRIPP'S STANDING OVATION

Robert Fripp and the League of Crafty Guitarists play Ovation Legend 1867s with super-shallow bodies. So far some 300 have come close to Fripp's student body. Why? "The super-shallow Ovation is the only acoustic guitar I've ever been able to play with any conviction. I tried deep bodies and it never worked. The intonation is far better than other guitars. The pickup is superbly powerful, about two-and-a-half times the power of a humbucker.

"One of the problems a guitarist faces is that guitars are made for guitarmakers, not guitarists. A lot of it has to do with how the guitar comes to the body. An acoustic guitar is generally too thick, so the arm is like this. [*He juts his right arm out, angled sharply at the elbow.*] Within five minutes, this is profoundly uncomfortable; within 10 minutes it's excruciatingly painful.

"Why is the acoustic guitar built like this? The traditional answer would be because of the sound of the instrument. But often it's only because of tradition. When you then abandon that design of the acoustic guitar, you have to be concerned about the production of tone. Work done in the nineteenth century by a Spanish guitarmaker found that 90 percent of the production of tone was determined by the top of the instrument, not the back. In other words, if there is a compromise to be made in the production of the guitar, provided you don't compromise the top, the rest is up for grabs. So then you can put on a molded fiberglass or carbide body which comes to the body of the guitarist."

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FRIPP, FRIPP, GUNN & BEAVIS

Yes, Robert Fripp's playing electric guitar again with his new band Fripp, Fripp. But he's too stubborn to talk about it. In the study of Red Lion House, surrounded by his books, papers, beloved antiques, trusty personal computer and his Ovation acoustic, he digs in his heels. "This is neither the time nor place to discuss Fripp, Fripp," he says, while nonetheless proffering promo photos for the new band. We try reasoning, cajoling, arguing and finally remind Fripp that we'd traveled 3,600 miles at his invitation and were promised by his U.S. label's publicist that he'd discuss the band, but it was no use.

"I think the reason Robert doesn't want to say anything about the band is because he doesn't necessarily know what it's going to be," says Trey Gunn, who plays bass and Chapman Stick in Fripp, Fripp. "We've got to take the material out and test it. We're just figuring we don't know what we're doing yet.

"Robert has been trying to find the right way to work with Toyah for quite a while, and this seems to be working. It's a rock project, a power trio, and I think most people are going to be really surprised with Robert's playing. Not just because of the new tuning, which sounds so fresh, but he threw out all his old tricks in the first couple of days."

After Fripp recruited Gunn, a 27-year-old Guitar Craft student from Eugene, Oregon, and local drummer Paul Beavis, who played on the 1984 Fripp/Andy Summers collaboration *Bewitched*, the band had five weeks of writing and rehearsals in May and June. "We just played a lot, put everything on tape and forgot about it," says Gunn. "Toyah was around half the time, mostly giving us suggestions. And then she took all that material—some of which was really whole—to work with. We met again in October and played sort of acoustically, with Paul playing drumsticks on a pillow, Robert and I with little bitty amps and Toyah without a microphone, and really put it all together. And now we're going to do a small tour. So far it's all built around the vocals, but everyone's contributing pretty much equally. We're not looking to be a heavy soloing band, but it's sure there when we need it."

clothe it in sound."

MUSICIAN: *Martin, how did you feel about playing that role?*

SCHWATKE: In the beginning, I really wanted to play. I had prepared myself to play quite a long time, intensively. But there was kind of an inner urge, because I felt it might be needed. So it turned out that this role was needed for this tour. And I accepted it completely, because otherwise it wouldn't have been possible to do it. Especially in this show in Boston, the quality of silence was different from the rest of the tour. There were some moments of a very clear presence of the silence in this show. There were moments like there was no time and space anymore, just the music very purely present.

MUSICIAN: *Did you accept the need for silence yourself, or were you told there was a need and then accepted the role?*

SCHWATKE: It was growing in me, and when it was there it was clear. There was no doubt.

MUSICIAN: *This is why you see headlines like "Zen and the Art of Guitar Playing."*

FRIPP: Generally an interviewer is always good to have along to a course because he asks all the dumb questions that people asked on the first day they got there, but on the fourth day they realized are dumb because one guy is still asking them. So that's generally the role of the interviewer that comes in. He can remind us what it's like to be deaf. [*pause*] Now this is different with you, you understand? [*The class erupts with laughter.*] But generally this is so. They come into a refined, subtle environment without leaving all that grotesqueness at the door. Having an interviewer in is a risk for us, because they might go back and write terrible things like "Zen and the Art of Guitar Playing." Nevertheless, my concern is for the needs of the students and the course rather than how it comes out.

MUSICIAN: *Since 1985 you've been saying that you'd be ready to reveal your "new standard tuning," the tuning used in Guitar Craft, "shortly." "Shortly" has been three years now. So are you ready to go public with the "new standard tuning"?*

FRIPP: [*long pause*] Yes.

MUSICIAN: *You are?*

FRIPP: Yes. The new standard tuning, or the Guitar Craft standard tuning, is C-G-D-A-E-G. That is, the bottom string is two tones below the old tuning of E, the fifth string is one tone down from A to G, the fourth string is constant at D, the third string is up a tone to A, the second string is up a fourth from B to E, and the first string is up one minor third from E to G.

MUSICIAN: *How did you develop that tuning?*

FRIPP: I didn't. It presented itself.

MUSICIAN: *Under what circumstances?*

FRIPP: I was lying sweating in the sauna of the Apple Health Spa on Bleecker Street one morning at about 10:30 in September 1983 and the tuning flew by. I let it pass and continued sweating.

I went from the Apple Health Spa via the airport to Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, where I was working with Adrian Belew for a week prior to Tony Levin and Bill Bruford coming in for King Crimson rehearsals. And I put it on the guitar and I couldn't see what it was for, quite. It didn't fit the existing repertoire, so I didn't take it any further then. When I went into retreat at the end of Crimson's commitment to active service, I had an acoustic guitar that had been shipped from Ovation, my first super-shallow. I put the tuning on that, but I didn't really apply myself. It was really a week before the course that I decided that if this was a tuning we would be using, I'd best discover some things about it. So I got to work.

MUSICIAN: *What are the advantages of the tuning?*

FRIPP: If you want to discover the values of this tuning, work with it. One student said, "If I want to play bop, should I use this tuning?" I said, "If you want to play old music, use the old tuning. This is a new tuning for new music." The advantage is this: The tuning is based in principles of organic form. The old standard tuning is arbitrary. So one is soundly based in principle and the other is only soundly based in practice, but it was only arbitrary from the start. And the guitar is a different instrument today than the guitar of 200 years ago. The electric guitar today is a different instrument to the acoustic guitar today. If you are an electric guitar player you will very probably even wear a different kind of clothes than if you're an acoustic player. You don't see many acoustic guitarists in spandex, leather and metal studs.

MUSICIAN: *Speaking of leather and spandex, you've written in one of your monographs that "in popular culture the musician addresses the highest common denominator in all of us, and in mass culture the musician addresses the lowest common denominator." How do you separate mass culture from popular culture?*

FRIPP: Popular culture is when it's very, very good and everyone knows it and goes "yeah!" Mass culture is when it's very, very bad and we all know it and we go "yeah!" Mass culture works on like and dislike, and popular culture addresses the creature we aspire to be. Examples of popular culture: Beatles, Dylan, Hendrix. I wouldn't put names on mass culture but your magazine writes about enough of them that you could probably go through back issues and pull out a few.

But there's something very powerful and good in mass culture in which almost we recognize we are the same creature. Now the Live Aid concert in England was quite remarkable, where people gave all this money. You can argue about whether the money was well-used or whether that kind of action does any help and so on, but what I saw was how much

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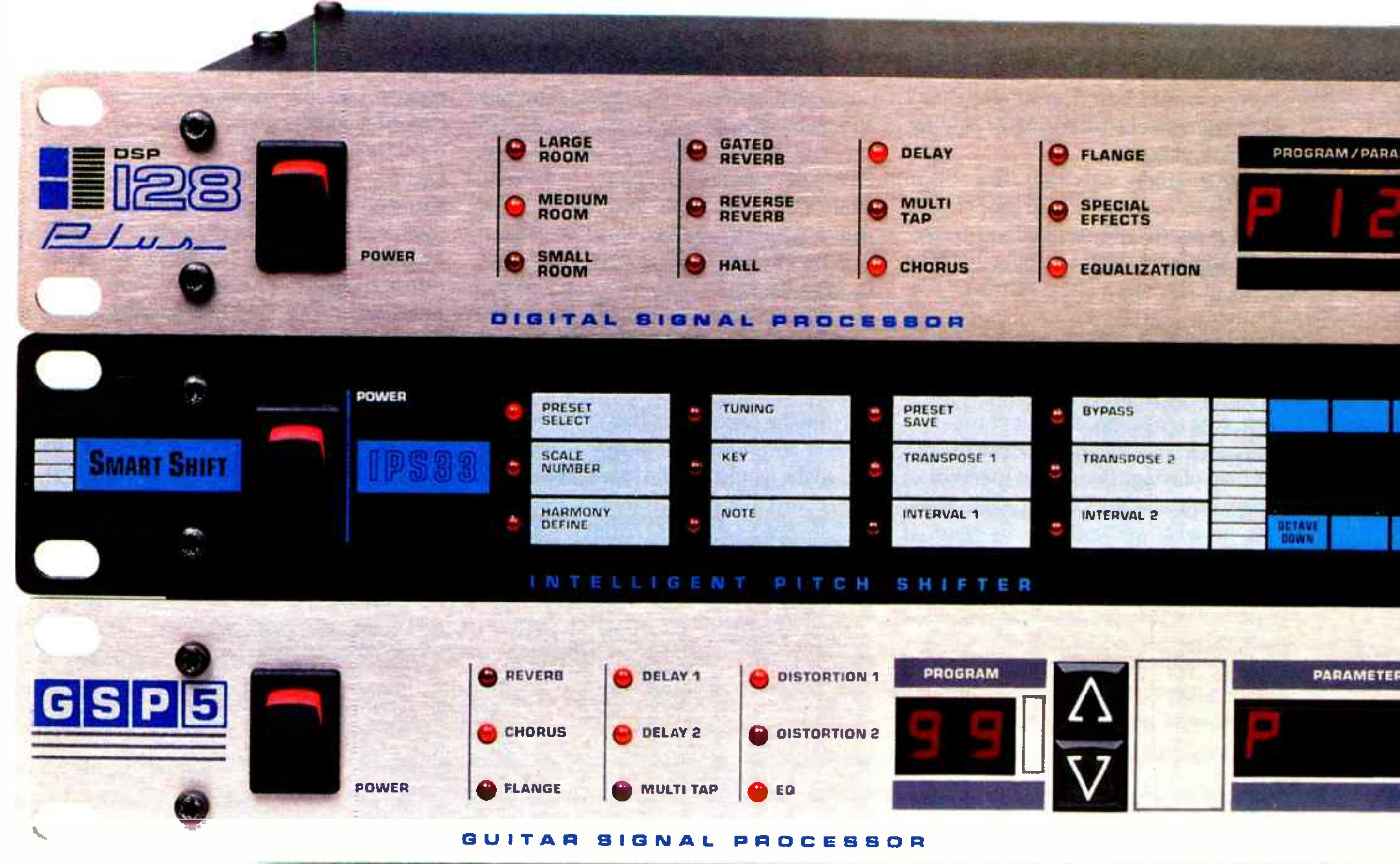

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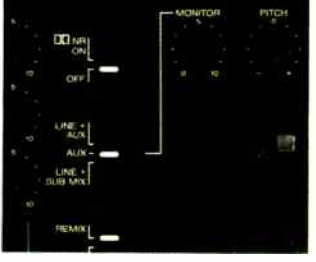

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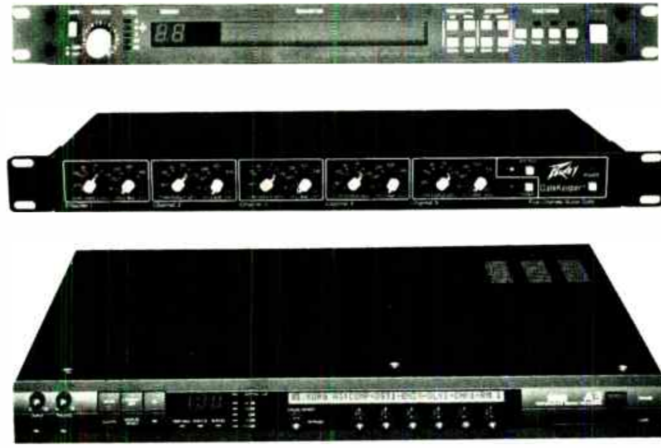
Developments

A NAMM Sneak Preview

by Alan di Perna

Howdy there, campers. It's time for a wholesome winter NAMM preview from your best buddy, Ranger Al...the Musicians' Pal. Remember our big hike to Atlanta for the last NAMM show in June? Golly, we sure got lots of healthy shut-eye then, didn't we? Half the musical instrument manufacturers decided to stay home, so there weren't many exciting new products to keep us from sawing the ol' logs. But even back then, the hints started circulating that the upcoming Winter NAMM jamboree would more than make up for the Atlanta snooze-in. But will we end up drinking last year's stale Gatorade out of this year's canteens again? Swallowing still more spinoffs on existing goods? Rack-mount versions . . . new, miraculously affordable versions . . . software-updated versions . . . .



Three new racks girding for techno-battle: the N.I.H. R16 (as in 16-bit) digital effects unit (top), Peavey's five-channel Gatekeeper noise gate (middle) and Korg's six-processor A3.

Yawn-a-roo, eh scouts? Bulk or breakthrough? That is the question. The answers must wait till next month's column and our annual Winter NAMM report. But to tide you over till then, here's a few promising trails we've picked up in the M.I. woods. Follow me, girls and boys . . . .

Your pal the Ranger has called the **Atari** ST *the* rock 'n' roll computer. Now Atari will be introducing its first real music product at NAMM. We know that it *won't* be a computer, but that's about all we do know at this point. Atari's playing it pretty close to the chest, but we understand that several independent developers and possibly some members of the Fleetwood Mac camp are involved.

Meanwhile, their new laptop version of the 1040 ST will also debut at NAMM. Looks like they're going after **Yamaha**'s IBM-compatible C1 laptop in a big way. Unlike the C1, Atari's laptop *will* be battery-powered and is expected to retail for about half the cost. The portable 1040 will feature track ball control (although a mouse can also be plugged in) and, of course, the ability to run any music software program for the ST. With plenty of new software for the C1 expected to debut at NAMM, the character-building, sportsmanlike competition should be in full swing.

In another part of the forest, **Steinberg** will be announcing a new operating system they've developed. It's called M-ROS and it's designed to work in tandem with the resident operating systems in the big three computers: the Atari ST, **Apple** Macintosh and **IBM**-PC. The main advantage of M-ROS is that it will bring real multitasking to the ST, PC and Mac. For example, you can run an M-ROS-based sequencer simultaneously with a console automation program on the same computer. (Steinberg will be releasing M-ROS-based versions of its programs around March.) One nice thing about this is that you'll only need a single SMPTE reader to keep both programs in sync. Beyond this, M-ROS will let you set up a multitasking link between two different computers—say an ST and a Mac—via MIDI. Again, you'd only need one SMPTE reader for both machines. And since both are sharing the M-ROS environment, the Start/Stop/Play buttons on one machine can control the other computer as well.

Obviously, the real impact of this new operating system will depend on the number of M-ROS-based music programs that eventually wind up on the market, so Steinberg has tentative plans to begin licensing M-ROS to other software developers.

But now it's time to move away from those computer screens, campers. It's not healthy to stare at 'em too long. Besides, it looks like there'll be lots of invigorating guitar action at NAMM to get that red-blooded blood circulating. For example, **Scholz Research & Development** have something they call the Rockman Modular Amplifier System, which is based on Boston guitarist/

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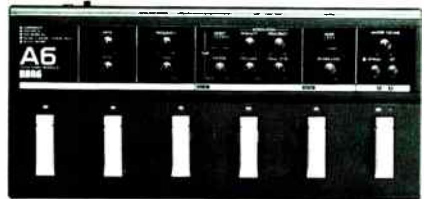
mastermind Tom Scholz's own touring rig. The system teams Rockman processing modules with a new 500-watt stereo amplifier and a new program change module called the MIDI Octopus. Rockman and other companies' modules can be mixed and matched in a mounting cabinet patterned after a Marshall head and fitted with an AC power strip. The system also includes a crossover and three-way speaker cabinets loaded with a 15-inch, 10-inch and high-frequency driver, all specially manufactured for Scholz R&D.

But let's march on. As all you campers know, Ranger Al's a real regular guy, just like you—only more so. So you know what he's always on the prowl for when he's at NAMM? Get your minds out of the gutter, you little perverts! The Ranger's idea of a good time is affordable guitar effects. So your old friend and role model will be sure to check out **Korg**'s new multi-effects pedalboard, the A6. It combines analog compression, distortion and parametric EQ, with a digital flanger/chorus/delay module and digital reverb. Korg will also introduce a more studio-oriented multi-effects processor, the A3, said to be priced near a grand. This is an entirely digital unit that will let you chain up to six effects processors simultaneously. You get 40 factory preset chains plus the ability to store 100 user programs in its internal memory and an additional 100 on external memory cards. And while he's at Korg, the Ranger will also doubtlessly want to noodle with Korg's newest guitar-to-MIDI converter, the Z3, with its own onboard six-voice synth and the ability to transmit MIDI messages in poly and mono modes. Golly, I can't wait. You know how much the Ranger loves MIDI guitar.

Now I'm sure a lot of you campers have been building up those MIDI-based home studios down in Mom's basement, right? But you say the old paper route isn't yielding enough to pay for a decent mixer? Well, hang in there, troops: Help is on the way. The fine, upstanding folks at **JBL** have just picked up England's affordable **Seck** line of consoles for U.S. distribution. The company sees the line as a complement to the more high-end

Korg's A6 pedalboard processor

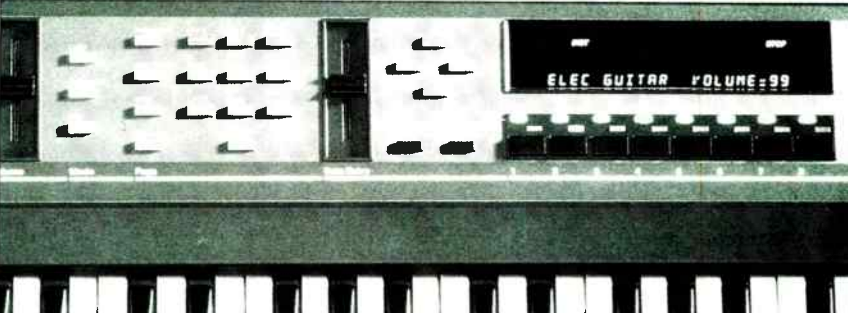


School Daze

A Second Look at the Ensoniq EPS

Sometimes an MI product comes along that's hard for us reviewers to get a firm handle on. Sometimes it's so complex, it can take a major educational effort just to get it to do its most newsworthy tricks, leaving more subtle attributes unrevealed. And sometimes it gets so bad, the tech writer gets sent back to school. Which is where I was sent after demonstrating a chronic inability to learn the Ensoniq EPS—straight to Ensoniq school at their impressive quarters outside Philadelphia.

Oh sure, I knew the book on the EPS: it's a quality sampler with an above-average onboard sequencer; still the only keyboard in its class with polyphonic aftertouch; it can play samples while simultaneously loading more from its onboard disk drive; has two sexy little buttons next to the wheels that allow you to access other samples; strong potential for live performance and as a master MIDI-board. But that's just scratching its gray metal surface. The EPS is really a kind of open-ended music computer with as much processing power as a Macintosh. Its RAM memory, measured in "blocks," can be filled with sample data, MIDI sequencer data or system-exclusive data in any combination, so it's completely versatile—you might use it as a multitimbral sound source in your computer-equipped studio and then dump your sequences to it for live performance using less data-hungry samples.



The software for this music computer has been the subject of intensive refinement. Recent versions (mine is numbered 1.92) are light years ahead of the sketchy, bug-infested operating system the EPS first appeared with—with currently 173 commands and edit functions available, there's now an extraordinary array of raw music-editing capability. There are also hardware improvements. While at Ensoniq school, I had my EPS's onboard memory doubled with a new $250 expander board—it'll now hold 2,000 blocks of memory at a shot, almost mandatory considering the best sounds of their growing sample library can chew up 700 to 900 blocks apiece. They also strapped on a hardware output expander box, which gives the EPS eight individual audio outputs for each of its multitimbral "instruments." I was loaded for bear—wouldn't Ranger Al be proud!

But that didn't mean I was out of the woods. My teacher immediately made me learn to use that formidable obstacle course they call a menu structure. The EPS essentially uses a key-combo system for all its operations, using three main trunk keys named Load, Command and Edit and 14 sub-branches to get at those 173-plus functions. Is it hard? Well, if like me you're ever tempted to fiddle with a machine without a manual, you will find the EPS completely inscrutable. Only when the at-times arbitrary layout is explained and diagrammed does it become usable, and even then you'll still need that little cardboard cheat-sheet they give you.

