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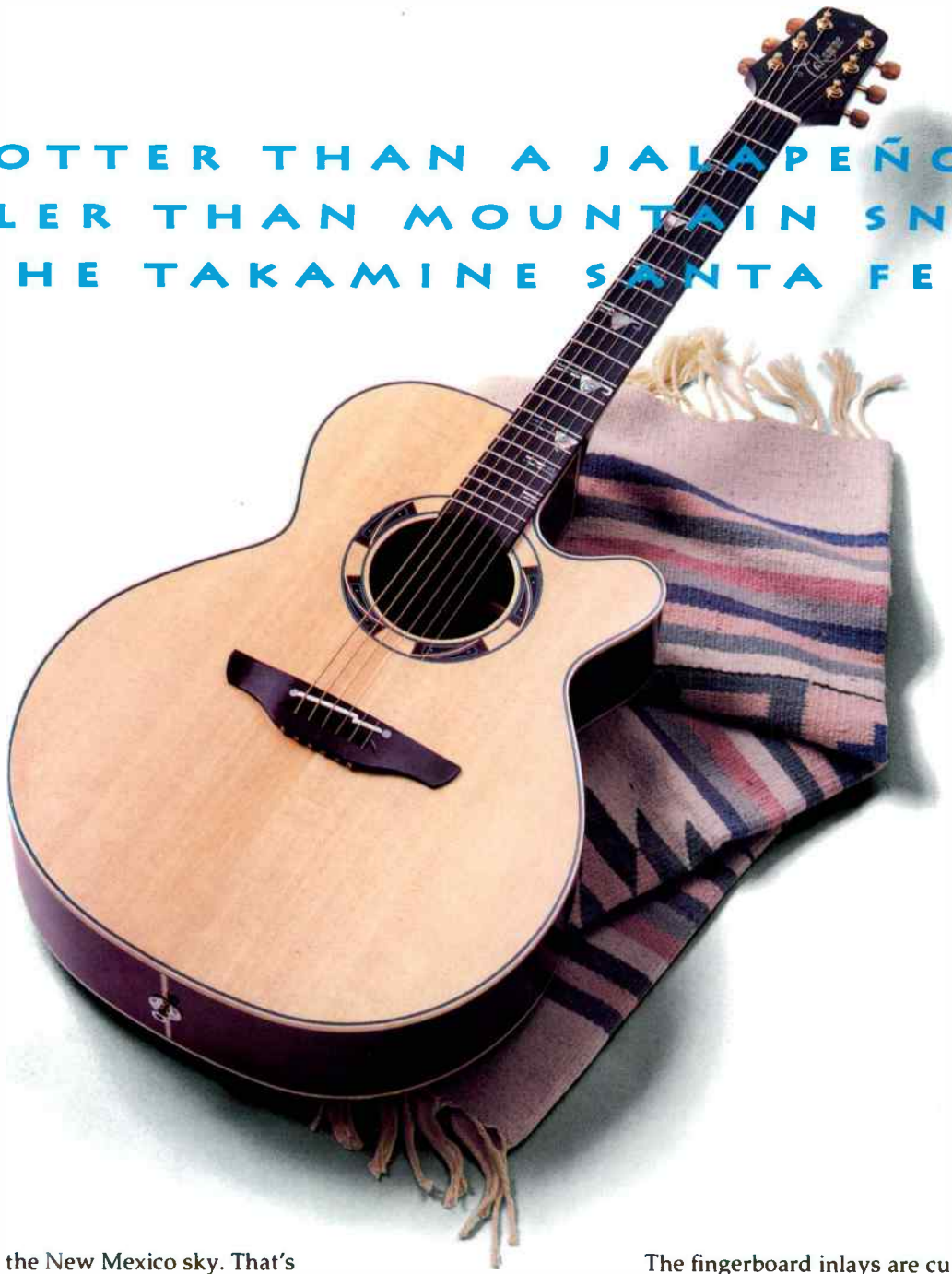

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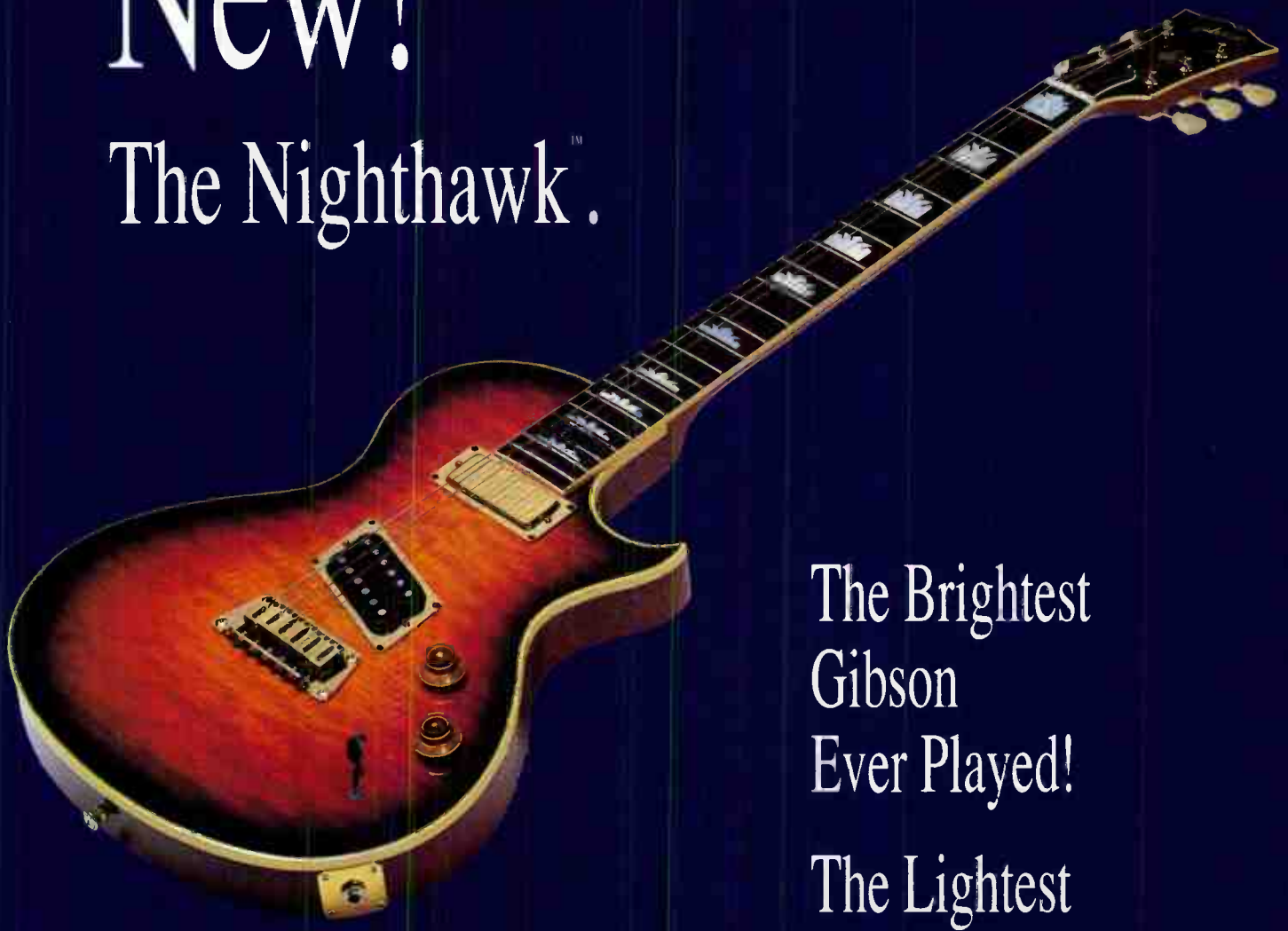

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ROUGH MIX

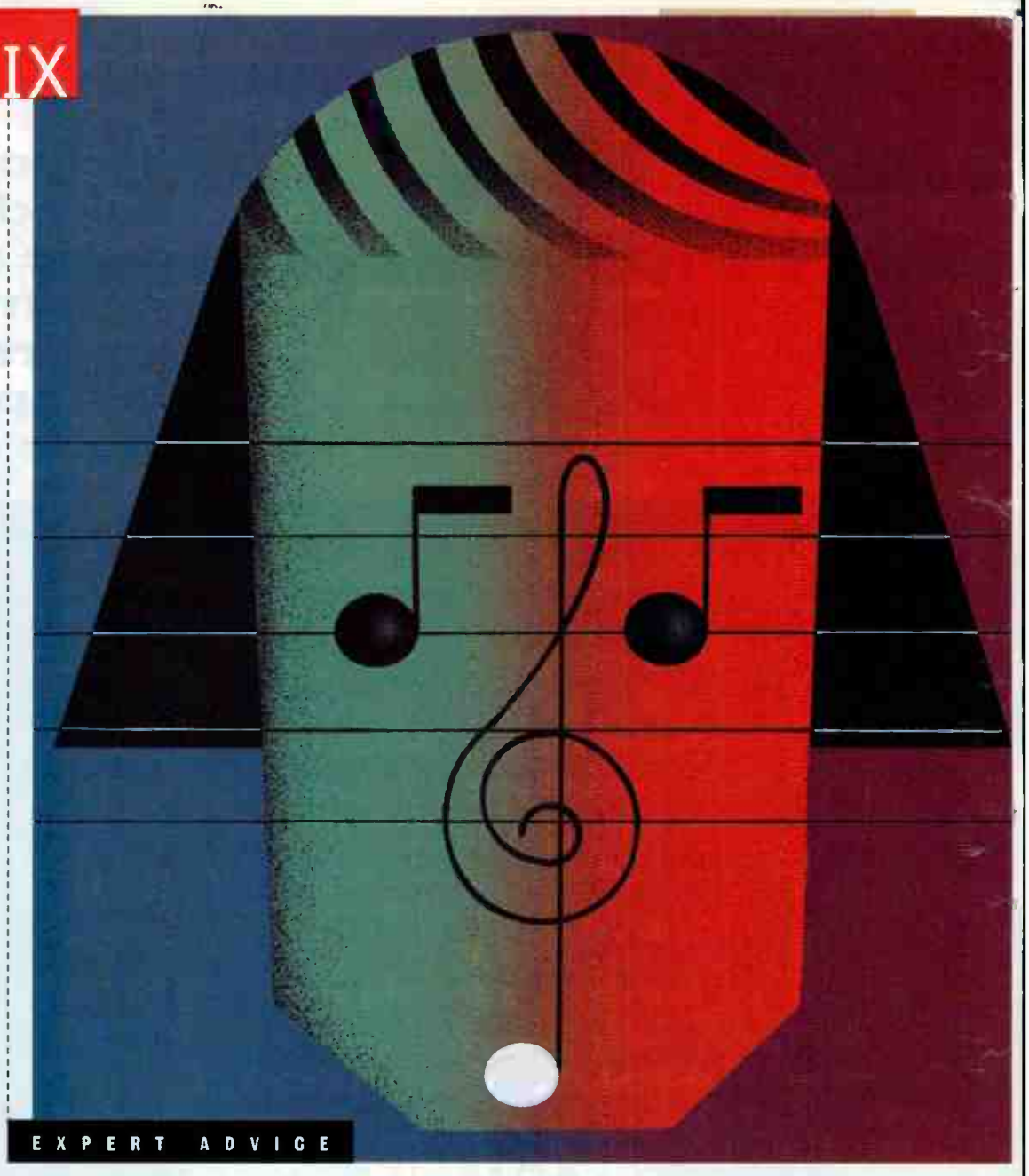
I'D LIKE TO HELP YOU, SON, BUT YOU'RE TOO YOUNG FOR MEDICARE

We wanted to reach downward, to the 35-to-55-year-olds."

—PBS VP Kathy Quattrone, on Public TV's recent use of music programs featuring such contemporary acts as the Moody Blues, Joe Cocker and Bob Dylan. From *Billboard*.

STRAIGHT OUTTA HITLER

Rapper Eazy-E, who as a member of N.W.A helped make the city of Compton synonymous with gangsta rap, recently applied for permission to shoot a new video in his hometown. Instead he spent an evening getting dissed by Compton mayor Omar Bradley for glorifying criminal acts and celebrating derogatory stereotypes of women and blacks. Fair enough—but unfortunately, hizzoner turns out to be no slouch himself when it comes to bigotry. "I won't name the specific racial group that's using you, brother," Mayor Bradley lectured Eazy-E at one point, "but they are destroying us and having a lunch and a bar mitzvah at the same time." Bradley also complained that "when the mayor of Compton goes to New York, he's a joke." Gee, wonder why?



EXPERT ADVICE

How I Wrote That Hit Single

by Paul Simon

"You can Call Me Al" is a song about a guy who starts out totally consumed with his waistline and ends up taking a trip to a strange world, the Third World, where there are angels in the architecture and his eyes are opened up and he shouts, "Amen, hallelujah!" And what is that but a depiction of a journey that happened to me?

What happens with my songs is that they start to write themselves, and I realize, "Oh, this is what's happening!" I didn't set out to write a song about redemption. I started casual, with the equivalent of "Two guys walk into a bar," or "There was a rabbi, a minister and a priest." You have to begin way out there, and then slowly see if you can reel something in. If you start right in and tell people a specific thought you want them to learn, you're being heavy-handed. So before I start insisting that you listen to what I have on my mind, let's celebrate what we have, which is a [*cont'd on page 20*]

ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY ALLEN

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ROUGH MIX

FILLING THE CRAWDADDY HOLE *Crawdaddy*, the first smart rock magazine, has been revived by founder **Paul Williams** as a newsletter, filled with Williams' very personal, very entertaining essays about recent albums by the likes of **R.E.M.**, **Arrested Development**, **Freedy Johnston** and other modern practitioners of the great '60s arts. It's the sort of intelligent, self-indulgent, proudly subjective rock criticism that has all but vanished in these professional days. *Crawdaddy* can be ordered by writing to Box 611, Glen Ellen, CA 95442.

IF YOU CAN'T BEAT 'EM... The folks at **E-mu**, esteemed inventors of the high-end Emulator EIII sampler, were taken aback to discover that they were getting several requests weekly for their SP-1200 sampling drum machine—introduced in 1986 and out of production for the past three years. Despite the unit's obsolete 12-bit resolution and minuscule 10-second sampling limit, the SP-1200 has, it seems, become *the* machine for producing hip-hop and house. Good sports that they are, E-mu have put it back on their manufacturing schedule for 1994.

THAT'S WHY I WRITE THE BLUES

Robert Murphy, an inmate of the Oregon State pen for 17 years, and a blues devotee who has written for dozens of music magazines around the world (including this one), was recently selected "Writer of the Year" by the Bay Area Blues Society Hall of Fame. Murphy was honored for his "overall integrity" as a blues scholar and for his writings about the history and unique contributions of West Coast–area blues, coupled with the "severe circumstances and conditions" surrounding his efforts, according to Hall of Fame director Ronnie Jordan. Murphy, who organized a three-day blues festival at the maximum-security prison (see *Musician*, Oct. '88), is scheduled for parole this Christmas.

