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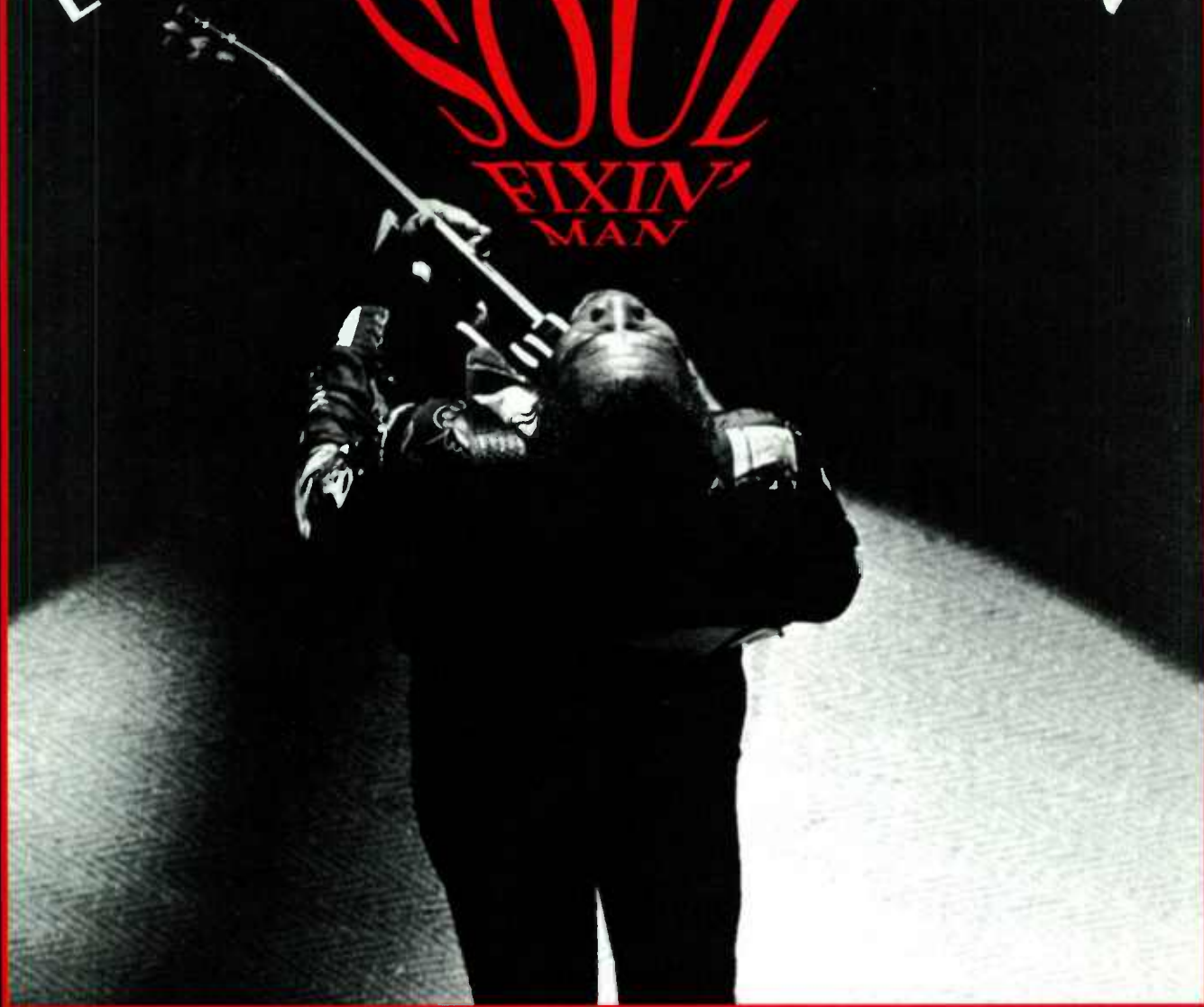
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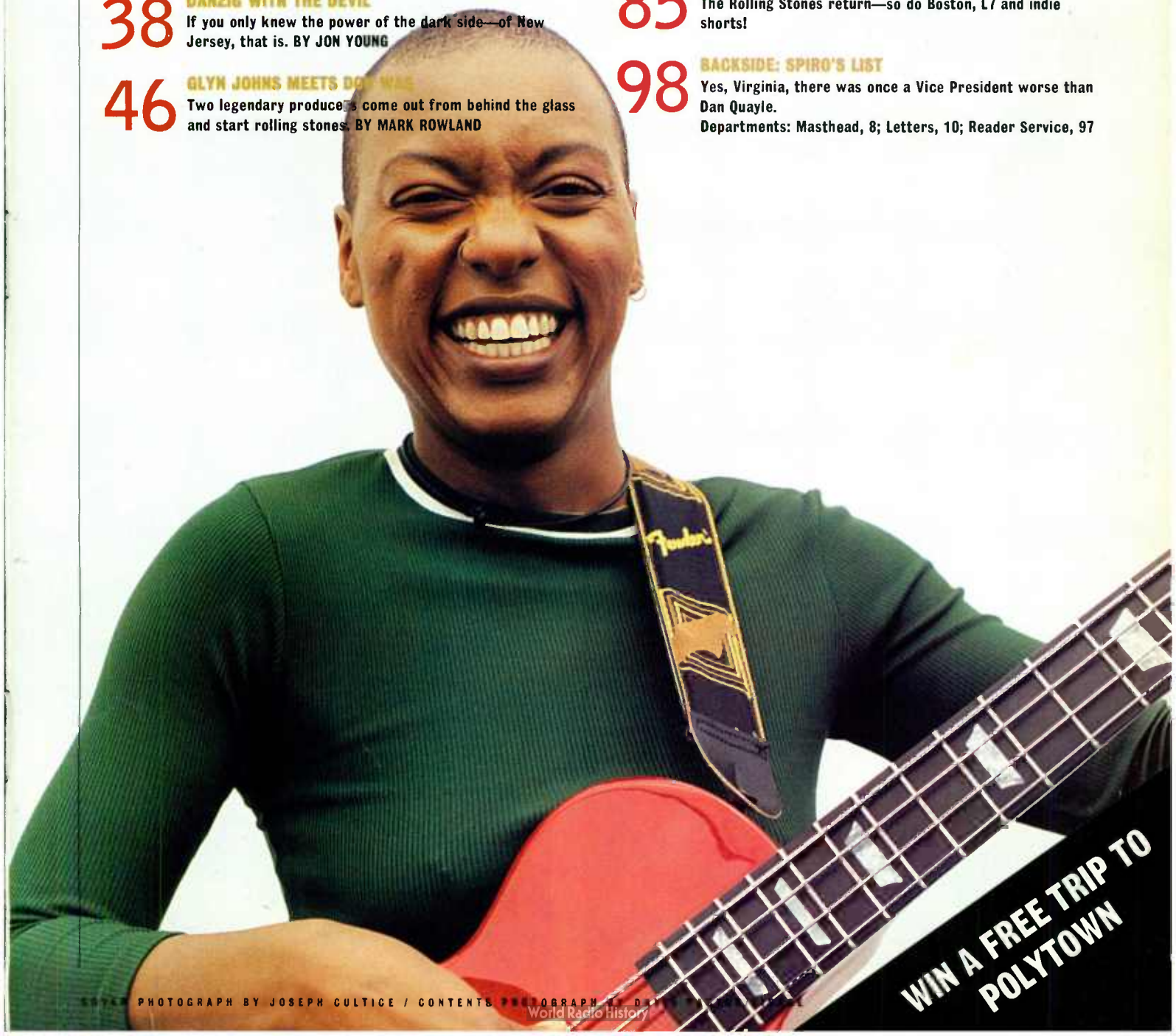
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*You're playing 23 dates in the United States this year. Is this the beginning of yearly tour appearances for Van Cliburn?*

I have been playing some since 1987. I will probably never play on the scale I once did—100 concerts a year or more—which I did for 23 years.

*Is there a single reason that you stopped touring in 1978?*

I told everyone when I was 18, "I know the first part of my life I'm going to work very hard. But I want a vacation at a time in my life that I can really enjoy it." And I did. [laughs]

*Is the vacation over now?*

I'm trying to have it balanced. I love traveling and people, but I love being home.

*This tour you're playing the Rachmaninoff Third and the first Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto, and you're narrating Copland's A Lincoln Portrait. How do you approach pieces you've played for 30 years?*

You're always practicing slowly with the score, refining and honing passages. Classical music is the only music that withstands endless visitation.

*It's ironic that the man who defended America's honor at the height of the Cold War in 1958 by winning the first International Tchaikovsky competition in Moscow was really someone who loved Russia.*

Some things I did for one reason, and other things happened along the way. When they announced this competition, the first thing I thought of was that I was going to see the Church of St. Basil. When I was five, my parents gave me a child's history book of the world, and the picture that stayed in my mind was the picture of the Kremlin with the Church of St. Basil. The first night, when I saw it, I felt like my journey was complete.

*Do you believe that Khrushchev had to approve your winning the Tchaikovsky?*

That's what I read.

*At Juilliard in the '40s you studied with Rosina Lhevinne.*

My mother was my first teacher, and she wanted me to continue in the Russian school of piano playing.

*What was New York like then?*

If I had a night, I would go to hear all the great pianists: I heard Walter Gieseking, Myra Hess, Solomon [British pianist], Clifford Curzon, and Toscanini of course. And when I could, I went to hear the opera.

*You never saw Rachmaninoff, though?*

No. My mother was on a committee to bring him to Shreveport, but I got one of those childhood ailments and couldn't go. He was probably the greatest pianist who ever lived.

*There is a trend for performers to read the score while performing—what do you think of this?*

I don't read now, but I may have to someday. Myra Hess used to read. It's up to the person. A great conductor was asked one night before a performance if he were going to use the score, and he said, "Yes, I can read music."

*Have you ever played Stockhausen?*

**"Great pieces get an emotional response first, then an intellectual one."**



## VAN CLIBURN

Never. Let me tell you. I like music that has a lyrical thrust. I don't mind dissonance if it serves a purpose. A great piece of music gets an emotional response—then an intellectual one. If there is too much intellectualism, you have no poetry. If there is too much poetry, you have no architecture. Music is unseen architecture.

*You've come into some criticism in the press for not expanding on your Romantic repertory. Does that affect your playing?*

How can it? You must be yourself. I tell younger players: Never play anything that doesn't lie close to your heart. You can't *prove* anything, you can only be. If something I play is not deemed acceptable to them, that's their privilege to say that.

*Do you still conduct?*

I did 27 concerts, but that's over. My mother said she didn't think I would have been invited to conduct if I didn't play well. [laughs]

*You're writing a piano sonata, aren't you? What's it like?*

It'll be three movements. They're sort of drafted. The first movement will be sonata allegro form—I'm old-fashioned that way. You always feel like there are so many ways you can go when you're writing, expanding on this motif or that idea. But you have to have a totality in mind, that's where architecture comes in.

*Will you perform this? Your fans are waiting.*

Absolutely—you can be sure. If I die before it's done, you know I'll be very unhappy. [laughs]

*Are you the most famous pianist alive?*

Heavens, no. We all have our little worlds, where we go into our little room and we're alone. So when I'm alone, does anyone remember me?

KEITH POWERS

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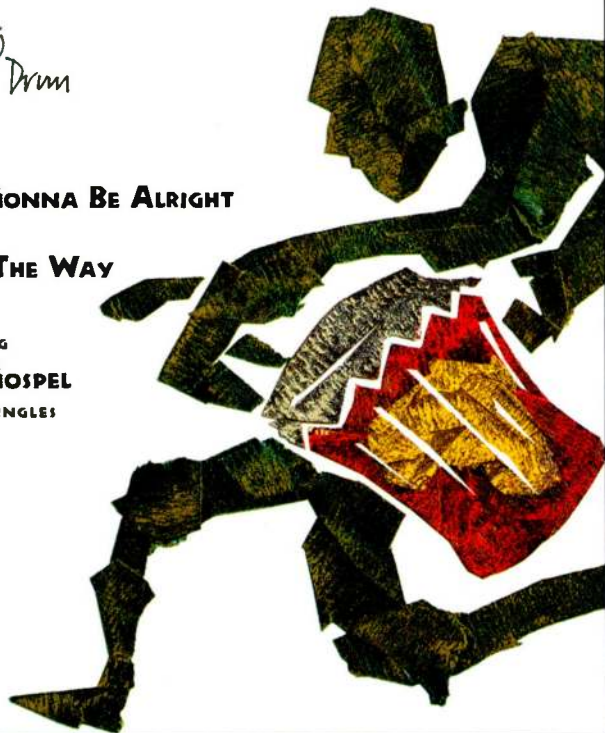
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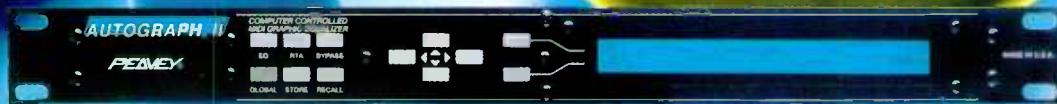


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# LETTERS

## NIRVANA

Dozens of readers responded to Bill Flanagan's tribute to Kurt Cobain (June '94). Here are some excerpts:

Kurt Cobain's music taught one thing: We all deserve to be accepted and loved. He was anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-homophobic—unfortunately, he not only lacked prejudice, he also lacked the tools to cope.

*Ilona Radics  
Chicago, IL*

I believe that if not for his music, wife, and child his flame would have burned out much sooner. His inward pain that he struggled with became more so apparent after his tragic ending.

*Donna Slay  
Ladson, SC*

Thanks for bringing out the fact that people should not try to cash in on his death, but to appreciate his work, and realize he was piquant. I think many will enjoy his music for years to come, and share it with their children and grandchildren. Let Mr. Cobain rest in peace!

*Adria R. Friedman  
Paradox Magazine  
Staten Island, NY*

It's about time someone recognized Kurt as a person with feelings and a personality, rather than a programmed music freak that has no life outside the music industry.

*Prisha Martin  
Niceville, FL*

We take this poor kid and say to him, "You're in charge now, you're our new leader—speak to us, O Great One." We finally pushed someone over the edge.

*Jim Bevan  
Bryn Athyn, PA*

As a fan of Nirvana, I am sad and angered by Kurt Cobain's suicide.

*Lisa Hake  
Glenwood, IL*

When Frank Zappa died the world lost an intelligent, dignified, self-made man who didn't make excuses, but went straight ahead in the face of adversity, raised a family and his own

recording company while composing an ungodly amount of diversified music. When Kurt Cobain killed himself the world lost a coward who didn't have enough common sense or decency to tough it out, confront his problems and give his daughter an upbringing that he constantly whined about not having.

*Marlon R. Slater  
Townville, SC*

To mention the difficulties of his childhood in the oblique way that you did subtly reinforces the notion that this boy was victimized and that

obviously does not understand their music.

*George Goebel  
Catonsville, MD*

I have come to expect a little more than this type of childishness. In giving a two-word review, Mr. Considine ignored both the fact that the recording and technology behind the Yes album are amazing, and for us Yes fans out here, there's a couple of really good tracks to go along with the radio-ready stuff.

*Lawrence Dorsey  
Chicago, IL*

What bothers me is that reviewers seem to walk down the same tunnel together. Nirvana and Pearl Jam are hip; Yes is not.

*Victor Hahn  
Omaha, NE*

The tragedy of suicide is not something to be glorified but rather addressed as a serious problem that is taking the lives of so many people who only needed help. I say this because I am 23 years old and have made a half a dozen attempts to take my life. It's hard for me to think of other people when I am really depressed and feeling worthless and alone. The real loss is the waste of a young life filled with talent whose pain touched the hearts of people like me who struggle every day to find hope and a reason not to give up.

*Kyla Smith  
Wichita Falls, TX*



J.D. Considine is a gifted writer, as shown again and again in reviews and articles. When the importance of being clever overshadows the need to produce an informative review, however, I suggest you examine what you are looking for in a critic. Either review the album fairly, or skip it.

*Thomas Hawley  
Las Vegas, NV*

his end was somehow justified. This insults those many people who have had true hardship to bear, eventually overcoming or accepting it but never, ever turning tail and fleeing.

*Stephen G. McDaniel  
San Antonio, TX*

Here we go again lamenting the loss of another rock "icon"! Kurt Cobain is *not* a martyr. He is a selfish asshole.

*Ken Lesko  
Hillsborough, NJ*

## YES OR NO?

As a supposedly professional critic of rock music, J.D. Considine comes across as a rank amateur with his infantile critique of a disc by one of progressive rock's most enduring bands (*Short Takes*, June '94). One can only assume that he is incapable of any in-depth critical analysis of Yes or any of the other progressive rockers (ELP, Pink Floyd, Genesis etc.), because he

## JAZZ SINGER

Rickie Lee Jones "hate[s] jazz" and "would never invite traditional players because they'll play only the one thing that they can play." Is that why on one of her recent records she prominently featured tenor veteran Joe Henderson?

*Richard Freeman  
San Francisco, CA*

Rickie Lee Jones' derogatory comments regarding jazz make it very apparent why she's never succeeded as a jazz singer. It is very disappointing that she could say such unintelligent things about a musical style that has established itself over the past century as a uniquely American art form.

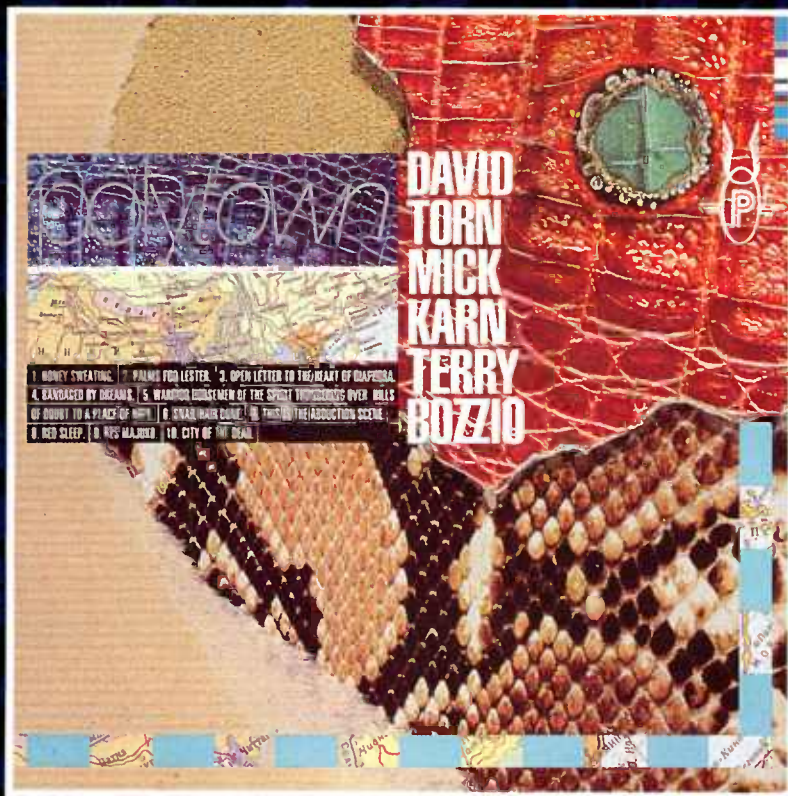
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# DAVID TORN



Guitarist David Torn has been experimenting at the cutting edge where rock meets jazz ever since he heard Jimi Hendrix's "Burning Wall of Voodoo" at Woodstock. Torn has worked with a whole host of musical heavyweights including Don Cherry, Jan Garbarek, Mark Isham & Bill Bruford & has composed for some 20 films & is additionally noted for his production work.

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# MICK KARN



*Wah*

The distinctive sound of bassist Mick Karn was first heard as a key member of the internationally renowned group Japan. Their innovative approach to pop & rock won them international success with Karn's rubbery & constantly inventive basslines regularly featuring as the lead instrument of the band. In 1991 Karn formed his own band with David Torn, Steve Jansen & Richard Barbieri. Their first album "Bestial Cluster" was released to wide spread critical acclaim.

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## REQUIEM

When Joe Pass and Sonny Sharrock died last month, the jazz guitar world lost two titans, albeit from radically different perspectives. Pass, who succumbed to liver cancer at 65, was the consummate mainstream player, who'd developed incomparable skill in the delicate realm of solo guitar; Sharrock, who died of a heart attack at 53, was a confirmed eclectic best known for chordal walls of sound.

Both enjoyed late-blooming recognition. While his career began as a bopper in the '50s,



Pass worked his way through struggles with drugs and prison; in the '60s he was a studio session fixture before flowering as a jazz virtuoso in the '70s. Deftly weaving chordal, bass and melodic elements on the themes of timeless standards, he embodied a seamless musicality and a sense of adventure.

More a cult hero, Sharrock had a dizzy career that included stints with Herbie Mann, a brush with Miles Davis in the classic LP *Jack Johnson*, and in the last several years renewed visibility in such voodoo jazz contexts as Bill Laswell's *Last Exit*. In a recent interview, he noted, "I sang doo-wop as a kid in the '50s, carried that into the free music in the '60s, and then brought both of those forward into this electronic '90s thing. I guess I'm just the American dream come true."

He was kidding, but he was right. Joe Pass and Sonny Sharrock: May those dreams live on.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES

# How I Wrote That Hit Song

by Brad Roberts, *Crash Test Dummies*

**WHEN I sat down to write "Mmm Mmm Mmm Mmm," I wanted to put together a piece which reflected the funny, quirky world that kids live in. So I wanted to paint three scenarios, one in each verse, that hopefully provided a sense of that childhood atmo-**

sphere. In each verse, we meet a kid who's in some situation that perhaps sets him or her apart from their peers and would tend to stick in a kid's mind.

In the first verse, the kid is in a car accident, and his hair changes color as a result of the trauma. I was careful to make sure the kid wasn't paralyzed or had a punctured heart or something, because that would be melodramatic. That the kid goes away unscathed in terms of physical injury but nevertheless bears the mark of the accident was, I thought, a nice happy medium.

In the second verse, we meet this girl who is reluctant to change in front of the other girls; she has a variety of birthmarks that she's a little embarrassed about. These are *not* marks of physical abuse by her

father—as has often been supposed. She's just kind of stuck with this situation that makes her nudity awkward in front of her peers.

In the last verse, we encounter a kid whose parents go to a church that involves things like speaking in tongues and being possessed of the spirit. He's marked in a different way—i.e., his parents engage in what is, to him, very baffling behavior. I'm not critiquing religion here. But like the kids in the preceding verses, he tends to be looked at askance by his peers because of their unusual behavior, and he himself is also baffled by it.

I can't say that I was drawing from particular experiences in my life. Usually when I write, I see writing in terms of problem solving. For example, in Verse A,

# ROUGH

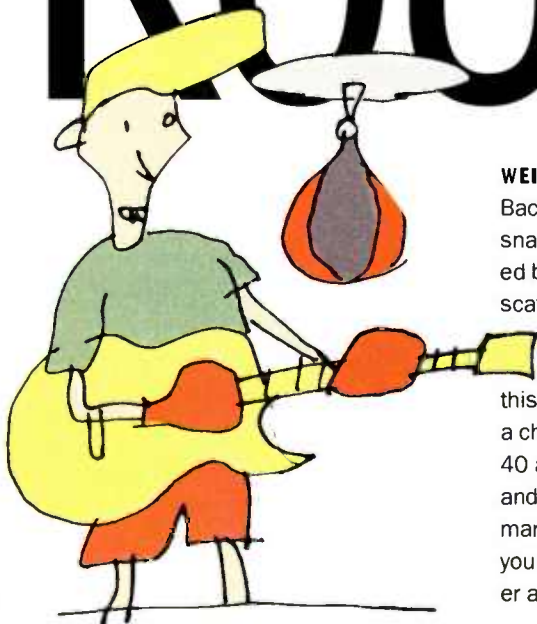


ILLUSTRATION BY PATRICK BLACKWELL

## WEIGHTS, JUICE AND ROCK 'N' ROLL

Back in the '70s, Ozzy Osbourne demanded snakes in his dressing room. Van Halen wanted buckets of M&Ms, minus the red ones, scattered backstage. Aerosmith's chemical indulgences were legend. And those were the *official* contract riders. But this is the '90s, and rock star physiques are a changin'. "A lot of these musicians are over 40 and feel lucky to have survived the '60s and '70s," observes Jeff Krump, a director of marketing for venues in the Denver area. "If you have a hangover, you bounce back quicker at 20 than at 40."



BRAD ROBERTS, ELLEN REID, DAN ROBERTS, MITCH DORGE AND BENJAMIN DARVILL

how do we deal with a kid that's been in a car accident without being sentimental? Well, here's how. Those are the kinds of processes that inform what I'm doing, more so than personal biography.

The other thing is that the piece is primarily atmospheric. When we get to the end of the song, there isn't a tidy moral message that the listener can go away from thinking, "Oh, *that's* what that's about." Oftentimes I find people assume that a lyric that doesn't wear its meaning on its face must be some "code" to be cracked, and if you crack the code, you'll know what it's really about. That's just not the case in my writing.

As with any song I write, I had a melody put together first, and I had intended for there to be lyrics for the chorus. But once I finished the verses, I realized that humming the chorus had a nice feeling to it—at the end of each verse, there was this kind of resigned feeling of not being able to say much but "Mmm."

I have had many, many DJs and VJs complain to me about the difficulty of pronouncing the title. I never even *thought* of that. But it hasn't been a handicap, at least in terms of its chart action. Probably if anything, people's ears perked up because it was a bit unusual.

# MIX

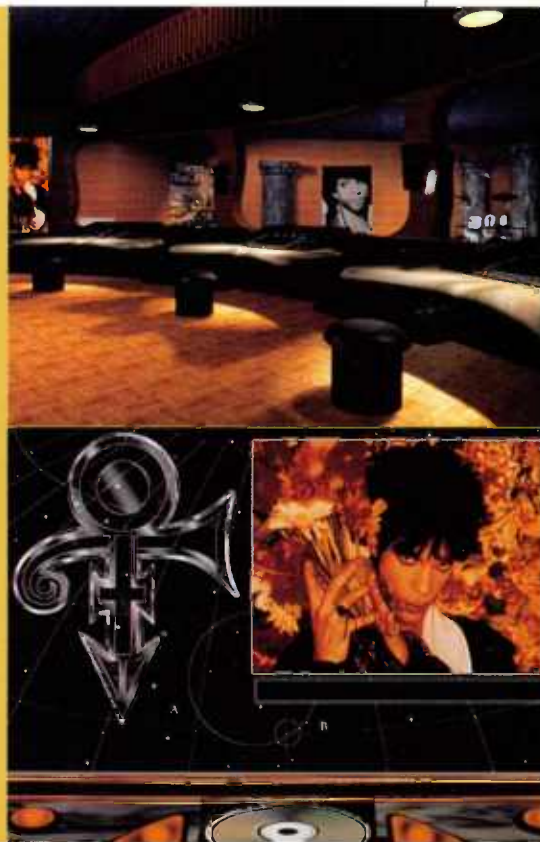
As a result, many current performing contracts of well-known pop stars specify items more typically found in health spas. Consider:

- **David Bowie** demands a punching bag.
- **Sting** must have a running track near his hotel accommodations.
- **Aerosmith** brought a \$1000 juicer and over a ton of carrots for their *Pump* tour.
- The **Pretenders'** culinary spread must include a salad bar.
- **Morrissey** needs baked potatoes backstage. Said one promoter, "He's a vegetarian who hates vegetables."

## U GOT THE DISC

"Baby, baby, baby, let's do it/Interactive!" sings the artist formerly known as Prince on "Interactive," a tune penned for the Purple One's delve into CD-ROM technology, *Interactive*. Serious fans can now point-and-click their way through a Dungeons-and-Dragnish lavender manor including a Boudoir, a Dance Club (featuring samples from the ex-Prince's discography) and a computer replica of *Interactive*'s Paisley Park Studio. Adventurers can also control the vocal, guitar, bass, horn and drum levels on a new song via the control room's five-channel "funky mixer," or touch one of the New Power Generation's instruments with the mouse and hear a famous *Interactive* riff. *Interactive* also features six videos and four full songs in its nooks and crannies, along with vases that spew clouds which morph into *Interactive*'s face.

World Radio History





and ring fingers, Brown picks upward on the B-string D note and hammers onto the sixth fret of the G string (the flatted 5) with his little finger, alternating that D-and-C-sharp combination with the G note on the E string to produce a Scroggssesque roll. He also mutes at the bridge with his right palm for nice banjoish touch. "It's totally unconscious, but I guess I do mute most of the time," says Brown. "It sounds like my right hand is doing the work, but really it's the little finger of my right hand doing most of it. I'm not copying

the banjo lick, it's just a loose impression." Things get really wild when Brown plays it at lightning speed and slides his left hand slowly up the neck.

"The best way to learn this lick is to repeatedly pick the B string and hammer that flat 5 on the G string, and just do that over and over until you strengthen that little finger and get some volume out of it," Brown suggests. "You can stick that little G note in there on the E string later."

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM HERRINGTON

## PRIVATE LESSON

### JUNIOR BROWN'S BANJO IMPRESSION

Since the release of *Guit With It* on Curb Records last year, Junior Brown has been on a nonstop honky-tonk tear, routinely blowing heads off with his self-invented "guit steel" guitar. It's tough to keep up with the raving Texan's hands as they fly back and forth between the instrument's Siamese-twin six-string and steel guitar necks. Catching up with Brown in Nashville, we forced him to slow down for a minute so that we could get to the root of his guitar version of a bluegrass banjo roll.

"I use it in bluegrass-type songs like 'Freeborn Man,'" says Brown, "and speed it up to fit a song with a rock beat like 'Highway Patrol.'"

