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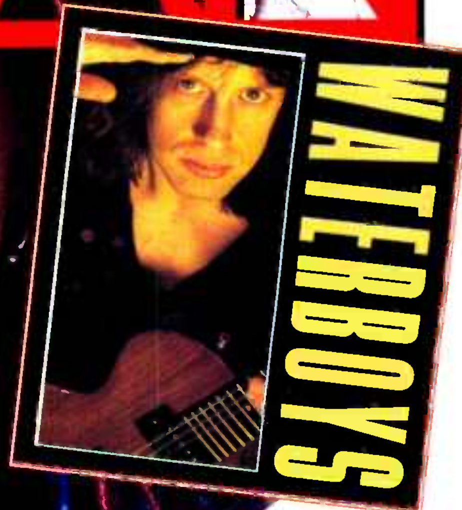

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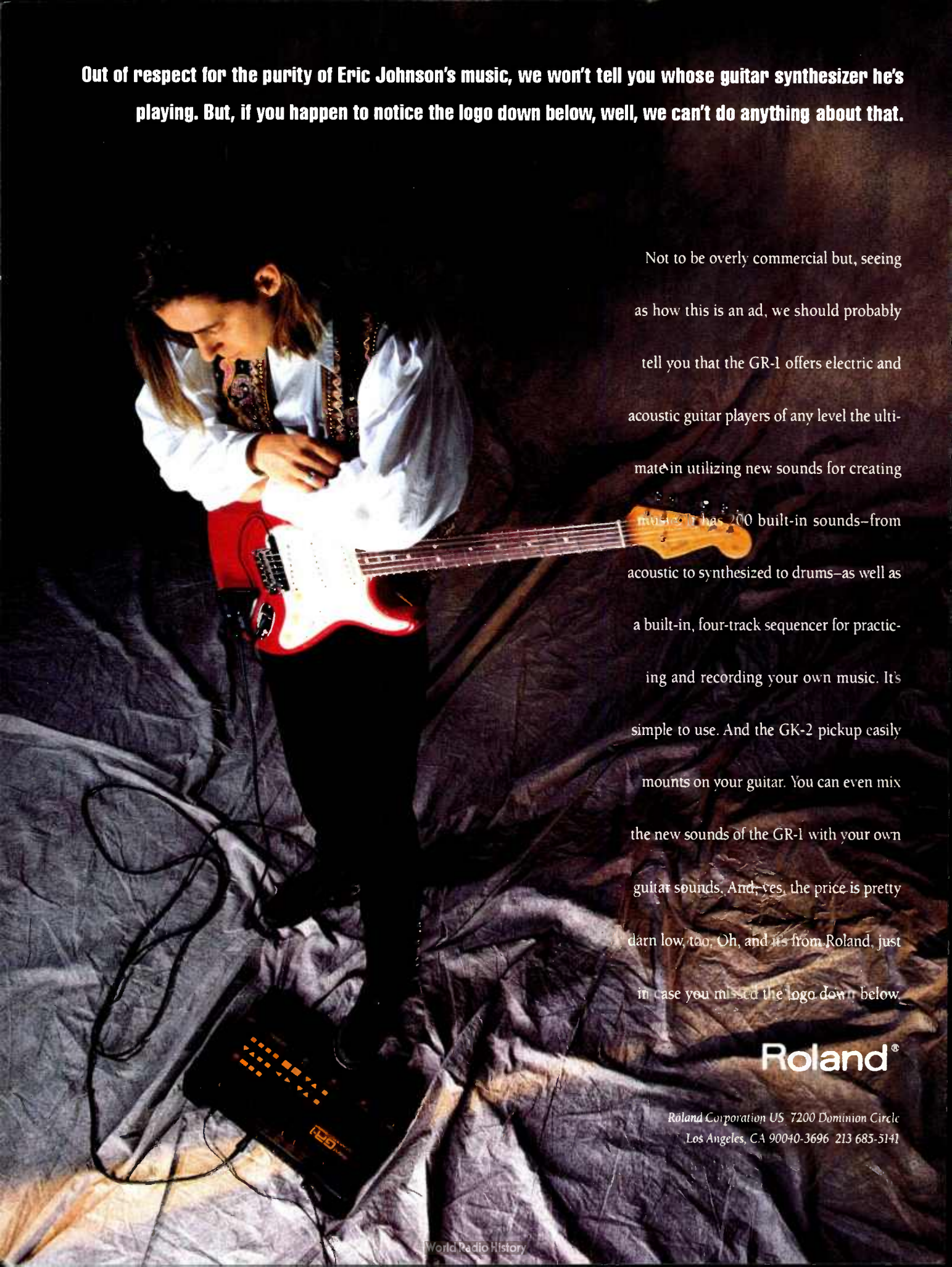

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AUGUST 1993 • ISSUE NO. 178

THE 1993 BIG GUITAR ISSUE

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COVER
Photograph of Steve Vai by Jeff Katz; Bono by Frederic Garcia/Retna

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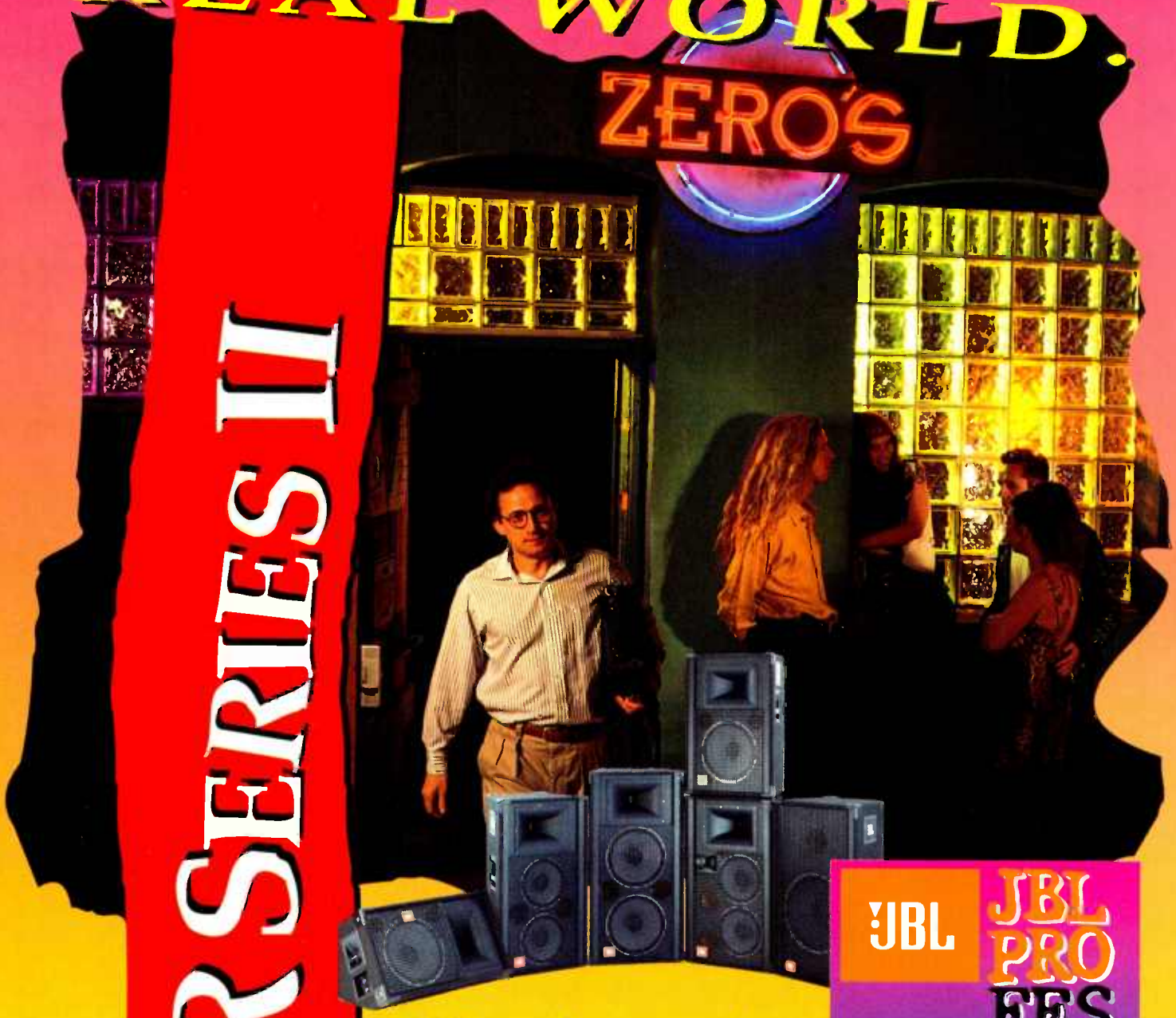

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JIMMY PAGE

FRONT MAN

Is it a holdover of your Led Zeppelin days that most of the songs on Coverdale/Page *start off with acoustic guitar and progress to heavier stuff?*

Well, when we were writing the songs—actually, this is not a direct answer—but a lot of the songs were written on acoustic guitar, in a very intimate atmosphere. I mean, we bounced ideas off each other all the way through. So I said to David, "Come on, you play acoustic guitar on this and we'll just do it the way we wrote it." We had to—certainly with things like "Pride and Joy."

This is a wonderful partnership between the two of us, and there is no doubt about the fact that we've brought the best out of each other. I haven't played this well since the days of Led Zeppelin, and David's singing is absolutely great. So what can you say?

Are you impressed by any contemporary guitarists?

There are many young guitarists I can relate to, because they play six strings. It's very difficult to play six strings, to get real interpretation from them and get your own spirit flying.

The guitar sounds on this record are pretty diverse.

Well, I had about 50 guitars. I'm not kidding, 50 guitars! And as the song would progress, I would almost be in a trance. I'd be looking at the guitars and thinking about the amplifiers that should go with them, to get the sound together.

There's no given formula for any of this. I used Gibson guitars, Gretsch guitars, Fender guitars and Fender bass, Marshall amps, Peavey amps—everything and anything, old and new. Every guitar is a different piece of wood, and when it's strung up they all sound different. You have to know the specific character of all those guitars, and I suppose I got to know the guitars even better than before.

How did you divide your attention between your guitar contributions and your overall production?

Well, you have to know which guitars to use at the right time; we try and mix the guitars so it'll work out best for the song. The solos come at the end of the day, but as far as the tapestry of things, it's best as it goes.

Did you use any open tunings?

Yes, on "Older Now," there's an open-G tuning. "Waiting on You" is another open-G, and then on "Pride and Joy" we dropped the two E strings down to D. That's it.

When you and Coverdale came together, did you feel the pressure of your audiences' expectations? Is it likely that fans of Led Zeppelin or Whitesnake will readily accept the material on Coverdale/Page*?*

Listen, I'll tell you what. The very first day of writing, we'd agreed to take everything one step at a time. And we got on incredibly socially the first time we met, but that very first day of writing said it all, really. There were incredible nerves, certainly, on my behalf, because I didn't want to let the side down, you know. That day we came up with "Absolution Blues," which was pretty astounding.

"IT'S VERY DIFFICULT TO PLAY SIX STRINGS, TO GET REAL INTERPRETATION FROM THEM."

When you've got two heavyweight people together, both with very high standards of what they want to do individually and collectively, they're not necessarily going to produce very good music. When we met up for the first time, we were very nervous.

It was rumored that Robert Plant didn't think too highly of David Coverdale at one time.

Well, Robert didn't have a liking of either of us. When I was on tour four or five years ago, I had this same thing: The press kept confronting me with "'Robert said this,' 'Robert said that,'" and I got fed up with what Robert had to say. But then he really hasn't got a lot to say. We've got more to say.

MAURO SALVATORI

PHOTOGRAPH: NEAL PRESTON

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LETTERS

INTERACTIVE SCORES

Tell me how someone with Joe Jackson's talent and professionalism can sound like an inexperienced dweeb (Mar. '93).

Come on, Joe, this is the '90s. The horny-for-hip attitude should be beneath you. Talking down a product of the type you were involved with is folly. It's a poor carpenter who blames his tools.

If you had done your homework, you would have found that scoring an interactive project is like scoring a film or TV show, but instead of writing 45 minutes of music for an hour program or 110-minute film, you write as much as three hours of music, plus hundreds of sound effects. Once this is done on your main platform (for example, a Roland Sound Canvas or E-mu Proteus), you must thin down the music to work on a PC sound card. It's a ton of work! There are talented, hard-working musician/composers daily producing tremendous soundtracks for interactive game software from companies like Sierra-On-Line, Electronic Arts, Virgin, Dynamix, Coktel and educational game companies like Brite-Star, Broderbund and the Learning Company. These products are more than exciting—they're innovative and fresh.

The music is only as good as the guy who sequenced it. Those who can, do. Those who can't will bitch about the tools and pretend to be too hip. Wake up and smell the coffee, Joe Jackson.

Neal Grandstaff
Staff Composer/Guitarist
Sierra-On-Line
Oakhurst, CA

SOUL FOOD

I swear I'll lose my lunch if I have to read about one more "three chords and the truth" band who wish they could be as honest dealing with life as they are in their songs. Soul Asylum (June '93) is a mercilessly hyped band of painfully average songwriting and musicianship. Their "us against the world" attitude, holey jeans and flannel shirts are every bit as contrived and clichéd as heavy metal or corporate rock. How about a little more ink for artists like Los Lobos or XTC, who are truly contributing to pop/rock history.

Rob Hanzlik
San Diego, CA

Soul Asylum the next Nirvana? I don't think so. Soul Asylum is too brilliant to be compared to Nirvana. They are three things that Nirvana isn't—polite, intelligent and talented. Do you really think Nirvana would ever feature pictures of missing children in their videos? Soul Asylum has got to be the best alternative band around.

Carey Trounson
Virginia Beach, VA

THEY LOVE US

Since subscribing in November '92, *Musician* has opened my eyes to a lot of new music. I used to be into thrash and death metal, some progressive and some alternative. Now I have a much greater appreciation for these styles and more. Among my favorites discovered in your pages: Arrested Development, Manu Katché and Billy Cobham, Nine Inch Nails, Grunt-truck and Raymond Scott. The articles and interviews are usually very enjoyable. Thanks for the wake-up call to the world of music.

Tony Hicks
Hudson, FL

I've been an avid reader of *Musician* since your second issue (Eno, Art Ensemble) and have never read a more positive and uplifting article than the interview with Curtis Mayfield and Speech (June '93). I've never met either one of these gentlemen, but since I live in Speech's hometown there might be a possibility. With an attitude like his, no wonder his name is Speech.

Bob Dublon
Milwaukee, WI

LETTERS

Thank you for your always entertaining, nondiscriminating and, at times, self-deprecating *Letters* section. This candor and concern for your readers is indicative of the integrity of *Musician*. A special thanks is due for whoever included the March '93 letter where a reader wrote that Roger Waters' *Amused to Death* "represents what Bob Dylan *ought* to be saying instead of prattling on about Jesus." That was a hilarious letter! First, what spurred this knucklehead's attack on Bob Dylan? We're talking *beyond* left field. Secondly, if Dylan has ever *prattled* on about anything, I doubt the topic was religion. I hope you gave this reader Dylan's phone number; I'm sure Bob is just dying to know what he *ought* to be saying. It just keeps getting funnier the more I think about it!

Peter Kassab
Chicago, IL

JUST DON'T GET IT

Freddie Mercury's passing overlooked. Brian May left off the list of the 100 Greatest Guitarists. *Musician* just doesn't understand Queen. Freddie Mercury and Queen sold 100 million albums, 80 million singles and 13 million concert tickets. Queen stole the show at Live Aid and were huge in every corner of the world. Most importantly, they were artists. Yet *Musician* doesn't find Mercury worthy of even *a paragraph* on his passing! Why?

If your editors honestly believe that other guitarists have changed music or influenced more guitarists than Brian May, they are woefully ignorant. Then again, they felt that Freddie Mercury wasn't worth a mention in *Musician* upon his passing. Everyone has personal biases, but these two deletions are embarrassing for such a fine magazine.

Shawn Stevens
Toronto, Canada

It really saddens me to see such hate for Queen expressed in a letter to this magazine (*Letters*, Mar. '93). I have yet to see a band with the same extraordinary ability to connect with a live audience that Queen had. For those who don't know, Queen did not like to use the word "fans" to describe their following, but called us "friends," and through the magic of music, that's just what we had become. When Freddie Mercury died I couldn't help but feel that I had lost part of my family.

Catherine Zielin
Santa Monica, CA

I found it ironic reading the congratulatory letter in your March issue on *not* paying any tribute to Freddie Mercury of Queen. The letter was so strongly worded that it reminded me of a story of Johannes Brahms in which he writes, and I paraphrase: "I am sitting in the smallest room in my house, using your letter for the purpose for which I believe it was intended." Someone didn't like his music.

To hate something implies that the thing is in some way threatening. I wonder what would threaten someone about a rock group that nobody is forcing him to listen to?

Pamela B. Foard
Brookfield, WI

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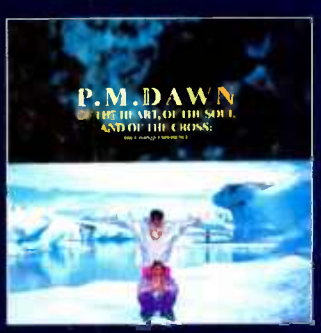

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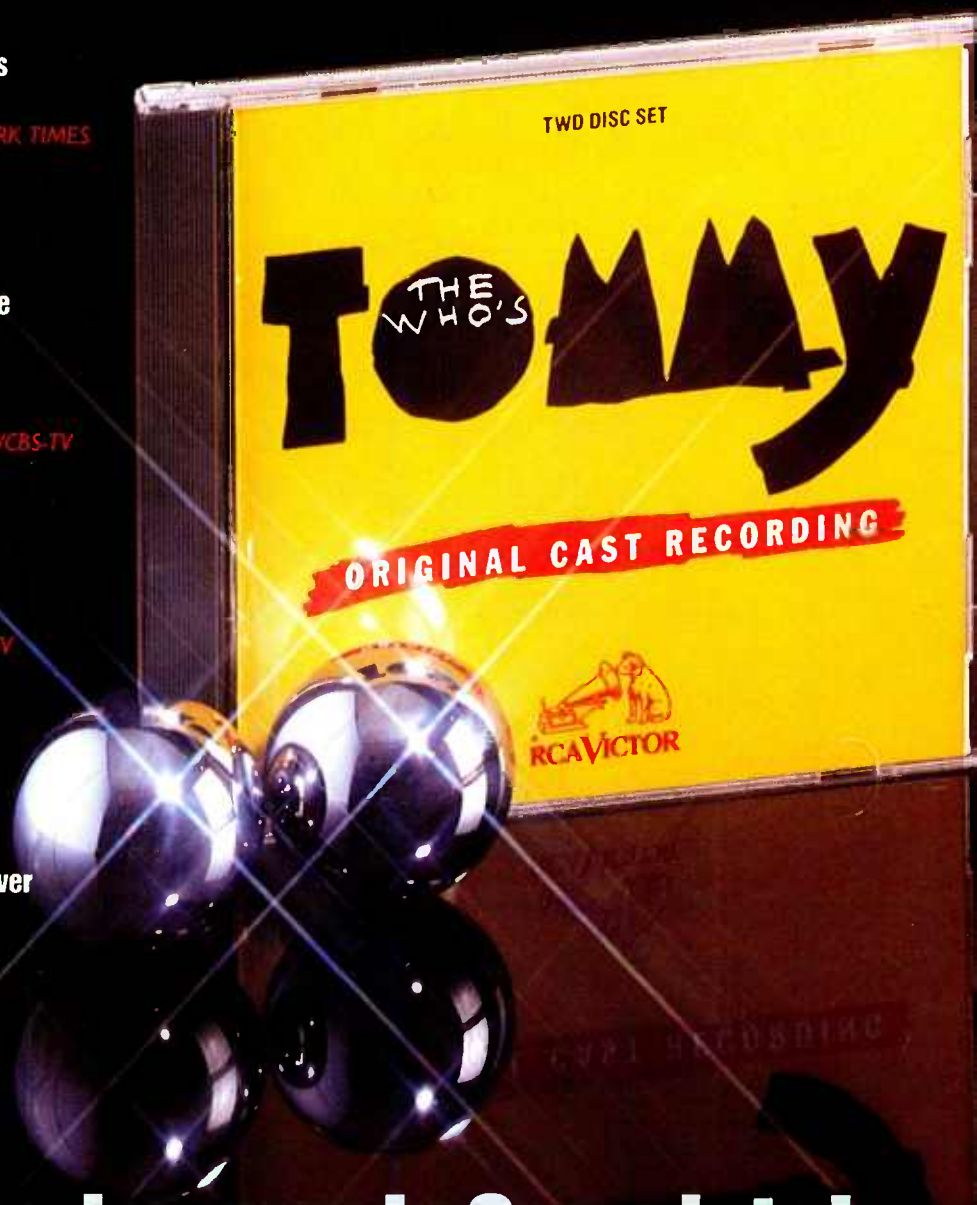

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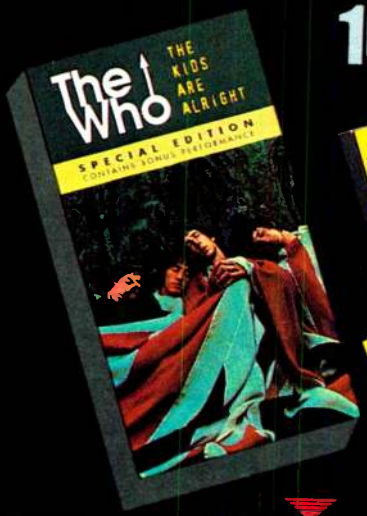

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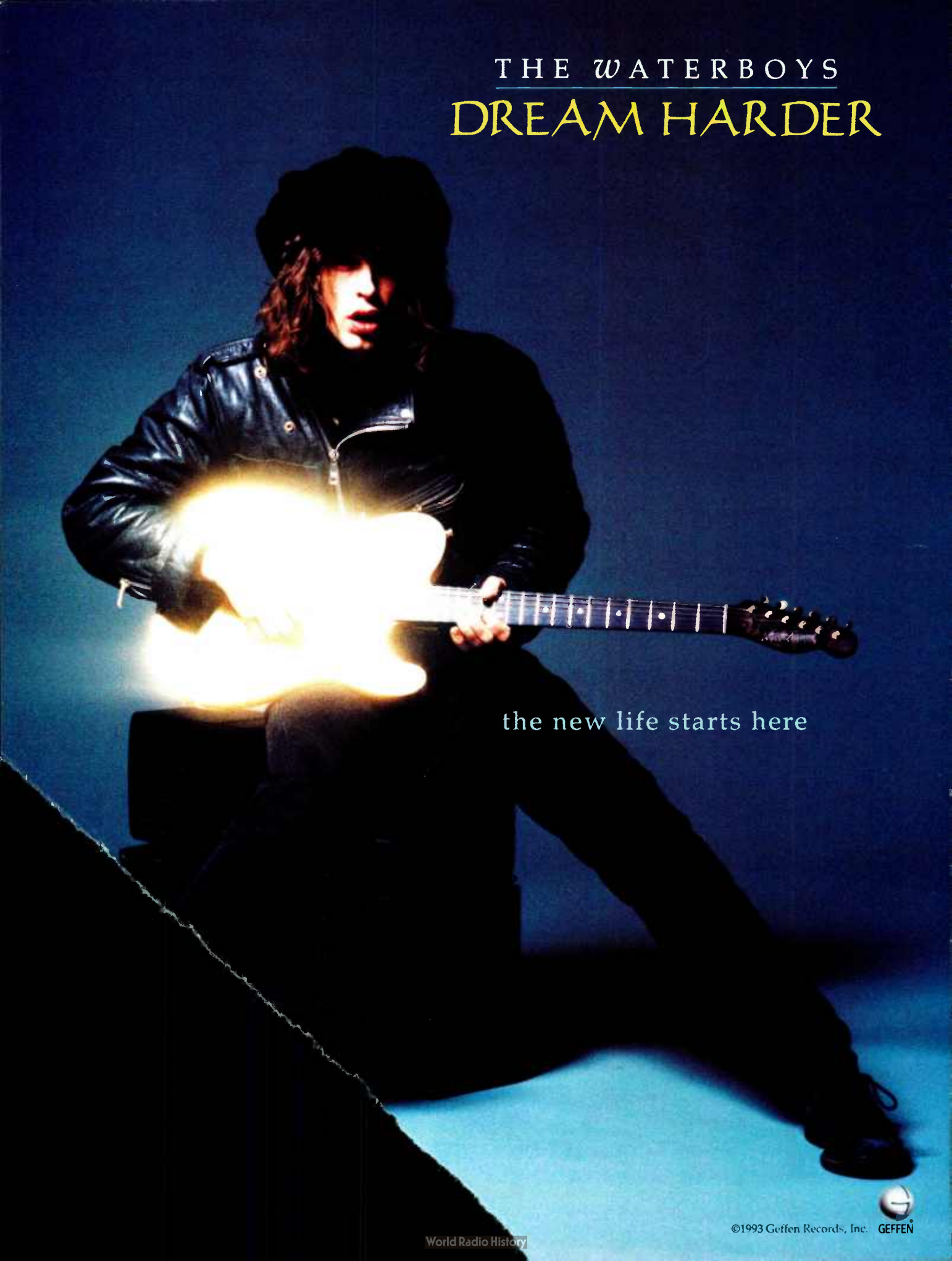

FACES

Susan Voelz

Pondering Without Poi Dog

TODD V. WOLFSON

The guys in Poi Dog Pondering like to kid Susan Voelz about her "Susan fans," yet so many of her bandmates pop up on her solo album *13 Ribs*, they must be fans too. It's also a recognition of her violin's starring role in that band, but while the instrument weaves through the record, *13 Ribs* is as much about the rest of Voelz's personality as a singer and writer.

"I'd been on the road with Poi Dog throughout the whole making of it," she recalls, "which was all guys, and we love guys, but 14 of them.... Pretty soon, I think I was shutting off a big part of myself to get along, to spend a day. So I'd get home and just pour out this stuff onto the eight-track, just for myself."

Poi Dog's manager took a tape of her Tascam 688 creations to the MIDEM convention in Cannes and returned with a record deal from a French indie, Voodoo. When his shopping it in the States failed, an old friend of Voelz's sent a tape to Pravda Records, who picked up *13 Ribs*.

"It's an incredibly feminine album...very personal," admits the gypsy-ish Voelz in a South Austin cafe on a cloudy, wet afternoon, a perfect climatic analogy for the atmosphere of moody beauty that pervades her album. Sounding something like Nico and John Cale fused into one (somewhat sweeter) being, Voelz now finds herself finishing album two and readying for some U.S. and French touring. "It's just an extra bonus that people like it," she says shyly, her voice almost dropping to a whisper. "It makes me so happy."

ROB PATTERSON

Farewell Sun Ra & Arthur Alexander

The world's so busy with other things...football and basketball and prize fighting. Why should they listen to us?" That's Sun Ra feeling blue one afternoon a few years ago. But it was a rhetorical question—he'd just stepped offstage at the New Orleans Jazz Festival and knew his Arkestra had done a great job. The crowd had gone bonkers. Almost as bonkers as the band.

There were many reasons to listen to Ra, who died on May 30 at the age of 79 in Birmingham, Alabama (his birthplace, despite longstanding claims of being a native of Saturn). His Arkestra was a circus of joy. On the road for almost 40 years, they mixed audacious musical designs with bewildering celestial commentary. But at the heart of each performance was an exuberance that could border on rapture.

A genuine eccentric and innovative orchestrator, Sun Ra never forgot how blacks were violently brought to this country. It helped fuel (and substantiate) his doctrine of otherness. "I don't feel at home on this planet," he told *Musician*. Visiting magic cities and wobbling on ancient planes, he was trying to transcend, forever inviting us to novel destinations. One of his more dedicated refrains is worth remembering. Singing about post-Earthly reveling with the angels, he made a promise of reunion that good friends everywhere should understand: "I'll Wait for You."

JIM MACNIE

DAVID GAHR

Soul singer Arthur Alexander died June 9 of a heart attack complicated by kidney failure. At the age of 53, Alexander had been enjoying a revival of interest in his career after nearly two decades of inactivity. He made his first record, "Sally Sue Brown," in 1961, and his songs were covered by both the Beatles ("Anna") and the Stones ("You Better Move On"). Several of his own versions of his songs—characterized by a powerful baritone voice, wide-open emotion and tight backup band—became hits, although Alexander saw little of the money. His comeback album *Lonely Just Like Me* was released this spring to highly favorable reviews.

FACES

The Iguanas

Less Is More

"There's something magical that happens after 2 a.m. in New Orleans," says Derek Huston of the Iguanas. "There's no closing time, so we can keep playing as late as we like. We touch on everything we know during those late sets, and at a certain point it just becomes our music."

For the Iguanas, the main components in music are rhythm and blues, Tex-Mex and Colombian vallenata, plus a dash of rockabilly. Their eponymous debut album (on Margaritaville) emphasizes original songs that are natural extensions and creative hybrids of R&B and Latin idioms. It's a potent sound that's ideal for dancing, and now that the Neville Brothers and the Radiators tour almost constantly, the Iguanas have emerged as New Orleans' favorite hometown dance band.

"There's definitely a local precedent for what we play," Huston points out. "Professor Longhair played blues with rhumba rhythms." Huston's and Joe Cabral's dual saxophone work also pays homage to the great New Orleans team of Lee Allen and Red Tyler, who played on so many '50s R&B classics.

Cabral switches over to bajo sexto on Latin numbers, while Rod Hodges trades his sizzling lead guitar for an accordion. Such eclecticism rattles some listeners, but most flow with the Iguanas' seamless, steamy dance groove. "When people like Freddy Fender or the Los Lobos guys tell us they love our music," Huston says, "I figure we must be on the right track."

BEN SANDMEL

RICK OLIVIER

L–R: William Panker, Joe Cabral, J. Rene Coman, Derek Huston, Rod Hodges

FACES

Urge Overkill

Less Is More

"We always considered ourselves kinda like a punk version of a mainstream band," says Blackie Onassis, drummer of Urge Overkill, whose big-league label debut *Saturation* melds those antithetical forces in a euphoric blast of melodious guitar aggression.

It's a mild May day, and Onassis and bandmates Nash Kato (guitar, vocals) and King Roeser (bass, vocals) are holding court on the back patio of the Urge lair, a neoclassical former bank building situated in one of Chicago's most perilous neighborhoods, Humboldt Park. "It's such a musical environment," Kato says fondly, gesturing at UO's Latin-gang-turf surroundings. "There's a lot of rhythm literally on the street."

When choosing a producer for *Saturation*, their maiden voyage on Geffen Records, Urge Overkill also went for the street. No more underground overlords like Albini, Kramer or Vig, who'd helmed their indie efforts. Instead, the Urge men pacted with Philly-based hip-hop kingpins Joe and Phil Nicolo, the "Butcher Brothers" (Cypress Hill, Kris Kross). "Hip-hop is all samples and stuff, which they're good at," says Kato. "But I think they were achin' to set up some microphones again."

MICHAEL LAVINE

L–R: Blackie O, "Eddie" King Roeser, Nash Kato

The result is an almost absurdly terrific, dross-free disc with toothsome, witty pop songcraft wedded to atom-smashing guitar work. Its 12 varied cuts are arranged "like a little jukebox," in Kato's words. "Six A sides [followed by] six B sides. As with any good jukebox, the B sides are often as good as the A sides."