EXPERT WITNESS

Who Says It's Jazz?

by Wynton Marsalis

WHENEVER SOMEONE comes out and says they aren't playing jazz, they're celebrated and called innovative. What's the major movement that writers said was the big thing in jazz this year? Jazz and hip-hop. Who is playing jazz on any of those albums? Take M-BASE, which

Steve Coleman plays. I know him, he and I have had many conversations, and he'll tell you that the basis for his music is funk. But it will be celebrated as an innovation in *jazz*. Anthony Braxton has come to me and said, "Thank you for telling these people that I don't play jazz." It's not that I feel vindicated, because I know that's not what he's trying to do. Journalists want to have the type of power to define something, and they don't have that power. It's always been that way. Read the letters Coltrane wrote to *downbeat* and it will break your heart. He didn't understand that it's a waste of time to appeal to people who are being willfully unjust. He was saying, "Does anybody want to come forward and discuss this music?" And no one came forward. And Duke: Today his music would be labeled pretentious. You can read now in encyclopedias of jazz that after '43 Ellington's music took a great downhill slide, and that's not corroborated by the music itself. The press have to figure out what we're doing.

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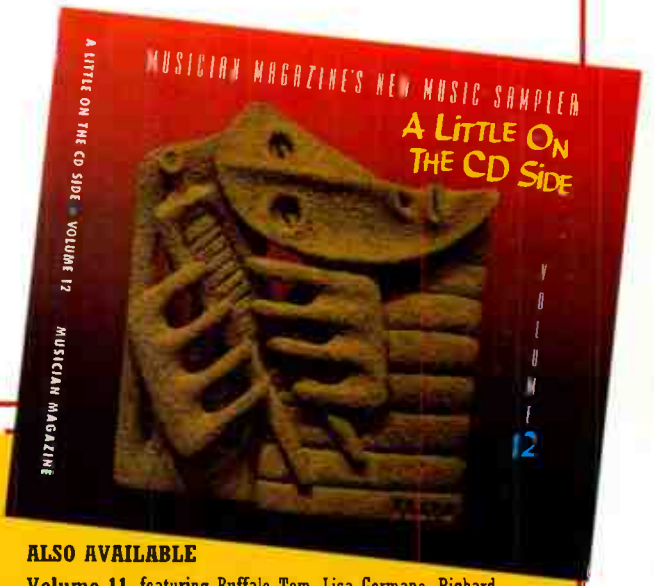

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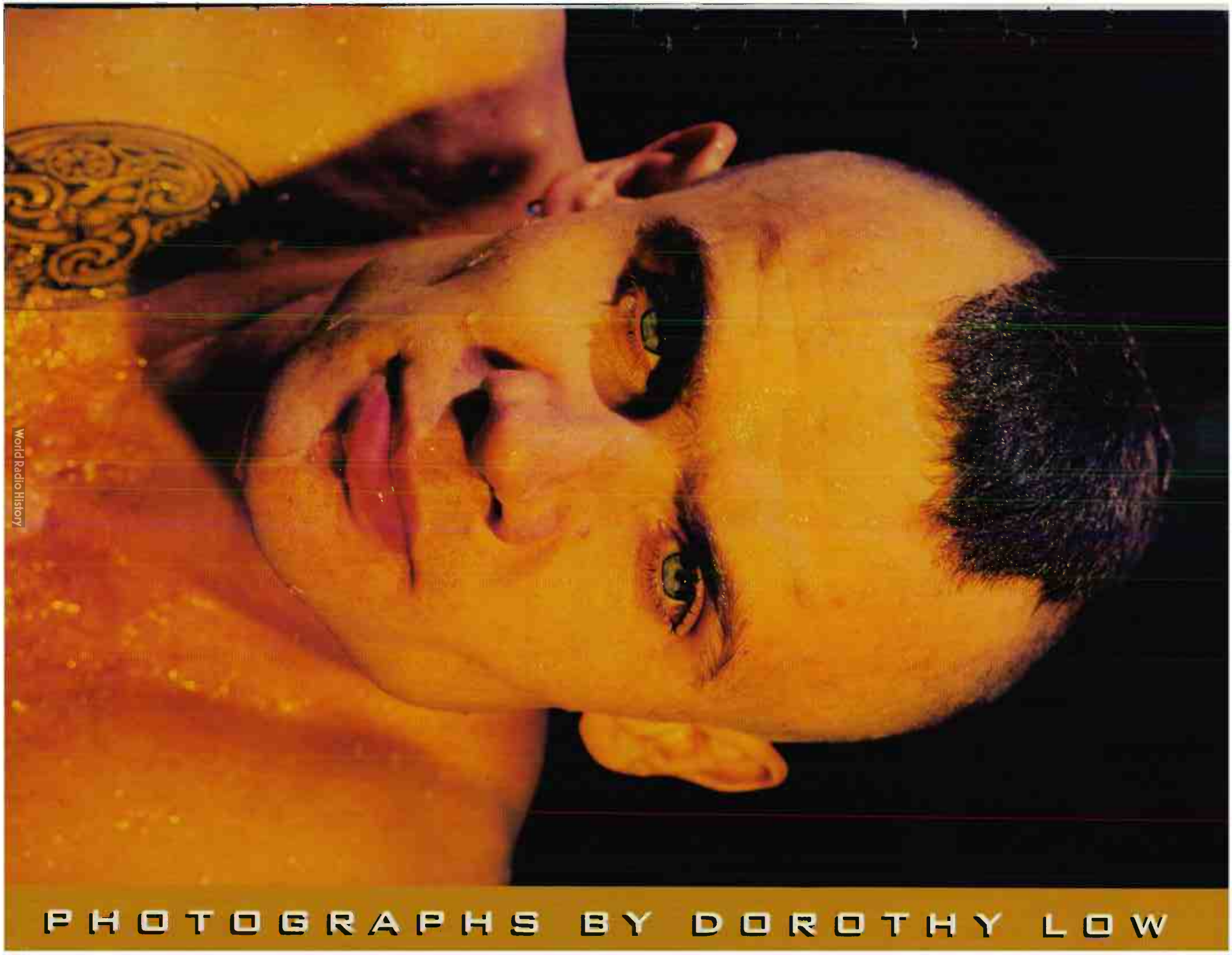
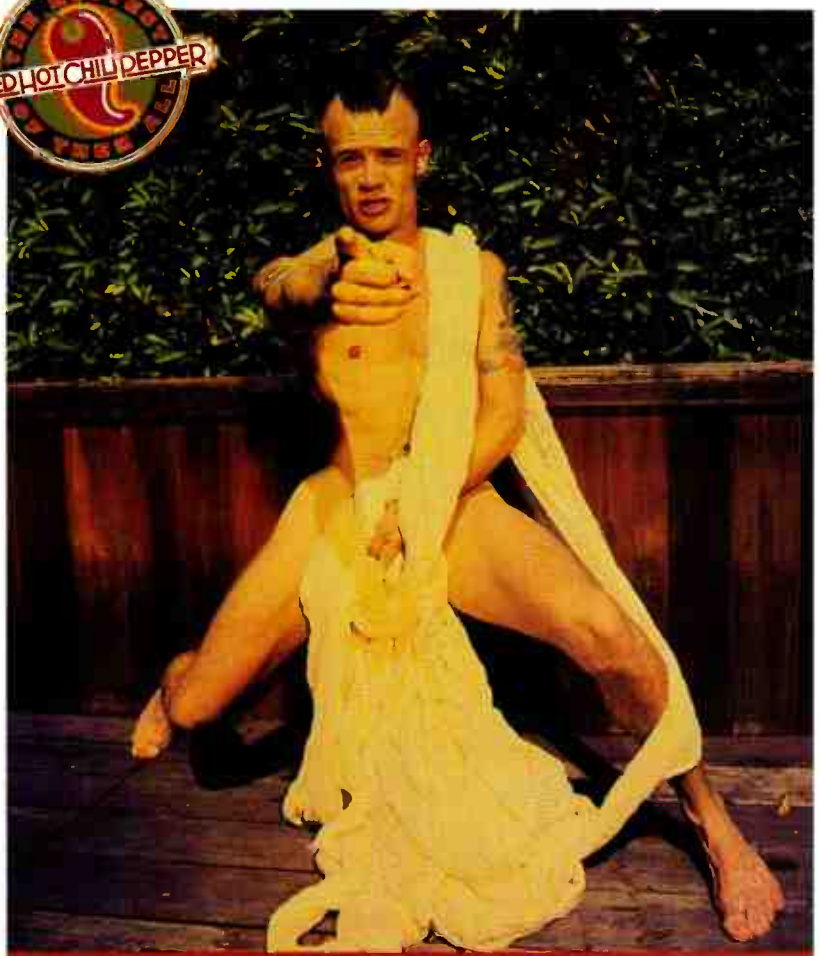
BY MATT RESNICOFF

FLEA

ON TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN





"THE GRAMMY WE WON WAS RACIST—THEY SHOULD HAVE JUST SAID, 'BEST WHITE GUYS WITH ELECTRIC INSTRUMENTS.'"

"I DON'T SUPPOSE any of you caught the documentary last night on genetic engineering."

Behind the sunglasses, tattoos and the swath of purple bandanna, Dave Navarro had something he couldn't keep from his new band. "They were trying to change the DNA structure in the hemoglobin of pigs," he told them, "to make it a human form so they could store and use the blood. They were basically manufacturing human hemoglobin in pig hosts, for consumption in emergencies."

Anthony Kiedis wasn't exactly bullish on the pig experiment. "That's dangerous business once the government gets involved," he pointed out, and Flea offered a reflective anecdote. "I was drinking something in China once and I kept asking what it was," he said, "and they kept muttering under their breath until I finally heard it—turtle blood." Ethical considerations turned to the dilemma of the basketball pro who left his hometown to play for a winning team elsewhere; the notion of man as the epicenter of nature; the Lankersham Boulevard passerby with bleached hair who Flea taunted with the pointer-pinky devil salute. "That guy was definitely 'Spandau Ballet.'" "Naw, that wasn't the New Romantic look. They had puffy shirts." "Hey, remember that film of early Led Zeppelin in puffy shirts, before they got into being cock-rockers?"

What else preoccupied the Red Hot Chili Peppers on this, the eve of their rebirth? They couldn't put it into words. The minute the band adjourned the outdoor lunch and moved into a large practice room, Flea strapped on his bass like a machine gun and started pumping, with Chad Smith eyeing him carefully before kicking in a huge, well-regulated backbeat. Kiedis sang nothing; he just hunched silently over a pad of notes, nodding his head in time to the familiar sound of this rhythm section, and waited for Navarro to shoot it full of the red-hot hemoglobin that will turn it back into a band.

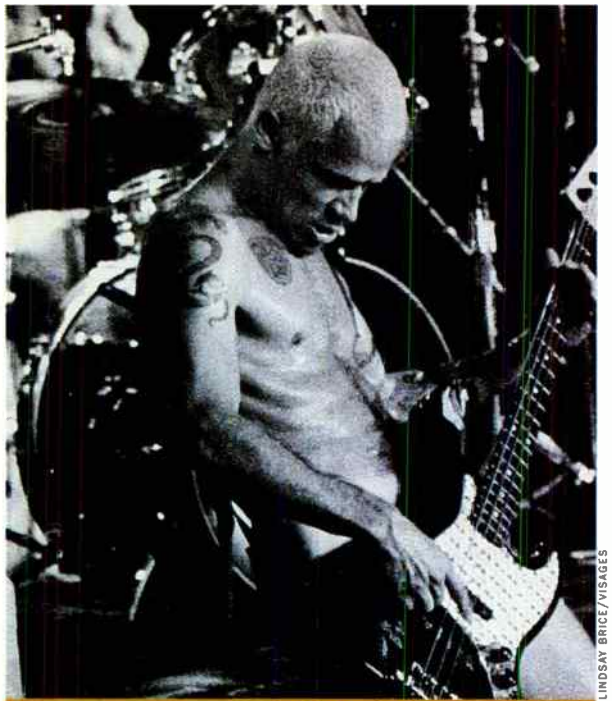
Keeping the Chili Peppers together in the wake of fickle guitarists has become a sort of running risk, but anything becomes less difficult when you do it four times a year. Somehow, after the death of Hillel Slovak, the alienation of Jack Sherman and, since May '92, John Frusciante's secession, Arik Marshall's silent disappearance and the dismissal of one guy Flea hardly remembers, the new group sounded as cohesive as a group can. With almost a decade in Jane's Addiction as a reference, Navarro knows exactly what will make this connection work—he's relieved to finally be in a band whose drummer gets a say in anything. He had rejected an earlier invitation from Flea (and a similar call from Guns N' Roses) simply because he couldn't throw himself behind music he didn't have a hand in writing. As he spread achingly melodic ideas around the Chili Peppers' funk that afternoon in rehearsal, he signaled how raw communication may unlock the world for them.

The four musicians returned outside and an odd fellow working on a sidecar-style vehicle looked up as they gathered around their collection of new Harleys. "All you guys ever talk about is motorcycles," he said, his face cracking into a toothless grin. "S'fun, innit?"

ONE LARGE RAFTER in his home is covered with old backstage passes, the bathroom is awash in gold records, and on the far wall of the den hangs a small population of wooden masks, each face twisted into some bizarre and euphoric contortion. The most ghoulish grin of all belongs to Michael "Flea" Balzary, staring down at ornately

LINDSAY BRICE / VISAGES

UPLIFT MOFO PARTYIN' WITH CHAD SMITH, ARIK MARSHALL & ANTHONY KIEDIS



LINDSAY BRICE/VISAGES

FOUR-STRING OR NOTHING: FLEA HOLDS DOWN HIS END.

carved marble chess figures bought with earnings from the Peppers' multimillion-selling *BloodSugarSexMagik*. Those sessions' outtakes alone are a fair chunk of multicultural indulgence, from Hendrix's "Little Miss Lover" to the *Coneheads* soundtrack hit "Soul to Squeeze," and as they surface, they're sustaining the band during this fertile period of reinvention: Just last night the album's producer, Rick Rubin, remixed their version of the Stooges' "Search and Destroy" and sent over some dubs, one called the "Ultra-insane Din Mix," another the "Slightly Cleaner Less Level Mix." "I know one thing," Flea says as he loads the cassette. "We rocked the fuckin' house when we played it."

As the music barrels forth he screams some helpful commentary: "Jim Keltner was in the studio! He knew the guy setting up the drums. We got him all nervous." He's still giggling as it fades. "We also did 'Bold as Love'—that song's so beautiful. And this African thing that Rick didn't like, but we tracked it anyway and it's *awesome*. It's called 'Fela's Cock.'"