Much of this sophistication centers around the onboard sequencer, which is so far beyond the sketch-pad phase it's actually competitive with most stand-alone hardware sequencers out there. Simply put, it's a chaining-type (rather than a tape recorder-type), with locations to keep up to 200 sequences to chain into a single song. And once all your eight-track sequences are strung together, the EPS gives you a fantastic bonus: eight more tracks that run parallel with the first eight throughout the entire tune. This is the best of both worlds, and the only true hybrid hardware sequencer you can buy.

Another impressive aspect of the sequencer operations is a permanent

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Pad inputs and a stereo headphone socket make the massive sounds of the **Trixer** available for home practice.

Trigger and mix – the **Trixer** – the solution to triggering and acoustic drum reinforcement in one box. Try a **Trixer** at your favorite music store. You might "*Learn*" something to your advantage.

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Imagine an artist painting with an infinite palette. That's, in effect, what CASIO's VZ-1 can do for you, the musical artist. Giving you the freedom to play with sounds so rich, so full, they have to be heard.

The CASIO VZ-1 is a 61 key, 16-note polyphonic digital synthesizer that puts all the tools for complex sound construction at your fingertips. It gives you outstanding performance versatility, through initial touch, and user-definable routing for after touch, two control wheels, and optional foot pedal. Its 16-note, 8-part multi-timbral MIDI implementation allows extensive individual control of each sound.

The VZ-1 uses a whole new technology called iPD (interactive Phase Distortion) instead of sampled wave forms, or PCM partials. An open system of 8 multi-waveform oscillators interact in a variety of ways—mix, ring, phase, and external phase modulation. The result: sounds that are rich, full, and unique.

One of the VZ-1's strongest features is its Combination Mode, which lets you combine up to 4 different sounds in a variety of split and layer configurations, including multiple velocity split and positional cross-fade capability. You'll swear you're playing a MIDI stack instead of a single keyboard. As a MIDI master keyboard, the VZ-1 can be split into 4 "zones," with separate send and receive channels for each note range.

The VZ-10M is a 2 rack-space version of the VZ-1.

The VZ-1 comes complete with 64 sounds and 64 Operation Memories, plus a free ROM card (RC-100) with an additional 128 of each, for a total of 384 timbres out of the box. Optional ROM cards with additional sounds are also available. And with an optional RAM card (RA-500), you can store up to 64 sounds and 64 Operation Memories of your own.

And finally, to enable you to effectively manage all of its programming power, the VZ-1 has a wide, backlit LCD graphic display, making editing quick and intuitive under any lighting conditions.

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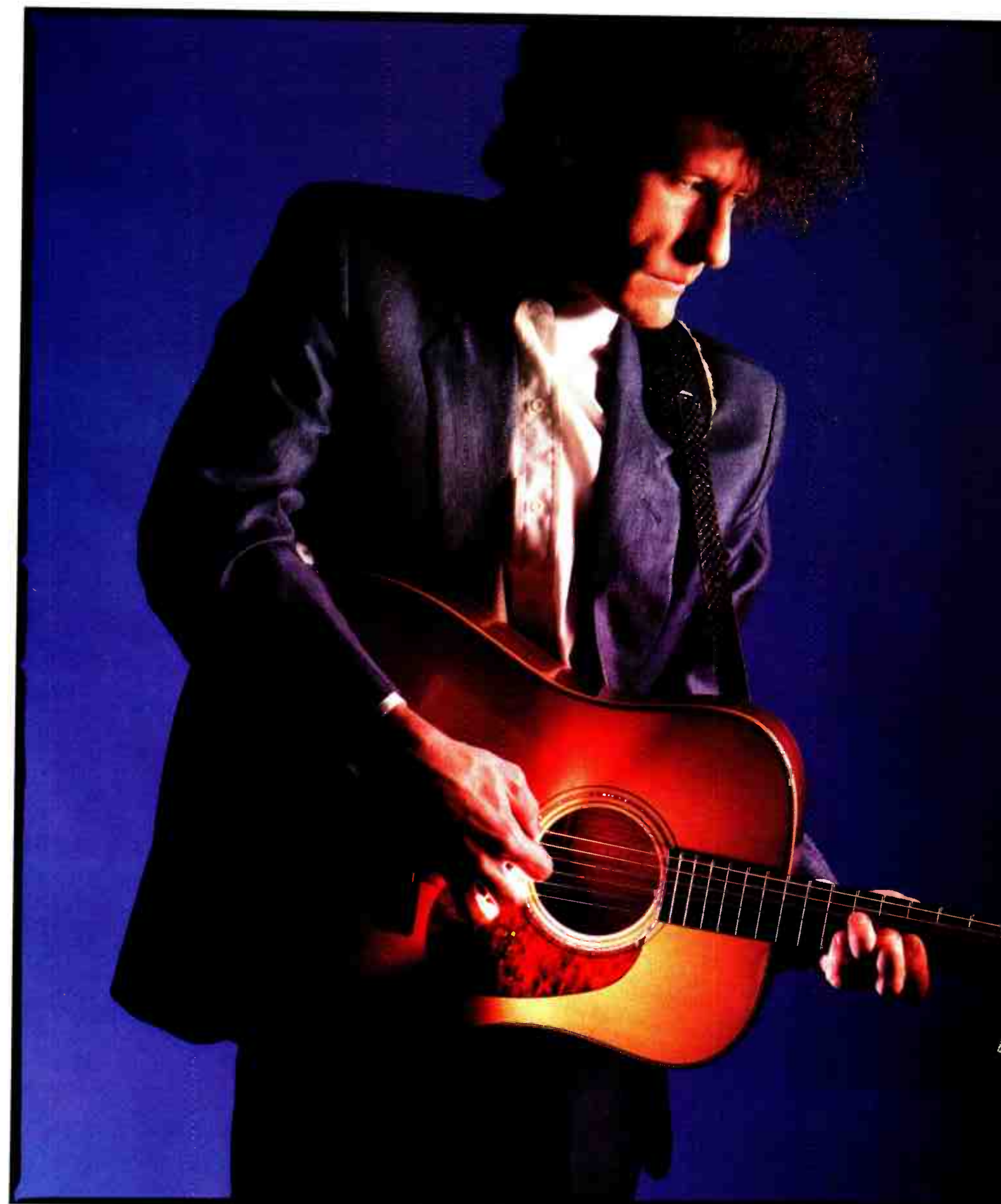
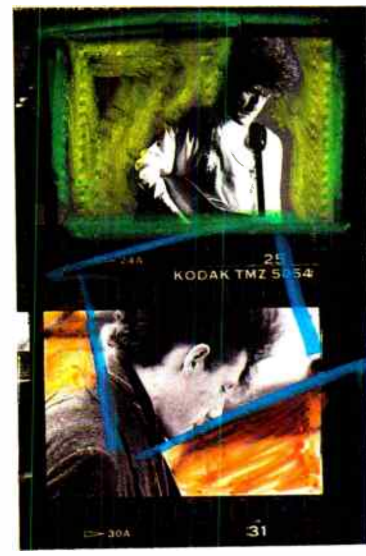


PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALAN MESSER

World Radio History

THE LIGHTS IN LYLE LOVETT'S FINGERS

Through the locked door, past the receptionist, down the corridor, beyond the hand-written "Closed Session Do Not Enter" sign, laughter rings out from the Masterphonics recording studio control room. I walk in and see Lyle Lovett standing over the illuminated mixing board while engineer Chuck Ainlay sits at the knobs. Both men are delighted, their eyes fixed straight ahead. "Great! Great!" Lovett smiles. They notice me and Lyle sticks out his hand in welcome. That's when I see that their enthusiasm is not fixed on the new Lyle Lovett album they're mixing, but on the studio's video monitor, which is switched to ABC-TV's "Super Model Search: Look of the Year." Chuck hits a button on the console and the unctuous voice of m.c. George Hamilton fills the studio. "We're mixing during the commercials," Lyle explains. Then he and Chuck go back to sarcastically rooting for their favorite aspiring Super Models.



A cat food ad comes on, the TV sound goes off and Chuck switches on "I Know You Know," a lush new Lovett tune with four alto saxes and one soprano sweetly harmonizing. "That's a great chord," Lyle nods, his gears already switched from voyeur to bandleader.

"All the saxes on this track were played by Steve Marsh," Chuck explains as the horns line up. "It was so weird hearing him put them on one at a time. Weird intervals! We'd say, 'That *can't* be right!'" It's not, I lie, you guys have just gotten used to it. Lyle and Chuck look startled and then laugh. They know they've got it right.

All the songs being worked on tonight are horn numbers, what Lyle refers to—self-deprecatingly—as his *blues* songs. In fact, tracks like "I Know You Know," "What Do I Do" and "Cryin' Shame" are trad jazz numbers pepped up with gonzo humor and a hint of Texas swing. Imagine a planet where Dan Hicks writes charts for Count Basie. If Lovett worked only in this style he'd be more original than most

BY BILL FLANAGAN

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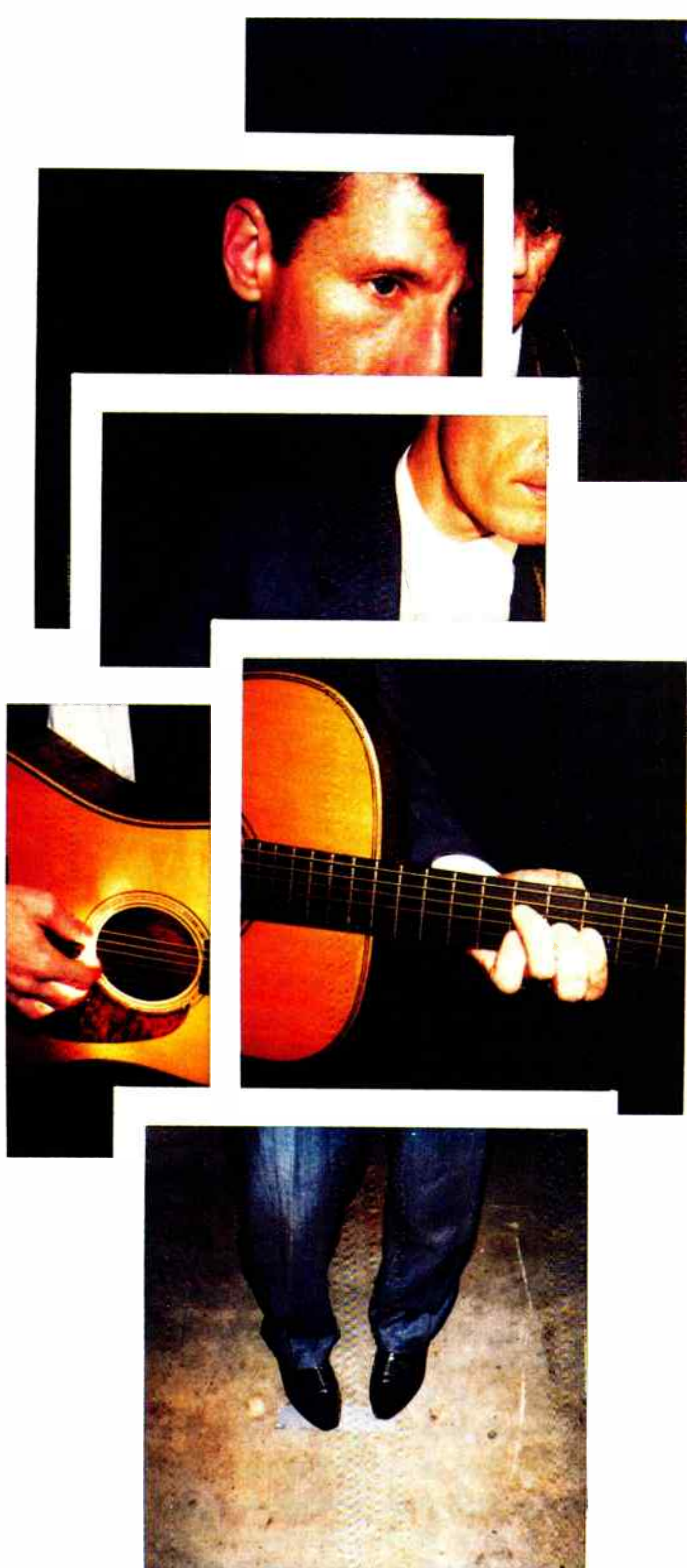

of the musicians here in Nashville. But these "Large Band" numbers are only one side of Lyle Lovett. He is also a twanging steel guitar country hitmaker, already infamous for simultaneously subverting and extending C&W conventions. The first single for this album is called "I Married Her (Just Because She Looks Like You)," another example of Lovett's gift for writing songs that mock country's sappier conventions with enough charm to avoid offending purists. "I Married Her" joins a canon that includes the famous "God Will" ("Who'll keep on loving you when you've been cheating?... God will but I won't, God does but I don't, and that's the difference between God and me") and the dead serious "If I Were the Man You Wanted (I Would Not Be the Man That I Am)." Lyle is the king of country epigrams.

So the thin man with the sharp face is both jazzy sophisticate and C&W wit, but that's not what makes Lyle Lovett important. Both of those roles, while delightful, are played by Lyle the entertainer, Lyle the sly songwriter, Lyle the wiseguy. What makes Lovett a major voice in American pop music are the tunes between the attention-grabbers: beautiful confessional ballads, songs of impossible longing and frightening glimpses into killers' hearts. In "Pontiac" a mournful cello and careful piano support Lyle's journey into the mind of a "nice old man" who sits in his car at the same place every afternoon, drinking a Coke and smoking a cigarette. Lovett carefully peels away the layers, revealing that the old fellow's brimming with hatred, his mind turning again and again to the German boys he killed during the second World War and his fantasy that he might murder his wife the same way.

Songs as hard and haunting as "Pontiac" and "L.A. County" (in which Lovett makes murdering an old girlfriend sound almost noble) are the reason critics compare Lyle to Randy Newman and Tom Waits. And "Pontiac" is very much like something Newman would write. But unlike those two West Coast subversives, Lyle has the common touch. One listen to Newman's or Waits' emphysemic vocals, one look at Newman or Waits hunched over a piano, one *note* of Newman or Waits, and Mister Average American says, "Uh uh, not for me, this guy's too odd." Or too nasty or too smart. Randy Newman and Tom Waits are great, great talents, but they will never enjoy the trust and affection of honky-tonkers and 7-11 clerks. Lyle Lovett does. In part it's just because he has a conventionally pretty voice, and in part it's 'cause his lighter songs get played on country radio. But mostly it's because Lyle covers a lot of territory. He is a good C&W singer, a very charming entertainer, and can write a weeper that will break your heart. It's only once he's hooked you with all that that he takes advantage of the opening to drop you through the trapdoor.

"I *never* get tired of getting mentioned in the same breath as those guys," Lovett says of Newman and Waits. But for all the common reference points there's an obvious difference; when Newman and Waits came along, eccentric singer/songwriters were signed in the major record labels' Los Angeles headquarters and marketed as pop, rackjobbed in the rock bins, pitched to FM radio. By the mid-1980s, when Lovett went looking for a record deal, he found the only warm reception in Nashville. "What I'm doing isn't really new at all," Lovett says. "It's the old singer/songwriter thing. It's strange, I think. You turn on country radio these days and hear the Eagles or James Taylor."

Is there a tendency to say, well, since we're being marketed through Nashville we'll stick a steel guitar or fiddle on this song? "Oh sure, that always crosses my mind. I have to always have something on the records that we can at least *act* like might be a single. But I really try to resist taking one of the songs that might be a straight-ahead blues song and doing that just because we're making the record in Nashville. Like with

PHOTOS MESSER COLLAGE CARSON

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'She's No Lady,' I thought, 'Instead of doing this with a saxophone section we could do it with a sax and a fiddle and a steel. But I really decided to just let the song be what it was. It's really nice, 'cause I haven't had to change a thing, I haven't had to compromise creatively. A song like 'I Married Her (Just Because She Looks Like You)' I'd *want* to do country.

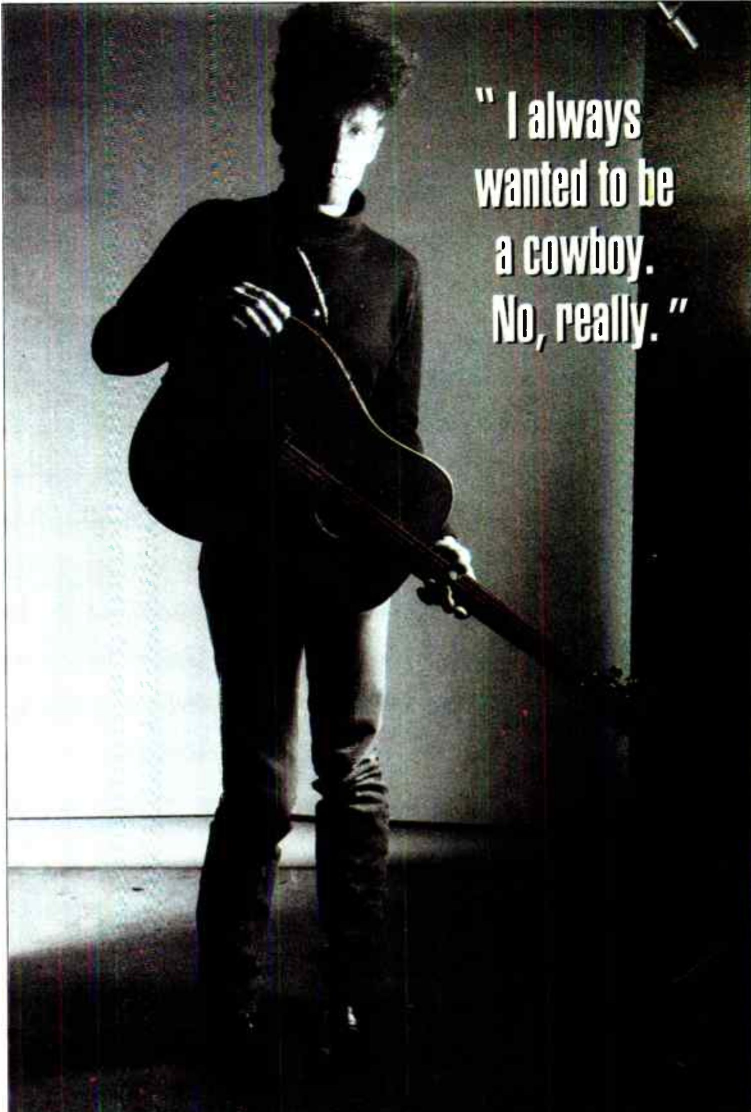
"It always seemed funny to me—the idea of getting signed because of what somebody sees and then all of a sudden trying to change everything. They haven't done that. I'm really surprised that country radio has supported me as much as it has. I haven't had any big hits on country radio—a number 10 was my best—and they're still letting me do the kind of songs that I want to."

For this, his third album, Lyle made one concession to record-company orthodoxy; he allowed session pros Leland Sklar (bass) and Paul Leim (drums) to replace his usual rhythm section. "Here in Nashville I guess it's rare that people record with their road bands, so we were kind of going out on a limb recording the first two records that way. Most of the people who played on this one are in the band, but it really started out as more of an effort on my part to *play ball*—and try to do things the way they do things here. The record company wanted me to do it. It really was an effort on my part to meet them halfway. I regretted not being able to use my bass player and drummer, but I felt very confident playing with Leland Sklar and Paul Leim, so I didn't feel like I was compromising musically."

The new album, *Lyle Lovett and His Large Band*, is half jazzy blues numbers, half country and acoustic. It has been previewed by those who saw Lovett's 1988 shows, in which the singer squeezed onto stages with a 10-piece ensemble that included cellist John Hagen, trumpet-throated blues singer Francine Reed and a ballroom saxophone section. Lyle has included on the new album the Large Band's swinging arrangement of Clifford Brown's instrumental "Blueswalk" (the live show's pre-Lovett fanfare), his cross-sexual version of "Stand By Your Man" (the live show's encore) and his own "Here I Am"—a bizarro cross between Steve Reich and those old Bo Diddley numbers on which the band would play a riff and then freeze while Bo delivered a dirty joke. On "Here I Am" brassy, full-band choruses alternate with Lyle's deadpan spoken surrealisms ("Hello? I'm the guy who sits next to you and reads the newspaper over your shoulder. Wait! Don't turn the page, I'm not finished"). Any of these three numbers might have been considered fun parts of the stage show not dignified enough for vinyl. But Lyle and his producer, Tony Brown, agreed that they liked the stuff and decided, "Why not?"

Right now Lyle and Chuck have more subtle decisions to make. They want the last chord of "I Know You Know" to ring for a long time, but at the last instant they can hear the dampers dropping from the piano strings. Never mind that few people in the world will pick that up at home (and of those few, only three will care), Lyle and Chuck are hunting for camouflage. They find it on the snare track—a swirl of brushes on drum skin. They gently boost that swirl just as the dampers drop. One more down.

The next morning I get to the studio before Lyle, and Tony Brown invites me into a back room where they're mastering. Lyle's album is being cut and mixed in 29 days, up nine from *Pontiac*. As soon as a track is mixed, it is brought back here for mastering, while the next one is being mixed in the main room. The Henry Ford school of efficient record production. Brown is a smart, funny man, an MCA Nashville executive and the producer responsible for New Country hotshots like Rosanne Cash, Nancy Griffith and Lyle. He was also Elvis Presley's piano player in the King's declining days, and spins hilarious stories of Colonel Parker's parsimonious payment schemes.