Brown demonstrates in the key of G, laying the fleshy part of his index finger across the B and E strings Chuck Berry-style at the third fret. Holding a pick between thumb and index finger and wearing fingerpicks on his middle



$\text{♩} = 152$

*f* Palm Mute full hand P.M.

TAB

## MAYBE THEY COULD SWAP T-SHIRTS

"I'm a big fan of her work and I'd love to see her perform, but her tickets are too expensive."

—Slash on Barbra Streisand, as quoted in the Los Angeles Times



ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL CORIO

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- Melvin Van Peebles** Blaxploitation pioneer '90s-style (Capitol)
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**TINDERSTICKS** With a sound as dour and intense as Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, lyrics full of Lee Hazelwood's gallows humor and a delivery as obsessively tender as Leonard Cohen's, Nottingham, England's Tindersticks are a force to be reckoned with.

After forming in 1992 and releasing a slew of independent singles and EPs, Tindersticks released their self-titled debut in the U.K. in late '93. It was met with the usual Brit press barrage that described the band as "suicidally dark and haunting," and of course as "the next thing."

Frontman Stuart Staples dismisses it all: "It's not depressing at all," he says. "Yes, there's stuff in there you can find to get depressed about, but our songs are full of humor."

But when he's singing in that monotonal marble-mouthed croon of his, propelled by guitars, keyboards and Dickon Hinchcliffe's meandering violin, it's sort of tough to tell.

The band is currently on its first tour of American support of the U.S. release of their album on the New Jersey-based

this record is that we recorded a Gene Clark song, 'Why Not Your Baby?' He died on Dylan's birthday and it bummed me out so bad because I'm such a huge Byrds fan—and I was a huge Gene Clark fan. And, at the time, I just kept saying to Mitch [Easter, producer and part-time fourth bandmember], 'Man, if some kid likes this song and then buys a Gene Clark record—that would make me so happy,' because it did so much for me to hear the guy.

"It's weird—sometimes it's kind of embarrassing," he apologizes. "I can't really separate myself from being a fan and being a musician."

**JACK LOGAN** It takes two hours and 17 minutes to hear Jack Logan's debut, *Bulk*, from beginning to end. When asked which selections he'd play for someone who only had 15 minutes, Logan laughs. "I'd probably play 'em some new stuff."

This is not a joke. Logan signed to Peter Jespersen's Medium Cool Records last year,



JACK LOGAN



TINDERSTICKS

Bar None label. Their live show is a mirror image of their recordings and should help establish their subtle yet insistent brand of rock on these shores as well.

**VELVET CRUSH** "Rock 'n' roll saved my ass, to be honest with you," admits drummer and music fan Ric Menck. His band, Velvet Crush, is one of the only American acts ever signed to the prestigious U.K. indie Creation Records, and is a favorite among both critics and players (including Matthew Sweet, who recorded a previous release of theirs in his living room, and for whom Menck regularly plays drums). The trio also has a new parcel of respectful, car radio-ready jangle-pop interpretations called *Teenage Symphonies to God*, but Menck can't stop talking about other bands; "We swiped the title from Brian Wilson, as you probably know," he notes.

"One of the things I'm really happy and excited about with



SHEILA CHANDRA



VELVET CRUSH

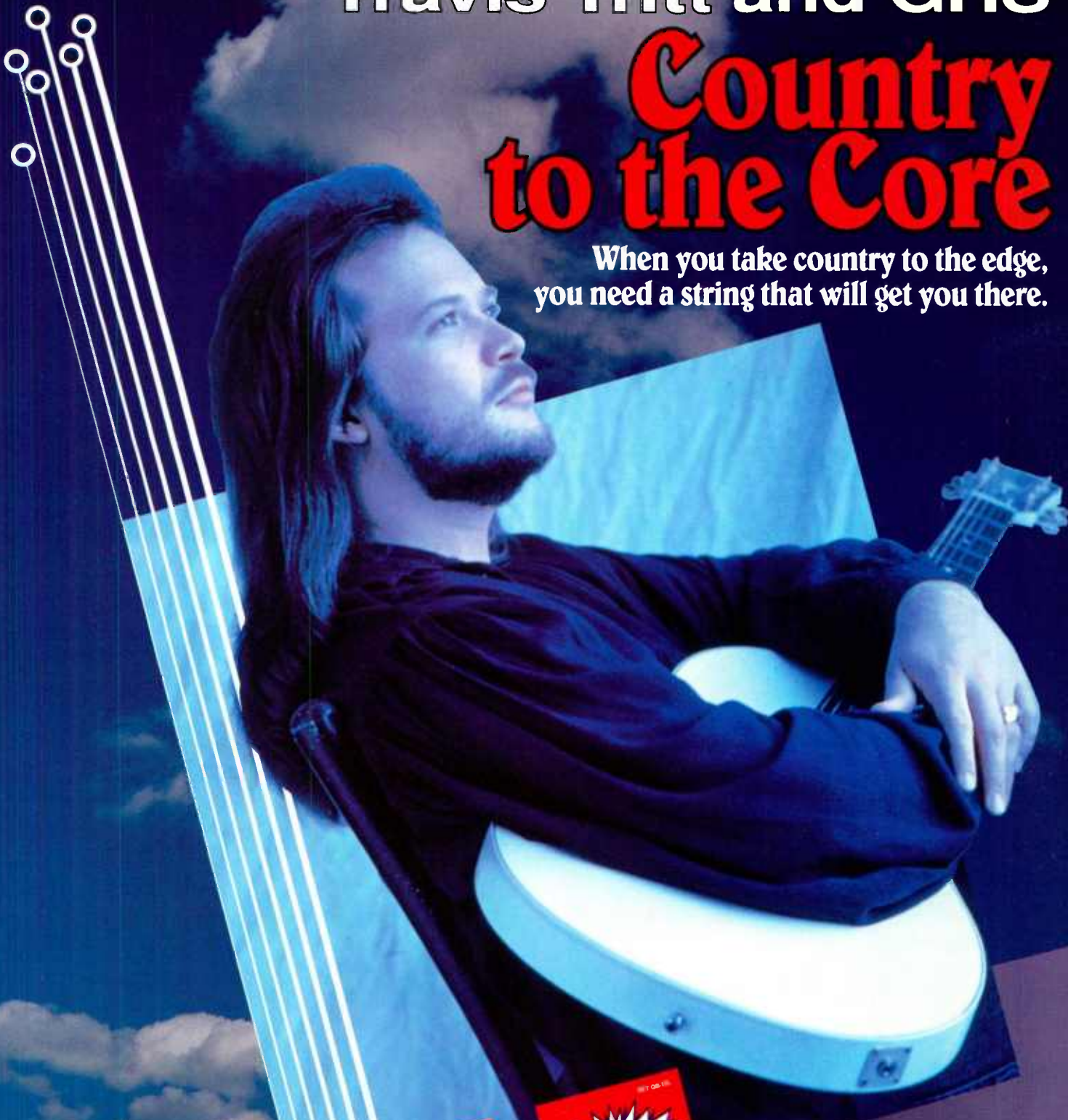
on the strength of some 600 songs he'd recorded with his longtime friend, guitarist Kelly Keneipp, and a loose confederation of musicians including members of the Dashboard Saviors. Rather than sending Logan, 35, and his "enablers" into the studio, Jespersen—whose credit sheet includes the discovery of the Replacements, among others—culled Bulk's 47 songs from the existing tapes.

Logan has written addictive, vividly imagined songs that ponder the hip questions (like mortality, one pet theme) in deceptively breezy bite-sized phrases; his characters—a woman who spent 15 years in Indiana as a cocktail waitress, another woman who keeps the bodies of her former lovers wrapped in plastic underneath her bed—could have walked out of a dark, ironic Flannery O'Connor short story. His musical sensibility might have been formed from repeated hi-

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# ROUGH MIX

## CLOSE THE DOOR WHEN YOU SOLO

A line of toilet seat lids shaped like guitar bodies—Jammin' Johns—will be unveiled at the summer NAMM show in Nashville. Official model names: "Straddlecaster," "Pee-Bass," "Les Pile" and an acoustic "Guitarlet." The lids are the "brainchild" of Marvin Maxwell, owner of Mom's Musicians General Store in Louisville, Kentucky. List prices start at \$49. Accessories include plastic pick guards, a tank-lid cover designed to look like a vintage amp, and a "Whammy Jammer" whammy bar flush handle.



RICK MATTINGLY

speed scans of a rural radio dial: *Bulk* spans hillbilly waltzes and lonesome, laconic love songs, raging Stones-style rockers and wry Western swing. And remarkably, none of it is a reach. Since the signing, Logan and Keneipp estimate they've documented over 100 more songs in the kitchen of Logan's Winder, Georgia home.

"We'd be recording even if the record didn't happen," says Keneipp, one of the instrumentalists who supply music for Logan's richly detailed sketches. "Recording ourselves meant nobody could tell you whether it's good or not. You can put down anything you want." And remarkably, none of it is a reach.

**SHEILA CHANDRA** Sheila Chandra didn't set out to turn *The Zen Kiss* into a one-woman seminar on musical multiculturalism, underscoring the connections

between soul singing and Arabic vocal styles, say, or linking Irish *sean nos* singing with Indian classical music. It just turned out that way.

"I think that's because the impetus to blend all these vocal styles has actually come out of my voice," she says. "There are so many gateways between different vocal traditions. Maybe because it's the same instrument.

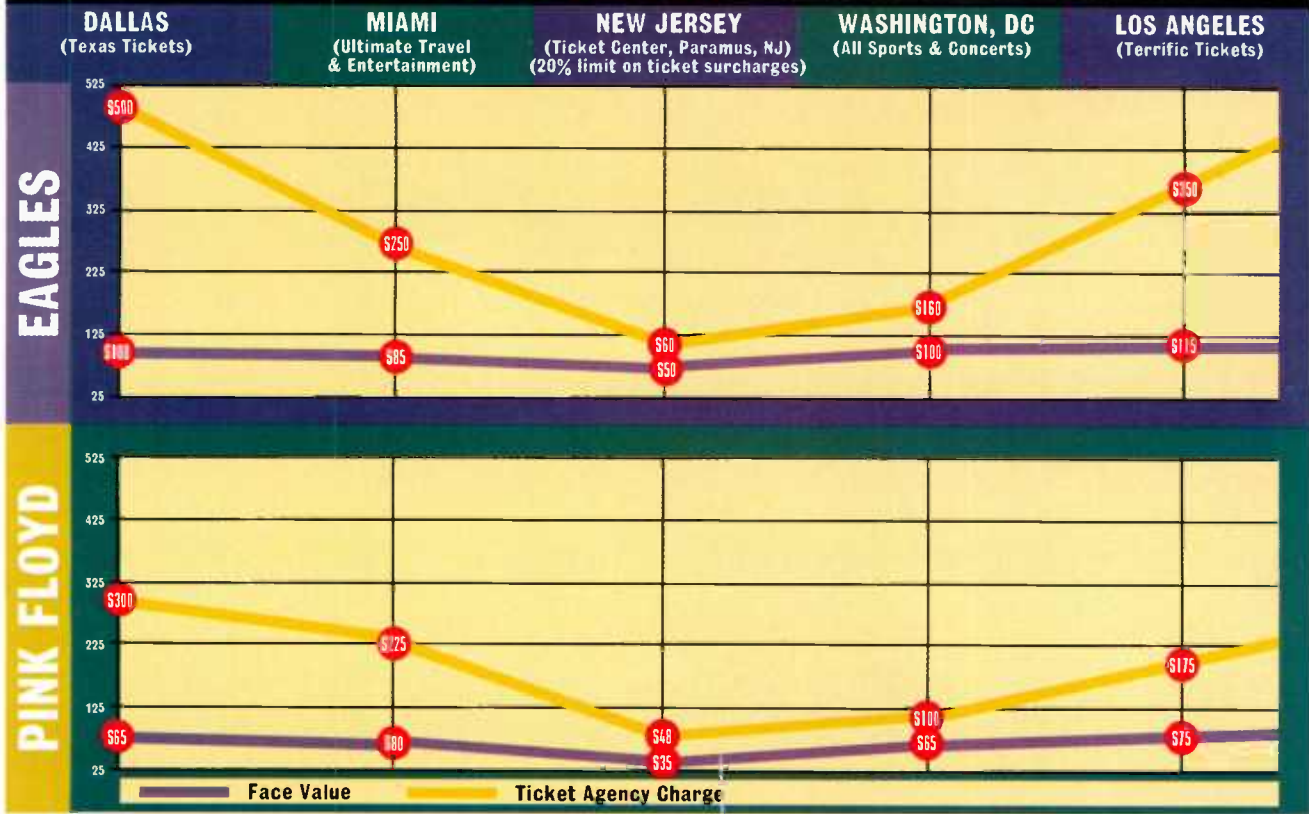
"The fascinating thing for me is that these connections really are waiting to be discovered on an almost organic level. It's as though we have a kind of library of knowledge built into us cellularly, and if you keep playing around with these musics, then these sorts of connections resurface.

"In a way, it means that none of this knowledge can be lost," she adds. "We're very much more connected culturally than maybe we know."

*This month's Rough Mix was written by Nathan Brackett, J.D. Considine, Dave DiMartino, Ted Greenwald, P.J. Hufstetter, Thom Jurek, Tom Moon, Dev Sherlock, Roy Trakin and Josef Woodard.*



# SUMMER CONCERT TICKET GOUGE



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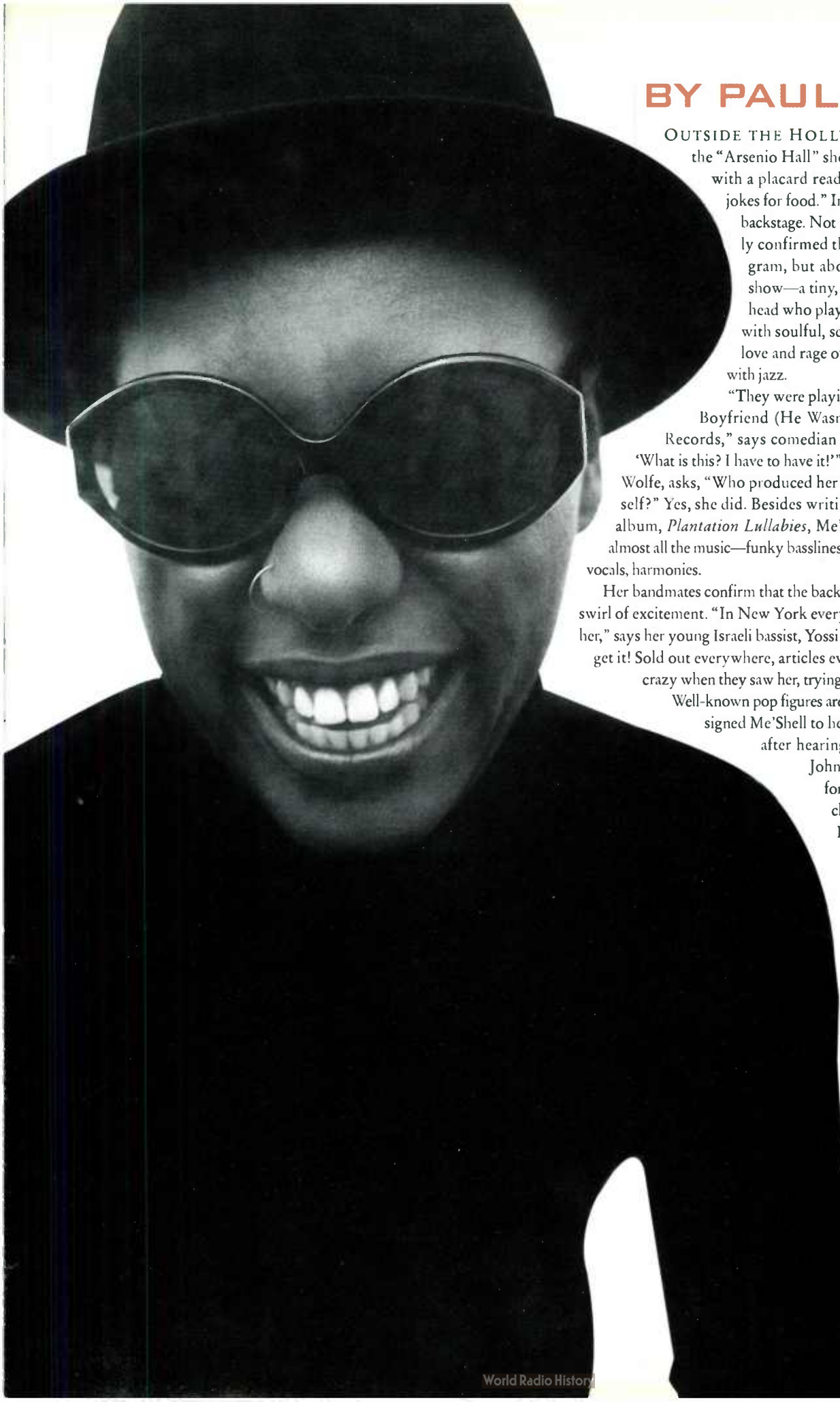
HE'S NOT THE NEW MADONNA

DIGGIN' WITH ME'SHELL NDEGÉOCELO



SHE'S NOT THE NEXT PRINCE SHE'S THE FUTURE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVIS FACTOR



STYLING BY NANCY STEINER FOR SMASH BOX BEAUTY

## BY PAUL ZOLLO

OUTSIDE THE HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS OF the "Arsenio Hall" show a homeless man stands with a placard reading, "Arsenio—I will tell jokes for food." Inside, there's a serious buzz backstage. Not about Arsenio, who recently confirmed the cancellation of his program, but about his guest for tonight's show—a tiny, trim woman with a shaved head who plays bass like a monster, sings with soulful, sensual ease, and raps about love and rage over hip-hop rhythms laced with jazz.

"They were playing her song 'If That's Your Boyfriend (He Wasn't Last Night)' at Tower Records," says comedian A.J. Sanders, "and I said, 'What is this? I have to have it!'" Hall's bandleader, Michael Wolfe, asks, "Who produced her record? Did she do it herself?" Yes, she did. Besides writing the songs on her debut album, *Plantation Lullabies*, Me'Shell NdegéOcello made almost all the music—funky basslines, keyboards, drum patterns, vocals, harmonies.

Her bandmates confirm that the backstage buzz signifies a larger swirl of excitement. "In New York every musician is talking about her," says her young Israeli bassist, Yossi Fine. "And in Europe, forget it! Sold out everywhere, articles everywhere. Everyone went crazy when they saw her, trying to grab her and touch her."

Well-known pop figures are lining up as well. Madonna signed Me'Shell to her label, Maverick Records, after hearing only homemade demos.

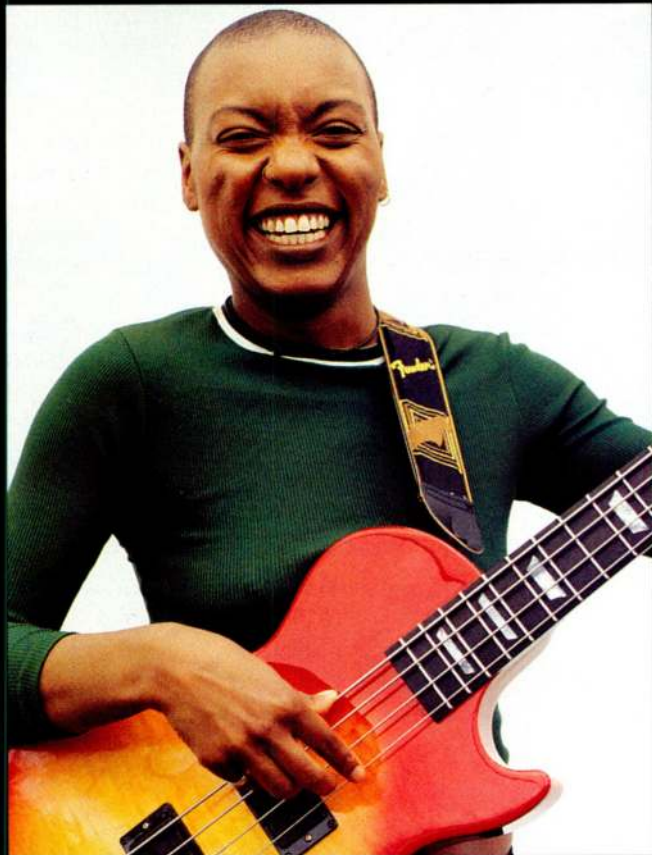
John Mellencamp recruited her for a duet on the Van Morrison classic "Wild Night." She and Herbie Hancock collaborated on "Nocturnal Sunshine," for an upcoming album. John Singleton has invited her to write dialogue and music for his next film. And Prince—with whom she's often compared—booked her at his L.A. club, Glam Slam, and absorbed every nuance of her set—standing on the dance floor next to Arsenio and other stars—before disappearing into the dark like Batman without a hello or goodbye.

Me'Shell, who, like Prince, seems smaller and more

"I WILL NEVER OWN A BASS THAT

DOES NOT LOOK LIKE A BASS."

"I WILL NEVER OWN A BASS THAT



DOES NOT LOOK LIKE A BASS."

shy in person, says she's happy never to have met the artist she considers her idol. "I have this perfect image of him," she says dreamily, "and I don't want to spoil it." Comparisons between the two might seem hyperbolic until one hears her album, or sees her perform live with her band. Like the symbol from Paisley Park, Me'Shell can cover a musical spectrum in almost every song, from funky R&B to progressive jazz, electric rock and pure melodic pop. She's that rare musician who is more about music itself than any particular instrument.

On the show, Me'Shell and the band perform two songs: "Boyfriend," which is shot in dramatic black and white with a lot of handheld camera, and a romantic ballad, "Outside Your Door," for which she sings intimately at the keyboard as the camera tracks wide circles around her. Between songs she does couch with Arsenio, who opens by asking how to pronounce her name. She enunciates it for him slowly, like a mantra: "Me-Shell. En-day-gay-o-chello." Then she adds, "It means 'free like a bird,' in Swahili."

"Hello!" Arsenio says.

"Hello!" she answers. Though she'd said earlier that she was going to be tough on Hall for posing boring questions to the Rev. Louis Farrakhan, she instead slips into comfortable TV chatter. Abruptly, though, Arsenio turns serious, and says, "I found this quote and I was like, 'Damn, go on girl!' You said, 'Being black, bisexual and a woman, I have three things that make me different.'"

After chastising him for quoting her out of context, she replies, "I live in a world of racism, of sexism, homophobia, economic sepa-

ratism. So being black and a woman—or black in general—is a difficult thing. Society's not set up for you to succeed."

"But when you do make it," Hall says, "you know you're bad."

"Oh yeah," she agrees. "Succeed, and that is how you dis them."

After the show, Me'Shell is full of energy, bopping in and out of the dressing rooms where her fellow musicians are winding down. Detecting my note-taking, she decides to give me a quote. "I can tell you one thing," she says with a sly smile, "if you put me on a magazine cover with Cindy Crawford, I sure don't want her *shaving* me."

**A**T A WEST HOLLYWOOD dance club about eight hours later, NdegéOcello's band sets up for a rare jam session, as DJs spin jazz, R&B, rap and hip-hop records. Bassist Yossi starts playing along with the records, his dreadlocks swinging. Gene Lake sits behind the drums and secures a solid, easy rhythm. Soon the rest of the band, guitarist Dave Fiuszynski, pianist Fred Peña, and singers Biti Strauchn and Arif St. Michael, is in place, and locking into the groove of shifting tracks from Brand New Heavies to Miles to Jodeci. Finally Me'Shell is onstage, her TV makeup washed off, wearing baggy pants, big boots and a stocking cap. When she picks up her red-orange Les Paul bass the electricity in the room becomes palpable. Yossi holds down the bottom end with a fat, round tone as she solos with a Jaco-like intensity, singing sweetly through the instrument.

Wah-Wah Watson—Me'Shell calls him the "emperor of groove"—is sitting in tonight on guitar. He riffs into a hot funk. Fred Peña flings organ fills with his right hand while striking a cowbell with his left. Me'Shell guides the dynamics of the band with subtle hand motions; one moment she is grinning wildly, digging Wah-Wah's intensity or Lake's fervent pulse, the next she's jamming on the bass, her head thrown back like Santana, staring at the heavens. She and Yossi lock into a sparring bass dialogue bubbling with intertwining rhythms; abruptly they play a single line in unison and repeat it in harmony. Peña lays down graceful acoustic piano lines that sparkle in the deep funk. The musical conversations go into the wee hours. Afterwards the musicians look transported, as if they could go on for days. Wah-Wah Watson, though, is funk-ed out. "You cats are crazy. I'm tired."

The next day, Me'Shell arrives at a Thai restaurant in Hollywood with her five-year-old son, Askia, whose name means "one who stole the throne." She orders a big bowl of "rock 'n' roll clams" and reluctantly agrees to talk about herself. A self-declared "army brat," she was born in Germany, raised mostly around Washington, D.C. and spent a lot of time at her grandfather's farm near Kittyhawk, North Carolina. Her father, a tenor sax player, was the musical director of army bands. Her mother played old soul records.

"My father's band had the *slammingest* trombone section I ever heard," she remembers. "These guys had the chops of life. They had that bebop shit down. My dad was a *musician*—he'd get drunk, stay out all night, get in fights. The family was separated, we never intertwined. But I always had music in the house.

"My mother was the one who played *all* the Aretha Franklin records, *all* the Jackie Wilson records, all that soul stuff. She loved Millie Jackson. She played this live Teddy Pendergrass album all the time and I just loved it.



"I didn't start to sing or play bass until I was 16. I wanted to be an artist. I worked with clay, doing very abstract stuff. In school I didn't talk at all. In sculpting you don't interact with anybody but the artwork. It's totally existential. It got too weird for me, and it was a really emotional time, so I started to hate it."

A friend of her brother's left his bass in her home, and it changed her life. "I fell in love with it immediately. It was a copy of a Sunburst Precision bass. Eventually my father got me a Mustang, one of those really teeny little basses." Her education in funk came in the form of Prince records, which she studied for hours. "On one of his albums you get a funk tune, a rock tune, a ballad and more. It covers the whole gamut. And I thought that if I made an album, that's what I wanted to do, for every song to have its personality."

How did you develop such a clean, sweet tone on the bass?

"My father plays sax, and he taught me to be a clean player. He said that's what's important. He can riff on bebop and you can hear every note he plays. I'm just a stickler for stuff like that."

Did you ever play fretless?

"No. And I don't use any pedals. I don't know nothing about a bass," she declares. "All I know is how to play it. I kid you not. And I don't like basses in funny shapes. I will never own a bass that does not look like a bass. I can't stand those weird shapes, and the ESP basses and Steinbergers. It may be an organic thing, but that kind of thing really annoys me. It's a *bass*. I don't even play five-string. As Stanley Clarke said, 'The bass has four strings.' That's it."

She started writing music—instrumentals mostly—almost as soon as she learned to play. "The first stuff I wrote was really ethereal, esoteric. No melodies, just these clusters of chords that constantly change. I had a little four-track and I would write these four-bassline songs. At 18 I started to put lyrics to it. I didn't talk much so it was my way of having conversations with myself."

One of the first songs she wrote was "Boyfriend," which sprung from her life. "I used to look like this years ago and it wasn't 'popular' then, and girls would tease me. I was dating this guy who had a lot of girlfriends, and I was working at a club and this girl came up to me and said, 'There's no way he'd like somebody like you.' And I said, 'That's funny, 'cause if that's your boyfriend, he wasn't last night.' So it was literally what I said and it turned into a song."

Other songs on the album grew from similar experience. "I don't write fiction," she says. The ambitious rap suite "Two Lonely Hearts on the Subway" began with a chance meeting on a train. "Shoot 'N' Up and Gett 'N' High" goes straight to the heart of the junkie existence, and climaxes with "we both saw God when he O.D.'d." "It's a sad love song," she says, "but it is a love song. Why is it that the only time we see God is when we die?"

A recurring theme in her work is the way in which black people have been conditioned by the culture to look, think and act white. "We've been indoctrinated by the white man's standard of beauty," she raps in "Soul on Ice." So she's somewhat bemused that fashion designers have asked her to be a runway model:

"It's suddenly 'in' to look the way I do. But I've looked this way for years." Told that, in preparation for a photo shoot, she will have to spend two hours doing hair and makeup, she laughs and says, "Two hours for hair? Why? I'm bald!"

"It's hard to come to the reality that that's what this business is all about," she continues, more seriously. "When it's thrown up in your face and people say, 'Don't you want to succeed?' You find yourself giving into things that you'd rather not get into. I try not to get lost in those things."

Yet on "Arsenio," you conversed with him like you'd been on that couch a hundred times.

"Well, I'm not going to let him rattle me. I'm getting to know a little bit. Like when I'm walking down the street and people reach out and grab at me. The first thing I say is, don't grab at me, don't ask for my autograph, I'll sit here and talk to you. So I treat everybody else like that.

"We say in the band, 'It ain't so deep.' Everything is just the way it is. Because I used to be real angry walking down the street. I admit, I used to hate white people. I used to think they all should be obliterated. Then spiritually I started to mature and understand that this is the process of the world, this is the system of colonization. I read a lot and began understanding where it stems from. I step above those who are racist or sexist. I don't want to be angry anymore.

"People say, 'You're kind of different for a rap artist.' Well, how am I supposed to act? Is 'yo-yo-yo' supposed to come out of my mouth every time?"

Women might be worried you'll steal their men, after hearing your bold rap on "Boyfriend."

"If you listen to it in the context of the album," she answers, "it's about self-esteem, and the misogyny that exists between women. I think it's interesting that if there's a love triangle, the woman attacks the other woman, instead of the guy. It's about treating people like property. But you don't hear that unless you hear the whole album."

## BOYFRIENDS

**M**E'SHELL NDEGÉOCELLO plays a Fender Jazz Bass and a Gibson Les Paul bass. "The Les Paul is perfect for me. It's the first bass that I can really get around on. It's not too big." She uses no effects pedals and whatever amp is around.