Flea has delicate hands, the kind you grip in a gentle handshake for fear of harming them. He jumps through a hatch into a music room, picks up a piccolo trumpet and begins playing Thelonious Monk's "Rhythm-A-Ning." Before being stricken with chronic fatigue syndrome earlier this year, he says, he was playing along daily with Charles Mingus records, and did a Haydn concerto with a pianist at a Sunset Strip rock club. Everyone at that show just stood there, but Flea thought it was beautiful. Flea has never been one to judge his actions by consequence; today, he put a piece of tape over a chest tattoo that reads the name of his ex-wife, another casualty of what he mourns as his worst year ever. It also promises to be the best year yet for his band, to whose success he's committed as much funkpower as he can muster. In the balance of these concerns is the essence of the man all the other bikers call Mister Softee.

MUSICIAN: *Les Claypool of Primus said that in the '80s everybody wanted to be Van Halen; now they all want to be you. Instead of focusing on solos, they're beginning to address the groove. But now there's all these bands playing stupid for the* sake *of playing stupid—I say if they're gonna play clichés, do it with conviction, but I'd much rather hear new ideas.*

FLEA: Yeah, I don't wanna hear rehashed rock 'n' roll—it bores the shit out of me. I want to hear innovative music in rock. You know, people can say a lot of things about the Chili Peppers, but they can never say we're playing other people's shit, [*laughs*] 'cause we're playing our own shit. To be a modern rock band and not be innovative is to suck. And to suck is to be lame. And to be lame is to be weak. And to be weak is to be a jerk. [*chuckles*]

MUSICIAN: *Well, look at the charts.*

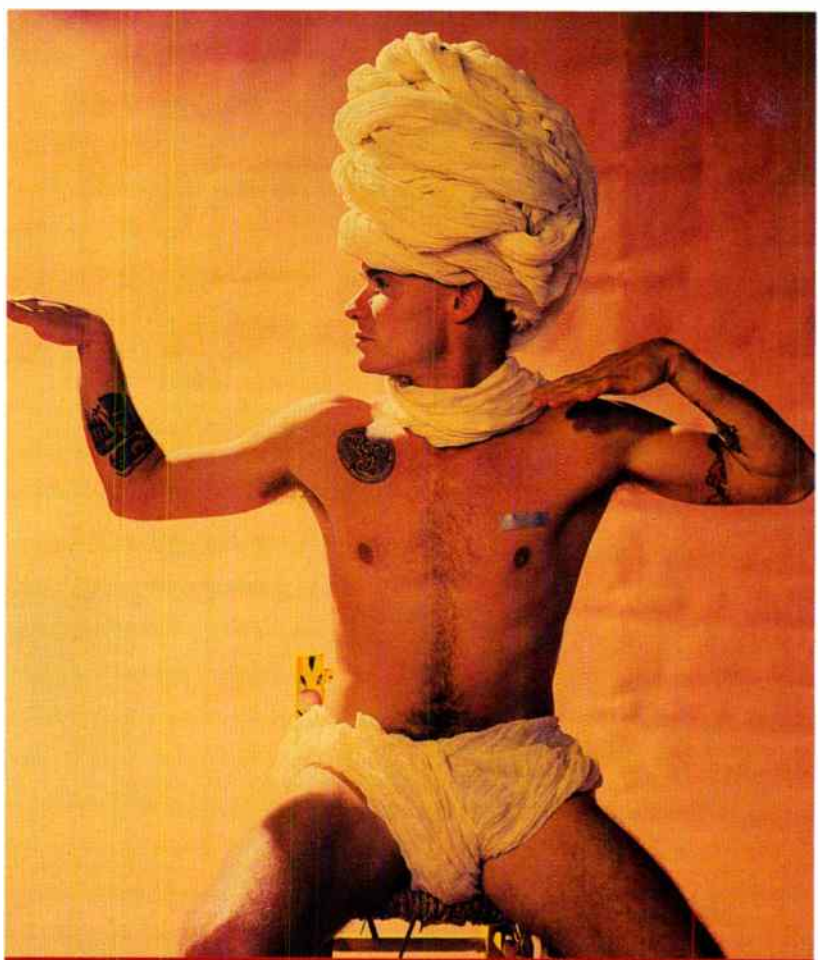
FLEA: As far as what's on the charts, it's what comforts people, what makes radio programmers feel safe; they're not sticking their necks out.

MUSICIAN: *They did with "Give it Away."*

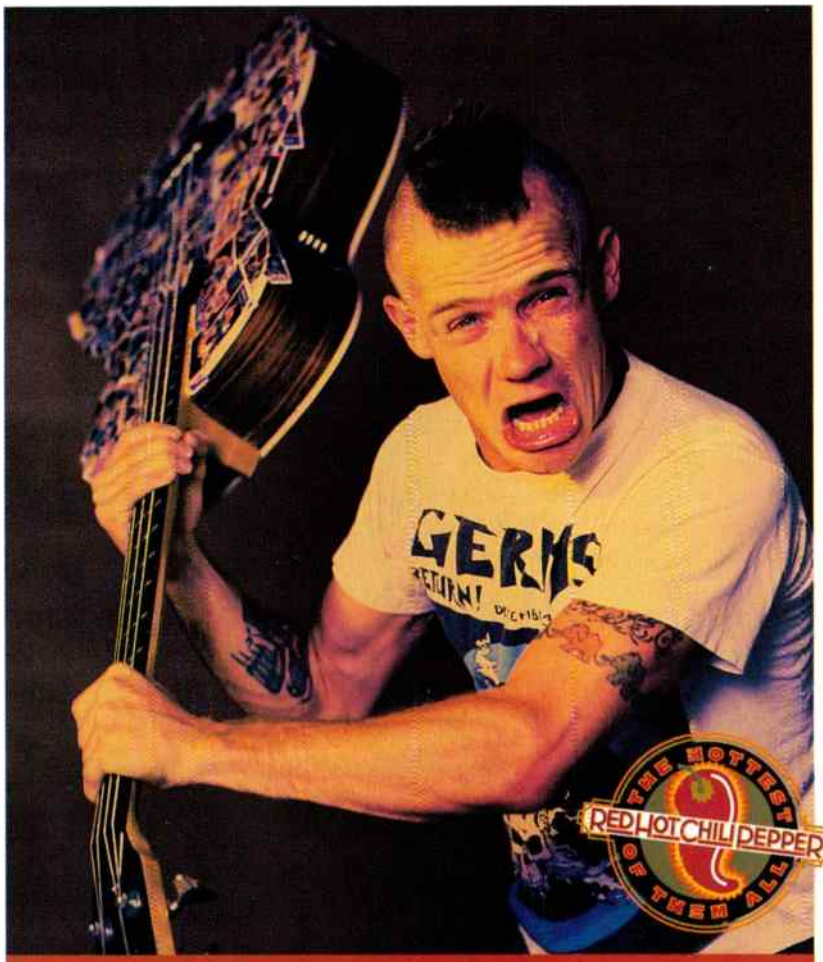
FLEA: Yeah, I guess they did, huh? You think they stuck their necks out with that one?

MUSICIAN: *Well, if it fell into a category, it would be on a black station.*

FLEA: I know. It was funny that we won a Grammy with that for "Best hard rock song"—it's a slinky funk groove! They should have just said, "'Best white guys with electric instruments.'" Yeah, the Grammy we won was racist. But maybe they were thinking of



"A TOUR IS A ROUGH THING. IF YOU CAN'T HAVE A LOVE THING WITH THE PEOPLE YOU PLAY WITH, YOU DRIVE YOURSELF CRAZY."



"WHETHER YOU CARESS YOUR PROBLEMS OR BEAT THEM TO A BLOODY PULP, IF YOU'RE DEALING WITH WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE, THAT'S WHAT ART IS."

PETER DOKUS/L.G.I.

A RARE ACOUSTIC 12-STRING TURN

expanding that category, too. It was by no stretch of the imagination a hard rock song. It was just that we're white and jumping around.

MUSICIAN: *Do you get asked to do gigs where you just don't fit, on the basis of celebrity alone?*

FLEA: Well, the Jon Hassell situation was that they contacted me through the record company. I felt lucky to be able to play with him; he's an amazing trumpet player. I very infrequently get asked to play with anybody, and it bums me out. I wish more people would call! [*laughs*] It's such a learning experience to grow as a musician, and to expand creatively and just get better at what I do. It's a feeling of accomplishment.

This friend of mine is producing a record for a lady from Algiers; she's 70 and just *wails*, this powerful animal-sounding voice. It's crazy in rai music, because they have this traditional North African music with microtonal singing, and it's just that and this crazy-sounding flute and drums. They take different parts of Western music and blend it with traditional Algerian music. Like, on this album they have me, East Bay Ray from the Dead Kennedys and Robert Fripp. I wish that could happen more *here*; I wish I could play with hardcore rappers, and more free-flowing spontaneous improvisation things. That's heaven.

MUSICIAN: *You have this real Miles aesthetic, spontaneous and sudden. Teo Macero could come in and edit your jams to create a really interesting recording.*

FLEA: I would love to make a record like that. Actually, me and John Frusciante and Stephen Perkins—the drummer from Porno for Pyros—jammed a lot, recorded stuff on a four-track, and we've been talking about releasing the best parts. We're thinking about going up to the studio where I played with Hassell and playing for three days and putting out an album. It'd be instrumental rock music without structure, with real emotion. It'd be a beautiful thing.

MUSICIAN: *Seeing you rehearse, it seems disruptive for such an interactive group to have to keep realigning itself with new guitar personalities.*

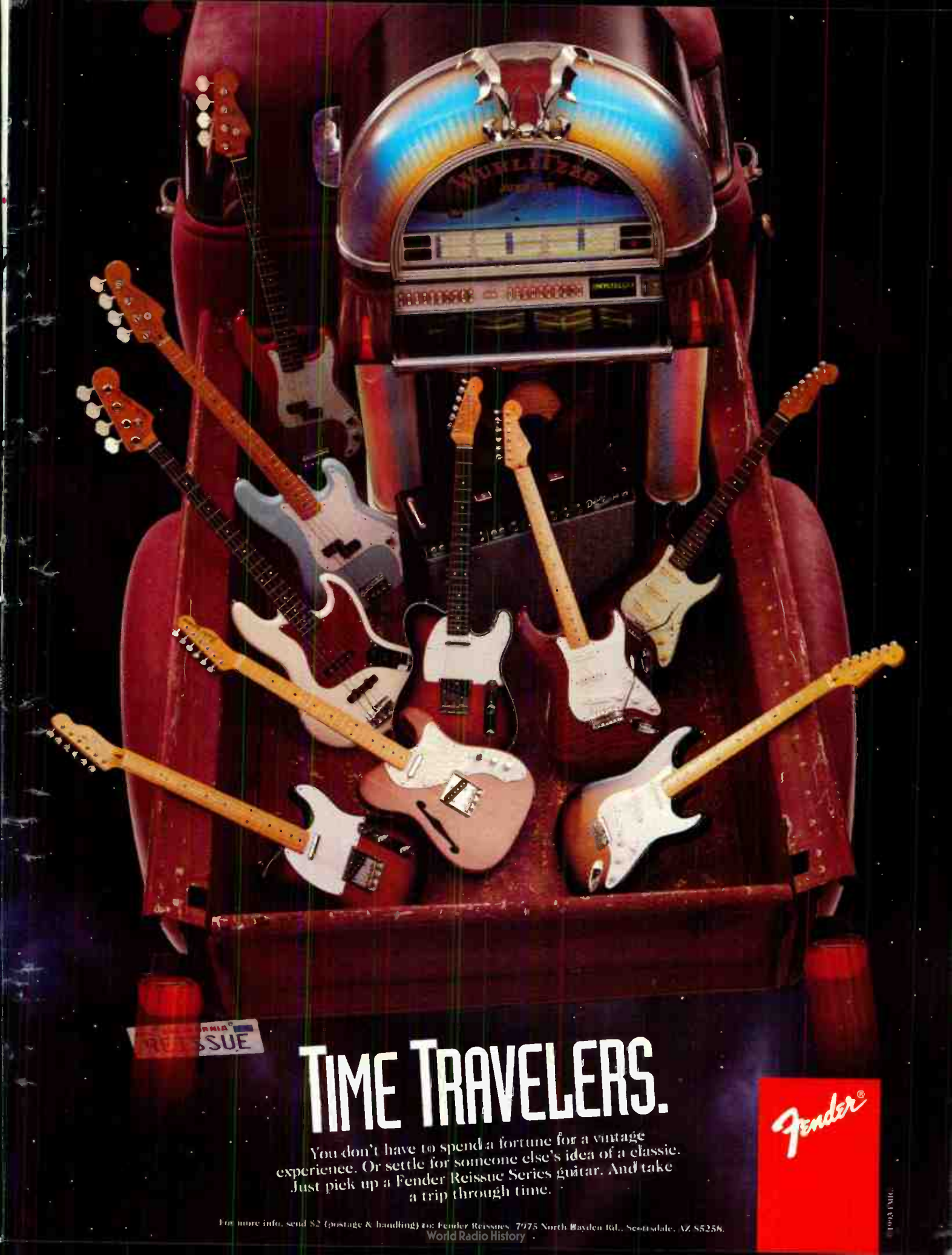
FLEA: It can be, but at the same time it can be like stepping into something new. The last record is the best record we made. As far as the string interplay, it was so easy to anticipate each other and communicate.

MUSICIAN: *With Fear, you were playing for rage. But you also say you want to get in touch with what's beautiful. Now, is rage any way to connect with positive spirituality?*

FLEA: I just try to connect with what's *real*. Rage is positive spirituality and what's beautiful is positive spirituality. I think instead of doing heroin in a corner, if you're attacking your problems in an artistic way, whether you're massaging and caressing them or beating them to a bloody pulp, you're

JOE HUGHES/L.F.I.

TUBE PURISTS FLEA AND ANTHONY SPORT ONLY THE FINEST HOSIERY.



dealing with them, and if you're playing music and dealing with what's going on in your life, that's what art is. Being vulnerable like that is the one time you can be open to everything. You can be a *vehicle* for that energy. When you say something true, and painful, whether you say it with words or music... that's the shit.

MUSICIAN: *This must all take a toll on your body.*

FLEA: Yeah, I'm just getting over being really, really sick. Actually, the last year has been the worst year of my entire life. I had Epstein-Barr, chronic fatigue. The last tour was in South America—it was fun, we played in stadiums with Nirvana, and Ian MacKaye from Fugazi was hanging out. The day I got back I started feeling weird, and I've been up and down for nine months.

MUSICIAN: *With chronic fatigue, you can barely function.*

FLEA: You get varying levels. I've been really fucked up, dude. I haven't been able to do shit. It's even tough to play; we had to cancel a tour. It's been really traumatic. I'm still a little weak.

MUSICIAN: *What do you do to keep your energy up when you travel?*

FLEA: Um...chainsmoke, stay up really late, don't sleep well, eat shitty food.

MUSICIAN: *Ah, the nutritionist's regimen.*

FLEA: Yeah. [*laughs*] But on the last tour, I'd split up with my wife a while before. I was losing my marbles, man. I was sitting up in hotel rooms throwing tantrums, I mean, smashing stuff around. I just *could not sleep*. I was so stressed out. I was wearing myself down to the nub. It was weird; after about a year-and-a-half I was starting to feel better. I quit smoking, I wasn't drinking, the only thing I was doing was smoking pot. And then *boom*, I got sick. One thing I learned from being ill is a guy really has to accept where he's at, at that moment in the universe. [*laughs*] Because otherwise you're just driving yourself bananas. I've been learning about being happy in my skin, you know?