MOIRA MCCORMICK

FACES

Book of Love

Bubbling Under

"We've always been mainstream," says Ted Ottaviano, keyboardist for Book of Love. "Though our instrumentation is different, we adhere to pop formats."

"Our roots are in '60s music," adds singer Susan Ottaviano (no relation). "We use 'cold' instruments, but there's warmth to what we do."

Now on their fourth album of offbeat synth pop, the New York quartet has compiled a string of dance-chart faves, including "Boy" and "Pretty Boys and Pretty Girls," without making much of a mark elsewhere. Anyway, the cognoscenti know: Jonathan Demme used one of their songs, as well as casting bandmember Lauren Roselli, in *The Silence of the Lambs*; fellow hipster David Byrne contributed the cover art for their new *Lovebubble* LP.

Until the rest of the world catches up, Book of Love stands tall on the club scene, although they're hardly a ruthless hit machine. "We couldn't be Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis," notes Ted. "Since we come from a self-taught art-school background, even our most blatant commercial attempts come off as quirky and personal. In dance music, consistency means relying on a formula. Some people wish we would do more of that."

JOSHUA CHRIST

Clockwise from top left: Susan Ottaviano, Jade Lee, Ted Ottaviano, Lauren Roselli

Eight years on, Ted is still coming to grips with the conventions of the genre, especially the use of remixers. "It used to freak me out to hear one of our songs manipulated to sound like a deep house record. Now I'm more likely to say our song exists on the album, where it's supposed to be, and the remix is just a deep house interpretation.

"The version of 'Boypop' currently getting played in the clubs isn't our four-minute album cut—it's eight minutes of pump, bump and grind. I'm happy with its success, but I don't listen to it and say, 'That's what I always intended.'" Pausing, he laughs, "I still can't believe we get writer's credit for other people's remixes!" JON YOUNG

FACES

Lisa Germano

The Pursuit of Happiness

IMKE LASS

"I've never been a *good* player," insists rockin' fiddler Lisa Germano. "I can't come up with hot licks and jam. I have to write my parts."

This alleged shortcoming hasn't stopped John Mellencamp from making Germano a mainstay of his band, while U2, Bob Seger and plenty of others have tapped Ms. G's talents in the studio. Lately, Germano has been self-employed, constructing eccentric soundscapes for *Happiness*, her second solo album. Delivering angst-soaked tunes in a breathy voice she compares to "whispering in your ear," Germano could be Indiana's version of Kate Bush. Oh yeah, she plays mandolin, guitar, piano and accordion as well as violin, but you shouldn't be impressed. "I just picked up those things because I wanted an ugly sound," Germano shrugs. "Violin's the only thing I can really play."

Hard to believe this fearless advocate of the do-it-yourself approach was a shrinking violet until recently. "Before I worked for John, I was controlled by my fears and limitations. When I played with a symphony, I had a panic attack during a concert once and had to walk offstage. I used to be afraid of fainting, but John would say, 'Shut up, go ahead and faint, and get back up.'" Although Germano's nervous early days in the rough-and-tumble Mellencamp band were marked by frequent crying spells, she credits the tough-love atmosphere with forcing her to stop being a wimp.

Similar accounts of psychic torment set the tone for *Happiness*, with strung-out tracks like "Puppet" and "Everyone's Victim" documenting the varieties of self-deception. "It's all about me. I make fun of myself all the time," Germano admits, adding with a wicked grin, "Maybe I should call the next album *Manic Paranoid Schizophrenic Girl*."

JON YOUNG

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ON STAGE

THE VELVET UNDERGROUND

"WE'RE THE VELVET UNderground, we want no part of this/That's because we think it is pretentious shit," Lou Reed rhymes awkwardly, as John Cale pounds jauntily on electric piano.

"Straight from soundcheck to you," Reed concludes, beaming as his self-mocking ditty delivered mid-show achieves the desired round of applause.

And straight from that to a blinding take of "White Light/White Heat," as hot white lights strafe the crowd and Reed, Cale, Sterling Morrison and Moe Tucker recreate the proto-punk roar of the 1960s New York band that was revered more in memory than in its heyday, for its pioneering fusion of art and rock, noise and melody.

Judged least likely to succeed from the moment they left Andy Warhol's Factory in 1965, the Velvets were also long considered to be the least likely group to hit the reunion trail.

Reed and Cale had sworn it would never happen, since Reed fired Cale from the band in '68 after their egos clashed once too often, while Morrison fought Reed over songwriting royalties until well into the 1980s. And the soft-spoken Tucker, a rarity then and now as the female drummer for a male-dominated rock band, had opted for motherhood five times over, and occasional solo albums for cult fans.

But here they are together on stage, two nights into their first public performances in 25 years and their first-ever European tour, working hard to dispel the thin pall of cynicism hanging over the event.

The marquee outside the 3100-seat Edinburgh Playhouse reads "VELVET UNDERGROUND—SOLD OUT." The statement can be read positively or negatively—and first-night reviews by the local press choose the latter—but the band members insist they're in it neither for money nor nostalgia, but simply for the fun of being together again.

The sentiment holds true both nights, as the band kicks into "We're Gonna Have a Real Good Time Together" with an enthusiasm that makes up for guitarist Morrison's less-than-stellar timing, Tucker's [*cont'd next page*]

JONI MITCHELL

FOR HER FIRST PUBLIC PERformance in several years, Joni Mitchell found a way to affirm her spiritual ties to the folk music community whence she came, while showcasing songs whose intentions ranged

PHOTOGRAPHS: (TOP) MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA, (BOTTOM) BRIAN DAVIS

JONI MITCHELL

far beyond that music's traditional boundaries.

The occasion was a two-day "Troubadours of Folk" festival in the open air of UCLA's Drake Stadium, featuring an impressive lineup of '60s-generation acoustic warriors (John Prine, Roger McGuinn, Judy Collins, Arlo Guthrie, Richie Havens, et cetera) and a middle-aging audience similarly uncertain whether such gatherings symbolized nostalgia or renewal. Most seemed content to let the matter ride and have a good time.

But when Mitchell finally appeared toting her guitar, the crowd in front of the stage became palpably attentive—this, after all, was an *event*—while several of the day's other performers formed a thick crescent around the stage rear. As if sensing a collective hunger for Something Different, she launched an unfamiliar composition, "Last Chance Lost," by bending long phrases around the languid, jazz-inflected melody in a way that brought to mind Betty Carter—a sultry sound masking spiky sentiment. Next up was a slower, chunkier version of "Big Yellow Taxi"—the song's original whimsy perhaps flattened by two decades' worth of witnessing its truths—and a wistful "Amelia," its succession of visual images seeming to hover and then dissolve like Mitchell's frosted breath in the cool evening air.

Technically, the show was far from perfect. The years have ripened her voice into a rich, dusky instrument as commanding as her personality, and heavy-stroked guitar rhythms provided a sturdy, propulsive bottom for Mitchell's intricate compositions. But on this night she was clearly nervous—just before she went on, you could see her puffing cancer sticks in the wings—and almost every song was saddled with a false start, missed chords or some such glitch. "I gotta practice more," she chided herself at one point, and you got the idea she wasn't kidding.

All of which could have been a recipe for disaster in front of a less supportive crowd—anyone remember Amnesty International? Instead, Mitchell's wit and disarming candor transformed this into an event of uncommon charm. At one point, she forgot the words to "Hejira" and had to stop in mid-song and ask the front-row listeners to prompt her memory. They did. Sobering new songs like "Sunny Sunday"—"about a woman waiting for a break," as she put it—and "Borderlines," a kind of kaddish for a culture that keeps ripping its own seams apart, were received warmly. By the time she closed with "Night Ride Home," the rapport between singer and audience seemed to mirror that song's hard-won serenity.

"Thank you very much," she said before exiting. "You've been wonderful, wonderful, wonderful!" Lawrence Welk couldn't have put it any better. —MARK ROWLAND

THE VELVET UNDERGROUND

minimalist drumming and a 20-song set list that largely favors traditional arrangements over innovation.

"Hello, thank you," Reed tells the cheering house. "We haven't seen you in a while. But it just seems like yesterday."

As always, the black-T-shirted Reed is the center of attention as he rips lead breaks with a series of sawed-off guitars and tosses off wry asides to the audience.

"Nico!" a fan shouts, recalling the late, star-crossed Warhol acolyte who sang on the Velvets' first album.

"That will take some doing," Reed dryly shoots back.

But Nico's ghost doesn't make an appear-

ance, being banished by Cale's stunning vocal and keyboard recreation of her star turns, "All Tomorrow's Parties" and "Femme Fatale."

Cale, who switches from keys to viola to bass just like the old days, also checks in with a spell-binding reading of "The Gift," the spoken-word boho ramble of a musical horror story penned by Reed in his university days.

In the dim light behind her sideways-turned floor tom, Tucker seems 20 years younger as she alternates between mallet and stick on toms and snares, laying down a hypnotic tribal beat that is short on fills and cymbal action.

Morrison is perhaps the least comfortable person onstage, not surprising since he spent most of the past quarter-century toiling not as a musician, but as a Texas tugboat pilot and university student of medieval literature. He seems to be fighting stage nervousness, but he still has his guitar chops, even if he does flub the first lead break on "Rock & Roll"—earning him an icy stare from taskmaster Reed.

Morrison pulls off his second lead break with aplomb, indicating a few more nights on the road will see him fully back up to speed. And he's already playing with more authority on this second night than he was on the first, as is the rest of the band.

"Sweet Jane" seemed an obligatory toss-off on opening night, but it becomes a show highlight the second, with Reed tearing at his guitar and playing with the audience.

"Some people, they like to go out dancin'," Reed sings, "but the Velvet Underground, they gotta work. C'mon, watch me now!" He points towards himself and the crowd cheers.

"Beginning to See the Light" proves the Velvets were always nothing less than a great rock 'n' roll band, and so does "I Can't Stand It," which Reed introduces solemnly by saying, "This will be our last song."

"Ooooh!" says the crowd, expressing its displeasure.

"Oh, you're so cruel," Reed teases. "Please talk dirty to me."

There is an encore, of course, and it starts with "I'm Waiting for the Man." Cale sings lead instead of Reed, and the song benefits both from his distinctive Welsh cadences and a second night of performance.

Reed sings lead on "Heroin" with more passion than he did the previous night, which got by more on the sheer emotion of the event than on musical brilliance. The band also knows it has done better the second night, because it returns for a second encore with a tune still dripping wet from inspiration.

"This is a new song," Reed says, smiling as he drinks in the effusive applause. "This is as new for us as it is for you. It's exactly three hours old."

The song is "Cast the First Stone," a good ballad that uses the title for a hook and metaphors about a coyote on a windswept hill, and there's a palpable sense of relief from the stage when the group makes it all the way through.

The night is suddenly over, with such Velvets classics as "Sister Ray," "Pale Blue Eyes," "Run Run Run" and "New Age" not heard either night.

But the reunion is still young, so set changes are likely. The band has announced only a dozen or so European dates, with no firm talk of a North American tour, but Reed told his Edinburgh audience, "We hope to see you again," indicating he wants the Velvet Underground reunion to last a while.

Despite all the amputations, despite all the computations, you can dance once again to the Velvet Underground, and they're still all right.

—PETER HOWELL

PATTI SCIALFA: TOMORROW COMES

IN A PERFECT WORLD, PATTI SCIALFA COULD RELEASE HER FIRST album, *Rumbledoll*, and listeners would judge it on its own merit. "But it's not the best of all possible worlds that we live in," Scialfa says quietly. "That's okay. I clearly understand that." Still, it makes her wary—nervous that her marriage to Bruce Springsteen will overshadow the fact that at age 40, through two pregnancies and after years in the studio, Scialfa has finally released an accomplished album full of well-crafted confessional songs.

Even the most basic decision, such as the choice of a single, has fallen prey to Scialfa's fear of how she will be perceived—not as a hardworking musician who's been steadily plugging away at it since she was 14, but as Springsteen's wife. "There are certain songs I really didn't want the single to be. I love 'Come Tomorrow' but that's too provocative to me. That's one of the things I'm frightened of," she admits. On "Come Tomorrow," Scialfa sings: "From the first time/That I saw you/I wanted nothing but to make you mine/Now there's this girl/With milk white hands/And on her finger your wedding band shines/Still you tempt me/With your kisses..." Her trepidation is understandable.

BY ELIZA WING

Scialfa debated over the album's confessional tone. "I could have rewritten those songs but I would have had to rewrite the whole record," she says. "If you're just putting out a confessional album not many people know what it's about, but if you're married to somebody who's well-known I'm sure it gives people the opportunity to use their imagination."

Just getting into the studio and making the album was a struggle for Scialfa, who was signed by Columbia Records in 1987 right after the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour, her first outing as part of

> *"The safer I felt, the more I wanted to make a bigger record."*

Springsteen's band. She was about to begin recording when Springsteen called and asked her to sing back-up on the *Tunnel of Love* tour. Soon after began the affair that would break up Springsteen's marriage to Julianne Phillips and lead Scialfa and Springsteen to a life together. Scialfa had intended to start her album after the *Tunnel of Love* tour but says, "I really needed the stability of having that part of my life figured out. That's why I took time off. It was something that I had been struggling with my whole life and I thought—I want these things in my life, I want a partner. I want a family. I spent *years* by myself."

Those years alone were devoted to building a career. Scialfa watched, fascinated, as her older brother formed a band in Deal, New Jersey, an upper-middle-class town along the Jersey Shore. She saved up and bought a $150 Shure mike. "It came in a little white case and I used to take it to my gigs.... I'd just find bands that I liked and ask them if I could sing with them." She laughs, remembering how ballsy she was. "I had a lot of rejections." Eventually she began writing songs and, after graduating from high school, moved to New York City. "I was like, if I don't make a record album before I'm 20 I'll never be the kind of artist that I want to be." Finally, she decided to become a vocal major at the University of Miami's music school, immersing herself in jazz—"I threw all my rock records out," she remembers. She graduated from NYU in 1975 and joined a fusion band called Tone, headed by former Springsteen pianist David Sancious. Soon after, she joined Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes as a back-up singer. In 1984 Springsteen asked her to join the E Street Band.

Her career may sound like [*cont'd on page 29*]

 PHOTOGRAPH: DEBORAH FEINGOLD

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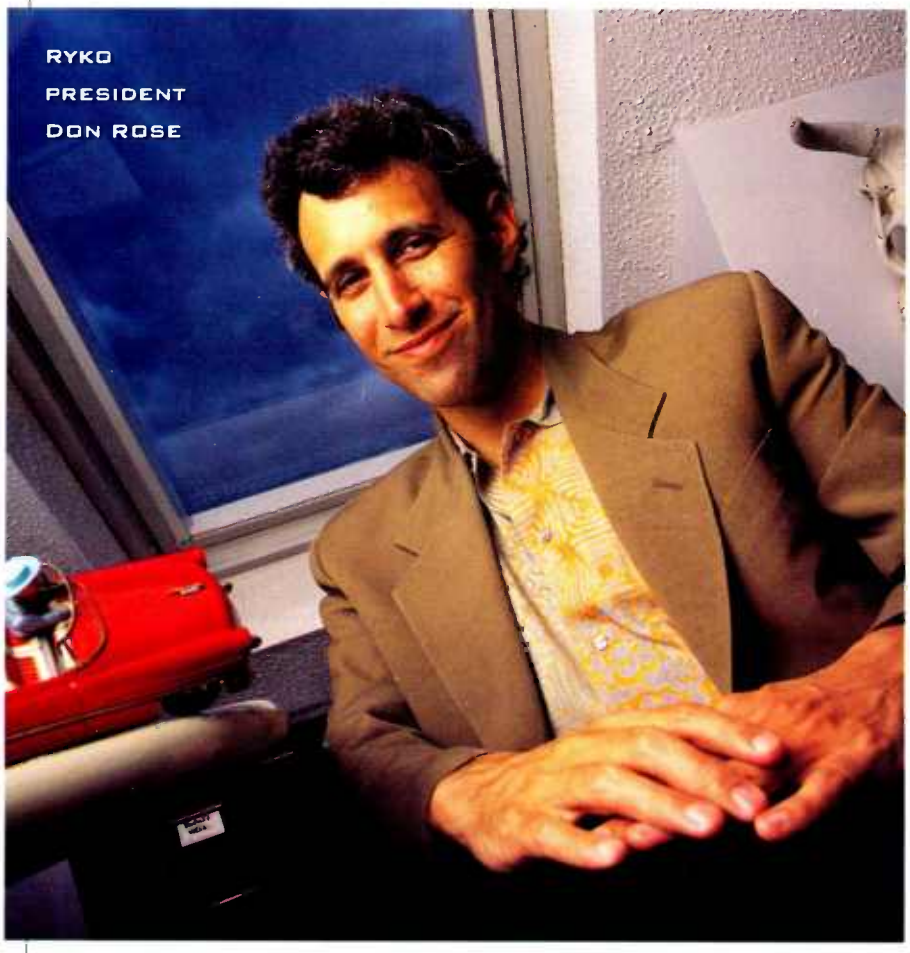

RYKO PRESIDENT DON ROSE

BY JIM MACNIE

YOU ADD IT UP. ONE OFFICE IN MINNEAPOLIS, ANOTHER IN PHILLY, an adjunct space in London and a comfy HQ on the Massachusetts coast. Rykodisc's aesthetic diversity pretty much parallels its scattered geography. No whale watches leave from the Salem docks near the respected indie label's main digs, but for the last decade Ryko has swum with the big fish, keeping an eye on the oversized rulers of the corporate sea. "The major labels could outgun us at any time," admits the company president Don Rose, "but every now and then, when they're not looking, we're going to sneak under their legs, give 'em a good one and jump back out."

He's talking specifically about Sugar, Bob Mould's acute yet affable trio. The band's *Copper Blue* is the largest-selling title by any new artist the label's signed (300,000 units). After a decade of learning what it takes to relaunch high-visibility catalogs—the company received plenty of kudos and sizable profits for their David Bowie and Frank Zappa campaigns—they've scored with a current release. Sales for *Beaster*, Sugar's follow-up EP, are clocking in at 150,000 units. Not a bad way to begin your tenth anniversary.

"We had high expectations with Bob," notes Rose, "but you've got to be careful. We're not under the notion that we can break 10 alternative rock groups at once, or that we should be running in and going head-to-head with the majors on these things."

That's the "jump back out" part of the Ryko plan. They're comfortable with their status, their autonomy and the quality of their stylistic concerns. "I like all the action, but for my tastes, we're a bit too big right now," offers the 38-year-old Rose.

That kind of practicality is part of a grand scheme that avoids the grand. Ryko's initial persona was that of enlightened curators. Rose and his current partners Rob Simonds and Arthur Mann bolted through the CD intersection while majors cautiously looked both ways. That begot notoriety. Their reissues were superbly executed. Notoriety turned to esteem.

The second-biggest U.S.–owned label is an indie.

"What we do isn't unique, but we make it unique," explains Rose. "We're completely untrend-driven. Though we never decided we had to be in 50 different areas, we did decide not to be in just one. Plus, we're not hit-dependent. Most companies are, and it's a shaky place from which to operate."

That's why you'll find Afropop, rockabilly, progressive, ambient, bluegrass, Celtic and Onomusic next to the Gyuto Monks and the Residents on their warehouse shelves. When they inked a deal with Joe Boyd's London-based Hannibal Records in '91, their eclecticism (and critical respect) was compounded. Viewed together, Ryko and Hannibal deal in top-shelf oddities and renegades.

"I have tastes that aren't always explicable to everybody," says Boyd. The 50-year-old American is well known for facilitating the advent of folk-rock, at least in Britain. He produced early Fairport Convention dates, and stuck with Richard Thompson right through the recent three-disc overview *Watching the Dark*. He quickly admits to "feeling like a carpetbagger" regarding his new team relationship. "But," he reminds, "life for independent record labels became more and more difficult, and I was a one-man band. It was a struggle to continue on alone."

Though they didn't conduct business in similar fashions, each side abetted the other. "My

PHOTOGRAPH: WEBB CHAPPELL

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buccaneering spirit was slightly wary of their highly organized, and what I took to be retail-minded, point of view. I started my career by saying, 'What do I want to shove down the throats of people?' Don and Rob come at it from 'What do people want to buy?' I've learned a lot with them. There's a point in an artist's career where they like a maniac like me saying, 'Hey, let's make a record like this!' But there's another point where they already know what they want to do and want it to be professionally handled. The bottom line here is quality. I can't imagine what other company I could have joined and gotten similar support."

The level-headed Rose saw a larger picture. "Hannibal was strong in Europe, and that's exactly where *we* needed help." Boyd is currently placing Ryko discs on the continent. Native American poet John Trudell's *AKA Graffiti Man* has been strongly embraced by consumers. So far, the association has been mutually fruitful. Boyd's even been scouting non-Hannibal artists. He recently stumped for the signing of the novel Boston ensemble Morphine. Their lineup is idiosyncratic enough to fit into the label's peculiar nature: sax, bass, drums. At the zenith of grunge, there's no guitar.

"There was interest in us elsewhere," confides Morphine vocalist Mark Sandman, "but Ryko was one of our first choices. My other group, Treat Her Right, was on a major, and we constantly saw corporate politics take precedence over musical decisions—divisional infighting was constant. Ryko seems stable. Plus, they genuinely dig, and even better, understand us. After a couple years at RCA, there wasn't one person that was the same."

Grateful Dead percussionist Mickey Hart has been around long enough to sniff out corporate indifference. His Grammy-winning World Music series thrives on the label. "Ryko made CDs before anyone else," muses the drummer. "That was ballsy. They were cutting-edge, but had that business logic. Right there I knew those guys were edgers. To have all my projects come out under one umbrella—to really make a statement—that was important. Another plus is packaging. When you present music of value, and you don't brown-bag it, people see its true worth. Presentation is crucial. These guys are genuinely into it."

Speaking of display, Ryko fueled the campaign to heave the dreaded longbox. Simonds was crucial to the cause; his '89 guest editorial in *Billboard* spurred a grassroots move.

"When I wrote it, it didn't seem ballsy—more like common sense. I knew there were a lot of people from the indie community on my side. What I didn't know was how far out that opinion was to the industry mainstream. For the most part, the majors don't want to go against the grain of the big retailers, who certainly were against the idea at first. It took a while, but it feels great to have the switch-over finally taking place." Because of the ecological righteousness, correct?

"Nobody cared about that. That angle only became an important part of the process when artists got involved. The Grateful Dead's publicist said they were interested in stopping the waste, and wanted to support getting rid of the package. Other artists concurred."

Forging consensus is a company talent. "We've always had to strive to communicate, because of the various office locations," says Simonds. "If we were all in one building, we might not work so hard at getting our points across. We're not in each other's faces all day long."

Whichever, their strategies have distinguished them. Clarifying pop history with their catalog sales (which sustained them through times when new artists foundered), Ryko looks to what Hart calls "the periphery" to make their mark. "We resist anything that defines us," beams Rose, "even things we do right."

[*cont'd from page 24*] a gratifying rise to success but her album chronicles a slow transformation. First, there's the fragile, pained woman in the title track who yearns for someone to come to her rescue, then follow songs like "Come Tomorrow" and the single, "As Long as I (Can Be with You)," in which she takes a chance, surrenders to a man and finds redemption in love. Scialfa says that the final cut, "Spanish Dancer," is about a woman who "takes the romance and illusion out of love and has a clear idea of being able to surrender while seeing clearly and being able to trust."

That personal journey was echoed in Scialfa's recording process. She knew she had to find someone she felt comfortable recording with—"I was frightened, I wanted to work in a safe environment," she says. Another criterion was that her producer be a musician with whom she could easily collaborate. Heartbreaker guitarist Mike Campbell fit the bill: "I thought it would be nice to work with somebody who was very rooted in his own sound," she explains.

Originally, Scialfa wanted to make a quiet, spare and stark album. "I wanted everything to be safe and closed in and controlled...not letting anybody else in and just playing with Mike." But as Scialfa grew more confident, she was able to allow the production to expand. The album showcases Scialfa's deep, warm voice and surrounds but never overwhelms it with Campbell's tasty fills. There are occasional Springsteen-like phrases, but Scialfa's sound is quieter, sweeter.

In fact, though Scialfa used fellow E Street veterans Nils Lofgren and Roy Bittan on several tracks, Springsteen is credited on only two songs, "Big Black Heaven" and "Talk to Me Like the Rain." The temptation to work and perform with her husband has been great, she admits: "The most natural thing is that you want to play together. I don't think it would be harmful to him, but unfortunately it would be harmful to me.... We did a couple of things. I'd be at home and I'd be trying to work out something and there was nobody else around. I'd go, 'Bruce, let's try this.' But on the whole we both knew it wasn't a good idea."

Rumbledoll is securely Scialfa's album. Her voice frequently bends up beautifully to the top of her range, a technique she uses to express vulnerability as well as an almost spiritual longing. "For some reason when I started writing the material there was something very spiritual about it," she says. "I was reaching up, like in church. The singing on the record kept on going up. But then, I was writing about reaching up and reaching out."

SPANISH DANCERS

When MIKE CAMPBELL and PATTI SCIALFA went in to record *Rumbledoll* both were looking for a natural sound. Says Campbell, "We stayed away from high-tech keyboards because I like the warmer, more analog sound of the cheaper models. The new models make the notes tinkly and clear." They settled on a Yamaha SY77 keyboard and a Roland Juno 106.

Some of Scialfa's vocals were recorded on a Neumann U47 FET, a new tube mike that Campbell had used to record Roy Orbison. "Normally, you'd go for an older mike for warmth," he says. "But this mike gave a real warm sound. Roy wanted to buy it after he was done recording."

For guitar, Campbell used a mid-'60s vintage Stratocaster that Tom Petty used to take on the road, a Rickenbacker 12-string and a 1956 Gretsch. He ran the guitars through an Ampeg Rocket, a Fender tweed Deluxe and a Groove Tubes preamp. His strings were Ernie Ball regulars. Fender Precision and Yamaha were his basses.

BONO VS THE BEAST

A GUIDED TOUR THROUGH U2'S NEW ALBUM

THE SETTING is Dublin's Factory rehearsal studio, where U2 are piecing together *Zooropa*, the follow-up album to *Achtung Baby*. Bono admits he is "totally wasted" from working in the studio until 3 a.m. on a track titled "Daddy's Gonna Pay for Your Crashed Car." U2 has made this new album while preparing for a summer tour of Europe. Does Bono, or do U2 as a band, feel intimidated by the ground-breaking success of *Achtung Baby* and the fact that they now must follow one of their most innovative albums in recent memory?

BY JOE JACKSON

"People say that to us but—can I be brutally honest and suitably humble with you? We just whipped its ass by making this new album over the past six weeks! It was easy! *Achtung Baby* was just us tuning up to get ready for this record!

"We don't feel at all intimidated, though we were totally taken aback by how successful *Achtung Baby* was. But the new record is a *different* album. It's more raw, more immediate because we have got the band playing together in a way that we probably never have before. And we really can't afford to stop and think, 'Oh wow, we've got to follow *Achtung Baby*.'

"You just get into the studio and do it."

Bono launches into an improvised ramble of responses to the songs on the new album, as well as a fly-on-the-wall look at as much of his psyche as he wishes to reveal right now.

Playing the new album's first track, "Zooropa," Bono shouts above the music: "A lot of what's in this album comes from reading the work of William Gibson"—the cyberpunk sci-fi author.

The song opens with a brace of suspended chords trembling as they chain down the sound of indecipherable human voices shifting from speaker to speaker, growing louder with each beat. It's sci-fi in hi-fi, signifying that ZOO TV future shock is about to begin again.

"This is just a sketch," says Bono. "The album is still changing day to day. As it stands we have 14 tracks which we'll probably cut down to 10. Over the last six weeks it's taken its own shape and we've just gone with the flow."

When the Edge rides in with a steely, angry "Zoo Station"–like riff bolting

PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVIN CUMMINS/LONDON FEATURES

together this amorphous musical maze, followed by Larry Mullen's steadying pulse on drums *and* on bass, Bono yells, "It's a trip!" Less flippantly he adds: "*That's* what I want it to be! Legal drugs. Why else would you buy an album these days?"

He recites with his own recorded voice: "*I have no compass/And I have no map/And I have no reason, no reason/To get back.*"

The moral confusion that dominates "Acrobat," from *Achtung Baby*, is in evidence again.

"*And I have no religion/And I don't know what's what/Don't know the limits/Don't know the limits of what we got.*"

Taking a deep breath while the song dissolves into screeching white noise, Bono laughs, shakes his head and, as if suddenly remembering there is someone in the room, says: "We were going to call the album *Squeaky* at one point!"

His self-conscious laugh is silenced as the DAT immediately delivers a second song, which begins with what seems like the sound of a child's toy in a soon-to-be subverted opening scene of a David Lynch movie.

"This is called 'Baby Face,'" says Bono. "And in this brightly lit, fucked-up commercial landscape we'll have onstage, we take the audience through a window and there's a guy watching somebody on a TV, a personality, a celebrity he's obsessed with. It's about how people play with images, believing you know somebody through an image, and think that by manipulating a machine that, in fact, controls you, you can have some kind of power [*sings, in a chillingly sweet voice*]: *Watching your bright-lit eyes/In the freeze frame/I've seen them so many times/I feel like I must be your best friend/You're looking fine, so fine.*"

As Bono harmonizes with his own voice, the spirits of David Bowie and Lou Reed hover nearby. Right on cue he stops singing and just as you're thinking of the colored girls going do-de-do-de-do-do-de-de-do-de-do, he smiles and says, "There hasn't been a good do-de-do on the album yet—so here it comes!" Hamming it up and calling to mind some of his father's heroes, he adds, "But you have to admit that Dean Martin was great at that, wasn't he? And Bing Crosby. What I loved was the way they'd casually slip their hands in their pockets while singing. I can't do that at all—because all my jeans are too tight!"

Bono explains that "Dirty Day," the next track, "is exactly as it happened": a largely instrumental sonic rumble, and ramble, made up mostly of improvised riffs and rhythms in the studio.

"Iggy Pop was very much an influence in terms of the way he'd make up songs in performance," he explains. "So this is really U2 in its most raw state. At the moment I'm toying with the idea of something that keeps flashing up in front of me when I hear the music, an image of a father giving surrealist advice to his son. I also see Charles Bukowski in my head and the kind of advice he gives, like 'Always give a false name!' But whatever lyric I finally put to it, the music strikes me as very sad. What I'm saying there is 'Make it better, son.' The feeling I get is that the father has fucked off, or something like that. Then again it may end up being about Gorbachev! But what you're hearing there is the base of what probably will become a song, and the creative process is obviously very much dictated by the atmosphere the band originally got while improvising. *That's* what will dictate the kind of lyrics the song finally has."

Continuing the father theme, Bono laughs and says, "And here's another cheery little U2 ditty we finished last night, 'Daddy's Gonna Pay for Your Crashed Car.'"