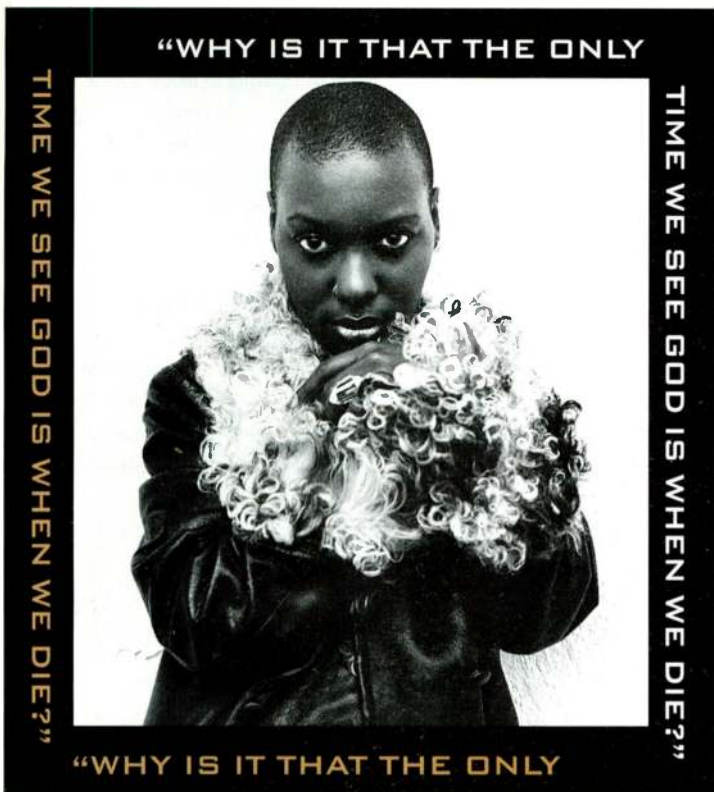
**GENE LAKE** plays a Pearl birch drum set with two snare drums, a regular and a piccolo, and Sabian cymbals. His sticks are Vic Firth.

**FEDERICO PEÑA** plays grand pianos with a Korg 01/W on top in clubs when pianos are available. Where they're not, he plays a Roland FP-8 or RD-1000 for piano sounds. "For strings and horn stabs I like the warmth of Roland," he says, referring to his Roland D-70.

**DAVID "FUZE" FIUCZYNSKI** plays a Tom Anderson Stratocaster-style guitar with Tom Anderson pickup and a Floyd Rose whammy-bar, and an Ibanez electric ("the kind that looks like a Santana guitar"). His pedals include an Ernie Ball volume pedal, ProCo Rat distortion, Boss Overdrive, Crybaby wah-wah pedal, Boss delay, Digitech whammy pedal. He uses a Mark III Mesa-Boogie amp head and a Peavey 4x10 cabinet and a SansAmp distortion pedal.

**YOSSI FINE** plays a Vigier bass. "It's from France, most people don't know about it in the States. It sounds like a Fender Jazz Bass but better." He also uses a '93 Fender Jazz Bass and one built by Stuart Spector, given to him by Lou Reed. "Because the bass tone is the most important part of Me'Shell's music," he said, "I play the most clean I've ever played. It's just the bass through the amp, and a Mutron wah-wah pedal for the sections when Me'Shell is also playing bass." He uses a Trace-Elliott GK800 amp, and has Mesa Boogie 15" cabs with Electro-Voice speakers.

**WAH-WAH WATSON** plays a modified Gibson L5 with extra-extra-heavy Ernie Ball strings. "I had to call someone at Ernie Ball and beg them to send me some strings because no music store sells the gauge that I need," he says. His wah-wah of preference is an out-of-production Maestro Boomerang. He also uses a Maestro fuzz and a Maestro Echoplex tape delay unit. He endorses Marshall amps, and uses the JC-800 tube series.



Nobody hears that on the radio. It's a safe song. But what is the record company going to do with me when they run out of safe songs?"

After dinner, Me'Shell says we can continue our conversation over laundry. She's taking off with the band for Japan in the morning, and still has a few loads to get to. With blues on the radio, we drive to her favorite laundromat, where she hands me a basket of clothes to carry. "Fame and fortune don't necessarily go hand in hand," she says dryly. "This is the real Me'Shell."

She sets up Askia with plastic dinosaurs on the floor, and within minutes has four loads spinning. She takes her laundry seriously, totting along a box of detergents, softeners and bleaches, conducting the cycles of the big machines as fluidly as she conducts her band. "When I was a kid I used to go with my mother to the laundromat every week. I *lived* at the laundromat."

As she checks her clothes, a scraggly-haired kid, maybe 17, comes up to her and says only, "I saw you."

"On 'Arsenio'?"

"Yeah. It was hip. You look a lot smaller in person."

Me'Shell laughs as she inserts coins. "I hear that all the time: You're much smaller than I thought you were. It's scary when people come up to you and grab you."

A bigger misconception, she stresses, is the idea that she hates white people. It's not hard to understand how you could get that idea—lines like "the white man should sleep with one eye open" jump out of the mix, and it's easy to miss the context. "In my songs I'm talking about how society treats us, how the educational system works in reference to us, economic separatism, poverty. I did San Francisco recently, and a white woman came up to me and said, 'You really don't hate white people, do you?' And I said, 'Nooooo!' That's crazy. I had to give her a hug. That's totally not my spirit. And it sometimes hurts my feelings that people think that. It's hard when people make an assessment of you from a record. I just made a record. I expressed myself. It's just like a painting. It's a work of art that deals with a certain period of my

life. Some of the views on that album *I don't even have anymore*. But I have to carry it around. It's embedded in stone, in CD. So I have to live with it. But people evolve. Everything changes.

"It's funny to be 'Arsenio' and be pampered one day and then the next day I have to pay rent, I have to feed my son and take him to school. My life is: I'm going to the laundromat to wash my clothes."

As we discuss the "everyday racism" at the heart of many of her songs, we hear a little white girl instruct her baby brother, who is entranced by Askia and his dinosaur game, in the ways of the world. "*Mama says not to play with black boys*," the girl shouts sternly at her brother, pulling him away. Me'Shell quickly turns to her son and says firmly, "Don't let that hurt your feelings, Askia. Don't let that hurt your feelings."

She looks at me with an amazed sadness. "Did you hear that? That's what I'm talking about. And people call me racist. Put that in the article, that that happened."

Does it make you angry?

"It doesn't make me angry. It hurts my feelings more than anything else. I feel so sad for children. They didn't ask to be here. If I could do it over again, I probably wouldn't have Askia, because the world is so crazy. But then again I love him, I love him being around." She pauses for a second, looking at her child. Then she springs to her feet. "Okay, we have to check the machines, come on."

**R**ESPECT Me'Shell on every level," says Madonna, "as a songwriter, a musician, a singer, a performer, but mostly as a woman. Surviving in this business, and being different. She's a badass."

Madonna got turned onto Me'Shell's music by producer Andre Betts, who brought the demo of "Boyfriend" into the studio one day. For Betts, producing both "Dred Loc" and "Boyfriend" for the album was a labor of love. "Me'Shell is one of the greatest artists I've ever worked with," he said. "Her experience, and the talent in her, is beyond that of a lot of people who have been out for years. It was just bottled up inside. There's no doubt that she's going to be a major star."

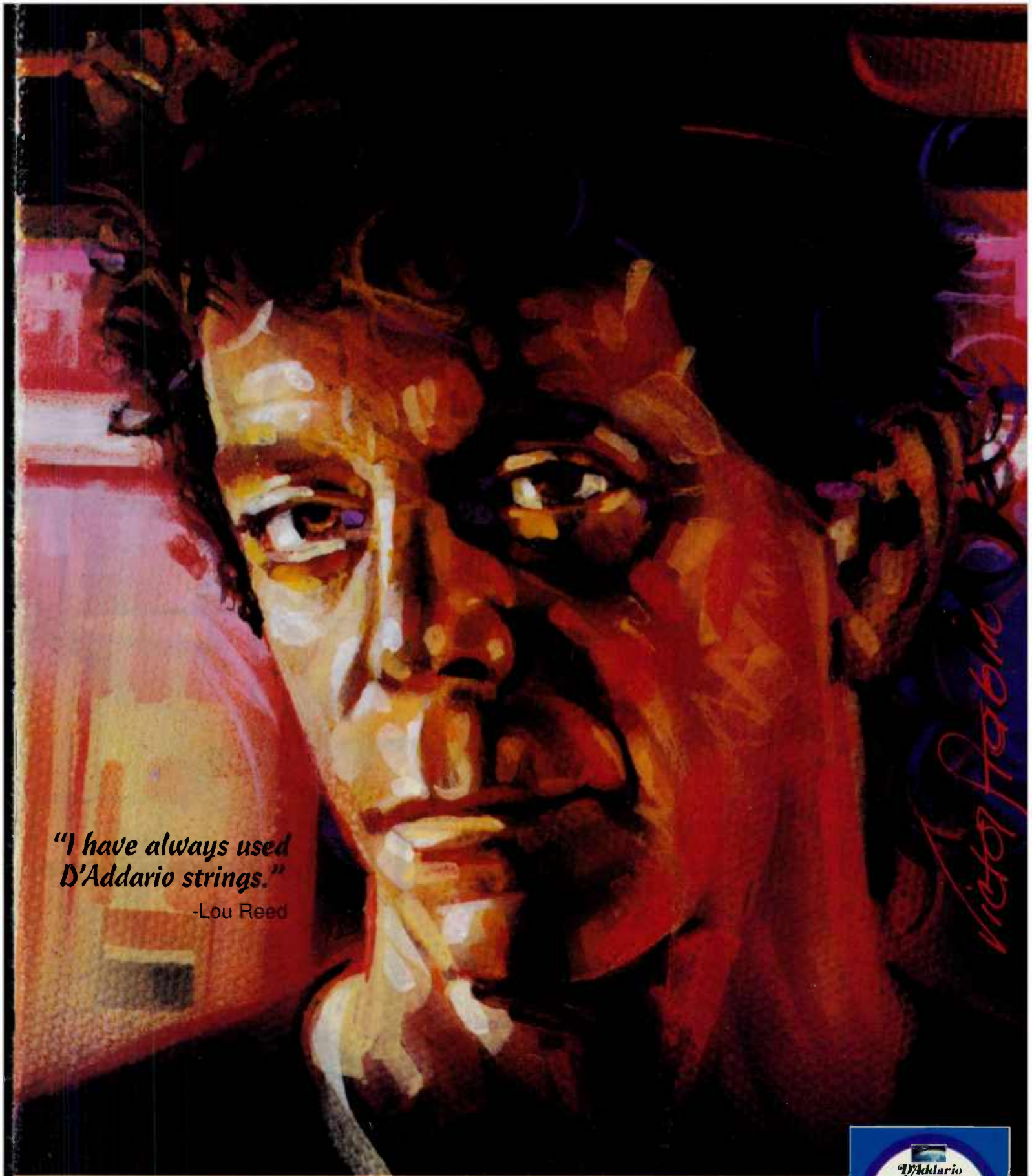
John Mellencamp was initially impressed by Me'Shell's bass playing, and invited her to his farm in Indiana to hang out with "the family," which includes his wife, kids and band, and to lay down some tracks. She ended up staying three days. "The thing about Me'Shell is that she's real," he says. "These days, that's a hard commodity to come by. I'm extremely disconnected from popular music, but a friend played me her album and I just loved her vibe.

"She came up with her bass part in seconds," Mellencamp recalls. "I told her what I wanted and she came up with something ten thousand times better."

Two days into recording with Mellencamp, Me'Shell admitted shyly that she had been a fan for years. "She looked at me and said, 'So who did win that Pink House?' I said, 'What are you talking about?' She said, 'You know, that contest on MTV in the early '80s?' She said, 'You know I entered that about seven times.'

"I think Me'Shell can do anything that she wants to do," Mellencamp goes on. "Her imagination is unlimited and her ability to *play* her imagination is unlimited. She is in the moment."

For her part, Me'Shell was flattered and a little bewildered by their collaboration. "Tell me the truth," she asked her manager, "how did he really hear about me? Somebody set him up, right?" She admits she's been a fan since Mellencamp was Johnny Cougar. "Lyrically, he's like me," she says. "He's very raw. He writes what [cont'd on page 76]



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# A&R—a week in the life

It's Tuesday morning in the 36th-floor conference room of RCA Records' gleaming New York headquarters, so this must be the weekly A&R meeting. Dave Novik, RCA's senior vice-president, A&R, takes charge.

"I'm going to throw some names at you, give me your opinion," he announces to the four other A&R people arrayed around a low table offering bagels, cream cheese, grapes and orange juice. "If I say an [RCA] artist's name, tell me if it's a gold or platinum record. Smithereens."

"Gold," A&R vice-president Peter Lubin promptly replies.

"Achievable?" Novik shoots back.

Whether or not the buck stops at a record company's A&R department, it usually starts there. A&R (for "artist and repertoire") is the

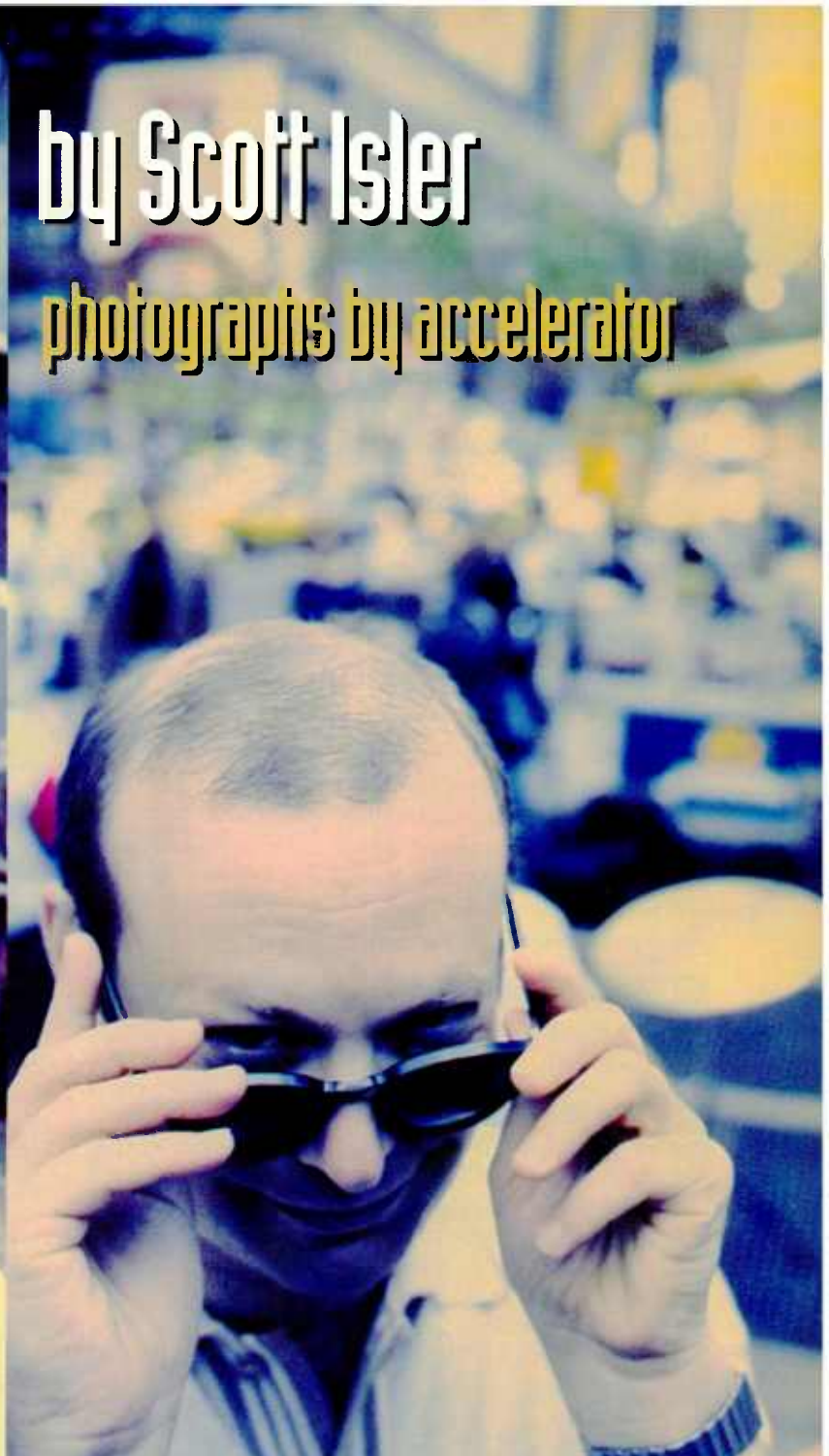
division responsible for finding and signing the talent the company will sell. Outside of being a performer proper, A&R may be the most music-related gig in the recording industry. As Lubin's assistant Kristine Ratliff puts it, "At least here you interact with the artist. Across the hall"—she picks up a CD and gestures toward RCA's promotion and marketing departments, where she used to work—"it's a piece of product."

Lubin has been at RCA only since February, but his office is decorated with photos and mementoes of past catches, notably Robert Cray, the Everly Brothers and Michelle Shocked for PolyGram (where Lubin spent most of the '80s), and the Pixies and the Breeders for Elektra. The question of what attracts his eye, and ear, is obviously one he's answered many times.



# by Scott Isler

## photographs by accelerator



"A&R goes through cycles just as anything else does. It used to be fashionable to say, 'Hey, man, we look for talent. You got it; we want it.' Now the current thing to say is, 'What you do is what's important. Be a band or artist; figure out how you're going to earn a living doing that; make a reputation in your home town, work radio and retail there, get bookings, find out what material works in front of people, cultivate your following, get bigger—eventually one of us is gonna show up with a pen in our hand.'

"That's the current popular thing to say. It's glib but it is really true. The best artists I've ever worked with have not considered a record contract as the finish-line of what it's all about."

Lubin himself is glib—no doubt a holdover from his rock-journalist past—and apparently still passionate about music. Before joining

RCA, he says, "I would go to meetings with various record executives—heads of A&R, presidents—and I would say, just in the course of conversation, 'Have you heard the new Urge Overkill?' Every one of them, without exception, would say, 'I have a copy but I haven't had a chance to play it yet.' You could not have a serious discussion about music with any of these guys because you would get the same answer to every record you would mention. They don't have the time or inclination to listen to records except they hear something for five seconds and say, 'My stuff is as good as that; why's *that* on MTV?'"

If Lubin wanted a challenge, he got one at RCA. The country's oldest record company had recently been acting the deadead. Lubin is part of a revamped A&R team that hopes to restore the prestige of what he invariably calls "the house that Elvis built":

"Everything is cyclical" in the music business, Lubin notes. "The wheel just keeps turning. If RCA delivers two stylish, noticeable things in a row—they don't even have to be million-sellers—suddenly it will be, 'Hey, maybe we can get on RCA.' RCA's time will come."

To that end, Lubin listens to tapes and CDs, mostly from small labels. "There's a whole indie level that we can now cherry-pick from. Maybe that's too patrician, but the fact remains there are major labels and there are indie labels, and bands can work their way up." (Unsolicited demos are official no-nos to avoid song-stealing lawsuits.) He jots down comments during listening sessions for later reference, sometimes listening "blind" to sampler CDs: "It keeps you sharp, and I can judge producers by it."

Lubin also has a signing wish-list he's trying to make reality. A convinced A&R person is one of the best friends an aspiring recording artist can have. But those who live by the A&R rep can also die by them. RCA's recent housecleaning swept out most of its acts along with the A&R people who signed them.

"They don't always get jettisoned," Lubin says, "but if they're fringe acts or no one takes up the mantle effectively, they do suffer. An act instantly becomes not an emotional decision but a business decision. A lot of groups can't hold up to the scrutiny."

A week in the life of Lubin is not for the out-of-shape. By nine-thirty on a Monday morning, in jeans, a plaid shirt and brown suedes, he's



at his desk, checking his schedule with Ratliff, reviewing an unending stream of phone calls, occasionally responding. Later that morning there's a meeting with RCA Records president Joe Galante regarding a group Lubin is big on signing; the frontperson will be dropping by that afternoon. She is, Lubin assures Galante, "very success-oriented."

"So I should expect someone to come in here and ask very specific questions," Galante replies. He also tells Lubin he loves the band's raucous EP: "I played it very loudly yesterday and I heard from some of my neighbors."

That afternoon Lubin catches up on phone calls, checks out some tapes, schmoozes with a lawyer acquaintance who's pushing a band, and—with Galante—meets with the object of their musical affection. Galante goes into high gear pushing RCA as the new we-try-harder label among the majors. The young woman may be wary but rarely interrupts. "I have to ask you something about these marketing people," she interjects after Galante describes the company's department-by-department reorganization. "Do they know who my group is?"

A couple of days earlier Kurt Cobain made his last headline. Subsequently, Lubin has been thinking of the harm record companies can do to artists they do sign: the too-much-too-soon scenario. Still, he's not looking forward to a dinner the next evening with the Rake's Progress, during which he'll tell the band he's not signing them. "It's quite a good group," he explains. "But it's like 30 percent of what they ought to be before they present the world with a debut album. But these guys are chomping at the bit: 'We wanna do a record!'"

Around seven o'clock Lubin gathers some tapes for an at-home listening session. He estimates he'll spend four hours—from ten to two in the morning—auditioning them.

The next morning's main item is the A&R meeting. For two hours, there's talk of development deals. Artists' names are brought up and shot down. Tapes and CDs play as one or another of the participants hopes to spread enthusiasm for their finds.

Following lunch, Lubin drops into Novik's office to pursue the

## ROCK 'N' RACISM

Peter Lubin's mid-'80s signing of Robert Cray to PolyGram Records looks like a no-brainer—in retrospect. "There were people at PolyGram who begged me not to do it," Lubin says. "At the time, blues was a sales ghetto." And then there was racism. A big-city radio station program director enjoyed Cray's PolyGram debut during a pre-release listening session—until informed of the singer/guitarist's tint. A PolyGram promotion head tried to talk Lubin out of putting Cray's photo on a 12-inch single sleeve.

An A&R person must range far and wide for talent, but simultaneously answer to (usually) more conservative corporate bosses. "The idea is to sign people who are unlike what's going on," Lubin explains. "You do run into the attitude, 'What format of radio is going to play *that*?' If you want anything special to happen, you can't deliver ordinary records."

He views corporate culture as "a confluence of economic circumstances and the mindset of the people running the joint. It's constantly in a state of flux. Sometimes you hold back on presenting something because you think, well, the corporation's in a foul mood this week, but things should be cheerier by the end of the month. You pick your moment if you think you're going to meet resistance.

"On the other hand, the sign of a healthy record label is their desire to acquire rights. That's what you trade in, the currency of the realm."

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morning's discussion concerning pop tunesmith Doug Powell, a Lubin pet project. A month earlier Lubin had circulated a memo calling Powell "the finest 'undiscovered,' unexploited songwriter in America today." However, Powell's rough-hewn tapes have failed to convince Novik.

"I'm missing the songs you're hearing," Novik tells Lubin, "and I don't like the sound of his voice."

"First of all," Lubin responds, laughing, "he ain't a singer! Ideally the songs can be turned into records." He goes on to describe a plan to introduce Powell to the public via staggered EP releases. Novik says he loves the idea "as a marketing concept, but maybe it needs to be applied to the right guy."

Despite Novik's reluctance, Lubin succeeds in freeing up an amount in the low five figures to finance preliminary recording. "It'll do for now," he comments after leaving Novik's office.

Lubin has made better progress with another item on his wish list: free-jazz guitarist Sonny Sharrock. Sharrock's signing to RCA sends a message that times are changing at the label, but Lubin has no desire to see his prize vanish into a jazz marketing ghetto. To that end his next visitor is *Billboard* jazz columnist Jeff Levenson, invited for brainpicking. Lubin asks him about Sharrock's fan base and producers for the new album. Jeff Beck's crossover hit *Blow by Blow* is clearly on Lubin's mind as a role model.

The dreaded dinner with Rake's Progress and their manager takes place at a noisy Thai restaurant in Soho. Despite Lubin's forebodings, a pleasant time is had by all. Lubin's only faux pas is comparing the group's sound to INXS; he means it as a compliment but it's received

with general consternation and forehead-slapping. Noting "the way is fraught with peril," he sugarcoats his decision to pass on the group with advice that they release an indie-label EP before jumping at a major company. He offers to help any way he can (short of signing them), such as finding a producer or recording studio.

Lubin picks up the tab and turns down the band's offer to accompany them to a club. "That came off 100 times better than I imagined," he exhales, visibly relieved. The night air is cool and damp but he decides to walk back to his apartment a mile away.

The following day's business highlight is a meeting with Sharrock and his management. The discussion centers around the choice of musicians and producer for the guitarist's RCA debut. At 53, Sharrock is dignified but affable. At one point Lubin—who's been speaking of a new audience "embracing" Sharrock's music—turns to him and asks, "How would you like to be embraced?"

"I've been embraced," Sharrock answers, deadpan. "It ain't bad... from the front. From the back it's kind of worrisome."

Sharrock has decided ideas about what he wants and doesn't want on his record: "I always have this nightmare of somebody coming in and turning me into Janet Jackson." Yet he agrees to the need for a "producer-producer," as Lubin terms it, as opposed to an "engineer-producer." After Sharrock leaves, Lubin is pleased with the response to his suggestions.

[Sadly, Sharrock's major-label breakthrough would never come. The guitarist died of a heart attack May 26—six weeks after this meeting.]

He pops a demo tape into his cassette deck: "Do you notice how


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talk about *"Swamp Ophelia."*

**Amy:** "We recorded 'Touch Me Fall' live. It was an improv thing. I had a car wreck, actually, the day we recorded. The song is sort of a journey that goes from the ego and true love ... this real pure type thing into a chaotic existence."


**Emily:** "'Least Complicated' is about when you reach 30, which I am now, and you start to look back at all the patterns in your life. It's about trying to learn a lesson that's very simple, that you could've learned a long time ago."

"Swamp Ophelia," the new album featuring "Touch Me Fall" and "Least Complicated."

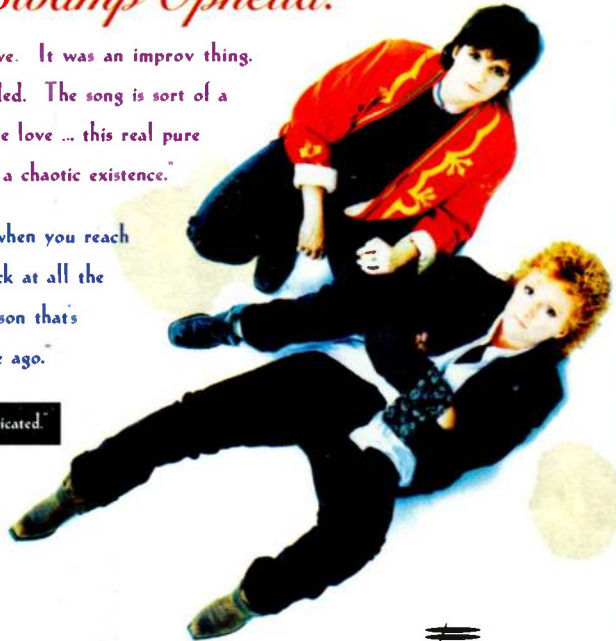


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ELECTRONICS

the first song [on demos] is the best? Do you know what that's called? Lack of talent."

An increasing number of unsigned bands now shop their wares on CD instead of cassette. "It used to be that the best groups had CDs: the ones that could afford it because they toured and they got paid to play and they could afford to press CDs. But now everybody has them and not everybody is good enough."

On Thursday Lubin flies down to Memphis for Crossroads '94, the city's third annu-

al pop music showcase. He'll check out a couple of bands, but Lubin's trip isn't a talent hunt. Rather, the gathering conveniently assembles some artists he's already courting. "It's not an efficient use of time to go out every night randomly looking at acts. Usually everything you see is terrible."

His first day in Memphis is largely a schmoozefest, with the bonus of free Grace-land tours for Crossroads registrants. The event is still small enough to allow everyone to run into each other nearly constantly.

Lubin connects with Wil Sharpe, a Los Angeles-based manager representing two acts in which he's interested: B.B. & the Screaming Buddha Heads, and the Eric Gales Band. The former is already licensed to RCA; the latter Lubin hopes to sign.

Thanks to a late-night/early-morning band appearance, the next day finds Lubin operating on four hours' sleep. Nevertheless he's got to give his best pitch to the Memphis-based Gales trio and their manager to convince them to go with RCA. After two Elektra albums the Eric Gales Band is looking for another label.

"You guys need a home?" Lubin charges right in. "I need acts on my roster. The question is what do you want to do and how can I help you tell me what you want to do?"

Gales—who, for all his experience and six-string expertise, is still a teenager—seems partial to Lubin, perhaps for their shared Elektra tenure. Lubin eventually changes tack, shifting from pitching RCA to a band-directed pep talk: "It's time to take a creative leap and start to stand for something. I don't mean civil rights; I mean have a point of view, an artistic personality...a really distinct thing that says, 'You can't get it anywhere but here.'"

"What you're saying," Gales says encouragingly, "is what we've been talking about anyway."

Sharpe says he wants a marketing/promotional commitment in writing, and will make a decision that month.

Following the meeting Lubin attends the tail end of Crossroads' A&R panel. ("They're always good for a laugh," he says of A&R panels in general.) With no must-see acts on his schedule for that evening, Lubin hits the Rendezvous, Memphis' famous barbecue joint, with Howard Thompson, a fellow Elektra A&R alumnus. The next day is Saturday but Lubin will stay in Memphis to catch an after-midnight band set. He'll fly back to New York on Sunday.