MUSICIAN: *It's surprising that all that would happen on the last tour, the culmination of 10 years' work.*

FLEA: I know! Making money, playing big places, playing good music, having a hit album. But before Lollapalooza, John was really unhappy. We were building up to him leaving, which he did in the middle of a Japanese tour. It was hell. A tour is such a rough thing, and if you can't live inside the music and the people you play with and have a love thing of brotherhood and camaraderie.... That's the saving grace, because you all stick together and do it. If you can't, you can drive yourself crazy.

MUSICIAN: *Was playing a way of getting it out of your system?*

FLEA: No. It was great to play, but the communication between the four of us was totally stilted, and I was so tired. I get so physically hyped up when I play, and I just burned out. Once I got up there I was like, "Play." Blank. "That's all that counts. Play good." But I was losing it. And then John was unhappy; he wasn't into the whole fame-rockstar trip at *all*. He was into finding peace of mind and love somewhere else.

MUSICIAN: *Did you audition Buckethead before Arik?*

FLEA: Buckethead! Yeah. Right at the same time. We auditioned a few guys. Buckethead. [*laughs*]

MUSICIAN: *He's an out cat.*

FLEA: He seemed sweet and normal. He came in and started jamming, playing all this crazy shit, a lot of fast, crazy runs with a lot of effects. That would be great, but we need-

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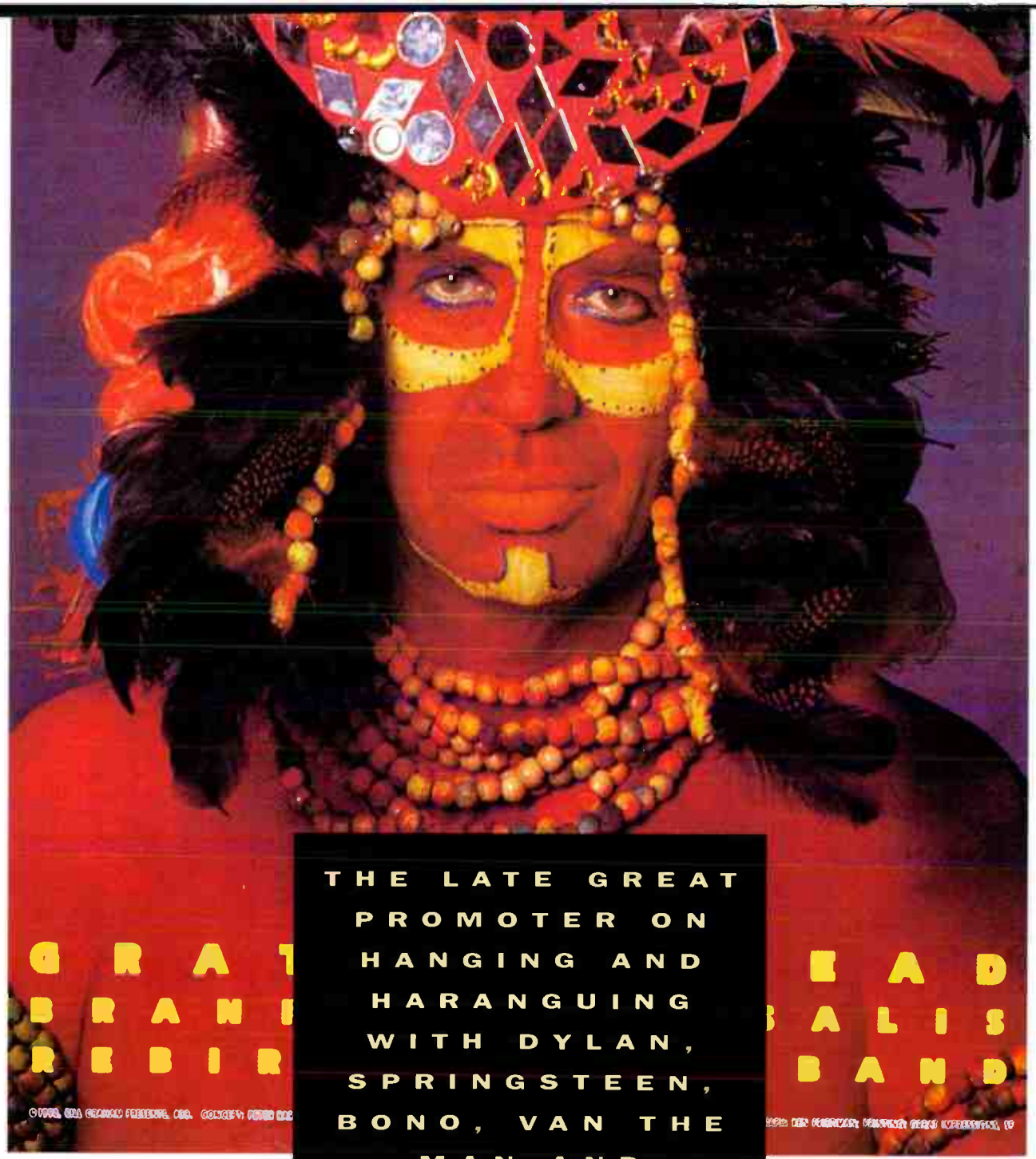
THE UNPUBLISHED MEMOIRS OF BILL GRAHAM

THE UNPUBLISHED MEMOIRS OF BILL GRAHAM



EMPEROR

THE LATE GREAT PROMOTER ON HANGING AND HARANGUING WITH DYLAN, SPRINGSTEEN, BONO, VAN THE MAN AND OTHER LORDS OF THE REALM

INTRO AND EPILOGUE BY ROBERT GREENFIELD

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CAMERA 5

ment were trusting us so it had to be done this way.

About 25,000 people showed up. Exactly what we wanted. It was lunch time. People drifting out of those big buildings to get something to eat, and there was *U2*. A little rock 'n' roll in their working day.

Before the show, Bono called me into his trailer and said, "Bill, could you get us some spray paint?"

I thought it was strange that he would ask me. But I said, "Sure."

I sent somebody for spray paint. A few minutes after they started playing, I put the can by the speaker in back of him onstage. We had built these ramps so he could walk right out on to this statue that is there. An ugly piece of sheet metal and wrought iron out of which water comes. A playpen for metal workers. Bono took the can of spray paint and went out there and sprayed, *"Rock 'n' roll stops the traffic!"* on it. The kids thought it was great. I didn't think much of it either way at the time.

The next day, my phone did not stop ringing. Citizens had called City Hall. How *dare* they allow this desecration of public property? Eventually, Dianne Feinstein, the mayor, called. She was very decent about it. She said, "We trusted you because of your relationship with the city. We're not saying you did anything wrong. You need to speak to the artists and ask them to apologize. They have to get involved in the removal of what was written there."

I had already hired professional art curators to remove the graffiti. $549. You and I could have taken White-Out and done the same job for free. But for them, $549. I called up Paul McGuinness. I said, "You've got to do me a favor. I've still got your two shows coming up. It was the city's art. Plus, this was all on *my* say-so. We got three permits and they went along with us only because of me."

He said, "Well, Bill, Bono doesn't want to apologize. He feels he's an artist. That was his statement."

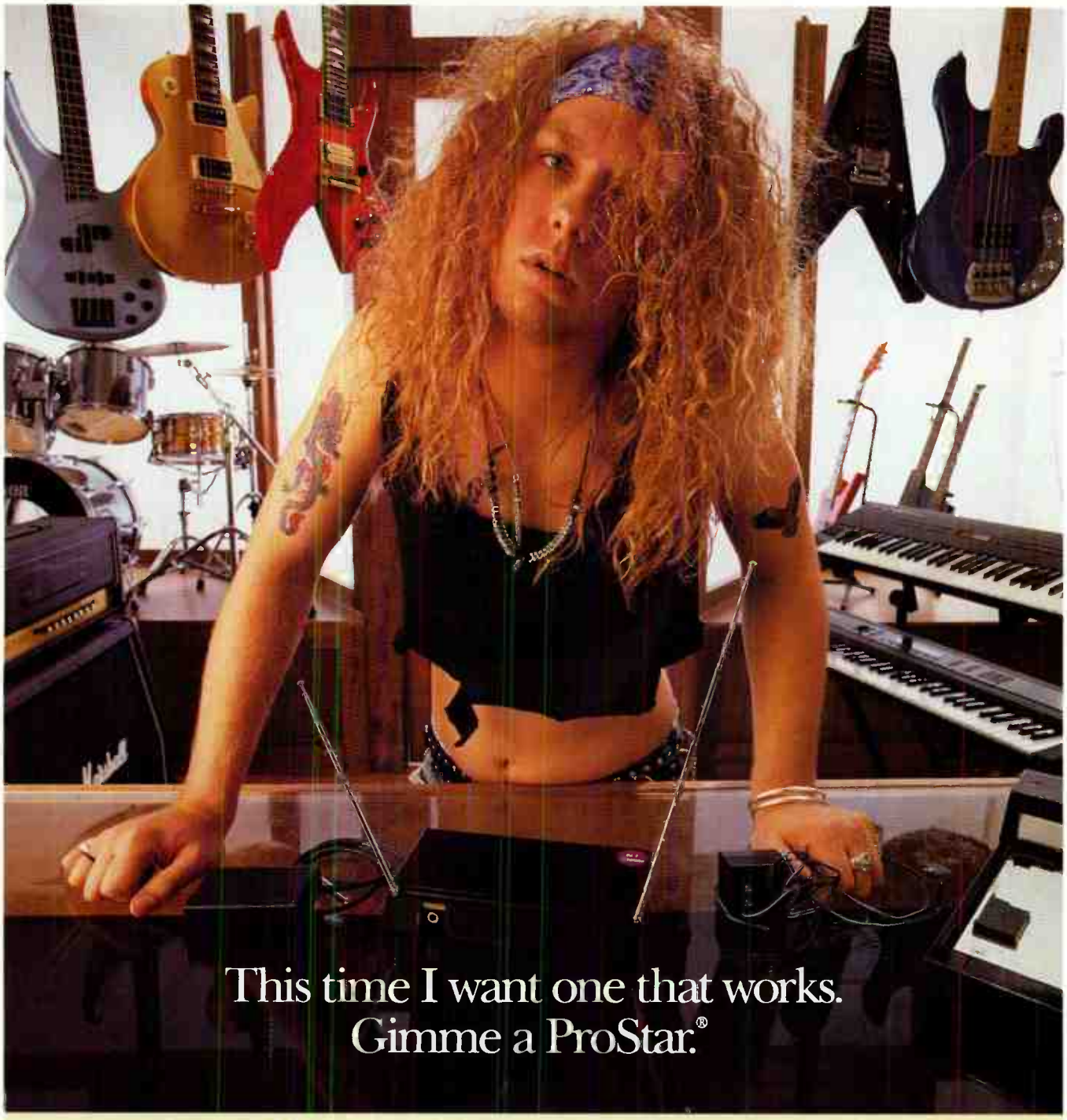
Then I got more pressure. Two people from the Board of Supervisors called. The mayor's office called again. The mayor's secretary called. People were insisting on a *public* apology. Then Paul McGuinness said, "Bill, can you get hold of the artist [who created the sculpture], Bernard Villancourt, for us?"

Within a day, I found the artist in Toronto. He *loved* Bono. He *loved* U2. He had a bad foot and was on crutches but was on his way to California to protect artistic expression. Villancourt by now had given up the possibility of ever being in the media. Suddenly, he was *famous*, thanks to Bono spraying his statue. He made an appearance at the show. He and Bono *embraced* onstage.

During the second show U2 did, they had a huge sign about the tragedy of El Salvador. Many Central American refugees were onstage. They gave Villancourt a paint roller. On crutches, he joined in painting the sign.

ON A GIVEN NIGHT, Van Morrison is among the very few who can be the *very* best. Carmen McRae, Otis Redding, James Brown, Van Morrison, the Rolling Stones. He could be *that* electrifying. On the other hand, he could also be like the plug that never got in the socket. Van is the closest experience we've had with purity in our industry. He is the only artist who *never* gave in to the supply and demand game, having had the choice. A lot of guys play clubs and say, "I don't want to play those fucking stadiums." Well, who ever asked them to? "I don't want my own TV show." Who offered them one?

Throughout the years, whenever Van



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could have played a 10,000-seat hall, he played a five. When he could have played a five, he did a 2500-seater. He played clubs when he could have played bigger places. He spent more money to get the musicians he wanted. He didn't play when he didn't feel like it. All his life.

He always really loathed the industry and the interviews and the rah-rah and the doo-doos. He was a pure painter. He painted when he painted and sent the paintings to the gallery and his life was his own. Every once in a while, he went out and painted in public. But never for the grandstands.

Van was always very close-mouthed. You could talk music to him and that was *it*. Not "How's your aunt? How's your sister? Get your car fixed?" Once I went to his house and he was just waiting for me to say something. I said, "Have you been listening to any new music lately?" He said, "Yeah. I went out and got some records last week. I came home and put them on the record player here. I put the needle here and I put the needle there and wherever I put the needle, it's *shit*. Shit *here* and shit *there*. Wherever I put the needle, it's *shit*."

Back when we were managing Van, he was on "Saturday Night Live." I watched him during rehearsal and I said, "Van, you're going to be in front of 40 million people tonight."

"So?"

"I watched you on the monitor. During the entire rehearsal, you sang with your eyes *closed*."

He turned to me, *with* his eyes closed, and said, "Why don't you just do your fuckin' job and I'll do mine?"

The night of the show? He opened his eyes.

I think I probably have more admiration for him than any other single artist. What he would give people on a good night was *special*. It was *so* rich. It made them feel *so* good when they left. When he was on, people left knowing they had seen a *toreador*.

I TOOK BOB DYLAN and Santana on a summer tour of Europe. In a way I find hard to explain, I felt the same way about Bob's songs and lyrics as I did about the way Carlos played his guitar. It was almost as if Dylan was the mind and Carlos' guitar was the body, and the way the body feels. I thought the two of them together on the same show would be a terrific combination. They would play separately and then also maybe do a few things together at the end.

I went to Dylan and talked to him about it. He put together a touring band with Mick Taylor in it and Tim Drummond. When they played at Wembley Stadium in London, I invited Eric Clapton and Chrissie Hynde and Van Morrison and Mick Jagger to the show. It was during the day. Santana played and then we set up for Dylan. First, he would play an acoustic set that was always very good. Nothing was said to anybody about what was going to happen.

Before the show, I said to Dylan, "Bob, it would be nice to invite Van." And he said, "Oh, does Van *want* to come?" Every time Bob came off the stage that day, he saw someone else I had invited. At some point, Bob said, "Oh, does Van want to *do* something?" I went over to Van and said, "Bob would like you to play with him."