Bono sings: "*You're a precious stone/You're out on your own/You know everyone in the world/But you feel alone.*

"We use the reverb there to bring my voice in and out of focus, so it's *right in your ear* one moment, then lost in the mix the next. We want it to be disorientating, disturbing," he says, having effectively fractured my eardrum with his shout. As the tape winds into silence he picks up his guitar, saying: "That's a blues, an industrial blues. You could just as easily do it this way." He continues the above lyric but now sings it as a 12-bar blues. "*Daddy won't let you weep/Daddy won't let you ache/Daddy gonna give you/As much as you can take.*

"Now even though it has been heavily processed," he explains, "the point is it was written through that process, rather than written as a blues, then put through the technological mix you hear. It was written back-to-front, as it were. Yet to me it's definitely a blues song for the '90s, as true to its roots as a song could be."

Most of the new album was done in Dublin this spring. One song, titled "Numb," however, has its roots in Berlin, and in the recording sessions for *Achtung Baby*. It opens with a no-shit dialogue between Larry's sticks rapping a snare drum and Edge's guitar spitting out vengeful licks. The vocal, delivered through gritted teeth, is a litany of commands made all the more powerful because they are almost whispered.

"Edge has just got a list of things there, one following the other," says Bono. "*Don't cry/Don't eat/Don't drink/Don't sleep.* It's kind of arcade music, but at base it's a dark energy we're tapping into, like a lot of the stuff on *Achtung Baby*. And, here, I use my Fat-Lady voice that I used on 'The Fly.' There's a big fat mamma in all of us! But you need that high wail set against the bass voice because the song is about overload, all those forces that come at you from different angles and you have no way to respond. It's us trying to get inside somebody's head. So in that mix you hear a football crowd, a line of don'ts, kitsch, soul singing and Larry singing for the first time in that context. So what we're trying to do is recreate that feeling of sensory overload."

"Numb" ends as it began, with a drumbeat yet minus Edge's guitar

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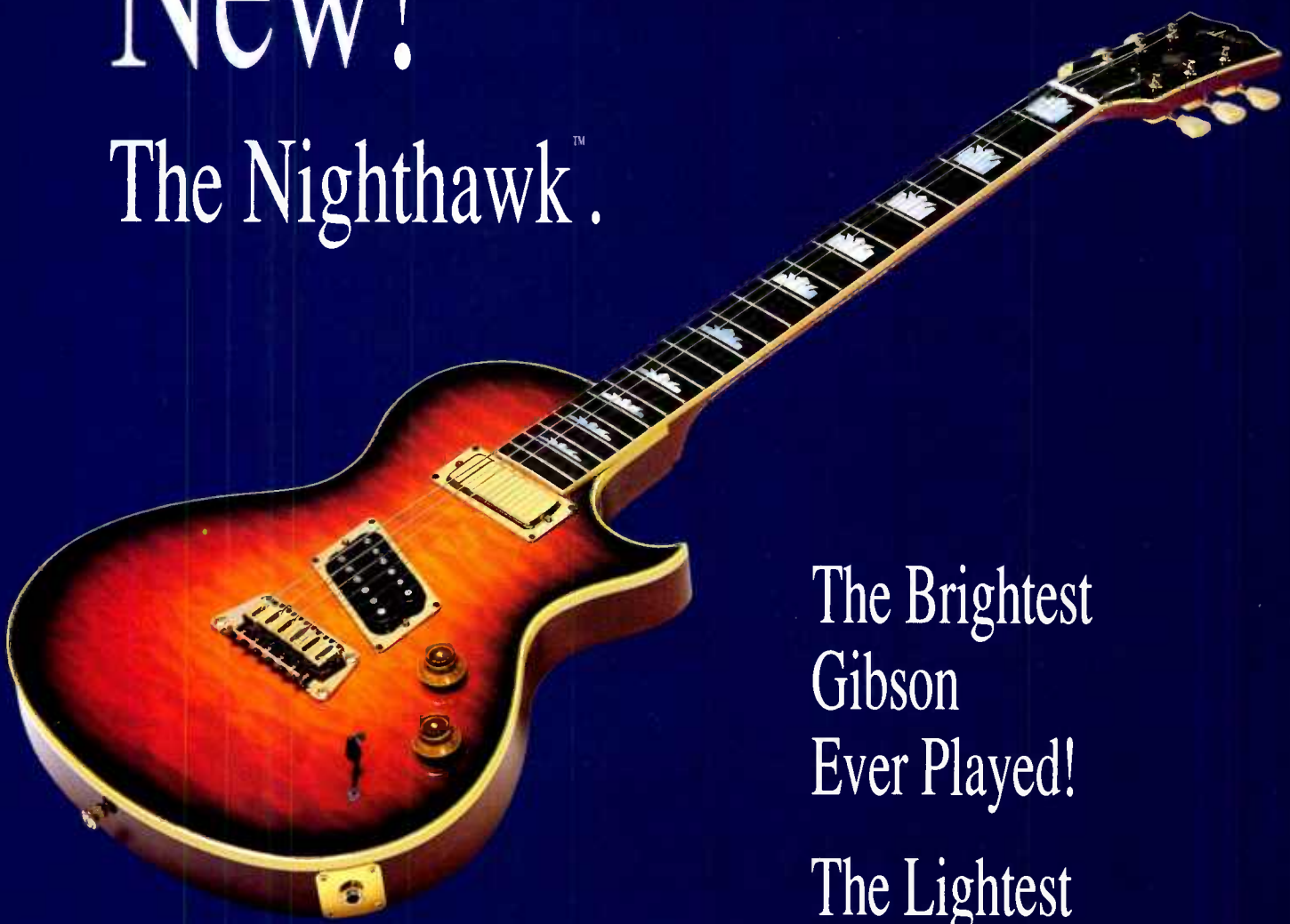

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lines. The drumbeat is sampled from the Nazi propaganda film *Triumph of the Will.*

Changing the tape again, Bono explains: "For us, it's a new way of working. We've been taking audiovisual loops and working with them. That drum loop comes from the scene where an 11-year-old Nazi plays the drum at the 1936 Olympic Games. And we're going to be playing, and using that loop, in the actual stadium where that boy played, in Berlin. That's going to be a very eerie moment, because that boy could still be alive, I suppose."

Silencing the DAT machine and switching on his PowerBook, he brings up his "Lyrics" file, and says, "I wrote this piece called 'In Cold Blood.' I probably will recite it during the show. But this is as I wrote it, I haven't rewritten anything." He recites the following:

I read a book once, called *In Cold Blood.*
Pages of facts did me no good.
I read it like a blind man, in cold blood.

So the story of a three-year-old child
Raped by soldiers, though she'd already died,
Made the mother watch as they fucked her in the mud.
I'm reading the story now, in cold blood.

More now coming off the wire
City surrounded, funeral pyre
Life is cheaper than talking about it
People choke on their politicians' vomit.

On cable television I saw a woman weep
Live, by satellite, from a flood-ridden street
Boy mistaken for a wastepaper bin
Body that a child used to live in.

I saw plastic explosives and an alarm clock
And the wrong men sitting in the dock
Karma is a word I never understood
How God could take a four-year-old in cold blood.

I live by a beach, but it feels like New York
I hear about 10 murders before I get to work.
What's it going to be, Lord, fire or flood?
An act of mercy or in cold blood?

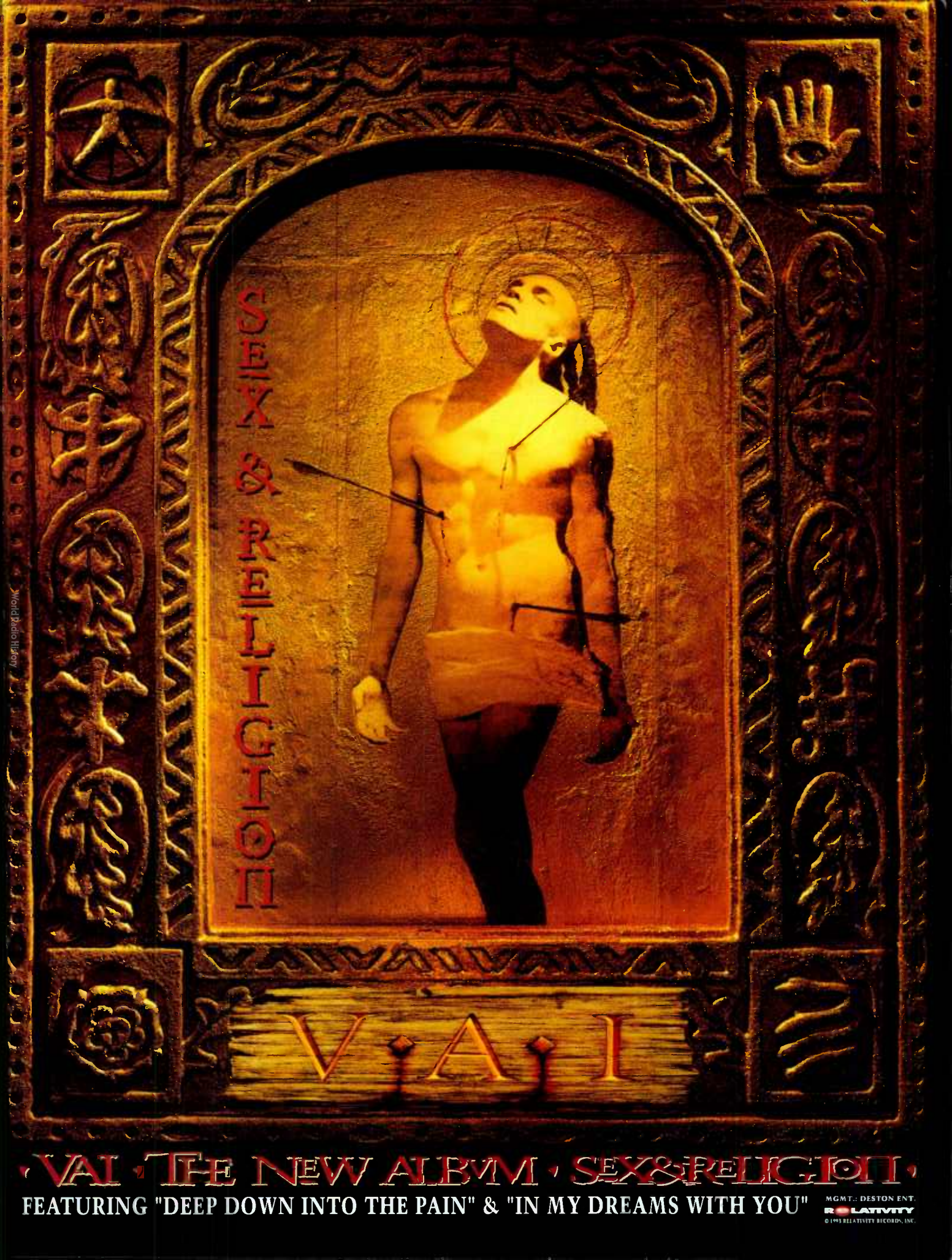
Pausing after reading the lyric, Bono sips from his coffee and then says, "Sometimes, in the middle of all the kitsch you have to stick the boot in. But that lyric too is about overload and I want to use it as part of 'Numb' live, though it may only be samples or lines I like. But it's not so much about the cold blood involved in the various acts I describe, it's about the way we respond to those things. Maybe I'll just do parts of that to the drum loop. And if I read it onstage I will be standing in front of a 12-foot-by-12-foot television image of the child playing that drum in 1936 in the Olympic Stadium in Berlin."

Bono uses this example to highlight how deeply committed he is to rock as an audiovisual form of expression. "The way we feel about it is that rock 'n' roll—whatever that is these days—is mutating and that it's always technology that spurs these mutations. It's the electric guitar that gave us the fuzzbox, the sampler that gave us rap music and so on. And while I have respect for people who wish to ignore that 'filthy modern tide,' I don't want to, I couldn't. If you go back to the birth of electric blues, many musicians didn't want to leave their acoustic guitars behind. If some hadn't, where would the blues be now, where would rock 'n' roll be? Would we even have something called rock 'n' roll? And it was the bluesmen who also used electronic distortion in its most basic sense. They'd attach bits of metal to their drums so that they'd buzz and distort. And that's what was happening right there at the beginning of the blues."

The same, of course, applied to the birth of rock 'n' roll when Sam Phillips at Sun deliberately busted a speaker cone to get distortion on "Rocket 88," the track widely described as the first rock 'n' roll recording.

"That's what the whole thing's all about," says Bono. "Doing any-

 PHOTOGRAPH: FREDERIC GARCIA/RETNA



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thing you can to feel the ground going from under your feet and *enjoying* the sensation! And that's exactly where we're at, though we do a little more than busting a speaker or an amp! But the whole idea is as it's always been during the best moments in rock, pushing things to see what might happen rather than just sitting there and simply recreating, say, the '70s, which is so fashionable now. Or any other period in rock. If we're committed to the art of rock 'n' roll at all we have to move forward to see what we can make of the beast by pushing everything to its limits. And, to me, that's what is most interesting about rock 'n' roll and popular music, this state of flux.

"And *this* is where popular music, and rock, is at right now," he asserts. "People are buying video games more than they are buying records. And I have to ask *why* would people buy albums now? That's why I think records should be more of a trip, literally. If it's just about songs, then make collections of songs, taking the great songs from all over the place, but for me it's got to be more than that. For me great records are, and have always been, like books and movies. They're *another place*. And I'm *not* talking about concept albums! Certainly our new record isn't a concept album. But the music of the Sex Pistols was 'concept' music, a 'concept album' all told. It was a world you entered into at 16, a sonic experience hauling you in by throwing images at you. And you disappeared into it.

"So, again, what we're doing is not so far removed from that, particularly when, on the new album, the influence is so obviously someone like William Gibson. All his concepts about the future involve the use of interactive means of communication. For all these reasons it makes great sense to use all that in our music. And that, to me, is where music has to go."

One track on the new album highlights the ways in which U2 are intent on kicking rock into the 21st century while refusing to deny its equally important links to the past. That track, "The Wanderer," features a lead vocal by Johnny Cash.

"Johnny Cash is a very smart man and he's definitely someone who had no problem coming along with us for the ride, for the trip," says Bono, laughing as he changes the tape. "He came in from day one and started singing over what we described as this 'Holiday Inn band from hell!' And yet, seriously, this song is definitely the antidote to the *Zooropa* manifesto of uncertainty.

"Even if it begins with *'I don't have a compass/I don't have a map'*—in other words, I don't know, I don't know, but I accept this state of uncertainty—this track gives one possible solution. But overall on the album the key is learning to live with uncertainty, even allowing uncertainty to be your guide."

Some of U2's Christian fans may have sensed the absence of the Lord on *Achtung Baby*, despite the presence of the song "Until the End of the World," which Bono once described as "a conversation between Jesus and Judas in the Garden of Gethsemane." Likewise in relation to ZOO TV, which probably presented a new set of questions from U2 rather than prescribing God as the answer.

"We deliberately kept that record for the most erotic form of !ove so as to almost exhaust it as a possibility, and I think that makes it a kind of prayer, in a strange sort of way," says Bono, pausing and choosing his words carefully. "Edge's guitar solo in 'Love Is Blindness' is a more eloquent prayer than anything I could write.

"You go through phases in your attempt to work out what it is you believe. And there was a period back in the early '80s where we lived a much more ascetic life and got a great grounding in the fundamentals of what Christianity could be. It wasn't the kind of Christianity that I loosely grew up around. It wasn't particularly Catholic or Protestant, it was more the cutting edge of Christianity. And I'm really glad I have that base.

"At the time we probably were extreme, because you are extreme in that honeymoon period. And you're always extreme when you're defensive. So I suppose we did build a wall around us and just got on with what we saw as our faith. But I do remember [manager Paul] McGuinness saying to me, even back then, 'Look, I'm not sure I share your faith but I know it's the most important question to you. And that an artist, a writer, is going to have to address that in whatever way you see fit. And if you want to do so you'll get a lot of stick, but go for it.' And we did so. And we did get a lot of stick."

Surely Bono himself, when he sees news reports about atrocities in Bosnia, for example, must have doubts about the existence of God.

"I'm sure of one thing," he replies. "Like we say on *Zooropa*, *'There's nothing certain/That's for certain.'* But if I was certain of anything, I'm certain that you can't pin our actions, the actions of man in places like Bosnia, on God. *That* is our final arrogance, that we blame God for our own state. Most people think we got kicked [*cont'd on page 93*]

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The Waterboy in the new world

by Elysa Gardner

mike scott

LETS GO

"I'M NEVER MISERABLE OR DEPRESSED. I MIGHT GET CRANKY FOR HOUR OR SOMETHIN', BUT BASICALLY, I ALWAYS HAVE A GOOD MIKE SCOTT INSISTS OVER COFFEE IN MIDTOWN MANHATTAN. E ENOUGH DAY, BUT AS SCOTT STARES AT A NASTY LITTLE FORMING BY ONE OF CENTRAL PARK'S ENTRANCES, IT'S THINKING OF THE COASTAL SCOTTISH ERE HE IRISH COUNTRYSIDE HE CALLED

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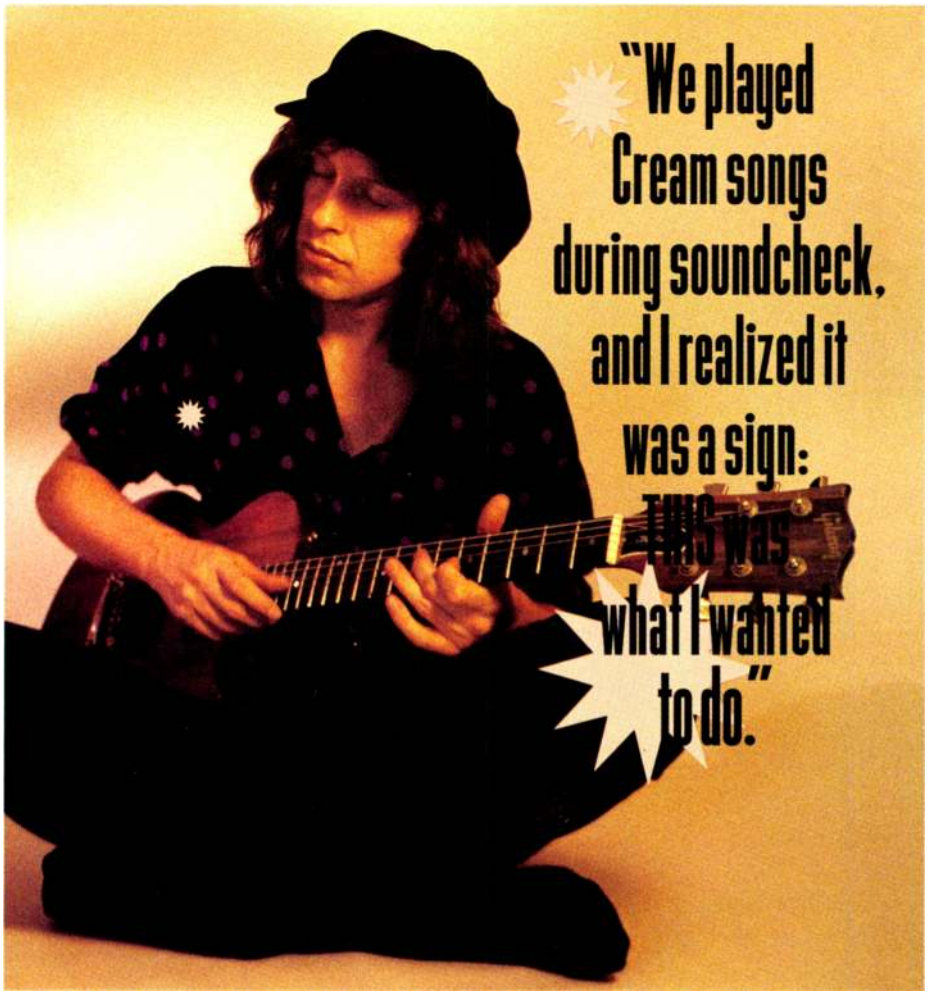

home before moving to New York a year and a half ago.

Still, wearing a floppy red hat and an out-of-towner's easy smile, Scott scarcely evokes a portrait of the artist as a bummed-out young man. As the Waterboys' frontman and driving creative force, the singer has nurtured a reputation for sublimating his cranky and melancholy impulses by writing romantic paeans that emphasize faith and hope. His new album, *Dream Harder*, returns to the lofty, majestic rock 'n' roll that distinguished the Waterboys' earliest efforts, before Scott began the love affair with traditional Irish music that engendered the band's most recent studio efforts: 1988's *Fisherman's Blues*, a glorious Celtic brew of ballads and reels that was widely misinterpreted as Scott's commercial death wish, and 1990's gentler but equally folky *Room to Roam*.

One of the most prominent themes on *Dream Harder* is that of discovery. As song titles like "The New Life," "Preparing to Fly" and "Good News" imply, Scott's new songs deal in liberating epiphanies. Time and again, there's a triumphant sense of having finally arrived at that key kernel of truth that should have been obvious but wasn't.

Scott looks down at his coffee cup. "Uh-huh. Yeah, it is so. Ummm...ya know, it's hard for me to pick one area...I mean, you put it in such wide-ranging terms..."

If Scott is carefree in spirit, he's anything but glib in speech. Ask him a question he finds vague, and he'll call you on it. Ask him a question he considers astute, and he'll acknowledge your insightfulness, then pause to consider whether or not he feels he can—or wants to—answer it. And he knows such behavior hasn't endeared him to every journalist who's crossed his path. "I've come across a certain way in the past, and it's been my own fault. I probably took interviews very, very seriously. But I'm lightening up now. I've always been light in my *life*, but I'm trying to lighten up where my media skills are concerned."

Light is hardly the word to describe Scott's latest music. With its crashing, soaring modern rock arrangements and passionate evocations of natural and spiritual imagery, *Dream Harder* harks back to 1983 and 1985, when the Waterboys were being mentioned in the same breath as U2, Big Country and a sprinkling of other bands who thought, dreamed and acted big at a time when popular wisdom dictated that less was more. Of course, if these bands were dissing the legacy of punk, it was news to them. Just as U2 unabashedly worshipped the Ramones, Scott harbors a reverence for the Clash. In 1985, when the Waterboys' third album, *This Is the Sea*, yielded a Top 30 single in England with "The Whole of the Moon," Scott refused to promote the synth-laden anthem on the popular British TV show "Top of the Pops" on grounds "mostly arising out of solidarity with the Clash. The idea was that 'Top of the Pops' was uncool, or ideologically unsound. I've broadened my perspectives since then."

Scott still traces much of his personal and artistic growth back to his move from London to Dublin after *This Is the Sea* was released. His first years in Ireland were spent in self-imposed media exile. Even the first album that would eventually materialize from his growing infatuation with Irish folk music, *Fisherman's Blues*, was three years in the making. The idea was not to escape fame's intimidating shadow, as some assumed, but simply to get a life. "I had been livin' in this kind of vacuum, doing interviews and going to sessions and going to the studio. Anyone I met was someone I was workin' with. When I moved to Ireland, the place and the people—and, soon after, the music—enacted a great power on me. A whole new world opened up, and I wasn't *interested* in playing stadiums or anything like that. My sights and horizons just changed. The thing that I was missin' in my life, which was a sense of community and security, came out of that time."

So did the realization of his musical chemistry with Steve Wickham, the Dublin-based fiddle player who played a principal role in redefining the Waterboys' sound and vision in the latter half of the '80s. Wickham had first made Scott's acquaintance while passing through England around the time that *Sea* was released, just as keyboardist Karl Wallinger was leaving the Waterboys to form his own band, World Party. "Steve joined my band and became my best friend," says Scott—although he's quick, as always, to point out that the split with Wallinger was amicable. When Wickham left the

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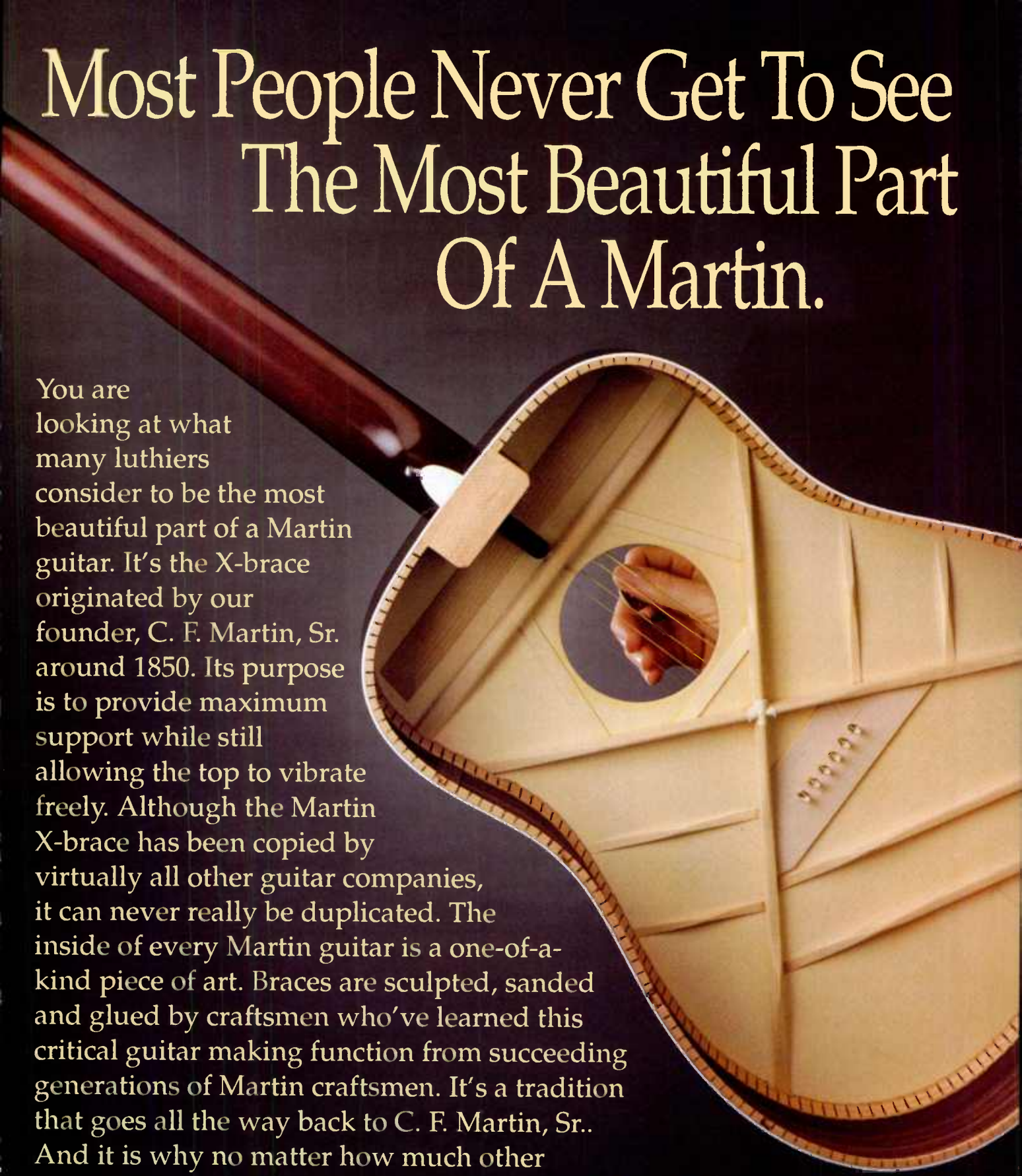

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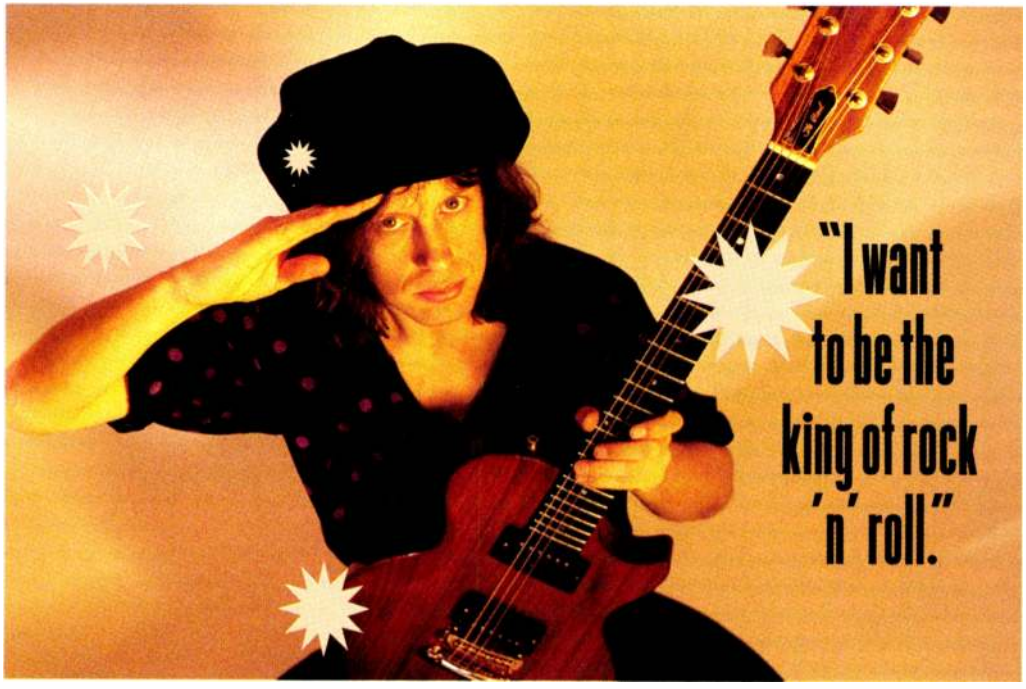


Waterboys after *Room to Roam* was released, it was another turning point for the band. In fact, it was before the fiddler bid Scott goodbye and good luck that the singer first sensed that a change in direction was imminent.

"I had been playing electric guitar during sound checks. And I found that I didn't want to put the guitar away; the bass player and drummer would be there, and we'd play Cream songs and things. And I realized that this was a sign: *This* is what I want to do! And shortly after that, the band broke up. It was like a pack of cards collapsing," he laughs. Just as Wickham's signing on had precipitated the addition of traditional Celtic musicians—accordionist Sharon Shannon, flutist Colin Blakely—to the Waterboys' lineup, his decision to leave expedited the departure of those players. "All the folk instruments just left, and I found myself on the road with a four-piece rock band, playing electric guitar. And I was happy."

After touring for a while, Scott and his Irish wife Irene—a former recording studio manager whom he'd met just a few weeks after moving to Dublin—decided to relocate to New York City. As a native of Edinburgh, the Scottish capital, and someone who'd spent a good deal of time in London, Scott wasn't intimidated by the prospect of living in a metropolis. Still, he was wary of leaving Ireland, and the special demands posed by the Big Apple. "Starting a new life in a city as tough as New York is a very hard thing to do, and I resisted the idea for a while. I had a lot of fear: Would I be able to *make it* in New York? But I needed a new challenge, and I very much wanted to be in the middle of everything, you know? I wanted to be where there were all these recording studios, and lots of new musicians."

One of the first things Scott did after settling in New York was to hire a manager, Peter Leak, who handles 10,000 Maniacs and Cowboy Junkies. "I'd been looking for a manager for a long time, but I couldn't find the right one. That was another part of my problem with doing interviews, actually. Without a manager, I had to cover a lot of bases myself; to have done a substantial amount of interviews, at that point, would have tilted the balance towards the insane." The next step was to recruit musicians for a new Waterboys album. Multi-instrumentalist Anthony "Anto" Thistlethwaite, who had been the only original Waterboy remaining besides Scott, left the band after the *Room to Roam* tour. In discussing Thistlethwaite's departure, Scott speaks softly and seems to weigh his words even more carefully than usual.