(When guitarist James Burton gave the Colonel an ultimatum on the eve of a tour, Burton got his raise by being "hired" by Vernon, Elvis' dad. *No one* got a raise from the Colonel.)

Lyle arrives at about 9:30 and suggests we get breakfast. We head to a diner where the waitress says, "Hi, Lyle" and an older man comes up to say how much he likes his music. One nice thing about being marketed country instead of rock is that people of all ages listen to your music. "I'm still really encouraged and get a real thrill when this guy comes over and says he's listened to my stuff," Lyle says after the man leaves. "That's a good sign! I really feel like my songs represent me pretty well. If somebody really listens to my songs, I don't think there'd be too many surprises if we ever talked. In that way, if somebody *doesn't* like you for your music it makes it a little easier to deal with. At least you don't feel like they've got you all wrong. Maybe they just really don't like you.

"I think my songs are honest from an emotional standpoint. In that the emotion that I'm feeling is what I'm trying to communicate in the song. But by the same token that I wouldn't want to feel that way for two songs in a row, it's nice to bring it up or change it. If I can convey a lump-in-the-throat emotion, I would certainly want to be able to communicate a poke-in-the-ass kind of emotion as well." Lyle grins and

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blushes. "Uh, make that *kick* in the ass."

What about the women in Lyle's songs? His tunes are full of "Lola" types, big tough women capable of throwing the singer over their shoulders and carrying him off. The hyper-sensitive have accused Lyle of misogyny, but the songs under indictment ("She's No Lady," "Give Back My Heart," "Cowboy Man") all pretty much paint the singer as a goofy cross between Andy Capp and Barney Fife, intimidated by a powerful female. "I always seem to get involved with strong women," Lyle shrugs. "A beautiful, intelligent, self-motivated woman with absolutely no interests or opinion of her own is really hard to come by."

Hold your letters, he's smiling when he says it. Lovett's gift—and it's a gift that can get him in trouble—is for writing about the humor in real situations. People don't mind a writer turning autobiography into pathos, and no one minds funny stories that are fiction. But whether you're Ralph Steadman, Tom Wolfe or Lyle Lovett, folks get testy when you play their real lives for laughs. And even Lovett's strangest songs have some basis in real life. Take "An Acceptable Level of Ecstasy (The Wedding Song)": Lyle goes into great detail about a posh highbrow party with black servants running around offering oysters Rockefeller and checking umbrellas, a fat man from the opera trying to sing "Misty," and the ominous secret that "the whole thing was paid for by the funeral director, who poisoned the saxophone section." As crazy as the whole scene sounds, the descriptions are so perfect that they must have a real basis.

"Of course," Lyle nods, "I would never have thought of that. All the different stuff in that song is really true; it was my second cousin Martha's wedding. Her dad—my mother's first cousin Teddy—runs the family business, a funeral home. They've got a supermarket and right across the street, built with exactly the same architecture, is the funeral home. I always say they run the discount supermarket and funeral home on Main Street, which is what it looks like. The party really was like that. It was done in Old South style. It really was a great party. I got a big plate of food and sat down and my dad leaned over and said, 'You sure you're gonna eat that? I'd be careful if I were you.' That's where I got the bit about killing off the band to get the business to pay for the party." Lyle takes a bite of his breakfast and adds, "I think most people are pretty nice about it, but I write about real people. I don't think anything's really identifiable, but *they* know."

Of course, the real person Lyle writes about most is Lyle. Like most songwriters his most frequent subject is love. Unlike most songwriters, Lyle's songs—from the silliness of "I Married Her" to the poignance of "Simple Song"—often seem full of resentment that the one he loves has power over him. "I don't really mean to express resentment," he says carefully. "I'm a very happy guy, but I don't write about it. That kind of stuff does express maybe an extreme *frustration*, but not really resentment, at a person for having that kind of power." He thinks about it. "But yeah, that does make sense. A song like 'She's No Lady' makes a joke, but I'm just dealing with the frustration I feel in that situation."

"A friend of mine said, 'You really have to be careful doing violent songs, I don't think it's a good idea.' But you have to go as far as you possibly can."

Other singer/songwriters *Musician*'s spoken to, like Tom Petty and Elvis Costello, have admitted to stirring up turmoil in their personal lives so they'll have material for songs. How about you, Lyle? "That's pretty scary, huh?" He repeats it emphatically. "That's *pretty scary*. I would sure like to think I don't do that. 'Cause I really want to be a happy person." He laughs. "Boy, that's a frightening thought. I can sure see the potential. I don't know. Maybe I do that. I don't know. I started playing, really, as a release from feeling that kind of frustration, from wanting to have a girlfriend and not being able to. It was something that helped me feel better. I would hate to think that it would ever get that *backwards*." He is quiet for a minute and then says, "Sure, the potential's there."

What about the potential for exciting it in other people? Rock, country, blues and folk have a long tradition of songs about shooting your baby down by the river. To get too prissy about violence would mean leaving no art but "Little House on the Prairie." Still, when Lyle gets inside a killer's head on songs like "Pontiac" and "L.A. County," he explains the character's motivations so well, makes his case so convincingly, that we sympathize and even identify with the killer. How far into those characters does a songwriter want to go? "You

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"I think I wrote songs because I wanted people to notice me. I guess I was looking to validate myself, and to reassure myself that there was something there even if nobody noticed."

do get into a really unknown area," Lyle says. "The dilemma is, how good do you write the song? It is a tough thing. A friend of mine who plays said, 'You really have to be careful doing songs like that, I don't think it's a good idea.' And it makes sense. But what do you do? You have to go as far as you possibly can with a character, pursue your strongest idea. If you don't, you come up with a crummy song." Suddenly he laughs. "Which I guess isn't the worst thing in the world.

"Talent can be a real hit-and-miss thing, and good ideas are a real hit-and-miss thing. I feel like if I get one then I should keep going. But what you said about those songs is, in my mind, how I wish they would come out. It's really hard to achieve. Those are my favorite songs that I wrote, those get closest to what I'm trying to say. I'm really surprised that people have paid as close attention to my stuff as they have. That songs like 'Pontiac' even get noticed, really. 'Cause there are great songs, dark songs, that don't get noticed. It is surprising to me, I hope it doesn't make me more self-conscious. I thought I was just sliding one on that my friends would like and nobody else would notice."

Well, what about it then? Will his rising celebrity inhibit those darker impulses? "I really don't think so, because it's really hard for me to imagine I'm reaching people real broadly. It still feels really similar to playing in clubs. I can see where Tracy Chapman might consider it, but I just do my best to write something that will hold up. In terms of being too revealing or any of that, it doesn't strike me."

Some of Lyle's most revealing songs, though, are disguised with poetic language. "If I Had a Boat" has a childlike whimsy, with the narrator imagining himself as fast and frightening as lightning, scaring whoever he wants to scare. "The Waltzing Fool" is no less ambiguous, but it is more ambitious, painting a careful picture of a character thought to be an oddball who has "lights in his fingers" but always keeps his hands in his pockets. It's a compelling image of someone afraid of his own specialness, and it's easy to imagine a shy, creative kid like Lyle growing up among Texas cowboys feeling a little embarrassed by his own poetic impulses.

Lyle says, yeah, that's right—he's the waltzing fool. "I think I wrote songs because I wanted people to notice me," he says. "If I was at a party I was never the one speaking up. To talk in class was always really tough for me. I guess I was looking to *validate* myself, and to reassure myself that there was something there, even if nobody noticed. So that's the whole idea of the lights in the fingers and the hands in the pockets."

Was it hard to get onstage for the first time?

"Oh sure, yeah, of course. I think people were nice enough about it, supportive enough to make me want to do it again. But yeah, really hard. I don't really get nervous playing onstage anymore, and when I first started I'd be really nervous about a gig at the pizza joint! So that's better. The whole thing is a real neurotic contradiction, I think. On the one hand, I want to be successful enough to be able to keep doing this and that's what you need, but in another way it's sort of strange. I really don't want to do anything else. I just hope I can keep writing things that are good—not just keep doing it to do it. The whole thing about playing—and I don't think I've ever said this—from a personal standpoint, the whole motivation for performing is this idea of being able to be appreciated for being myself. And that's what I've been able to do, really. Even coming to Nashville and making these records, I've really been fortunate in that I'm working with people who really let me be myself. So if people like me for that—I guess that's really what I want." Lyle looks up. "It's nice to be appreciated for being how you really are."

Back at the studio, Lyle throws himself into mixing. He is fiddling with the horns again. Should the lone alto be mixed slightly higher than the tenors to give the part an edge? Or should it be pushed down, to make the sound round and soulful? Engineer Chuck urges soulful. Lyle overrules him. He wants edgy. The phone rings; it's Lyle's music publisher. Lyle grabs the receiver and explains they're right in the middle of something, could he call back... He interrupts himself as the publisher explains something. "Uh huh... so both names? ... But if I want to take those two lines out later I can do it? ... Well, okay then, that's fine with me... Yes... As long as we're sure we can change it later if we want to... Okay... Thanks..." He brightens. "Call me later!"

Hanging up, Lyle swivels around and explains that as a joke at the end of a new song called "What Do You Do," he sings, "That's the story of, that's the glory of What Do You Do." It is a lyrical (if not melodic) sendup of the old chestnut "The Glory of Love" ("That's the story of, that's the glory of love"). After recording his tune, it occurred to Lyle that it would be polite if he asked the copyright holders of "Glory of Love" if they minded his joke. So Lyle's publisher called Shapiro and Bernstein, the firm that owns the "Glory of Love" copyright, who said they wanted co-writing credit and a third of the royalties. Further, they wanted the title on the record to read, "What Do You Do/The Glory of Love." Now bear in mind that we are not talking about Lyle quoting a whole song, or even the legally compelling eight notes of melody. We're talking about quoting a *rhyme*. It's doubtful any court would ever force a songwriter to cough up cash for that. Lyle does not care. He says that if Shapiro and Bernstein feel they are entitled to a third of his song, let 'em have it. "My publisher asked me to just change that line," Lyle shrugs. "But I liked it. And I like to be very straight-up about these things."

Before I leave Nashville, Lyle runs off a cassette of the rough mixes, which I play in the car going to the airport. One of the songs on the tape is "Wallisville Road," a mid-tempo country rocker deleted from the final LP. It is the closest thing to a mainstream, Rodney Crowell-type single on the album; that he's dumped it demonstrates Lyle's determination to make his shots from the corners. But that's not the surprise. The surprise is "Nobody Knows Me Like My Baby," a slow song Lyle did not play for me in the studio. A delicate piano and acoustic guitar arrangement tiptoes along dreamily as the singer intones, "I like cream in my coffee, I hate to be alone on Sunday. Nobody knows me like my baby." Now this is a folk/country device that goes back further than "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry": The singer describes simple details of his environment, returning at the end of each verse to a title

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declaration that apparently has nothing to do with the rest of the song—but which takes on more emphasis each time it's repeated, until it starts to dominate the whole scene he's set up. That title line ("I'm so lonesome I could cry," "Nobody knows me like my baby") shows what's *really* on the singer's mind. Lyle's song establishes its sleepy, Sunday morning mood, establishes that nobody knows him as well as she does, and then, in the last couplet, sticks in the knife: "And she cried, 'How could you do it?'/ I swore, 'There ain't nothin' to it.' Nobody knows me like my baby."

Ouch. Remember Morrissey's joke that he couldn't write a love song without putting in a get-out clause? With that couplet Lyle Lovett turns his whole dreamy love song on its head, revealing what it is the singer's baby knows about him: She knows he's a snake. Even his choice of verbs says it: She cries, he swears.

"Well, it's a cheatin' song," Lyle says in Houston a week later. "It was intended to be a cheatin' song. You know I never write songs about being happy." We're in his dressing room between shows at a club called Rockefeller's. Lyle's smiling, but he's playing his cards a little close to his vest tonight. Onstage a lame local disc jockey is trying to turn his m.c. spot into a comedy career by making dirty jokes about Kitty Dukakis. The crowd (who are either politically liberal or socially conservative) don't like it and let him know. Backstage a local record rep helps himself to some complimentary alcohol and then asks a woman guest of Lyle's to turn around once so he can check out how pretty she is. He then trips and pratfalls into the Mexican food. Lyle introduces me to his uncle, asks me to take an Instamatic photo of him with his aunt and greets his father. Lyle and his dad smile at each other but barely speak, as if holding comment on this scene till they're alone. Lyle's house is adjacent to his family's farm, half an hour from Houston. (Maybe it's Lyle's ironic detachment from cowboy macho that makes him call it a farm; they raise horses, wear cowboy hats—any other Texan would call it a *ranch.*) Houston, America's fourth largest city, has exploded so quickly that it is still possible to live a "Bonanza" life a short drive from the metropolis. No wonder Lyle combines affection for rural values with urban detachment. He's Adam Cartwright.

"I always wanted to be a cowboy," Lyle smiles. "No, really. I grew up around cowboys at home, or people who were sort of *like* cowboys. Country people. As a kid watching TV I always thought, 'Cowboys!' It's the great American myth. And I think it's a good metaphor for man's individual struggle."

Onstage, opening act Robert Keen is singing a cowboy song, "This Old Porch," which Lyle collaborated on and included on his first album. Keen's version of the song is faster than Lyle's, sung in *Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* vocal bursts. "This old porch is like a big red and white Hereford bull standing under a mesquite tree out in Agua Dulce." Keen does a monolog in the middle of the song, recounting his days working as a cut-rate fence mender for a crusty old rancher. Keen's song is a celebration of Texas mythos, while Lyle's mournful version is a farewell to it.

When he comes offstage, I ask Keen whose porch it was he and Lyle have immortalized. "It was my porch," he smiles. "I met Lyle when we were in college at Texas A&M. I was actually sitting on this front porch playing guitar and Lyle rode by on his bicycle. He came up and said, 'What do you play?' We just talked about music for a little while. We ended up in an English class together and got to be real good friends. I started playing guitar in my second year in college, I'd never played an instrument till then. I guess that's why we got to be such good friends: We were kind of on the same level! 'Hey, I learned *this* chord!' That kind of thing.

"'This Old Porch' is one of the first songs I wrote and played consistently. One of the first that had some punch to it. I had written a lot of the song and then Lyle just came up one day and said, 'Hey, check this out.' He'd ended the song. He really wrapped up the song and gave it a lot of emotional feeling. Mine is the descriptive adjective stuff, and his is the *personalization* of the song." Lyle's personalization is telling. While Keen's verses make the old porch a simile for every local charm, from "a steamy greasy plate of enchiladas" to a shuttered movie palace, Lyle goes straight for the gut:

This old porch is just a long time of waiting and forgetting
And remembering the coming back and not crying about the leaving
And remembering the falling down,

"THE TWO-STEP IT DRUG LIKE A BALL AND CHAIN"

A guy named Bill Collings in Austin built my guitars," **Lyle Lovett** says. Okay, we muttered, no ad there. What kind of strings do you use, Lyle? "I've been using medium gauge." No, no—the *brand!* "I switch from Yamaha to Guild to GHS, depending on what's in stock." Okay, we'll say you use two of each. "I do like phosphor bronze," he adds helpfully. Lyle says he knows nothing about electric guitars, nothing about microphones. "I do own a Shure SM57 microphone from when I used to carry my PA around in the back of my truck." Dare we ask if you have a home studio? "I have a 10-year-old Teac 3340." Okay, let's get serious. We better go back down to Masterphonics and talk to Chuck Ainlay, Lyle's engineer.

Sure enough, Chuck fills us in on the secrets of making your voice sound like Lyle Lovett's (pay attention, Jesse Winchester): "On a lot of Lyle's vocals and practically everything we overdubbed, we bypassed the console and went through the George Massenberg pre-amp—the GML. The transformer was discrete. We'd use a variety of microphones and go through that, use some compression, and go straight to tape. We went for the shortest signal path we could follow. Although on some things we went through the SSL console. We used EMK omni mikes a lot."

"I used the Sanken," Lyle pipes in. We knew he was holding out.

"We used the Sanken on his vocals," Chuck nods, his EMK deal shot to hell. "It's a Japanese dual-diaphragm condenser microphone. It's got one diaphragm for the ultra-high frequencies crossed over to a larger diaphragm for the mid and low frequencies. There's not really another microphone like that."

Well, that was a pretty useful stop. Come on, let's go down to the Warwick Hotel and see what the Large Band are playing. There's **Ray Herndon**. He's got a reissue '57 Fender Stratocaster—supplemented on record by a Gibson ES-175—plugged into a Mesa Boogie amp. Ray uses D'Addario strings, an Ernie Ball volume pedal and Roland effects. **Matt Rollings** is playing a Yamaha grand piano and a Yamaha DX7.

John Hagan's cello was made by an Englishman named Thomas Earle Hesketh in 1900. It is equipped with a Fishman V-100 Transducer pickup, which hooks it to a 10-band Boss EQ and an Alesis MicroVerb, controlled by a GDR volume switcher. John checks himself out on a Gallien-Krueger stage monitor. He also has a Fishman on his fiddle, which he plays upright, like a cello, to the abject horror of all *real* violinists. A nameless, brandless, beat-up piece of work, all we can safely say about that fiddle is that it was not made by no Englishman.

Dan Tomlinson plays Yamaha drums with sticks, brushes and the heel of his hand. The great **Willie Weeks** is using a Yamaha bass these days, and says he is in the market for a good amp. Endorsees may send free bass amps to Willie care of *Musician.*

Let's hear from the horn section! **Steve Marsh** plays Yamaha alto and soprano saxes, **Andy Laster** goes for Selmer Mark VIs, baritone and alto. **Harvey Thompson** blows a Selmer Mark VI tenor. Nice guys. Too bad they were all poisoned at that G.B. gig.

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*THE HONORABLE THING TO DO.

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and the laughter and the curse of luck
From all of them sons of bitches who said we'd never get back up.

Lyle's college days were the turning point in his life and career. He had owned a guitar since childhood, but did not take it seriously until he got to college in the mid-'70s. Then he started taking music very seriously indeed. As soon as he learned a few songs he began playing in restaurants and at the school coffeehouse, where he started booking shows and organizing hoot nights. Texas A&M was two hours from Houston and Austin, three from Dallas—and Lyle worked the regional folk club circuit. A journalism major, he interviewed Texas musicians such as Nancy Griffith and Michael Murphy for the school paper. Lyle was that rare student who actually used college to learn his trade.

"The motivation to write always came from needing songs to play," he says. "I played the same four or five clubs every month, and they were all places where I played my own stuff. It was always a good feeling to be able, the next time I played, to have one new song. I could make my rounds in a month before, and now it takes a year. It definitely slows down the need for new material and the real motivation to work on it."

Lyle turned 31 five days ago, and now the doltish deejay, who has been politely asked to cool the offensive jokes, insists on leading the audience in singing "Happy Birthday" to Lyle as he comes onstage. Lyle tells the audience that he and the Large Band have finished a new album, just played Austin and Dallas, and wanted to end up back home.

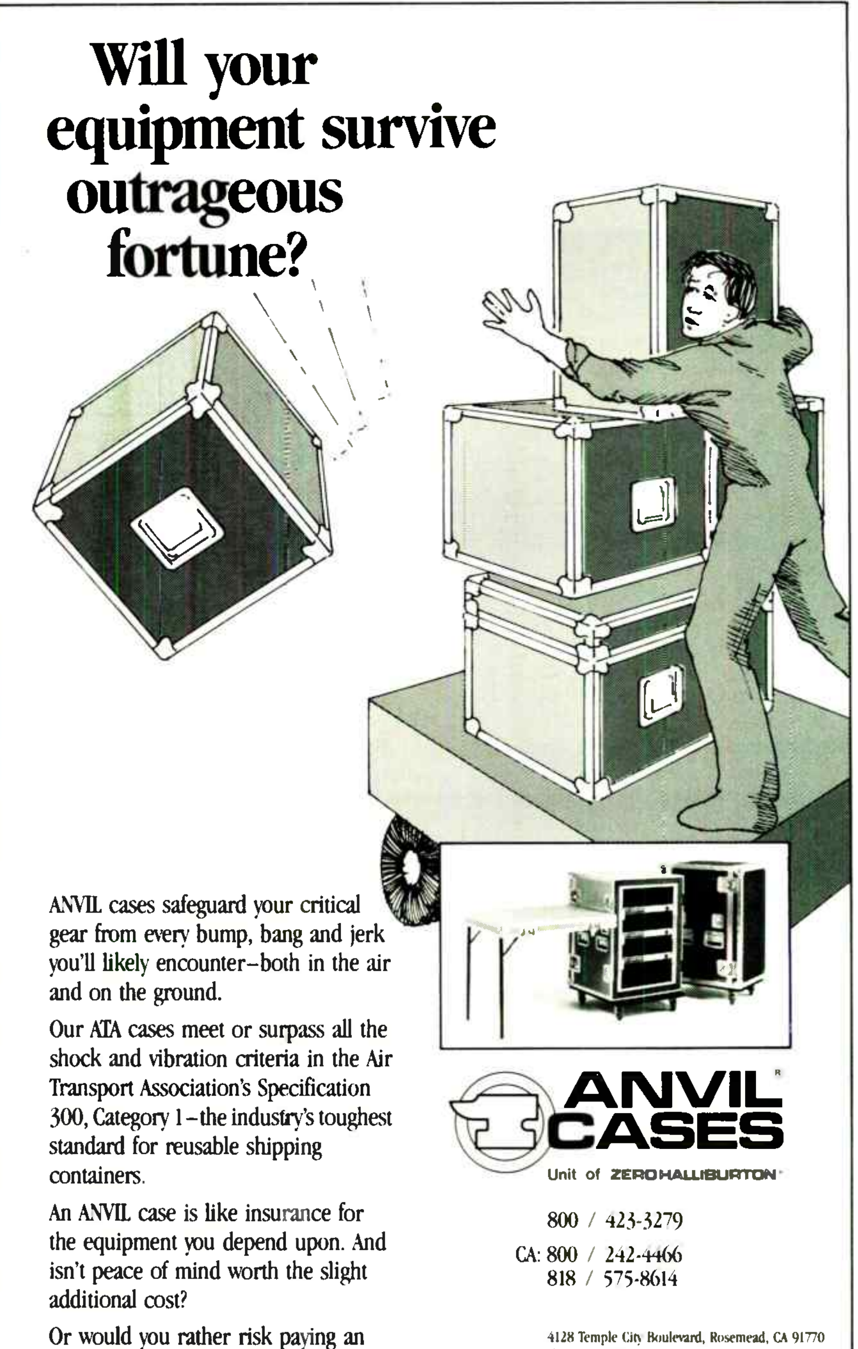
Someone yells, "We love you, Lyle!"