This is not everyone's ideal lifestyle. But for non-musicians committed to music, the A&R role is a fascinating chance to play god, or at least make a difference. As Lubin is fond of saying, "We are the enablers."

That's the upside. On the other hand, "It's very easy, when you're an A&R man, to get talked out of things. Lord knows the odds are against you; it's a crapshoot."

Another Lubin comment could stand as a perverse A&R credo: "The last thing I look forward to is stumbling onto something good," he admits. "Every band that sucks is a relief." ☺

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BY JON YOUNG

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PHOTOGRAPH BY NORMAN WATSON



DANZIG

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KNOWS THE POWER  
OF THE DARK SIDE

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HE SITS IN A DARK HOTEL ROOM IN SECAUCUS, NEW JERSEY ON A WARM SPRING AFTERNOON. HE IS WEARING BLACK. HE IS ALWAYS WEARING BLACK, EXCEPT FOR THE MASSIVE TATTOO ON HIS MASSIVE LEFT ARM: "WOLFS BLOOD" READS THE INSCRIPTION (IN BLUE AND RED), UNDER WHICH ARE RENDERINGS OF

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various skeletal creatures and a vampire bat. Yet his features are surprisingly soft: the thin dark hair that splays toward his shoulders, the frown that strives to seem menacing but just as often suggests a pout, the speaking voice, somber but thoughtful as he quietly makes a point.

"If I take Satan or a murderer, and put him in a song, all of a sudden I'm supposed to *be* that person. Whatever happened to literary license?"

Who *is* this guy? In an age of instant celebrity, where the lines become ever more sharply drawn between the cynically fake and the achingly sincere, Glenn Danzig remains a figure of intrigue, and an enigma. His public persona is at once cartoonish and emotionally naked, his messages cryptic and clear, his band's music gutbucket primal and subtly sophisticated. Inhabiting that strange nether space between boomers and genXers, punk and pop, metal and melody, caveman and crooner, he grabs hold of the spotlight and sucks it into the black hole of his inscrutable self. He is, perhaps, rock's last mystery man.

It's a testimony to the power of his hellish visions that Danzig, man and band, has inspired adulation and antipathy over the course of six years, three LPs and last year's *Thrall-Demonsweatlive* EP, which contained the breakthrough hit "Mother." Backed by brutish henchmen John Christ (guitar), Eerie Von (bass) and Chuck Biscuits (drums), the singer spins dark, angry tales like "Twist of Cain," "Snakes of Christ," "How the Gods Kill" and "Am I Demon" with grim panache. As the players grind out brusque, bluesy hard rock, he conjures a spectre of blood, vengeance and supernatural possession in a deep, authoritative voice that prompts comparisons with Jim Morrison.

Given his fondness for otherworldly jive, it's not surprising that Danzig has been suspected even of Satanism, and that some have been frightened away by the group's aura. He recounts with amusement how one prominent producer was too scared to work with the group. Yet he shrugs off opportunities to explicate his image. "With this band, what you see is what you get," he smiles, deftly revealing nothing. Asked if he objects to being turned into a devilish caricature by the press, which is likely to occur with increasing frequency as Danzig infiltrates the pop mainstream, he seems momentarily taken aback. "You know I never really...", he says, then lets the thought go slack and shrugs. "I can only go, 'Typical.'"

The band's latest, *Danzig 4p*, won't clear the air at all. Featuring chillers like "When You Call on the Dark," "Goin' Down to Die" (under consideration for Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers*) and "Invocation," which Glenn cheerfully describes as "about a demon

fucking somebody," the new album is a looser, less stylized, more accessible work that's sure to build on the popularity generated by "Mother." Pondering commercial success, he admits, "I wouldn't mind. All of us have worked really hard, and if we see something out of it, that'd be fine. But we're not gonna write a song to get on the radio. We're not gonna change what we do."

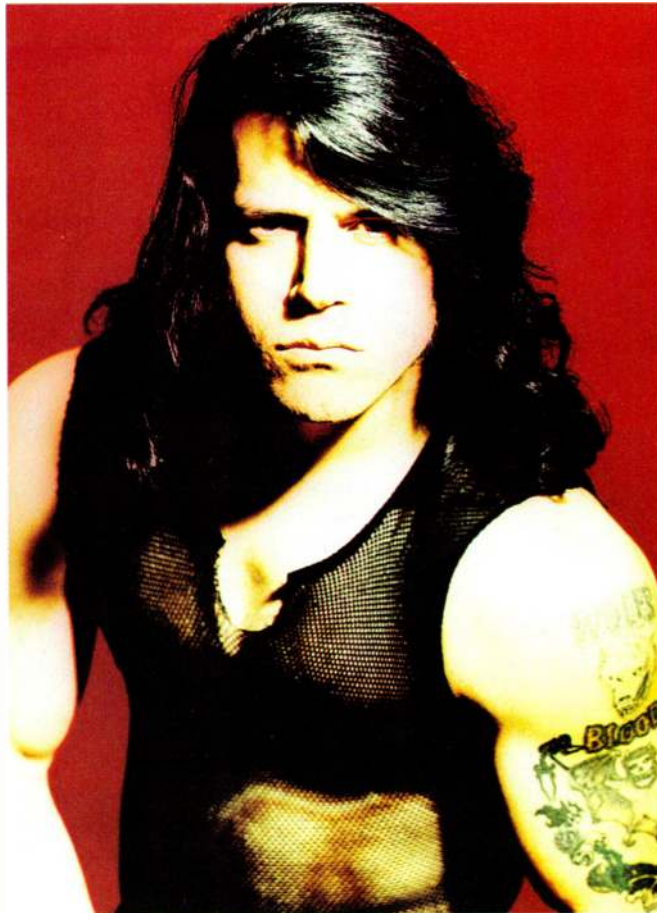
Danzig takes "Mother" with a grain of salt, since the song was six years old when the live EP version took off, and balks at crediting the song for the band's steadily growing audience. "I'm glad MTV played 'Mother,' but we had a loyal following already. Actually, I'd rather have it happen like that than the way it does with some bands, where MTV makes them. When they don't play the videos anymore, their popularity is gone. Thank God that won't happen to us. We got our fans the hard way, playing on the road."

Danzig, 35, has been doing that longer than some of his video-come-lately fans might surmise. In some ways he's the prototypical Jersey Guy, replete with muscles and plodding work ethic—the Bizarro World Springsteen. He went to high school in nearby Lodi from the late '70s to mid-'80s, he led the Misfits, a respected New York punk band that put out records on its own label, called Plan 9 in a nod to bad-movie auteur Ed Wood. "I'm reticent to talk about that stuff, because it was a long time ago. It should have been discussed when it was pertinent," he says dismissively, as if trying to wipe away tracks from his past. Still, he admits the group "was a lot of fun, although eventually it became very limiting"—partly because Glenn could sing melodies, a talent rarely in demand among punks.

Nearer to Danzig's heart was his next group, Samhain, named

for a Celtic ritual. Including bassist Eerie Von, another Lodi alumnus, Samhain was "a coming of age, a deeper approach to music" that laid the groundwork for his current band. Samhain toured constantly, attracting up to 2000 people a night and generating a buzz at the 1986 New Music Seminar in New York. Following a midnight set, Danzig recalls, "we were talking to some labels in the dressing room after the show, and this wild card shows up, saying, 'You guys were incredible! I want to sign your band!' I didn't know who he was. He looked like somebody from ZZ Top."

He was Def American honcho Rick Rubin, who'd signed Slayer at the same venue one year before. Danzig came by Rubin's office on lower Broadway to learn more. "The company was still a street-level company and he was running it out of his loft apartment, which was a typical New York place: garbage everywhere, stacks of records tipped over, phones ringing constantly, speakers blasting. It was pretty cool.



"We went out, had some pizza, walked around town. He told me he saw us as a real band, not a trendy band, and though we could get a little more focused, he thought we had more to say than some groups. I liked that."

So Samhain became Danzig, and Rubin and Glenn set about sharpening the focus. Out went the deadwood and in came drummer Chuck Biscuits, a veteran of punk institutions Black Flag and the Circle Jerks, and guitarist John Christ, who was knocking around Baltimore in bar bands while pursuing a music degree. The lineup hasn't changed since.

Not that everyone's real chummy. There's obvious friction between Danzig and Christ, a tension that's been great for the band's musical vision, but hasn't exactly bonded their relationship. Control is essential to Glenn, who writes the songs alone and tells the others how to play, even the lead guitarist. "As far as John's ideas, I don't know of any ideas he has," he says baldly. "I write most of the guitar parts—always have, in every band. You might see that as control. I see it as more of a producer's role. Sometimes John does a bunch of different lead tracks and I piece them together. It's like conducting."

Others might think such dominance reflects a lack of confidence in his players. "We're not concerned with what some people think," he shoots back. "We know what works for the band. If someone wants to get his rocks off in a different way, he goes outside."

Love or loathe the music, there's no denying Danzig can strike a nerve. The horror-movie stuff is amusing enough, if you're attuned to the flamboyant excesses of "Hellraiser" or "Texas Chainsaw Massacre." But he's also adept at evoking the confusion, frustration and disappointment of mundane life. From "Mother"'s invitation to an intimidating new world of adult experience, to the furious assault on mainstream religion in *How the Gods Kill's* "Godless," to the new "Can't Speak," a stunning depiction of helpless desperation, Danzig throws an emotional life preserver to those who feel overwhelmed or unloved, letting them know they're not alone.

He isn't surprised that his listeners, especially younger ones, relate to his evocations of rage and loneliness. "Most kids are really frustrated. They're living under things I didn't have to live under when I was a kid, like AIDS and guns in school. We had guns and knives in school, but not 9mm's. It wasn't like today. Why do you see so many people end their lives so young? Life looks bleak now."

He describes his own upbringing as stormy. "I wasn't a nice kid, but I wasn't the worst kid. The worst kids I knew are now dead or in jail. I could have been one of them if I'd made the wrong decision. I

ended up on that road on a number of occasions and had to steer myself back."

What made the difference? "Who knows? Maybe a force that you don't know about. I believe in controlling your destiny, but you hit crossroads where you have to make the ultimate decision. Destiny will try and take you in a certain direction, but you've gotta help it along." Today, he says, "I definitely believe in a yin and a yang, good and evil. My religion is a patchwork of whatever is real to me. If I can draw the inner strength to get through the day from something, that's religion." And the supernatural stuff? "There are definitely forces at play that people could tune into, but don't. If you think that all that exists is what you see here, you're not seeing it all.

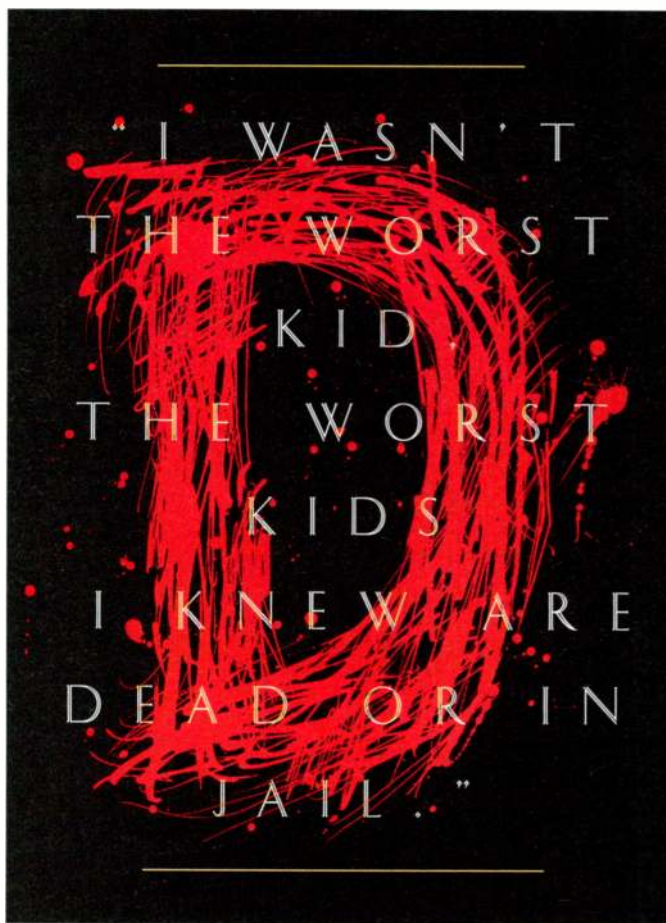
"Religion is such a big part of the world," he goes on more philosophically. "It's caused some great things and some terrible things. It motivates people to commit murder, to commit actions normal-thinking people wouldn't do. So any time you question religion, you're sticking a piece of metal in the spokes, stopping the wheel from turning. You want people to reevaluate things and think for themselves, and they want you to stop thinking before you realize it's all bullshit. If I accuse the Catholic church of genocide—and we have history to back it up—they don't want that known."

Does he really believe "they," meaning the powers in control, are monitoring what Danzig says?

"You better believe they are! That's why they'll try to write me and other people off as Satanists. You lose credibility if you're a cartoon character. If they'd found a way to market us like they did a lot of the alternative bands, nobody would be scared of us."

Informed that *Musician* stands to lose advertising for putting Danzig on its cover, he seems momentarily surprised, then grumbles, "That's typical of America, a repressive society bordering on a fascist society. That's covert censorship, where people don't know that things are being censored around them."

Danzig espouses an elaborate network of theories, some of which will be familiar to conspiracy buffs, to explain our screwed-up world. But we digress. He's equally passionate about music. "I like so many different singers. Roy Orbison [who recorded Danzig's 'Life Fades Away' for the *Less Than Zero* soundtrack], Bill Medley, Johnny Cash, of course. I remember as a kid being in a record store and seeing this Cash album. He had a guitar slung over his shoulder, a scar on his chin and he was all in black. Even then I could tell he had been through some shit. There was a rebelliousness there that you knew wasn't hype."



# CAREFUL WITH THAT AXE, JOHN CHRIST

PLAYING GUITAR with Danzig is a fairly simple matter, says John Christ. All you have to do is understand what Glenn Danzig doesn't like, and work around it.

For instance? "If it sounds too normal, he doesn't like it," explains Christ. "If it sounds too rock 'n' roll, he doesn't like it. If it sounds too happy, he doesn't like it."

Which leaves—what? "The guitar parts in Danzig are all very simple," he explains. "But once the basic idea is there, then I make it Danzig—which means an extra chord change here and there, short fills to break up the parts, and some of the artificial harmonic things in single notes and in the chord structure with some sustained feedback thrown in, to make the individual parts a bit more interesting and full."

Things start with Danzig's demos, which are, erm, basic. "Well, the way he did it this time, he'd have a song on one of those little microcassette recorders, just his voice going *dubnn-dubnn-dubdubdub-DUHNN-dubnn-dubdubdub*—you know, stuff like that. Then he and I would sit there with guitars; once we got one or two guitar parts, Eerie [Von] and Chuck [Biscuits] would come in, and they'd kinda start jamming to it. We do a lot of mid-tempo songs," he notes. "Danzig likes to go from really soft to really loud. We like the big power that comes when everything is crashing in."

But the band can throw curves. "On 'Son of the Morning Star,' we actually start out with jazz chords and a funky jazz beat. All of a sudden, we kick

into this heavy riff pattern. Then we come back to the original jazz feel, but in a rock version. It's nice for me, because out of all this powerchord stuff, there's some real harmony going on."

Christ, it turns out, is a harmony fiend. Glenn, of course, is not. "Once in a while, he'll throw in some harmony vocals, but it's not like Alice in Chains, where it's built on that minor-third vocal harmony sound. Also, when you get into powerchords, it's hard to inject a whole lot of harmony."

So Christ opts for color instead. "The parts that I do are almost afterthoughts, to highlight some of the implied keys and harmonies that do exist. Slightly dissonant harmonies are what work with Danzig, usually 7ths and 4ths. I'll also throw in some dissonant type of patterns—half-steps, weird diminished 5th intervals. Every record, we have a diminished 5th in there somewhere. 'Brand New God,' from the new album, is the same thing; that B to D to B to the F is the tritone that gives it that sound. So there are a lot of weird things in there."

Except in the solos, which are generally straight pentatonic blues. "It doesn't always start out that way, but that's really Glenn's favorite style. Sometimes I'll play the blues scale, and put in variations which imply different modes that apply to the chord structure, just so you'll hear something different. It's funny, because when I see people transcribe some of the solos, they'll say, 'Well, here he shifted to such-and-such mode.'" Christ laughs. "No, I just played a couple half-steps in between. But you can notate it any way you want."

J.D. CONSIDINE



He was understandably delighted when the Man in Black included Danzig's "Thirteen" on his recent *American Recordings*, produced, not so coincidentally, by Rick Rubin. Glenn beams, "I wrote another song for him recently and he liked it too."

Elvis Presley also rings Danzig's bell. "Eerie's the big Elvis fan, but I really like his voice. For me, the best record is the Memphis record, when he had to prove he wasn't a joke. The Sun stuff is good, but his voice is better on the Memphis record. There's real maturity there."

As for comparisons to other singers, he says, "The Morrison thing I can see. Orbison, maybe, in some of the phrasing. Howlin' Wolf would be more accurate than all of them, 'cause I don't think any of those other guys ever screamed the way I scream, and Howlin' Wolf did."

Danzig's got other irons in the fire these days. A comics fanatic, he's starting his own company, beginning with a book of illustrations by Frank Frazetta. "He's a very cool guy and he's been dicked over by a lot of people. I'm gonna make sure he gets paid." He speaks proudly of his friendship with the late Jack Kirby, of "Fantastic Four" and "Captain America" fame, recalling how he gave the legendary illustrator moral support in his legal battles with Marvel. At the same time he seems oddly defensive about his passion, taking pains to explain that he reads books, too.

The phone rings, twice. The rest of the band is waiting on the tour bus, ready for the soundcheck at the Garden State Art Center a few

miles down the turnpike in Holmdel. By the time Danzig arrives at the open-air amphitheater, however, four hours before their scheduled 8:30 p.m. set sandwiched between opening act Suicidal Tendencies and top-billed Metallica, the odds of getting a soundcheck are shrinking. With the doors scheduled to open at 6:00, the headliners are still sorting out their own mix, scrambling to cope after seeing a fancy new digital system crash.

Looking around the room dominated by Metallica's bustling staff, which seems to be in a state of mild panic, he muses, "My oldest brother—I have two older and one younger brother—used to be a road manager, so I can see how much things have changed. Back then a roadie just moved the equipment; there was no high-tech stuff. Metallica has a 50- or 60-man crew. That used to be an audience," he laughs.

I ask Glenn how his parents feel about his career. "When I was a kid, they didn't want me to be in music. Now they're proud," he says, adding that he got his dad an autographed photo of Johnny Cash. Will the folks attend the show? "I won't let 'em," he says tersely. "They wouldn't get it."

Polishing off his greens, Danzig heads for the upstairs dressing room. "We've gotta go over a new song we're gonna play for Eerie's deceased uncle." The rest of the band mills around the building, shooting the breeze with the worker bees and schmoozers. In the tiny Danzig dressing room, where a modest buffet of fresh fruit and candy





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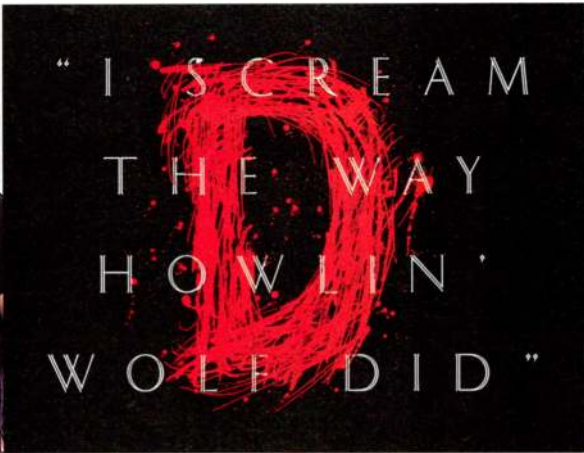


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bars brightens the scene, I grill laconic drummer Chuck Biscuits.

He scoffs at the likelihood of big-time success. "We'll see. I've heard that so many times. People are expecting a big explosion after 'Mother,' but it never seems to work that way." He's happy with his contribution to the new album, however. "I've had problems with the drum sounds on previous records.

They've been too flat, too controlled. In the past, Rick has been into that dry, tight AC/DC sound. This one was looser, with more spaces, more noise—all the good shit I like."

Chuck and Glenn go back to the days when Black Flag and the Misfits shared a bill. Asked to compare playing behind Danzig and former Flag frontman Henry Rollins, he snickers. "It's like the difference between night and day. Henry doesn't really sing, does he? This band has melodies."

He feels closer to his current bandmates—some of 'em, anyway. "Me and Eerie and Glenn have a certain amount in common because we all collect toys and we were all punk-rockers. But we would never have known John. We come from two totally different worlds. When I was in punk bands, he was in heavy metal bar bands. If I'd gone to Baltimore and met him on a bus, he and his friends would've beat the shit out of me."

As we talk, a member of the Danzig crew decorates the dressing room with brightly colored Elvis Presley tapestries, the kind found at cheesy roadside souvenir stands, as well as a portrait of Christ (Jesus, not John) with arms outstretched. Some zany graffiti artist has drawn a cigarette in the Savior's hand.

Glenn's oldest friend in the band, Eerie Von, is responsible for the portable Elvis shrine. The two go back to the latter days of the Misfits, when Eerie drummed with his own band, Rosemary's Babies. Eerie switched to bass at Danzig's behest—"He said I had too much personality and ought to be out front"—and hasn't budged since, though he's lost some of his youthful zing over the years. "I used to headbang like a maniac, but now I have to wear a back brace onstage. If I made a lot of sudden movements, I'd probably kill myself."

More than a dozen of Eerie's relatives are on the guest list for the evening's show. "My Uncle

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Tony would have been here, but he just died, which is a drag," he says softly. "He was a big fan of the band and promoted us everywhere

## "MOTHER"'S LITTLE HELPERS

**J**OHAN CHRIST'S main guitar is a 1983 B.C. Rich Rich Bitch, strung with custom D'Aquisto strings. "It's a freak, a really good-sounding B.C. Rich," he says.

"When they were originally coming out, they were loaded with DIMARZIO Super Distortions, which was the style at the time. But the sound was a little bit too hot, so I loaded it up with some Paul Reed Smith pickups, and all of a sudden, that guitar came to life."

The Bitch goes through a Custom Audio 4x4 Audio Controller (with a Boss GE-7 seven-band graphic EQ in the effect loop, integral to Christ's sound) on its way to a VHT Pitbull built by Stevie Freyette. "It has a really strong low end and good, full power," he observes. The 4x4 is connected to a Rocktron Patchmate, a switcher/processor that handles audio routing to Christ's effects, channel switching for his amp, noise reduction and pedal-activated volume control.

A Custom Audio RS-10 MIDI Foot Control Pedal controls the Patchmate, allowing Christ to switch in and out of his Boss SE-70 and Rocktron Intelliverb multieffect units. Audio outputs from the effects are routed (via the Patchmate) to a Custom Audio Dual Stereo Mini Mixer whose stereo outputs are fed to a two-channel VHT 2150 power amp.

Reproducing the sound of the Pitbull and the 2150's stereo output requires three cabinets, each loaded with four Celestion Vintage 30 speakers. Onstage, Pitbull's sits in the center, flanked on either side by the wet stereo mix. A tap on the foot controller can change Christ's sound from a dry mono blast to an echoing cathedral. "I can program in sounds for *How the Gods Kill* and make it sound almost exactly like the record," he says. "I just have to hit one switch there, and boom! The changes are as tight as they can be."

EERIE VON plays a Fender Jazz Bass strung with D'Addarios, plugged into an Ampeg amp paired with an SVT speaker cabinet.

Gripping Promark sticks, CHUCK BISCUITS pounds away on a '70s-era Ludwig kit with a Ludwig piccolo snare drum and Zildjian Earth-ride cymbals.

GLENN DANZIG sings through whatever mike is available.

he went. But my crazy Aunt Barbara, his wife, will be here. They've been behind me since I started playing. They always said to me, 'You're gonna be big some day.' If that ever happens, I'm gonna come back with a car carrier full of Cadillacs and say, 'Pick your favorite one.' There's a lot of people I'd love to do that for." Just like Elvis!

Does Eerie's family have a problem with Danzig's more gruesome songs?

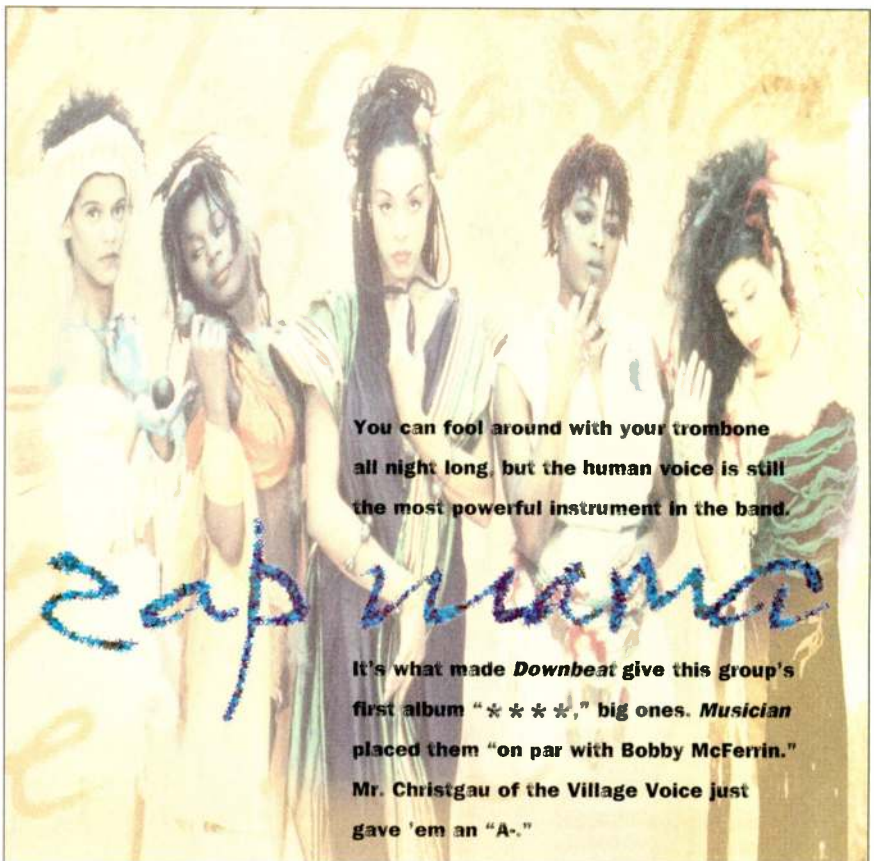
"I told 'em to ignore that. My mom's pretty high up in her church—I think she's an elder—and I told her, 'You might hear some-

body say something bad about us, but you know what I'm about.'"

Just before they're set to go on, Glenn storms into the dressing room to rally the troops. "We're doing our full set and if anyone wants us offstage, let them come and get us! You guys know we're doing 'Goin' Down to Die' for Uncle Tony, right?"

"All right, let's do Eerie's relatives proud!" Despite no soundcheck, the show cooks.

Limited to less than an hour, Danzig storms through old stuff like "She Rides" and, of course, "Mother," and a [cont'd on page 95]



And Jon Pareles of the *New York Times* went to see Zap Mama and reported that the audience walked out singing.

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# SO

BY MARK ROWLAND

At first gaze, they are the odd couple. Glyn Johns is trim, silver-haired, in finely creased linen trousers and a white shirt buttoned at the collar the picture of refined English taste. Don Was, a frizzled black mop of hair hovering over sunglasses and baggy sweat clothes, lends new meaning to the term “rumpled.” The preeminent producer of the '60s and '70s, Johns' personality often seems to reflect that wild era—glib and profane, with mood swings ranging from funny to furious. Was, quietly deliberate, more closely exemplifies the spirit of the present decade, as he measures his thoughts with the care of a therapist. Or as Johns himself puts it, only half in jest, “We’re very different personalities. Don is a nice guy. I can be an asshole.”

For all that, Johns and Was comprise a mutual admiration society for each other's work—and well they should. Between them, they've produced and/or engineered scores of great albums by the cream of modern pop music's Valhalla, from *Led Zeppelin I*, *Who's Next* and Eric Clapton's *Slowhand* (Johns) to Bonnie Raitt's *Nick of Time*, the B-52's' *Cosmic Thing* and the Beatles biopic soundtrack *Backbeat* (Was). What both bring to bear on their work is a love for the music-making process, a healthy respect verging on awe for the artists they counsel and a fierce determination to protect those musical visions from outside interference—that, and enough experience and intelligence to command respect for their opinions. There's even a natural continuity in their careers, the best example being their relationship with the Rolling Stones. Johns produced that storied band's first recording session 30 years ago, and was an important



# PEAKING



*From "Get  
Back" to  
"Backbeat"  
Glyn Johns  
and Don  
Was Have  
Produced a  
Rock 'n'  
Roll Hall of  
Fame.*



*Photographs  
by  
Ann Summa*

# *for the* RECORD

presence in the making of every Stones album through *Exile in Main Street*. This month, the world's greatest rock 'n' roll band will release their latest album *Voodoo Lounge*—produced by Don Was.

"I was listening to those old Rolling Stones records to reference them," Was admits at one point, "and the sound"—he shakes his head—"just fantastic."

"Well, coming from you that's high praise," Johns replies smartly. "And I'll take it!"

Interestingly, Was and Johns had never spoken at length with each other until *MUSICIAN* coaxed them together for this freewheeling summit session on the craft of record production. But as the following conversation full of anecdotes, rants, trade secrets and repartee makes clear, they both brought a lot on their minds.