Eric Clapton was standing on the other side of the stage. I said, "Eric, come *on*." He said, "*No*, this is *Bob's* show." I said, "But he'd really like you to." Finally, I just whispered in his ear, "Eric, you're going to embarrass me because I'm going to try to

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Everything in the studio is DIGITAL. So why are

between two worlds

DESPITE PERENNIAL COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE LACK OF "WARMTH" IN CDs, DAT masters and digital tracks—and with all due respect to those who find the learning curve just too steep for comfort—we've been living in the digital age for over a decade, and most of us like it. Digital's sky-high dynamic range, ruler-flat frequency response and magnifying-glass sonic detail are enticing enough. New capabilities like non-destructive editing, graphic waveform displays and the ability to clone and bounce with zero degradation add up to one heck of a musical powder keg.

by
Michael Cooper

illustration by
Richard Downs

Amid the dizzying pace of change, what tends to be overlooked is that the most crucial phase of the digital revolution is yet to come. Sure, digital synthesizers, samplers, drum machines and signal processors have found their way into virtually every musician's life. We record to digital multitrack tape, mix to DAT and master to recordable CD. In fact, these days there's a low-cost, high-performance digital version of almost every component in the studio. The only thing missing is a practical way to route digital signals back and forth among them. Most digital audio devices provide only analog inputs and outputs.

Eliminating the analog link between various pieces of digital gear will usher in a new stage in the evolution of recording technology: the advent of the all-digital studio. It will bring about a paradigm shift in the ways studios are organized and the kinds of things we can do with them. To be sure, some things won't change. Until our analog ears sprout multipin connectors, speakers will pump out analog audio. Likewise microphones, which transduce the analog phenomenon of sound pressure into electricity, are likely to remain analog. So the all-digital studio of the future will be as "analog-free" as "fat-free" ice cream. Otherwise, though, it's tantalizingly close. It doesn't take psychic powers to see that it *will* happen. But when? And what will it look like?

Fat-free AUDIO

LET'S BACK UP a bit. What's the problem with analog inputs and outputs anyway? The answer is distortion. To enter the digital domain, an audio signal passes through an *analog-to-digital*

we still messing around with ANALOG audio?

converter (ADC), which degrades it more or less depending on the quality of the circuitry. Likewise, a signal going out passes through a *digital-to-analog converter* (DAC), degrading it again. In today's digitally equipped studio, signals suffer the cumulative degradation of multiple conversions between numerous boxes, all due to the lack of digital inputs and outputs (*digital I/O*). Imagine how good digital would sound if it could remain digital from soup to nuts!

In today's digitally equipped studio, signals suffer the cumulative degradation of multiple digital/analog conversions between boxes

To that end, more and more boxes are providing digital I/O. Among effects processors, these include the Korg A1, Roland R880, Yamaha SPX1000, Sony SPD-1000 and Lexicon 300 and 480L. Ditto for equalizers such as the Roland R660 and Yamaha DEQ-5, and Valley Audio's model 730 dynamics processor. Digital I/O comes standard with Roland's S770 sampler, and even synthesizers like the Kurzweil K2000 and Yamaha SY99 offer optional digital outs.

But the mere presence of digital interfacing doesn't guarantee that all this outboard stuff will work together, or with digital multitracks or mixers. The sad fact is that, for the time being, it takes a motley assortment of expensive accessory hardware to ensure compatibility between various devices—and even then it's no picnic.

What's holding up the show? On our way toward an answer, let's survey the landscape of digital audio systems, keeping an eye on the ways they address issues of connectivity and compatibility.

The systematic APPROACH

BY AND LARGE, current digital audio systems follow one of three basic approaches: integrated, computer-based or mix-and-match. Yamaha's DMR8 is a typical integrated system. For $34,000, you get an eight-track tape recorder (with autolocator) and a 24-channel automated mixer with onboard effects—all in one box. The Korg SoundLink and Roland DM80 store audio to hard disk rather than tape, but otherwise follow a similar scheme. All components are made by one manufacturer, so they should work together without a hitch. The down side is that components from other companies may not be compatible. You'd better be pretty darned satisfied with what you get in that one box.

Using the computer-based approach, manufacturers hitch a ride on the visual display and processing power—not to mention the ready-made installed base—of a personal computer. In systems such as Spectral's AudioPrisma for the IBM and Digidesign's Pro Tools for the Mac, you can edit audio data graphically, much as you would MIDI data with a computer-based sequencer. In fact, a number of sequencing programs come in versions that record and edit MIDI and digital audio in tandem. Since each manufacturer's system is designed to run on a particular computer, there's more intercompatibility among products from various companies. For instance, most Macintosh software products are compatible with Digidesign's audio hardware.

That leaves mix-and-match systems, in which you assemble a batch of components from different manufacturers. You might start with one of the popular multitrack tape decks or a hard-drive recorder such as Akai's DR4d, a digital mixer such as Yamaha's all-digital DMC1000 or DPM9 (which has only one digital input) and whatever outboard boxes you can find with digital I/O. Some connections you'll be able to make digitally; some will work if you add third-party interface hardware; and some will just have to be analog.

Communication BREAKDOWN

THERE'S NO MYSTERY to the current impasse. The stumbling blocks to seamless digital interconnectivity are *data format* (the order of bits—1s and 0s—required to communicate intelligibly, and the choice of information they convey) and *sample rate* (the speed at which a device sends and/or expects to receive each bit). It may help to think of digital audio as a language. In order for one piece of gear to communicate with another, both must speak the same dialect (data format) and speak/listen at exactly the same speed (sample rate).

Digital audio consists of a series of *samples*, each representing the amplitude of the signal at a given moment. The sample rate is the number of samples per second: 48,000 per second, or 48 kHz, for digital video; 44.1 kHz for CDs; 44.056 kHz for most film and video applications; 32 kHz for digital broadcast. Generally speaking, an internal *clock* regulates the sample rate within any given device. Being physical systems, these clocks are subject to slight drift over time.

If two devices use sample rates that are grossly different, or theoretically identical but drifting, connecting their digital I/O ports will result either in poor communication (distortion) or no communication whatsoever (silence). In the former case, you might be able to sync one device to the other's clock, but in the latter the only solution is to mediate between them using something called an *asynchronous sample-rate convertor* (ASRC), which allows both devices to continue speaking and listening at their own speeds, yet still understand one another. But outboard ASRCs, at $4000 or more per, are no small investment. Roland, Sony and nVision are among the companies that make these boxes.

The expense of fitting a multitrack rig with outboard ASRCs makes mix-and-match digital systems less than entirely practical. But that's about to change. Recently, Analog Devices introduced a line of ASRC chips costing only $20 to $35. These chips, incorporated into a new generation of digital mixers, are likely to have a big impact on the near-term future of the all-digital studio.

Of course, it would be a lot tidier to make all devices in the studio communicate at one speed, eliminating the need for ASRCs. To accomplish this, you would establish a single master clock for the entire system and require that every device be capable of syncing to it. In fact, that's how integrated systems work, and the way components such as digital mixers and multitrack tape decks work *internally*. Unfortunately, sending digital audio out into the world is another story.

To allow digital audio devices to communicate with one another, one of two standard audio data formats is usually employed: AES/EBU (for professional applications) and S/PDIF (for the consumer market). When two AES/EBU or S/PDIF devices are connected, they both sync to the internal clock of *the device that's outputting*. In a multichannel situation, this leads to a classic case of too many cooks spoiling the broth. Imagine a bunch of outboard devices sending to a mixer's inputs, each

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one insisting the mixer listen at *its* rate. The console, of course, can operate only at one rate at a time.

Furthermore, both AES/EBU and S/PDIF are two-channel formats, inherently ill-suited for multichannel applications such as mixing and multitracking. The only solution is a beast called a *format converter*, such as the Yamaha FMC-1 and FMC-2 and the Alesis AI-1, which translates between a manufacturer's proprietary internal data format (often multichannel and master-clocked) and the more limited standard formats. Once again, an expensive way to go.

We'll never be rid of ASRCs and format converters until manufacturers agree upon a standard data format for multichannel digital audio that can be implemented easily and inexpensively. Don't hold your breath. It takes a hefty investment to design a digital-audio system from scratch. Now that everybody has one, nobody is likely to abandon their bussing system for the sake of intercompatibility. On the contrary, manufacturers have an interest in holding out, hoping that their gear becomes so popular that everyone else is forced to adopt their proprietary format.

BLACK boxes

ACTUALLY, A FEW years ago several manufacturers did develop a multichannel digital-audio synchronization standard called MADI (Multichannel Audio Digital Interface). Boasting 56 channels, MADI is overkill for today's popular eight-track systems, and expensive to implement as well. Another drawback is that MADI's routing capabilities resemble a 56-cable point-to-point snake. A patchbay-style bussing system, in which any output could feed any input, is far preferable, especially if it can be controlled by a computer. Yes, even the lowly patchbay is undergoing a digital metamorphosis!

In fact, as the all-digital studio comes closer to reality, traditional patchbays may pass on to the great recording studio in the sky. Both Digidesign and Lone Wolf are betting that computer-controlled signal routing is the wave of the future—although they have different ideas about how it should be implemented.

Digidesign's bid is TDM (Time Division Multiplexing), a bussing specification capable of routing 256 channels of 24-bit audio, patchbay-style, over a one-inch ribbon cable. Clocked by a single source (either internal or external), TDM integrates Digidesign's computer-based ProTools system by linking various add-on cards with the host computer. Computer cards hold not only the recording and playback hardware, but also signal processors and other devices.

Furthermore, Digidesign is making the TDM specification available to other manufacturers so they can make specialized hard- and software for the system. Lexicon already offers a reverb card for the Digidesign system, the NuVerb, and Kurzweil has a TDM-compatible product in development.

With virtually all studio hardware residing in the computer and all signals routed internally in the digital domain, you won't need any rack-mount boxes, digital I/O or no. According to Rob Currie, Digidesign's vice president of software engineering, rack-mount hardware is "not long for this earth. The idea of having a bunch of external boxes like digital EQs, that connect together in a similar fashion to the old analog way, is incredibly inefficient."

That opinion is not shared by Lone Wolf, inventors of the MediaLink digital routing system. MediaLink is essentially a computer-controlled patchbay that carries multiple channels of MIDI, digital audio and SMPTE simultaneously over a fiber-optic cable. Lone Wolf expects hardware processors to stick around for a long time—they just won't have any knobs on them.

"I see the knobs going away because that's redundant hardware," argues Mark Lacas, the company's president and co-founder. "Why do you need a volume knob 400 times in your studio?" In fact, companies such as Z-Systems already are manufacturing rack-mount devices with blank front panels. Control parameters are available only via MediaLink.

Like the Digidesign system, MediaLink does away with the need for knobs and meters by representing studio components as icons on the screen of a central computer. When you click on an icon, up pops a virtual control surface for the device in question. Furthermore, MediaLink supports two-way communication. An amplifier, for instance, can let the computer know that it's about to overheat, and the computer can respond by shutting it off and activating a redundant unit.

MediaLink has a good chance for industry-wide acceptance, given its influence upon the emerging AES SC-10 standard for remote control of audio devices. Already, over 30 audio manufacturers are working on MediaLink-compatible devices, with dozens more pending—although at present they're using it to route control and monitoring signals only,

not audio. As an industry standard, it could be quite a breakthrough. Just look at what happened to keyboards when manufacturers agreed on the specification for MIDI!

The CRYSTAL ball

JUST AS MIDI severed the connection between a musical instrument's playing surface and its means of generating sound, the all-digital production environment will bifurcate the studio into control surfaces and audio-processing horsepower. The mixing console, for instance, is likely to undergo a dramatic metamorphosis.

"You'll still have a knob panel, a mixer desk," Lone Wolf's Lacas predicts, "but there won't be any audio in it. It will send control signals to a rack that has the mixer hardware in it." In fact, high-end mixers along this line are beginning to appear, including Tactile Technology's M4000 and AT&T's DISQ Digital Mixer Core. Having the knobs handle control signals instead of audio offers a compelling benefit: You can store their settings for instant recall, and automate any moves you make.

What about multitrack recorders? Is digital tape here to stay, or is it a flash in the pan, soon to be replaced by hard-disk storage? Answers differ, of course, depending on whom you ask. "Tape is robust and affordable," notes Peter Chaikin of Yamaha. "It will be around for a good while." Digidesign's Rob Currie, on the other hand, gives tape another two to three years of good favor before the plummeting cost of hard disks makes that technology more attractive. "At some point, tape is not going to make sense," he asserts. "Systems like the Alesis ADAT are a transitional phenomenon."

Currie also sees a future in which effects are distributed on floppy disk or CD-ROM. They'll be loaded into a generalized signal-processing engine that will take on whatever personality the software gives it, just as a computer becomes a new machine depending on the application it's running. This concept is already in the works at Digidesign.

With so much of today's equipment on the chopping block, will any of it survive? Some will, some won't. Scaling the level of a digital signal is a piece of cake, so VCA-based automation boxes, while they may ward off the death throes of analog consoles for a while, certainly have a dim future. Old standbys with no obvious digital equivalents—say, Shure SM57 mikes and Martin guitars—will survive. Likewise, retro-heads will continue to value the sound of tube compressors and equalizers.

"People will continue to use the products they love," Chaikin suggests. "But the benefits of keeping everything in the digital domain are here now for many, many people, and are so great that they're willing to live within the current limitations." Technophobes, he muses, will embrace digital audio only "when the cost is within reach."

And when might that be? To some extent, that depends on what kinds of products catch on in the broader consumer market. Mass consumption creates economies of scale in which high-tech parts can be manufactured very inexpensively. So as more of the parts that go into building digital audio equipment are mass-produced, the cost of a complete system will drop.

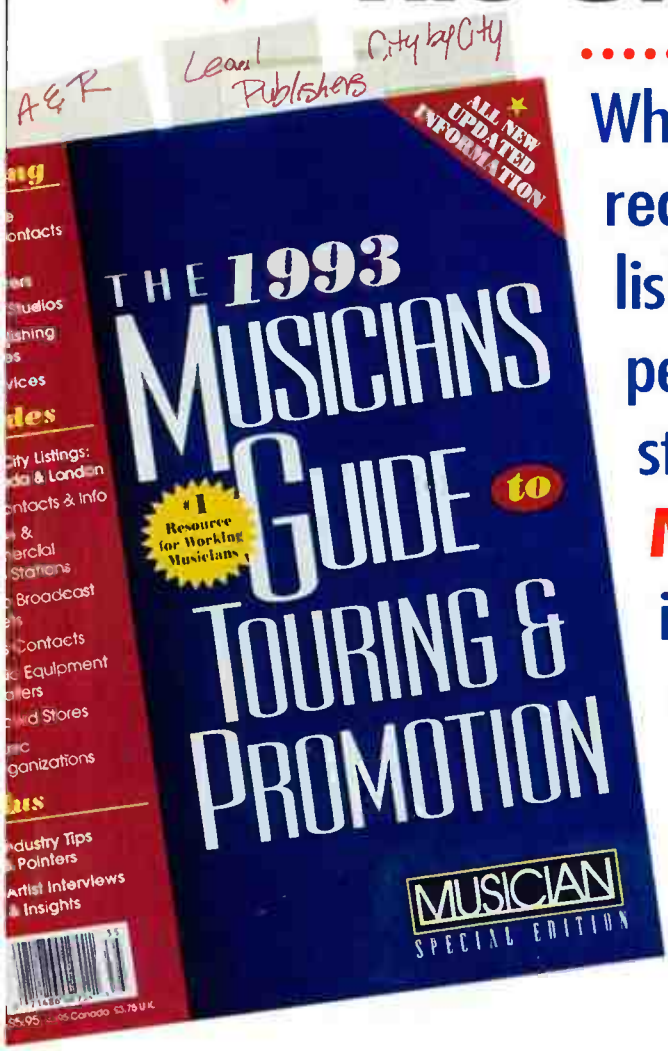
A case in point: The proliferation of consumer CD players propelled the mass production of DACs, causing them to drop in price. ADCs, by comparison, remain expensive. Had DAT recorders taken off a few years back, ADCs would have become less expensive (since DAT machines have inputs as well as outputs). Input-intensive items such as digital mixers won't become cheap until something like that happens. MiniDisc and DCC, two new consumer-targeted digital formats, may yet do the trick, but their success is far from certain at the moment.