"Thanks, uhhhh." Lyle looks flustered and the people laugh. "You're a fine-looking crowd."

The Large Band show is an eclectic's delight, covering not just the expected blues, folk and country, but extra stretches from Francine Reed's brassy spotlight number, "Wild Women Never Get the Blues," to a gorgeous reworking of "You Can't Resist It"—which on record was an AOR rock song and here becomes a riveting workout for amplified cello and hand-played drumkit. Lyle introduces "L.A. County" with, "This is your typical fatalistic country song: boy meets girl, boy shoots girl."

During *his* version of "This Old Porch," Lyle gets reflective. The room is filled with not only his family, but old friends, supporters, fellow guitar pickers, even the local restaurant owner who was the first person to ever pay Lyle to sing. This is more than a birthday party, it's a homecoming celebration. So when Lyle gets to the point in the song where his friend Robert Keen did a monolog, Lyle starts talking, too.

"We used to hang out a lot and play guitar on his porch," Lyle says tentatively as he strums. "Talk to just about everybody that walked by. You know when he does this song, Robert tells a great story. I've always admired Robert's ability to do that while he was playin' the guitar." The audience laughs and Lyle grins. "I've always had trouble with that." He gets serious again. "A lot of folks walked by his house there. We would always say hi, always strike up a conversation. Most folks would talk to us. Every now and then somebody wouldn't say anything. They'd just look down at the ground and walk a little faster. We met a lot of people, made a lot of friends. And all those folks that just kept walkin'," Lyle looks pained, "I always wanted to tell them I really didn't *want* anything from them. I wasn't trying to sell them anything. Sure weren't gonna hurt 'em or nothin'." The room is leaning forward now. Lyle Lovett searches for the words. "All I was trying to do was..." He looks achingly sad "...learn how to play the guitar and talk at the same time." M



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photography by steve marsel

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achin' to be understood

the replacements face up and 'fess up

Tommy Stinson, Chris Mars, Paul Westerberg and Slim Dunlap

tucked in a booth at Minneapolis' CC Club, fresh back from months of coast-hopping spent in making the new Replacements album, Paul Westerberg takes a slug from his beer and reflects on the lot of the near-rock-star. "The night the U2 movie premiered in L.A., we were across the street from the Mann Chinese Theater at the hotel. It was me and Slim and Dan Baird from the Georgia Satellites. We were sitting there talking about guitars, and I was starting to wonder why the drinks were flowing so freely. Finally the waitress comes up and asks us, 'Aren't you guys in U2?' I told her we were in the Ramones. We were cut off instantly."

Just then his story is interrupted by an old favorite on the jukebox. "Ah, Tom Jones," he says with unfeigned admiration as the first bars of "She's a Lady" spill out of the speaker behind us. "Now there's a singer. I love this. Got it on CD, matter of fact. Best song

by steve perry

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Paul Anka ever wrote." A lot of Replacements fans will go to their graves wanting to believe that Westerberg's affection for some of the most scorned pop records of the '60s and '70s is some sort of hipster gag, but the joke's on them. He loves the stuff.

"Let's see," he says, "there were the Raspberries—'I Wanna Be with You,' 'Let's Pretend.' 'I'll Be There' by the Jackson 5, which we've done live. Slade, though that was fairly hip to like because they were loud. Joni Mitchell, I always liked her. Jackson Browne, 'One Bad Apple.' Bobby Sherman's 'Little Woman.' I love that stuff. T-Rex was always a favorite. My friends didn't like them because they were all into Zeppelin and Deep Purple, and they were put off by the fact that he was supposedly gay.

"I liked the Go-Gos, I loved Blondie. That was one of the first shows I saw when I turned 19. Hank Williams, too. I guess he had a certain coolness even then. I don't like him now quite as much as I used to. Back then he was a mystery, kind of an old, broken-down thing. As I get a little older, I can feel for him. I mean, fuck, he died when he was what, 29?"

And Paul's 28.

"We didn't realize there's a thing called promotion people. We'd say, 'Get out of here in your leather pants.' Talk about bite the hand; we tore off the arm."

"Yeah, with like a month to go. So...it seems a little more tragic now. A little more real."

A few beers and 30 or so spins of the jukebox later, Westerberg is ready to leave the bar and go play the final mixes of the Replacements' third Sire LP, *Don't Tell a Soul.* "I think you're about the first person outside the immediate circle to hear this," he offers a little anxiously. Then he drops to the floor and starts tinkering with the controls on the amp: plus five on the treble, minus three on the bass, and crank the sucker. "I went to the audiologist today," he screams over the music a few minutes later. "He says I got problems at 4,000 hertz. I'm losin' the high end."

Even with the tone controls set like hell's own jukebox, the album is riveting from the very first lick. Westerberg's voice strikes you first: It's always had a great rock 'n' roll edge, but now it sounds more confident and emotionally encompassing—positively *sweet* at certain times, tough and intractable as ever at others. The songs are very different, too. In place of the formula that was becoming the Mats' vinyl signature—a handful of Paul-only ballads, a handful of full-bore raveups with the faint odor of filler, and a plurality of sturdy, sometimes brilliant rockers that split the difference—*Don't Tell a Soul* weaves Westerberg's disparate impulses into a fully realized pop record, with plenty of hooks and plenty of muscle, too.

The album contains nothing that hasn't been implicit in their records for years. But it's the first time the band has taken the time and care to make a *record,* as opposed to a collection of more or less live performances in the studio; and it's the first time Westerberg has had the nerve to speak in his natural voice—tentative, doubt-ridden, as prone to bittersweet sentimentality as to righteous anger—for the length of an entire album.

At first he didn't think that the songs he'd written could be a Replacements album. "I told everybody this was gonna be my acoustic record, with no drums. But then, you know, you have a couple beers, and I'm the first one to say okay, turn that goddamn amp up! Let's rock 'n' roll a little bit. I think I was trying to conceptualize it too much, and when you do that, what you get is not pure. It has to just happen, and whatever feels best is the best way to do it."

So instead of the long-rumored Westerberg solo project, it became the next Mats album after all. And a pivotal one, at that, since it's almost as certain to alienate some old fans as to win a lot of new ones. Back in the CC Club a few days later, bassist Tommy Stinson brushes off the probable backlash. "We won't even hear the people who say that. We haven't yet. There's always that jerk in the front row who yells, 'Where's your brother? What'd you do with your brother?' I mean, fuck you, we grew up and he didn't. It's not that big a deal who says we're selling out anymore. People get panicky when you're not their little pocket group anymore—their favorite little group that only they know about."

"People panic whenever things change," nods guitarist Slim Dunlap. "Okay, so this record isn't what people will expect it to be. That should make us happy. If you try to stay pigeonholed and please the old fans, that's the kiss of death. You can't please everybody. But we didn't sell out, I know that. I have no problem saying that to people. What is a sellout, anyway? When you do a commercial for beer? That to me is a sellout. A band growing and changing isn't a sellout."

It's a moot question, really, because the pop accents of *Don't Tell a Soul* represent a move the band has to make. After five years-plus as doyens of the college/alternative crowd, it's time to take the next hill or risk the long slide toward self-parody. There is also a question of pride. Contrary to bohemian chic, Paul Westerberg is, in his own perverse way, obsessed with pop stardom. Which is not to say he's infatuated with the idea of limos and Letterman guest spots, or even that he's sure he *wants* to be a pop star. It's just that he can't stop thinking about it. Westerberg is as disenchanted with much of mainstream rock as any of his contemporaries, but the fact remains that when he was growing up hit radio was his lifeline. And deep in his gut, he can see no reason why the Replacements shouldn't have some hits of their own.

"It's almost embarrassing not to have had one by now," he says. "It's like, you start out and you want as big a hit record as the Beatles. And then you realize that ain't cool, you don't want to have hits. Well, now I do. We should have a hit. Name me a band that's gotten progressively better over the course of eight, nine years and hasn't had a hit record. NRBQ, maybe. But there's really no one, is there? In the world, in the history of rock 'n' roll, *ever.*"

One reason, Westerberg fesses up, is the band's penchant

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for occasionally shooting itself in the foot. "When we first got on the label, we didn't realize there's a thing called promotion people. All of a sudden we're on Warner Bros., and these people start coming around backstage. We say, 'Who the fuck are *you*? Get the fuck outta here in your leather pants.' After you do that for three years, you sit back and wonder, '*Gee, why don't we have a hit?*' Talk about bite the hand: We tore off the arm. It's not like we're now gonna go back and brown-nose, but we see, okay, it's their job to put the record on the radio. Now we realize there is that end of the business."

Westerberg's more sensitive to knee-jerk recriminations from old fans and cohorts than the rest of the band seems to be, but with a band as prone to writing songs about itself as the Replacements, the proof is right there in the grooves. "Time for a decision to be made," Paul sings in "Hold My Life," the first song on their first major-label LP, *Tim*. "Crack up in the sun/ Or lose it in the shade." Once the dilemma is posed, though, he retreats from it: "Hold my life/ Until I'm ready to use it/ Hold my life/ Cuz I just might lose it."

Compare that to "Talent Show," the first cut on the new album.

In my waxed-up hair and my painted shoes
Got an offer that you might refuse
Tonight, tonight we're gonna take a stab
Come on along, we'll grab a cab
We ain't much to look at, so
Close your eyes, here we go
We're playin' at the talent show

Stinson, Westerberg and Mars trash their rehearsal space.

The song contains the same trepidation as "Hold My Life"; the very image of a talent show suggests boundless potential for publicly embarrassing yourself. But at the end of the song Westerberg takes a plunge: "Too late to turn back/ Here we go!" And that they do. *Don't Tell a Soul* is the best rapprochement with straight-ahead pop that any postpunk band has ever achieved—better than anything R.E.M.'s ever done, better than anything Hüsker Dü ever dreamed of.

Funny thing, though: Apart from "Talent Show," very little of the record seems to be about the band. "This time more than any," he agrees, "the songs *aren't* about the Replacements. That's a difference. Because when you think about the Replacements, or when I do, it's sorta like we're anti-establishment. And there are other things to write about. I guess to this point I haven't addressed a lot of adult issues. But this record is less 'we/them'—by which I mean, the band versus the establishment." He stops himself, shakes his head. "I don't know," he says with a characteristically rueful smirk. "I'm diggin' a little grave here..."

Indecision is more than a theme in Westerberg's songwriting; it runs all through the band's history. What this has meant in practice is that a lot of the most important decisions they've made have come only when their hands were finally forced, and on grounds that were shaky at best. In preparing to record *Don't Tell a Soul*, Westerberg hired a producer named Tony Berg "because he seemed like a nice guy," but when Berg proved to have less rock 'n' roll experience than the band had been led to believe, they fired him almost as casually as they had hired him. Then they hired Matt Wallace, a young producer whose scant credits included such blockbusters as Faith No More, Sons of Freedom and the New Monkees, on the basis of a single phone call. He seemed like a nice guy, too; this time they were luckier.

The Mats have done things this way since the beginning. "They never said to me, 'Will you be our manager?'" recalls Peter Jesperson, the band's discoverer, mentor and de facto manager from 1980-85, and the repository of 1,001 shaggy dog Mats stories. "It just happened one night at the Longhorn in Minneapolis. The manager of the club, this guy named Hartley, was badly organized, so there were always holes in the live calendar. One night after they played there, he started pressuring them to play again a couple of days later. I thought they were too good to wear themselves thin doing that, and I said so. "Hartley exploded at that. He said, 'Let's go outside! We gotta talk where it's quiet!' So we all went outside. I can still picture this. It was like a game show, with the four guys sitting on a concrete bench, and here's Hartley and here's me. Hartley's going, 'I think you guys should take this gig!' And I'm saying, 'No, I don't think you should. You're too good. Don't

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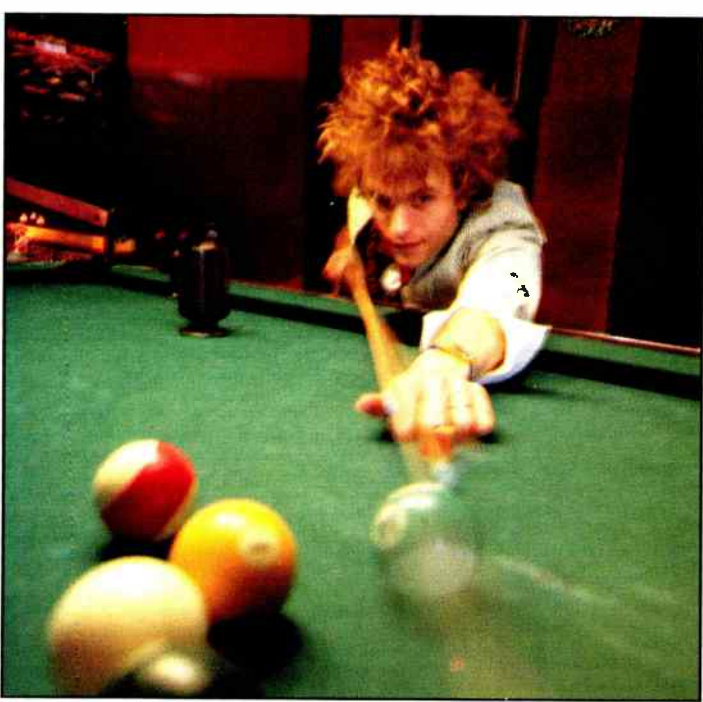
sell yourself short.' Finally Hartley said, 'Do I have to talk to this guy every time I book you?' Paul kinda looked at me like, would that be okay?" Jesperson gave him a furtive nod. "And so Paul says, 'Yeah.' That was my official hiring."

If the Replacements have always seemed ill at ease making career decisions, one reason is that they never got accustomed to thinking they had a career. They were just guys from the neighborhood who wanted to play rock 'n' roll. "I met Paul when I was managing Oar Folk [a record shop] and we were getting Twin Tone going," says Jesperson. "One day he came in and gave me a tape with four songs on it. I was backed up with tapes at the time, so I didn't listen and I didn't listen. Paul came in two or three times to ask what I thought, but I still hadn't gotten to it. At that time all the bands around here sounded like the Stooges, and it was getting hard to think of new ways to say no to these bands.

"Finally I just took a stack of tapes and a boombox back to my office. Six or seven tapes into this listening session, I threw in the tape Paul gave me. About 20 seconds into the first song I went, holy fuck, and I called three of my best musical pals to hear it. They all came down and agreed that the tape was great. So I called Paul back and said, 'Were you thinking of a single or an album?' He said, 'You want to *record* this? We only wanted you to help us get a gig at the Longhorn.'"

To Westerberg it must have seemed part fairy tale, part destiny fulfilled. "This'll sound storybook," he admits, "but the first day I walked in and saw the other guys together, I knew it was magical. I don't want to get into describing how everybody looked and everything, but I knew the second I saw Tommy, Bob [Stinson] and Chris [Mars] that it was a good mixture—Tommy being so young and Bob being so loud and Chris being so versatile. I knew it would work. The end."

Well, not *exactly* the end. "Did Paul tell you how he got into the band?" laughs Jesperson. "Basically he lied his way in. He used to listen to them practicing when he'd come home from work. He'd hear this noise coming from the basement and he'd hide in the bushes and listen. He ended up meeting Chris at school or something, and Chris said, 'Why don't you come jam with us?'



Tommy Stinson shootin' dirty pool.

"So he did. But they had another singer at the time. He was pretty crappy, and Paul thought, I'm better than this guy. So he went and told the guy, 'Listen, I really think you're great, but the band doesn't like you.' And then he told the band, 'Hey, he doesn't want to play with *you* anymore.' The guy ended up splitting, and that's how Paul got the frontman slot."

About a year after they met Jesperson, the Replacements made their first Twin Tone album, *Sorry Ma, Forgot to Take Out the Trash.* Before long they were taking it on the road in a beat-up van, rock 'n' roll innocents playing weekends on the Minneapolis-Duluth-Madison circuit and working hard at seeming hip and jaded beyond their years. Tommy was 13 at the time, Paul 20; Chris and Bob fell between them in age. "I remember the first time we were actually leaving to head east, past Madison," says Jesperson. "We were going to Milwaukee, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, whatever. I remember Chris asking, 'Are there any mountains in Wisconsin?' And when we got to the time zone change in Ohio, I said, 'Okay everybody, it's an hour later now. Set your watches.' Bob says, 'What do you mean?' I said, 'We're in Eastern time now. It's an hour later.' Bob goes, '*They can't do that!*'" He laughs out loud at the memory. "It was pretty swell in those days."

The poignancy of the story is that in a much larger sense, the Replacements really didn't know where they were going, or what to expect when they got there. Like a lot of neighborhood bands, they originally conceived of playing rock 'n' roll not as a means of getting something, but as a means of getting away from something: dead-end jobs, stunted lives. Westerberg describes his upbringing as thoroughly middle-class, but that seems doubtful when you consider that some of his unreleased songs have titles like "Bad Worker" and "I Was a Gas Station Attendant." Or when you hear the very working-class gorge that rises in the singer of "Waitress in the Sky" when he thinks a stewardess is slighting him because he's flying coach. "Don't treat me special and don't kiss my ass," he growls, "just treat me like the way they treat 'em up in First Class." On one level a pure toss-off—the performance is rough even by Replacements standards, and the melody line is cadged from Johnny Rivers' "Mountain of Love"—"Waitress" is ironically also one of the better evocations of class resentment that '80s rock has produced. And pretty firm evidence that Westerberg's sensibilities are anything but middle-class.

But however he chooses to characterize his background, Westerberg's own prospects—and those of the other guys in the band—weren't too good. Everyone in the band hated school; not one even finished high school. (Paul got through twelfth grade, but was denied graduation for detention undone.) "We're a diplomaless band," Westerberg says now with an air of casual resignation, but he couldn't always afford to be so diffident.

"When I was 17 or 18," he said last year, "I worked in a Munsingwear factory, where I pushed this cart with wet fabric around. I worked in a steel mill for two weeks, loading a steel crusher. I was a janitor, too. I had enough of sweeping under other people's feet and having them look down at me. They're getting minimum wage, and they're looking down at me like I'm beneath them. I think that spurred me on to get in a band.

"I guess I wanted to be somebody. I didn't want to be a working stiff, which is all I was. I thought, God, it'd be cool to be up there, and it'd be neat not to have to work in the day and to do this at night instead. It was very simple: I admired the things I saw on TV, and the bands I saw around here."

Bad jobs weren't the only problem he was trying to rise above. "With my friends," he admits, "I always felt a little out of place. I like sports and stuff, but I never quite...everybody I knew liked to go swimming and fishing and hunting and to

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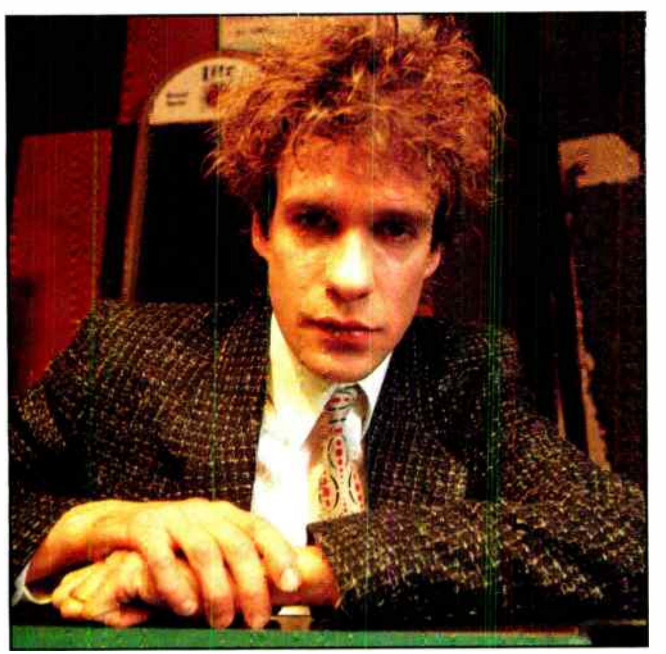

"I've come to grips with the fact that I'm an artist. For years I pretended I wasn't. I pretended I was a punk, a rocker, a drunk and a hood-lum. I'm not a hood-lum. I'm a f#@®☆g artist."

football games. I didn't fit that. I never remember feeling truly comfortable with any of my friends. There was stuff I wanted to tell them that they would laugh at when I tried to explain it. They'd say, 'Guys don't talk that way!' And I was afraid of girls, which is another thing guys aren't supposed to talk about. So I wrote songs instead." He pulls up short, a little embarrassed. "So you know the rest. Blah blah blah."