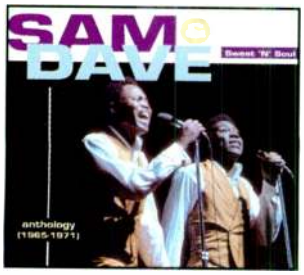
"Anto and I had been together for about 10 years. We'd gone through a whole journey together, and we were beginning to repeat ourselves. It's very difficult breaking up with someone after that length of time, and I think we both wanted to keep it going for the personal thing. We were very much at ease with each other; we'd just laugh all the time. But we would have been keeping an old thing together for social reasons, not musical reasons, and I don't think that would have been right. He's releasing a blues album now. It's called *Aesop Wrote a Fable*. He's been working on it for a long time, and the songs are great."

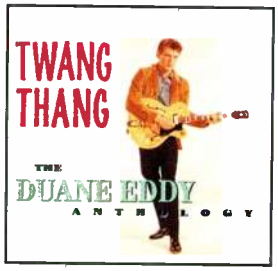
With Thistlethwaite gone, Scott had to start from scratch. His new management company put out word in New York and Los Angeles that musicians were needed for a new Waterboys project, and Scott himself, still having something of the maverick in his system, went the route of many a less established New York–based musician: He put an ad in the *Village Voice*. "It said, 'Band seeking bass and drums, into Clash, Hendrix, Waterboys.'" In that order. "Yeah, it was very funny. And we got to try out some great people. I think they were probably told on the phone that it was for the Waterboys. Most of them probably hadn't even *heard* of the Waterboys—probably had come down because of Hendrix!"

In the end, Scott wound up using folks who were a little better connected. Along with the singer—who also plays guitars, keyboards and some percussion—guitarist Chris Bruce, bassist Scott Thunes and drummer Carla Azar make up the nucleus of the band on *Harder*. Azar, known for her work in Wendy & Lisa's band, was the suggestion of a friend of a friend; Thunes, who has played with Frank Zappa, came to Scott's attention through his new record company, Geffen. Jules Shear and drummers' drummer Jim Keltner are among the musicians who make cameo appearances.

Asked to identify which members of this illustrious cast are considered part of the current Waterboys lineup, Scott smiles and sighs, "I don't know." The singer glances out at the street again. "I could settle on a bunch of players now, and we could work together till the millennium. Or it could go another way." As Scott himself admits the next day, "the band is a floating, ever-changing thing. At the moment it's up on a sandbank, lookin' for the next bunch of guys." As it turns out, not one of the musicians who played on *Dream Harder* will be able to go on the road to promote it: "They all have other gigs. I haven't nailed a touring band yet, but I'm workin' on it."

He's also working on new material. Just as *Dream Harder* presents a reclamation of the Waterboys' old epic rock turf, invigorated by a





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of blind pursuit.

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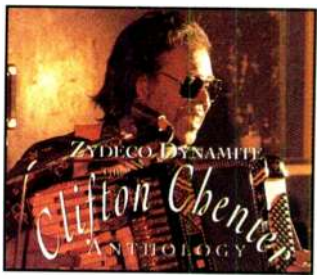
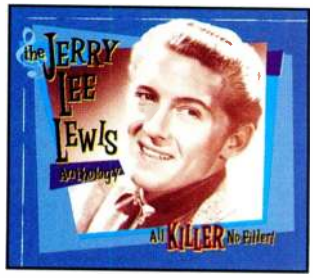
of time and talent.

The ambition
that feeds off the heart.





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few offbeat flourishes—the chunky reggae foundation of "Suffer," for example, or the acoustic folksiness of "Corn Circles," which evokes Neil Young at his cutest—Scott expects that his next recording project will turn another corner. "Most of the songs on *Dream Harder* were written just before I came to America or just after. The new songs I've been writing since then are very much influenced by what I'm hearing around me in New York. I listen to gospel music, I like blues music. I'm hearing now how American musicians play differently from European musicians. I mean, I've played with some British musicians who are very free and far out, but there's something about the way the American guys play that I find really fresh. They get their balls out very readily, and I like that."

According to Niko Bolas, the American engineer/producer who recorded and mixed *Harder*, Scott appreciates directness on the other side of the board as well. "Everybody told me he'd be difficult to get along with, but working with Mikey was the easiest job I've ever had. It's just that he knows what feels good, and you can't bullshit him. When he's not on, he'll be the first one to admit it. But get him in a situation where he's comfortable, where he forgets he's doing a job and just lets things flow out of him naturally—you just have to hit 'record' and you're done. What comes out of him when he's not even thinking is the sort of stuff everybody wishes they had."

Whatever countries or planets the next musicians who play with the Waterboys hail from, Scott will choose them on his own terms. "In my early days in the music business, people were always trying to pressure me to do things for reasons that had nothing to do with music. You know: 'Ah, just get a pickup band and do the tour—doesn't matter who's in the band.' I'd think, the hell with that! I'm not gonna have a bloody pickup band; I care about my music. I've always been in this for the *music*." But as Scott's perspectives have broadened, he's come to realize that caring about music doesn't necessarily preclude promoting it in a media-savvy fashion. Case in point: Having denounced videos throughout the course of his career—other than a live performance clip of "The Whole of the Moon," he's never agreed to take part in one—Scott says he has every intention of using the medium to promote his new album.

"It's hard for me to explain, but I now feel that I should use things that are here. I remember when CDs first came out; I thought, ah, I don't like that—because I was attached to the old format. I get very attached to things, but I'm realizing I can let go of that. I can let go of my preconceptions about video. I can step into what is, for me, a new thing." Easing the transition, he claims, is the fact that David Geffen has made it clear to him that he's under no pressure to bow at the altar of MTV. "He said, whatever you want, I want you to be comfortable. He's a smart man; he knows that if he allows me that freedom, I just might do it!"

So does Mike Scott want to be a full-fledged modern rock star?

"Oh, I want to be king of rock 'n' roll!"

No visible traces of sneering irony register on his face. Does he *really* want to be a rock star?

"Oh, yes! I'd like to be selling many, many more records than I've been selling."

Scott laughs, "You know, I've always loved Bob Dylan and the Beatles and the Stones and Bruce Springsteen and David Bowie. Those are the people I grew up lis-

tenin' to, and the whole world listened to their music. I was living in a small town called Ayr, and all my first garage bands were based in that town. And our dreams were to be as famous as the Beatles and the Stones and Bowie, so that people would feel as strongly about our music as we did about that music. That's what *drove* me when I was a lad."

Rock star ambitions notwithstanding, Scott's most consuming project these days is "becoming more self-aware, and taking responsibility for my own life." Having smoked cigarettes and the occasional reefer in the past, he now rejects both habits as distasteful and insidiously diverting. And he and Irene are now considering buying a house of their own, preferably in a more rural area. "I'd *love* to have a kid, yes. Never really thought about it for an awful long time, but in the last few years I've thought about it a lot."

In pondering the *Dream Harder* lyric sheet again, the question begs itself: Does having "found God where He always was" enter into any of this?

"I believe in a creator," he says. "I read an interview with Willie Nelson where someone asked him why his life had turned out as it had, and he said, 'Fortunately, we're not in charge.' I knew how he felt. I never dreamed my life would turn out like this. But I believe we're here for a reason. Something made us. I think love made us, and I think love is our true nature. I used to have an intellectual notion of God, but it's different now. God has to come down from the head into the heart to be effective in the world."

Scott leans forward in his chair, nodding thoughtfully. "The perception of God is an unfolding thing. I have a very flawed and cloudy perception of Him. But I do feel that we're closest to God when we experience great love—any kind of love. There was this great program that I saw on the twentieth anniversary of *Sgt. Pepper's*... They went back to all these people who had been around in '67 and said, well, how do you feel now? Do you still think that 'all you need is love'? And people would say things like, of course you need love, but you need money as well; or, you need a steady job; or, you know, you need this or that kind of security. And the one person they asked who stuck with it was George Harrison. He said, 'All you need is love is my story, and I'm stickin' to it.' And I think that's cool. Because if you've got love, everything else gets thrown in."

DREAM STARTERS

On *Dream Harder* MIKE SCOTT and his Waterboys used an '89 Les Paul Standard, a '78 "The Paul," a Danelectro 12-string, a gold James Trussart Steel Deville and a Jackson Soloist, all strung with Ernie Balls; their acoustics were a Martin Shenandoah HD-2832 with a Thinline pickup and a Taylor S55 12-string with a Fishman pickup, strung with Martins. Also on hand were various electric and upright basses, sitars and bouzoukis. Effects included a Hendrix wah, a Rotovibe and Turbo Rat and Boss Turbo distortions. The Boys ran through a Marshall JCM 900, an '89 reissue Vox AC30 and a Fender Super 60. Microphones included Neumann U47s, Manly Gold References and AKG 414s, and additional color was provided by a Roland FP8 digital piano (sometimes through a JC-120), a Hammond B3 with a Leslie, and a Farfisa.

The Waterboys use dw, Premier, Pearl and Ludwig drums, various American Indian rattles and shakers and tubular bells.

TIMELESS WORKS OF ART

The Steve Vai designed Ibanez Guitars featuring the new JEM 7VWH.
The new album, Sex & Religion, featuring Steve's new band, VAI.

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All-Star Cast

How top guitarists recovered from crippling injuries

IT'S BAD enough dealing with a handicap like being born with no talent. Worse still is discovering your gift, slogging for years to cultivate and maintain it, and in the course of indulging rock-star excesses, obsessive practicing or just being on the wrong end of plain bad luck, inducing a handicap that could cost you everything.

This is not to grieve those famous accidents which happened early and were taken in as part of the learning process, like the mysterious tragedy which cost young Jerry Garcia most of his right middle finger, or the industrial mishap which now requires Black Sabbath's Tony Iommi to wear plastic fingertips on his fretting hand. These are the cases of the unforeseen, and the struggle to overcome.

by Matt Resnicoff

ILLUSTRATION BY JONATHON ROSEN

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES

DJANGO REINHARDT

Injury: Paralyzed left-hand ring and pinky fingers
Cause: Trailer fire
Treatment: Untreatable
Result: Forced to revolutionize jazz guitar with two viable fretting fingers and thumb

YNGWIE MALMSTEEN

Injury: Brain hemorrhage and nerve damage
Cause: Automobile accident, 1987
Treatment: Therapy, daily eight-hour practice sessions
Result: Prolonged hospitalization, coma and impaired motor skills; rendered unable to play for three months. "But as this injury healed," Yngwie reports, "all the practice I put in elevated me to another plateau. So right now—I might sound a little like I'm bragging—but I feel like there's no boundaries to what I can do."

JONNI MILLS

LARRY CARLTON

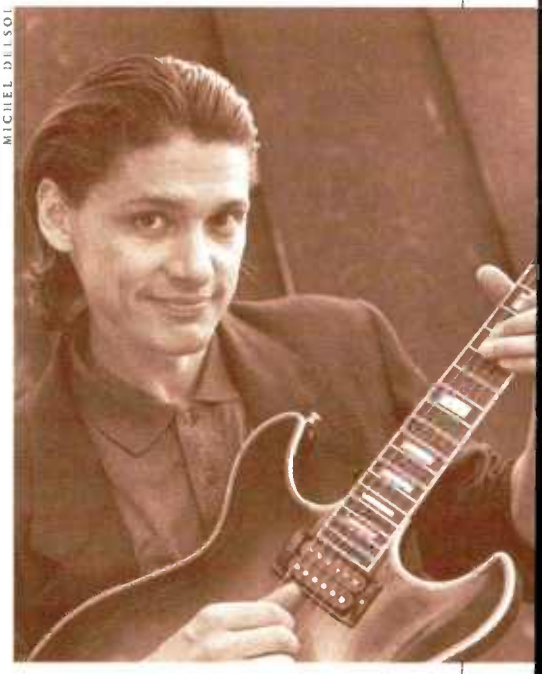
Injury: Severe nerve shock induced by neck wound
Cause: Shot while standing in doorway of studio, 1988
Treatment: Mood-elevation drugs, extensive physical therapy
Result: Gradual convalescence; couldn't so much as raise a drinking glass because of muscle atrophy in left arm, and had to hire rhythm guitarist for a track on solo album. "When I would pick up the guitar I knew I would be able to play it," Larry smiles, "but it just hurt too much and I would cry. One evening I actually played a couple of licks on a gut-string with the neck shaved down, and that even hurt. My outlook was like the devil's advocate: 'Yeah, I'm gonna play again, but I wonder if I'll ever play as good as I could before.'"

PAT MARTINO

Injury: Brain aneurism, 1980
Cause: Unknown
Treatment: Surgery
Result: After his operation, Martino had no memory of playing, and completely relearned the instrument by listening to his own recordings and taped performances; his astounding "comeback" is documented on 1987's *The Return*.

ROBBEN FORD

Injury: Tendon protrusion and inflammation in left palm, severe aching in both forearms
Cause: Overuse syndrome: manual overexertion, 1989
Treatment: Massage, Nikken magnets applied during sleep
Result: Periodic pain during and after playing. "The magnets helped a little bit," says Robben. "They aid blood circulation, which helps your muscles heal faster; the ones I used on my forearms were about six inches by one-and-a-half inches, attached with an Ace bandage. Acupuncture didn't work at all. And though it was recommended to me, I would say not to use the hot and cold treatment of warming your muscles before playing and then icing them down afterwards. I think all of it probably came from stress, of being in bad health on the road. I've learned you really need to take good care of yourself."



MICHEL DELSOL

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES

JOHN MCLAUGHLIN

Injury: Left-hand index finger severed at first joint

Cause: Sliced by television sliding over steel mounting track, 1990

Treatment: Digit reattached and temporarily immobilized

Result: Couldn't touch the instrument for two months. "I was having nightmares," John says, "waking up in the middle of the night sweating. Something like that can happen. We don't know what destiny has in store for us, and you can only deal with it when it happens to you. But I'm a very optimistic guy. I believe everything is a blessing, or in disguise. Even that is a blessing in disguise in some way. It's hard to find what it *is*...."

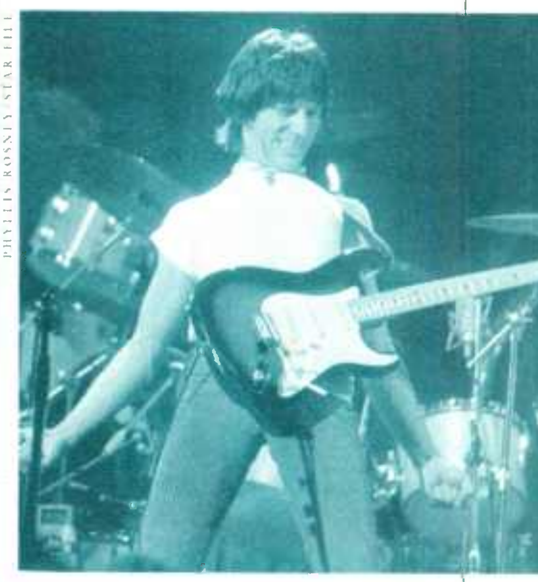
JEFF BECK

Injury: Snapped first joint of thumb

Cause: While sliding extremely heavy wood planks covering his grease pit, the far end of one slab fell in, causing the near end to trap hand against underside of car, 1987.

Treatment: One bottle alcohol, taken internally

Result: Didn't release a record for three years. "It was about a year before I got the feeling back in the tip," says Jeff. "I could still play, because the thumb was poking up vertically when I held the neck; I couldn't bear to wrap it 'round. I couldn't believe that the broken tip of the finger could be so painful. But your whole body just feels like it's been run over by a truck. In the middle of the night, say, you'd forget that you've done anything because you'd be in a deep sleep, and you'd maybe flex and stretch—*aaahhh*!"



PHYLLIS ROSNEY/STAR FILE

ANDRE CSILLAG/PHOTOFEATURES

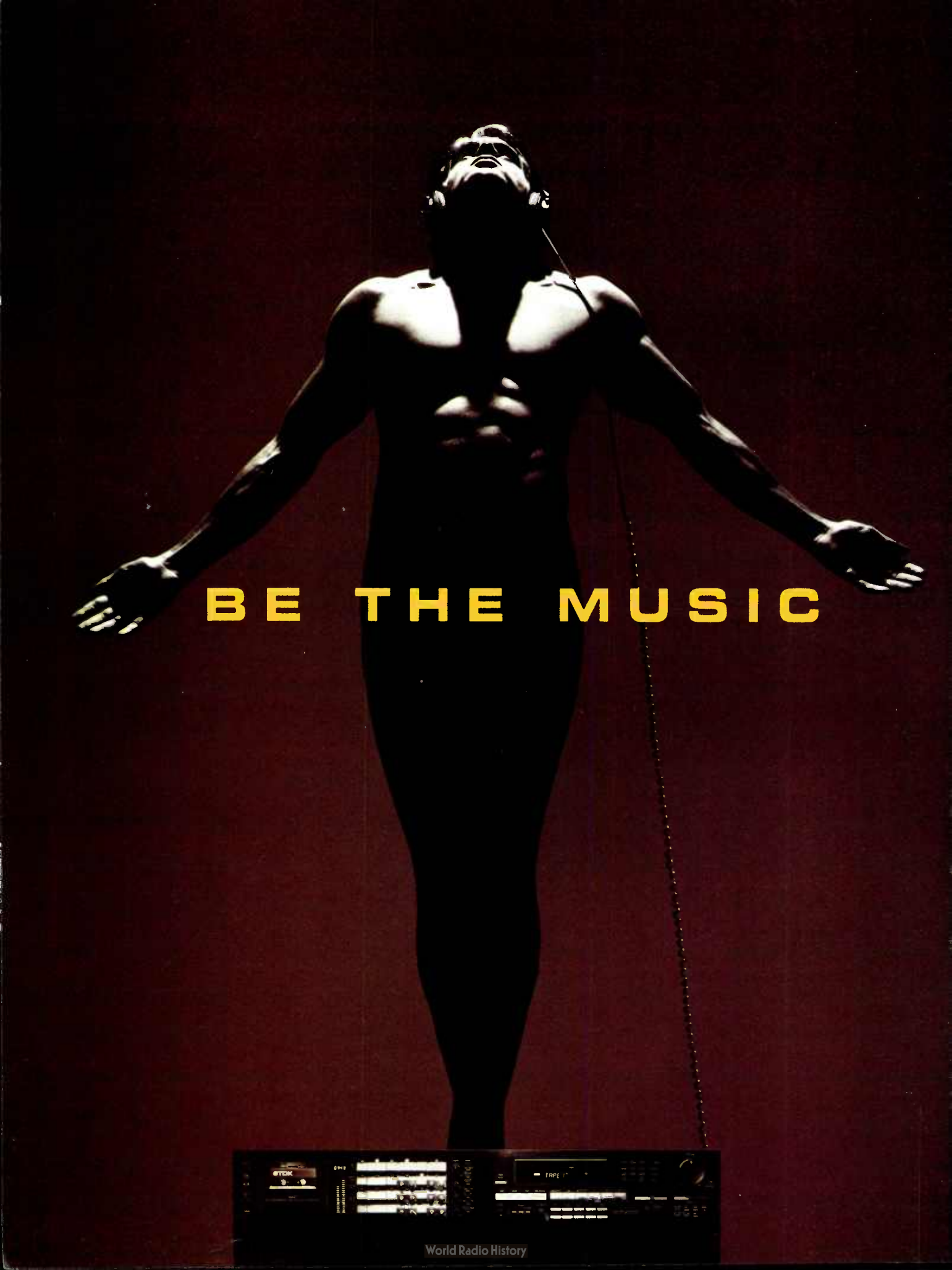
PETE TOWNSHEND

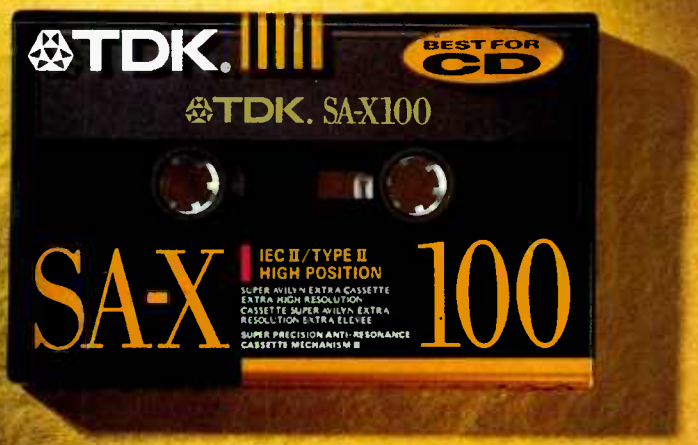
Injuries: 1) Smashed and cut right hand, 1979; **2)** impaled right hand, 1989; **3)** broke right wrist, 1991.

Cause: 1) Swung hand, windmill-style, against heavy strings; **2)** swung hand, windmill-style, into vibrato bar of guitar; **3)** broke wrist in bicycle accident on holiday on the Scilly Isles.

Treatment: 1) Intrepid efforts to perform with cumbersome cast on picking hand, 1979; **2)** cursed self until microsurgeon diagnosed no permanent damage, 1989; **3)** helicoptered to mainland, had wrist set, 1991.

Result: Can no longer rotate wrist or strum triplets. "I used to console myself, 'Okay, I can't do what Yngwie Whatshisface can do, but neither can he do my flamenco thing,'" says Pete. "And having it kind of snatched away, it just made me think, 'Well, this is Ecclesiastes, man. What do you do now?'"





AS SERIOUS AS YOU CAN GET

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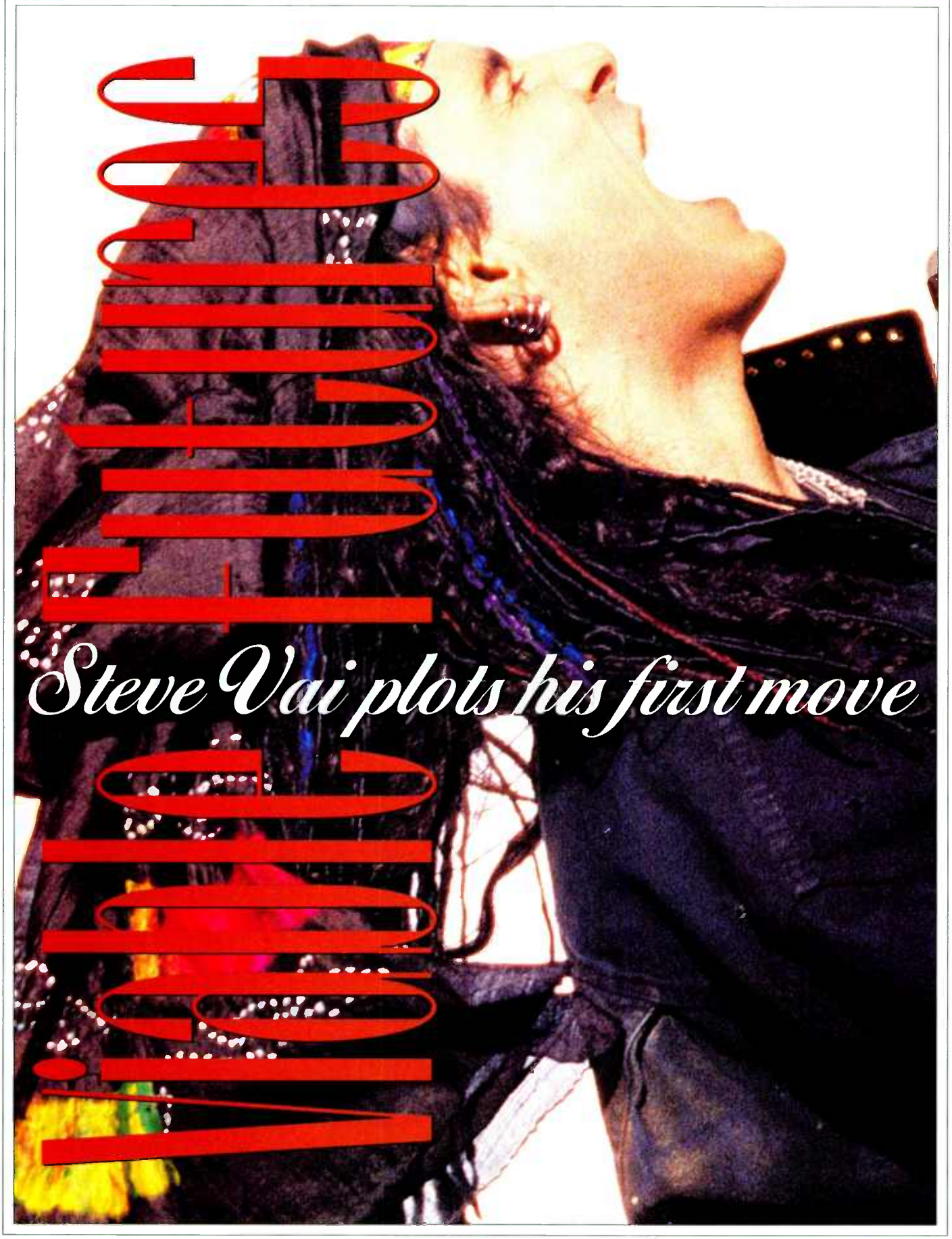
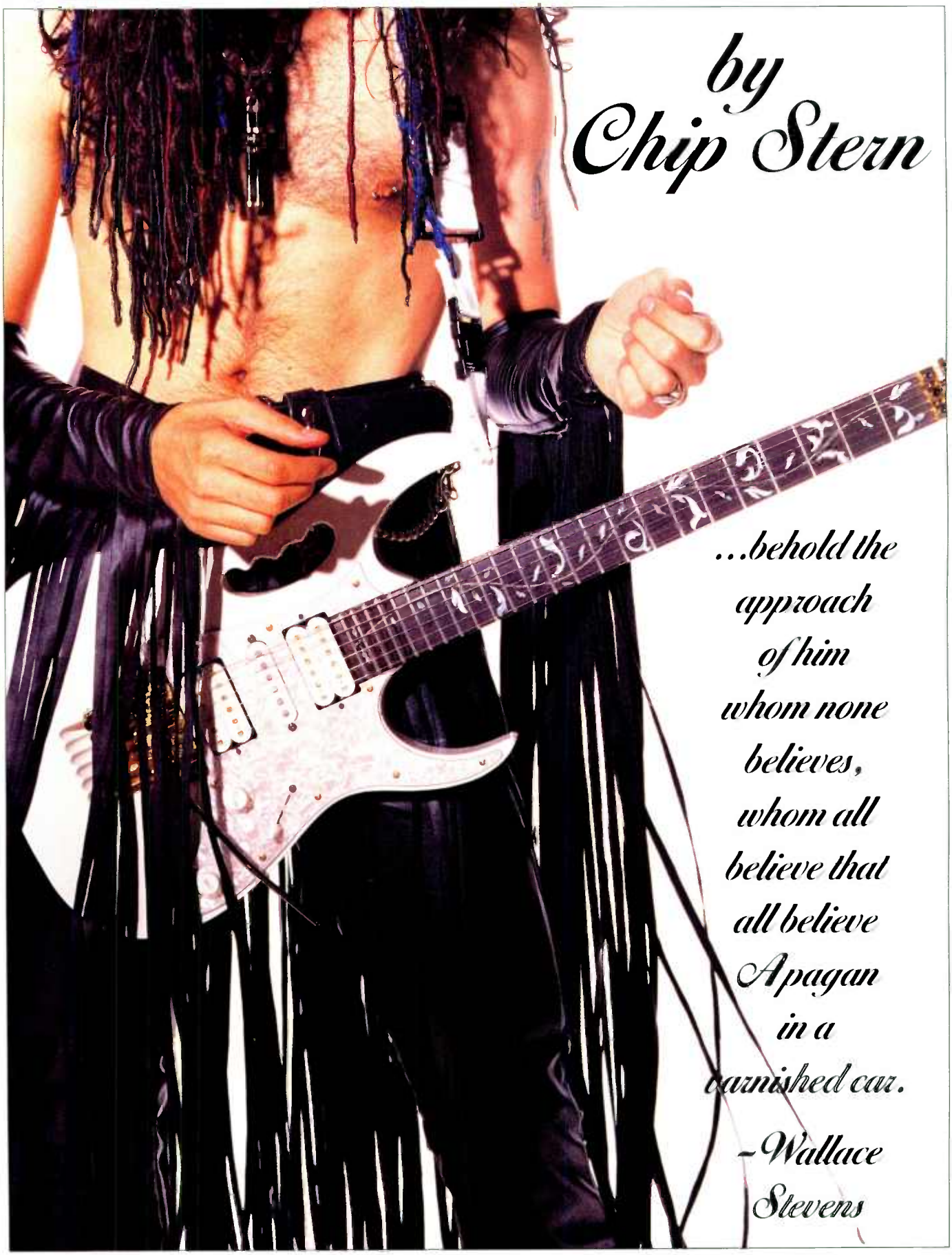


VIRTUOSO

Steve Vai plots his first move

by Chip Stern



...behold the approach of him whom none believes, whom all believe that all believe A pagan in a tarnished car.

–Wallace Stevens

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEFF KATZ

ISLANDS OF COLOR dot the mountains around Los Angeles, as sudden bursts of springtime hue mock the the scorched beige tinge of quickfire grass that covers this parched land. Jacaranda trees burst forth in lavender bloom, like immense lilacs to these Eastern eyes, offering a gaudy promise of life and renewal against the queasy climate of a stage-two smog alert.

One of the first things I see when I enter the workshop/studio section of Steve Vai's multi-tiered hillside dwelling is a jacaranda-colored Taylor acoustic guitar, the spruce and maple grains luminescent in the translucent lavender glow. "Too bad the weather's so bad," Vai shrugs as I admire the instrument. "We could talk out on the back porch. My wife's got a beautiful garden going back there."

And Steve Vai has got a whole garden of viable possibilities blooming forth as he prepares, for all intents and purposes, to initiate his solo career after more than a decade as a sideman: first as the resident stunt guitarist for Frank Zappa (and Satan in the film *Crossroads*); as a session whiz for artists as diverse as Indian violin virtuoso L. Shankar and punk godhead Johnny "Rotten" Lydon (check out his soaring solo over Ginger Baker's tribal beat on "Ease"); and as a well-paid hired gun for arena-rockmeisters like Alcatrazz, David Lee Roth and Whitesnake. Pretty cool for an Italian rock 'n' roll guitarist from Carle Place, Long Island.

Vai's first solo flight *Flex-Able* was a charming sketchbook of musical impressions and experiments, never intended for public consumption, which sold like nobody's business. But with the release of his instrumental jubilee *Passion and Warfare* (which went gold in nine weeks), all the gyrations and aspirations in his music, the wealth of contradictions and conflicting impulses (extremes of order and chaos, bliss and pain, spirituality and paganism, lyricism and lunacy) were laid bare in a swelter of commercial and avant-garde styles for legions of stringslingers to worship in wonder. Would the real Steve Vai please stand up?

Vai laughs off that notion. "I'm one of the fortunate ones who can really do whatever the hell he wants. I think when people perceive me, they see this weird creature who synthesizes these different elements, and just when you think it's going to do a certain thing, it goes and does something else. Like, I say to myself, I'm going to sit down and write a song and make it real straight-ahead so people can listen to it, and then I get these ideas and I'm forced to throw things into them. I'm cursed with this desire to express myself in this weird sort of pandemonium, right when I've got everything together."