**MUSICIAN:** *What is the essence of a producer?*

**WAS:** If you want to get to the high concept of it, you're there to bring out the best in the artist. There is no formula for it. People from Giorgio Moroder, who wrote everything, sequenced everything and did the whole bit, to other people, who shall remain nameless, who are known for sitting and talking on the telephone and not being in the room except for—

**JOHNS:** Oh, Jimmy Iovine! [laughter]

**WAS:** Okay, to take Jimmy, for example, he's consistently been involved with great records. You can't bullshit your way through a decade of doing that. So, obviously, he had a method that worked well. You've got to do whatever it takes.

**JOHNS:** There is no golden rule, but basically, your job is to represent the artist. Although one has a loyalty to the record company, too. You can make the two work, but there's a tremendous amount of psychology; equally, I suspect, there's a tremendous amount of psychology used on us.

**MUSICIAN:** *In movies, there's a credit for producing and a credit for director. In music the line between those two gets smudged.*

**JOHNS:** Well, the title of producer is ridiculous, especially now. Director is far more what we are. At the end of the day, the record company's the producer, really, in the filming sense. Correct?

**WAS:** Yeah, exactly. A director of a film is realizing his own vision. Whereas a record producer, you've got to realize the artist's vision.

**MUSICIAN:** *Why take on this task?*

**JOHNS:** Because I was a failed artist.

**MUSICIAN:** *You were a singer?*

**JOHNS:** Yes, at a very small point, very brief. My interest in music started at a very early age. My education was in classical music and when I became a teenager I got interested in popular music. It just happened to be at a time when music was going through a very serious change, which I identified with enormously. I got a job in a recording studio as an engineer, which I just lucked out—I didn't even know what an engineer was. And I became successful as an engineer and having done that I thought, "Well, now I'm gonna go and sing." And I wasn't very good. [laughs] So I was led by the nose back to what I'd been doing before very quickly, in a matter of weeks. And frankly, it's the best of both worlds.

**WAS:** I have an ongoing career as an artist and they're two different experiences. The artist has got to go to the furthest limits of the tether—and the producer's supposed to be there on the earth, holding the tether down. It's much easier to be the producer—that's why I'm doing it. [laughs]

Which isn't to say it's an easy job, it's just that, when I see guys like Bob Dylan reach these places that I can't get to as an artist, it's so rewarding. It's the greatest show on earth. I once waited in line overnight in the winter to get tickets to see the Rolling Stones in Detroit. So why wouldn't I wanna see them play 10 feet from me for six months?

**JOHNS:** Or have Mick play you a song he's just written and actually be interested in your opinion? That's pretty serious stuff, extremely serious stuff—not that he ever asked my opinion of anything. [Was cracks up] I don't think he's ever even asked me the time.

**MUSICIAN:** *How much does your individual sensibility as an artist influence your producing?*

**WAS:** To leave your thumb print on their forehead is insulting. I've always felt the fact that I was able to make the Was (Not Was) records when I could be very helpful, because I could vent my artistic ambitions. Conversely, I find working with great people to be really inspiring. To watch however Keith Richards writes a song makes me want to go write songs. But you are really the artist's representative when they're off in the middle of making this record.

**MUSICIAN:** *When you work with artists of the calibre of the Rolling Stones, can you be intimidated by their stature?*

**JOHNS:** Well, in my case I wouldn't because we go back too far. I took them into the studio before they'd ever sang, when they were these very snotty-nosed, long-haired hooligans. My fondest memories are of seeing them in the very beginning in small clubs when they were just getting started.



BONNIE RAITT  
BEATLES  
LED ZEPPELIN



BOB DYLAN  
JACKSON BROWNE  
EAGLES



ROLLING STONES  
WILLIE NELSON  
B-52's



ROY ORBISON  
LEONARD COHEN  
LYLE LOVETT



THE CLASH  
THE WHO  
JOHN HIATT

# PRODUCER'S CUP

**MUSICIAN:** *Did you have any sense at that point of what they would become?*

**JOHNS:** Oh, I knew perfectly well they were gonna be huge. Unfortunately, I couldn't convince anybody else. I was very young too, and didn't have any money. So I'd done a deal with the guy who owned this studio: If I took anybody in there, he would own the tapes. So he took the tapes, knowing nothing about popular music at all, and tried to place them. And he failed bitterly because he didn't know anybody. He went to the head of classical music at Decca or something.

**WAS:** So where are the tapes?

**JOHNS:** I don't really know. I've got an acetate at home but that's all that remains. Bill [Wyman] had an acetate at home and he told me the other week that he sent it off to be cleaned and it got bootlegged.

So then Andrew Oldham came on the scene and in fact, although in that entire time I contributed a very large part to the productions I never actually got credit for producing. I was given credit for producing *Ya-Yas*, a live album. That was one of the biggest bones of contention, that they would never recognize me as a producer, because they saw me as an engineer. I don't think they really knew what a producer was, then. They might know by now 'cause they're using him. [gestures toward *Was*]

**MUSICIAN:** *Was there general resistance to crediting producers then? Because you never got credit for producing the first Led Zeppelin album either.*

**JOHNS:** Thanks for reminding me!

**MUSICIAN:** *And in Mark Lewisohn's Beatles Chronicles he suggests that one reason the original "Let It Be"/"Get Back" sessions were canned was because John Lennon didn't want to give you producer's credit.*

**JOHNS:** Yes, it's very interesting. I'd been retained on a fairly loose basis; Paul rang me up and said would I be interested in doing a record with them? And I naturally presumed that George Martin was gonna be there, but he wasn't, it was just them and me. So we got on with it, and after a few weeks, I realized that in fact George *wasn't* gonna be there and that I'd been doing it all and that I'd come up with a real concept of the way the record should be.

So I went to each of them individually and I said, "Here's the situation, this is most embarrassing, I find myself actually producing here and I would like a credit for that. I don't want a royalty, I think that would be completely out of order because you're gonna sell 10 million records whether I do it or the milkman. So I'm quite happy not to

have a royalty—but I would like the credit." And all the other three went, "That's fine." And John went, "Why don't you want any money!?"

Like, he couldn't believe it. I said, "Look, I've just explained to you why." And that was all I ever got out of John. He was never negative to me about it; he never said "no" or anything else; he seemed quite happy about the whole thing and it was only after the band split up that it became apparent that he didn't like the record the way it was so he went off and gave it to Phil Spector who then totally ruined it.

**MUSICIAN:** *From many accounts the Beatles were not in very grand spirits at that time—how does a producer deal with something like that?*

**JOHNS:** No, I don't agree with that. There were frustrations between individuals that were quite understandable. However, I remember the time as being really very cool and against all the odds and the publicity they were getting at the time, and they got on really well together. There were a couple of incidents which were very unpleasant but that was between them and nothing to do with the music. In fairness, I don't think that George [Harrison] got a fair enough crack with his material—I don't think he ever did, really. But basically, they got on great.

If you listen to my record, the whole object of the way I did it was exactly to prove that! The whole thing's live; they were in a room sitting around with microphones and a P.A. and I just recorded everything they did. And it was filmed. Having proved that they'd made the finest produced records of their era, I thought how cool it would be to show actually the four of them sitting down, playing their songs... there was no overdub, but just playing, real down home, in your face, no tricks.

**WAS:** You invented "Unplugged," in other words.


**JOHNS:** Yes, I guess I did. Christ!

**MUSICIAN:** *You went all the way back with the Rolling Stones. But wasn't it daunting to work with the Beatles at that point? They'd become mythic.*

**JOHNS:** Oh, I was seriously intimidated by them. And I'd worked with a lot of serious people. But there wasn't anybody in the world like them.

**MUSICIAN:** *Then doesn't it become more of a problem to say, "John, that vocal wasn't any good"?*

**JOHNS:** There are certain people you don't say that to. Because they know themselves, and frankly, they have a far better opinion of what they're capable of doing than you do. You're just there to facilitate



**ELTON JOHN**  
BRIAN WILSON  
FACES

**GEORGE CLINTON**  
STEVE MILLER  
GUNS N' ROSES

**ERIC CLAPTON**  
BOB SEGER  
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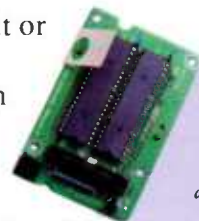
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them doing it. And he'd be one of those. I wouldn't need to tell John. John had a very clear vision of what he was trying to do and he went and did it. And it was usually the first take.

**WAS:** [astonished] Is that right?

**JOHNS:** Oh yeah. I only overdubbed with him once. I ran the tape to get a level from him, went back to the top of the song and I said, "Okay, we'll take it now." And he said, "Didn't you tape that?!" It was the only time he ever got really pissed off at me and he was really pissed off. Ohhhh—the wrath of Lennon.

**MUSICIAN:** So how about you, Don? The Stones bring a fair amount of psychic baggage.

**WAS:** Yeah, but I'll tell you something. I had an experience a couple of years back. I was working on a Bob Dylan record and he brought George Harrison in to play the solo and just about as close as the three of us are sitting right now, here's George, overdubbing the slide solo; here's Bob; and here's me. And I'm trying to hold my jaw together, thinking, "It's the Concert for Bangladesh." [laughs] In my lap! I'm like, flipping out. And George played a solo that was okay but it wasn't great. And they both looked up at me after the solo and said, "Well, what do you think, Don?" So I just swallowed hard and I said, "It was good. I think you can probably do a better one." And they said, "Great, let's do it." And I thought, *of course*—he's paying me money to sit here. I'm not here because "you're such a great fan, Don, we'd like to have you observe the record." So from that moment on, I saw that I did the right thing there and I should probably do that all the time.

When Mick was doing his vocals, I couldn't look at him. He was standing 10 feet away with a hand-held mike and he was doing the full stadium thing—and if I looked, I was awestruck! But if I just looked down and listened, I was able to engage in a proper dialogue with him and evaluate the thing. I felt it was really important that they walk away from this thing having written good songs and having performed them. And nothing was gonna stop that.

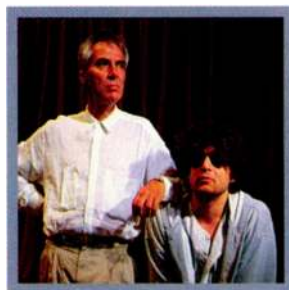
**JOHNS:** I admire you for having that strength and vision and for pulling it off. It's not easy to do, especially with an artist that's as long in the tooth and as complex as a band.

**WAS:** Well, a band is tough. I think that I was really fortunate to meet up with them at this point in time because they were ready to make a good record. They'd snuck by on the last one with the wonder that they were able to get together and make anything at all. And now, I think they were invigorated by the realization that they'd been doing this longer than anybody, that there hasn't been a rock 'n' roll band that remained creative for 30 years. And that there were new waters; what kind of precedent are we gonna set? And I think that a lot of this cynicism that you read in magazines about them being washed up, that affects them. I think they're certainly not washed up—they're in incredible form. And I came on board with all that advance work done. They were ready to go.

**MUSICIAN:** Bill Wyman's leaving must have thrown things up as well.

**WAS:** I think it had a strong effect on Charlie's playing. The core of the Rolling Stones, to me, it's Charlie's hi-hat. I don't know if you found that...

*Johns: "One  
reason I didn't  
want to work  
with the Stones  
is I was bored  
to tears."*



**JOHNS:** The core of the Rolling Stones to me is Bill and Charlie. So I'm fascinated to hear what it is without that. Because I've used Charlie on sessions for other people and he's different without Bill. There's something weird that happens when those two play together. When you listen to those records...you're a bass player, you must know what I'm talking about.

**WAS:** Oh, Bill Wyman is as great a bass player as James Jamerson, to me. It's weird because Daryl Jones, who plays bass on this album, really hadn't listened to those records. At one session I was saying, "Yeah, play something like the bassline at the end of 'Street Fighting Man.'" Blank. [laughter] That night at the hotel I said, "You never heard 'Street Fighting Man,' did you?" He said, "Well, I might have heard it on the radio once." So I laid some of the stuff on him to explain what Bill was about. But I think that was the beauty of what he contributed.

**MUSICIAN:** With a band such as the Stones, is it better to record them together, or isolate one or more of the players?

**WAS:** I don't think it's ever better to isolate anybody. One thing I was pushing for was to have lyrics before we started recording, so that instead of Mick singing syllables, he would be singing hard and meaning something, because I think people feed off that. You start doing tracks without vocals or some other important elements, it's like putting an emotional limiter on the track. The great things happen

when there's chemistry and people are pulling each other up.

**JOHNS:** I completely agree, and from our point of view it's by far the easiest way of working, because we are getting more of the entire picture and the problems are easier to spot. However, there are examples of extraordinary records, in the case of the Rolling Stones particularly, who very rarely have done what you're talking about—

**WAS:** Like "Street Fighting Man"—that was Keith on an acoustic and Charlie on a toy kit on a cassette machine, basically?

**JOHNS:** Yeah. And a lot of them was Keith playing the groove over and over, with Bill and Charlie and whoever else was there, and just sort of formulating how he wanted it without any sort of top line at all. I found that incredibly boring and in many cases it was played to death by the time they got around to taking it, and the early run-throughs when it wasn't formulated were far better in feel and excitement. That was one of the reasons I didn't want to work with the Rolling Stones anymore, I just got bored to tears, to be honest with you. However, you listen to the records that they made that way and they're still pretty damn good!

However, the bottom line is, the performance of a piece of music by more than one person should be done as an interaction by those people. It's as simple as that.

**MUSICIAN:** On Bob Dylan's *Under the Red Sky*, you had almost a different band on every track. It seemed like you were going for a "Highway 61" sound but that Dylan undercut it by singing songs like "Wiggle Wiggle." What do you think?

**WAS:** I think you might be reading more into it than was there. [laughter] In reality I didn't know any of the songs before the first ses-

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sion. So I struck a deal with Bob, whereby we would choose the musicians and surprise him, and he'd come in with the songs and surprise us. Based on the premise that in a room full of great musicians you'll walk out with something at the end of the day. I wasn't really going for a "Highway 61" sound so much as I was just looking to keep him juiced—I wanted him to dig the musicians. You know, this is a guy who loves music. He knows more about records and old songs than any 50 of us. And he really comes to life discussing it and playing it. When he walked in the room and saw Stevie Ray and Jimmy Vaughan and David Lindley, he was jazzed, and we cut a lot of things that day.

**MUSICIAN:** *Glyn, you recorded Dylan Live—what was that like?*

**JOHNS:** Well, I thought he was fantastic. Unfortunately, he's surrounded by a bunch of assholes. But once I got through that if I was doing to do it I was going to have to speak to him and not some dick that worked for him, we got on great. We recorded six shows around Europe and I went back to London after the last gig and we spoke on the phone a lot. I sent him rough mixes and we decided that he would pick from the shows we'd done and I would do the same, and we'd compare notes. And our notes were *diametrically opposed*. [laughter] He picked every performance that was absolutely fucked—wrong chords, bum notes, feedback, anything that would make it really unacceptable. I mean, I have a great respect for this man, as do we all. But I felt he just might not quite be getting it. Anyway, over several conversations he agreed to everything I wanted, in the end. We had some really great conversations.

**WAS:** Did you think he was baiting you?

**JOHNS:** I have no idea. It sure looked like it if you heard the stuff he was picking.

**WAS:** See, if you'd said, "You're right, Bob, that's great!"—then you would have known.

**MUSICIAN:** *It's rare that producers work with bands or solo artists for more than a record or two—are there hazards to doing that?*

**WAS:** I'd say there are definite hazards. The pros are that you eliminate a lot of the introductory bullshit and hone a more subtle vision. The potential downside is that you get lazy and formulaic. So you have to try to create new obstacles to overcome. Bonnie's the only artist I ever made two records with and the story's not written yet. I don't even know how to fully evaluate this new album.

**JOHNS:** While I, on the other hand, have made lots of albums with lots of different people. It's interesting what you say. Yes, when you work with somebody for the first time, there is a learning period for the first few days or weeks, which can be very uncomfortable. However, I tend to find that the first record I make with people is usually the best because there is some ground-stomping going on, and a little bit of angst can be very healthy. The more familiar I become with the artist the more friendly I become and the less objective I can be. That is, for example, the reason why I was fired from working with Eric Clapton—because I'm far too friendly with him, and I wasn't doing my job. *Slowhand* was easily the best record I made with him and that was serious business. He was behaving like a naughty boy, I was the bloody schoolmaster—and that's what it needed. And there was a lot of that going on. We went at it a couple of times.

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The fact is, in certain cases I am brought in because I am very firm and can get out of order on occasion. The interesting thing is that I went through a period of becoming a lot more like Don—and I found that I made very soggy records. So I've gone back to being a bastard. [laughter]

**MUSICIAN:** *What's the producer's obligation to keeping a band together during the course of the record, or to not play favorites?*

**JOHNS:** If it's a band I'm working for, I'm working for everybody, and to preserve the integrity of each of the individuals in the band is extremely important. If there is a Rolling Stones and you're working with Mick and Keith, they're writing their material, they're the most visual, they're the ones you're dealing with initially, correct? But it doesn't make how happy Charlie is any less important. That applies to a band off the street just the same as a big band. They're *all* who you're working for, not just the guy who's visible.

**MUSICIAN:** *Well, if a producer told Mick and Keith to get rid of the drummer, they'd be out the door quick. But a young band might be far more impressionable.*

**JOHNS:** The point is, it's the *band* that you're given to work with. It isn't the band minus the drummer. If there's something wrong with the drummer the record company or the group would be aware of it and they'd replace him before you ever got that far. Or they'd have a problem with it. If you've got a problem with it, it's your problem and you'd better work it out. You don't bring in somebody else. I think that's criminal!

I made a record for a major label not really long ago with a com-

pletely unknown band, first album, I'm amazed they even got signed, they were too good. And they weren't particularly commercial. The drummer in the band was having a lot of trouble, it wasn't easy for him, he was very nervous and the whole recording experience, he was petrified basically. Frankly, I sympathized with the poor bugger and I went to a lot of trouble while making the record to try and make the guy comfortable.

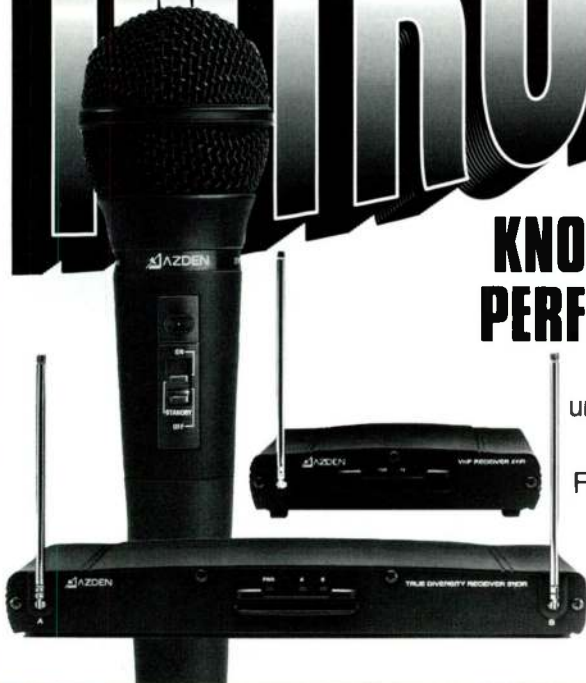
So I deliver the record and I get a call two weeks later from the head of A&R at the time, going, "Well, I love this song on the record but it needs Jimmy Keltner to play on it." And actually, the greatest drummer in the world, Jimmy Keltner or anyone else, wouldn't make a blind bit of difference to its commercial success. One way or the other, the kid had done his job and I thought it was gross that the guy even brought it up. Because immediately it caused the most horrendous problem within the band. I mean, I'd spent two months trying to make this kid feel good about himself. Really pissed me off, man, and as a result I told the guy to go shove it right up his ass and the record never got released and the band got dropped.

**WAS:** The worst crime that exists in the music business is when a record company signs an artist, band, whatever because they see some spark there. And then if they're lucky, the band may get a chance on the first album to start to realize the potential. But if that first album doesn't make back the advance, then, man, you're fucked. The next one, they're gonna come down hard on you and proceed to kill the spark in the name of—

**JOHNS:** Oh, I think it happens first time around. I've seen this over

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and over. A band gets signed because they show potential, and once the ink's drying on the bloody contract it's: "Well now, here's what we're gonna do. Instead of being this sort of band, actually, why aren't you *this* sort of band? Why don't you write this sort of song? Why don't you play this sort of guitar?"

And actually, fuck off! Why sign me as a writer and now tell me I've gotta go and write this sort of song for you? Some dick who couldn't get arrested anywhere else in this business, who happened to be in a club one night to see a band and got lucky—it's true! Many A&R people are completely not qualified. There are exceptions to the rule and thank God for them, but most of them I think are complete fucking dickheads.

**WAS:** I think that may be a little strong. [wild laughter] But I'll tell you a story. There was a band that approached me on the street in Hollywood and gave me a videotape and it was like, two wild-looking street guys. And it was in my back pocket for a long time and one day I was sitting around, bored, waiting for a mix to be finished, and I flipped the videotape in; the band had made a really creative video for no money. I called them up and said, hey, you got more songs? Bring them over. They literally came down with acoustic guitars, five of them, sat in the kitchen of the Record Plant and played me a set. I said, this is great.

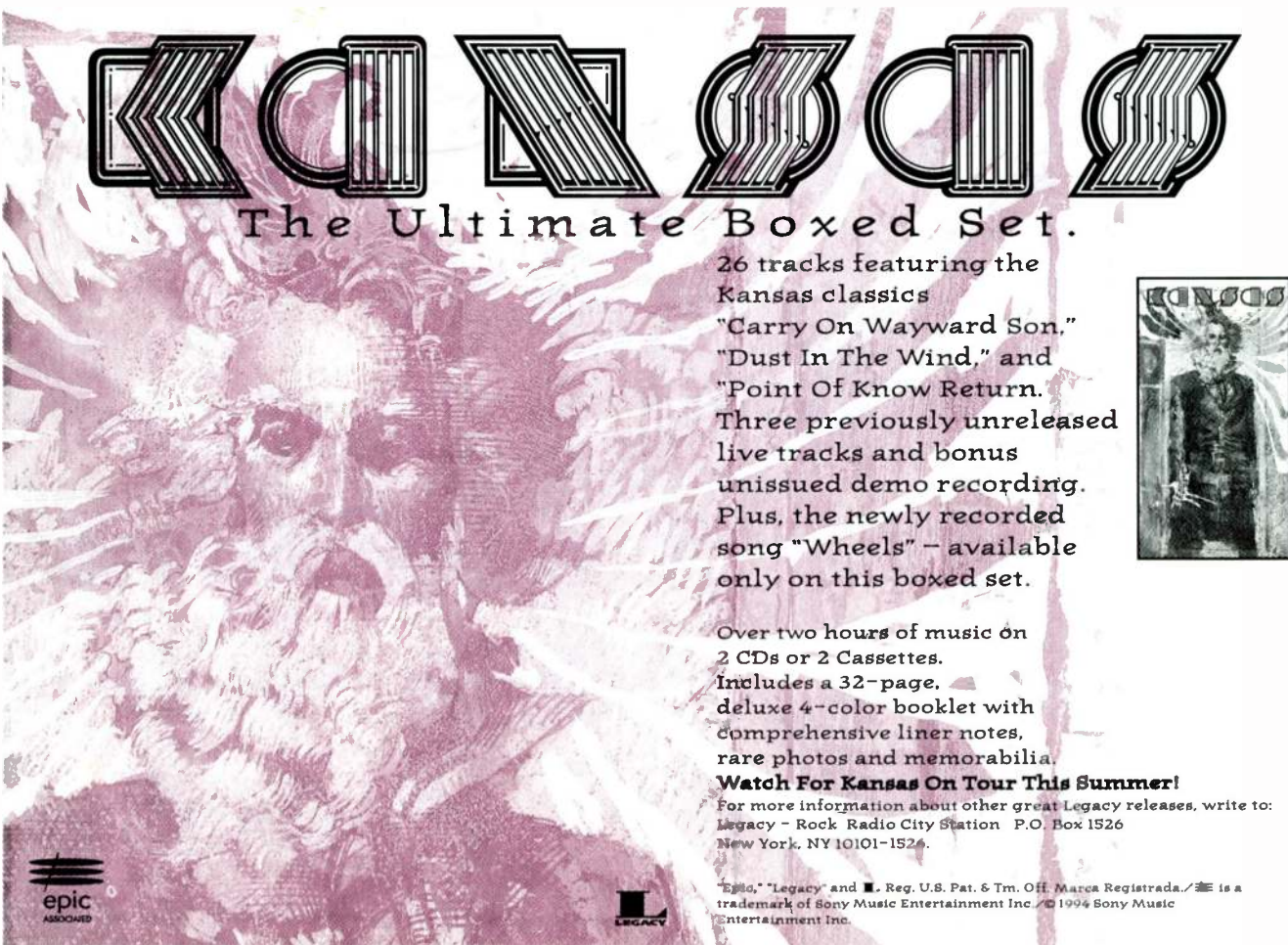
Went to Highland Grounds, took Jeff Ayeroff from Virgin Records down, already other record companies are there! Within a month, you go to a gig, there's David Geffen, there's Mo Ostin, the bidding's up to \$800,000 advance on a first album. This was just a band with a spark, it was good but it wasn't Shostakovich. Sure enough, they took as much money as they could get, no lawyers or

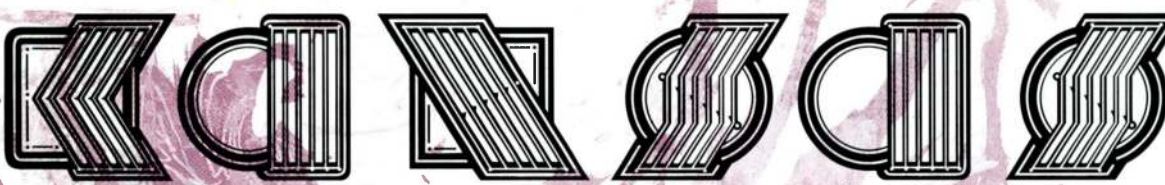
managers ever said, "Maybe this isn't the best idea in terms of developing as an artist"—no. It's "take the money and let us commission it," and the first album, the pressures were down. You gotta make that \$800,000, no chance to sell \$80,000 or \$150,000 and grow and build a loyal club. They never made it through the record. They were dropped and the record never came out. They'd pissed away the advance, I'm sure, and no one will go near them anymore.

That's not an outrageous story. It's really indicative of the mentality at play, I think, coupled with record companies kowtowing to radio, which is pathetic. In the old days, you could actually sustain an FM station with ads from bookstores and headshops. Now an FM station in a major market brings \$50 million, so the little entrepreneur's out of the picture. Broadcasting corporations come in and buy these things. And they have to make the investment back and that means Ford Motor Company ads. And record companies have yielded to that and make artistic decisions based on, "Well, if you'll change this and this and this, people won't turn you off before the Ford commercial." Those two pressures, the bands taking a shitload of money that has to be earned and radio determining what music is gonna be, is the single largest threat to good music and it's really why the record companies have had to live off of their catalog sales for the last 15 years.


**MUSICIAN:** So what producer's advice would you give young musicians when it's time to make that first record?

**JOHNS:** I think the one thing is, don't be pushed into anything by anybody. You've gotta figure it out yourself. Most acts starting out are incredibly intimidated because whoever it is has worked with so





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and so. And I don't know about you, Don, but I find when I work with younger artists now, that it takes me an awful long time to get them to realize that I actually am not their father [*laughter*] and I can be very, very wrong. And they can be very, very right.

Our job is not to dictate. Our job is to make sure that the artist has really what they want. All I ever ask for is the room to display what my ideas might be. And if you don't like that at the end of the day, fine.

**WAS:** In the larger sense, what you're talking about is what George Bush called "the vision thing." It's really important for any artist, whether they've made 30 records or whether they're 15 years old, to close their eyes and really be able to hear what they want the music to sound like finished and, in this day and age, how, visually, they want to be represented on MTV. And if this is *not* me, I don't care if it does lead to a hit record, I'm not wearing that funny hat, I'm not putting those strings on; that's not how I get my music. If you have your vision, you have something to stay true to. If you don't, you're gonna get washed away like sand on the fucking beach. And it's happened to me as an artist.

**JOHNS:** That's why your hair's like that!

**WAS:** It's all saltwater, man! But, really, that happened. I was simultaneously producing other people and telling them to stand firm; don't compromise. There was no one around to tell my partner David and I, "Maybe you shouldn't do that 'Dinosaur Dance.'" And really, it killed my band.


**MUSICIAN:** *The wrong success can kill you?*

**WAS:** Absolutely. "Walk the Dinosaur" was a big hit everywhere in the world. "Spy in the House of Love" was a Top 10 hit here; it had noth-

ing to do with what our band was about. As a result, the audience that we might have been building for who we truly were, were alienated by the videos and the success of the record. They stopped coming to shows and the people who liked "Walk the Dinosaur" were grandmothers and little kids. They didn't buy albums, they bought singles—and they didn't come to concerts. So in the end, we didn't sell any more records for having those singles, but we did effectively ward off anybody who might have actually been into what we were truthfully doing.

**MUSICIAN:** *As producers, do you have philosophical dispositions toward digital vs. analog, or with any approach to studio technology?*

**JOHNS:** I never use digital at all. I'm a boring old fart. I use analog, 24-track. I don't think it's necessary for anybody to go beyond 24 tracks. The more decisions you leave in abeyance for later, then the longer "later" is gonna be. So if you know what you want, you've either got it or you bloody haven't. If I say, we'll put a tambourine on this, it works, and if it doesn't work, you erase it. You've got a guitar part and it's kind of okay but you're not really sure: "Maybe we can do it better." Well, it's not maybe, you either can or you bloody can't! And if it's not good enough as it is, you do it again! "We'll hang onto that just in case"—there isn't a "just in case." It's good or it isn't. It's real simple stuff.