But getting into the band was no panacea; Westerberg simply carried the same problems into a different arena. At least he was playing rock 'n' roll, but for a long time the sense of identity he'd been looking for didn't come any easier. "It's been hard for me to do," he says, "but I've come to grips with the fact that I'm an artist. For years I pretended I wasn't. I pretended I was a punk, I pretended I was a rocker, and a drunk, and a hoodlum. I'm not a hoodlum. I'm a fucking artist. And now I can deal with that, but I hid it until 1985. That was at a point where I was out of the family, so to speak. I grew away from them, and I didn't know where I belonged."

For the postpunk bands that have emerged in the 1980s, paying homage to the punk explosion of 1976 has become almost an act of ritual affirmation, like genuflecting on entering a church. On first blush the Replacements seem to be no exception. "When I heard the Sex Pistols for the first time," says Westerberg, "I was in this band called Neighborhood Threat, playing lead guitar but not singing. This was a band that played a lot of Rush covers and Budgie. The day we got the Sex Pistols record and put it on, it was like, I ain't playin' with these fuckers ever again. I'm gonna go get a haircut and start a fuckin' band and sing. I've said before that it was Johnny's voice that convinced me I could sing, too. Or that I *couldn't* sing, too, but I was going to anyway.

"It was the first rock 'n' roll I'd heard, to my ears—'cause you're too young to understand the Rolling Stones when you're five. What I heard was excitement, and a certain sense of abandon. And I think there's an element of yearning, a sort of pissed-off yearning. You want something that may be unattainable, but that doesn't stop you from wanting it all the more. That's the feeling I got from the good punk bands. It wasn't a pose; they really were angry. I wasn't sure what they were angry about, but I wasn't sure what I was angry about, either."

Punk/hardcore was the original premise of the Replacements, but a funny thing happened on the way to mohawks and premature obscurity: The Mats discovered they weren't really a punk band. "We were probably a little too late and a little too young. Or a little too early and a little too smart. We were spawned by power-pop and hardcore, which were both offshoots of punk, so we were a product of that environment. But basically we were a pop band that played really loud and really fast. And I guess we never got fully assaulted by the whole punk thing. We just had some records; we never heard it on the radio or anything. I think the Midwest saved us from being a punk band, because the only punk band around here was the Suicide Commandos, and we were too young to get in to see them. With no one to imitate, we had to make up our own version of it."

Being your basic unreconstructed pop fan didn't help Westerberg's standing as a punk, either. "Right. Though I was afraid to admit that at the time. Hell, we were *never* a punk band. But I dare say we were truer punks than a lot of bands who dressed in black and had the haircuts and said the slogans. We never took shit from anybody and we did what we wanted—which was more daring than saying, I am the anti-Christ, I am an anti-perspirant, or whatever."

A few days later at the CC Club, Chris Mars seconds that emotion: "I'm a '70s fan. I can't help it."

"Hear, hear!" cries Tommy, who was all of three years old when that endlessly maligned decade began.

"We were this way since the beginning," continues Mars, "but we were lumped into this little punk thing. From the beginning, we played for skinheads and we had long hair and we played 90 miles an hour. But that wasn't us. In the back of our minds, we were always thinking Thin Lizzy."

"We tried to fit their mold," says Tommy, "but we secretly liked the other side that they didn't like. We were a suck-ass hardcore band."

"It was almost a battle," laughs Mars. "'Okay, we see your bald heads, and we're supposed to play fast for you skinhead fuckers.' You sit there doing that and you start to get angry, because you're trying to play so fast and meanwhile you're thinking, what the fuck am I doing here? And then they yell, 'Play faster!'

"But that," he declares after a moment, "was then."

"And this is now!" yells Tommy with manic glee, lunging

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toward the tape recorder to deliver a special message: *"Fuck you, skinheads!"*

A few minutes later, somebody punches up "Sugar Sugar" by the Archies on the box. "We used to play this for the skinheads," Tommy recalls. "It was about three times this fast, and nobody could sing the high part."

"Back when we was fake," smiles Mars.

Though it wasn't apparent at the time, the band found that once they'd run the hardcore gamut, they'd also come to the end of the road with Bob Stinson. As a guitar player, Stinson lived out the advice he always dispensed to drivers when the band's van was stuck in traffic: "Close your eyes and floor it!" When Westerberg lost interest in writing that kind of music, Stinson lost interest in the band. So for a couple of years (the period spanning *Let It Be* and *Tim*, essentially) they continued to coexist uneasily, with Westerberg writing the occasional "Dose of Thunder" for Bob to go nuts on. He admits now that a lot of it was filler.

"It got to the point where I couldn't grow and write the kind of songs I wanted to with basically a punk/metal guitar player wailing his ass off on every song. I always liked writing songs that I thought the band could get off on, that they could shine on. I ran out of ideas that Bob could shine on."

The differences were more than musical. "Bob lost the concept of the band. He was just himself, and just into what he was doing. And frankly, I felt like he didn't like me anymore. Personal things like that have an effect. How am I supposed to write a song thinking that the lead guitar player doesn't like my songs and doesn't like me? He believed the image we played with onstage. It's scary, like the Brian Jones thing. Not that we were posing at it; we drank and took drugs a lot. All of that. But Bob thought that *was* the Replacements. He didn't understand, oh, we gotta play some music, too. We gotta *do* something."

Even after they'd shed Bob, and along with him the last remnants of their hardcore reputation, the Replacements still faced some serious problems. The "sham" Westerberg felt himself living out at times was more than a matter of accommodating a musical style he wasn't interested in anymore; it involved larger questions about the climate of postpunk rock generally.

Joke as they might about their own failings as a punk band, the Replacements were one of the purest products of the postpunk rock scene that took shape in the early '80s. Countless new bands shared a widespread contempt for mainstream rock, directed partly at the smug, passionless professionalism of many '70s rockers but more fundamentally at rock's seeming cooption. In the '60s, it was hip to have hits, to be a "rock star," because rock was an outsider's language. But in the early '80s, mainstream rock seemed too often synonymous with middlebrow entertainment. So the postpunk bands embraced amateurism and sneered at popularity. In so doing, many bands fell victim to a perverse elitism as stifling and false in its own way as any Rod Stewart star trip. As the college/alternative scene grew more and more cloistered toward the middle of the decade, fans grew more and more possessive. Favored bands were supposed to be "their little pocket group that only they knew about." For a lot of bands this poses no problems; for a band as restless and ambitious as the Replacements (or R.E.M.), who aren't about to stay in one place, it does.

"Just the other day," says Westerberg, "I was downtown and a couple of punk girls walked by and burst out laughing. It didn't really hurt, because it seemed to me more of a pose for them. They're supposed to laugh at me because I used to be a punk, and look at me now. That kind of irritated me. It made me wanna follow 'em and spit at 'em." He smiles. "So I guess some things don't change." "To an extent I think it gets to him," says Jesperson. "But on the other hand he'd say, 'Fuck it. If they think I'm deserting them, then they don't understand what I'm doing.'"

Beer for breakfast: 8:30 a.m. at the CC Club.

But amateurism eventually became an end in itself for too many bands. It turned into a pose as ludicrous as the ones that generated it. "Oh, yeah," sighs Westerberg, "after eight years...In the first two years our antics got us gigs, got us loved, got us hated. At least it got our name around. We played that up. We were pretty young and we didn't worry about what would happen tomorrow. All we wanted to do was make sure we were headlining the next gig, not Hüsker Dü. So we would make sure the night before that we played twice as bad or twice as good as them just so people would have our names on their lips. At times it *has* become an albatross. I've been onstage at times when I felt like, this is bunk, this is pretending. When we started we were hacks. We were amateurs. And we're not anymore. We're professionals." And then, the inevitable smirk and the self-effacing afterthought: "Professional *whats*, I don't know."

The Replacements' reputation as a band of "alcoholic boobs" (Tommy's words) was elevated to the level of rock mythology by a late-1984 *Village Voice* feature that the band resents to this day. "RJ Smith came with us on the road," says Tommy, "and saw how we slept, how we drank, how we loved each other, how we loved the band. He took it and made it look like something ugly."

Tommy's protests aside, though, the Replacements' rep for erratic behavior and relentless self-abuse wasn't always unearned. But when the band began to back away from it, they found they had a ghoulish legacy to contend with. The drinking "is one side of us," Westerberg told me a year ago. "We can do that. But we certainly can get up there and play, too. We've been booed for playing *good*. It's hard. The audience is split; half want to hear the quiet things, half want to hear the rockers

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and another fraction just wants to hear the bullshit and see us fall down. So we can't please everyone, and we just try to please ourselves. Some nights what pleases us is to get rip-roarin' drunk and fall down. That happens less and less now, though, because you can't do it all the time and still be around. It was getting old last time [the *Tim* tour]. We could tell by the people who were getting into it that it was less a matter of real kicks and more serious alcoholics being there and needing reinforcement: 'Look, I can be fucked up because they're fucked up.' We got to see some of that, and it was getting pretty scary.

"I dare say it almost got to be a shtick, where we would do it on purpose now and then. But that was a few years ago. Last year it was half-albatross and half-confusion: 'If we don't do it, they're gonna hate us, and if we do it, they're probably gonna be sick of it anyway.'"

Westerberg is afraid to alienate *any* part of his audience. "Shit," he says at one point, the frustration welling up in his voice, "I've probably already alienated all the people who first saw us. But I am *not* in this to lose any fans. I just wanna make new ones. If I'm gonna have a core of fans, I'd like to have the ones that liked us from the beginning as opposed to starting all over and getting a whole core of new ones.

"I don't try to write for kids anymore. I've tried, and I realize I can't. Most people who respond to what I do are my age or older, I think. Some kids will get it, but they usually are... bright... This is sticky. It's not like I'm trying to play up to dumb kids by saying this, but I feel more for the dumb, confused kid than I do for the highly intelligent adult who's maybe in financial difficulty. I feel caught in the middle between 'em, but my allegiance is still for the kid. I don't know why. Maybe in a few years it'll change. But I remember when I was 16, it meant a lot to me to get the feeling that they were talking to me. I want to create that feeling, without being so obvious as to say things like: 'Hey, little girl, it ain't so bad, you're gonna grow out of it.'"

A similar concern surfaces again when he explains why he doesn't mind including songs like "Dose of Thunder" and "Red Red Wine" in live shows. They may be filler to him, he says, but "you gotta think you're gonna play 30 songs or whatever in a night. If there's a few you don't love, but somebody has waited a year and saved all their money to come hear them, fuckin' play 'em, you know? Play 'em, and try as hard as you can. We're not out there to piss people off, not anymore. We tried it for a while, to be cool. That's bullshit.

"The people who listen hard and like the serious side, that's fine. But the people who don't do that, the people who work all day in crummy jobs, they listen and come to the shows, too. You're a writer. When was the last time you bought a ticket to a show? That's what I mean. I gotta think of that, too. I gotta think of the person who works hard and hates their fucking job. I can relate to that; I did it for a *little* while, and I hate what I'm doing sometimes. If I write totally for the intellect that dissects and seeks to understand what I'm saying, then I'm gonna turn into Elvis Costello. Everything he does is analyzed: 'What does this mean?' I don't want to be that."

Bring your own lampshade, somewhere there's a party
Here it's never-ending, can't remember how it started
Pass around the lampshade, there'll be plenty of room in jail
If bein' wrong's a crime, I'm servin' forever
If being strong's your kind, then I need help here with this feather
If being afraid is a crime, we'll hang side by side
At the swingin' party down the line

– "Swingin' Party" (*Tim*)

"INCREDIBLE" — Romeo Williams (Elton John)

"FOR THE BASSIST WHO WANTS IT ALL – A SMALL PACKAGE WITH A BIG SOUND." — Rickey Minor (Whitney Houston)

"THE SOUND IS AN INSPIRATION IN ITSELF." — Dwayne "Smitty" Smith (Anita Baker, Teena Marie)

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Every great rock 'n' roll band has had its characteristic obsessions. If the Stones' was sex and the Who's was identity crises, for Westerberg and the Replacements one key theme—maybe *the* key theme—is fear. It's one of the things that bind the band together: fear of success, of failure, of embarrassment, of straightforward self-presentation, and deeper in Westerberg's heart, fear of *rejection*, pure and simple.

Though they're squeamish about saying so, fear as much as fun is a reason why drinking has always figured so prominently in the Replacements saga. Explaining their last hometown appearance, a disastrous show in a 3,000-seat theater, Westerberg offers plenty of reasons: discomfort with theaters, a bad case of nerves with so many friends at the show and so on. But then he blurts, "Probably, honestly, we were just very nervous and got very drunk. If it had been someplace else where we didn't feel we had to be something great, we'd probably go out and be ourselves and do fine. When we're on the spot to show our hometown fans that we're the best and we haven't lost it, we get scared. And we drink."

What about now? Between the potential breakouts and the probable backlash from the old guard, it's got to be a scary time. But don't expect the band to give you a straight answer about it. "Yeah," nods Jesperson. "I don't know if Paul would like me to be saying it, but you're probably aware of it anyway. I think he *is* scared. Not wimpy-scared, but he's got the brunt of the weight on him from a million angles. Wanting to spend time with [his wife] Laurie, not wanting to travel too much, not wanting to be away from home. Not wanting to desert the band.

"George Regius, their attorney, worked real hard and got 'em a good record deal. I think Paul really wants to deliver on one hand, but he's afraid of the consequences. Like, 'What if I pour my heart and soul out and make this record I want to make, and it flops? Or what if I make a record that really is successful, how do I cope with celebrity?' Of the two, I'd say he's more afraid of making a record he thought was really great and having it flop."

No doubt about that. "I don't give 100 percent. I always try to withhold something for myself," Westerberg has said on several occasions. He insists he's not comfortable with the thought of being understood too well by his fans or friends. ("Thought about, not understood/ She's achin' to be" is how he puts it in "Achin' to Be," one of *Don't Tell a Soul*'s best songs; it may be the most autobiographical line he's ever written, despite the gender switch.) Without some measure of artifice, the prospect of rejection would be *too* painful. So Westerberg is a little evasive, in song and in person—frequently reversing himself, always trying to put an ironic spin on his words so that they don't reveal too much. It all comes out in his songs anyway; at heart he has more than a little of the confessional singer/songwriter in him, right there alongside the world-class rock 'n' roller.

Sometimes the more personal songs worry him. "A lot of times I write songs and I don't *know* what they mean. I don't know if I'm singing about myself, about someone I met years ago, someone I just saw this afternoon. Listening back to them over a period of years, the meaning will change even for me. I don't know why I wrote them. And that scares me. It makes me feel like I never really wrote the thing, like somebody else did and it just came out of me. That's when I feel like I might be cracking a little." He means it, too; you don't have to spend much time with Westerberg to realize that he's stone-scared of the implications in some of his own songs. Being in the Replacements helps him manage that side of himself he isn't sure he wants to know. Sometimes it's the most prudent thing musically, too.

"I don't like to listen to anybody sing about themselves for 45 minutes," he says. "And if I did a solo album, I could be a prime candidate to make that foolish move. If you're the mouthpiece for a band, you've gotta say stuff that they can get behind. That kinda keeps me in check. I can be fairly personal, but I have an obligation to say things that they can believe in.

"Basically, if Tommy wasn't in the group, we wouldn't play as much rock 'n' roll, because he likes rock 'n' roll. I get a true kick out of coming up with a rock 'n' roll song that he likes to play. 'Cause we're good friends and...I bounce my songs off those guys first. If it was all head music, it'd be boring, and Tommy's young enough and has enough spirit to realize that. You've gotta have some body music in what you do, or you might as well write a book.

"To me," he says later, "the greatest fear is to be boring. And if people understood the things I was really writing about [in the more personal songs], they might be bored shitless. So I don't *want* them to understand."

But when you set yourself up as the misunderstood soul, don't you stand to become your own worst enemy?

"No," he says angrily. "Here, I'll drop a bomb. If people understood me, they would realize that I have absolutely nothing to say. Which is what I said years ago. So let's keep it vague, and make them believe I'm saying something, when all along all I'm doing is talking to myself. And it's like, I have to find these grandiose ways to make it seem like a big statement when all I'm doing is thinking to myself. If I keep it vague, someone's gonna be fooled into thinking there's a message.

"I spend at least 50 percent of my life, if not more, all by myself. Alone. And I talk to myself. This is not the beautiful loser bullshit, but I *am* a loner. That's where my ideas come from. That's where I do what I do. And when it's done, I try to rationalize it or talk about it, but I feel like I'm talking about something I don't understand and I'm just trying my best to look like I know what I'm talking about.

"Listen," he says in pure exasperation, "I'm talking my way out of a job here."

Not really. But Westerberg genuinely seems not to understand that most artists endure some version of this struggle with doubt, this trouble with articulating the root motives behind their work; he thinks it's unique to him. And he's afraid that if he leaves the Replacements behind, everybody else will figure out the score, too.

Of course it's not that simple. If fear is one thing binding the Replacements together, they are also together for the best of reasons: They are an honest-to-God rock 'n' roll *band*, which is to say that they accomplish things together that surpass the

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TALENT SHOW

On most of *Don't Tell a Soul*, **Paul Westerberg** plays a Dan Armstrong guitar with a clear Lucite body. "That's his standard," says **Slim Dunlap**. "He broke it twice in making the record. But to tell the truth, he'll play any guitar you put in his hands." Paul still has his Yamaha acoustic at home, and his '56 Les Paul. Slim plays a Telecaster, a Les Paul goldtop and a Gibson 335. "I like guitars that look like guitars," he adds. "All the new ones look too much like hot rods." Paul and Slim both play through Marshall 100-watt stacks.

"Tommy's got an orange Thunderbird bass he broke in L.A.," says Westerberg. "He also plays a red Fender and a green Rickenbacker with funky-ass pickups that make it sound like a guitar." What about Chris? "He's still got the same drums. Black ones."

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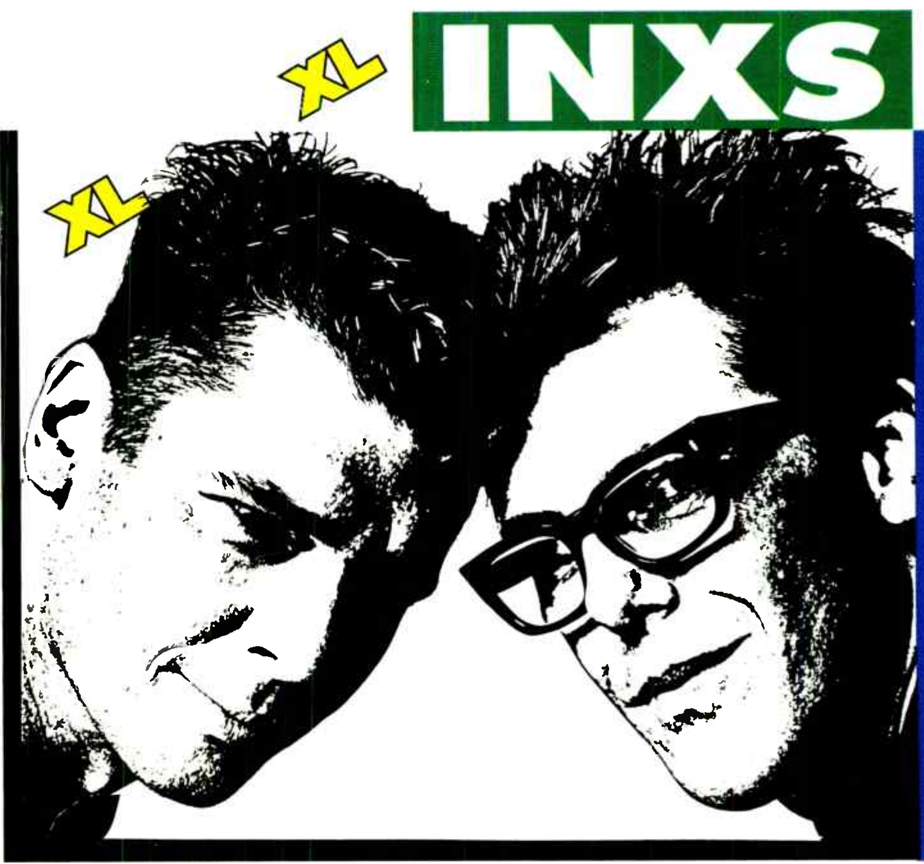

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LAST TANGOS

NEW BEGINNINGS

The Fleetwood Mac Nobody Knows

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The High Priestess of Pop-Rock is spitting mad.

"Mark my words," says Stevie Nicks, a furnace in her gaze, "tomorrow, in this very room, is the final reckoning, and if Lindsey Buckingham *dares* to insist his own projects are more important than the future of Fleetwood Mac—that's it! New beginnings have always been the best part of this band. I swear it to you now: If there needs to be a new Fleetwood Mac, we'll start all over again!"