Such is the duality of guitar deity Steve Vai. With his composer's head and his rock 'n' roll heart, Vai is among the most intriguing of all the scalar spawn who've been swimming upstream since Led Zeppelin conquered FM radio in the early '70s. Is Vai a bold conceptual force or just another hot soloist? More ambitious or simply more pretentious? Only time will tell, but based upon the cameos I heard of his first album of songs, *Sex and Religion*, the guitarist does indeed seem capable of summoning light without heat; ready, willing and able to test the waters of pop with something other than a tried and true guitar jock record.

"I've always been interested in composing and the idea that you can take little black dots and put them on paper and somebody knows what you're talking about," he says. "I'm more of a musician than I am a guitar player as such. It's more of a struggle for me to play the guitar than it is to compose. I have physical limitations. But when I have a piece of manuscript paper and an instrumentation to work with, I feel more free than in any other aspect of my life. And I've gone through several changes—or at least *I* haven't, but the way people view me has—because I like rock 'n' roll; I like the high energy. What I try to do is fuse more of a musical aspect into it but people don't understand why, because they feel that if you are educated musically, you can't really be a rock 'n' roller. People who are dogmatic cut themselves off from things, and their experience would probably be much richer if they could open up."

Like most young electric guitarists of the post-Zeppelin era, Vai was swept away by the technological and artistic breakthroughs of rock's first great instrumentalists: Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton, Carlos Santana, Frank Zappa, Jimi Hendrix, Jimmy Page and Allan Holdsworth can all be heard peeping through Vai's arrangements on *Passion and Warfare*. Still it all comes out sounding like Steve Vai, as if those styles were churned through a late-Coltrane Cuisinart, liberally whammy-bar'ed with Tabasco overtones and cranked through a MESA/Boogie

"Writing lyrics about what I feel is sappy and would make everybody cringe. I like to walk the line between cringy and acceptable."

for maximum overdrive, velocity...and melodic content. Because for all Vai's chaotic instincts, for all the bizarre vocal effects he can wrest from a guitar, lyric instrumentals like "For the Love of God" and "Sisters" reveal him to be a romantic at heart.

But it wasn't romanticism that arrested the endocrine systems of millions of teenage boys—it was noise, Jim, and if there hadn't been an Eddie Van Halen or a Steve Vai to key the stylistic evolution of the electric guitar, nature would have been compelled to create one, because those ideas were surely in the air some 20 years ago...waiting for the prophets and lawgivers. Van Halen put modern electric guitar on the map, but I doubt if he was out there alone.

"It's hard for me to sit here and tell you I was doing that hammer stuff before I heard Van Halen do it," Vai points out. "I've never said that in an interview; it sounds like I'm trying to take credit for something he made popular—but I *was* doing it, long before I heard him. I have a lot of admiration for the guy, even though he gets in the press and says that every single thing *I* do is a rip-off of him, only alls I do is play it faster. Which I don't really care about, first of all. Second, he was inspirational because he did it much better than me when I first heard him—he made hammering work. I mean, I was already doing hammering stuff, but when he started doing it, it was just devastating—it was *simpler*."

Thanks to Van Halen and Vai, the floodgates opened and the instrument may never be the same. It's all a bit imposing to a semi-enlightened noodler like myself, for whom Tal Farlow's choruses of harmonics on "My Romance" seemed plenty adventurous, thank you.

"Yeah, like Lenny Breau and Eric Johnson," Vai concurs. "That's something different." Vai grabs his Taylor acoustic to demonstrate. "You see, there's different harmonics. You divide the string in half and you get an octave, and if you do it in a third, you get a higher octave. There's harmonics all over—that's just the overtone structure of the instrument.

"When it comes to fast hammering, I try and hit the notes so they ring as evenly as a note that's picked, then pull off to vibrate the string so that next note you pull off to has a clean and level vibration. So to hit three notes, you pick a note, hammer a note, and then you can't just let go of it when you pull off—you have to sort of pluck it. Then you add distortion, which allows for all those screaming notes, and harmonics where there are no harmonics, and those notes can be even more piercing.

"I was sitting in my recording studio, and Edward came in and picked up my guitar, and played it, and it sounded like him; it didn't sound like me at all—it didn't even sound like my tone. He's a natural. I don't know if guitar players figure out Steve Vai riffs. I mean, I've heard guys who sound like me, or are trying to, but from it will come things that they can use."

Even for so gifted a stylist as Vai, the temptation towards self-parody is enormous, but the guitarist is too talented and ambitious to be defined by his instrument or his chops...or the company he's kept. And, of course, the most natural way to get past the technique and image trap is to come up with your own music; it's here that *Sex and Religion* offers the most tantalizing hints as to Vai's vision of the future.

In a sneak preview of Vai's maiden voyage as a songwriter and bandleader—admittedly stacked in favor of his beloved "outside" arrangements—I experienced a churning, propulsive, unpredictable kind of highbrow hardcore, with a crafty pop overlay and a liquid-cherry center of post-adolescent angst and rebellion. That basic crunch beat was always lingering around, even when Vai and company went off on his patented harmonic/metric tangents—which was often enough to keep me satisfied.

And it's hard to overestimate the impact of Vai's 21-year-old vocalist/guitarist Devon Townsend on all this—he makes Axl Rose sound like Johnny Mathis. Townsend's is something of a Cinderella story. The Vancouver native mailed an unsolicited tape to Relativity, whose president flipped and sent it along to Vai. *He* flipped. Now Townsend's rolling around naked in the snow, howling at the moon and helping define the tone of what may turn out to be a very forward-looking, vital rock band. Townsend has enormous grace and musicality and Vai's tricky, careening melodies faze him not a whit, but it is his beserker emotional range that helps focus *Sex and Religion*, gives it a dynamic edge and keeps it from making an overly artsy descent into fusion/progressive purgatory. I was surprised by the music I heard and said so.

"What were you thinking that it would sound like?" Vai wondered.

Like some of the more grandiloquent passages from *Passion and Warfare*.

"Grandiloquent?"

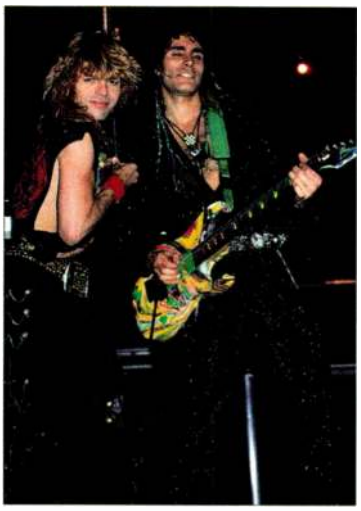
Sure, you know...*ahem*..."*If I were king of the foressst...*"

"When I started thinking about money, like a Hollywood guy, Zappa said: 'Do the music the way it should be done.' That had more impact than any notes he wrote."

Vai laughs. "This band that I'm working with, there's a lot of high energy. I have fabulous musicians in T.M. Stevens and Terry Bozzio, and Devon..." Vai pauses in delight. "Wooooooo! I tell you, this boy is a wild card—he's the anti-rock star. He's got the pulse of creativity that youth has, and doesn't have the hangups of caring if it's accepted or not.

"Live, this is going to be spectacular. I've been in big rock bands, and I've learned where the gaps are and what you need to do to fill in where it was lacking, and I want to bring all that to this band. I especially want to bring back that aspect of improvisation that's disappeared from rock 'n' roll. But it's a show, too. Everybody's got cool hair and clothes, and that's a big part of the presentation. If someone wants to go grunge, that's great, but I happen to like the stylistic *look* of a rock band.

KNOW YOUR MARKET: With Zappa ("profound"), David Lee Roth ("intense") and Whitesnake's David Coverdale ("enjoyable"). "Why condemn yourself because you have the desire to do a lot of different things?"



"Musically, T.M., Terry and I could easily go to fusion Mars. When we jammed it was the most powerful thing I ever felt. And I think I captured some of that on *Sex and Religion*, even though we didn't all play together. T.M. brings a great feel to everything. He's like...big. His aura fills the room. And his bass sound is so big and funky. And it's been a dream of mine to play with Terry, and it was quite the honor to have him on *Sex and Religion*—he was fabulous. People think of Terry as a great drummer, but they don't know that he's an incredibly musical person. His drumming is an orchestration of his musicality."

Still, for all of the creative input Townsend, Stevens and Bozzio bring to *Sex and Religion*, this is by no means a purely collaborative project. He's been such a stalwart team player for so long, has sublimated his ego for so many leaders, that the allure of micromanaging every aspect of these songs was irresistible to Vai the arranger.

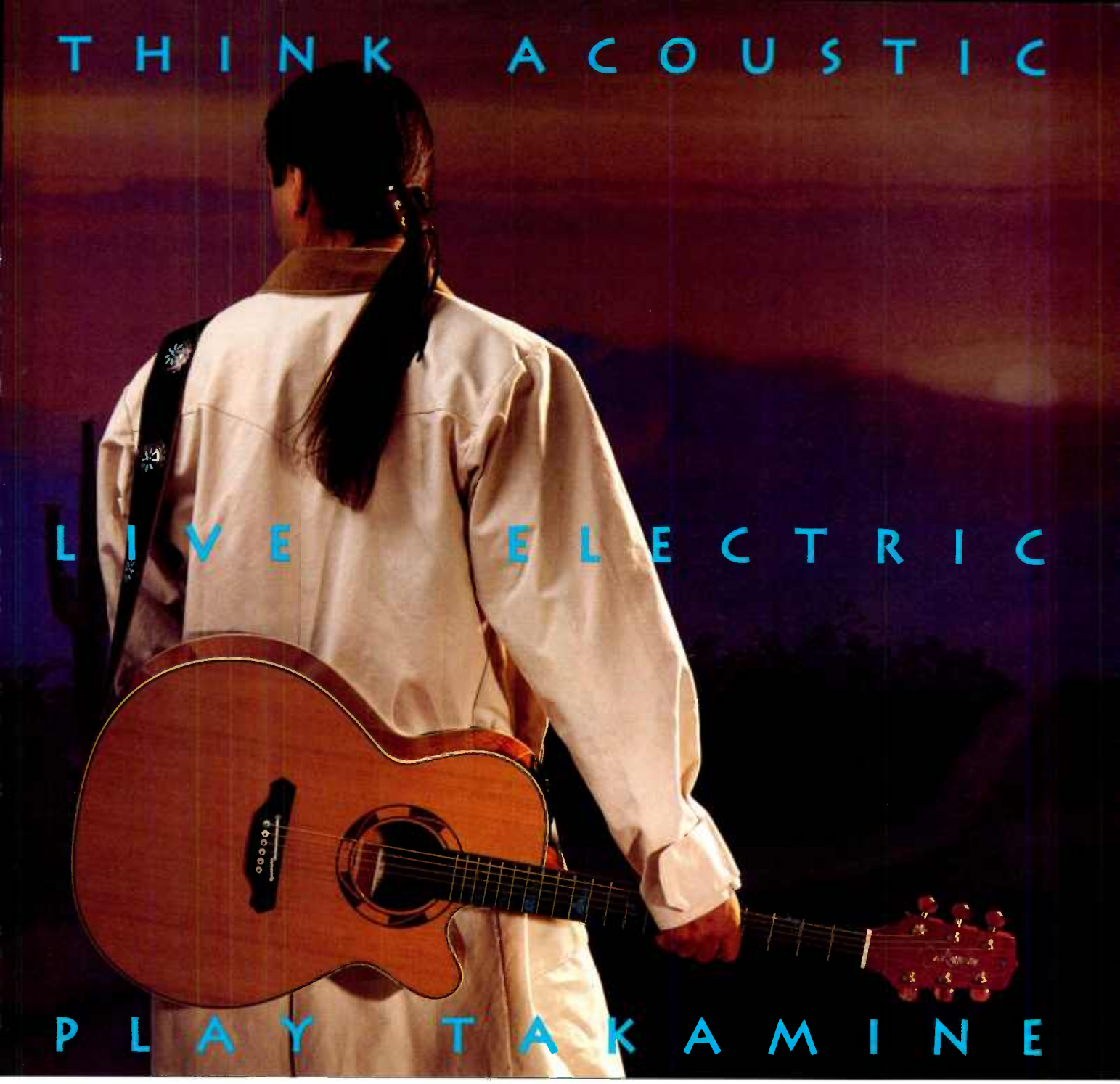
"I needed to get more freedom in this situation," Vai explains. "I'm such a control-type person that sometimes it's to the detriment of the band or the personalities. Because a rock 'n' roll band is really an unconditional acceptance of somebody's offerings. Although I'm not incapable of that type of situation... right now it doesn't feel right. I need to be a bandleader, to be the juggler.

"The process for this record was different. I ended up writing it all, and doing it in my house in Tahoe, away from the musicians, just imagining what they would do, instead of us all being in a room and saying 'let's jam' and seeing what we come up with. It wasn't unconditional acceptance, so by those standards, it's not necessarily a *band* band. What someone like Terry is looking for is that unconditional acceptance. So it would be very hard for him to join a band like this. In the future I'm hoping to make it more cooperative, but because of timing and distance between people, it didn't turn out that way—maybe that's what I *chose* to do, too.

"The songs were my focus on this project. I think lyric writing is such a subliminal art that you can write something and not understand what it is, then look at it and realize it came from someplace within you that was real—and then you can attach meaning to it afterwards. And one word could change it completely. Sometimes certain words may be wrong, but you can't really explain...why. I realized that in doing this record, because I'm not a terribly experienced lyricist.

"It's quite a blanket to shield yourself from writing lyrics," Vai laughs. "I've never released [a whole record] with lyrics, and it'll be interesting to see how it's received, because [as an instrumentalist] what you're saying and feeling is what you're saying and feeling when you play these melodies. But give someone a pen and paper and they express it differently. I could easily go off into realms of fantasy about what I feel when it comes to writing lyrics, but it would be sappy, and would make everybody cringe. So I try to construct those feelings in such a manner that they have a subliminal impact. I walk the line between cringy and acceptable, which is a border I like to walk."

PHOTOGRAPHS: NEAL ZLOZOWER; (ZAPPA) NORMAN SEEFF



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"There is nothing in the world as addictive as a hit single. With it comes everything—the money, the glory.... And that's terrible, because it binds you to the world."

YET EVEN BEFORE Vai could walk, he was touched by a sense of music's essence and its possibilities, and of his talent for actualizing those feelings and bringing them to earth. "The earliest memory I can recall was I was sleeping and woke up—and I wasn't quite awake—I was in this strange mental state and was hearing a sound. It was like a bell or a *whurrr*; it wasn't like I was hearing with my physical ears, it was an internal thing, and what I was witnessing was this...vastness. I can't really explain it. It was this state of mind where everything was expanding.

"I've always felt the same way as long as I can remember. I've always been interested in constructing melodies. I would try to take melodies and play them on this little Kenner organ my mother bought me for my sixth birthday, on 6/6/66...but I'm not the devil. That organ was precious to me. I remember playing every little theme I heard, and it seemed so simple to me: The notes get higher, and then they get lower, y'know, and if you want a melody that sounds like this, you go like this—it just seemed natural.

"My dad was militant about practicing the accordion a half-hour a day. Italian family from Long Island, so you had to play the accordion: 'Lady of Spain,' 'Arivederci Roma,' 'Volare'—the whole nine yards. I developed a great sense of melody, but I was appalled by the accordion. But when I finally said I didn't want to play anymore, he was okay. Meanwhile, I developed good keyboard skills.

"I used to hear this strange music coming from my older sister's room, *Led Zeppelin II*, and I was totally enamored with the guitar playing. 'This is just it. This is what I want to do!' I literally slept with my guitar—still do sometimes.

"I practiced no less than nine hours a day, because I had a list of things I had to get through. And I used to write down my regime every day. I would have everything mapped out, even my masturbating time, all in hour increments. And by hook or by crook I made that my objective every day. It got to where I'd come home Friday from school and sleep until the middle of the night, then practice until I had to go to school on Monday.

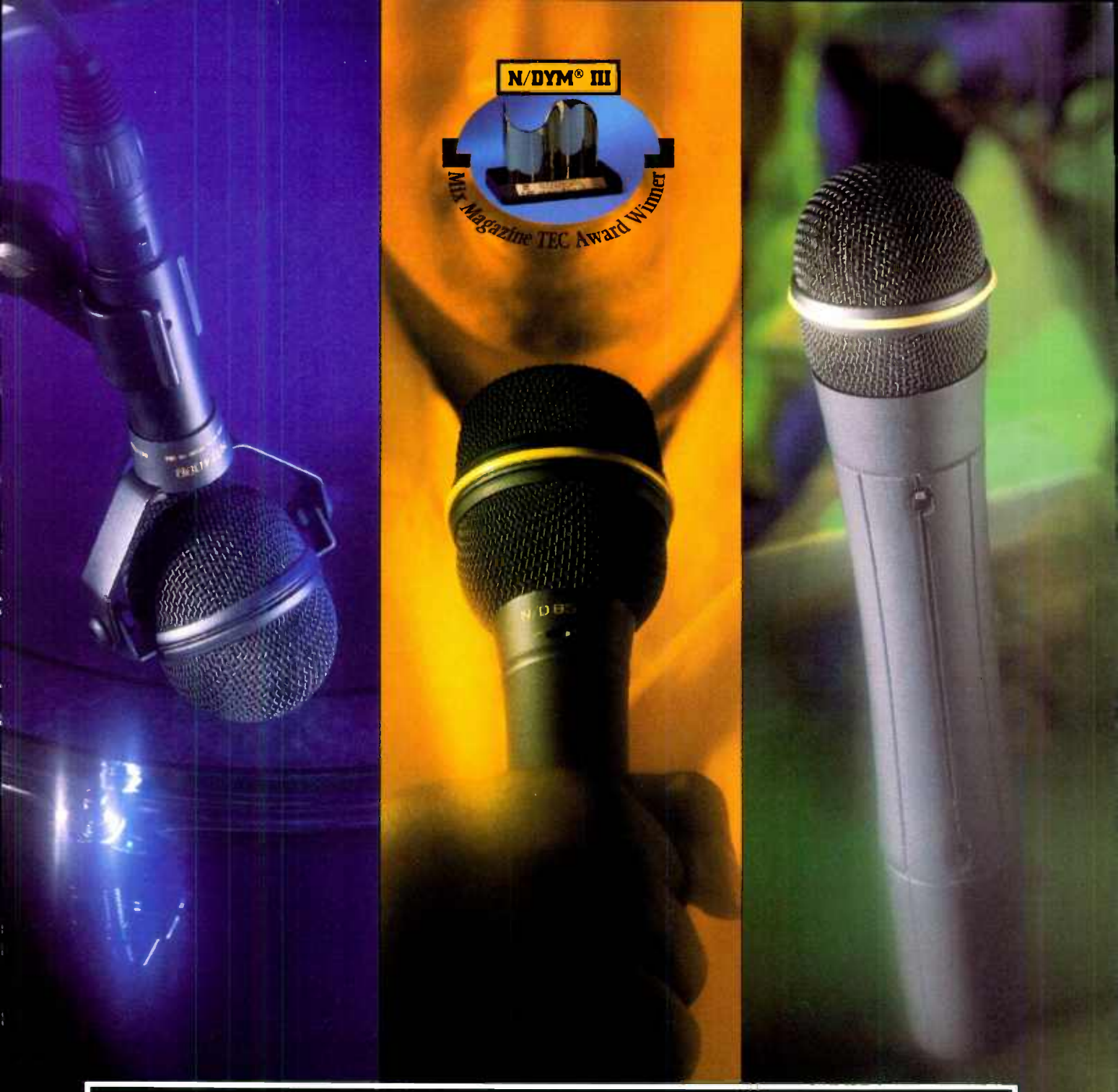
"I learned all the different techniques: retrograde and inversion, all the classical parameters like figured bass, and all the drop voicings, all the regulations. It was wonderful in high school that way, because I was moonlighting with the rock band, playing Kiss, and meanwhile I was composing a score for the school orchestra, the first score I wrote, called 'Sweet Wind from Orange County.'"

Vai went to Berklee to keep his rock chops together. "It was educational because I felt inferior to all the wonderful musicians there so I didn't compete," he says, "I just tried to absorb. And I got Zappa's phone number from a friend of mine who got it from this studio in New York. So I sent Frank some Edgard Varèse scores he was trying to get, because the Boston Public Library had an incredibly rich music department. And I sent him a tape and he just flipped. He wanted to fly me out and audition me for the band but I told him I was 18—it was just like, whoa...sorry.

"So I made my way out to L.A. and began transcribing for him, and he was impressed enough to hire me to transcribe guitar solos and drum parts. It would be something to the effect of taking a bar and then, say, any meter—pick a meter—and then a polyrhythmic structure that spanned one or three or parts of those bars, and that polyrhythmic structure may be something like 10 eighth notes played in the space of seven eighth notes, and then within those 10 eighth notes there's subdivisions of rhythms thereof.

"But what I learned from Frank was much greater than music. I was doing this transcription, a lead sheet thing. And at that time what they did was pay you for the number of bars of music—some ASCAP/BMI kind of thing. There was this one song which could have either been done in 2/4 or 4/4, so almost tongue-in-cheek I say to Frank, 'You want me to do it in 2/4 so there'll be more bars and you can make more money?' And his reply was just so pure: 'I don't need to make my money that way. You're starting to think like a real Hollywood guy now. Do the song the way it should be done.' And that probably had more of an impact on me than any notes he wrote."

Soon, Vai launched his apprenticeship as a full-fledged member of Zappa's ensemble, assisting the leader with arrangements, playing the impossible written parts, even getting the occasional solo feature. But in the mid-'80s the young guitarist hit an emotional wall, out of which came a much stronger, more mature individual. ("It was a death—I spent 15 percent of the time doing what adolescents do, and spent the rest playing the guitar.") After a bleak period of spiritual soul-searching, he moved on to a number of high-paying, high-visibility arena-rock gigs that helped bankroll his current artistic independence, cement his divinity among teenage stringslingers and provoke a certain ambivalence about his artistic goals among fellow musicians and



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members of the press. Still, Vai, as self-motivated a cat as you're ever likely to meet, was always able to manufacture some sort of challenge to drive him forward.

"I don't discount one second of any of my performances with any of those bands," he says. "One of the things I'm most attracted to is energy—intense feeling. And with David Lee Roth or Whitesnake you can experience an energy you may not get playing with someone like Zappa, and vice versa. I don't have any limitations; if I want to take the guitar off and throw it in the air, I've got the freedom to do it."

And now Vai has the freedom to do pretty damn much whatever he wants. And that covers a lot of ground, from his burgeoning aspirations as a composer, the directions he wants his career to take, and his sense of inadequacy as an instrumentalist. "With *Sex and Religion*, I didn't focus on the guitar per se," he says. "I focused on songwriting, producing, working with musicians; the keyboards took a lot of work, but I wanted that flavor. My playing suffered because I haven't had the hours to put in, but that was a conscious decision.

"My decision is that I'm going to go into hyper-guitar mode, because it's going to take a lot to get this show out on the road—a *lot* of guitar playing. Then I have this project with the Orchestra of Our Time in New York. And I'm orchestrating two-and-a-half hours of my music for a 30-piece orchestra and a rock band. We're trying to schedule some shows on the East Coast, like at Radio City Music Hall, which is all down ultimately to how many tickets I can sell. And there are other projects which are too far off to talk about, but they'll consist of a lot of guitar. I want to create some things that are very adventurous on the instrument: not just a melody, but a complete guitar piece.

"Contrary to popular belief, I have to work extremely hard to play the guitar. I have to work very hard to make my fingers sound like it's effortless—there's a lot of effort involved. But the positive side is that I *know* what it takes to be completely limitless as far as it's physically possible for anybody, although I haven't achieved it. But for all the time I put in, I should probably be better than I am. I'm a very sloppy player in many respects. That's probably why I like distortion so much. It's sometimes easier to play faster with distortion, because there's a lot more sustain so you can rail about. Which is why there was a period where I'd perform on electric, but spend all the rest of my time with an acoustic. Pick every note, and more than that, get rhythm together and really listen to chords; make up big, weird chords—I learned all my chord chemistry that way.

"But, man, there's a lot of things I can't do on that damn instrument. Have you heard of [chord-melody master] Ted Greene? The guy's monstrous. I want to study with him. I mean, if you're open-minded you can learn from anybody. I have no qualms about teaching anybody that wants to know, or if I want to go to lessons with Joe Pass. You need to be free like that or you'll never progress.

"But by the same token I'm looking forward to the time when I can do a record that doesn't have any guitar whatsoever, all melody and instrumental textures. Maybe that's a problem for some people: I'm sure it is for my record company, because in order to sell five, 10 million records, you've got to be focused on a sound and know your market. I've agonized over that. 'How am I going to sell a lot of records?'

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And it was very painful. You wake up in the morning with this anxiety. And then...this is a while ago, I thought, 'This is silly. Why condemn myself because I have the desire to do lots of different things?'"

But didn't *Passion and Warfare* sell a respectable number of copies?

"*Passion and Warfare* sold more than a...it made me a multi-millionaire, you know," he chuckles. "You can leave that out," he suggests self-consciously, but upon reflection his voice grows softer and more assured. "Ah, you can put it in if you like," he says offhandedly. "Look, it was wonderful the way it sold. But when you start selling records, it's a trap, because then you have to keep selling records, and let me tell you, there is nothing as addictive in the world as a hit single. Because with it comes everything: the money, the glory, the fame, the drugs, the pussy—whatever it is you want. And that's terrible, because it binds you to the world. And you become a caricature. That's why I respect Prince. He does what is *him*, and balances it with the type of stuff that's very accessible, but is always growing. Always stretching."

Vai stretches and yawns. Time to go stargazing. The dark star is calling. This biker Dogon yearning to master astronomy, compulsively divining its secrets, living by its symbols and parables, unto and through death. To conquer time, dress up his dreams so that someone else could understand...so no one could. Sensitive arranger, gonzo guitarist. The pagan in the varnished car.

I practically trip over the spread of guitars germinating out and about Vai's home studio, all ringing in a variety of curious open tunings. "That's Devon," Vai says proudly, citing the handiwork of his brash young vocalist. "He's a unique young man—they've all been Devonized." Strum. "Except that one—he doesn't like Les Pauls."

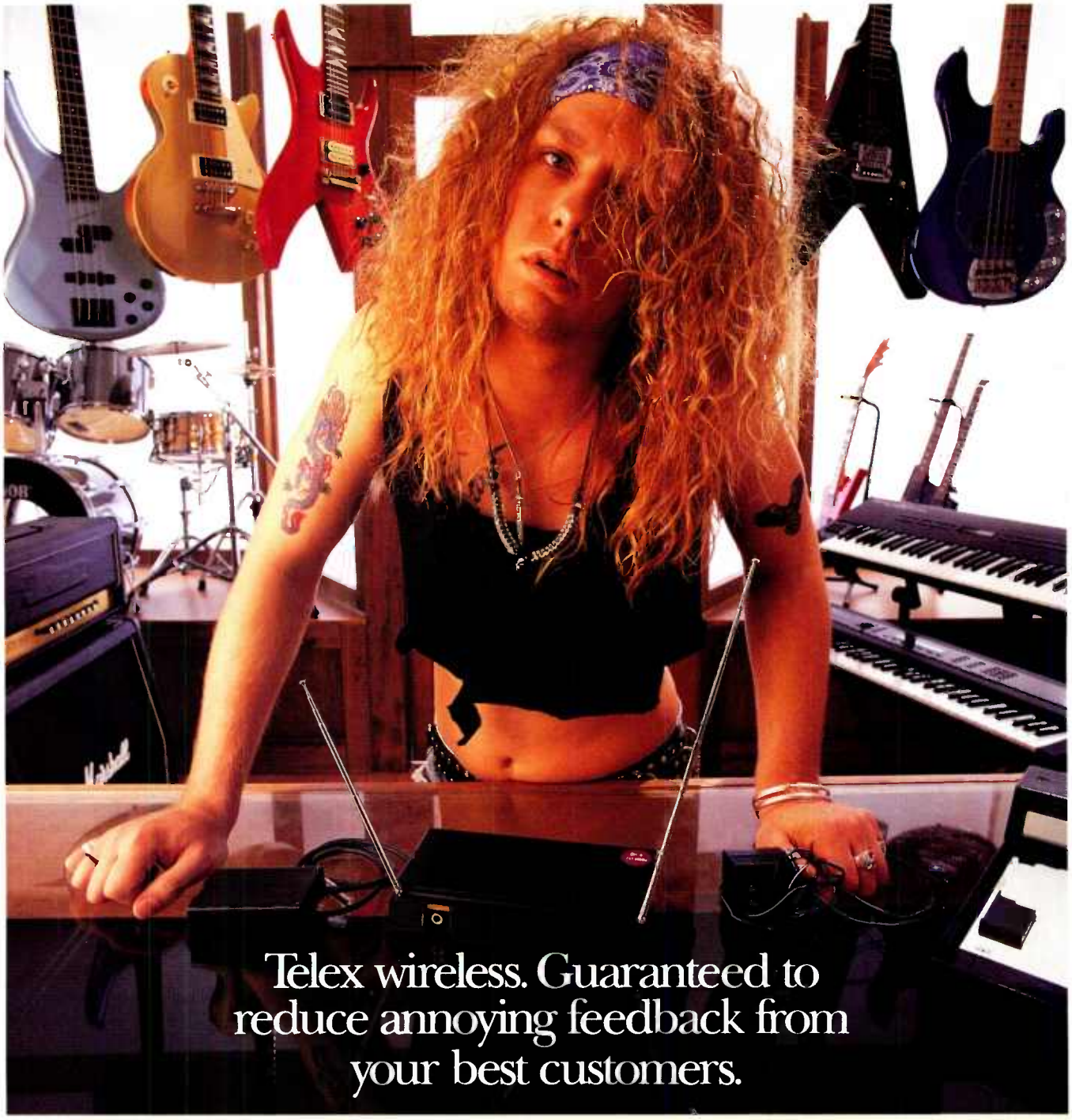
He draws at himself with those graceful hands, coloring himself in gestures, pulling compulsively at the corners of his standard-issue, *Pirates of Penzance* rock-star shirt. I've been staring at those twin scars on his clavicle all afternoon. Ask.

"I thought you said you were an Italian. You been trafficking with Transylvanians? What are those Dracula fangs?"

"Oh," he says matter-of-factly, "these are piercings that I had made, going through my neck...like these." Hello. A dual whammy-bar nipple ring. "I took them out because they got in the way of my guitar playing. But this is another whole story."

VAITAL PARTS

Vai uses Marshall, Boogie and Soldano amplifiers. Though he's known for using a complicated rack effects system, these days he's reverting back to the old-style pedals: MXRs and Mutrons, Maestro phasers and Vox CryBaby wah-wahs. His Ibanez Jem guitars have DiMarzio pickups and Floyd Rose–style tailpieces: "I've got this little thing in the back, a clutch, that prevents the bar from going sharp or wavering when you rest your wrist on it, because without that you traumatize all the notes every time you hit a note." Vai is also testing his intonation and range on a fretless guitar, and on the seven-string he designed. He uses Dean Markley Blue Steel strings.