**WAS:** I agree. More important than whether you're a Neve person or an SSL person or anything like that: Make decisions, give good performances, good songs. The biggest hit I ever had as an artist, "Walk the Dinosaur," I cut on a Fostex E16 in my den—everything. And it sounds fine on the radio. The important thing is not to become a slave to the tools. Make the tools work for you. 

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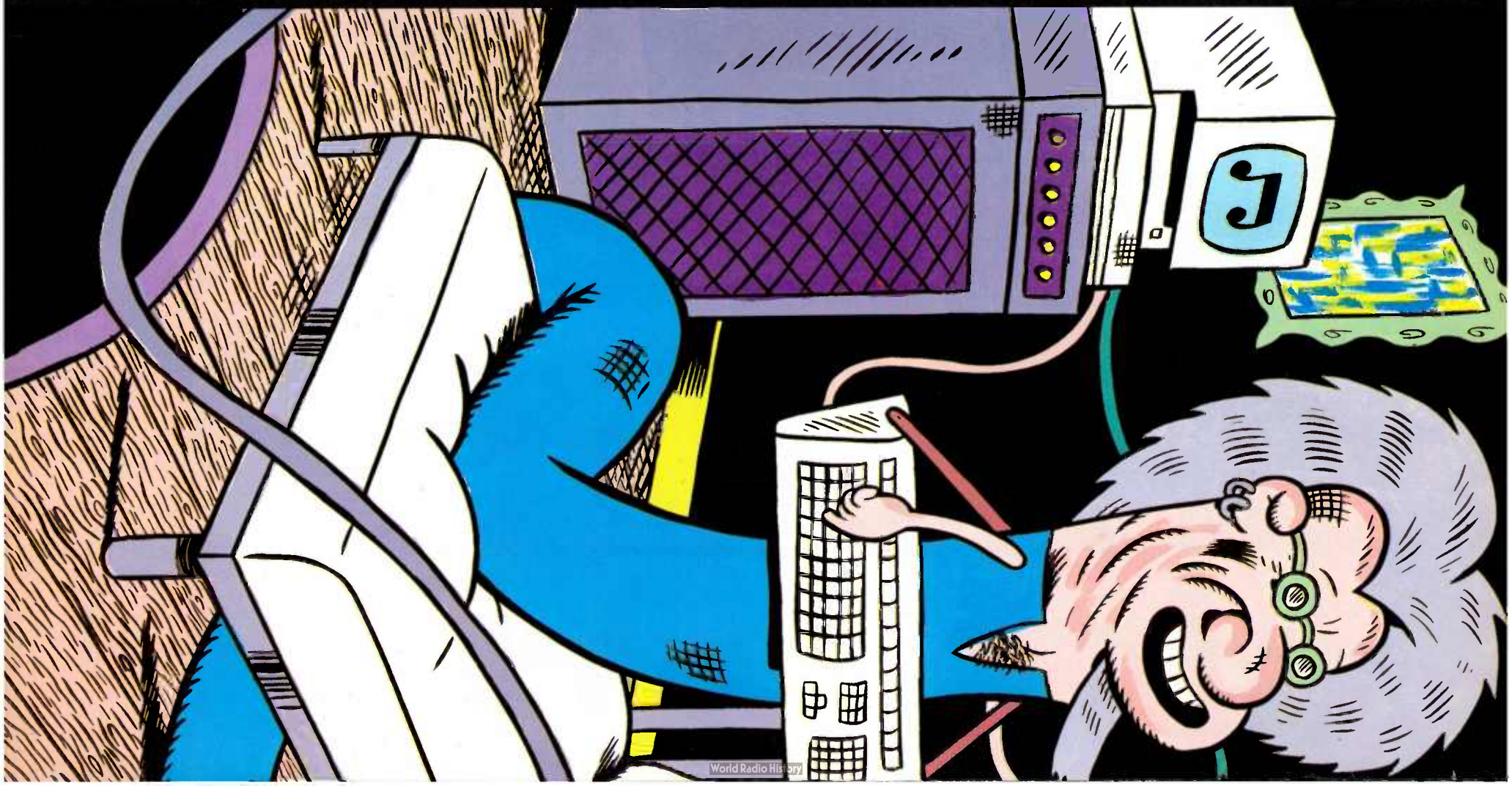
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## A MUSICIAN'S GUIDE TO ON-LINE SERVICES

Little by little, though at the velocity of electrons racing down a wire, the electronic frontier is being tamed. The evanescent realm of cyberspace—a term denoting the psychological borders of remote interaction via computer, best defined by technologist Jaron Lanier as “where you are when you’re on the telephone”—is quickly becoming populated by cultures and subcultures fairly representative of the nation, perhaps the world, at large. And, just as music can be found everywhere across the globe, music-related activities and services are proliferating throughout the on-line universe.

By stepping through the on-line looking glass, you can find information about equipment, records, performance venues and radio stations; sounds and images of up-and-coming bands; players available for gigs; songs ripe for recording; public-domain music software; even access to record company A&R departments and an on-line audience that numbers in the tens of millions. All it takes is some fairly common equipment (computer, modem, software and phone line), a pioneer’s spirit and an ability to cover the resulting bills. Just boot up a telecommunications program that commands your computer to dial, through your modem, the access number for an on-line service, and you’re cruising. Poised at the QWERTY keyboard, typing and watching for responses that appear onscreen as if typed by a ghost, the sensation is one of navigating a vast space with few landmarks, stopping off here and there to talk with friends or conduct business, and stumbling suddenly upon obscure roadside attractions that offer a wealth of new opportunities.

Among the denizens of cyberspace are musicians as diverse as Billy Idol and Stanley Jordan. Idol printed his electronic

**BY ANDREA POWERS**

**ILLUSTRATION BY KAZ**





## JACKING IN

IF YOU'RE a beginner, read up on the subject before you do anything else. If you already have a computer and modem, the equipment you own is likely to be enough to get started. Don't upgrade until you begin to feel at home in cyberspace and have a clearer idea of your needs.

★ **Resources:** *Your First Modem* by Sharon Crawford (Sybex 1993) is a good introduction. For those venturing into the Internet, numerous guides are avail-

able. *Access the Internet* by David Peal (Sybex, 1994) includes a user-friendly software front-end, while *The Internet Yellow Pages* by Harley Hahn and Rick Stout (Osborne/McGraw Hill, 1994) includes an extensive list of music-related nodes.

★ **Hardware:** Any basic IBM compatible or Mac, preferably with a hard disk, will do. But you should make sure your modem is Hayes-compatible and relatively fast. Any modem capable of 9600 baud or faster will be adequate—for the moment. In years to come, higher speeds will certainly become de rigueur.

★ **Software:** In addition to the computer's operating system software, you'll need a telecom program or terminal emulator such as SmartCom. Microsoft Windows comes with a simple one, and modems often come bundled with one. Also, freeware telecom programs are available; if you have a friend who's already on-line, he or she may be able to download one for you. Some providers, including CompuServe and America OnLine, provide special software that make it easier to connect and find your way around.

address on the cover of his last album, *Cyber Punk*, but had to terminate the account after being deluged with responses. "The day I closed it I had 4000 unanswered letters," he laments. "That was not what I wanted when I signed on. I wanted to stay in touch with people." Now he keeps a lower profile. "You have to be a little creative if you want to find me," he suggests. "And, believe me, people do."

Contact with his audience is also at the heart of Stanley Jordan's interest in telecommunicating. "It's the nature of musicians to reach out to people," he observes. "It's easy to hide behind your manager for everything. This offers a way to communicate more directly with people." (Plugged-in fans can contact Jordan at [stjordan@delphi.com](mailto:stjordan@delphi.com).)

On-line providers come in a few types. Appealing to a broad audience, large national services such as CompuServe, America Online, Prodigy and GEnie offer a diverse mix of topics, among them music-related discussion groups, or "forums." Subscribers pay a membership fee plus the cost of connect time. National operations may serve as "gateways" to independent companies that provide more specialized services, often targeted toward specific groups. Some of these independent services can only be reached directly. Like the national services, they charge a membership fee, and there may be additional charges. Finally, there's the Internet, a nonprofit international network along which anyone can set up a cyberspace outpost or "node." Technically, the Internet is free.

## CAUGHT IN THE 'NET

IF THE information superhighway outlines a frontier, the Internet is the Wild West itself. Established by the U.S. Department of Defense

during the '60s to connect research facilities, it took on an increasingly academic cast as more universities logged on. Estimates of Internet usership range between five and 20 million, but there's no doubt that the figure is growing. Since most institutions provide access to their students free of charge and there's no charge for connect time, the Internet has evolved into something of a student hang-out. At the same time, third parties have sprung up to provide Internet access, for a fee, to the rest of the world. Along with unparalleled opportunities for information exchange, though, comes a host of unwritten rules, foremost being a ban on commercial activity.

Given the 'Net's worldwide scope, on-line discussions, called "newsgroups," are its most obvious asset. The dozens of newsgroups devoted to music are coded with the prefix "rec.music" and cater to specific interests, such as "rec.music.funky," "rec.music.industrial" or "rec.music.makers.guitar.tablature." For instance, Brian Rost, a bass player in Boston, hangs out in "rec.music.makers.bass" for the lowdown on new equipment. "If you want to buy a certain high-end bass," he says, "you can ask someone on the 'Net and get information that you might not get from your local dealer. The Internet puts a lot of pressure on retailers because now everyone knows the prices of things."

Next to messaging, up- and downloading files—that is, copying files to and from a hard drive connected to a remote host computer—are the most common on-line activities. A host computer system that dispenses files for free is known as an "ftp," or file transfer protocol, site. The files may be freeware (that is, in the public domain) or shareware (free to try out), or documents such as text, pictures or soundbites. The ability to digitize words, images and sounds and transmit them via phone lines may turn out to be a revolutionary promotional vehicle for musicians. The first effort to harness the Internet in this way is the Internet Underground Music Archive, or IUMA, established by Jeff Patterson and Rob Lord, two computer science students at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

"My band, the Ugly Mugs, was in the process of making a demo in 1993 and I was fed up with the low number of tapes we could afford to produce," Patterson recalls. "Around that time, I met Rob on the 'Net and found that we had both worked in record stores, where we got a glimpse of how inefficient the music distribution system really is. So we decided to digitize bands and put them on the 'Net." The Archive includes both sound and image files created by unsigned bands, including Santa Cruz's Whistle Pigs. According to the Pigs' Danny Johnson, as a result of the IUMA, they've garnered fans from as far away as Turkey.

Another Internet node, Technet, connects musicians directly with audio, video, film, broadcast and multimedia professionals. Rather than a newsgroup or an ftp site, Technet is a "mailing list"—a list of Internet addresses—that costs \$10 to join. Electronic mail sent by



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## ON-LINE CONTACTS

BEFORE MAKING any modem calls, it's best to contact the service provider by voice to make arrangements. Most will want your name, address and credit card number. In return, you'll get instructions for logging on, a user ID and/or password and, in some cases, interface software.

★ **America Online (AOL)**, 8619 Westwood Center Dr., Vienna, VA, 22182; voice (800) 827-6364. AOL currently forwards e-mail to Internet addresses, and plans to provide more comprehensive Internet access. Monthly fees.

★ **CompuServe**, 5000 Arlington Centre Blvd, Columbus, OH 43220; voice (800) 848-8199. CompuServe forwards e-mail to Internet addresses. Monthly fees.

★ **Crescendo**, P.O. Box 20212, Laurel, MD 20726; voice (410) 792-7230, fax (410) 792-7792, BBS (301) 490-4775. Up to 20 minutes per day free.

★ **Internet**. If you don't have Internet access through a university or research facility, you can find a company that provides it in the pages of *Wired*, *Internet World*, *Boardwatch*, *Computer Shopper* or the business section of your newspaper. Here are three: Software Tool & Die (617) 739-0202; Netcom (800) 488-2558; Delphi (800) 695-4005. Monthly fees.

★ **Internet Underground Music Archive (IUMA)**, 903 Pacific Ave., #300, Santa Cruz, CA 95060; voice (408) 426-4862. On line, you can reach this Internet ftp site at the following address: info@iuma.com. Free.

★ **MIDI Vault**, 623 W. 51st St., New York, NY 10019; voice (212) 315-3900 or (800) 79-VAULT. \$35 annual membership fee, \$22 registration fee per composition.

★ **Performing Arts Network (PAN)**, P.O. Box 162, Skippack, PA 19474; voice (215) 584-0300. \$225 one-time membership fee plus hourly or monthly fees.

★ **Taxi**, 21450 Burbank Blvd., Suite 307, Woodland Hills, CA 91367; voice (818) 888-2111 or (800) 458-2111. On-line access through America Online only. \$299 annual membership fee, \$5 submission fee per song.

★ **Technet**, P.O. Box 3024, New York, NY 10185; voice (213) 713-9473. You can connect through any service that forwards Internet e-mail. \$10 one-time membership fee.



members automatically goes to all addresses on the list. One of Technet's most impressive features is the "job board," a message area where job-related ads are posted. Recent postings have mentioned positions for an AV technician, assistant professor of music in Tennessee, professor at Berklee College of Music in Boston and multimedia specialist at a California museum. "There's been a huge number of postings, considering that haven't yet advertised our job board," observes Vanessa Else, a videographer formerly on the editorial staff at *Electronic Musician* who handles most of Technet's administrative chores.

## STRICTLY COMMERCIAL

THE MAJOR on-line providers also offer discussion forums and libraries of files for downloading (except Prodigy, which has no files), while throwing a wealth of other information services into the bargain as well: stock prices, weather reports, news, databases, on-line shopping, e-mail and the like. They operate nationally from a central location, but you can reach them with a local phone call. Unlike the Inter-

net, these are businesses designed to turn a profit. Often discussion forums and "special interest groups," or SIGs, are sponsored by still other businesses, so participating in them can incur charges above those for basic service. It's worth noting that discussions on the large commercial networks are monitored by system operators, or sysops, who ensure that discussions remain family-friendly and on the topic. Also, these services are more likely to respect copyright law and restrict the flow of protected material.

But where musicians are concerned, the large networks are overshadowed by a small one with a membership drawn exclusively from the music industry: the Performing Arts Network (PAN). Established in 1981 as a one-stop shop for musicians and industry professionals, PAN offers variety of services available through other on-line venues, but which might be difficult to locate in the uncharted on-line ocean. But the major selling point is the membership, numbering 3000 and qualified to solve any problem a user might pose. According to founder and executive director Perry Leopold, "PAN is a human resource. We keep amateurs out by the price structure. This is not casual stuff."

PAN's strength is in bringing together a variety of industry constituencies. Label reps can send e-mail to college radio stations regarding new releases. Managers can book tours. Tour managers can order spare parts from the road. Players can scan the classifieds for gigs and used gear, find new band members, contact manufacturers, dig up old product reviews, and access the amazing breadth and depth of knowledge available on the Internet. There are discussion groups entitled

Home Recording, Studio Recording, Product Reports and Specifications, as well as Booking and Management, College Markets, Record Promotion and Tour Promotion. PAN also offers back articles from *Keyboard* and *Electronic Musician*, hosts manufacturer-sponsored SIGs (where customers can discuss specific products) and provides gateways to other national services.

CompuServe, the oldest commercial on-line service with a membership of over one million, is just beginning to get serious about music. In keeping with its diverse membership, though, the emphasis is on consumption rather than creation. The All Music Guide forum is a database containing reviews of over 200,000 albums, while RockNet hosts discussions among fans. There's an area called Sight+Sound that offers sound files—less musical raw material than fancy beeps for your computer—and a MIDI forum for MIDI files and discussions. An interesting new development is the Learning To Play area in the Music/Arts forum, where electronic courses in instrumental music can be found.

On the business side, Warner Bros., Viacom and others are collaborating with CompuServe to run the EDrive forum, which features the

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Industry Canteen, where record industry professionals can exchange messages. Meanwhile, many labels maintain areas in the Music Vendors forum where they field questions from fans and post photos, soundbites, bios, tour schedules and the like.

The General area of the Music Vendors forum is also a useful resource. Recent postings have included a list of new releases from Lipstick Records, tour dates for the band Scraw!, a guide to independent record

labels—and the resume of one David Gold.

Gold, a former club DJ and sometime promotions man, has been beating the bushes around CompuServe for a position in the promotions department at a small label. He also scours various forums for the latest inside tidbits. "I look at each label's uploads of tour dates and release announcements to see what the latest releases are," he says. "I think I can find out what music is going be hot electronically before I can read about it. I

upload my own Top 40 charts on what's hot in my local area, New Jersey. I also leave messages asking what's really hot in the sound libraries before I download files. That's beneficial because the time it takes to download costs money."

One of CompuServe's prime competitors is America Online, which has a much smaller membership but boasts a friendlier user interface. AOL offers a forum called Composers Coffeehouse, roughly equivalent to the Internet's rec.music newsgroups. The Coffeehouse is further divided into two sections, Composing/Arranging and Songwriting/The Business. Members exchange MIDI files through a library called the Piano Bench.

AOL's main advantage is a unique third-party service to which it serves as a gateway: Taxi. Taxi bills itself as a "vehicle" ferrying information between artists and decision makers in the industry. Producers, A&R people and music publishers tell Taxi what they're looking for in the way of songs and bands. Taxi e-mails these requests to its subscribers, who respond by sending tapes and a handling fee. Taxi screens the tapes and forwards worthy entries. The screening committee, which includes such industry heavyweights as Jeff "Skunk" Baxter, e-mails their critique to the artist. (Taxi also offers these services by old-fashioned mail.)

Members can also exchange messages. Recently, a new member questioned whether Taxi's services were worth the annual fee of \$299. "The biggest advantage is that you get reviews of your material from people in the industry; members swap tapes with each other too, and give lots of support," one reply reads. Another member answered, "A professional review of your material is probably worth the price, even if you aren't signed." One said, "I'm learning that Taxi isn't the best place to pitch new material with its own sound and style. But I have regular e-mail, tape swap and even letter and phone correspondence with a half dozen great people I never would have met without Taxi."

According to founder/sysop Michael Laskow, who has credits as a producer and recording engineer, 70 companies have used Taxi and 40 subscribers have been signed as a result. Denny Ernest, a Wyoming guitarist, recently inked a deal with a Florida music library that agreed to press 3000 CDs of his music for distribution to film production houses.

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## NUMBER ONE WITH A BULLETIN BOARD

MOST SMALLER on-line providers operate as local bulletin board services, or BBSs. The differences between a national service and a BBS are mostly in scale: fewer simultaneous callers, fewer downloadable files, fewer discussion groups and so on. Also, a BBS outside of your area can only be reached

by a long-distance phone call. On the other hand, where large services cater to a general-interest membership, smaller operations focus on serving a particular community.

MIDI Vault, for instance, offers a single service: certifying the date of creation of compositions and lyrics for copyright protection. Compositions can be uploaded in the form of MIDI files, audio files or text. MIDI Vault responds with a certificate within five days, and holds the files for seven

years—presumably long enough for the government to process the application forms, which must be furnished by the author in the mean time.


“We’re establishing the existence of the file, not the authorship,” Joe Bolanos, president of MIDI Vault, explains. “If a record company has a song in April and a writer can prove that it existed in January, it’s a ticket to the courtroom.” MIDI Vault’s authority has yet to be tested in court.

Crescendo is a BBS that serves the Baltimore/Washington, DC scene. Like a scaled-down version of PAN, it offers press releases, equipment reviews, classified ads and chat areas. Sound engineer and Crescendo sysop Roger Wood describes it poetically as “a magazine but different, like a coffeehouse but different; maybe a dance club without walls, a studio or a jam session.”

In any case, it’s an electronic environment in which locals can meet, confer and perhaps rustle up some business.

Of course, most bulletin boards don’t cater specifically to musicians. But even one run by a local PC or Macintosh user’s group is bound to include discussions and files useful to players, songwriters and producers. Since anyone can start a one with a little equipment and technical know-how, new boards spring up daily. *Boardwatch* and *Computer Shopper* print monthly lists of BBSs.

Like the cosmos nanoseconds after the big bang, the on-line universe, already enormous, is expanding momentarily in all directions. Exploring such a diffuse territory, it’s easy to become lost in the data stream and lose track of time and expense. But it’s an expenditure that increasing numbers of people are finding well worth their while. For Billy Idol, cyberspace is a realm of “ideas, inspiration, communication, criticism and infinite possibilities.” Dave Gold, the resume poster, observes, “I find myself spending many hours on-line. It’s like falling into a bottomless pit of knowledge and information. On-line is a beautiful thing.”

Beautiful thing, way of life, or revolutionary resource for people seeking to share information and communication—either way, getting on-line is fast becoming a necessity for those who expect to take part in the music industry of a future that’s so near, it may as well be today. 

*Brandon Stosny, Nathan Brackett and Dev Sherlock contributed additional research to this article.*

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## HOFNER BEATLE BASS

The distinctive shape of the Hofner violin bass circa 1963 instantly conjurs Beatlemania and the British Invasion's first wave. The Vintage '63 (\$2295) is identical with the original, still prized by Paul McCartney for its tone and light weight.

The top is formed from arched, narrow-grain spruce with a two-piece flamed maple back, while the fingerboard is fashioned from unbound tropical rosewood. The instrument features gold and ivory volume knobs, a rounded heel and stable pickups. ♦ Hofner c/o EMMC, 770-12 Grand Blvd., Deer Park, NY 11729; voice (516) 243-0600, fax (516) 243-0605.



## SANTUCCI TREBLEBASS

The Treblebass (\$1980) by Santucci combines standard guitar and bass strings onto a single neck that ranges in width from 2½" to 3½" at the 24th fret. Bass players who double on guitar (and vice-versa) will appreciate the freedom to leave one axe at home, while fretsmen with a bent for exploration will enjoy the ability to cover all registers from deep bottom to sinewy twang. Bass and guitar pickups terminate in separate outputs and can be switched on and off independently. ♦ Santucci, 353 W. 57th St., Suite 2007, New York, NY 10019; voice (212) 757-2717, fax (212) 541-4785.



# ARD



## YAMAHA PROMIX 01 DIGITAL MIXER

Yamaha has a history of debuting leading-edge technology at a high price, then dropping the price drastically to establish a new price/performance standard. The all-digital ProMix 01 represents the second phase of this pattern, offering 18 inputs, four sends and two stereo returns with MIDI control of all parameters, snapshot memory and moving-fader automation—all for \$1995. Three-band parametric channel EQ is included, as well as two stereo effect units and three compressor/gates, all featuring graphic editing via the LCD display. ♦ Yamaha, P.O. Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622-6600; voice (714) 522-9011, fax (714) 522-9832.

## TWELVE TONE CAKEWALK SEQUENCER

Version 3.0 of Cakewalk Professional (\$349), the flagship sequencer for IBM/Windows from Twelve Tone, is available. Basic functions include 256-track MIDI sequencing, notation editing and printing, and support for the Media Control Interface (MCI) protocol for multimedia presentations. The update adds groove quantization (including DNA template support), 96 groupable onscreen faders (compatible with Mackie's OTTO 1604), synchronization with tape decks via MIDI Machine Control (MMC) and a percussion editing interface. ♦ Twelve Tone, 44 Pleasant St., P.O. Box 760, Watertown, MA 02272; voice (617) 926-2480, fax (617) 924-6657.



## ROLAND S-760 SAMPLER

The line between samplers and digital recorders is becoming a blur, but Roland's S-760 (\$2595) leaves no doubt that it's a musical instrument first. With 24 polyphonic voices, it permits four samples to be layered or cross-faded among 32 multitimbral parts. Two megs of sample memory (expandable to 32) can be



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# NEW TOYS & NEW TOOLS

## GUITARS & BASSES

**Alembic's** midpriced Epic electric bass guitar is available in a variety of woods and features an extremely stable neck joint and a durable polyurethane finish that looks like oil. All Alembic models can be ordered in left-handed and/or fretless configurations at no extra cost; fingerboard width of some models can be specified free of charge. ♦ **Robin** introduces the Avalon archtop electric guitar, featuring a mahogany body with book-matched curly maple top, rosewood fingerboard with inlaid abalone dolphin motif and two Seymour Duncan humbuckers. Also, there are several new models in the Ranger line, including the Revival, Custom Exotic Top, Special and Bass VI baritone guitar. All feature bolt-on neck construction, rear body contour, three Rio Grande pickups, five-way pickup selector switch and Sperzel machine heads. ♦ **Cross Guitars** of Sausalito, California, offers handmade custom guitars decorated with unusual carved designs, including musical symbols and Egyptian hieroglyphs. ♦ The Tele Little '59 from **Seymour Duncan** is a bridge-position pickup for Telecasters designed to emulate the warm tone and quiet response of the vintage 1959 "patent applied for" humbucker. The new design is a direct replacement, requiring no routing to install. Another new pickup, the George Lynch Li'l Screamin' Demon, is a humbucking direct replacement for Stratocasters. ♦ **Dunlop** offers a new line of Blues Bottle Slides, available in six varieties and various sizes. The end is weighted for optimum balance, while the tapered opening makes for a solid grip. ♦ The Robo Roadie from **Gibson** tunes electric and acoustic guitars automatically, even in noisy environments. The battery-operated unit combines a tuner with a motorized wrench. As you pluck a string, it listens to your guitar and turns the tuning pegs accordingly. Also, Gibson now offers a complete line of replacement parts for Les Paul guitars.

## KEYBOARDS & MIDI

The S4 QuadraSynth Sound Module is a rack-mount version of **Alesis'** keyboard synthesizer. Alesis also offers a new video manual for their BRC remote controller covering practical operation of ADAT/BRC systems. ♦ **Roland** debuts the SoundCanvas DB, a piggyback board for the **Creative Technologies** Sound Blaster and other compatible PC sound boards. The unit contains a dedicated microprocessor that manipulates some 200

parameters per note (including onboard reverb) in real time, yielding more expressive output.

## DRUMS & PERCUSSION

The Masters series of snare drums and toms from **Pearl** now comes with stainless steel hoops, which impart strength as well as brass-like tone. All Masters kits now include Remo Powerstroke3 bass drum heads with built-in "muffling rings," and both Masters and Prestige drums are available in packaged configurations featuring the DR-50 and DR-110 rack hardware. ♦ **Ludwig's** lightweight Classic series of hardware is triple chrome-plated and comes in single- and double-brace models. Also, Ludwig introduces one bass drum pedal, the LM-914-FP Modular Professional Foot Pedal, and two double pedals, the right-handed LM-912-FPR and left-handed LM-913-FPL Modular Professional Double Foot Pedals. All three are chain driven and feature double spur points, a single adjustable spring for footboard tension, and adjustable beater angles. The double pedals can be converted into single pedals. ♦ **All One Tribe Drums** of Taos, New Mexico, offers six new one-sided hand drums. The instruments are handmade and decorated with Lakota Sioux designs.

## AMPS & SPEAKERS

The new line of amps from **Diaz** includes the CD40 Club Classic and Classic Twin combos, the CD100 single-channel amp, and the Vibramaster and P20 preamps. Diaz's handmade products feature all-tube circuitry, spring reverb and vibrato. ♦ **Gorilla** introduces the GB-30 Classic Bass Amp, a 50-Watt combo with separate treble, mid and bass controls plus a "Funk Bass" switch for extra punch. ♦ **Bullfrog's** PR1510, designed for main PA and full-range instrument applications, is the company's first three-way wedge, with 15", 10" and 1½" drivers plus a horn. Also, their DT line of speaker cabinets has four new two-way models, all designed for maximum bass response to eliminate the need for subwoofers.

## SOFTWARE & HARDWARE

Producer Pro, the multimedia authoring system from **Passport**, has been updated to version 1.1. Also, Passport introduces Media Player, a cross-platform player for Producer files. ♦ **Jupiter Systems** introduces the Multiband Dynamics Tool (MDT), a software plug-in for **Digidesign's** Sound Designer that provides real-time compression, lim-

iting, expansion, gating and the like for digital audio files. ♦ **MIDIscan**, an IBM/Windows program from **Musitek** that converts scanned notation into standard MIDI files, has been updated to version 1.1 and the retail price has been reduced.

## MIKES & MIXERS

The **Nady** Wireless 3D is the company's lowest-priced true-diversity VHF wireless mike and instrument system. Battery life approaches 20 hours while maintaining a range of 250 feet in adverse conditions (up to 1500 feet best case). Dynamic range is 120 dB. ♦ The K6 modular electret microphone system, new from **Sennheiser**, boasts improved frequency response, increased S/N ratio, lower distortion, and transformerless design. System components include capsules with various pickup patterns, lavalier and hand-held bodies, and phantom power module. ♦ **Carvin's** DX series of portable consoles comes in 16- and 24-channel models. Channel inputs feed four group buses and include both XLR mike and line inputs, three-band EQ, two monitor and two effect sends, mute and full-throw fader. Onboard digital effects are included.

## SIGNAL PROCESSORS

The rackmount 115 Power Light Module and PB-48 Modular Balanced Patch Bay are the latest units from **dbx**. The 115's front panel provides two dimming lights housed in retractable metal tubes, while the rear includes eight AC outlets with spike and surge protection. The PB-48 includes 24 pairs of balanced patch points in a single rack space. No tools are required to make normalised connections. ♦ The DI-2 Stereo Direct Box from **ARX** packs two direct boxes into one case with a switchable -20dB pad and +10dB boost, plus ground lift and battery check LED.

## RECORDING & PLAYBACK

**Sony** extends its line of Pro DAT Plus tapes with new lengths optimized for recording and dubbing applications: 15, 34, 48, 64, 94 and 124 minutes. In addition, Sony introduces CD-R recordable compact discs in 63- and 74-minute lengths, playable on any standard CD player.

## CASES

**Case Logic** offers the DM-4 portable CD case, which houses and protects discs plus a portable disc or cassette player and mini speakers.