One factor affecting both the price and the effectiveness of the all-digital studio is competition among manufacturers. Before competition can begin in earnest, the integrated approach to system design must die. Self-contained, proprietary systems shut out the rest of the world, so consumers don't have an opportunity to incorporate the best components in each category, or choose among competing technologies such as tape and hard disk. They also force manufacturers, each of whom might excel in one area or another, to design and manufacture the whole enchilada—a strategy that's not likely to deliver the best value per dollar.

But practical utility doesn't always drive change. In technology as in art, the ultimate arbiter is human aspiration. "It's not just a matter of what chips we have," Chaikin observes. "A lot depends on where the people who create the products want to go, where their passion is." When manufacturers' passions line up with those of musicians, sparks fly. And when the all-digital studio finally catches fire, exciting new sounds are sure to follow.

Thanks to Dr. John Strawn, president of S Systems, and Pat Downes, president of Palmtree Instruments.

The Ultimate Guide For



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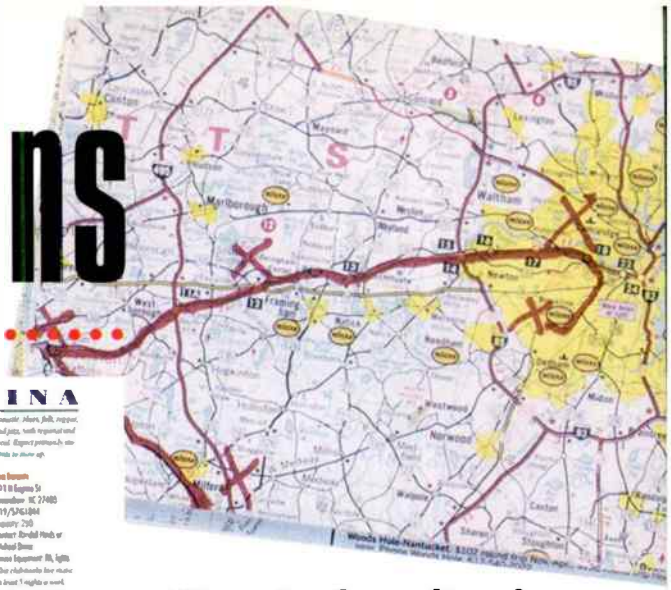

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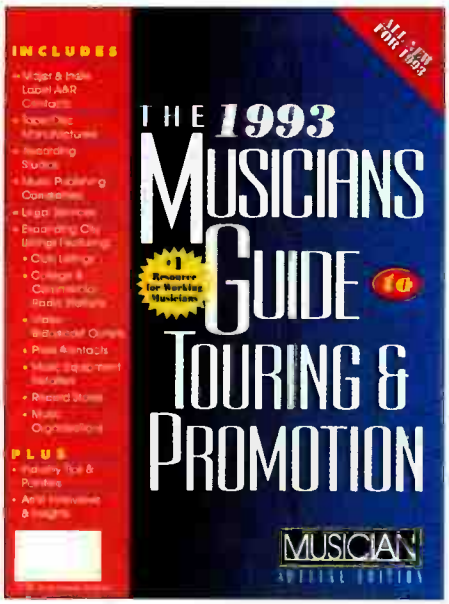

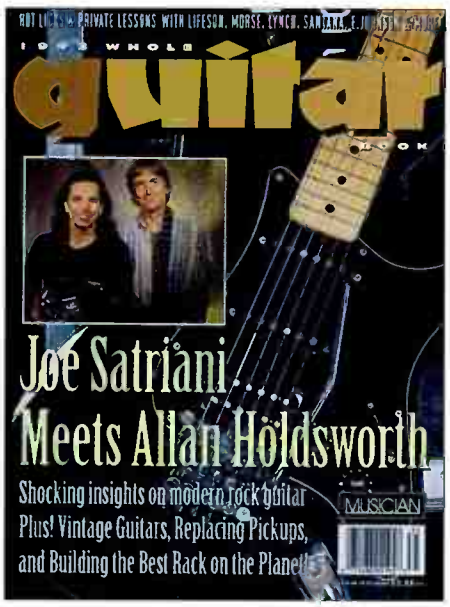

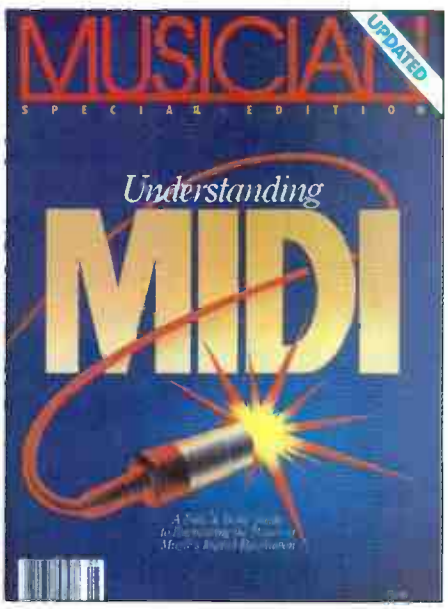

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COLLISION COURSE:

Pocket Protectors Meet Fuzz Boxes at AES '93

IN A DARKENED DEMO ROOM off to one side of the chaotic convention floor, a man with Asian features stood silently beneath a spotlight. Kongar-ool Ondar's outfit, the traditional dress of his native country of Tannu Tuva in south Siberia, stood out amid the audience's business suits and blue jeans as stark evidence that there's more to the world than late-night recording sessions and MTV.

Taking a deep breath, he exhaled with a long, low, guttural tone. And then the magic began: Above the droning voice a subtle melody took form, a whistling sing-song reel whose source was betrayed only by slight changes in the singer's facial expression. Surrounded by the highest of high-tech, visitors to October's Audio Engineering Society convention in New York were treated to the ancient art of Tuvan throat-singing, in which the performer changes the resonant properties of his throat to reveal a succession of harmonics hidden within his voice. Ondar's performance was sponsored by AT&T in hope that his two-voices-in-one technique would dramatize the dual character of mixing consoles equipped with their DISQ system, which retrofits high-end analog boards with a digital signal path. But the Tuvan singer did something more germane. His cameo was nothing less than a masterful demonstration of the sublime power of music—and a fitting reminder that it doesn't depend on any technology more exotic than flesh and blood.

In contrast to previous years, music was a distinct presence at AES '93. In fact the Society, an organization of *engineers*, for heaven's sake, has become snarled in the same net that's been pulling "pro-audio" manufacturers (recording, sound reinforcement and broadcast) to NAMM's semiannual gathering of "MI" companies (musical instruments proper). From mixer to synthesizer, traditional pro-audio and MI product categories are dissolving to reconstitute in new forms more consonant with the demands and potentials of digital technology. Concurrently, audio people and musicians are coming to rely on the same tools. If AES '93 wouldn't have been mistaken for a NAMM show, it's only because the din was 50dB lower and the hair wasn't piled as high.

Exhibitors such as Kurzweil, E-mu, Ensoniq, Hughes & Kettner, ddrum, Opcode, MOTU and Emagic displayed their wares next to studio [*cont'd top page 84*]

THE FUTURE IS NOW

The AES show's official theme emphasized multimedia, but what really stood out was the multitude of digital audio workstations (DAWs). A number of them looked to us like the future of music production. Here's a sampling:

THE FOSTEX FOUNDATION 2000 routes 16 inputs to eight outputs or stereo. Up to six modular DSP cards, each with four Motorola 56002 chips, drive the unit's recording, mixing, processing and editing functions. Data is stored on up to six removable 540-Mb SCSI drives.

THE SIGMA SOUNDSTATION from Digital Audio Research includes built-in visual waveform editing for either eight or 16 channels. All processing functions are available on all channels simultaneously, including crossfading, varispeed, forward and reverse playback.

MULTIDESK adds moving-fader automation and a familiar control surface to Studer's Dyaxis II. Dyaxis piggybacks on a Macintosh, adding nine DSP chips per four-channel card for up to 48 channels of recording, mixing, processing and onscreen editing. The system provides transport control for four external tape decks.

15	12/78	**Chick Corea,** New Freedom Swing
21	11/79	**Brian Eno,** Talking Heads, Weather Report
34	7/81	**Tom Petty,** Dave Edmunds, Wayne Shorter
45	7/82	**Willie Nelson,** John McLaughlin, the Motels
64	2/84	**Stevie Wonder,** X, Was (Not Was), Ornette
70	8/84	**Peter Wolf,** King Crimson, Sly + Robbie
71	9/84	**Heavy Metal,** Dream Syndicate, Tina Turner
102	4/87	**Robert Cray,** Los Lobos, Simply Red
104	6/87	**Springsteen,** The Blasters, Keith Jarrett
112	2/88	**McCartney,** Stanley Clarke, Buster Poindexter
113	3/88	**Robert Plant,** INXS, Wynton Marsalis
115	5/88	**Stevie Wonder, Sonny Rollins, Joni Mitchell, Johnny Cash**
116	6/88	**Sinéad O'Connor,** Neil Young, Tracy Chapman
117	7/88	**Jimmy Page,** Leonard Cohen, Lloyd Cole
118	8/88	**Pink Floyd,** New Order, Smithereens
119	9/88	**Billy Gibbons,** Santana/Shorter, Vernon Reid
120	10/88	**Keith Richards,** Depeche Mode, Steve Forbert
121	11/88	**Prince,** Steve Winwood, Randy Newman
122	12/88	**Guns N' Roses,** Midnight Oil, Glyn Johns
123	1/89	**Year in Music '88,** Metallica, Jack Bruce, Fishbone
124	2/89	**Replacements,** Fleetwood Mac, Lyle Lovett
125	3/89	**Elvis Costello,** Jeff Healey, Sonic Youth
126	4/89	**Lou Reed,** John Cale, Joe Satriani
127	5/89	**Miles Davis,** Fine Young Cannibals, XTC
128	6/89	**Peter Gabriel,** Charles Mingus, Hüsker Dü
129	7/89	**The Who,** The Cure, Ziggy Marley
130	8/89	**10,000 Maniacs,** Mellencamp, Brown/Raitt
131	9/89	**Jeff Beck,** Laura Nyro, Billy Sheehan
133	11/89	**The '80s,** Daniel Lanois, Syd Straw
135	1/90	**Aerosmith,** NRBQ, Richard Thompson, Max Q
137	3/90	**George Harrison,** The Kinks, Abdullah Ibrahim
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146	12/90	**Slash,** Replacements, Waterboys, Pixies
147	1/91	**Robert Johnson,** Bruce Hornsby, Soul Asylum
148	2/91	**Pink Floyd,** Neil Young, Art Blakey, Black Crowes
149	3/91	**Jerry Garcia/Elvis Costello,** NWA, Pink Floyd
150	4/91	**R.E.M.,** AC/DC, Top Managers, Jim Morrison
151	5/91	**Eddie Van Halen,** Fishbone, Byrds, Chris Isaak
152	6/91	**Stevie Ray Vaughan,** Morrissey, Drum Special
154	8/91	**Sting,** Stevie Wonder, 15th Anniversary Issue
155	9/91	**Paul McCartney,** Axl Rose, David Bowie
156	10/91	**Dire Straits,** Jesus Jones, Paul McCartney
157	11/91	**Jimi Hendrix,** Fronk Zappa, Primus, Eddy/Fogerty
158	12/91	**Miles Davis,** Robbie Robertson, Massive Attack
159	1/92	**Super Deals!,** Nirvana, Earl Palmer
160	2/92	**Fear of Rap,** Eric Clapton
162	4/92	**Def Leppard,** k. d. lang, Live
163	5/92	**Drugs & Creativity,** Lovett, Mike Speciol
164	6/92	**Guns N' Roses,** Metallico, Genesis
165	7/92	**Led Zeppelin,** Faith No More, Burnett/Phillips
166	8/92	**David Gilmour,** Robert Wyatt/Bill Nelson
167	9/92	**U2,** Big Guitar Special, George Harrison
168	10/92	**Elvis,** Horace Silver, Producers Special
169	11/92	**Bruce Springsteen,** Arrested Development
170	12/92	**Roger Waters,** Prince, Bob Weir
171	1/93	**Best of '92:** Extreme, Brown, Corey . . .
172	2/93	**100 Great Guitarists,** Paul Simon, Robben Ford
173	3/93	**Mick Jagger,** Hothouse Flowers, Annie Lennox
174	4/93	**Neil Young/Peter Buck,** Henry Rollins, Sting
175	5/93	**World Party,** Stevie Roy Vaughan, PJ Harvey
176	6/93	**Speech/Curtis Mayfield,** Soul Asylum, Chris Isaak
178	8/93	**Steve Vai,** Stevie Ray Vaughan, PJ Horvey
179	9/93	**Steely Dan,** Tonya Donelly, Kim Deal
180	10/93	**Nirvana,** Jeff Beck, Depeche Mode
181	11/93	**Pearl Jam,** Counting Crows, Liz Phair
182	12/93	**Future Shocks,** Year in Music '93
SP1		**Best of the Beatles and Rolling Stones**
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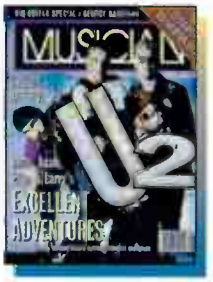

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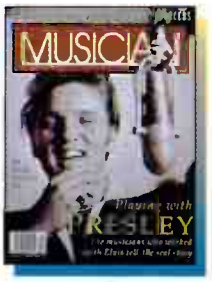
U2

153
Bonnie Raitt



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Elvis

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Keith Richards

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Grateful Dead

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Jimi Hendrix

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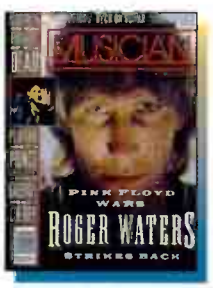
Lou Reed



170
Roger Waters

146
Slash

171
Best of 1992

142
Sinéad O'Connor

SP1
Beatles & Stones

SP2
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Turn On, Tune In and Unplug

Pop's bottom end is changing, thanks to new approaches to building basses, innovative pickup designs and MTV's "Unplugged."