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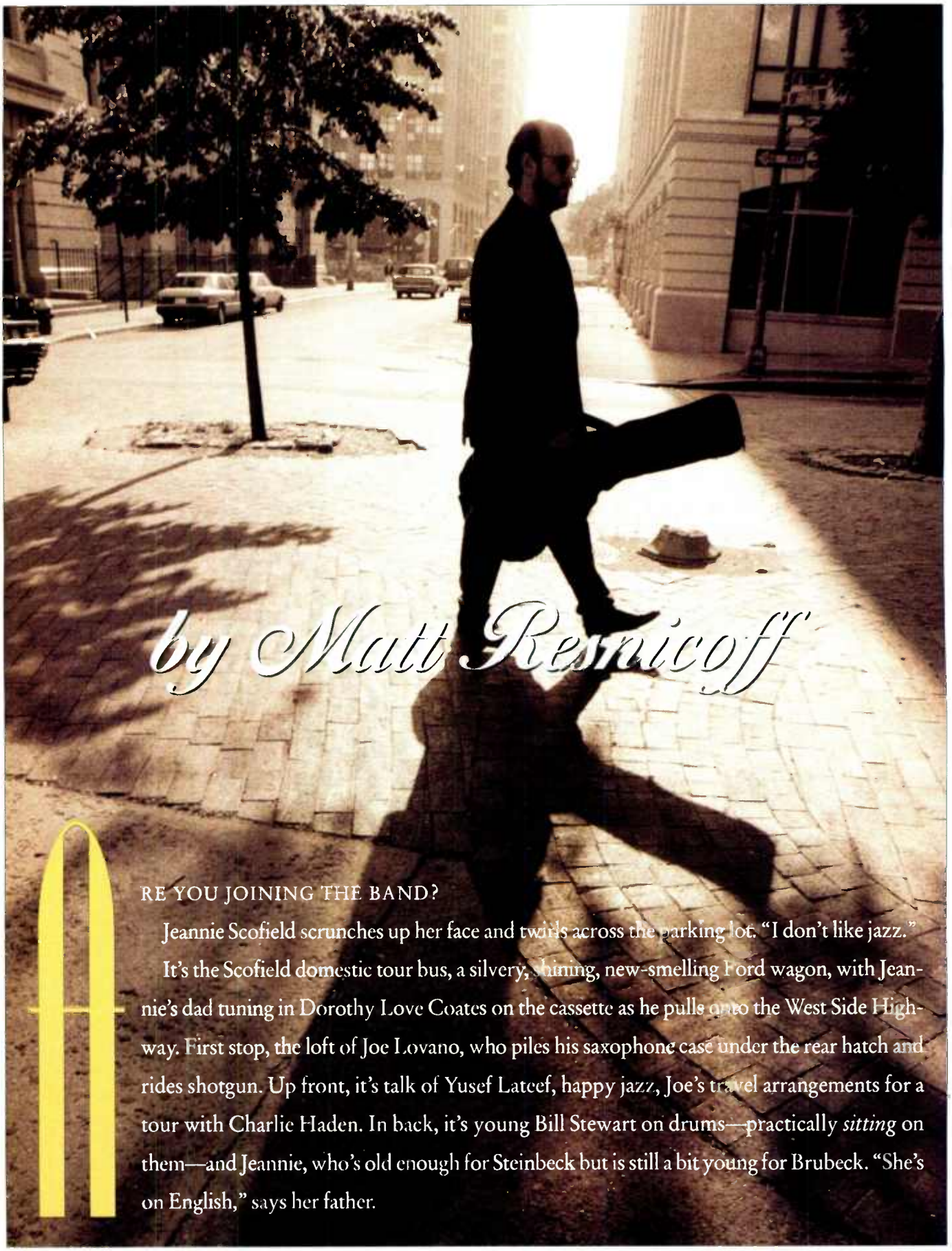

by Matt Resnicoff

ARE YOU JOINING THE BAND?

Jeannie Scofield scrunches up her face and twirls across the parking lot. "I don't like jazz."

It's the Scofield domestic tour bus, a silvery, shining, new-smelling Ford wagon, with Jeannie's dad tuning in Dorothy Love Coates on the cassette as he pulls onto the West Side Highway. First stop, the loft of Joe Lovano, who piles his saxophone case under the rear hatch and rides shotgun. Up front, it's talk of Yusef Lateef, happy jazz, Joe's travel arrangements for a tour with Charlie Haden. In back, it's young Bill Stewart on drums—practically *sitting* on them—and Jeannie, who's old enough for Steinbeck but is still a bit young for Brubeck. "She's on English," says her father.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS BUCK

The car plays a key part in the changing Scofield life plan, within which a longtime Greenwich Village homebase will soon become a pied-à-terre, second to a new house up in the Westchester suburbs. From Huntington to Hamburg, he travels a lot; luckily the Taurus is solid, practically drives itself. Tomorrow there's an early pickup, a four-hour trip out to Pennsylvania for two sets, with a high school band playing in between. Probably because of such a dedicated schedule, Scofield is now a jazz artist of the highest visibility, a composer of high order and an improviser of mindbending proportions. In the hallowed tradition of free jazz spirits, he makes personal, riveting music, and in that even grander tradition upheld by legends like Elvin Jones and Sonny Rollins, is managed by his wife.

"Who wants to manage a jazz act?" he says. "It's not the big time, like a pop act that has a chance in one year of grossing millions. But our booking agent says his favorite managers are Susan and Lucille Rollins. Most managers are not as good as she is. Susan doesn't do it because she wants to be in the music business. She does it because we have our own little cottage industry and it makes sense for her to do it. Mainly, you have to be a businessperson, not a jazz fan. My thing is like, 'Oh, I've got the shadow of Bud Powell on one shoulder, and then trying to get my amp to work....' Susan sees it as a business; I can't. I'm always thinking about '*ART*, godammit!' "

Suburban scenes whiz by as the great jazz eras are relived night by night at Paul's Mall back in Boston, where Lovano and Scofield spent their music college years watching Joe Henderson, Bill Evans, Little Feat. As they laugh, Jeannie notices what she calls very tacky condo housing in the outskirts of Levittown. "That's where we're moving, sweetheart," comes the response from up front. "Elvin told me that when he was growing up in Detroit, he used to listen to the Grand Ole Opry," John says, not missing a beat. "He liked Uncle Dave Macon. I've never even *heard* Uncle Dave Macon. I just remember Elvin telling me that. That's sort of like Martin Luther King saying he listened to George Wallace. But that's just how beautiful Elvin is, to hear music anywhere."

As the car pulls up in front of IMAC, a quiet little auditorium in a quiet main street on a quiet Long Island Saturday night, Lovano reaches for his horn and catches sight of the venue's coming attractions, one promising the appearance of a popular elevator-jazz saxist. "I can't believe it," he exclaims. "That guy actually performs? In *front* of people?!"

Scofield can't resist. "He's sitting in tonight, Joe."

EYES CLOSED, WIPING and scraping and scratching, bobbing and weaving and heaving, Scofield is hunched over a bluesy solo while he and his band work through "Camp Out," from their latest album *What We Do*. What they do is pretty incredible. Scofield eggs Lovano on with pecks, volume swells and squawking close-voiced chords, harmonizing the saxist's lines sometimes into three parts. Bassist Dennis Irwin walks a solid line between them as Stewart adds sharp, responsive accents—the drummer swings his ass off, implying a tune's chords in a roaring solo.

Lovano is a cat, a goateed anachronism, the guy sent to the principal

"You take what you got, set your sights, and if you wanna set them on absolutely mastering the guitar, boy, you've got a lot of work to do. I never tried. I've just had to work out music I like on a very difficult instrument."

in sixth grade for bringing a Roland Kirk record to show-and-tell. As Scofield solos, Joe steps behind the curtain and reminisces about seeing Jimmy Giuffre clear a hall with his experimental, beautiful playing. "It was important music for the time," Lovano says, fiddling with his mouthpiece, "but nobody was ready. You can't wait for anybody." As he steps out to finish the tune, even Jeannie Scofield is dancing.

After soundcheck, while everyone's getting rallied for Greek food, Irwin spots an issue of *down beat* magazine on a table in the intermission waiting area, its cover graced with a familiar face. "Is that the one with Lovano on it? I wouldn't pay $2.50 for that!" The magazine has printed music notation of Scofield's isolated guitar accompaniment on "What They Did." His rhythm section laughs—"They knew they couldn't capture *our* shit on that!"

Scofield takes the transcription and pores it over. "Wow. Could you imagine if a piano player played this stuff, how stupid it would sound? *Cliiknk, cllansd*! Actually, compared to jazz guitar tradition it sounds weird, but so much has gone down in the music in the '60s in jazz, really wild stuff, that it's not that *out*. That stuff is just responses to what's going on around me when I'm comping. Sometimes I listen back and go, 'Somebody might think this is *funny*.' Actually, the first cut on our new album has this amazing, weird guitar sound behind Lovano, and that was an accident: I think it was my pedals freaking out, like a broken chord, *aawwhackchww*."

Artists usually aren't able to see their own work as anything other than one long continuum, but if one were to break down the evolution of modern jazz guitar after the phases created by Tal Farlow and Jimmy Raney and Herb Ellis, one would detect a rupturing shift inspired by rock. With his pantonal understanding of the instrument, Scofield is straight-ahead's next step. "I always wanted to sound like a horn player," he says, "so the more sustain you had, the more vocal and hornlike you would get. Herb Ellis and those guys had just never *experienced* playing a guitar like that, while anybody from my generation had at some point played through a fuzztone. By the time you've been playing professionally for a while, adding stuff is harder because you've got a sound. I know Jim Hall really likes other sounds than his, but if you're Jim Hall and you've developed your sound for 40 years, why change it?"

These are unusually accommodating circumstances for making music, and after the gig, all are happy as they pile back into the car, especially the driver. "Once you get some ability, you realize, 'Hey, I can—maybe—say something special, and we as a group can come upon a mood that'll be really special tonight, in this little joint.' It's not the same as, 'We're gonna play our shtick and hopefully the audience will love it,'" he laughs, "you know what I mean? It's, 'We can actually *create* something tonight.' So that makes the surroundings tolerable, like not having the club or the business things exactly right, because they never are. The gig takes on a very special meaning when you're into the music that much. Especially with a band like these guys, I really look forward to every night, to trying to do it. And it's hard. One out of every five nights I get bummed out because I'm not living up to what I can do, and then one out of five nights I go over the top and say, 'Wow! I've finally become great.' And the next night you come crashing down to the depths again!" Back on the Long Island Expressway, half the cargo is asleep. Talk up front turns to Thad and Mel and Miles with the wah-wah pedal on his trumpet at Paul's Mall with Jarrett and Gary Bartz and Stan Kenton's great arrangements, all the way back to the city.

THE SCOFIELD MANOR in Manhattan is usually thick with sunlight and cats and hermit crabs and noise and music. Today Susan is out of town, the kids are at school, and for once in a long while John is enjoying a real break from a schedule based around 120 yearly gigs. Apart from visits here and at his shows around town, I've only seen him out of his house three times: one very early morning on a bleary passport-related errand, in the audience at a Joe Zawinul show (where Joe interrupted the performance to point him out at a v.i.p. table and shout, "Hey boy!") and at one by the Meters. "Hey, but between 1975 and 1980 I probably went out 10,000 times to hear bands," he dissents.

These days, most music John hears is at festivals or sessions he's working. His shelves are stocked with jazz imports, and videos of Monk, Sonny, Sesame Street, Miles. "This is the greatest thing," he nods towards a fat box set of compact discs, "the Miles Davis Group at the Plugged Nickel. They recorded two nights, *four* sets on one night and three on the other. That's the old days—even Miles, the greatest star in jazz in 1965, still had to play four sets a night. So that's how the business has changed right there. The audience is real noisy; the band is taking chances, maybe playing over their heads. But it's great to be transported to Chicago in 1965 and hear a set with no interruption, glasses clinking, cash register goin'—every time Ron Carter plays, a drunk guy says, 'Paul Chambers!' and at the end of Wayne's solo you hear him say, 'Yeah, you blew Miles off the stand!' As a musician, too, to hear these guys play four sets in one night and all the ups and downs...it's a lot of work, a lot of notes."

Before he was a comer, before he was even a musician, Scofield was a *fan*, and the fan's obsession governs his approach to the music, even through his dates with Mingus, Joe Henderson, B.B. King, Gerry Mulligan and Jay McShann. "I thought about this, and playing with somebody ultimately is great when you can play with them a *lot*, and develop some music, like Lovano. I mean, my idols, Wayne Shorter, Sonny Rollins—I'd love to play with them, but the all-star jam session leaves something to be desired. You need time, more than 45 minutes onstage at Carnegie Hall as part of the Newport Jazz Festival. You can admire somebody and learn from their music without playing with them."

John played a lot with Davis during the mid-'80s, doing the kind of heavy funk that became a model for several excellent records he made after leaving the group; the *Blue Matter* band, as it's known informally among diehards, reunited last year for the guitarist's *Jazz-Funk Guitar* videos. "When we did Miles' *Decoy*, one or two really good pieces weren't released," he remembers, "long things Gil Evans had written out that were derived from solos that either Miles or I took on gigs; he turned them into melodies for sax and guitar, and Miles would answer them. I saw the music Gil wrote out to a Miles solo that's never been recorded...and that's what I do when I write. I mess around until I come up with something. I forget five minutes later what it was. I need to be pushed to write. But it's rewarding in a way that improvising is not; I can sit for five hours and not come up with anything. It feels like a waste of time, even though it's not because the next day you may get to something. It's not particularly fun."

In two years at the Berklee College of Music, John made good on numerous trips as a teenager from New Canaan, Connecticut to the Village Vanguard, the Fillmore East and a club called the Guitar. Most important, he met other musicians who loved jazz, saxists like Steve Slagle and Lovano, and mentors like Steve Swallow, who later would play bass on Scofield's trio dates *Shinola, Bar Talk* and *Out Like a Light*; at one point in the early '70s John, Pat Metheny and Al Di Meola were all studying under the same roof. He practiced the days away, hoping to convince his parents he was no rock 'n' roll hedonist, and that a boy brought up on the "Hootenanny" TV show could actually make it through Charlie Parker's "Au Privave."

"You know what it is?" he bursts out. "It's the guitar. Just to have Jeannie take piano lessons has shown me that. To play augmented chords going up in whole steps, arpeggiated, is so hard on the guitar, but on piano you can get it right under your fingers in two seconds. I was like, 'Oh, no fair!' On guitar you have to do some ass-backwards jumping around to get at 'em. In a way, it wasn't meant to be a lead instrument. The thing that's been the biggest help is sitting down and just playing tunes, and improvising. If you hear some melody you can't execute, you analyze it.

"I'm still trying to figure out guitar, but I gave in a long time ago, saying, 'Man, this thing is impossible, so I'm just gonna get a little at a time.' And some people, that really hangs them up. They say, 'Well, I'm gonna master the guitar, and then become an improviser.' They play every possible position and get into this technical thing—which we all have to deal with—but it can be overwhelming, and then no music comes out. I'd rather hear Albert King play two notes; he hadn't been worrying about those augmented chords and whole steps. But you set your sights, and if you wanna set them on absolutely mastering the guitar, boy, you've got a lot of work to do. I never tried. I've had to work out music that I like on this difficult instrument."

Perhaps because of those limitations, Scofield writes tunes that have an undulant, enticingly disorienting mood, even when steeped in countryish twang, funk backbeats or full-on swing. "Mainly, the reason I write is for us to have something to play," he admits. "When you play a standard or somebody else's original, it always feels like treading on somebody else's property. There's so much history that you feel, my god, Charlie Parker or Bill Evans said so much with this, why should I even bother? When I play my tunes there's no history at all, and I feel much more free with it. But nowadays the only reason anybody writes is to make a record."

Could anything he's composed become a standard? "In a way, things have changed," he says. "Some of my tunes recently have been more in that tradition. But the thing of standards was like folk music, these tunes *everybody* knows, and they would improvise on 'em and turn them into weird vehicles. It made sense, because everybody's old Aunt Edna had sung 'Bye Bye Blackbird' and played piano in the straight corny way. And then to hear Miles was great, because here was this statement about how you could change a familiar thing and make magic with it. That's not happening anymore because people younger than myself don't know 'Bye Bye Blackbird'—*I* only remember it because my mother sang it around the house. Those tunes followed an AABA formula; today it's more of a blues thing, or just different settings, but not easy for a musician to pick up, play the melody, then extrapolate on it in a natural way. I'm not saying, 'They don't write 'em like they used to,' it's just if you have a band, you do your own music.

"When I was in a fusion thing, I heard fusion bands in Colorado and Paris playing my tunes. But if there are still bands in Holiday Inns playing 'Jeremiah Was a Bullfrog,' or 'Tie a Yellow Ribbon'—maybe *those* are standards. I mean, can you think of any jazz standards that have happened in the last 20 years?

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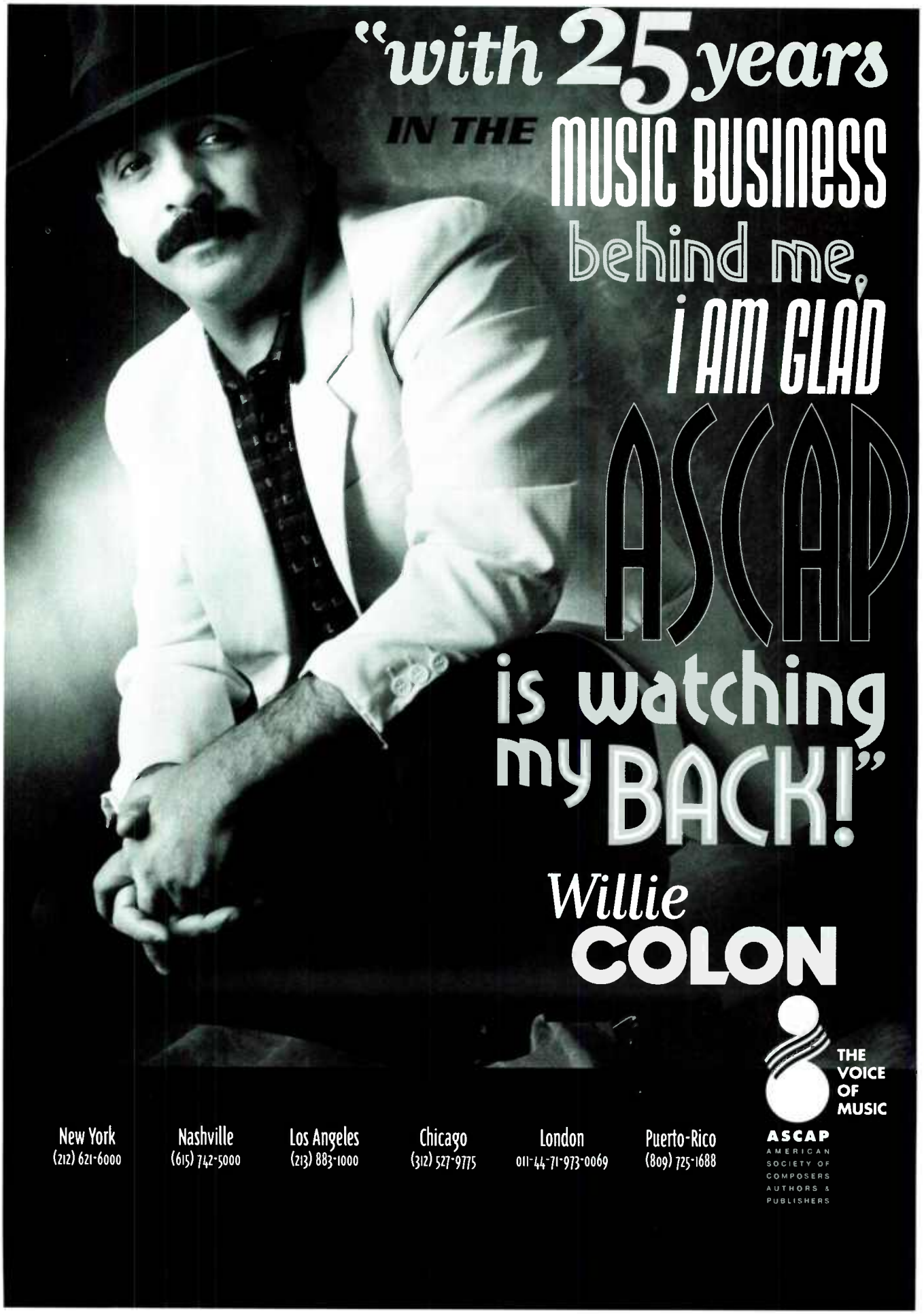
"I'm following the same direction I've always wanted, and I've always liked pop music and rock 'n' roll a lot. I've also played on jingles. When I didn't have much of a career in jazz, I would take any gig I could. I've played for strippers, I've played in really bad rock bands, weddings, bar mitzvahs. You know, people used to talk about doing a wedding and there would be Lee Konitz or some jazz great in there. Jazz musicians have *never* made a lot of money, except for the Miles Davises, the Mahavishnu Orchestras or the Benny Goodmans. Most respected jazz greats have to work for their money. That's the way it's always been. But then somebody like Wynton Marsalis will sell a lot of records. And you wonder, 'Well, how come Kenny Dorham had to work at Manny's music store?' Kenny Dorham was a really beautiful musician."

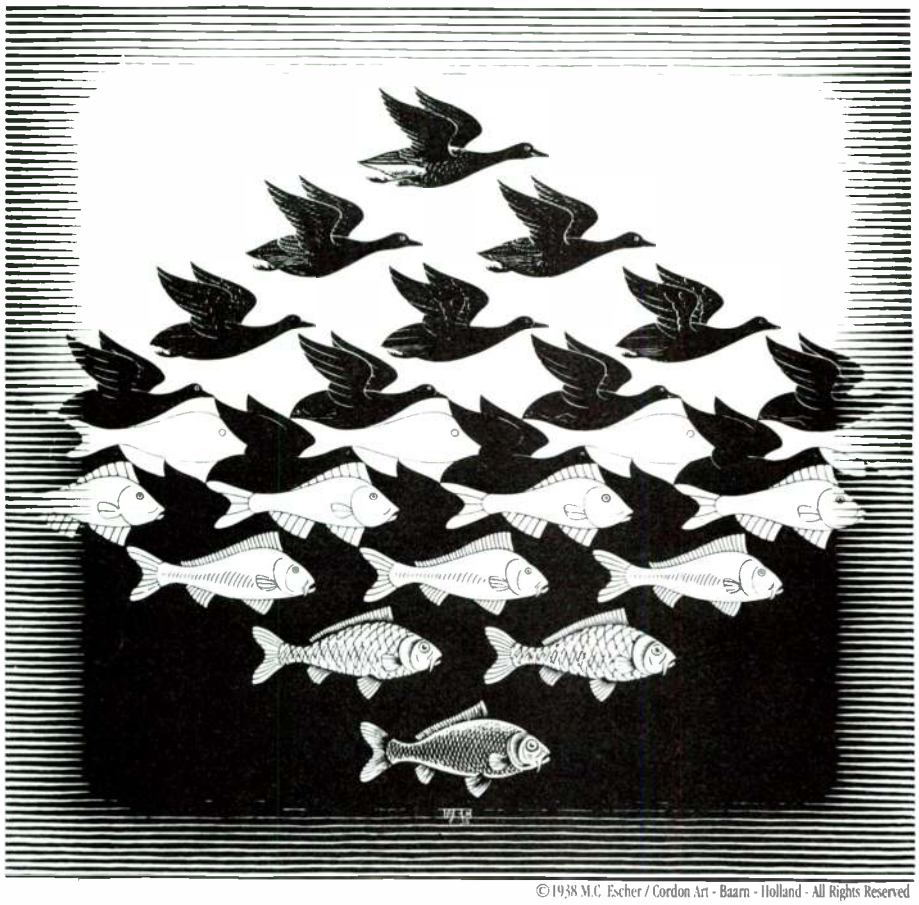
Does that ever get you down? "No, you know why? Because I'm doing pretty good. I'm making a good income and I have a real nice life with my wife and kids. I have enough. Now. I also spend a lot of time on the road and work my ass off. But that's okay—I'm playing good music. When I was a kid I actually tried to convince everybody I knew that jazz was where it's at and they were jerks to listen to pop. That was something I got over by the time I was 18-and-a-half—you know, going up to girls at rock concerts and saying, 'You're really stupid to like this! You should come over to my house and listen to a Charlie Parker record, you fool.'" He laughs. "It's only music after all, you know what I mean?"

WHAT HE USES

SCOFIELD spends so much time overseas that he leaves his Boogie Mark IIIs in Europe. Otherwise, he runs his Ibanez AS-200 through two Sundown combos, a Boss stereo chorus and a Rat fuzz. His strings are D'Addarios, .011 through .049, with an unwound G.



If you think only your eyes can play tricks on you...



Study the illustration. Are the geese becoming fish, the fish becoming geese, or perhaps both? Seasoned recording engineers will agree that your eyes *and* your ears can play tricks on you. In the studio, sometimes what you think you hear isn't there. Other times, things you don't hear at all end up on tape. And the longer you spend listening, the more likely these aural illusions will occur.

The most critical listening devices in your studio are your own ears. They evaluate the sounds that are the basis of your work, your art. If your ears are deceived, your work may fall short of its full potential. You must hear everything, and often must listen for hours on end. If your studio monitors alter sound, even slightly, you won't get an accurate representation of your work and the potential for listener fatigue is greatly increased.

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MIDI Guitar After the Plunge

Sound expansion through automation

by PETER MENGAZIOL

The world of MIDI can be intimidating to even the most interested parties, and guitarists have a particularly hard time. Living Colour guitarist/songwriter Vernon Reid fought to become a cutting-edge technophile. "I've been working with the quandary of how to get a guitar to control a synthesizer for a very long time," he says. "The biggest problem with guitarists feeling like Luddites and all anti-technology is because the aspect of creating your *own* environment has been so de-emphasized, and needs to be made more 'user-friendly'!"

MIDI has allowed Living Colour dominance over their ideas. Vernon brags, "I've had guitarists walk up after hearing our song 'Nothingness' and say, 'Me and my friend have got a bet that there's a keyboard player offstage!' I say, 'I don't know who put up the money, but you lost!' The four of us onstage control almost everything, as far as the options in terms of switching effects, programs within effects, the use of MIDI note-on commands to control samplers and the use of pitch-to-MIDI conversion to control synthesizers. Ninety-nine percent of what happens at a Living Colour concert happens in real time. The idea of a 'small self-contained intelligent unit,' like Fripp's concept, really appeals to us."

Guitarists need to understand that MIDI doesn't necessarily mean computers, databases and confusion. The most basic thing you need to know is that MIDI is a control signal that you never hear—you hear the synth or sampler it is controlling. Your guitar tells the synth only what note to play, and when; in the world of MIDI, it's the module, not the guitar, that generates the tone. A "patch" on a synth is a set of parameter values that configures it to sound a certain way. By changing patches, you change the way a synthesizer sounds.

Say you've decided to take up the challenge. You may have purchased an integrated system that incorporates the guitar, MIDI pickup and synthesizer or, like Reid, decided to build your system in modular fashion: first, the guitar-to-MIDI converter and a single synth or sampler, either a rackmount module or with a built-in piano-style keyboard. (Vernon now uses a Gibson Max interface on a custom Sustainiac'ed Hamer guitar controlling three racks: an amp rack, an effects rack and a synth rack consisting of a Korg Wavestation A/D and Proteus and Vintage Keys modules by E-mu.) The allure of MIDI is having access to the entire universe of sounds; like a sonic Lego artist, you can amass new modules one at a time and integrate them just by connecting a cable.

Two basic accessories (besides more sound modules) are essential for expanding a MIDI guitar system: a quality line mixer and a MIDI "brain" to access the sounds you want, when you want them. And lots of MIDI and audio cables. If you only have one sound module, you can patch its audio output into an effects loop or spare input channel; the gui-

PHOTOGRAPH: LINDA COVELLO

tar's MIDI pickup triggers the module, which returns a normal audio signal to your amp. If you have several modules and perhaps an effects box or two, you'll need a line mixer. As you add modules you'll see the benefits of a good, flexible mixer, since most new MIDI modules have multiple outs (E-mu's popular Proteus series has six programmable outputs). "Keyboard" mixers are perfect because, these days, they're designed for MIDI systems.

The "brain" of your MIDI system can be as simple as a pedal or as elaborate as a program running on a MIDI-enabled computer—to the modules it's all the same bits and bytes. To explain the function of this brain, let's take the simplest case: an interface with a single MIDI module or keyboard synthesizer. You change patches via buttons on the synth's front panel or through a special mode built into some guitar interfaces that allows you to change patches by picking notes on your guitar. As you add modules, each with its own control panels, things get more complex. Do you want to play them one at a time, or mix and layer them? How fast can you push buttons?

Keyboard players use special "master" keyboards that perform such control functions with a single keystroke—MIDI guitarists need every available finger just to play. A resourceful guitarist can go just as far with a MIDI controller pedalboard (by Digital Music Corp., DigiTech, Peavey, Meico, Zoom and Lake Butler Systems, to name a few).

When your foot hits one of its switches, the pedalboard sends out a string of MIDI messages that control the way the module responds to your playing. Each module in your system "listens" for messages on its own MIDI channel—up to 16 of them—so you can address each one separately, or all of them at once, with a tap of your foot. Messages can change the sound, the volume, the key and a number of other useful parameters.

Say a rig contains three modules set to MIDI Channels 1, 2 and 3. To hear only Module 1 would require *three* volume messages: You need to turn up Channel 1 all the way, and turn Channels 2 and 3 all the way down. Layering Modules 2 and 3 would also require 3 messages—Channel 1 down, and 2 and 3 up. Since the MIDI volume message (a "continuous controller," not a switch) has a range of "0" for off to "127" for all the way up, you can just as easily use these commands to set mix levels. In a nutshell, that's how MIDI pedalboards work.

Your pedalboard may well be limited to sending only patch changes and not volume messages. In that case, here's a trick that can be used to mute modules: Program a patch on each module (usually given the location "0" for convenience) as a quiet or "null" patch, with all sound-production parameters turned off. When you want to mute a specific module, send a message on that module's channel to change to the null patch "0." To turn it on, just send a patch-change to the desired patch. While you still have to deal with other modules to play a single one exclusively, you have simplified the process.

Whatever brand of MIDI foot controller you choose, make sure it can be programmed to send a variety of MIDI messages and can store a long enough series of messages to give you some flexibility (255 bytes is a good number). Keep in mind that other units like signal processors, mixers and even lights can be controlled from these pedals.

Via MIDI, guitarists have opportunities. As Vernon puts it, "MIDI guitar is not about having an organ sound, it's about sound programming and coming up with other ambient colors—I mean, really dealing with synthesis."