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# BASS FX BOXES

**B**ASS PLAYERS don't live and die by effects. While guitarists may worship the Holy Trinity of distortion, wah-wah and delay, bassists are likely to idolize James Jamerson, who inscribed grooves on 100 million records using little more than his fingers, an amp and a Fender Jazz Bass. So it's not surprising that bass players tend to be less than enthusiastic about stomp boxes. As a spokesman for Ibanez, which discontinued its line of bass pedalboards, told me, "Putting 'bass' in the name of an effect box is the kiss of death, no matter how good it is."

Which is unfortunate, because bass players have plenty of uses for them. Bootsy Collins laid down the funk with a Mutron envelope-controlled filter. Roger Waters set up the groove on Pink Floyd's "One of These Days" with a regenerating delay. Nirvana's Krist Novoselic wrapped the bass line for "Come As You Are" in a swirl of flanging. Recognizing these landmarks and spurred by advances in digital technology, manufacturers are offering stereo multieffects units tailored for bass that rival guitar boxes for tonal variety.

Unlike most of them, DOD's TR3B (\$199) is an analog unit. It packs into one box the three most common bass-oriented effects: compression, EQ and chorus.

The programming interface is simple and direct: one knob per function. It's definitely quieter than three stomp boxes linked together, and there's no patch-cord jungle to trip over. The chorus is set up so that it doesn't affect the fundamental pitch, a nice touch. One caveat: The housing is made of plastic, which calls its stageworthiness into question (EQ sliders are notoriously fragile).

Abandon all hope of sim-

licity ye who go beyond here: You are entering the realm of digital programming. What you gain is the ability to program entire chains of effects—distortion, EQ, delay, reverb, chorus/flanging, compression and more—and recall the exact settings instantly. What you give up is the ability to adjust your sound simply by leaning over and cranking a knob. These units are far more suitable for studio than stage (unless your set list is so rigid that you always use patch 24 on the first song, switch to 25 for the bridge, and go to 65 for the next tune). You sure don't want to be messing with the parameters while your singer is scuffling for a one-liner to fill the dead air.

If you do need multiple effects in a live situation, Korg's A4 pedalboard (\$550, 30 user-programmable sounds, 30 built in) is a good compromise. An array of footswitches can be used to pick one of six patches with a tap of your foot. Then, in edit mode, you can use the same switches to add or subtract effects within a patch.

It still takes four or five moves to change an individual parameter setting, but of the digital units, this is definitely the quickest and easiest to edit.

Most of the A4's presets offer various delay times and trebly compressor-EQ-chorus patches designed for slapping. The distinctive feature is "synth bass" (an effect, not a plug-and-play bass-controlled synthesizer). At low sensitivity settings, it gives a punchy downward-wah sound. At higher ones, you get a distorted sound resembling a '70s analog synth, or maybe the output of a ring modulator run through a Mutron.

The synth bass setting on Boss' ME-6B pedalboard (\$425) is the real deal: Your bass triggers a Mini-moogesque sound source, although unless your attack is immaculate you're likely to have tracking problems. The unit also has more effects (distortion and great-sounding "automatic wah" envelope filter), but only 25 editable patches. Its setup resembles the A4's, with six footswitches controlling access to five five-sound banks. Programming is digital-style, but the front panel illustration keeps things relatively straightforward.

Unfortunately, both the A4 and ME-6B are plastic too, so the earlier caveat goes double. Do you really want to subject that sophisticated microprocessor to beer-swilling bandmates and Doc Marten-clad stage divers?

Of the floor units, I go for the A4. It's the handiest for live playing, as you can get into edit mode or bypass all effects with a tap of the foot, and adjusting its delay time is more precise. But \$550 seems somewhat pricey, especially when the Peavey Bass Fex has 256 patches (128 preset, 128 editable) for \$549. The Bass Fex mounts in a rack, as do the other units

**With the new wave of bass-oriented effects, it's time for bottom dwellers to reclaim a proud tradition.**

◆

**BY STEVE WISHNIA**





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# GUITAR X-RAY SPECS

**W**HILE MANY players don't bat an eyelash at the notion of deflowering a beloved axe with custom pickups or tone controls, there's a more powerful route to enhancing your guitar. We're talking about add-on gadgets and accessories designed to alter the guitar's response in fundamental ways, that might be termed "performance enhancers." Some, essentially plectrum substitutes, affect the interface between fingers and strings. Stringbenders alter the pitches available from the fretboard, and bridge attachments radically alter tone or sustain characteristics. Some are mechanical devices that fit on any guitar. Others require extensive routing or come built into special instruments. In many cases, a single guitar can accommodate more than one gadget, opening up a candy store full of mix-and-match possibilities.

These devices are easy to dismiss as gimmicks, the X-Ray Specs of the guitar world. But a *real* set of X-ray glasses would change your world view by revealing things otherwise hidden. These units can do the same for your music by breaking comfortable habits and pushing the limits of imagination.

Probably the best known of the group, Heet's Ebow (\$99) has been around since 1976. The hand-held, battery-powered unit works in conjunction with an electric guitar's pickups to produce a magnetic drive-field that keeps a single string vibrating for as long as the unit is held over it. Unlike the other items discussed here, it requires no installation, so you can use it on any electric guitar at any time. The possibilities for eternal trills or sweeping, sliding lines encourage you to explore sensuous melodies and unusual tones.

The performance enhancement built into the Fernandes Sustainer can't be retrofitted to your favorite guitar at present. Fortunately, Fernandes makes excellent guitars, with Sustainer models starting at \$799. The battery-powered Sus-

tainer replaces the neck pickup, electrically recirculating the strings' vibration to keep them sustaining indefinitely. Unlike the Ebow, the Sustainer can work on all six strings at once, making for howling power chords. The amount and pitch of the effect can be switched or dialed in, providing intuitive, interactive real-time control of results that range from edgy sustain to radical backward effects.

The Hammer Jammer from PLC (\$80 including demo video) mounts six plastic hammers above the strings at about the position of your picking hand. The tonal difference between picking and hammering is striking: A sharp, ringing attack issues from both electrics and acoustics. Better yet, the Jammer unlocks a range of new techniques. Hitting multiple hammers simultaneously produces brilliant, dramatic chords, and impossibly fast tremolos can be achieved by hitting the same hammer with your thumb and forefinger. It's simple both to install and to adjust to your style and tonal preferences, and surprisingly easy to adapt to. After a short time, I was playing percussive rhythmic patterns that transformed otherwise conventional chord progressions into something completely new. The trade-off, especially with acoustic guitars, is that the unit covers some of the higher frets, putting them off limits. With electrics, you can handle this by installing it near the bridge.

It isn't necessary to learn new techniques to benefit from the 2TEK bridge (\$300 including installation)—but you may develop some. It fits into any solidbody guitar or bass and concentrates each string's vibration in its own brass "tonal finger," tuned to the fundamental frequency of the string. The sympathetic vibration gooses your tone, expanding dynamic range and increasing sustain, and enhances responsiveness.

Using the Raga Master from BiAxe (\$95), I was lost in a purple haze of droning voices long after the novelty wore off. The unit fits most guitars easily, mounting over the bridge via magnetic strips. Six adjustable metal contacts vibrate against the strings to produce a karma-enhancing buzz. A lever lets you switch the effect on and off, and the works have a low enough profile to keep out of the way of your picking hand. Inventor Chuck Soupos lent me his guitar, which was set to a modal tuning.

Country guitarists like Albert Lee have been emulating pedal steel licks for years using "string-pullers": mechanisms that allow you to change the pitch of one string at a time (as opposed to vibrato bars, which modulate all six) by pushing a lever or strap button. Most, like the famous Parsons bender, require extensive routing and permanent installation. Happily, Hipshot's line of

**Performance enhancers for the guitar hot rod not only your axe, but your imagination as well.**

BY E.D. MENASCHE



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INNOVATION AT WORK.

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retrofits works with most any electric guitar or bass without maiming, and they're sturdy, accurate and easy to install.

The maxed-out Hipshot system I tested lists for \$298. It includes a Guitar Extender on the low E tuning peg (\$70-\$88 depending on finish); the Open Tuner (\$244-\$304), set at the factory to enable you to switch to open G on the fly; the Palm Bender (\$192-\$240), which makes it possible to raise the G string by up to a full step with a push of the palm;

and the B Bender (\$146-\$204), which raises the B string via a lever engaged with your hip—easier to master than it sounds—leaving your hands free. These benders are smooth, fun and challenging to play with. With a little practice, you'll be mutating chords on the fly and doing bidirectional bends, as demonstrated by Charles Crews in Hipshot's inspiring demo video.

If you're into alternate tunings, the same company's Trilogy bridge (\$226) employs six

three-position levers to offer 729 possible tuning variations. Going from standard tuning to open E, for example, is a matter of flipping the appropriate levers. When you become proficient enough to do it in mid-song, you can play rhythm in an opening voicing, then solo in standard territory.

Teetering at the edge of current technology (and affordability) is the Trans Performance DTS-1, which must be heard to be believed. For \$4000, you can have the computer-driven system installed in your Les Paul or similar archtop solidbody. Play it once, and a life of crime—or that megabuck major-label deal you just turned down—become highly attractive options. Six computerized motors inside the guitar control the bridge, changing tunings at the touch of a button. Tunings are presented in sets of five, viewed on an LCD display and selected via guitar-mounted buttons or footswitch. You can choose from 120 preset tunings and store as many as 200 of your own. Properly set up, the DTS-1 does its thing with breathtaking accuracy, propelling you almost instantly from standard tuning to open C to anything your twisted imagination can devise.

The few seconds it takes for the motors to move the strings can be used to creative effect as well: Playing a repeating figure while the tuning changes under your fingers is like dancing over an earthquake, and hearing the pitch move while the guitar is feeding back is enough to make any sonic youth drool. Trans Performance plans to introduce a production model for roughly \$2000, including the guitar. From those unable to afford the current system...we're waiting.

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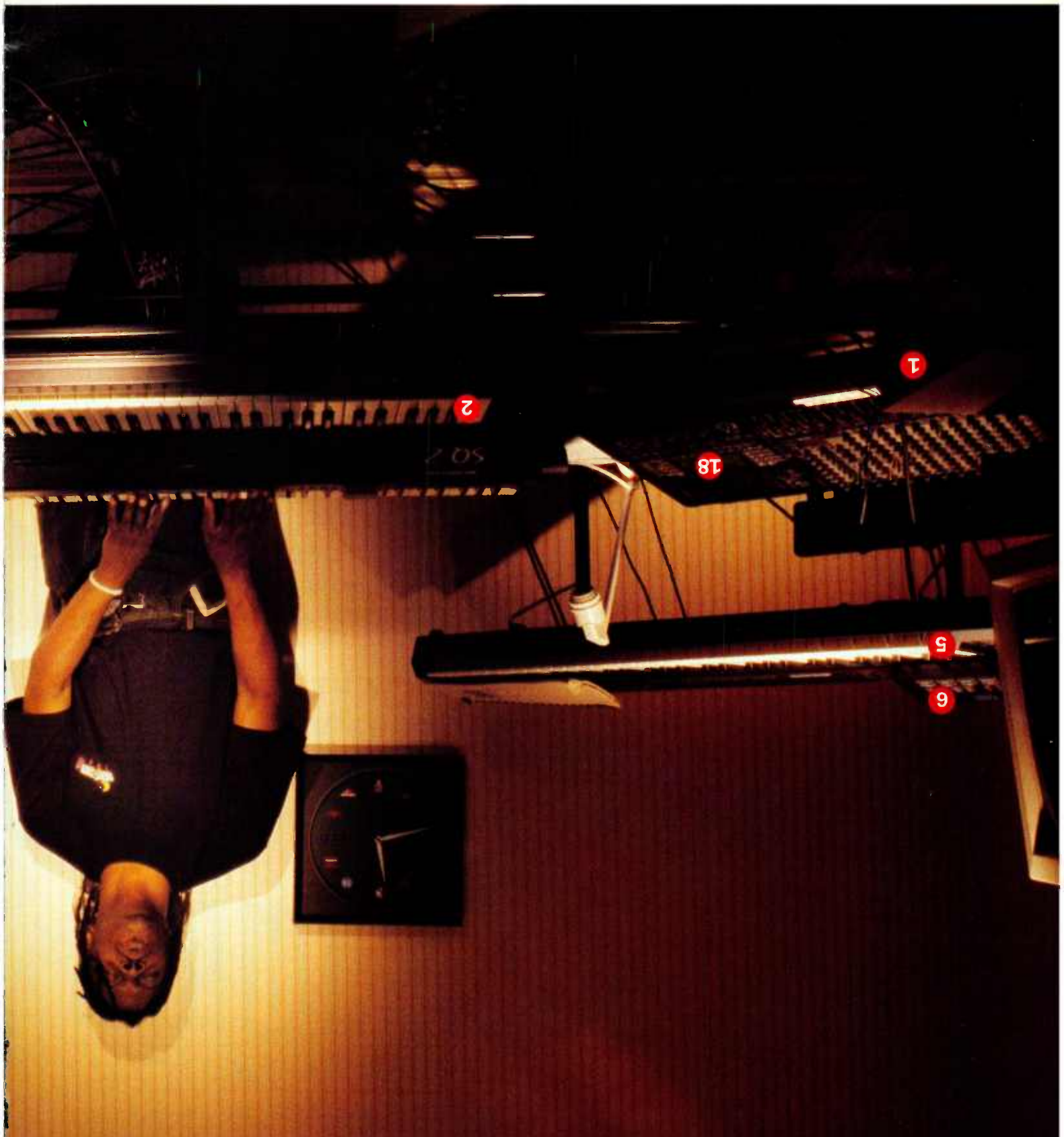


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# PHILIP BAILEY'S HONOR

# HOME STUDIO



“THIS WAS the *last* of my worries for a few days,” singer Philip Bailey says, gesturing toward the equipment occupying one room of his house in California’s San Fernando valley. “It was just about trying to save your butt, you know?”

Earth, Wind & Fire’s longtime lead vocalist is recalling last January’s big earthquake. Remarkably—since everything but his road case tumbled to the ground—the only real damage was a smashed key on the keyboard of his **Apple Macintosh IIci** computer **1** and a few picture frames.

Bailey uses his home studio for songwriting, typically with a keyboard player, and occasional pre-production—and sometimes both at once. Consider, for instance, “Love Across the Wire,” from EW&F’s recent *Millennium* album. “Thom Bell, Maurice White and I were in here,” he recounts. “I had a keyboard sound which Thom played right here. I gave the computer files to [programmer] Mike McKnight and he fleshed it out. He got all the sounds, did all the corrections, so when it came back to us it was the basis for the song—because we wanted to keep Thom Bell’s feel. Then we went into the studio and added the rest of the musicians.”

An **Ensoniq SQ-2** controller **2** sits between two **Tannoy** monitors **3** and in front of two other keyboards that Bailey finds useful, a **Korg M1** **4** and **Ensoniq SD-1** **5** (upon which an **Alesis SR-16** drum machine **6** sits). “Sometimes I revert back to the old M1,” he says, “but a lot of the sounds are a little hard for me now. And the SD-1 has some really cool sounds.” Nonetheless, currently Bailey is so enamored with his new rackmount **Ensoniq EPS 16 plus** sampling workstation **7** that if he had his druthers, he says, he’d trade the other keys for three EPSs, get a good weighted controller and just go with sampled sounds. Keyboard outputs go through a **Roland M-160** line mixer **8**, perched above a **Technics RS-TR232** dual cassette deck **9** and **Yamaha CDX-900-V** CD player **10**, and amplified by an **Audio Centron RMA-250** **11**.

The road case houses an “old faithful” **Roland V-220** synth module **12**, **Yamaha SPX-90II** multieffects **13**, **Symetrix 528** voice processor **14**, **Akai S900** sampler **15** (“dinosaur equipment,” Bailey notes, “I should have an S1100”), and **Mark of the Unicorn MIDI Time Piece II** **16**, which handles MIDI routing chores. A **Furman PL-8** power conditioner **17** delivers clean AC to the whole shebang.

For recording his primary instrument—his voice—Bailey uses a **Tascam Ministudio 688** **18**. “I can always have a mike hooked up and sing my ideas directly into it. I don’t have to mess around.” Lately the mike has been an **Electrovoice N/D 457A**, which apparently has seen better days. “My sons are in here a lot,” the singer says sheepishly. “Sometimes my stuff gets...you know what.”

**BY DAVE DIMARTINO**

PHOTOGRAPH BY DARRYL ESTRINE



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# Slight Return

THE ROLLING STONES

*Voodoo Lounge*  
(VIRGIN)

IN THEIR 32 YEARS TOGETHER, THE ROLLING Stones have been called many things—"very rich" and "grandpa" included. "Blazing sonic innovators" isn't a term that comes to mind, though. Since the loopy days of 1967's *Their Satanic Majesties Request*—an album still pooh-poohed by many, but which sounds damn hip in '94—you can count their sonic innovations on three fingers: 1) the sludgy, off-kilter guitar of "Street Fighting Man" (1968), 2) the stripped-down rawness of *Exile on Main Street* (1972) and 3) the believable blend of rock and dance music of "Miss You" (1978). In many respects, the Rolling Stones have done little more than coast on their consummate professionalism since then. And that's fine, considering the level of that professionalism and the massive scope of their entire phenomenon—as a cultural force, as a stadium-filler and as a money-making juggernaut that has dwarfed nearly every one of its contemporaries. But it's also very boring.

What makes *Voodoo Lounge* the most listenable Stones album in 16 years is, ultimately, what *isn't* on it—at least not as much as usual. "Sparks Will Fly," the worst song here, neatly exemplifies all that has gone wrong with the Stones in the past two decades. It's lousy, and almost laughably formulaic. Main ingredients: catchy three-word title ("Start Me Up," "She's So Cold," "Beast of Burden," "Fool to Cry," etc.); typical chunka-chunka rhythm/lead guitar riffing by Keith Richards; and predictable tub-pounding by Charlie Watts, whose admittedly classic, pushing style—uniform to the point of distraction—has sonically contributed more to the '80s-era Stones "sound" than anything else. And that's not intended as a compliment. Coming as it does as the third song on *Voodoo Lounge*—following the opening single "Love Is Strong" and "You Got Me Rocking," both heavy on the chunka-chunkas—it does not, upon first listening, bode well for what's to come. Particularly to those who found irony in Mick Jagger's singing, in the previous song, "I was a hooker losing her looks."

But then, with "The Worst"—sung, oddly enough, by Keith Richards—and everything afterward, *Voodoo Lounge* opens up. The formula is gone, the soundscape broadens, and the arrangements show a complexity and maturity—a willingness to experiment—that is unexpected and completely delightful. There's a harpsichord on "New Faces," a track that like the later "Sweethearts Together" sounds as if it might've come from *Flowers*; there's peculiarly upfront percussion and a guitar run-



# THE BASEMENT BOYS ON STORYTELLER



BACK WHEN the Basement Boys were starting out, their moniker wasn't just a colorful nickname. Singles like Crystal Waters' breakthrough hit "Gypsy Woman (She's Homeless)" really were recorded in a cramped Baltimore rowhouse basement. In fact, Waters' "vocal booth" was just a refitted bathroom, something that turned "singing in the shower" into a Top 40 reality.

By the time the Basement Boys—Teddy Douglas and Jay Steinhour—began work on Waters' sophomore effort, *Storyteller*, the duo had put together a far more conventional studio. But the sound they went after was just as raw as in the old days.

"We keep it rough," says Douglas. "Instead of letting the engineer compress it and gate it and fix it, making this clean and that clean, we'll let it be a little rough around the edges."

It helps that the Basement Boys like to keep their studio gear simple enough to maintain a hands-on approach. "We've done a lot of it ourselves," explains Steinhour. "We don't let it get out of our own control, or else it might become too much if someone else was running it all the time."

Take the way the instrumental tracks were cut. Like a lot of dance music producers, Douglas and Steinhour rely heavily on MIDI programming for their basic beats. But the real flavor in their tracks comes from live musicians, not sequencing.

"We try and use that and make it feel as live as possible by mixing around the live players more than the programmed stuff," says Steinhour. "Like on '100% Pure Love.' We'd been working on that quite a bit, and then brought the organ player [Gary Hudgins] in. He pulled the whole thing together—the mix kind of built around his solo."

But the biggest difference between *Storyteller* and its predecessor was Waters' vocal approach, which went from amateurishly inspired to polished and professional. "She'd gotten a vocal coach," says Steinhour, "and wanted him to be involved. Which he was."

"Because of the relationship they had together, she was really comfortable in the studio," says Douglas. "It came out really well, with all her signature sounds, the slurred stuff and all. We didn't want to lose Crystal Waters' identity, you know?" —**J.D. Considine**

World Radio History

ning through what sounds like a Leslie on "Moon Is Up"; there's an actual sense of drama, of a *song* rather than a standard robo-riff, on "Out of Tears." There are substance, style and newness here that—for the first time in many years—make a Rolling Stones album seem more a work of art than Phase One of a three-year business plan. The Most Likely Band to Mix Down to Crappy Car Radios has, incredibly, crafted full-fledged ear candy.

Though wholly crediting a producer for an album's success is a disservice to the artist—and often an ill-informed judgment call—there's no question that Don Was, who "co-produced" these sessions with Jagger and Richards, has made the major difference here. Aside from producing the first Stones album in eons you'll want to play more than 10 times, he's also freed the band up from what appeared to be their inevitable destiny: disappointing sound-by-rote corporate cogs, but *damn* do they make money. Even more importantly, with album closer "Thru & Thru" he's given Keith "Croaker" Richards the first opportunity of his life to prove, despite all evidence to the contrary, that he actually *can* sing, and sing well. As odd as it sounds—and at this late date it sounds extremely odd—the Rolling Stones may be getting better with age. And weren't they the ones who told us getting old would be a drag?—**Dave DiMartino**

## BOSTON

*Walk On*

(MCA)

IT'S IRONIC, I SUPPOSE, THAT AN ALBUM that took so much evident effort from Tom Scholz requires so little effort on the part of the listener. Boston's last album came out in 1986, so Scholz has had ample time to not only write and record *Walk On*, but to also design and built Hideaway Studio II, which includes *equipment specifically built for this record*, like the Rockman Ultimate Amplifier and the Smart Gate.

Dunno what they are, but that Gate wasn't smart enough to keep *Walk On* from being exactly what you'd expect: a collection of Ultimate Generic Love Songs that could easily be the soundtrack for a mid-'80s movie. No kidding, take a gander at these titles: "I Need Your Love," "Livin' for You," "Surrender to Me," "We Can Make It." I think we can agree that these don't exactly sound like forays into novel musical expression.

Letting that ride—since that's the kind of MORness that made Boston Boston—what interests me is Scholz's attitude towards love, remarkably consistent throughout the album. Consider this, from "Livin' for You": "Thinking

about you in everything I do... You're my religion, girl, I've been living for you." Do you, as I, find that a strangely adolescent sentiment, coming from a grown man? Maybe you could invent the Wall of Triteness for your next album, Tom. That's the one your label will want in 2009.

*Walk On* is, ultimately, easy listening. It's painless and (for all of Scholz's liner-note posturing) essentially meaningless—the kind of chorus-rich power rock that neither errs nor delights. In those interminable liner notes, Scholz tells us that “progress was interrupted by a lengthy trial where Boston had to defend its right to make the best recordings possible...”

Evidently they lost. —J. Kordosh

## THE FUTURE SOUND OF LONDON

*Lifeforms*

(ASTRALWERKS/CAROLINE)

**T**HE FUTURE SOUND OF LONDON IS THE *nom* *electronique* of collaborators Gary Cobain and Brian Dougans, and the music they concoct exists somewhere between conventional techno dance music and the altogether less accessible electronic music of the past 40 years or so. Which makes the “Future” part somewhat misleading. Breaking out of a young but established genre, they're hedging toward a much older one. Much of *Lifeforms* sounds familiar—sometimes drearily so—but its pastiche of probing and treading water can give the impression of freshness.

# HOUSE PARTY

## What Are You Listening to Lately?



**IRIS DEMENT**

1. Robert Earl Keen—Bigger Piece of Sky
2. The Essential Johnny Cash
3. Guy Clark—Boats to Build
4. Alison Krauss—Everytime You Say Goodbye
5. Jay White—Between Midnight and Hindsight

**MATTHEW SWEET**

1. Everly Brothers—Walk Right Back
2. Gene Clark—Roadmaster
3. Rolling Stones—Singles Collection—The London Years
4. History of Northwest Rock Vol. 1, 1959–1964
5. The Pretenders



**VERNON REID**

1. Eleven—Eleven
2. Soundgarden—Superunknown
3. Sonny Boy Williamson Sings the Blues
4. Mecca—Mahatma Gumbo
5. Me'Shell NdegéOcello—Plantation Lullabies



in service of a benevolent intent—you can follow their train of thought knowing they're not going to throw any nasty shocks your way. At most there'll be some pleasant surprises like the reconstituted Isaac Hayes of “Eggshell,” reminiscent of those early-'70s soul epics where the strings glided blissfully over wah-wah guitars. Or the Debussyian whisper-thin sadness of “Cascades,” surprising because emotion in this music usually seems remote, abstract or banal.

Besides this discursive coherency, the boys are also adept at working in all the de rigueur burbles and twiddles of the genre smoothly—though each little space-age burp and sigh reminds one of how much the existence of an electronic palette demands such garnishings, of how the overrun of technological development creates the need for usage (think of those televisions the size of a wristwatch: a pointless marvel). The most modern, if not futuristic, thing about this music is how, at its heart, the desire to express seems to have been replaced by the need to utilize. It's the techno equivalent of art for art's sake. To shape it well requires a certain cleverness and comfort with the form, and to judge it adequately, a set of responses still being formed.

On surer ground, I can tell you that whenever these guys come close to a melody the music becomes hopelessly inane. We're talking Kitaro, if not worse. Fortunately this only

occurs a half-dozen times or less over the course of two CDs. For the most part we're asked to contemplate the plasticity of machine-generated sound, a phenomenon which manages to suggest both nascent possibilities and the reassuring terrain of the same old brave new world.

—Richard C. Walls

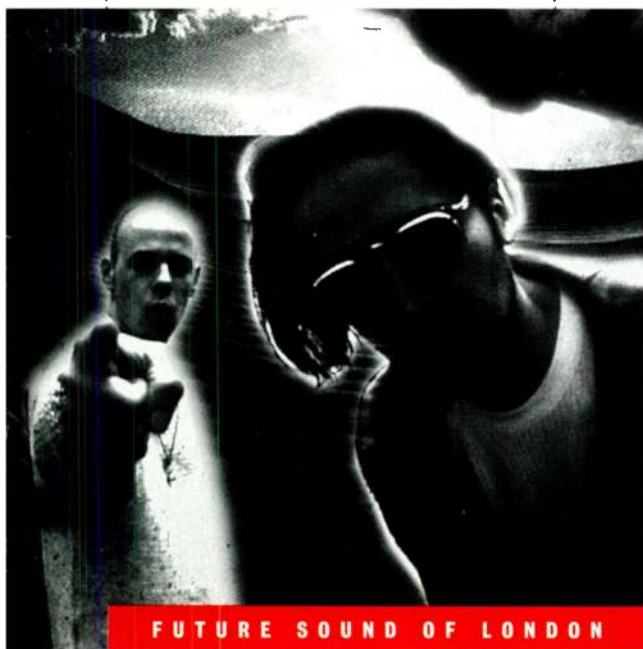
## JIM LAUDERDALE

*Pretty Close to the Truth*

(ATLANTIC)

**B**EFORE RADIO MARKETS WERE NARROW-cast in demographic stone, anything was possible. The '60s' loose cross-pollination of country, soul and rock 'n' roll helped produce Al Green's Memphis soul and the mournful funk of Lowell George, not to mention the artistic leaps it enabled in Ray Charles and Bob Dylan. *Pretty Close to the Truth* recalls that era, a time when substance stood above style. While Clint Black and Randy Travis are summoning Nashville's golden years, Lauderdale's visceral country (he's written songs for George Strait, Vince Gill, Dave Edmunds and Mark Chestnutt) is closer to Buck Owens' rye swagger and the sweet rock 'n' roll of Carl Perkins, tapping the same vein that attracted the Beatles and the Stones to country's flexibility and melodicism.

*Truth's* 11 songs are a pleasing shock to the system. Though not gifted with a great voice, Lauderdale wrenches emotion out of a song, wrapping his rangy tone around stinging three-way guitars, naturally recorded drums and understated keyboards. He puts his tongue in cheek on “This Is the Big Time,” a loping shuf-



FUTURE SOUND OF LONDON

There's also the seamlessness of the duo's free associations, the way they can apparently intuit the next reasonable texture while avoiding disjunction. This dream logic is very seductive and

# REVIEWS

file with chug-a-lug guitars; "I'm on Your Side" could easily be George Harrison circa 1965; "Why Do I Love You" is a bittersweet 6/8 ballad with a surprisingly clever bridge; and "Run with You" is reminiscent of Lowell George on Little Feat's *The Last Record Album*.

Lauderdale is such a natural and producer Dusty Wakeman such a pro, the old adage about turning the phone book into a hit song comes to mind—their pairing is that good. Some songs ("Don't Trust Me," "Three Way Conversation") glide on pure vibe alone, pushing all the right buttons in our collective Patsy Cline–George Jones memory.