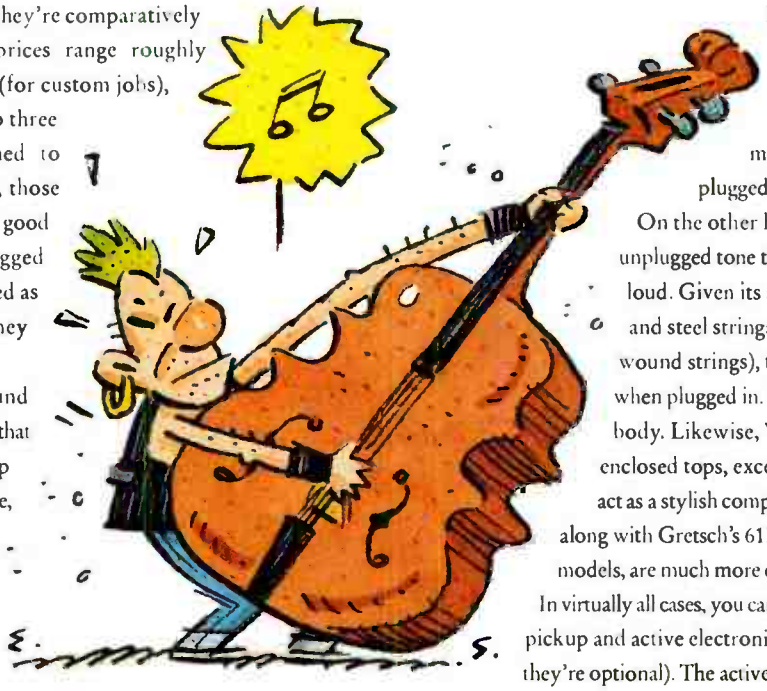
WHEN LEO FENDER introduced his Precision bass in 1951, few people had considered the notion of a solidbody electric bass guitar. The cumbersome upright bass, variously known as the bull fiddle, the doghouse and a dozen other derogatory epithets, had reigned supreme in almost every style of popular music since the beginning of the twentieth century. Today, 40 years after Leo's invention, pop's bottom end is changing again, thanks to a combination of new approaches to building acoustic basses, innovative pickup designs and MTV's "Unplugged."

The difference is the precipitous rise of the acoustic bass guitar. This mutant instrument is quite a different animal than the acoustic guitar, the electric bass or even the old upright. The upright has a massive body, large soundboard and huge cavity because that's the best way to generate and disperse low-frequency energy at volume levels sufficient for music. But even the biggest acoustic bass guitar is only one-fifth the size, so you can't expect that massive *woooom* beneath the sound—that is, unless you plug it in. That goes double for instruments equipped with a fifth, low B, string.

Nonetheless, there's a lot to recommend the current passel of acoustic/electric bass guitars, which includes models from Gretsch, Guild, Martin, Ovation, Samick, Washburn and a host of smaller companies. They can be used amp-free in the park, on the porch, even in the studio. Their tone is completely different from that of an electric or an upright. And, of course, they're comparatively lightweight. Although prices range roughly between $500 and $4000 (for custom jobs), these instruments fall into three categories: those designed to sound good unamplified, those that tread the line between good plugged-in and unplugged sounds, and those designed as electrics even though they provide an acoustic tone.

If you've been around acoustic guitars, you know that solid spruce tops and deep bodies point to a robust tone, while instruments with laminated (plywood-like) tops, thick paint jobs and shallow bodies sound less formidable. Unfortunately, these guidelines aren't entirely helpful when it comes to basses. A common phenomenon with these instruments, even those built in the tradition of the acoustic guitar, is a proximity effect that tends to make the tone sound more balanced to the player than to the listener. From several feet away, though, Ovation's B768-4, with its synthetic "bowl" back, spruce top, and bevy of small soundholes, seems to project more volume and a wider range. Go figure.

Despite varying approaches to endowing guitar-sized basses with "acousticness," once they're plugged in the differences between various models are subtle. Many of them take on an entirely different character, too, so it's important to consider just how much of the time you're likely to be playing in the raw. In fact, channel-surfing past "Unplugged" the other day, I noticed that the player's Washburn five-string was—horror of horrors—*plugged in!* It sounded great, but it wasn't acoustic. If you're interested in playing unamplified, the large-bodied instruments tend to sound best, including the Martin, Guild and Sigma, as well as the Ovation. These also give the most acoustic-like tone when plugged in.



On the other hand, the Samick Kingston has an unplugged tone that's predictably nasal and not very loud. Given its shallow body, f-holes, thick finish and steel strings (most of the others have bronze-wound strings), this instrument is clearly at its best when plugged in. In fact, it sounds much like a solidbody. Likewise, Washburn's AB20 and AB40 have enclosed tops, except for a group of narrow slits that act as a stylish compound soundhole. Both Washburns, along with Gretsch's 6175 and 6176 shallow-body cutaway models, are much more commanding when plugged in.

In virtually all cases, you can expect to find a piezoelectric bridge pickup and active electronics (well worth the extra expense if they're optional). The active electronics [*cont'd bottom page 84*]

• **Boom Bass**, 642 Shasta Rd. #B, Yuba City, CA 95991; (916) 671-6692. • **Breedlove**, 19885 8th St., Tumalo, OR 97701; (503) 385-8339. • **Dave Maize**, 999 Holdon Rd., Talent, OR 97540; (503) 535-9052. • **Gretsch**, Box 1175, Savannah, GA 31402; (912) 964-0880. • **Guild**, 2885 S. James Dr., New Berlin, WI 53151; (414) 784-8388. • **Kaman** (Ovation, Celebrity and Applause), Box 507, Bloomfield, CT 06002; (203) 243-7105. • **Larriveé**, 267 E. First St., North Vancouver, B.C. V7L 189, Canada; (604) 985-6520. • **Martin**, 510 Sycamore St., Nazareth, PA 18064; (215) 759-2837. • **Samick**, 18520 Railroad St., City of Industry, CA 91748; (818) 964-4700. • **Washburn**, 255 Corporate Woods Pkwy., Vernon Hills, IL 60061; (708) 913-5511.

ILLUSTRATION BY ELLWOOD H. SMITH

PEARL EXPORT PRO DRUMS

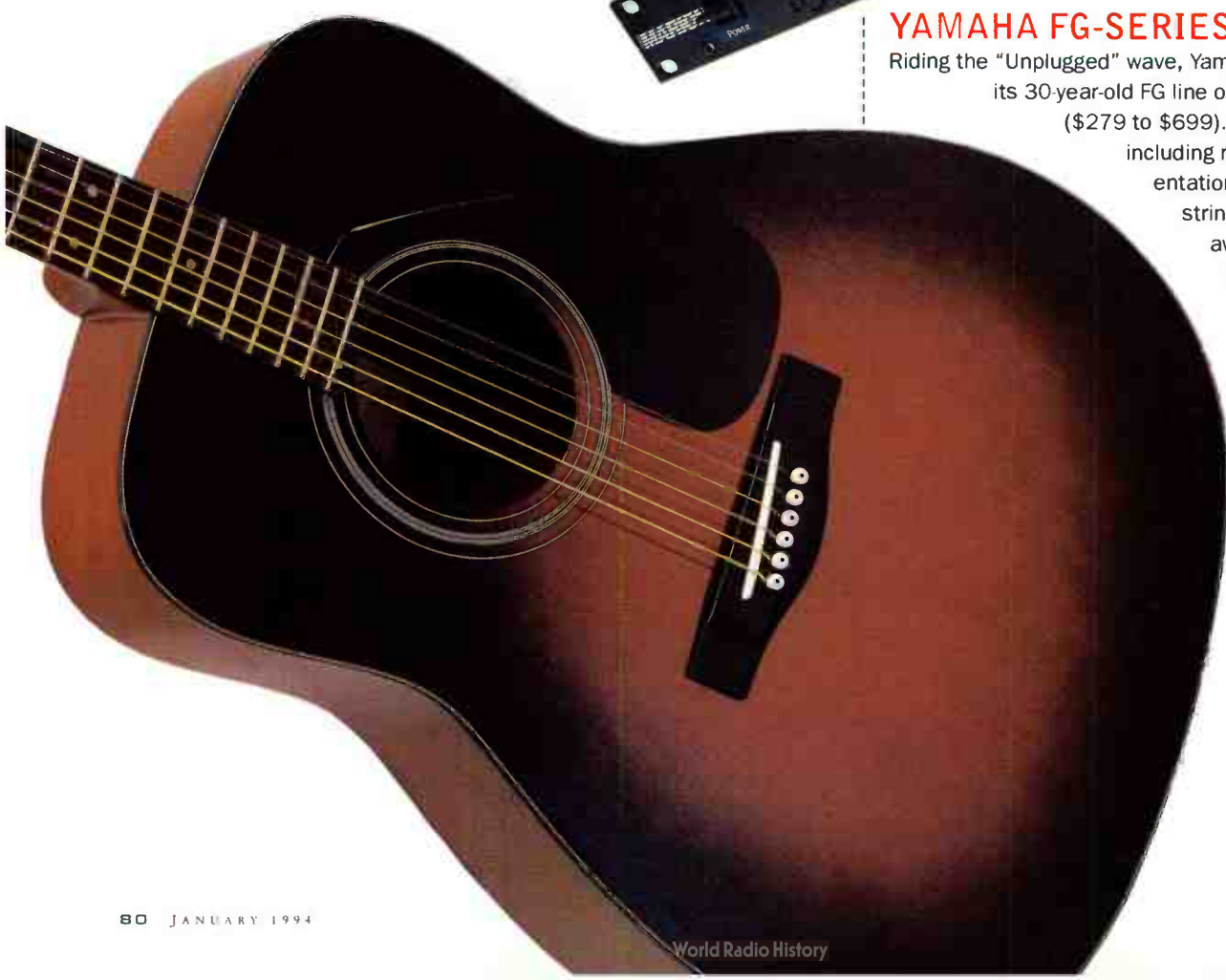
Full-bodied tone, responsiveness, sturdiness and eye-catching design are the hallmarks of a great drum kit. Pearl's Export Pro kits fit the bill with a host of professional features. For instance, the EX-22D-60DW ($2690) offers pressure-molded shells and infinitely adjustable cymbal tilters and snare basket. Toms are suspension-mounted for improved resonance, dynamic response and decay time. Pearl, 549 Metroplex Dr., Nashville, TN 37211; voice (615) 833-4477, fax (615) 833-6242.

MARION MSR-2 SYNTHESIZER

Tom Oberheim, the man responsible for the legendary tone and progressive design of classic Oberheim synthesizers, is back. His new baby is the Marion Systems Modular Synthesizer MSR-2 ($1495). The MSR-2 is a mainframe that holds two plug-in synthesis modules, thwarting obsolescence by making it possible to incorporate new sound-generation methods as they develop. Marion Systems, c/o RiCharde & Co., 335 Willow Hts., Aptos, CA 95003; voice (408) 688-8593, fax (408) 688-8595.

YAMAHA FG-SERIES GUITARS

Riding the "Unplugged" wave, Yamaha has expanded its 30-year-old FG line of acoustic guitars ($279 to $699). A wealth of options, including right- or left-hand orientation, solid top, six or 12 strings, pickups and cutaways, makes for around 20 different FG models in a variety of colors and finishes. Yamaha, P.O. Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622-6600; voice (800) 523-4686, fax (800) 522-4023.



FAST FORWARD

KORG i-SERIES WORKSTATIONS

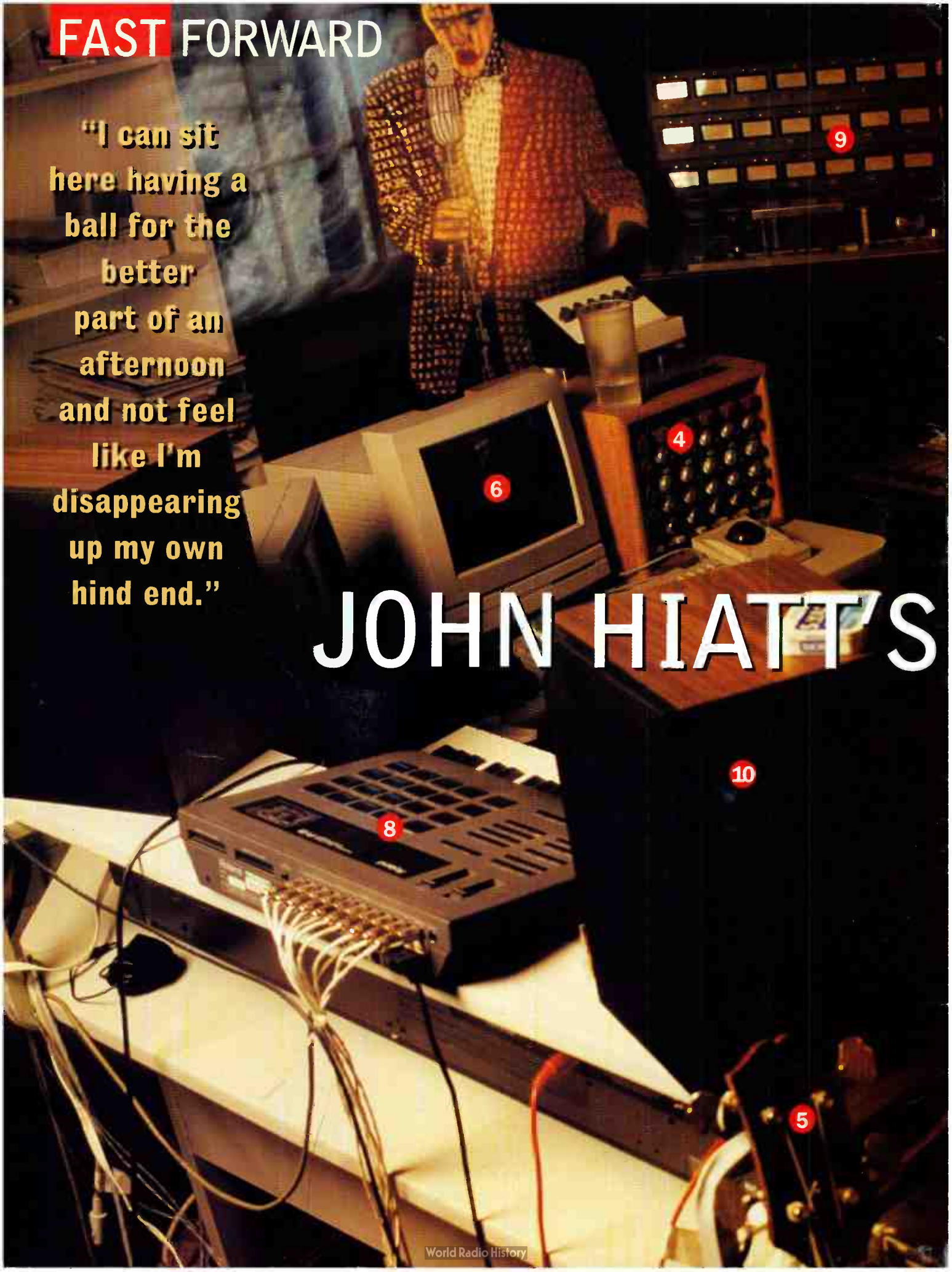
Artificial intelligence may be the next big thing in music workstations. Korg's *i*-2 (76 keys, $3899) and *i*-3 (61 keys, $3199) pair the sounds of the Korg 01/W with capabilities designed to aid in the creative process. Sequencing a new song is a breeze thanks to automatic accompaniments, intros and endings that adapt, in real time, to the player's choice of melody, harmony and rhythm. Korg, 89 Frost St., Westbury, NY 11590; voice (516) 333-9100, fax (516) 333-9108.