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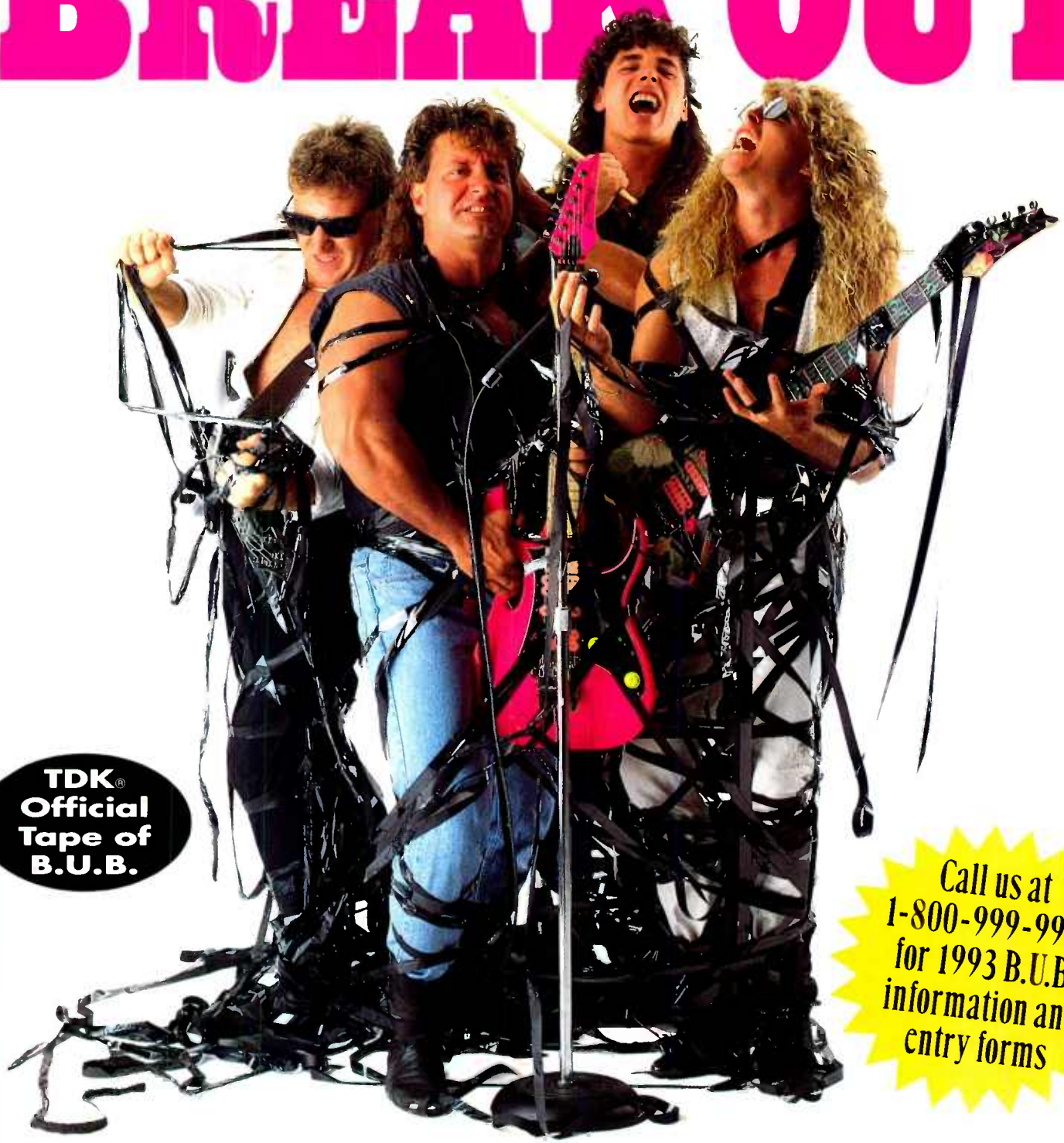
BREAK OUT



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MUSICIAN

Start the Retro Revolution Without Me

The electric guitar hurtles forward into the good old days

by STEVE BLUCHER

It doesn't require great powers of observation to notice that the dominant trend in the guitar world lately has been toward all things classic (or vintage, or authentic original, or just plain old). In electric guitar terms, that appears to mean anything developed before 1970 (or maybe 1975—these things change rapidly). A very limited amount of equipment from that period survives in working and playing order, so we now see a market in which large and small companies offer new gear designed to be as close to the old stuff as possible. The major companies have shops devoted to reproducing accurate versions of older-model guitars and amps, and there is an expanding group of smaller companies offering everything from hand-made amplifiers to pre-aged pickguards. I haven't seen anyone offering pre-rusted screws. Yet.

I don't know if guitarists are a singularly superstitious crew, but we devote much effort looking for equipment possessing magic. If we're convinced that the magic resides in equipment built the old way, we naturally gravitate toward the promise of the real (old) thing. Some of what's promised may be real, but some is advertising smoke, wishful trend-riding at best.

Two classic examples of magic instruments are the 1959 Gibson Les Paul sunburst and the 1954 Fender Stratocaster. The virtues embodied in these very different instruments have been mythologized to the point that they often appear to represent unattainable standards to which all later guitars must be compared and found wanting. The aura around these guitars should not obscure the fact that they actually are fine instruments. On another level, they are simply solidly constructed guitars made from (relatively) good pieces of wood, about whose construction not much mystery exists. One possible point of sonic superiority these guitars (and other similarly aged instruments) possess is the likelihood they've been played a long time. There is some debate about this, but it's a strong belief among experienced builders that a well-played instrument has a more even, defined tone and better sustain. I've played a number of veteran instruments from the '50s and '60s that reinforce this belief. I've also seen several virtually unplayed instruments, including an astounding mint '59 sunburst Paul and a '58 Strat, which behaved a lot like new guitars: stiff-sounding, with merely average tone and sustain. That's not much evidence to base a conclusion on, but it does suggest that a well-made new instrument has the same chance to sound cool as did its predecessors, given a sufficient amount of playing time.

I don't want to downplay the contribution of pickups to the creation of a vintage electric sound, but it's been disheartening to see some players and builders overstate the importance of electronics and underestimate the role of the instrument itself. "They're all just planks of wood" is an attitude that still exists, although I think it plainly hurts the state of the art (and also fills music stores with bad instruments—but that's a different subject). For the record, it's not easy to quantify the contribution of pickups in an old vs. new context, in large part due to manufacturing inconsistencies of almost all

 ILLUSTRATION: CHRISTIAN CLAYTON

old pickups, as well as the wear and tear that has caused a gradual weakening of the magnetic fields over 30 years of use (and misuse). The idea that an old-sounding pickup can "age" the sound of a new guitar depends, again, on the belief that the guitar has less of an effect than the pickup. It might be better to focus on how an individual instrument might be changed by a pickup substitution, rather than believe that a specific pickup can convert a '93 guitar into a '63.

It's in the field of amplifiers and effects that the retro wars have really heated up. To question the sonic virtues of handwired vs. printed circuit boards, tube vs. solid-state rectifiers, or EL34 tubes vs. 6L6s may seem like a bizarre exercise in audio political correctness to some, but to others it takes on the musical equivalent of revealed truth. People who believe handwired circuit boards and IC-less audio paths create a sound which is unapproachable by any other technology feel they are the true practitioners of the Book of Leo. The loyal opposition believes that Leo Fender would make full use of new technology and manufacturing techniques, were he here today. Judging from the comments of those who worked with him, as well as from his own later designs, there seems to be enough evidence on both sides to keep the argument alive. The underlying conflict might be put to rest if and when an amp built completely with recent technology can fool (literally) blindfolded experts in direct, hands-on playing comparisons.

This last thought crystallizes my deepest objection to the retro revolution. This resurgence has, at least partly, been fueled by merchandisers bent on convincing musicians that the "magic" sound of the '50s and '60s can be captured by buying products built like those used by the players who created that sound in the first place. It may not be intentional, but what this does is disrespect the players, who deserve far more credit than the equipment. If there's any real magic, it was wielded by musicians who had no assistance or advice in discovering musical expression far beyond what the equipment of the time was intended for, or even what was widely believed possible. Even the best players had to deal with guitars that wouldn't stay in tune, microphonic pickups, amplifiers that might not live through a set and inexperienced technical support from a field in its infancy. The ability to create great music, or any music, while engaged in a constant struggle against the restraints of the instruments (to an electric guitarist, amps and effects *are* instruments) is remarkable. It is more than a little ironic that this achievement is now cited as evidence of superior instruments, rather than as a triumph over the limitations those instruments imposed.

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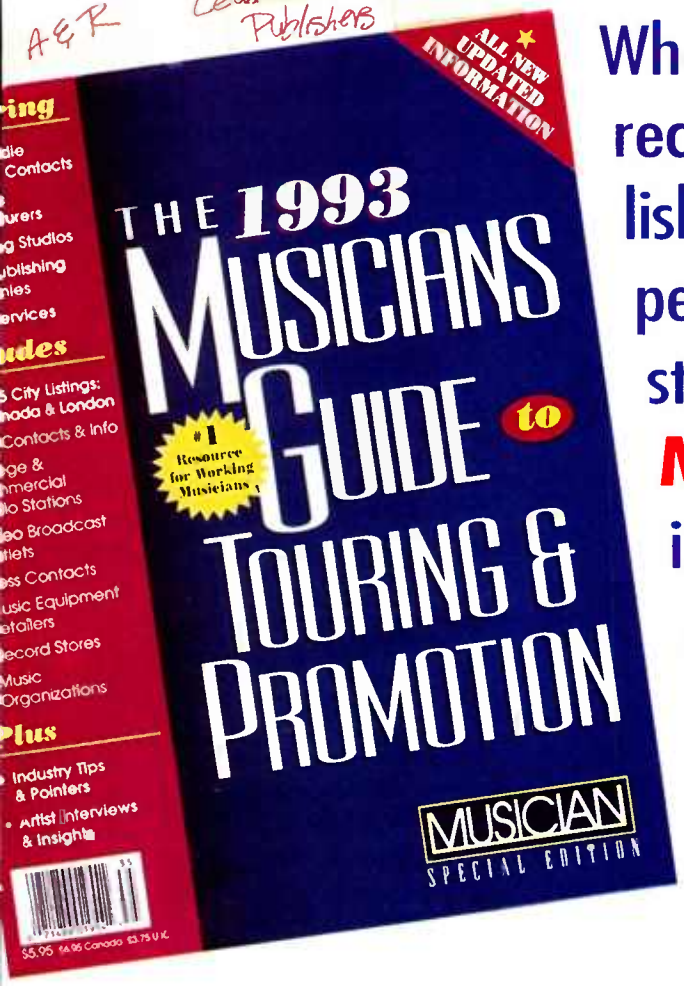

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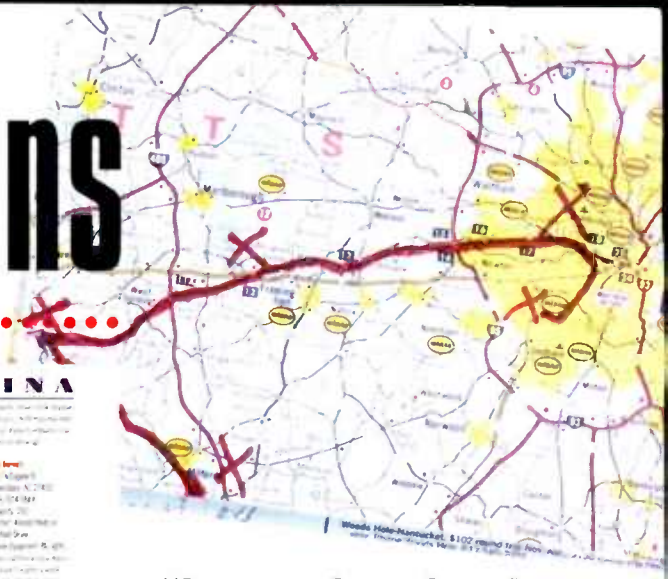

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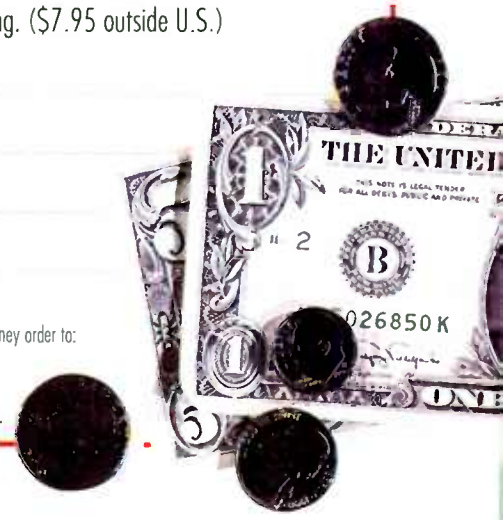

Stephen Bruton Gets His Turn

Riding shotgun with Raitt's right hand

by PETER CRONIN

You know you're in Texas when you get picked up for a lunch appointment and the restaurant is a 75-mile drive away. "Hop in," says Stephen Bruton from the front seat of a Mercedes station wagon. "I call it the Prairie Schooner," he shouts, throwing back the sunroof as we speed west out of Austin into wide-open Texas hill country. I get the reassuring feeling that Bruton is real comfortable on wheels. As guitarist on Bonnie Raitt's last two albums and tours (and Kris Kristofferson's last 100 or so), the Fort Worth native has over a quarter-century's worth of musical miles behind him. And although he likes to say he's been "hiding in a band," Bruton has been developing into that rare player who knows how to really listen. His experience at the right hand of Raitt, Geoff and Maria Muldaur (separately), Bob Dylan, Christine McVie and especially Kristofferson, has molded the Austin-based guitarist into a consummate sideman, with an uncanny sense of what to play and when, and the musical vocabulary to pull it off.

Bruton was just 21 when he began his on-again-off-again, 18-year gig with Kristofferson ("Roger Miller had just cut 'Me and Bobby McGee'"), and found himself suddenly and constantly on the road and out on a limb, learning songs on the run. "Kris and I like to say we both owe our jobs to Billy Swan," Bruton laughs. "When he quit his job as janitor at Columbia Records, Kris took it. And when Billy quit Kris's band overnight, I got the gig." The 44-year-old guitarist admits that years on the road as second fiddle made him hungry to make his own musical statement and saddled him with a few bad habits. But with his just-released solo debut, *It Is What It Is*, Bruton spits in the eye of those devils, and delivers a musical and lyrical catharsis of a record that swaggers with attitude without sacrificing the panoramic musical outlook that's at the bottom of his heart.

"Growing up in Fort Worth, you had to play country *and* blues, and you had to do it well, a lot of times for the same audience," he says. "So as a musician, I don't feel confined, I feel compelled to play different styles of music." The stylistic leaps come fast and furious in a Stephen Bruton solo, with frenetic jazzy licks tumbling over elastic pedal steel–ish bends. But to him, it's all just music. "In North Texas there's always been this huge exchange between different players—jazz, country, black, white, young and old," he says. "If you keep your ears open, it widens your horizon."

Bruton's been kicking his songs around on the road with Raitt for a while now, and he brought the core of her band in to record *It Is What It Is*. The experience of countless soundcheck sessions shines through. Producer Don Was had been carrying a bootlegged copy of Bruton's "Getting Over You" around in his pocket for a couple of years. When it came time to produce Willie Nelson's *Across the Borderline* album, Was cast the song as a duet between Nelson and Raitt. "I was in the studio working on my own record when I got the [*cont'd on page 94*]

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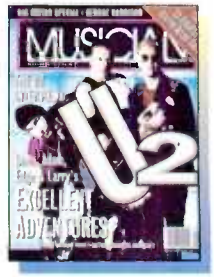

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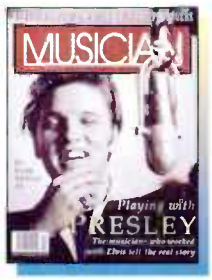

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Choosing an amp setup can be difficult—especially if you play acoustic guitar. Traditional guitar amps are designed for electrics, while the usual solution for ensemble players, plugging your pickup's output directly into a PA, denies you the kind of on-stage sound and tone control that inspires great performances. The variety of pickups available complicates matters further, not to mention the endless array of preamps, amplifiers and speakers if you're interested in "separates" rather than a combo amp. But if you're serious about your sound and willing to invest in it, the marketplace offers some excellent options.

All else aside, a good amplified acoustic sound starts with a good pickup. The DiMarzio Natural ($89) and the Dean Markley SST ($100), both passive pickups, are exceptionally transparent and flat in their price range. For more money, the active Fishman Acoustic Matrix ($140) and Highlander IP-1 ($197), and the passive L. R. Baggs ($110) and Sunrise ($170–$200), are among the best on the market. Proper installation is critical, so make sure it's done by an expert. If you need an in-line preamp—required by any passive pickup—the $140 Fishman Model G is one of the most popular and effective. Baggs and Sunrise also offer high-quality preamps, the cream of the crop being the Sunrise Tube Interface ($750).

When it comes to amplifiers, most players go with a combo simply to avoid matching up separates and transporting them. Fortunately, a growing number of combos are designed with the acoustic guitar in mind. Guild offers the Tamarack (20 watts stereo and two eight-inch speakers, $600), Aspen (25 watts stereo and two 10s, $790), and Sequoia (55 watts stereo and four eights, $990). Given their low power ratings, these amps are best suited for small rooms and low volumes, their strong points being price, portability and a wealth of features. The 100-watt Gallien-Krueger 200MV ($899), which I didn't listen to, sports two 6 1/2-inch speakers, a seven-band graphic EQ and chorus.

At the other end of the price spectrum, Trace Acoustic offers the popular two-channel TA100R ($1850) and three-channel TA200S ($3450). Both models deliver 100 watts and feature tone controls on each channel, a single master five-band graphic EQ and an onboard Alesis Microverb. To my ear, the TA100R's four five-inch drivers aren't quite up to the job, sounding thin and compressed and decidedly lacking in lows. The TA200S, with twice as many speakers in a stereo configuration, sounds bigger, if not much better.

The sound of Seymour Duncan's 100-watt TARA ($1350), which issues from two six-inch drivers and a one-inch dome tweeter, boasts a good deal more body and warmth. Each of two channels has its own five-band graphic EQ, plus a notch filter for dialing out feedback. This is one great-sounding little amp, and you can slide your favorite effects unit into the optional one-space rack slot ($50).

Those with a larger budget should look out for the Fishman Acoustic Performer-8 ($1600), scheduled for August release. This unit's specs call for considerably more wattage than the competition, biamped to an eight-inch driver and a one-inch dome tweeter. The grapevine predicts that it's going to be a monster.

Combos are convenient, but for those who will drive all night for tone, a separates system (hand-picked preamp, amp and speakers) tends to deliver more bang for the buck. A clean, transparent amplifier runs between $400 and $1300. Anything by Carver, Hafler or Crown is a good choice. As for high-end preamps, don't miss the truly spectacular Pendulum HZ-10SE ($695), designed specifically for the acoustic guitar.

I listened to a number of fine speaker enclosures, but when I plugged into a Daedalus—again, designed specifically for acoustic stringed instruments—I heard a curtain lift. The C-81 ($695), a two-way ported cabinet with eight- and five-inch drivers, sounds absolutely gorgeous. The larger C-82 ($795) offers twice as many speakers, in stereo, for a louder, richer sound with more depth and spaciousness. Both models include rack spaces for mounting electronics directly into the cabinet, making your system a virtual combo.

The Pendulum/Carver/Daedalus combination is an acoustic player's dream come true, a bounty of warmth and detail. The bottom is tight and well-defined, while the highs retain their brilliance without any solid-state harshness. It doesn't come cheap, but if you're serious about amplifying your acoustic, this is the best, most musical sound available.

DAVID LAWRENCE

Special thanks to New York guitar builder Roger Sadowsky.

• DiMarzio, 1388 Richmond Terrace, Staten Island, NY 10310; (718) 981-9286. • Dean Markley, 3350 Scott Blvd. #45, Santa Clara, CA 95054; (408) 988-2456. • Fishman, 5 Green St., Woburn, MA 01801; (617) 938-8850. • L. R. Baggs, 483 N. Frontage Rd., Nipomo, CA 93444; (805) 929-3545. • Sunrise, 8101 Orion Ave. Unit 19, Van Nuys, CA 91406; (818) 785-3428. • Highlander, 305 Glenwood Ave., Ventura, CA 93003; (805) 658-1819. • Gallien-Krueger, 2240 Paragon Dr., San Jose, CA 95131; (408) 441-7970. • Guild, 2885 S. James Dr., New Berlin, WI 53151; (414) 784-8388. • Trace Acoustic, 1330 Blue Hills Ave. Box 507, Bloomfield, CT 06002; (203) 243-7941. • Seymour Duncan, 601 Pine Ave., Santa Barbara, CA 93117; (805) 964-9610. • Pendulum, Box 339, Gillette, NJ 07993; (908) 665-9333. • Daedalus, 18 Irish Hill Rd., Box 124, Newfield, NY 14867; (607) 564-0000.

ILLUSTRATION: MARK FALLS

ART SGX 2000 EXPRESS GUITAR PROCESSOR

Tubes or transistors? The choice has plagued guitarists since tube combo amps gave way to solid-state models that were cleaner, louder and cheaper. Then the pendulum took another swing and guitarists started plugging into tube amps and preamps. Combining tube technology with digital multi-effects, ART's SGX 2000, released in 1991, was a surprisingly successful attempt to be all things to all players. The SGX 2000 Express ($849) updates the original unit with new effects, more juice to the tubes, and four times the number of on-board presets.

The Express' analog half offers compression, tube and solid-state distortion, high-frequency enhancement, envelope-controlled filtering, gating and EQ. On the digital side, there's reverb, 1300 ms. of delay and one-shot sampling, chorusing, flanging, phasing, dual-interval pitch shifting, panning, tremolo and programmable EQ and levels. A crossover filter on the analog output adds flexibility by passing only high-frequency partials to the digital section, and the mix between the dry signal and digital and analog outputs is programmable. Up to eight parameters can be controlled by MIDI continuous controllers.

The front panel offers knobs for drive (input level to the compressor), five-band EQ, tube contour (pre-tube tone control), pan and master volume. As convenient as these are, they present a dilemma since there's no way to save their settings as part of a preset. The rear panel is a recording engineer's dream come true, providing balanced and unbalanced outputs and two effect loops.

When it comes to tone, the Express is versatile enough to satisfy 95% of the people 95% of the time. The distortion plus multiple EQs, tube contour and programmable mix make for an extraordinarily broad palette. The digital effects are clean and lush, and the 400-plus factory presets cover the gamut from screaming, screeching, echo-overdosed guitar sounds to kick-drum fatteners. No matter what your taste, you'll find a substantial number that are immediately useful. In fact, it may be a long while before you need to do any programming—which, by the way, is remarkably easy for a device this complex.

To pick a few nits: I find the unit a bit limited when it comes to the ordering of the effects and creating parallel signal paths. Also, those using their guitar to drive a synth will miss the ability to mix it into the Express' output. Still, the SGX 2000 Express will make a lot of people happy. It doesn't offer all of the flexibility that serious effects hackers might want, but it provides most of what guitarists want in a quick and easy format.

WARREN SIROTA

• *Applied Research & Technology (ART), 215 Tremont St., Rochester, NY 14608; (716) 436-2720.*

MARTIN BACKPACKER GUITAR

If you're going through an obsessive guitar-playing phase, the prospect of a business trip feels like doom. To bring your axe along you need a hard case, which takes up so much space that it needs to be checked as baggage at the airport. Then you spend the flight in terror that it'll end up broken or stolen. If you travel by car, putting your guitar in the trunk poses similar problems. So does the stress of traveling with a guitar outweigh the stress of not playing?

Martin renders this dilemma obsolete with the Backpacker ($210), an acoustic that fits easily where other guitars can't. I don't recommend it for backpacking (get a harmonica), but I did take it on a recent trip. It fit easily in the airplane's overhead bin, and it was better than beer for cooling out in the hotel room after a stressful day.

Made of mahogany with a spruce top and "selected hardwood" (usually rosewood) for the fingerboard and bridge, the Backpacker weighs just over two pounds plus a one-pound padded gig bag. Its 33-inch body slopes out from the neck (standard Martin width of 1 11/16") to a maximum width of 7 1/4" at the base. At 24", the scale is nearly standard, so you get a real guitar neck with 15 normally spaced frets.

The action is slightly high, and the Backpacker's odd shape requires a strap and takes some experimentation to brace properly. Its tone falls between a banjo, a dulcimer and a guitar, although the electric model (equipped with a Martin Thinline pickup, $335) delivers an inspiring, purely guitar chime through an amp.

Quibbles aside, the Backpacker is simply the best guitar for travel. I've also found it indispensable for playing supine while watching TV at home.

CHARLES M. YOUNG

• *Martin, 510 Sycamore St., P.O. Box 329, Nazareth, PA 18064; (800) 345-3143.*

PHOTOGRAPH (RIGHT): FRED STIMSON

THIS YEAR, SOUNDCHECK–THE TICKETMASTER YAMAHA MUSIC SHOWCASE PRESENTED 150 BANDS IN LIVE PERFORMANCE TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE RECORDING INDUSTRY AT 30 SHOWCASES THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES. AT EACH EVENT, ONE BAND WAS SELECTED TO ADVANCE TO THE NEXT STAGE – THE REGIONAL SHOWCASE.

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SMALL WORLD AFTER ALL

JULIANA HATFIELD
BECOME WHAT YOU ARE
(MAMMOTH)

The second solo album for former Blake Babies bassist/vocalist Juliana Hatfield is the sort of anonymous pop success that the insulated world of indie rock cherishes. It's full of garage band workouts—sweaty bass and drums, unrefined tube amp distorted guitar—with lyrics that plainly state frustrations and exultations, coming at you in Juliana's little-girl-squeak voice. (She's got a bit more of Belinda Carlisle in her than she'd probably like to admit.) In a more mainstream world, these songs would be fleshed out, sweetened; in alternative America, the engaging demo-esque sound will suffice. She's not Jonathan Richman, but she knows all about modern lovers.

"I say that I'm cool/But really I'm not," Hatfield sings at the end of "For the Birds," the album's fourth cut and its first to show off the melodic treasures that overtake the rest of the album. She's fully aware that with her fragile voice, she can't try and trick anyone into thinking she's out to kick ass. So she solicits sympathy. She sings, "I don't wanna care at all/He's got a life without me" in "Little Pieces" and you just have to wonder what the hell was this guy thinking? Leave *her*? Hatfield's excitement is positively infectious in the acoustic guitar–driven "Spin the Bottle," where she waits for the bottle to point at the object of her desire. But "Feelin' Massachusetts" suggests that her romantic judgment may be a bit faulty: "Introduce me to someone really cool/Not another crazy, crazy fool."

The music is very garagey, even

at its grandest—the choogling guitar coda of "President Garfield"—small enough to fit in a box. The songs themselves are offhand-sounding, even-tempoed. Not surprisingly, the album's structure most closely resembles the Lemonheads' *It's a Shame about Ray*, where Juliana guest-vocaled with Evan Dando, who didn't return the favor this time out.

The result is a close-knit atmosphere where humility makes all the difference. There are no grand illusions, no attempts at mystifying the ordinary. Every day: Sun rises, sun sets. Maybe today's the day you fall in love, maybe it isn't. But like an unconscious smile, *Become What You Are* has a way of catching you off-guard and making the world seem like a manageable place after all. —Rob O'Connor

CARLENE CARTER
Little Love Letters
(GIANT)

JOHN ANDERSON
Solid Ground
(BNA)

WELL, IT'S HAPPENED—COUNTRY MUSIC is "popular." And all you have to do is check out the biggest stars to see just how safe it's become. It's enough to make you long for those wacky '70s, when Johnny Paycheck was out there shooting people, Gary Stewart was crawling in a dumpster looking for his drugs and David Allan Coe was busy making demos of cringe-inducing pornographic country songs. Those days are gone, folks, but with *Little Love Letters* and *Solid Ground*, two hardcore survivors of that bygone era manage to break the bland barrier with some of the best music of their careers. Both are "follow-ups" to successful records that brought those careers back from the dead. And in both cases, the artists have opted not to mess with the formula, and depend heavily on the team that brung 'em back.

Carlene Carter's producer (and Tom Petty's bassist) Howie Epstein once again applies his pure-pop-for-new-traditionalists approach to Carter's songs, proving that too much overdubbing can be a good thing. On tracks like "World of Miracles" and "Sweet Meant to Be," Epstein floats Carter's pure country voice over a zillion shimmering musical layers. The result is a heavenly—and, miraculously, never muddy—mix of hillbilly and high tech. On the album's centerpiece, the gorgeous "Unbreakable Heart," the producer wisely chooses a bare-bones backing, letting Carter's frail warble, and the song itself, do the work.

Anderson's comeback also got a boost from the rock world when Mark Knopfler wrote a song for his last album; here producer James Stroud frames the singer's left-of-Lefty Frizzell vocals for '90s radio. Quirky but commercial songs like "Money in the Bank" and "Nashville Tears" show that Anderson still knows how to pick 'em, and his songwriting chops are as sharp as ever on songs like "All Things to All Things" and "Solid Ground."

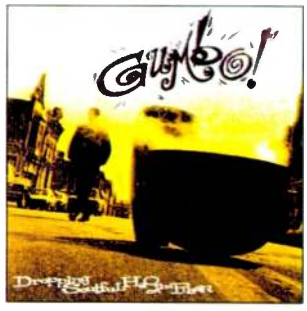
Over the years, Anderson and Carter have done a lot of kicking at their major-label stalls, and God bless 'em for it. It's that stick-to-their-guns stubborn streak that will keep them out of the rubber rooms of Branson, while contributing some much-needed musical depth to the mainstream. —Peter Cronin

GONZALO RUBALCABA
4 Y 20 Suite
(BLUE NOTE)

THE JAZZ-CRIT CONSENSUS ON CUBAN expatriate Gonzalo Rubalcaba, now four albums into a career as a jazz pianist, goes like this: *He's a hot-blooded Oscar Peterson–style player who disregards subtleties in favor of the flash preferred by compatriots Arturo Sandoval and Paquito d'Rivera.* Rubalcaba, who retains Cuban citizenship but resides in the Dominican Republic, hasn't countered well. Though his projects contain contemplative moments, his whole-keyboard runs and massive chordal seizures do most of the talking. And they tell a familiar story—about an artist content to flaunt the fire that is by now a stereotype and to uphold the rigid, unimaginative formulas of what's called "Latin Jazz" rather than explore.

The 30-year-old pianist has been plenty busy establishing jazz credentials (playing a whiplash-tempo "Giant Steps" with Charlie Haden and Jack DeJohnette, for example), but portions of the tender *4 Y 20 Suite* find him asserting his Cubanness. Finally. Celebrating the swing of the clave rhythm and introducing elements of mambo into otherwise linear solos, this subtle work suggests it's too early to pigeonhole Rubalcaba. With furtive, pawing lines, he takes material familiar to any Miami lounge band ("Perfidia," the Beatles' "Here, There and Everywhere") and finds ways to wring fresh tears from it, as though playing for a room of exiles longing for any hint of the old country. His own ballads (for piano trio and sometimes an added trumpet) reflect the tension and release of the sentimental bolero even as they stray miles from conventional notions of melody. Stately and proud and remarkably fluid, they're imbued with a surging pulse and a restless sense of invention.

This thirst for something new is responsible for the most interesting music on *4 Y 20*, which is marred by a few wandering compositions and the by now predictable sweeping runs. Rubalcaba still overplays in spurts, though the fiery results often justify the excess: On the gentle bossa "Comienzo," his solo ends in an eruption of salsa-style montuno—crisp chordal clomps that echo, and advance upon, Eddie Palmieri's classic dragon-slaying outbursts. But Rubalcaba doesn't want to be a salsa pianist; he's using his heritage to create a defiantly individual hybrid that's still under construction, a music that reflects both the ruminative spirit of Bill Evans and the percussive charge of Los Van Van. It's a road that hasn't been negotiated successfully before, but parts of *4 Y 20* indicate Rubalcaba's got the poise and the passion to make the journey interesting. At least. —Tom Moon



GUMBO
Droppin' Soulful H_2O on the Fiber
(CHRYSALIS)

IF ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT'S *UNPLUGGED* made you suspect Speech was running out

of ideas already, here's proof to the contrary. Ostensibly the work of Gumbo, an engaging Milwaukee trio fronted by exuberant teenage rapper Fulani Faluke, *Droppin' Soulful H_2O on the Fiber* offers more of the homespun grooves and Afrocentric sensibility that graced AD's monumental debut. Speech has left his fingerprints everywhere: producing, writing most of the material and even playing DJ, which makes it his record, too.