It is Wednesday, July 8, 1987, and the wild-hearted head siren of rock 'n' roll's longest-running passion play is storming around the art nouveau-packed living room of her hillside Los Angeles home, attired in full Good Witch of the West Coast finery. Stevie's startling fashion statement builds upwards from white lace anklets and black spandex hose to a vision of cemetery seduction. And there is disorder in the dark lady's realm.

"If that man tries to hang us up," she vows, regarding Fleetwood Mac's errant lead guitarist, "he is *not* gonna have the last laugh!"

BY TIMOTHY WHITE

The matter at hand on that fateful afternoon more than a year ago was the future of Fleetwood Mac, which rose to musical prominence in the 1970s as heir to the pop throne vacated by the Beatles and the Beach Boys. The British-American unit was the prolific purveyor of such transcendent hits as "Over My Head," "Rhiannon (Will You Ever Win)," "Dreams," "Gypsy"...the list is endless, with another bumper crop from 1987's hit *Tango in the Night*. *Tango* was five years in the dawning, and it arrived nearly a donkey's age after *Rumours*, 1977's 20-million-selling alloy of Brit blues-rock and California acoustic pop. *Tango*'s appearance hinged on a belated mating dance with Buckingham, the band's eccentric studio Merlin. It is he, along with former inamorata Nicks and sultry songbird Christine McVie, who have generated most of the band's output. And it is he who frequently shaped that often "rough" yield in the control room until it shone from a light within. Buckingham was the resident alchemist in this medieval court intrigue, and the man who wound up stretched on the rack of his cohorts' frustrations.

And so, two weeks after the July '87 ultimatum expressed by Nicks and company, Lindsey Buckingham was dismissed from Fleetwood Mac. He was replaced seemingly overnight by Billy Burnette, accomplished (seven solo LPs) son of rockabilly legend Dorsey Burnette, and by Rick Vito, former Bob Seger/Jackson Browne lead guitarist. Burnette had once backed Lindsey in his extracurricular concerts and also played in Mick Fleetwood's spinoff combo, the Zoo. Vito served a hitch with Fleetwood Mac mentor John Mayall's blues infantry. As further evidence of the durability of the Mac tradition, the band has just issued *Greatest Hits*, a compendium of modern Mac chart successes—plus material cut by the latest lineup, with "As Long As You Follow" currently filling the airwaves.

As promising as the new group appears, the challenge of overcoming the loss of Lindsey Buckingham looms large. It's strange that last year brought both the comeback *and* the dissolution of the most famous Fleetwood Mac lineup, yet their swan songs on *Tango* boasted all the star-crossed struggles and pop enigmas for which they had become renowned. "Big Love," the first single from *Tango*, carried a hint of foreboding with its inscrutable choruses of sweaty *oooh*s and *aaah*s. Who, the rock rumor mill wondered, was responsible for such outbursts? With a wink and a shrug, Buckingham is now happy to 'fess up.

"It surprised me there was a whole lot of interest in who was doing the female side of the song's 'love grunts,' or whatever you want to call them," says Lindsey, with a nasal laugh, while seated in the Slope, the cluttered 24-track home studio inside his quasi-oriental Bel Air home. "That was actually me—with VSOs, variable-speed oscillators. There's a lot you can do in terms of your arranging and your voicing with slowing and speeding tape machines. It was odd that so many people wondered if it was Stevie on there with me. I guess it just follows the same thread

L. HOLLIS RETNA R. NEAL PRESTON OUTLINE

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as everything that was brought to the public in *Rumours*—you know, the musical soap opera."

Buckingham is referring to the romantic taffy pull amongst the band's personnel that turned brittle after the formidable success of *Fleetwood Mac*, the 1975 album on which the L.A. contingent of the 20-year-old Mac debuted. By the time the followup *Rumours* LP was completed, Lindsey and Stevie's four-year romance was asunder; ditto the marriage of Christine McVie and bassist John McVie, as well as founder-drummer Mick Fleetwood's with Jenny Boyd. (Mick and his spouse divorced, remarried, and then in 1979 divorced again, Jenny's penchant for rock wedlock being shared by sister Patti Boyd Harrison/Clapton/Harrison/Clapton).

"While *Fleetwood Mac* took only two or three months to record," says Nicks, "*Rumours* took 12 months because we were all trying to hold the foundation of Fleetwood Mac together, and trying to speak to each other in a civil tone, while sitting in a tiny room listening to each other's songs about our shattered relationships. It was very, *very* tense—a room full of divorced people who didn't dare bring anybody new into the same room, because nobody was gonna be nice to *anybody* brought into the circle."

Back then, at least, there was a strained consensus that the circle be unbroken. No such unity of purpose still prevailed in the wake of *Tango in the Night*, which only came about after Christine McVie recruited Buckingham, Fleetwood and her ex-husband to help her cut a new version of the Elvis chestnut "Can't Help Falling in Love" for the score of an aptly titled Blake Edwards film, *A Fine Mess*.

The many faces of Mac—1987: Fleetwood, Vito, McVie, Nicks, McVie & Burnette

JEFFREY MAYER

"There were no ulterior motives to try and get the band together," Christine maintains, yet the abrupt momentum of the project, begun in late '85, served to weaken Buckingham's hard-won new independence from the supergroup.

"At the beginning of *Tango*, we hadn't spent a lot of time together," explains Buckingham, a slight, delicately-featured man whose diffident look is countered by an intense discourse. "So, because there was no real central organizing force, people on the periphery started to get into the picture. Lawyers started to construct a situation that would get this thing off the ground, and their perception of a creative situation to inject something 'new' was to bring in a young guy from New York to engineer/produce. It took us a week to realize this guy was in a little over his head."

The inorganic methodology backfired as it became obvious that Lindsey and engineer-best friend Richard Dashut, who had been studio maestros for the Mac from the audacious *Tusk* onward, could not contribute to the fold in a compartmentalized fashion. In order to steady the foundering *Tango*, Buckingham and Dashut saw no alternative but to plunder the best assets of Lindsey's beloved third solo LP-in-progress. "I used everything that I liked for *Tango*," he moans, a total of four songs commencing with "Big Love." Then it came time to either farm out wordless music tracks to the other members, or buff the rough gems they proffered.

"If I had to choose my main contributing factor to the band," he says, "it wouldn't be as a guitarist, a writer or a singer. It would be as someone who knows how to take raw material from Christine and Stevie and forge that into something. That's a nice gift to have, and to be able to help people with.

"I think I'm coming into the most creative period of my life," he rules, "and whether that has to do with Fleetwood Mac or whether it doesn't is not really important. My solo work is back on track, Warners has already heard and liked some fruits of my latest labors, and the public will shortly be able to judge for themselves. [The album is expected later this year.] Meantime, I've done my best by this group of people!"

They had wanted more. Not out of selfishness so much as simple need. They expected Buckingham to set aside his own aims and press on with a world tour in support of the seven-million selling *Tango*. While Lindsey was neither the star of this outfit (Stevie has that slot), nor its leader (don't let the sunken stare fool you; manic flailer Mick Fleetwood has always stayed in charge), Buckingham was its strategist, theorist and master mechanic. He's always been most adept at devising high-minded artistic maneuvers, while the rest of his colleagues have clung to a humbler purpose: survival. Now he was history.

"On August 5th, 1987, the new history of Fleetwood Mac began," stated Stevie Nicks at a secret September band rehearsal in Venice, California, just before the revised Vito-Burnette edition embarked on its baptismal concert trek.

According to Nicks, the original July '87 meeting in which the band was to have it out with Buckingham proved anticlimactic. All personnel arrived at Nicks' house in the afternoon, arranging themselves on the semi-circular ivory leather couch in her living room. The atmosphere was taut, but Lindsey diffused the tensions by announcing that he might still be open to the road trip. A low-key dinner for final deliberations was scheduled for that evening—and Lindsey failed to show.

Nonetheless, a call came from his management several days later, informing one and all that Buckingham would indeed tour. "We all got really excited," Nicks recalls. "It was like, 'Well, he's gonna do it, even if it's only for 10 weeks. It's gonna be great, we'll get to play, and we're gonna make some money; everybody needs to make some money.'" Instantly, all of the members' separate management offices aligned to spend a frenetic week booking an intricate itinerary that more properly

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1969: McVie, Green, Fleetwood, Spencer & Kirwan

should have been arranged six months earlier.

The night before the final production meeting to settle on additional backup musicians, lighting and staging, etc., Buckingham's representatives rang Nicks and guest Mick Fleetwood at her main manse in Phoenix, Arizona, to tell them Lindsey had rescinded his agreement. In collective shock, but unwilling to face the humiliation of informing the nation's top concert promoters that the band was in dire disarray, the rest of Fleetwood Mac demanded a confrontation in Los Angeles with their delinquent whiz kid.

That August 5th conference lasted a matter of minutes before Nicks was on her heels, tongue-lashing her old boyfriend. The duo's mutual harangue culminated in an outdoors tiff in an L.A. parking lot that grew more deeply felt than either party ever intended or feared.

"It was horrifying for both of us," says a somber Stevie Nicks, describing her August altercation with Lindsey Buckingham, a shouting match extraordinaire. "We said too much to each other. We said all the things that we had wanted to say for the last 10 years, and we *screamed* at each other. Those things in a relationship that you try to never say just in case you do get back together—we *said* those things. Lindsey and I had been going together from about 1971 to around 1976. But we never really broke up until that moment. We've since patched up our friendship, because Lindsey is far too important to my life not to do that, but the creative ties are behind us.

"The thing about Fleetwood Mac is that everybody wants everybody to be free," Nicks now reflects, "everybody wants you to be in this group because *you* want to. I think that in his heart Lindsey didn't want to say, 'I quit, I'm leaving.' Everybody believes in dreams and fairytales, and we all hoped he'd change his mind. I knew he would *never* change his mind.

"He just wants to concentrate completely on his own music, recorded and played on *his* terms," she summarizes. "And I admit he's certainly earned that right."

Not surprisingly, Buckingham concurs. "In the past," he says, "what I've done is given over the commercial side to Fleetwood Mac, and tried to make, hopefully, more artistic statements on solo records." And how would he describe those statements? "Ah, just lust, longing, loneliness," he answers with a subtle grin. "Same old thing you always hear from me."

1974: Fleetwood, C. McVie, Welch, Weston & J. McVie

Hours after the parking lot blowout with Buckingham, Nicks asked Mick Fleetwood if she could join him for dinner. Mick had reserved a table at the chic Le Dome bistro on Sunset Boulevard for himself, Zoo guitarist Burnette and free agent Vito. Mick and his manager Dennis Dunstan wanted to invite the two musicians to a Fleetwood Mac band rehearsal slated for the following afternoon.

"I walked into the restaurant," says Nicks, "sat down, and was introduced to Rick Vito, who I saw play with Bob Seger, but had never met before. What really happened was that everybody just started to smile. And as I sat there I thought the same thing I did at the beginning of Fleetwood Mac, when Lindsey and I joined; I thought these are going to be *very* close friends of mine.

"And I want this to work out, I want us to *converge*," says Nicks, who invited the fresh lineup to her house for the August '87 Harmonic Convergence, "so if there is something happening up there we'd be first on that priority list. You don't ever replace anybody, or their soul or their historical value to Fleetwood Mac, but you *do* go on."

What had always rescued the band from artistic dissolution, as well as tatty backstage sordidness, is its candor about individual sins and shared illusions. Rock 'n' roll was once synonymous with scathing honesty, but in an era when the music is rife with hypocrisy and specious accommodation, the family tree of Fleetwood Mac continues to bare its fairest foliage as well as it knots. You may elect to go your own way, but it's how you travel the twisted route that makes the destination worthwhile.

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In the beginning there was hot-wire limey blues, and the brisk hoisting of lager that blurred the band's rainiest days. Peter Green, né Greenbaum, Eric Clapton's replacement in John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, quit that crew in 1967 and invited sometime interior decorator Mick Fleetwood—who had been dropped from the Bluesbreakers for chronic drunkenness—to join his own fledgling outfit. To flesh out the sound, Green chose guitarist/prankster/Elmore James impersonator Jeremy Spencer and so-so bassman Bob Brunning. Sensing a good time was brewing, veteran Bluesbreakers bassist John McVie—also temporarily ousted by Mayall for excessive intoxication—came swiftly on board to replace Brunning.

"I was playing with John Mayall in a pub in East Anglia," says McVie, "and I was a full-on

MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA NEAL PRESTON SKR/LFI

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blues bigot. We had just put horns in the band and I felt the Bluesbreakers were getting too jazzy." During a 20-minute break, the disenchanted McVie fetched a pint of the best from the bar to stiffen his resolve and slipped out the back door. "I went to a phone booth across the street, called Pete and said, 'I'm in!'"

Fleetwood Mac's debut album was cut in three days, and lingered on the British charts for 13 months. Green was as gifted at songwriting as he was at bending his Gibson Les Paul guitar to his dexterous whim. He composed a slew of influential hit Mac singles in the U.K., among them "Man of the World," "Oh Well" and the reverb-soaked 1968 chart-topper "Albatross"—the song which caused the envious Beatles to create "The Sun King" for *Abbey Road.* Green also wrote the Santana staple "Black Magic Woman."

The Mac's prowess as a live act—further augmented with the addition of third guitarist Danny Kirwan—became the stuff of legend. Numbered among the band's loyal following was self-described "Fleetwood Mac groupie" Christine Perfect. She came from a musical brood, father Cyril being a violinist with the Birmingham Symphony. Back in art college, her first boyfriend had been Birmingham University German teacher Spencer Davis, soon to gain fame with the group that bore his name. Moving to London, she found daytime wages as a department store window dresser, night work as a pianist and singer with Chicken Shack, and a new musician-admirer in John McVie. Shortly after they were married, a 1969 *Melody Maker* poll named Christine top female vocalist of the year, and she left Chicken Shack at her manager's insistence for a half-hearted solo LP and tour.

Christine had all but given up music, settling into life as a housewife, when Peter Green made the astounding declaration in May 1970 that *he* was quitting rock. In a series of turgid testimonials, he babbled about the decadence of the road, with its tempting virgins, poisonous victuals and assaults on his immortal soul. Claiming divine intervention in his life, Green's vague remorse led to a vehement repentence during which large chunks of his income were dispatched to charities for African famine relief. While his heart was in the right place, his psyche was not—owing, in the minds of many of his colleagues, to a massive acid dose he suffered one evening while on tour in Germany.

"If I had to choose my main contributing factor to the band, it would be knowing how to take raw material from Christine and Stevie and forge that into something."

Peter Green finally bolted the Mac to become a disciple of a small fundamentalist denomination in the States, releasing a quasi-religious solo record (*The End of the Game*) in 1970. (Several other solo albums would follow, mostly on smaller labels.) His subsequent appearances were those of a private citizen with an addlepated demeanor, refusing his backlogged record royalties while toiling as gravedigger, publican and petrol pump attendant. To this day, it is difficult for Americans to comprehend the jolt Green's mental collapse gave his British audience; had Eric Clapton not recovered from his heroin-induced exile of 1971–73, the public sorrow would have been comparable.

Mick Fleetwood, the band member to whom he was closest, still views Green's unraveling as a crisis of conscience, but remains profoundly disquieted by the founding member's farewell rant: "He said it was all evil, he had to give everything away."

If Green was hellbent to divest himself of all rock transgressions, Fleetwood Mac seemed just as eager to distance themselves from the vacuum left by Green's exit. Fleetwood, Kirwan and the McVies retreated to the south of England, renting an ancient oast house—that is, a farm building containing a kiln for drying malt or hops. It was in this humble dwelling that the band not only mended its spirit with the moving *Kiln House*, but also absorbed Christine as a full participant. She had been greatly saddened by Green's deranged grief, and the wistful landscape of elf-colonized enchantment that she drew as the record's jacket illustration had its own personal subtexts of loss and metaphysics.

"My mother, Beatrice Perfect, had recently died," Christine remembers. "A remarkable, very psychic lady, she was a medium and faith healer. Her strange talents and interests used to concern me, because she belonged to these psychic research societies and would go off ghost hunting. As for her faith healing, I had a rather nasty wart underneath my nose when I was about eight. My mother just put her finger on it one night before I went to bed and when I woke up the next morning it was gone!"

Seated cross-legged before the fireplace in her antiques-appointed Beverly Hills cottage, the comely, husky-voiced McVie chuckles mischievously at this anecdote and doles out another. "I distinctly remember a time when a friend of my father's had leukemia and was told she had virtually no time at all to live. I remember my mother being sent a white kid glove that belonged to the sick woman, and my mother wore it in bed several times. Within a month, there was a phone call from this sick lady's companion, saying the doctors couldn't understand it but she was completely healed, not a thing wrong with her!"

Pity the remarkable Mrs. McVie couldn't have ministered to the bedeviled souls in Fleetwood, for they were multiplying. Jeremy Spencer was a confirmed scamp notorious for stunts like taking the stage of London's prestigious Marquee Club with a wooden dildo dangling from his gaping fly. But the tawdry sideshow in the City of Angels seemed to shock him into a paranoid Puritanism. When in Los Angeles with Fleetwood Mac in February of 1971, he left the hotel prior to a performance to purchase a newspaper—and promptly disappeared. Four days later, he was discovered in the local commune of the born-again Children of God sect.

Once more, Mick Fleetwood was the patient listener to whom all scarifying sorrows were divulged, Spencer's consisting of an "evil" cloaking L.A. that was out to "get him," the dreadful proximity of the San Andreas Fault, and a guilt that embraced everything from the band's increasing divergence from their blues charter to the mounting gate receipts they were banking. Spencer's mid-tour denouement not only meant

STEPHEN MORLEY RETNA EBET ROBERTS

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"We were all trying to speak to each other in a civil tone, while sitting in a tiny room listening to each other's songs about our shattered relationships. It was very, *very* tense."

the loss of an underrated talent, but also a much-needed sense of humor. John McVie reveals that his favorite Fleetwood Mac album is a 1969 Spencer-sponsored masterwork still unissued.

"It was a parody album, which was *very* funny and technically perfect," says John with a reflective snigger. "It was done as a whole show with different bands in it. It started off with your typical gross MC who introduced this acid band, a blues band, a jazz fusion band and one doing some '50s Fabian-esque cutie music. We'd be playing in each different style, and Jeremy was very much a mimic with a beautifully sarcastic sense of humor. It was full of wanker jokes, vulgar gags and very outrageous stuff. I don't think the record company thought we were serious, but it was great!"

Spencer's shoes were ably filled by singer/guitarist Bob Welch, who made strong contributions to four Mac LPs. But more trouble loomed. Not long after the band axed Danny Kirwan in 1972 (reasons given by the rest were that he had been "a nervous wreck" and the source of an "intolerable" professional climate), there was indeed a fake Fleetwood Mac on the hoof.

For Mick Fleetwood, the phony Mac was a source of anguish on multiple levels. In the early phases of a sizable autumn 1973 U.S. tour to promote *Mystery to Me,* Mick Fleetwood found that Kirwan's successor, Bob Weston, had become romantically involved with his wife Jenny. Distraught, Mick bounced Weston, after which the band went on an uncertain sabbatical and Fleetwood repaired to Africa by himself to contemplate his options. Band manager Clifford Davis, reluctant to let all that box-office cash evaporate, quickly assembled an anonymous pickup crew he christened the "New Fleetwood Mac" and hustled them out to exploit the uncanceled bookings. The genuine article sued Davis and his fraudulent ensemble and won, although the case took years to adjudicate.

Meantime, Mick Fleetwood patched both his marriage and his band back together and moved the entire crew to California. He also began managing the Mac himself under the whimsical banner of Seedy Management. In December 1974, just as Bob Welch was bowing out to form his own group, Mick was shopping around Los Angeles for a fit studio and new troops to comprise the next Mac attack. It was in a modest complex called Sound City, while listening to a tape in order to demonstrate the control room hardware, that Mick chanced to hear a duo known as Buckingham-Nicks.

Lindsey was a scion of a Palo Alto family who had distinguished themselves over several generations as savvy coffee growers and Olympics-caliber swimmers (Gregg Buckingham earned a silver medal in the 1968 games). The youngest of three boys, Lindsey was the clan misfit who had squandered a $12,000 inheritance from a dead aunt on an Ampex four-track tape console. His father gave him a tiny room in the bowels of the coffee plant where he could tinker. And when he wasn't holed up there, he was off trying to get another recording deal for himself and girlfriend Stevie Nicks.

Stephanie Nicks was the only daughter of Jess Seth Nicks, former president of General Brewing, executive vice-president of Greyhound and president of Armour Foods. After

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open-heart surgery in 1975, he turned to concert promotion and an amusement park venture in Phoenix, Arizona. The combination of a privileged background and an overachieving parent had conspired to make Stevie into a markedly stubborn and strangely distracted teenager. Seeking a safe magnet for their teen's intense inattentiveness—and hoping to make restitution for a childhood novelty act with her country crooner grandfather that they'd forbade—her parents presented Stevie with a Goya classical guitar.

"It was my 16th birthday," says Stevie, who was then under the spell of Bob Dylan and Judy Collins, "and I wrote a song the day I got it. It was 'I've Loved and I've Lost, and I'm Sad but Not Blue.' I was recovering from my first—I thought—love affair," she details with a throaty giggle. "I was crazy about this very popular kid at school, and I made this whole thing up.