ALESIS X2 MIXER

The popularity of digital multitrack decks in home studios poses a conundrum: Mixers of comparable quality are built for pro-studio budgets. The X2 ($6495) from Alesis addresses the situation with a full-featured 24x8x2 console. The X2's built-in automation synchronizes muting to both MIDI and the sync output of the Alesis ADAT. Alesis, 3630 Holdrege Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90016; voice (310) 558-4530, fax (310) 836-9192.

AKG VINTAGE TL MICROPHONE

Retromania has breathed new life into old guitars, keyboards, drums, even stomp boxes. Why not microphones? AKG's Vintage TL ($1499) is based on two time-tested condenser models, the evergreen C414B/TL and the revered C12 tube mike. The black-and-gold body belongs to the C414, but the Vintage TL's capsule is a state-of-the-art reproduction of the C12's '50s-era design. AKG, 1525 Alvarado St., San Leandro, CA 94577; voice (510) 351-3500, fax (510) 351-0500.



HOME STUDIO

"I've become a good boneheaded engineer," says John Hiatt, talking about his long hours in the funky home studio he built in the big ol' shed behind his Tennessee mountain home. "*Perfectly Good Guitar* is the first example of me having this kind of stuff to do preproduction. It definitely saves me money, but mainly it saves me mental time. For this record it served a great purpose because I was really prepared when I went into the studio. We were able to go in and make a very intense, go-for-it kind of record."

Hiatt's home studio grew up around a **Peavey Production Series 1600** board 1, but these days the songwriter usually bypasses the console on his way to tape. "I mainly use the console to mix," he says; he captures the results to a **Casio DA-2** DAT machine 2 and a **Denon DRM 710** cassette deck 3. "If I've got to mike an amp, I'll run it through one of these **Neve preamps** 4 to put some moosh in it." Lately, Hiatt's been using the vintage Neves, culled from a defunct console, to "muck up" just about everything from his **'63 Epiphone Newport** bass 5 to those icy digital drum and synth tracks. He uses **dbx 160** compressors and a rackmount **Tech 21 SansAmp** for the same purpose, rounding out the selection of processors with **Lexicon 300, PCM 70** and **LXP 5** effects boxes.

But, for Hiatt, the groove comes first. "I'll get a pocket, a drum beat, with my sequencer," he explains, pointing to a **Macintosh LC** 6 running Opcode's Vision. "Then I'll sit there with the acoustic and play and sing the song to get the drum beat at the right rhythm and the right feel. It's usually something dumb, just kick, snare and hat. Then I might take 20 minutes going through some drum samples to get sounds that seem to fit the song. Then I'll bang on a vocal track and fill it out with bass. When it's pretty well formed, I'll go back and put the drum fills in."

Hiatt plays the drum fills live using a **Kat DK-10** drum controller. His keyboard, a **Roland RD300S** 7, is equipped with his one main requirement: weighted action. Drum sounds come from a **Roland R8** drum machine 8, with additional timbres from **Roland's U220** module and **S750** sampler, all recorded to a 1977-vintage **MCI JH16** analog multitrack deck 9. His primary microphones are an **AKG C414** and a **Shure SM57**. Two sets of monitors pump out the mix: a pair of **KEFs** from England 10—"I love 'em, they're totally unflattering"—and **Yamaha NS-10s** 11.

MATT BARNES

BY PETER CRONIN

can expect from a reunion. But, considering their history, you can't blame a fan for wanting more. —Rob O'Connor

CASSANDRA WILSON

Blue Light 'Til Dawn

(Blue Note)

ON HER EIGHT PREVIOUS RECORDS, Cassandra Wilson helped redefine the idea of a jazz singer, commingling elements from soul, blues, pop, gospel and so on in an intensely personal search for an outer and inner voice. On *Blue Light*, she's found it. A hushed masterpiece of torrid romanticism, this is at once her most assured and daring album to date.

Inspired by reductionist notions from producer Craig Street, each track here is propelled by slight but striking instrumental figures. The violin in "You Don't Know What Love Is," Chris Whitley's bottleneck guitar on "I Can't Stand the Rain," the accordion in "Come On in My Kitchen," Don Byron's clarinet darting through Joni Mitchell's "Black Crow"—each enhances the dramatic flow of Wilson's supple, smoky voice. These songs and their sequencing are arranged for maximum impact, bristling with Wilson's eloquent interpretive skills. It's overwhelming understatement.

Her last record was titled *Dance to the Drums Again*, and percussion is the singer's greatest ally here as well. Wilson negotiates rhythms like no other improvising vocalist at work today, and by alternately ensconcing herself in Cyro Baptista's rich claves and floating whispers over Vinx's hand-drums, she astutely applies jazz tactics to pop music. She also hears the cadences in melodic instruments; Brandon Ross's guitar is often a foil for Wilson's roaming phrases. Conflating Miriam Makeba's spirituality, Odetta's dignity and Laura Nyro's shadowy drama, *Blue Light* spins an alluring song cycle into an inescapable web. —Jim Macnie

CHRIS CALLAS

CASSANDRA WILSON

JUNIOR BROWN

Guit with It

12 Shades of Brown

(Curb)

EVERYTHING ABOUT JUNIOR BROWN seems off-kilter: his penchant for wearing white cowboy hats with suits that look a size too small; his ability to veer from humor to

VIDEO

AIRTO MOREIRA

Rhythm and Colors

(PCI VIDEO)

THROUGH INSTRUCTIONAL INTERVIEWS and group presentations, *Rhythms and Colors* offers a compelling video seminar on the possibilities of merging the melodic colors of percussion instruments with the indomitable groove of the American trap kit. It illustrates how Airto employs a double bass drum pedal, a remote extension hi-hat pedal, a crisp 20" Zildjian flat ride, three shallow single-headed Eames tom-toms (fitted with Remo Pinstripes), a 16" bass drum (on his far right) and a snare drum (on his far left where your hi-hats would usually be) to approximate the traditional four-way coordination patterns of the drum kit—while freeing up his right side to hover over a percussion table full of tuned and untempered instruments, for a rainforest of natural sounds. The dancing, songlike cadences of his samba, baiao and frevo beats—and Airto's ability to illustrate their underlying simplicity—should win over renegade backbeaters who never bought into the company line that the only way to play repetitive patterns is in a static, robotic, toneless plop. And his closing evocation of healing spirits, parallel dimensions and dancing ancestors, far from new-age doggerel, suggests the very essence of musical freedom.

—*Chip Stern*

PAGE TURNERS

BEYOND CATEGORY: THE LIFE AND GENIUS OF DUKE ELLINGTON

by John Edward Hasse

(SIMON & SCHUSTER)

HOW TO MAKE BIG MONEY SCORING SOUNDTRACKS: YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO WRITING AND SELLING ORIGINAL MUSIC

by Jeffrey P. Fisher

(FISHER CREATIVE GROUP)

THE ULTIMATE BEATLES ENCYCLOPEDIA

by Bill Harry

(HYPERION)

heartache in a wink; his unique double-necked "Guit-Steel," which combines a six-string Strat with a lap steel, a contraption so heavy he has to strap it to a music stand to play while standing upright; his finally making a major-label debut at age 41 with not one, but two, albums. Oh yeah, and the fact that, despite country music's busting popularity, hardly anyone in Nashville seems to be paying attention. Somebody oughta reconsider that one. Garth sells zillions, Wynonna's a household name, but Junior Brown is touched by genius.

Like Merle Haggard, also currently languishing in Curb Records limbo, Brown is a genius of the all-trades variety. He sings in a sonorous bass-baritone, picks on Hank Garland's "Sugarfoot Rag" (for instance) with a dexterity Roy Clark would admire, then tosses in Jimi Hendrix quotes in a manner at once audacious and natural. A cockeyed tribute like "My Baby Don't Dance to Nothing but Ernest Tubb" bookends an album with "Don't Sell the Farm," in which a family tragedy unfolds with spare, unblinking wretchedness. Stately ballads segue to whimsical confections like "Hillbilly Hula Gal" and "Coconut Island" as Brown takes western swing really west, all the way to Hawaii. You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll dance.

Both of these records are terrific, though not altogether similar. *12 Shades of Brown*, which was released earlier as an import, is a fine showcase for Brown's songwriting, while *Guit with It* does the better job of showing off his instrumental prowess—and why not? As the 11 minutes of "Guit-Steel Blues" demonstrates, Brown possesses jaw-dropping technique, yet never employs it strictly for technique's sake; the playing is fluid, concise, musical. No, Nashville may not be ready for Junior Brown, but that's the price of being an original. The payoff is that music this true can never go out of style.

—Mark Rowland

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RECORDINGS

[*cont'd from page 95*] raw feistiness informs his sense of improvisation, recalling the spirit if not the letter of players as diverse as Django Reinhardt and Tal Farlow. A medium swing take on "Say a Little Prayer for You" harks back to the Wes-ified pop standards of the '60s; the title cut, a slow suave blues by Duke Ellington, reeks of cologne on red Naugahyde seats. A Monk-ish wiliness emerges on "Gaslight," while "Sno' Peas" closes the set in a dark, lustrous bath.

At times, Malone's youthful zest turns to jumpiness and grace is lost. For the most part, though, he's got his priorities straight—ahead, that is. Like Eubanks, and in his own way, he takes a few steps back to inch forward.

—Josef Woodard

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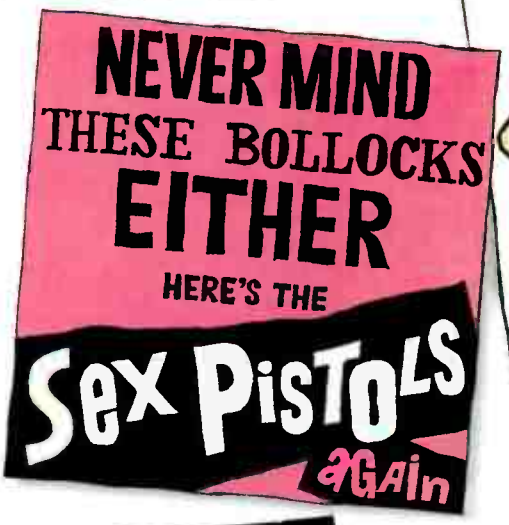
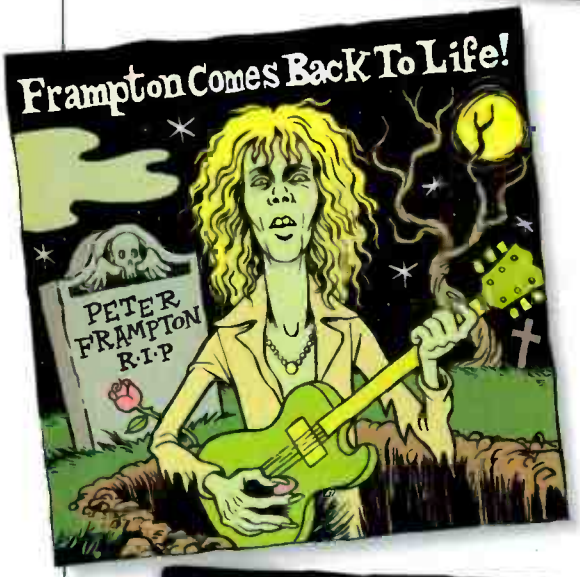
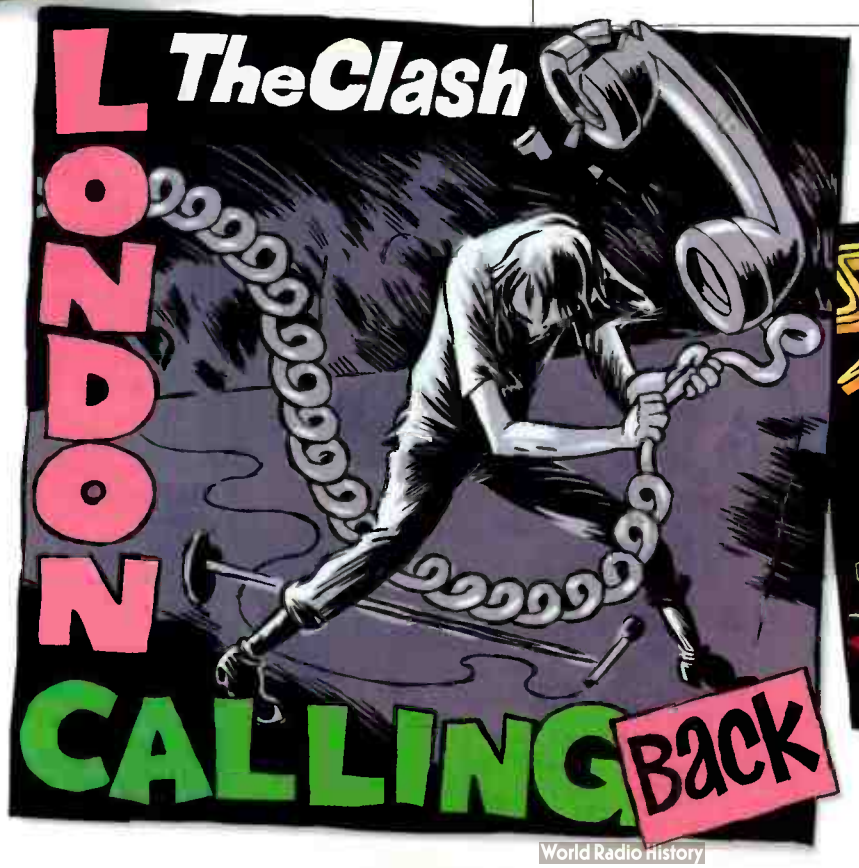




Sequel Opportunity

Meat Loaf's 1977 album *Bat Out of Hell* continues to sell 15,000 copies a week, while the beefy vocalist's subsequent LPs have long since been melted down to make mood rings. In a stroke of marketing genius, Mr. Loaf decided to name his latest album *Bat Out of Hell 2*, and sure enough, it has proved to be a sales bonanza. What does this Stallone-ish innovation bode for the future of pop? We can imagine:



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