Emboldened by success, Speech seizes the occasion to intensify the debate over the identity of hip-hop and, by extension, the future of the black community. Themes such as self-respect, spiritual liberation and regard for women dominate the discourse; occasionally, *Droppin' Soulful H_2O* suggests a sermon punctuated by beats, not actual music. However, these righteous vibes don't equal sweetness and light. Contentiousness abounds, from a testy diatribe on diet in the raucous "Basement Music" to the inspired "Soldier Boy," a call for young African-Americans to tend their own back yard rather than heed the army recruiter. "The Boat," a crackling jam equating the oppression of slavery days with modern ills, has an exhilarating kick, but "Do You?," a sarcastic lecture from Mr. Speech himself, just seems cranky.

Despite the hefty agenda, *Droppin' Soulful H_2O* goes easy on the ears, tempering the potentially harsh aftertaste of zealotry with genuinely friendly noises. Buoyed by funked-up pop melodies, Fulani Faluke radiates energy and charm, whether damping racist fears ("No Need 2 Run Anymore") or playing the tender lover ("I Know You're a Virgin"). Connoisseurs of cool will dig the light-headed title track, which could be a transmission from deep space, and "The Jungle," featuring a sample from the Jungle Brothers, a prime AD inspiration. All in all, Speech's master plan for world domination is off to a good start.

—Jon Young

BILLY IDOL

Cyberpunk
(EMI)

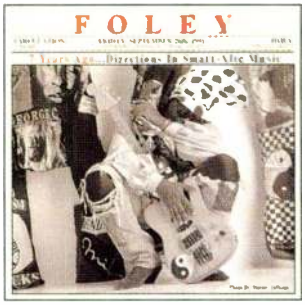
ALL THOSE GREAT PUNK SURNAMES that celebrated ugliness—Vicious, Rotten, Scabies—now seem quaintly dated, while Billy Idol's nominal nod to self-hype has lasted him right into the '90s. Of course, Billy has endured this long primarily because he's always been more of a friendly, eager-to-please, Saturday morning cartoon punk than a stinky, gobbing anarchist. He made his millions as a major face on early MTV, and has seemed satisfied in recent years as a lord-about-town in L.A. But he must know his riff 'n' sneer formula went flat on albums like *Whiplash Smile* and *Charmed Life*, because this time around, he's tried to shake things up by running his spiky head through a computer-driven home studio.

Inspired by William Gibson's futuristic novels, and fascinated by the electronic "bone stimulator" he wore while recovering from his 1989 motorcycle accident, Billy has embraced the high-tech world of computer recording as a way of returning the DIY edge to his work. On *Cyberpunk*, first-time producer Robin Hancock pushes the mouse around, while guitarist Mark Younger-Smith and Living Colour bassist Doug Wimbish add some live heat to the hard drive. In between menacing samples, Idol croons and hollers, pouts and shouts against a thick backdrop of digital bleeps and burps.

The result is a sometimes heady, sometimes dopey collection of Idol-ized techno-grooves, ranging from the whitened hip-hop of "Tomorrow People" to the apocalyptic booty-shake of "Neuromancer" and the New Age lull of "Adam in Chains." The raging "Shock to the System" is supposedly a take on the L.A. riots, although Billy's commentary is limited to repeating the title phrase and growling, "Feels good, well all right." Low point: the techno-disco reworking of "Heroin." It might have been a good idea for Gloria Gaynor, or SCTV's Eugene Levy, but here it's a painful misfire.

Cyberpunk is both intense and ridiculous, depending on your level of Billy-tolerance. For real rage and insight, you're better off watching C-Span and listening to old Clash records, but if you think of Billy Idol simply as a vaudevillian punk-trouper with an incurable lip-curl, this lurch into the future definitely has entertainment value.

—Chuck Crisafulli



FOLEY

7 Years Ago... Directions in Smart-Alec Music
(MOJAZZ)

FISHBONE

Give a Monkey a Brain and He'll Swear He's the Center of the Universe
(COLUMBIA)

MUSIC HAS THE POWER TO TURN COMplaint into pleasurable sound, a feat amply demonstrated by these two examples of African-American *nouvelle* [*cont'd on page 94*]

NEW RELEASES

august

ROCK

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

VAN MORRISON
Too Long in Exile
(POLYDOR)

FOR THOSE WHO feel his last few albums have taken him too far into the mystic, the straight-up jazz and blues performances served here may seem like a return from exile. But the only real difference is song selection and a couple of John Lee Hooker cameos; otherwise, Van and band deliver the same spirited and soulful sound he always has, from the bitter, bluesy "Bigtime Operators" to a surprisingly adroit "Moody's Mood for Love." And though much will be made of Hooker's contributions to "Gloria," the gritty, conversational "Wasted Years" is by far the better duet.

CLANNAD
Banba
(ATLANTIC)

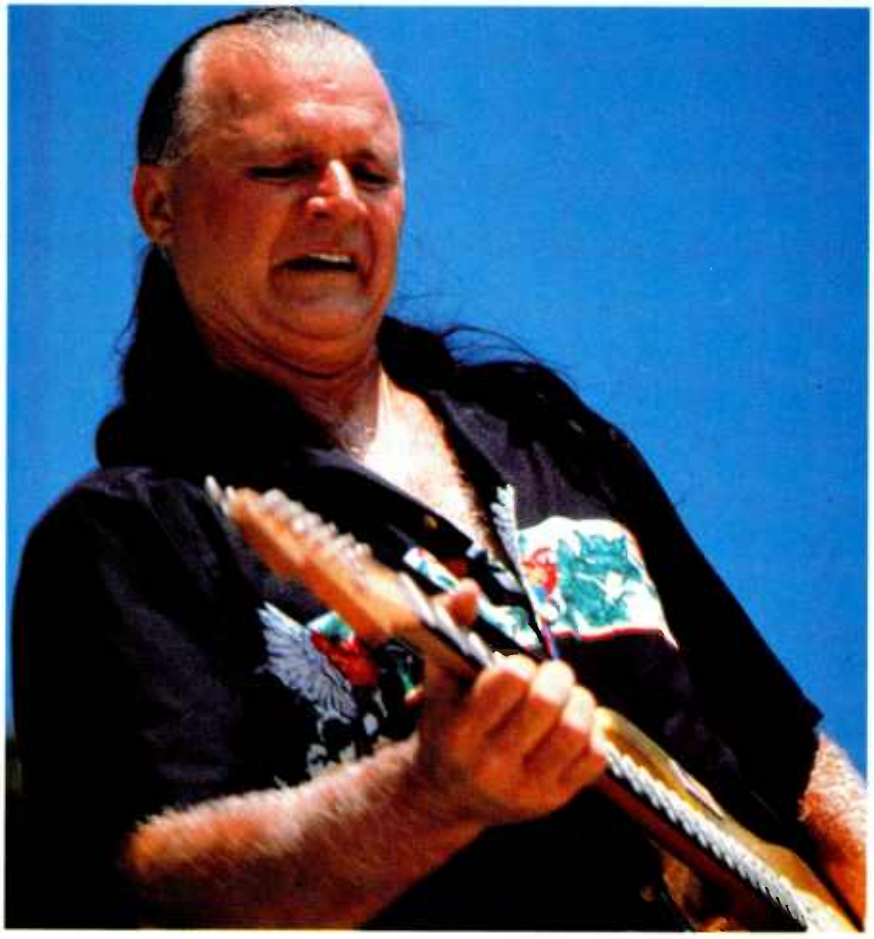
NO, *BANBA* IS not Gaelic for *fahrvergnügen*, but given what Clannad has gained from the use of "Harry's Game" in that VW ad, who could blame them if it was? The songs here play off the same soft-focus harmonies and stately Celtic airs as their best-known work, while Clannad continues to expand its sound, clearing space for jazzy extrapolations in "Banba Oir," hearkening back to folk roots with "Caide Sin Do N Te Sin," and uncorking some wonderfully catchy choruses for "The Other Side" and the stately "Struggle." Talk about a drive to succeed...

STEVE MILLER
Wide River
(POLYDOR)

SHALLOW SONGS.

TIM FINN
Before & After
(CAPITOL)

IF ALL YOU want from Tim Finn is exquisitely crafted guitar pop, full of effortlessly arching melodies and wondrous minor-key modalities, you won't be disappointed by this one. Between the heartbreak chorus of "Always Never Now" and the lilting waltz cadence behind "Many's the Time," these songs are as catchy as any he's written. But if that's all you *expect*, you're in for a surprise. Because in addition to the usual repertoire of strum-and-thump arrangements, Finn manages to slip enough rhythm into the mix to lend a smooth funk sheen to "Protected," and a raffish, reggae edge to "Strangeness and Charm."



DICK DALE, TRIBAL THUNDER (HIGHTONE)

THOUGH DALE STILL relies on the combination of tricky-picking and heavy reverb that launched the surf-guitar era, he has a wealth of new applications, from the psychedelic habañera of "Esperanza" to the untitled Afro-flamenco number that closes the album. And if you think he's lost any of his old flare, cue up "Shredded Heat" and stand back as the waves of sound wash over you.

BELL BIV DEVOE
Hootie Mack
(MCA)

SINCE IT WAS street savvy that made BBD's debut a smash, it makes sense that this new one would be obsessed with keeping current. But in their rush to find the phattest, freshest grooves around, the BBD crew forgot that it wasn't beats that made *Poison* a killer, but the way those beats begat songs. Here, all the beats beget is sex talk, and apart from the nicely harmonized chorus to "Something in Your Eyes," there isn't a memorable melody to be found.

CYNDI LAUPER
Hat Full of Stars
(EPIC)

FORGET THE DESPERATE attempts at hip; what really sinks this is its total lack of personality or charm. True, her mock-bluesy moan on "Broken Glass" has probably put white soul back half a century. But that's less a problem than her perfunctory

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MUS

reading of "Sally's Pigeons," because it's the sort of nostalgic ballad that Lauper made her name on. And that, not contrived dance pop, is what she needs to restake her claim to the charts.

BAABA MAAL
Lam Toro
(MANGO)

LIKE FELLOW SENEGALESE crossover Youssou N'Dour, Baaba Maal is blessed with a lithe voice, an infallible melodic instinct and wide-ranging tastes. But unlike N'Dour, he's found an easier way of bridging the gap between African and Western pop: reggae. So even though much of *Lam Toro* sticks with home-grown sounds, the more adventurous tracks flesh out the traditional with club beats ("Olel"), dub bass ("Ndelorel") and dancehall rhythms ("Hamaday Bioro") without diluting the music's indigenous charm.

THE BATS
Silverbeet
(MAMMOTH)

BETWEEN THEIR GARAGEY guitars and understated vocals, the Bats suggest a cross between early Buzzcocks and later Go-Betweens—a sound that's too unvarnished to pass for pop, but too tuneful to be anything else. At its best—"Courage" or the swirling "Alight from the Rear"—it's as infectious as it is unassuming.

DAVID CROSBY
Thousand Roads
(ATLANTIC)

...LEADING NOWHERE.

JAZZ

BY JIM MACNIE

BRANFORD MARSALIS
Bloomington
(COLUMBIA)

FORMALLY, IT'S THE "soundtrack" to a D.A. Pennebaker profile of Marsalis; informally, this trio gig is a casual/daring historical artifact that buries last year's conceptual/dumb blues record. You can hear the leader discovering ways to make swing sound fresh. Monk's "Friday the 13th" is a more demanding training ground than any of Branford's originals, and as the group tinkers with melody, their authority is amplified. Bad luck doesn't affect this "Friday"—like much of *Bloomington*, it's got plenty of elbow room and zing.

NED ROTHENBERG
The Crux
(LED)

THE TECHNICAL MASTERY—oh, hell, let's just call it brilliance—of myriad reeds has shaped Rothenberg's solo aesthetic for a decade now. These unaccompanied pieces aren't only about serendipitous expression; they show off the saxist's absolute authority over his horn—multiphonic intricacy, textural and tonal breadth—while maintaining a totally musical demeanor. It's emotional stuff that sounds weirdly scientific. Twenty years after Braxton's *For Alto*, Rothenberg continues to do the genre proud.

JAZZ FUTURES
Live in Concert
(RCA/NOVUS)

THE YOUTH BRIGADE, each with careers on-line, still play like they have something to prove on this snappy, straight-ahead blowing date from '91. The news comes from guitarist Mark Whitfield, who upends the creamsicle demeanor of his solo records with a few piercingly exclamatory passages. But everyone has a turn cutting loose. A Roy Hargrove/Marlon Jordan trumpet battle gives way to an inspired squawk-off from saxists Antonio Hart and Tim Warfield on a piece called "The Public Eye." These young adepts are responding to scrutiny with natural and individualistic flash.

SIMON NABOTOV
Tough Customer
(ENJA)

TRAVIS SHOOK
Travis Shook
(COLUMBIA)

TWO PIANISTS LEADING trios who could stand to rub off on each other. The middle-aged Russian comes up with a slew of unorthodox phrases, coercing them into tunes that are sometimes in, sometimes out. As Nabotov flips through multiple tempo changes, his drive (along with that of Mark Helias and Tom Rainey) intermittently vanishes. It's the opposite problem for young Shook, whose facile antics could stand some meat and/or abstraction. He's got plenty of oomph, but too smitten with credentials to challenge his team mates (Tony Williams and Ira Coleman). It's just riding and riding, tripping through the changes without a destination in mind. Someone set up a conference call.

DON BYRON
Plays the Music of Mickey Katz
(ELEKTRA/NONESUCH)

HOKUM ALWAYS GOES farther when it's in the service of virtuosity, and as the hippest clarinetist to come down the pike in ages addresses the music of the hot-shit klezmer bandleader, high brow and low brow snuggle tight. The conception of this tribute depicts Byron's well-informed, wily nature. It puts fun up front, but it wouldn't exist if it weren't for the formidable musical opportunities that Katz's klez offers. Compact orchestrations retain the drama and accentuate the frolic, and the shtick is nudged into a spot where the essence of entertainment befriends both adventure and brilliance. C'est si bon, baby.

KEITH JARRETT
Bye Bye Blackbird
(ECM)

IF THE PIANIST'S lyricism is what leads him into meander land on his rapturous solo dates, it's also what plenty of his listeners sign on for. With a trio, this melodiousness has a righteous context: swing. Poise is the common link among the participants on this kinda/sorta Miles eulogy; Jack DeJohnette and Gary Peacock can match Jarrett nuance for nuance. They push, too: Oliver Nelson's "Butch and Butch" has some rumbling drive, and "I Thought about You" blends suspense with sentimentality. You expect a Jarrett record to be gorgeous. This one's robust as well.

TOM CHAPIN TRIO
PLUS BRASS
Insomnia
(FACTORY WORKS)

THIS ALTO PLAYER has always had brass, but now he has the horn ensemble to back it up. Their collective boisterousness finds a slew of ways to shift the focus away from the leader's fierce but finite sax prowess. If you miss the Art Ensemble's "Old Jed," and Air's "Great Body of the Riddle," then these are the settings for you.

LISA SOKOLOV
Angel Rodeo
(LAUGHING HORSE)

THE VOCALIST'S LILTING post-folk/out-jazz gets overly arch in spots, which multiplies the melodrama. But when her singing is on, her voice spirals through the lyrics, effecting a confluence of Meredith Monk and Betty Carter. On paper, the Peter Pan move seems contrived—"I'm Flying," indeed. But the gypsy strains and constant caprice give her glide plenty of slide.

REISSUES

DOLLY PARTON
The RCA Years 1967–1986
(RCA)

I'M NOT SURE what's more perverse, the current practice of cramming pop CDs with 70 minutes' worth of noise just because the space is there...or this CD twofer retrospective, which could easily accommodate twice as many quality tracks as the 30 here meted out to two decades' worth of song by—to quote the liner notes—"the most famous, most universally beloved and most widely respected woman who has ever emerged from country music." If you think that's hype, this package will at least set you straight, for Parton's greatness has less to do with her pleasing Appalachian trill or her charisma than with the trove of honest, well-crafted, achingly personal songs she wrote and rode to stardom in the '70s. From "Coat of Many Colors" to "Just Because I'm a Woman" to "My Blue Tears" she revamped the rules for women in country music, and created more than a few classics in the process. That she's preferred to spend the last decade warbling assembly-line pap makes the gold here shine even brighter.—*Mark Rowland*

ROBERT JR. LOCKWOOD
Plays Robert and Robert
(EVIDENCE)

THE ROBERTS REFERRED to here are Lockwood and his stepfather, blues legend Robert Johnson. That fact alone should set this tribute apart from other Johnson homages, and Lockwood's walking basslines and beautiful slidework have a stylistic purity that came straight from the master. Originally released in France about 10 years back, highlights of this solo/acoustic set include "Take a Little Walk with Me" and "Little Boy Blue"—reputedly Johnson titles never recorded by their author—and a bonus cover of "Sweet Home Chicago." One of the smartest reissues this year.—*Thomas Anderson*

BONO

[*cont'd from page 36*] out of the Garden of Eden. I'm not so sure. I think we kicked God out of it. And what I don't see is evidence of God in man. There is enough food, for example, but we just won't share it. We always see this planet as belonging to God—I think it belongs to us. We probably stole it from God. But you can try and give bits of it back in any way you can.

"People ask me, 'Are you exorcising or exercising your demons through your music?' I can only say that I hope I'm exorcising my demons. That's what I'm banking on. Maybe the word 'demon' isn't the best choice though. It's more a matter of tapping into your own darkness. And maybe that has to be a part of creating any form of substantial art. That certainly is something I've come to believe.

"Van Morrison's philosophy is 'more light, less darkness.' On the other hand, maybe sometimes you must use darkness to show up the light. And that is something I believe to be true. But this is a problem I have with many religious people today. They refuse to stare into the face of the world they're living in. And they refuse to describe it in anything other than the most bland way. They're not attempting to understand the darkness in the world, or to get into it and describe it from the inside so people can really get a sense of what you're talking about. But, more and more, I realize that *everything* tells us who, and what, we are.

"That, too, is why we drew on so much in the ZOO TV tour, from pornography to images of the Gulf War. *That's* our way of describing the world."

There have been rumors that Bono is now so interested in exploring darkness that he has

begun to examine Satanism. Is that true?

Laughing loudly, Bono leans forward in his chair and says, "Can I say yes, please? Can you imagine the stories that would spin out of that? That would be something else."

He pauses and shakes his head in disbelief before answering more seriously. "You are attracted to the darkness—attracted in some strange way to the things you are afraid of. But I never really had that shit of denying the darkness in your nature as a child. I was just given a few clues and directives and told to get out there and find the answers for myself. But what's really important is that I wasn't spiritually abused. And just as you can be mentally and physically abused as a child, you can be spiritually abused. I wasn't.

"I don't buy that Robert Johnson selling his soul to the devil for the blues idea. I know your original question about Satanism is very real for some people and it's going on. And I know that in the vacuum created by the church, people look into expressions of other kinds. But I see explorations of darkness to that degree as very dodgy. And the truth is that I've too much respect for the devil to fuck with him.

"There was a song on *The Joshua Tree* called 'Exit' and I just want to take a bath after we do that. I just want to wash it off my skin. I broke my shoulder and did unearth a lot of shit—from within myself—doing the song on stage. It also was a song somebody used in a murder. It came out later that the guy claimed the song had made him do it. *That's* what I mean about not wanting to fuck with the devil."

Does Bono feel in any way responsible for the fact that a work of U2's ended up allegedly making someone commit a murder?

"Not at all. That sounded to me like a good lawyer at work for his client. But I still feel that you have to go down those streets in your music. If that's where the subject is taking you, you have to follow. At least in the imagination. I'm not sure I want to get down there to live. I'll take a walk occasionally, and have a drink with the devil, but I'm not moving in with him."

BRUTON

[*cont'd from page 80*] call," Bruton says. "They played it over the phone, and it's two of my very favorite artists doing my song. I looked out into the control room and said, 'Somebody take my picture, I'm having a good day here.'"

On the heels of his production success with fellow Texan Jimmie Dale Gilmore's *After Awhile* album, Bruton has been spending more and more of his time in his favorite local studio, producing Alejandro Escovedo's critically acclaimed *Gravity* LP, as well as the recent debut of Austin rockers Loose Diamonds. As we drive out of town, Bruton points out an unassuming little Austin store front. "There it is," he says with mock drama, "the *Hit Shack*!" What the modest studio lacks in big gear, the producer more than compensates for with a "big ears" musical philosophy. Both of these rootsy, off-kilter records pack a bigger-than-their-budgets sonic wallop.

Bruton is aware that the same wide-angle view that makes him so well-suited to the producer/sideman role may be what relegates his hard-to-pigeonhole solo debut to indie-label status. "There used to be a thing called scope," he says. "You spend years and years working on your craft, and they say you're too eclectic." But the guitarist shrugs it off, saying how much he "loves playing behind people," and maintaining a very Austin-like attitude about the whole business. As we finally pull up to the Hilltop Cafe in Middle-of-Nowhere, Texas, the conversation comes back around to why he started playing music in the first place. "It's all about having fun," Bruton says, "and making somebody shake their ass with total abandon."

WHAT IT IS

STEPHEN BRUTON's main guitars are Paul Reed Smiths and Fenders (Strats and Teles), and he's got a few of each. On the acoustic side, he owns several prized '40s-era Martins, each of which he used on *It Is What It Is*. He strings them all with D'Addarios, or with "half-price" sets he picks up at Austin's Heart of Texas Music. Bruton calls his black-faced Fender Vibrolux "the best amp they ever made," but onstage things get more heavy-duty. He swears by his Marshall 100-watt Super Bass head, especially in tandem with any of his PRS guitars. He's also fond of his customized Rivera 100-watt amp. On Raitt's tour, Bruton played through a Bob Bradshaw preamp powered by a VHT 2150. His rack, which contains a t.c. 1250 chorus, Roland DEP6, CAD stereo compressor and a Lexicon PCM70, was controlled by a big ol' Bradshaw stomp box.

RECORDINGS

[*cont'd from page 89*] eclecticism; the confluence of funk, rock and more exotic tastes makes the bitter pill of the cumulative message of these two discs easily swallowable. And it's a message which maintains its potency even at a time when anger has begun to sound rote and frustrated outrage can't help but shade into self-pity and paranoia.

Foley was the bassist and musical director for Miles Davis for seven years and the chops-driven funk fusion of late-Miles is an important part of the thing here, along with a well-digested George Clinton influence (Clinton appears on a few cuts). Foley does his version of art rap, heavy on the voice distortion, and likes to trick up his mix with the soon-to-be-forgotten sound of scratchy vinyl. He segues and layers his songs with documentarian touches—phone conversations, public voices proclaiming, confessional soliloquies—and has mastered that beguiling post-Funkadelic combination of light, even delicate, textures and lines over a hard groove. His two Miles tributes, "September 28th, 1991" and "Little Davis," come dangerously close to fuzak but are saved by bent harmonies and Foley's most original touch—his bass, pitched high and with sustain, is indistinguishable from a lead guitar. *Au courant* to the max, he addresses a laundry list of hot topics on cuts like "If It's Positive" (AIDS), "Date Rape (Remix)," "40 Solos and a Mule" and "Better Not Die (N Amerika Being Black)." With the Clinton pedigree and the guesting of Arrested Development's Speech, Foley's papers are in order—and if the grooves sometimes sound unfocused, at least he errs on the side of ambition. Which is to say: Check it out.

Fishbone makes a big mess too, again. *Monkey* doesn't have the frantic sloppiness of their last album, which brought the full hairiness of their stage presentation into the studio, but it's still cranked. The 'bone dialectic breaks down into two different responses to the same unjust world. First there's the salvation-through-uplift approach represented by the group's guitarist/philosopher Kendall Jones on such songs as "Servitude" and "Unyielding Conditions." Then there's the more goofy/profane take, usually supplied by the group's bassist Norwood Fisher and lead singer Angelo Moore, on cuts like "Drunk Skitzo" and "Warmth of Your Breath" ("May your dog's colon be familiar/With the warmth of your breath" goes the refrain). Large helpings of what one can't help but think of as College Metal are spelled by Clinton-esque funk and slow-drag ska.

The group's former good humor seems to have curdled somewhat in the heat of their new intensity—a sign of the times. Seesawing between Jones' impressive naivete (how does he keep the faith?) and Norwood and Moore's crypto-humanist class clowns, Fishbone offers energized righteousness and didactic doo-doo jokes side-by-side as a creative shield against despair. Which is to say: You may need it. **—Richard C. Walls**

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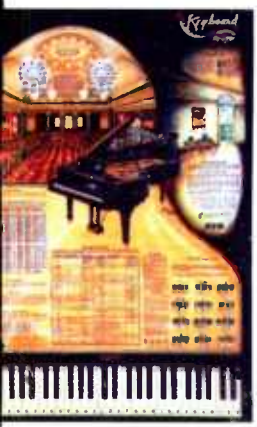

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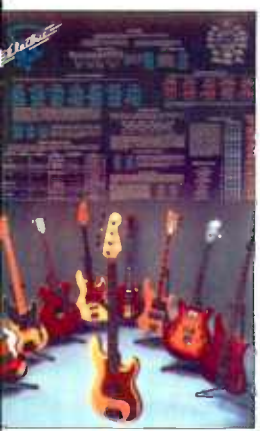

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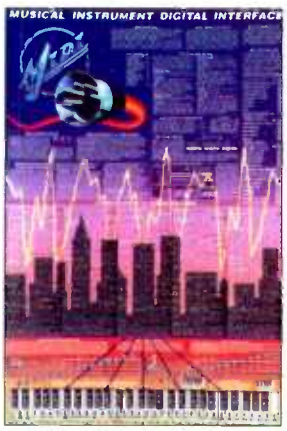

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AD INDEX

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THE 100 GREATEST GUITARISTS: THE READERS' VERSION

In our February issue the editors of *Musician* listed our selection of the 100 greatest guitarists of the 20th century, and invited readers to send in their choices for guitar greats omitted from our list. The response was fast and voluminous. It took us a month to dig out our letters page editor, and several more months before the flood ebbed down to a manageable trickle from which we fished the following list.

Our faces are red on a few counts. Why was top readers' choice Robert Fripp not on the original list? Probably because Fripp was a long-time *Musician* contributing editor; we were worried about showing favoritism so we overcompensated. It also seems likely that Robert Johnson's omission was a flat-out mistake—apparently Johnson's name was accidentally dropped during the switch from one ballot to the next. Since making that goof we've had stones in our passway and hellhounds on our trail.

36 VOTES
Robert Fripp

30 VOTES
David Gilmour

29 VOTES
Les Paul

28 VOTES
Steve Howe

23 VOTES
Brian May

22 VOTES
Adrian Belew

16 VOTES
Roy Buchanan
Danny Gatton
Robert Johnson

14 VOTES
Dickey Betts

13 VOTES
Larry Carlton
Johnny Winter

11 VOTES
Mick Taylor

10 VOTES
Ritchie Blackmore

9 VOTES
Mike Bloomfield

8 VOTES
Billy Gibbons
Lonnie Mack

6 VOTES
Lindsey Buckingham
Bonnie Raitt
Hubert Sumlin
Andy Summers
Joe Walsh

1–5 VOTES
Stuart Adamson
Jan Akkerman
Laurindo Almeida
Pete Anderson
Joan Armatrading
Randy Baelman
Derek Bailey
Micah Ball
Martin Barre
Paul Barrere
Jennifer Batten
Charlie Baty
Jeff Baxter
Elvin Bishop
Bob Bogle
Tommy Bolin
D. Boon
Paul Brady
Julian Bream
Lenny Breau
David Bromberg
Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown
Peter Buck
Kenny Burrell
Chris Cain
Toy Caldwell
J.J. Cale
Randy California
Glen Campbell
Al Casey
Eugene Chadbourne
John Cipollina
Roy Clark
Bruce Cockburn
Jimmy Colvard
Robert Cray
Marshall Crenshaw
Dave Davies
Rick Derringer
Jerry Donahue
Jerry Douglas
Bob Dylan
Elliot Easton
Dave Edmunds
Nokie Edwards
Jesse Ed Davis
Herb Ellis
Tinsley Ellis
Everly Brothers
Marianne Faithfull
Tal Farlow
Tim Farriss
Don Felder
Ray Flacke
Lester Flatt
John Fogerty
Peter Frampton
Ace Frehley
Glenn Frey
John Frusciante
Anson Funderburgh
Eric Gales
Rory Gallagher
Cliff Gallup
Frank Gambale
Amos Garrett
Lowell George
Paul Gilbert
Andy Gill
Egberto Gismonti
Davey Graham
Peter Green
Ted Greene
Woody Guthrie
Steve Hackett
Kirk Hammett
John Hammond
Mike Hampton
Richie Havens
Eddie Hazel
Justin Hayward
Jeff Healey
Richard Hell
James Hetfield
David Hidalgo
Steve Hillage
Buddy Holly
Earl Hooker
Lightnin' Hopkins
Son House
Ernie Isley
Skip James
Bert Jansch
Blind Willie Johnson
Brian Jones
Steve Jones
Henry Kaiser
Terry Kath
Phil Keaggy
Freddie King
Danny Kirwan
Dr. Know
Karl Kress
Robby Krieger
Sonny Landreth
Eddie Lang
Bruce Langhorn
Leadbelly
Alvin Lee
Adrian Legg
Alex Lifeson
David Lindley
Arto Lindsay
Steve Lukather
George Lynch
Ellen MacIlwaine
Magic Sam
Phil Manzanera
Joe Maphis
Johnny Marr
Hank B. Marvin
J Mascis
Fred McDowell
Roger McGuinn
Steve Miller
Joni Mitchell
Ronnie Montrose
Gary Moore
Thurston Moore
Tony Mottola
Bob Mould
David Navarro
Bill Nelson
Ron Nichols
Ted Nugent
Christopher Parkening
Carl Perkins
Luther Perkins
Joe Perry
Glenn Phillips
Richard Pinhas
Andy Powell
Baden Powell
Prince
Riley Puckett
Robert Quine
Trevor Rabin
Lee Ranaldo
Alvino Ray
Jerry Reed
Jimmy Reed
Lou Reed
John Renbourn
Suzanne Rhatigan
Marc Ribot
Tony Rice
Don Rich
Howard Roberts
Nile Rodgers
Jimmie Rodgers
Dexter Romweber
Mick Ronson
Michael Schenker
Tom Scholz
Neal Schon
Bola Sete
Brian Setzer
Jimmy Simmonds
Kim Simmons
Slash
Hillel Slovak
Roy Smeck
G.E. Smith
Chris Spedding
Bruce Springsteen
Leni Stern
Mike Stern
Steve Stevens
Steve Stills
Matthew Sweet
Gabor Szabo
Hound Dog Taylor
George Thorogood
Johnny Thunders
Steve Tibbetts
Glenn Tilbrook
Tiny Tim
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Ralph Towner
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