Peter Green before the fall

"I realized right away I could write songs because I could have experiences without even having them!" Explosive laughter. "And I'd run to the guitar, and I'd cry, and my parents would leave me alone because it was like, *Don't come in the door. A great artist is at work here.* I kept a guitar at the foot of my bed." And she kept her fantasy world working full throttle.

With her family constantly uprooted due to her dad's incessant corporate promotions, she made few lasting friends, so the formation of little bands became a device for fast-forward connectiveness in each suburban enclave where she was deposited. While in high school, she formed Changing Times, a folk group named for the Dylan standard, but it wasn't until she was enrolled at San Jose State that she located the structure and the mentor she required to make her quirky designs more real.

Fritz was Lindsey's rock combo, playing music he concocted in his four-track lair in the coffee factory. Stevie was the catalyst for its modest goals, and then some. After three-and-a-half years of experience together, which Stevie helped fund through work as a dental assistant (for one day) and a hostess at a Bob's Big Boy, Lindsey and his gal lit out for Los Angeles. They shared a house, much as Lindsey does now, with Richard Dashut, and peddled their demo tapes. Polydor Records bit, and issued the *Buckingham-Nicks* LP in November 1973. An exquisite folk-rock miniature just a tad ahead of its time, it could still be mistaken as modern Fleetwood Mac product.

When the LP bombed, Stevie resumed waitressing on the lunch shift at a Beverly Hills restaurant called Clementine's, and Lindsey hit the road with a group Warren Zevon threw together to back Don Everly. On New Year's Eve 1974, at a party at their house, Lindsey and Stevie were wondering if 1975 was worth welcoming in when Mick Fleetwood phoned with the invitation that made their dreams, and nightmares, come true.

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It's been said that the worst thing you can do for talented, sensitive people is to permit them to pursue anything they please. Besides the music, for John McVie it was liquor; for Christine McVie it was unrequited love; for Lindsey Buckingham, it was workaholism; for Stevie Nicks, it was the Grand Slam.

And for once, Mick Fleetwood was too overextended himself to pick up all the surrounding pieces.

"If anyone doesn't know it," Mick volunteers, "I ended up stark broke," alluding to an early 1980's personal bankruptcy proceeding, tied in part to ill-advised investments in Australian real estate which left him owing some $2 million to two California banks, his record label and his attorney. He was also fired as the band's manager for intemperate spending. Fighting back from these reversals, plus a freak illness related to his blood-sugar levels, left Mick drained in every sense. His prospective recording plans for his adjunct band, the Zoo (they had one RCA LP), have been shelved, since his star guitarist Billy Burnette is now an asset of the Mac. But Fleetwood wants to record a sequel to 1980's *The Visitor*, his own pre-*Graceland* hybrid of hard rock and African roll. And he's completing what he calls "a transcension album, working my drums into spoken-word tapes of the quite wonderful poetry readings of my late father."

While these initiatives are closest to his heart, he's also hot to make his mark in Hollywood. "I've done a bit of acting, appearing early in '87 in *The Running Man*, that Arnold Schwarzenegger film based on a Stephen King story. I played a character named Mick, who was myself, really, at 85 years old. I was a mad professor, obsessed with the ideals of the '60s and the deterioration of the social structure. I enjoyed the *shit* out of it!"

While Fleetwood was lost in his harmless Tinseltown reverie, fellow Mac stalwart John McVie was in a near-lethal stupor. "I woke up on the bathroom floor," is how the bassist begins an unsolicited soliloquy about his bleakest bout with the bottle in the spring of '87. "I had a seizure, an alcohol-induced seizure, which scared me and scared my wife. It was time to stop because it was destroying everything. There's nothing constructive comes out of being an alcoholic."

This conversation had started out being about sailing, John McVie's sole interest outside of Fleetwood Mac, and the hobby he plunged into with a vengeance following his divorce from Christine McVie in February 1978. Sailing can be both solitary and social, McVie preferring the convivial side. By the end of 1978, John had remarried to former secretary Julie Ann Rubens and was well into the inebriated joys of high-seas yachting jaunts from Los Angeles to Maui. McVie sails out of Newport Beach these days, most frequently to and from a haven he maintains in St. Thomas—which is where his pre-*Tango* idleness took its alarming toll.

"I sat around," he says, "and it didn't help my alcohol problem. I sat in St. Thomas for a *long* time, and it being a duty-free island, for $2.98 you can get well-twisted." He simpers to himself, his droopy eyes showing a subdued twinkle. "It turned into a constant problem, which I'm trying to beat now."

While McVie views touring as an antidote to his idleness-aggravated dipsomania, Buckingham detests the drab motel-to-motel cycles of nationwide concertizing. While on a 1977 sprint in support of *Rumours*, Buckingham passed out in the shower of a Philadelphia suite and was diagnosed as having a mild form of epilepsy. He's sought thereafter to be more vigilant against undue stress. His greatest detriment, of course, is his own penchant for marathon studio servitude, the turning point being 1979's *Tusk* LP. Taking its name from Mick Fleetwood's code word for the male sex organ, the two-record *Tusk* cost a cool $1 million to realize and was composed in the main by Buckingham. Executed with all the fanfare of a '70s response to the Beatles *White Album*, there has been a tendency in the decade since to depict the lavishly eclectic *Tusk* as "Lindsey's Folly," or an outright debacle, but actually it's a sublimely produced pop cornucopia that sold a respecta-

MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA

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ble four million copies, and its two Top 10 singles (the title track and "Sara") are among the band's best.

Fleetwood Mac responded to *Tusk*'s post-*Rumours* commercial shortcomings with abject contrition, as evidenced by the far more conservative *Mirage* (1982). Buckingham still sounds resentful of the defensive attitudes: "I felt that it's a danger zone when people stop really looking at what the *work* is, and start noticing the phenomenon per se: the sales, all of that. In this business you have a responsibility to constantly be cultivating what you're doing, rather than just watching yourself in action."

Does this mean his third solo album will be a double one? "Quadruple," he quips sheepishly. "Hey, I've got about 60 songs!"

Meantime, Christine McVie's struggles with her art are concerned more with emotional objectives than physical volume. "I like to write songs about love," she says. "Music and love go hand in hand to me, but I like to find an unusual way of phrasing it all." She notes that the wistful "Isn't It Midnight," one of her *Tango* tracks, "goes back directly to a guy that I met a long time ago; it was a concrete situation that didn't work out." Elsewhere on *Tango*, critics found the refrain "Little Lies" ("Tell me lies, tell me sweet little lies"), which Christine penned with new husband Eddy Quintela, to be borderline perverse, but she discards such carping.

"The idea of the lyric is, 'If I had the chance, I'd do it differently next time.' But since I *can't*, just carry on lying to me and I'll believe—even though I know you're lying."

While there is no attempt to pin the song to a specific relationship, it fits the pattern of her woebegone bond with the late Dennis Wilson of the Beach Boys, who had replaced Fleetwood Mac lighting director Curry Grant as the object of her affections. The likable but profligate Wilson moved into her large Coldwater Canyon house just prior to Christmas 1978 and by all accounts took advantage of her good nature and financial largess. In one celebrated incident, he hired a flock of gardeners to plant a huge heart-shaped flower bed in her backyard as a birthday token. Less well known is the fact that he had the bill for the landscaping sent to her.

For two years, she forgave his every childish falsehood and infidelity, but with his drinking and drug use escalating by the close of 1980, she finally called a halt to the love affair. (An intoxicated Dennis Wilson, 39, later drowned in Marina Del Rey on December 28, 1983.) Christine made her peace with the past and went on, marrying Portuguese musician Eduardo Quintela de Mendonca on October 18, 1986 in London.

For now, Christine's outlook on her own life and career is sufficiently optimistic that she and Lindsey blocked using Stevie Nicks' downbeat "When Will I See You Again" as *Tango*'s closing selection.

"That was a little too down and depressing," McVie says, so its position on the album was shifted. To fill the gap Christine took an existing instrumental track of Lindsey's and wrote "You and I, Part II," a song that echoes her new beginning with Eddy Quintela. "There's a hopeful, optimistic vibe to the song, of a new tomorrow," she believes, pointedly adding, "It's pop, but it's *mature*."

Christine McVie doesn't mention it, but another light-hearted track which could have been selected to close *Tango* was a Stevie Nicks rouser called "What Has Rock and Roll Ever Done for You?" Stevie has no rancor about the song's total elimination, asserting with a sigh that Fleetwood Mac usually prefers her "stranger, more demented rock 'n' roll."

Ms. Nicks remains a believer in ghosts and witches, a devotee of the occult who is capable of conducting entire conversations about the modern import of Halloween (her favorite night of the year), the usefulness of the Tarot, and the significance of maya, which in Hindu embodies the illusory world of the senses. In a more concrete sphere, Nicks endures as the most formidable of Fleetwood Mac's solo draws, with a trinity of smash albums to her credit and another one nearing completion. Nonetheless, there are those who persist in dismissing her recordings as—in her words, "musical spaciness."

"It bothers me," she says, "because I would like to know how spacy *these* people are, or if they ever really listened at all. I don't care, even if they say things that aren't very nice, if I feel they had a valid reason. But when people get needlessly cruel it really hurts my feelings. I don't read many reviews because I start questioning and think maybe I ought to get out of this business if I'm such a space cadet.

"I write about true experiences, and if the song isn't about me, it is absolutely about someone around me. Everything I do is a concept: the way I dress, wear my hair, do my makeup, write my songs, live my life. If everybody has such trouble understanding what I'm saying, then I wonder how come I'm still in rock 'n' roll after all these years? I start getting nervous and questioning my concept. I don't *like* to question my concept. I very seldom make a decision and change it."

For instance, she insisted on dedicating her 1983 *Wild Heart* album and the song "The Nightbird" to her best friend, Robin Anderson, who died of leukemia in 1982. Robin had given birth

FLEET AXES & WOODSY HARDWARE

For the band's Shake the Cage tour, **John McVie** played a '62 Precision bass with EMG P-Bass pickups, routed through an Alembic F26 pre-amp with DBX 160 limiter and Carver power amps. His speakers were Ampeg SVT-4s, and his strings were D'Addario half-rounds.

Rick Vito brought a Ripley Stereo guitar and another six-string electric of his own design that was built by Toru Nittono of LA Guitar Works. Rick also used a 1980 Telecaster customized by LA Guitar Works, a '56 Les Paul TV Junior with heavy strings for slide playing, a Washburn semi-acoustic and a Roland GP-8 effects unit. Rick's amps were a stereo output configuration, one side featuring a twin-cabinet Dumble containing four E-V 12-inchers, the other side boasting a Boogie Mark II driving a stock Seymour Duncan 4x12 cabinet. Rick relied on D'Addario strings of .010 to .046 gauge.

Billy Burnette tore it up with two Gibson Les Paul Lites, a Gibson J180 acoustic with SORC pickups and an Epiphone F-400. He employed a Roland GP8 effects unit and an army of Seymour Duncan amps and speakers. His strings were D'Addario gauges .010 to .046.

Keyboards-wise, **Christine McVie** was everywhere at once courtesy a Yamaha KX88, a Keyboard Products-modified B-3 with custom Leslies and a Yamaha Grand Piano.

Stevie Nicks sang her wild heart out as always through a Sennheiser MD441 and used a range of percussion traps, tambourines and cowbells. **Mick Fleetwood** remained the master timekeeper atop a "mountain" of Tama drums with Remo heads, Paiste cymbals, the trademark Nigerian talking drum that was a gift from Peter Green and a set of "clicking balls," joined by a leather thong, that he never takes the stage without. (Says Mick: "Whenever I sit on the drum stool with my balls hanging down, I feel fine.") Also, Ray Lindsey, the band's "guitar doctor," strapped on a Gibson Chet Atkins SST to provide live accompaniment on "Go Your Own Way."

Meanwhile, **Lindsey Buckingham** was content in his 24-track home laboratory, The Slope, utilizing everything from a Gaelic lap harp to his prized limited-edition Turner solid-body electric (the handsome one he's plucking on the "Big Love" video).

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World Radio History

On the musical front, the next solo expressions of Buckingham's independence from his friends will reach the stores before long. Meantime, other

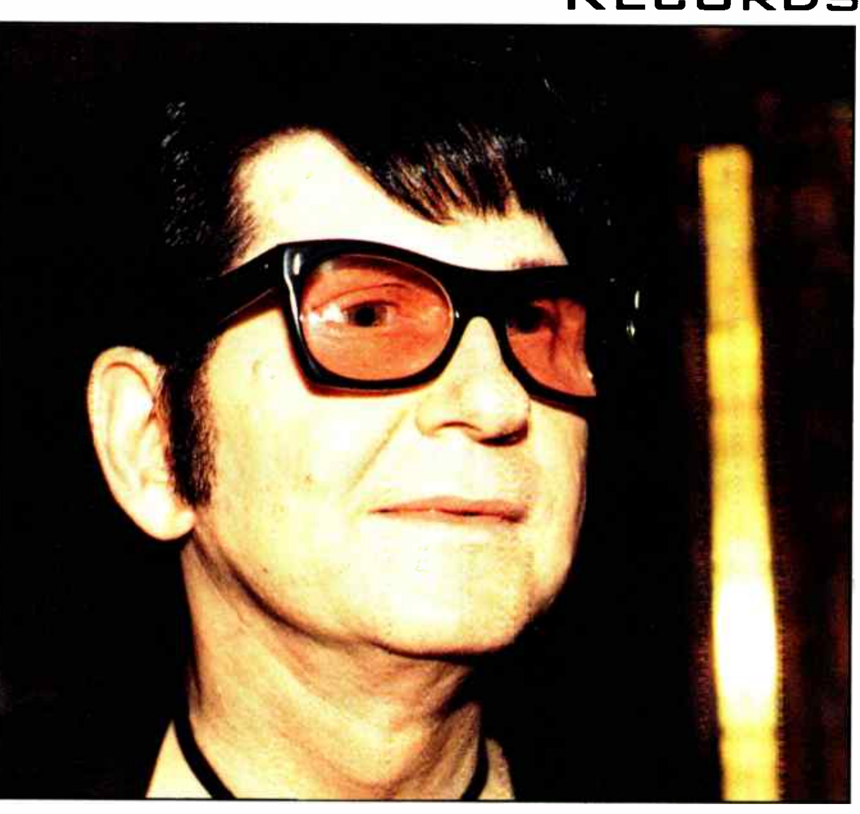
Jane Samuel, Green relapsed into mental turmoil and presently sleeps in deserted rail depots of Richmond, North Yorkshire, England. When asked about his

Rick Vito's impeccable guitar has been the linchpin of records like Bob Seger's *Like a Rock* and Jackson Browne's *Lawyers in Love*. As for the boyish, immacu-

IT'S OVER

ROY ORBISON

Mystery Girl
(Virgin)



December 4, 1988: Two days before the end.

JULIE KRAMER

Roy Orbison's life seemed to mirror the gloom-laden scenarios of his most popular songs. In the mid-'60s his wife was killed in a motorcycle accident; two years later he lost two sons when his house caught fire. These traumatic events—combined with his penchant for shades and black garb—created an image of otherworldly forbearance, as Orbison stood stock-still onstage and belted out such paeans to neurosis as "Only the Lonely," "Running Scared," "Crying" and "It's Over."

The image was mostly that: an image. Soft-spoken Orbison wasn't the outgoing type, but he was one of the most good-natured, courteous Texans you'd expect to find outside of national politics. He also had enough of a sense of humor that it's too bad he couldn't stick around to appreciate the irony of his death by heart attack on December 6. At the time, Orbison was enjoying his highest-ranking album ever—even higher than his titanic greatest-hits compilations—thanks to his membership in the Traveling Wilburys supergroup. Four days before he died, a slimmed-down Orbison was saying how good he felt thanks to a new diet. And he had finally wrapped *Mystery Girl*, his first album of new material in nine years.

Mystery Girl is now a posthumous release, and we'll never know how it would have fared without Orbison's death to help it along. After an amazing early-'60s hot streak (nine Top 10 singles in four years), Orbison's recording career stalled; pre-*Traveling Wilburys*, his last charting album was in 1966. He considered himself a singles artist, and the singles era was closing. Still, he continued having hits, though he no longer sang them: Linda Ronstadt's 1977 version of "Blue Bayou" and Van Halen's "(Oh) Pretty Woman" in 1982 proved the staying power of Orbison's classic material. (He wrote or co-wrote almost all his hits.)

He started out as a hot-blooded rockabilly, but Orbison found his niche with dramatic mid-tempo ballads; his untrained tenor voice blossomed into a powerfully keening instrument. After he peaked with the number-one "Oh, Pretty Woman," though, Orbison had trouble changing with the times. His late-'60s recordings tended to be either watery pastiches of his hits or weirdly "progressive" pop songs and arrangements where he sounded like he'd wandered into the wrong studio by mistake. On *Laminar Flow*—that last "new" album, from 1979—Orbison's unique voice was pickled in soft-funk and disco (!) arrangements that sound more dated now than his older hits ever will.

Mystery Girl doesn't attempt to remold Orbison in the mirror of fashion. The various producers here all revere the singer for what he's always done best, and provide sympathetic songs and settings in the Orbison "tradition." The result is an anomaly: a new old Roy Orbison album.

The record is virtually calculating in its one-dimensionality. Past the happily lovesick kick-off of "You Got It," the remaining nine songs are all about wracked relationships. In addition, three of those songs throw in the other Orbison idée fixe: dreams. "You Got It" (written by Orbison with fellow Wilburys Tom Petty and Jeff Lynne) includes a few good-natured musical references to "Oh, Pretty Woman"; other songs, most co-written by Orbison, conform to familiar chord sequences, distinguished by a piano here or electric slide guitar there for musical accent.

The most adventurous tunes come from overseas members of the Orbison fan club. U2's Bono and the Edge contribute "She's a Mystery to Me"; as expected, the lyrics borrow heavily from the catalog of Christian guilt, but a haunting, harpsichord-like guitar ostinato makes an effective contrast to the more conventional musical melodrama elsewhere. "The Comedians" is Elvis Costello's turn at a Roy Orbison Song; the swelling music is less original than Costello's lyrics, which are typically paranoid and surprisingly cynical coming out of the Big O's mouth.

And need it be said that Orbison sings beautifully? Whether in his conversational lower register or quavery, powerhouse upper end, his voice aches with yearning. It's a corny and delicious effect, objectifying a state of mind. The sensibility veers toward camp, as film director David Lynch must have realized when he chose "In Dreams" as the leitmotif of the deranged Dennis Hopper

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character in *Blue Velvet.* Orbison's sincerity, however, always came through, even when his later concerts started taking on the air of Mario Lanza recitals.

He was always concerned about quality. It bothered Orbison that his mid-'50s doodlings and practice sessions for Sun Records—recorded without his knowledge, he claimed—were issued in the 1970s. (They continue to be unearthed to this day.) He recalled a demo he made of his "Claudette," a 1958 hit for the Everly Brothers:

"I needed a copy of it. I played the song in E, and in the middle of it I made a chord change and went back to E-sharp or G-flat, whichever. I stopped and said, 'Crap,' then started again. And they released that!"

In 1978 Orbison's Dutch fan club presented him with an alphabetically arranged set of his recordings, including the "Claudette" demo. "They played that for me. And this Dutch fella said, 'What is "crap"?'" Orbison, a history buff, could give him a delightful explanation going back to Thomas Crapper's invention of the flush toilet.

At one point Orbison was working on his own history, taping his recollections for a possible biography or film project; "I'd like to have it done while I'm around." Sadly, that wasn't the case. Although he'd had open heart surgery in the late '70s, Orbison's sudden death seemed as arbitrary as—well, as his former Sun labelmate Jerry Lee Lewis's survival. Now the soaring voice is disembodied, and it's the world's turn to mourn.

He was a damn good guitarist, too.

– Scott Isler

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LAST EXIT

Iron Path
(Virgin)

I*ron Path* is a beautiful and violent record, as deep and mysterious as the creative wellspring that feeds its players. Last Exit is an anarchic democracy, equal parts guitarist Sonny Sharrock, saxist Peter Brötzmann,

World Radio History

drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson and bassist Bill Laswell. In its tumultuous three-year, three-album life the improvising band's anything-goes m.o. has remained its strength and handicap, soaring with stretches of unbridled imagination and uncanny communion, and boring with sloppy variations on blues.

That's changed with *Iron Path*, Last Exit's first studio recording and major-label debut. Its 10 inspired non-compositions segue into a whole packed with finesse and fire. Laswell plays as you've never heard him, especially on the opening "Prayer" and in "Marked by Death," which gets much of its dark passion from his rich six-stringed tone and floating harmonics.

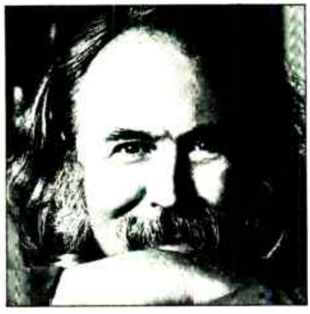
With *Iron Path*, even Brötzmann's most ardent detractors won't be able to deny his horsesense for harmony and melody. He plays bop lines when he's not wailing his brains out in conversation with Sharrock and Shannon Jackson on "Detonator," or dishing out good honest grunt for "The Black Bat." And Sharrock and Shannon Jackson sizzle relentlessly. When the drummer opens up—and that's almost always—he's as much texturalist as rhythmist. That's most striking in the title track, where bells and cymbals ring like sustained guitar chords. And Sharrock is everywhere: drifting bright feedback through the crevices in "Iron Path," delivering "Fire Dream"'s wah-guitar blues gospel, bringing down the "Devil's Rain" with his slide and playing his prettiest solo since "The Past Adventures of Zydeco Honeycup" on "Sand Dancer."