Oddly enough, the title track isn't a sassy hit but a plea to a lover asking for forgiveness and trust. True to tradition, the song is an impassioned statement delivered by a genuine storyteller. In the mega-million-dollar business that is "today's country"—when songs are often dependent on stage antics—fireworks, flying singers, cornball histrionics—and "achey-breaky" dance steps—the search for the genuine article is a long one. With Jim Lauderdale the search comes to an end. —Ken Micallef

L7

*Hungry for Stink*

(SLASH)

**R**EMEMBER, ONLY A FEW SHORT YEARS ago groups with guitars were said to be on their way out. At the onset of the 1990s, the all-



PHOTO: TUDOR

knowing music charts indicated that rap and dance music were what was selling. Of course, this didn't stop guitar groups from making records—in fact, most guitar groups were used

to not selling many records. Their low-budget productions therefore reflected the lack of financial rewards waiting. While a band like Nirvana squeezed out the crunchiest sound possible for the now-legendary \$606.17, other bands seeking larger sounds had to hope their listeners would imagine the loudness that simply wasn't there.

Of course, nowadays groups with guitars are on their way *in*. Again. And with this renewed interest come recording budgets that deliver the sound the way it's meant to be heard. Steamroller riffs now plow with pure sonic force, drums pummel with propulsion, and singers, above the din, ruin their voices in excited stereophonic glee.

Nowhere is this better evidenced than on L7's latest short-playing long player, *Hungry for Stink*. Heavy like last time's *Bricks Are Heavy* (where Butch Vig originally opened their sonic vistas), this time the approach is strictly slam-and-bang like punk rock—complete with unison vocals screaming out the simple titles with snotty, snarling relish ("Andres," "Baggage"), just like your favorite punk band of old. At times the effort sports such solidarity it's as if you're eavesdropping on the locker room of your favorite football team.

The result is an album that leans on monotony for its power, eschewing peaks and dips for

## VIDEO

DAVID GARIBALDI

*Tower of Groove. Part 1*

BY JIM LINDSAY

THROUGH HIS work during the '70s with Tower of Power, David Garibaldi established himself as the thinking man's groove drummer. His patterns required *mucho* coordination and independence, but Garibaldi also displayed the kind of in-the-pocket feel usually found in drummers who play a lot more simply.

Watching him demonstrate beats from a mixture of new songs and Tower of Power classics, you can see and hear what gives his playing such character. Much of it has to do with what he refers to, somewhat clinically, as "sound levels": enhanced use of dynamics, with extreme contrasts between strokes that slam and strokes that whisper. There's also an underlying swing in Garibaldi's playing, missing from many of today's funk/fusion drummers who were weaned on straight 8ths and 16ths. Although he was one of the architects of the 16th-note-based funk style, his jazz background puts plenty of roll in his rock.

This video is instructional in the sense that Garibaldi spends a little time isolating specific patterns, slowing them down and discussing some of the fine points, and comes with a booklet that notates the crucial patterns. Most valuable, though, is footage depicting Garibaldi with a band where he puts the techniques to work. With all of the subtleties and variations Garibaldi employs, the video doesn't merely stand up to repeated viewings, it demands them.—Rick Mattingly

# REVIEWS

the impressive fright of cruising 100 mph down a dead-end street. L7 play as if the dead end isn't there, as if their collective power and unswerving devotion will transport them to the other side without a scratch. Either way, they don't care. As long as it's *loud*. —Rob O'Connor

## THE CHURCH

*Sometime Anywhere*

(ARISTA)

**I**F ROGER WATERS HAD NEVER LEFT PINK Floyd, what would the band sound like today? Chances are, a lot less like the tranquilized *Division Bell* and more like the tranquil Aussie outfit the Church, on its dreamy, dreary new Arista disc *Sometime Anywhere*. Pared down to a core duo of cynical singer/lyricist Steve Kilbey (the Waters figure) and fluid, filigreed guitarist Marty Willson-Piper (who approximates the Floyd's David Gilmour in tone and texture), the once-jangling group has summoned up a surreal, bewitching mood piece somewhere between *Wish You Were Here* and *The Wall*, and album that would play well by candlelight in a hilltop haunted mansion.

A couple of segments clog Kilbey's slow-pulsing artery—the clumsy, veiled vitriol of "The Maven" and the disjointed Willson-Piper



CHURCH

vocal exercise "Fly Home," for instance. But he wheezes so suggestively from delicate six-string-and-synthesizer platforms like "Day of the Dead," "Lost My Touch" and "My Little Problem," you're immediately drawn in. As far back as 1981's definitive "The Unguarded Moment," Kilbey was sneering on most of humanity, and now it's become his stock in trade: Stepping over the dainty guitar notes of "Lullaby," he hisses, "A doom is on this child,

that I can see/He don't belong in this time with you and me/His life will not be very long/ Before you know it, he will be gone." Not your standard children's bedtime fare. In the flamenco-tempered "Loveblind," he's a hard-boiled detective piecing "together clue by clue/ Just what a faceless man would do." And—surprise!—the singer himself is the faceless man at the song's film-noirish finale. Throughout the set, ethereal female backing vocals waft

## SHORT TAKES

BY J. D. CONSIDINE

### DICK DALE

*Unknown Territory*

(GHTONE)

AS IF out to prove that last year's comeback was no fluke, Dale offers an even more helacious performance this time—all double-picked growls, rippling glissandi and full-curl powerchords. Yet that fretboard machismo never obscures the music's soft inner spirit; in fact, it's the innate romanticism of his playing that lets him get away with the likes of "Maria Elena" or "Hava Nagila." If only his singing were as sharp...

### O.G. FUNK

*Out of the Dark*

(PUNK/RC)

ACTUALLY, "Ol' P-Funk" would probably be closer to the mark, what with "Billy Bass" Nelson and Jerome "Bigfoot" Brailey in the rhythm section, and Bernie Worrell on keys. But despite the deep pocket of funk work-

outs like "I Wanna Know" and the Eddie Hazel tribute "Music for My Brother," what keeps this on-the-one are the ballads, especially the tender, miss-you sentiment of Nelson's (not Jagger's) "Angie."

### BUCKSHOT LEFONQUE

*Buckshot LeFonque*

(COLUMBIA)

WHAT DOOMS most attempts at jazz/pop fusion is the insistence on being one or the other. But Buckshot LeFonque—an even-keeled collaboration between Branford Marsalis and DJ Premier—manages to be both simultaneously. Some of that has to do with Marsalis's ability to maintain a melodic focus no matter how adventurous his solos get, and some with Premier's ability to bend and stretch the beat the way a jazz drummer would. But mostly, it's that they stress the "songs" above all—and that's as true of Maya Angelou's carefully declaimed "I Know

Why the Caged Bird Sings" as of Frank McCombs' soulful take on "Mona Lisas and Mad Hatters."

### OPUS III

*Guru Mother*

(L.A. FIRE)

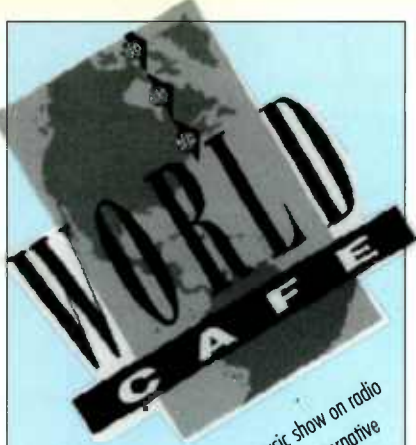
TO PARAPHRASE Lord Acton, success tends to corrupt, and mass success corrupts massively. So Opus III, which sounded so fresh and uncalculating on "It's a Fine Day," comes across here as just another disco act—albeit one with an engaging singer and a song sense of ambient groove. Bearable if you like a little hippie chic with your techno; disposable otherwise.

### JON SECADA

*Heart, Soul & a Voice*

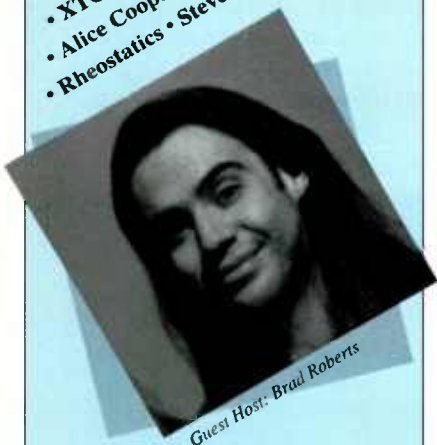
(JBL)

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# MUSICIAN

# ET CETERA

## OFFSPRING *Smash* (GREAT)

CALL IT popcore or call it puerile, but slaphappy Orange County punk combo Offspring has hit on a winning—and shamelessly retro—formula. Like its British ancestors GBH, Discharge and the UK Subs, these hyperspeed miscreants make every song sound like an old AC/DC album at 45 rpm, but tailor their lyrics strictly for the slacker generation. "I open the glove box/Reach inside/I'm gonna wreck this fucker's ride," bleats weasel-voiced belter Dexter Holland, humorously downplaying freeway shootings as another "Bad Habit." 9-to-5 yuppies are summarized on the jovial "Genocide" with a chanting chorus of "Dog eat dog every day/On our fellow man we prey," and their converse—the full-on Spicoli surf-stoner—gets a wrist-slapping through scratchy powerchords with "What Happened to You?": "Before you started tokin' you used to have a brain/But now you don't get even the simplest of things." Fortunately, it doesn't take a genius to appreciate Offspring's simple songwriting smarts, or the sobering anti-handgun message of its radio-friendly hit "Come Out and Play"—"Hey, they don't pay you no mind/If you're under 18 you won't be doing any time." A nice shot of adrenaline from a socially conscious syringe.

—Tom Lanham

## LUTHER ALLISON *Soul Train's Man* (GREAT)

UPON HIS arrival in the late '60s, bluesman Allison was celebrated as the inheritor of Chicago's West Side guitar crown previously worn by such worthies as Magic Sam and Otis Rush. Despite some solid records and a highly extroverted, rock-savvy live show, he never caught on with big audiences, and since the mid-'70s Allison has made his home in France. On this, his first American album in two decades, the singer/axeman makes a burning re-entry into his native market. Typically crackling vocals and dense, idea-packed picking mark the straight blues and soul-

blues numbers here; a tight band anchored by rhythm guitarist Jim Solberg and punched up by the Memphis Horns gooses the set along. Cut in Memphis by producer Jim Gaines, *Soul Fixin' Man* is an easy-to-groove-to mix of Windy City fervor and funky Southern feeling.

—Chris Morris

## BERES HAMMOND *In Central* (GREAT)

JAMAICA IS an island bursting with great voices out of proportion to its small population. As one of the best of the current crop, Beres Hammond has consistently grown in popularity among reggae fans over the last few years. A songwriter and producer as well as a gifted singer of the husky-sweet soul school, Hammond insinuates herself deftly within insistent melodies buoyed by bauxite-heavy basslines and slick but not syrupy arrangements. Whether achieving anthemic grace on "Giving Thanks" or trading vocal licks with notorious DJ Buju Banton on "Just Say No," Hammond confidently stakes his claim to the pop charts without getting caught in the crossover trap.—Tom Cheyney

## BLACK EYED SUSANS *All Souls Alive* (GREAT)

THE FIRST new record to emerge from the remnants of Australia's vastly wonderful Triffids—whose output during the '80s matched or bettered nearly every other band you can think of—is really just a side project for head Trif David McComb, who's otherwise engaged in his even niftier solo career. Though he sings but once here (a cover from Leonard Cohen's getting-hipper-by-the-minute *Death of a Ladies' Man*, which he also hit up for 1991's *I'm Your Fan* tribute album), he takes co-writing credit on the six best tracks and remains one of pop's sturdiest, most intriguing "new" talents. Massive long-deserved acceptance or continued pointless obscurity awaits him in these United States, you'll surely agree.

—Dave DiMartino

- 45 7/82 Willie Nelson, John McLoughlin, the Motels
- 70 8/84 Peter Wolf, King Crimson, Sly + Robbie
- 102 4/87 Robert Cray, Los Lobos, Simply Red
- 104 6/87 Springsteen, The Bosters, Keith Jorrett
- 111 1/88 R.E.M., George Michael, Year in Rock
- 112 2/88 McCortney, Stanley Clarke, Buster Poindexter
- 113 3/88 Robert Plant, INXS, Wynton Marsalis
- 114 4/88 John Lennon, James Taylor, Robyn Hitchcock
- 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
- 120 10/88 Keith Richards, Depeche Mode, Steve Forbert
- 121 11/88 Prince, Steve Winwood, Romy Newman
- 122 12/88 Guns N' Roses, Midnight Oil, Glyn Johns
- 123 1/89 Year in Music '88, Metallica, Jock Bruce, Fishbone
- 124 2/89 Replacements, Fleetwood Mac, Lyle Lovett
- 125 3/89 Elvis Costello, Jeff Healey, Sonic Youth
- 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, Abdulhah Ibrahim
- 138 4/90 Tom Petty, Lenny Kravitz, Rush, The Silos
- 139 5/90 Paul McCartney, Cecil Taylor, Kronos Quartet
- 140 6/90 Robert Plant, Suzanne Vega, Soul II Soul, Drums
- 143 9/90 Steve Vai, Michael Stipe, Malmsteen/McLaughlin
- 144 10/90 INXS, Neville Bros., Lou Reed/Vaclav Hovel
- 146 12/90 Slash, Replacements, Waterboys, Pixies
- 147 1/91 Robert Johnson, Bruce Hornsby, Soul Asylum
- 148 2/91 Pink Floyd, Neil Young, Art Blokey, 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 Hellen, Fishbone, Byrds, Chris Isaak
- 152 6/91 Stevie Roy Vaughan, Morrissey, Drum Special
- 153 7/91 Bonnie Raitt, Tim Buckley, McCoy Tyner
- 154 8/91 Sting, Stevie Wonder, 15th Anniversary Issue
- 156 10/91 Dire Straits, Jesus Jones, Paul McCartney
- 157 11/91 Jimi Hendrix, Frank 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
- 161 3/92 The Edge, Dizzy Gillespie, Harrison Clapton
- 162 4/92 Def Leppard, k. d. lang, Live
- 163 5/92 Drugs & Creativity, Lovett, Mike Special
- 164 6/92 Guns N' Roses, Metallica, 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
- 170 12/92 Roger Waters, Prince, Bob Weir
- 171 1/93 Best of '92: Extreme, Brown, Carey . . .
- 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
- 179 9/93 Steely Dan, Tanya Donnelly, Kim Deal
- 180 10/93 Nirvana, Jeff Beck, Depeche Mode
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Best of 1992



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in, à la *Dark Side of the Moon*, and underscore *Sometime Anywhere's* somber Floydian themes. And it's obvious—even on a mostly forgettable seven-track bonus disc—that Kilbey and Willson-Piper need each other for yin-yang balance, a lesson Waters and Gilmour seem to have long ago forgotten. —Tom Lanham

## JOHN CALE/BOB NEUWIRTH

*Last Day on Earth*  
(MCA)

## JOHN CALE

*Seducing Down the Door:*  
*A John Cale Collection*  
(RHINO)

**B**OB NEUWIRTH'S REPUTATION AS A "SONGWRITER'S SONGWRITER"—the quote is from T-Bone Burnett—has persisted for many years now somewhere just beyond pop visibility. Two recent Gold Castle albums did nothing to lift him from cult status, and his latest, a collaboration with the also culty but much more prolific John Cale, probably isn't going to do it either. For while Cale comes across here as his usual enigmatic and not unappealing self, Neuwirth

sounds annoyingly smug—especially on the longish opening spoken-word section. Presumably this is supposed to register as trenchant social commentary—you know, how everything's fucked and here's a few specific images to convey that larger truth—but what it sounds like is some old fart eyeballing the scene and taking some hackneyed swipes at obvious targets.

Once they get down to some actual songs things improve, marginally. The melodies tend to be inventively naive, in the Cale manner, with his keyboards and effects contrasting nicely with Neuwirth's banjo and harmonica (a string quartet and David Tronzo's protean guitar make for notable garnishings). Though all the songs are credited to both composers, a dominating hand is often discerned, e.g., "Angel of Death" could be an outtake from Cale's *Vintage Violence*, while "Paradise Nevada" elaborates on the sort of world-weary metaphor of which Neuwirth is a past master. The latter and "Secrets" counterbalance his curmudgeonly stance elsewhere, but only somewhat.

Maybe the project is doomed as a disc anyway. Conceived as a theatrical piece, it's been tightened up in this version, though not nearly enough.

And one could see this mix of doomsday clichés and lightly trippy music working in the context of performance art, an interactive event where a maximum of co-conspiratorial approval eagerly waits to greet a modicum of cleverness.

An altogether meatier artifact is Cale's *Seducing*, a boxed-set two-disc career overview which, despite a minimum of the kind of enticements one has come to expect from these things, is pretty good. There's only one previously unreleased cut—"Dixieland and Dixie" ('71), which sounds like the Beach Boys filtered through Randy Newman—and a handful of obscurities like "Temper" ('72), a solo piano piece that starts out rhapsodic in the Romantic tradition but soon wanders into the more modern area of multinote stasis. This combination of the melodic and the crazed makes a good summation of Cale's best work. Starting with the scalding paranoia of "Fear Is a Man's Best Friend" and the lumbering menace of "Gun," *Seducing* ably samples that six-and-a-half-year period ('75-'81) when Cale could pass for a rocker, and reminds those who have become used to that almost stately baritone some of the wild and crazy things he used to attempt with his voice.

Before and after those years Cale is generally

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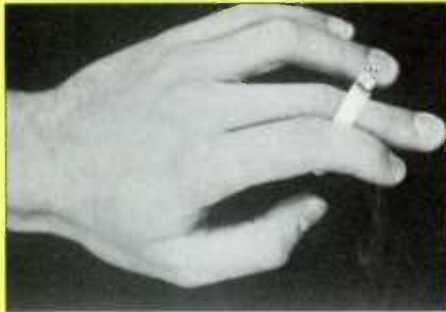


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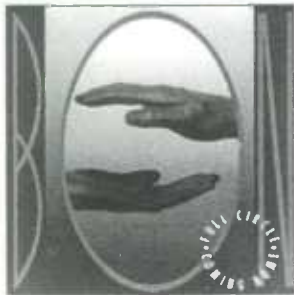
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more subdued—first reluctant to leave the academy, then later anxious to get off the road. And through it all, he remains determinedly cryptic and often literally indecipherable, though almost always emotionally intelligible; an original who will surely come back from the protracted “art” diddle of *Last Day*. —Richard C. Walls

## NAS

*Illmatic*

(COLUMBIA)

**N**AS'S DEBUT ALBUM *ILLMATIC* DOESN'T excel by the standards that great hip-hop albums are commonly judged: no new palettes of colors are introduced, as they were with Public Enemy's *Nation of Millions* or A Tribe Called Quest's *Low End Theory*, nor any new attitudes, concepts or lyrical styles (his cadences recall Lord Finesse and Kool G. Rap). The all-star team of producers engaged—Q-Tip, Pete Rock, Large Professor, Premier (of Gang Starr) and newcomer L.E.S.—have churned out 11 songs of hard, jazz-flavored East Coast funk, but the album as a whole suffers from the “more is better” school of rap producer—recruiting. If *Illmatic* doesn't feel schizophrenic, it lacks the consistency of a masterpiece, which is what it has been called by critics and hip-hop heads hungry for a culture hero.

That said, *Illmatic* could be one of the finest conventional hip-hop albums ever made, up there with EPMD's *Business as Usual* and Naughty by Nature's debut. Nas is a dark, compelling lyricist who enunciates cleanly and quickly, leaving the listener able to hear everything he says, but racing to follow the meaning (one particularly dizzying passage: “Word to Christ, a disciple of streets/Trifle on beats/I decipher prophecies through a mike and say peace”). Themes of a sad, lost youth run through the album, from the picture of Nas as a serious-faced child on the cover to the brilliant, brooding “New York State of Mind” (“I never sleep/Cause sleep is the cousin of death/I lay puzzled as I backtrack to earlier times/Nothing's equivalent/To the New York state of mind”), to the tragic “One Love,” which recounts a handful of stories of imprisoned friends and wasted lives. If anything sets Nas apart from hip-hop's gruff hardcore mainstream beyond his superior microphone skills, it's the palpable, fleshed-out pain of his lyrics, another page in the book started by Grandmaster Flash's “The Message,” but populated with real people with faces instead of “junkies in the alley with a baseball bat.”

Which doesn't change the fact that hip-hop needs a constant flow of, among other things, jazz licks, Black Flag riffs, Kung Fu yells and, most importantly, new MCs and producers with fresh

ideas to keep the music vital. Ominously, in recent years rap's world of reference points seems to have narrowed, between the dangerous nostalgia for the music's old school, the inescapable, identical “ruffneck” poses, the gun-centric lyrics and ghettoization of “alternative rap.” Nas hasn't changed the rules of the game, and only a fool would fault him for that. Nevertheless, it's troubling to consider that a music renowned for reinventing pop culture in its own image may be turning in on itself. —Nathan Brackett

## DANZIG

[cont'd from page 97] few new ones, including the first-ever live rendition of “Goin' Down to Die,” which he dedicates to Uncle Tony. The crowd may be there mainly to see Metallica, but Glenn and his posse compel their attention.

Back in the dressing room after the encore, Glenn is shirtless, drenched in sweat and feeling cranky. “All I could hear was Chuck's cymbals and Eerie's bass,” he growls. “I didn't hear much guitar or snare. There wasn't much beat for me to get into. It sounded like shit!”

“All in all, I guess it could have been worse. We're real critical of ourselves,” he adds, accentuating the obvious.

As the room empties, guitarist John Christ agrees to talk. The “serious” musician in Danzig, the quiet Mr. Christ—a surname bestowed by his disrespectful mates—is the odd man out. Sitting apart from the others on the bus, he's the one who perks up when the new Boston album comes on the radio. Where the others went to school on punk, John admits, “I like the guitar gods, even the ones nobody else likes, such as Yngwie Malmsteen. I grew up in the era of Ted Nugent, Angus Young, Frank Marino, Eddie Van Halen, Tom Scholz. That's what I wanna hear; that's what I wanna write.”

There's no room for that kind of flash in Danzig, though. Glenn won't permit extended solos and dictates what the guitarist plays [see sidebar]. Asked if the lack of freedom is frustrating, John concedes, “It used to be. But it doesn't bother me anymore. If I do a good job and everybody's happy, fine. It's not my band. I have to keep reminding myself, ‘It's not my band. It's not my band. It's not my band...’”

“When I first joined the group, I was so technical they'd laugh at me. I had to completely restructure the way I played. I got really raw and dissonant, stopped playing complete scales, made sure I dropped notes at weird intervals and started playing more diminished intervals. I'll practice for hours and hours before entering the studio, then Glenn will say, ‘Too much. Play fewer notes.’ He likes the talking guitar

stuff, bluesy string-bending, things like that.”

Having written TV promo music for ABC, Christ is looking for more work in that vein, and pursuing soundtrack gigs. Then, a record of his own. “I want to do an EP first, and see how it goes from there. It'll be a totally different vibe—my own thing. I need to do something in my own style,” he says, sounding almost desperate. “If everyone hates it, fine, but at least I'll have gotten it out of my system.”

In the darkness outside Danzig's tour bus, Eerie's Aunt Barbara runs up to Glenn, gushing thanks for the dedication to her husband. If the sight of this middle-aged woman in a Danzig T-shirt sharing a hug with the Master of Darkness seems odd, so be it. Glenn Danzig unselfconsciously embodies many such contradictions, portraying primal villains yet remaining scrupulously polite to awed fans, reveling in sensationalism while encouraging audiences to look beyond the obvious, simultaneously projecting empathy and paranoia.

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# SPIRO'S LIST

Those spooked by the current congressional investigation of rap lyrics (one legacy of the Washington Wives witchhunt of the mid-1980s) may recall that Spiro Agnew led a Nixon administration strike against rock lyrics in the early 1970s. In a much-reported speech Agnew explained that "Puff the Magic Dragon" was code for marijuana and the "Friends" the Beatles were getting a little help from were illegal narcotics. Journalist and guitarist Steph Paynes has used the Freedom of Information Act to find out just where Agnew's list came from—and how far it went. What she discovered would be funny if it weren't for this creeping feeling of déjà vu...

**THE BLACKLIST (PARTIAL LIST)**

"I Get by with a Little Help from My Friends"

**THE BEATLES**

"White Rabbit" **JEFFERSON AIRPLANE**

"Acid Queen" **THE WHO**

"Tambourine Man" **BOB DYLAN**

"Hashish," "Walking in Space" (**FROM HAIR**)

"I Like Marijuana" **DAVID PEEL AND THE LOWER**

**EAST SIDE**

"Heroin" **THE VELVET UNDERGROUND**

"Don't Step on the Grass, Sam"

**STEPPENWOLF**

"Happiness Is a Warm Gun" **THE BEATLES**

"Cloud Nine" **THE TEMPTATIONS**

"The Pusher" **STEPPENWOLF**

"Puff the Magic Dragon" **PETER, PAUL**

**AND MARY**

"Eight Miles High" **THE BYRDS**

"Acapulco Gold" **THE RAINY DAZE**

"Along Comes Mary" **THE ASSOCIATION**

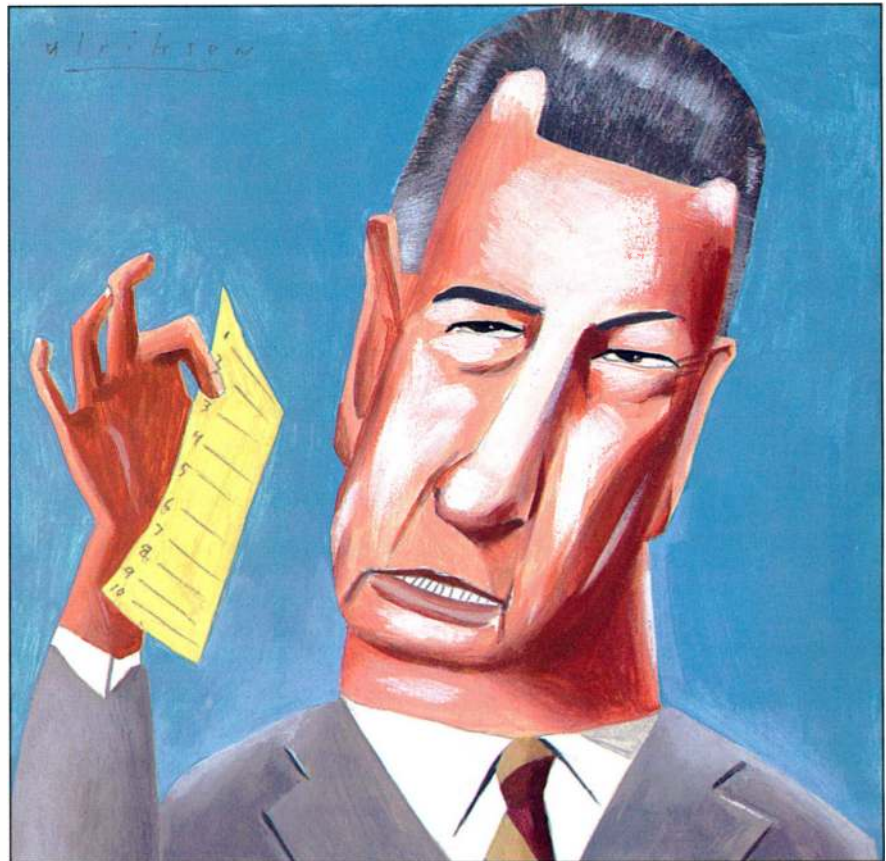
"Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" **THE BEATLES**

"Mellow Yellow" **DONOVAN**

*The Virgin Fugs* **THE FUGS**

The list was compiled by a core of "concerned" generals of the Department of the Army. The 22 songs were first presented at a Radio and Producers Briefing which took place at the White House on August 31, 1970. Several commissioners from the FCC were present at the briefing, and it was the FCC who later designed a campaign to dissuade broadcasters from airing "drug-related songs."

During the Army's presentation, several songs by the Doors were also singled out (specifically the line, "War is out, peace is the new thing"), as was "Mr. Businessman" by Ray Stevens.



On March 5, 1971, six months after the White House briefing, the FCC Commissioners voted five to one\* to issue a Public Notice to licensees reminding them of their "responsibility to review records," especially lyrics "tending to promote or glorify the use of illegal drugs." The notice threatened the "continued operation of the station" for violation of the order. Yet it did not specify language beyond the vague guideline of "might glorify"—a point which threw the radio industry into a panic. Wrote Commissioner Robert E. Lee, "I sincerely hope that the action of the Commission today in releasing a Public Notice will discourage, if not eliminate, the playing of records which tend to promote and/or glorify the use of illegal drugs."

Members of the broadcasting community, including the RIAA, RKO General and Time-Life Broadcast, Inc., immediately submitted a petition to the FCC asking for reconsideration of its public notice. On April 16, this petition was denied. The Yale Broadcasting Company petitioned the courts for a withdrawal of the FCC statements. The appeal process ended in 1973, when the

Supreme Court denied a hearing on the grounds that it fell within FCC regulations to "remind broadcasters of their responsibility to review records."

As part of a lengthy dissenting brief on why he thought the case of Yale vs. FCC should be heard, Justice William Douglas explained that the FCC's actions were "interpreted in many quarters as a prohibition on the playing of 'drug-related songs' by licensees. That belief was strengthened five weeks later when the Commission's Bureau of Complaints and Compliance provided broadcasters with the names of 22 songs labeled 'drug-oriented' on the basis of their lyrics. The industry widely viewed this as a list of banned songs, and many licensees quickly acted to remove other songs from the air as well. Some announcers were fired for playing suspect songs."

Spiro's gone, but his spirit lives on.

\*Commissioner Nicholas Johnson dissented: "It is not surprising that the Nixon Administration and the Defense Department, two primary targets of the youth culture, should try to strike back."



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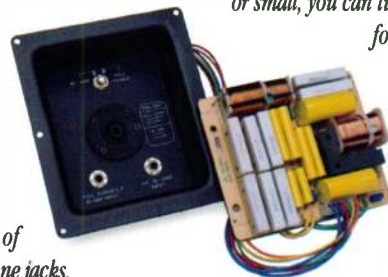
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