Sharrock has said that Last Exit was formed to play whatever its members want, whenever they want. For now, it seems they want nothing more than to play together, in one grand, captivating voice. – **Ted Drozdowski**

DAVID CROSBY

David Crosby
(A&M)

Some said, "Stills played all the instruments"; others said, "Nash wrote the hits," but I always said David Crosby was the most important member of CSN. The other two were solo stars looking for sidemen. Only Crosby was willing to subvert his ego to the greater good. He was the rhythm guitarist, the middle voice and, on those early albums, when each of the others was doing his own thing and throwing it into the pot, Crosby came up with whatever color was missing, especially the needed rock numbers.



Now we are in the winter of Crosby Resurrected, with his one-and-a-half contributions to CSNY's recent *American Dream* bordering on self-caricature. But fortunately Crosby's second solo album reestablishes his range. The arrangements are concise, a little pristine, but quietly supportive in the manner of a late-James Taylor album. The sound is neither as overstuffed as CSN in Crosby's lost decade, nor as desperately mod as *American Dream*.

Unfortunately, Crosby's inspirations sound a little subdued as well. His best songs used to work because they conveyed the passions of a kind, self-centered, slightly *kooky* personality. Did you care if Crosby almost cut his hair? Of

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World Radio History

by J.D. Considine

THE WATERBOYS

Fisherman's Blues (Chrysalis)

GO ONLY SO FAR AS "AND A BANG ON THE Ear" or "Dunford's Fancy," and it would seem that Waterboy Mike Scott is dead serious about the Irish traditional overtones here. Drop the needle elsewhere, though, and a different image emerges. Scott spends as much time subverting as co-opting the folk elements, meaning that the results range from the ragged, Van Morrison swirl of "Sweet Thing" to the jittery, psychedelic drone of "We Will Not Be Lovers"—and all without losing the album's sense of focus or direction.

THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS

Lincoln (Restless/Bar None)

THESE GUYS ARE ROCK'S ONLY TRUE HIGH-volume operators. It's not enough that they've squeezed 18 songs onto their third release of the last year; they also manage a new tune a day on their "Dial-A-Song" phone service (718-387-6962). Trouble is, for every gem like the frenzied, infectious "Ana Ng" or wacko pop bauble like "Shoehorn with Teeth" there are half a dozen songs built around puns like "This is the spawning of the cage and aquarium." So much for quantity over quality.

PINK FLOYD

Live: Delicate Sound of Thunder (Columbia)

FURTHER PROOF THAT YOU CAN'T LISTEN TO a light show.

CHAKA KHAN

CK (Warner Bros.)

SUCH SPECIAL GUESTS: PRINCE, MILES Davis, Bobby McFerrin, George Benson and Stevie Wonder, and that's just the "A" list. So why doesn't that star power make this album sparkle? Maybe it's context; after David Frank's high-voltage recharge of "Signed, Sealed, Delivered," the torchy "End of a Love Affair" sounds like an afternoon nap. Truth is, Khan is more in her element scraping against the groove than when poaching on Sarah Vaughan territory—no matter who's in the band.

GUNS N' ROSES

GN'R Lies (Geffen)

NEVER MIND THE "HEY, FUCKERS!" OPENing, the cheerful profanity of the live tracks (culled from the collector's-item EP *Live !?*@ Like a Suicide*) or the black humor of "Used to Love Her" (next line: "but I had to kill her"); that can be shrugged off as mere youthful exuberance. But "One in a Million," with lines like "Police and niggers... get out of my way" or "Immigrants and faggots, they make no sense to me," is harder to explain away, much less forgive.

BANANARAMA

The Greatest Hits Collection (London)

OKAY, SO THEY'RE MORE A TESTAMENT TO assembly-line pop than hard-won originality; the fact is, mainstream pop doesn't come any catchier than this. And before giving all the credit to their producers, think back to the Fun Boy 3-produced "He Was Really Sayin' Something" and ask yourself: Where are the Fun Boys now?

COWBOY JUNKIES

The Trinity Session (RCA)

WITH SO MANY BANDS THESE DAYS BELIEVing they have to shout to be heard, the Junkies' quiet, prayerful intensity comes as a revelation. Imagine the Velvet Underground cutting country-tinged *Loaded* with Nico, and that's this band's "Sweet Jane"; imagine originals which equal such a standard, and that's the rest of *The Trinity Session*.

HAROLD FALTERMEYER

Harold F (MCA)

BEST-KNOWN FOR THE MELODIC BEEP 'N' blip of "Axel F," Faltermeyer is out to prove there's more to his music than clever programming. And there is, too; check out the ass-kicking groove he places behind Patti LaBelle and Steve Stevens for "Them Changes." LaBelle aside, though, you've gotta wonder about his taste in singers: Why mess with Keith Forsey and Scott Wilk when the real Billy Idol is out there somewhere?

VARIOUS ARTISTS

MUP: Reggae from Around the World (RAS)

ACCORDING TO THIS, THEY'RE SKANKING from Kingston to Katmandu, and if the notion of reggae in Russian and Maori strikes you as the stuff of novelty records, think again. In fact, two of the best tracks come from such unlikely climes as Sweden and Japan, where a touch of local flavor has been blended into the roots-rocking beat. A real eye- and ear-opener. (Box 42517, Washington, DC 20015.)

LIVE SKULL

Snuffer (Caroline)

NOISE, IN AND OF ITSELF, IS NOT ENOUGH; A sense of pacing and dynamics helps, not to mention the occasional scrap of melody. Maybe that's why Live Skull seems such a cut above the competition. Dense as the band's sound is, with its clangorous detuned guitars and dull-thudding percussion, it's nonetheless rich with sonic detail and tuneful invention, and modulated by arrangements that lend the songs an almost symphonic grandeur. The Mahlers of the new noise? Could be. (5 Crosby St., New York, NY 10013.)

MORY KANTE

Akwaba Beach (Barclay)

WHEN SUNNY ADÉ INCORPORATED SYNTHEsizers into his juju band, the big surprise was how well they fitted in with the drums and guitars. But Mory Kante has been using synths for years, and the big surprise here is how hard it is to notice them. Born in Guinea and raised in the griot tradition, Kante sings and plays kora with all the assurance and authority of Foday Muso Susa. But Kante makes his crossover with considerably more aplomb, lending *Akwaba Beach* a rhythmic and melodic charm that loses nothing in the translation.

World Radio History

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World Radio History

by Peter Watrous

MARTY EHRLICH

Pliant Plaint (Enja/Muse)

ONE OF THOSE RECORDS THAT ARE ENDlessly informative. The melodic voicings—played by Ehrlich and long-time cohort Stan Strickland on reeds—change constantly, as do the rhythms and compositional conceits. Ehrlich and Strickland phrase together so well their blend sounds overdubbed, maybe telepathic. Then there's the swing: Anthony Cox on bass and Bobby Previte on drums groove and move like they're supposed to. This isn't a blowing date, though there's enough improvisation; the rhythm section carries the group through the changes. Ranging from flute and bass clarinet duets to polyphony to beautiful orchestrations, this is a brilliant record. (160 West 71st St., New York, NY 10023.)

MICKEY BAKER

The Wildest Guitar
(Atlantic import/Down Home Music)

BAKER WAS ONE OF MANY JAZZ GUYS WHO did service in the trenches at Atlantic Records, playing R&B dates. He also wrote some of the most important jazz instruction books for truly greasy guitar. Some of his solos are out, just flailing away, and if he wasn't much of a lick player, he made up for it with pure energy. *The Wildest Guitar* is pretty wild at moments, but it's more camp, which is fine by me: The "Third Man Theme" gets rocked, as does "Autumn Leaves" and other standards. Just a slice of the time, when anything went. Oh yeah, Mickey was half of Mickey and Sylvia (1957's "Love Is Strange"). (10341 San Pablo, El Cerrito, CA 94530.)

TOM VARNER

Covert Action (New Note)

THE ALBUM OPENS WITH THE SOUND OF cool alienation. Three guys—Varner on French horn, Mike Richmond on bass and Bobby Previte on drums—cruising the highway. The next tune, "Radiator," has a chopped-up feeling that breaks into swing, but it's structured; then there's a quiet piece and the side ends with a rocking, friendly and familiar "Let's Call This," by Monk. In other words, somebody gave the record shape, a rarity among new jazz albums, though the recording's a bit lame. But the playing's fine, and the record will be an important document of the sort of music that was getting played, when it could, in New York in the '80s. (Box 20568, London Terrace Station, New York, NY 10011.)

JIMMY BRYANT

Country Cabin Jazz
(Stetson/Down Home)

BRYANT WAS A BAKERSFIELD SESSION GUItarist who recorded instrumental albums with Speedy West, the steel player who made all these records sound like the aural equivalent of Airstream trailers. Recorded in 1960, this stuff is slick, I mean aluminum shiny. Part country, part Charlie Christian be-bop, part sound effects and all swinging, it defines a certain American optimism that, 10 years and one war later, would vanish and never surface again. One tune's called "Stratospheric Boogie"; they mean it.

TONY WILLIAMS

Angel Street (Blue Note)

I HEARD A WHOLE BUNCH OF BITCHING about his two earlier records on Blue Note; "too loud," people screamed. So Tony cooled down a bit, and what's left is one fine disc with exceptional writing, hard swinging and beautiful drum introductions to almost unbelievably beautiful tunes that move through a whole set of rhythms. Williams is everywhere, burning like Yellowstone Park. But it's the soloists, with Wallace Roney staking out a claim to be the meanest nastiest trumpeter of his generation, and Mulgrew Miller getting the fleet-fingers award, that make the album. This is a working band that sounds like one: tight and ready to rumble.

JIM HALL

These Rooms (Denon)

HALL'S ONE OF THE MOST SOPHISTICATED guitarists working, a musician who can make a bouquet of chords appear from a paltry bar of a major chord. There's over an hour of non-stop brilliant playing; backed by Steve LaSpina on bass, Joey Baron on drums and Tom Harrell on flugelhorn, he's spent time arranging more abstract stuff. Then there's his rhythmic sense, but that's another dissertation.

HARRY "SWEETS" EDISON

For My Pals (Fantasy)

I HATE THE WORD "SUBLIME," BUT THAT'S the idea here. Edison plays slyly, throwing in quotes, be-bop and anything else that crosses his mind. The rhythm section makes the whole affair sing: Tootie Heath, one of the great, underrated drummers, rattles and rolls.

16-17

16-17 (Recommended/N.M.D.S.)

GOOD MUSIC FOR THE BUSH ERA: QUIT your job, screw the neighbor's wife, set the Honda on fire, go to Mexico and do peyote. A trio comprising saxophonist Alex Buess, guitarist Markus Kneubuehler and drummer Knut Remond, the group makes noise: fast, jittery and loud. So it's not particularly original, sounding a bit like Lower East Side stuff in the early '80s—V Effect, kinda—but in this constipated age the honking and humming and rattling sound like a laxative. (500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.)

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FOGERTY from page 16

Francisco the day before the tour and do a deposition for the trial. Then I was out on the road for about two weeks and I had to do a deposition all day long by conference-call telephone with parties in three different cities across the U.S. This is while I'm on tour now! Mentally it was a real screwed time." A judge then postponed the trial.

Fogerty admits to having "funny emotions" about *Eye of the Zombie*, which sold under one-fourth the number of copies as *Centerfield*. He now blames himself for not giving Warner Bros. enough time to market it properly. "The single was out and nobody had heard it at the record company; they just were assigned the job of distributing it."

He stands by the content of the album, however. "It's not a happy record; this isn't 'Don't Worry, Be Happy' coming at you by any means. A lot of people told me it didn't make them feel good. As an artist, I gotta say I didn't care about that," Fogerty laughs. "I was in an area of dark stuff—stuff I'd been messing with individually. I had this 'Zombie' song, and I realized, God, I'd been playing with 'Violence Is Golden' for nearly 20 years—I had written it in this little notebook I keep—and it finally all came together. It didn't belong on a happy album; it belonged here! But it was maybe too much of a bad thing. There was no counterbalance, like 'Centerfield,' to get the eight-year-olds bopping in their aerobics class."

Fogerty is now in what he calls the "soft, early" stage of his next album. "I even dreamed a whole melody, and woke up and remembered it. To the best of my musical knowledge, it's a brand-new and totally original song," he laughs. "I've never done that, where I actually remembered how it went, and it was good! Usually you're humming the theme to 'The Partridge Family' or something. In the dream you thought it was great; you wake up and it's pretty dumb."

Most encouraging of all, Fogerty's and Fantasy's attorneys are talking to each other outside of court. Fantasy lawyer Burnstein notes, "We are discussing settlement of all issues with Mr. Fogerty and his counsel. What we're trying to do is see if we can get everything disposed of at minimal cost to everybody and avoid future lawsuits. That's everyone's hope, on both sides."

"The last couple or three days," Fogerty says, "I finally felt like the guy I had to put to sleep—the real person who would rather be working than be a professional witness—was starting to wake up again. I hadda put him to sleep about the time I hit the chair and broke my hand. 'Cause he just couldn't stand this. He's saying, 'This is such a waste of time.' But—you go through it 'cause you have to, I guess." M

McLEAN from page 24

nieces and nephews come to hear him when he plays Los Angeles. The kid's mother, who once prayed to St. Jude that her son would conquer his addiction, now prays to the saint when he travels the world.

And Jackie McLean still retains his capacity for delight: "You know what knocks me out when I come to Los Angeles? To see movie stars sitting in my audience. Not big people, but people I've seen on television. Last night there was a guy from the Bob Newhart show. When I look up and see somebody like that, it really gives me a thrill. I think, I've seen him a thousand times, and I never dreamed he'd come out to hear music like this." M

FRIPP from page 37

for seven years. I can see myself whizzing around the world with Trey Gunn, Paul Beavis and Toyah Wilcox, rocking out in small clubs, medium-sized theaters and stadia. Yes, I can see that!

But at that point you have to find a way of making your recording choices musical choices, to find a way somehow of being independent from the record company that will be financing you. And nearly all my thinking time in the past three weeks has been on how to establish a business framework that is supportive of the musical event, rather than the business event. This has nothing to do with music, nothing. But that I can live with, just for a period of time. M

RECORDS from page 91

course not. But because *he* cared so much, he made you feel—for the length of the song, anyway—that his spoiled-kid concerns were matters of life and death, his teenage concerns not only valid but profound. However, when he writes about national politics ("My Lady of the Harbor," CSNY's "Nighttime for the Generals"), I say, David, (a) you're preaching to the converted, (b) your extra-legal ethics have blunted your moral authority and (c) I'm sure you'll be in heaven before Oliver North, but I'd rather trust Ollie with my car keys. Only one song here—the introspect's anthem "In the Wide Ruin"—shows Crosby's

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muse completely re-lit.

Give me back Crosby the passionate eccentric, the guy who could get so absorbed in contemplating his navel that he'd convince you it was a better view than the Grand Canyon. I hear hints of him in "Tracks in the Dust," a song that recounts a conversation between Crosby and a dinner guest about whether the glasses are half-empty or half-full. I thought for sure he was coming out in "Distances," a Brook Benton-type tune that begins as if it's going to be about nostalgia for drugs ("You know what I miss? Small things like textures and flavors/ How close up everything used to feel") but turns into (sigh) a discussion of grownup relationships.

But look at how far Crosby's come. A few years ago he was a junkie in a jail cell. Today he's nine-tenths of the way toward regaining his old spirit. Let's wish him a band to belong to when he gets it back. – **Bill Flanagan**

REPLACEMENTS from page 70

sum of their parts. They aren't just a Paul Westerberg vehicle. And part of the credit for that, ironically, goes to the newest Replacement, guitarist Slim Dunlap. Toward the end of Bob Stinson's tenure with the band, they were losing their focus; some nights they didn't seem a band at all, just four guys sharing a stage without sharing a purpose. Dunlap shares no small portion of the credit for the breakthrough qualities of *Don't Tell a Soul*—both for his accomplished work on guitar and backing vocal arrangements, and for encouraging Paul to present his songs more straightforwardly. Dunlap may have ensured that the Replacements will remain a viable band a lot longer than they otherwise could.

"So sit down and tell Perry the real truth, Slim, about how you made this record happen." Westerberg, Dunlap and I are sitting in a booth at the CC Club; Tommy and Chris are in back shooting pool.

"Yeah, well..." Dunlap muses. "It ain't that big a deal. I didn't write the songs, and the songs are what's great."

Did Dunlap give Westerberg the confidence to follow his more melodic instincts? "Yeah, some. I would listen to Slim where I wouldn't listen to a lot of other people."

"He produced me," Dunlap shrugs, "and I produced him."

"Exactly," says Westerberg, downing the last of his drink.

Even if the new Replacements suit Westerberg better, everyone in and around the band knows that at some point Paul will take the solo plunge—maybe permanently, maybe not. The band has always made it clear that there's a limit to their willingness to follow Westerberg down quieter paths. And as for Paul himself, well, he just isn't sure. His thoughts on the subject change from day to day, and sometimes from one moment to the next: "Why didn't Keith make his solo record until he was 45? He was smart enough to know that if you're in a band, you're in a band. You don't do something to alienate the band. I don't want to do that. I'd rather be in the band and have my situation now than have a huge solo record." Pause. "If I thought I could, I'd probably be fool enough to try it." Pause. "But I mean, I write the goddamn songs, so it's not like they're stiflin' me.

"I have a split personality. If I didn't have a band, I'd have a different kind of music. But if I didn't have a band, I probably wouldn't have the courage to get on a stage. So what do I do, sit in my basement and write these ballads all my life and never go and perform them? Or do I write a bunch of rock 'n' roll songs and maybe write a couple of ballads to sneak in? I mean, I like 'em, too, but some of 'em are painful to sing. 'Rock & Roll Ghost' has made me break down crying four or five times. I don't ever want to put myself in the position where I get all mushy and shit onstage. Not because it violates my image, but because I don't want to be a freak show.

"All of these songs," he concludes, "are downer, mournful songs. That bothers me sometimes. I don't want to be the fuckin' Leonard Jackson Cohen Browne of my generation, exactly..."

Later on, he confesses yet another reason for his ambivalence. "I would hate," he says quietly, "to leave the other guys in the lurch."

That's another bind: For the guy who fast-talked his way into Bob, Chris and Tommy's band eight years ago, the thought of doing solo projects has always felt a little like betrayal. Peter Jesperson's memories of an early-'80s solo session sound more like the recounting of an extramarital interlude than a casual demo recording.

"One night after a show," says Jesperson, "I was listening to the tape from that performance and I started thinking about all the great solo stuff he was doing in his basement. If you don't record it, you lose it. You forget it. So I called the Blackberry Way studio and booked time with [engineer] Steve Fjelstad. Then I called Paul and said I'd booked time for a solo session, and did he want to do it?

"He said, 'Fuck, let's go for it.' So he was meeting me at the record shop that night. We were just about to jump in the van when Chris Mars walked in and saw Paul with his guitar. Chris said, 'Where you guys goin'?' We said, 'Uh, we're going over to Lou's house.' This was a roadie friend of ours. Chris says, 'Can I come along?' Paul says, 'Well, okay.' So we get in the van, and all of a sudden Chris says, 'It looks like we're going to Blackberry Way.' And Paul finally says, 'Okay, okay, we're gonna go record, but don't tell *anybody.*'

Maybe I'm from the working class," Westerberg says, "but I've hardly worked a day in my life." He and Chris Mars then embark on an explanation of the theory of social classes according to the Replacements, which differs significantly from Karl Marx's version.

"The middle class is the best," says Westerberg. "They make the best rock 'n' roll. Elliott Murphy said that. I don't know the exact reason, but I think the lower class is so desperate to rise above where they are that they'll do anything, even to the point where it makes them look stupid. Like metal, for instance. They're all stupid, but they want to make it. The upper class of wealth and affluence will try to make art, 'cause they've already seen money and power, and they go, 'well, we're above that.'"

"They try to imitate art," says Mars, "where the lower class is doing anything they can to bust out..."

"And the middle class," continues Westerberg, "doesn't give a shit. 'Cause they're right in the middle. They've never been rich, they've never been poor. We don't want to rule the world, but we don't want to be at the bottom of the ladder."

But maybe the Replacements protest too much. Westerberg, at least, certainly shares some of what he dismisses as the "lower-class" urge to make it, which is finally just the urge to win respect. At 28 he isn't content to be a "rebel without a clue," the perpetual outsider; trouble is, he isn't content to come all the way inside, either. Whatever the commercial fortunes of *Don't Tell a Soul*, that ambivalence isn't likely to go away. "I get in trouble," he says, "whenever I try to write like I'm the life of the party, which I do sometimes. My own personality isn't like that. The people who relate best to my songs are the ones who see themselves over in the corner. However much they'd like to, they can't quite get into the swing of things." M

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