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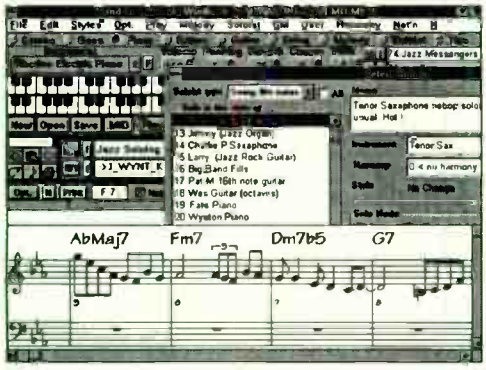

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COVER PHOTOGRAPHS: JERRY GARCIA BY JAY BLAKESBERG/SCREAMING TREES BY CHARLES PETERSON: CONTENTS PHOTOGRAPH OF GARCIA MEMORIAL BY JAY BLAKESBERG

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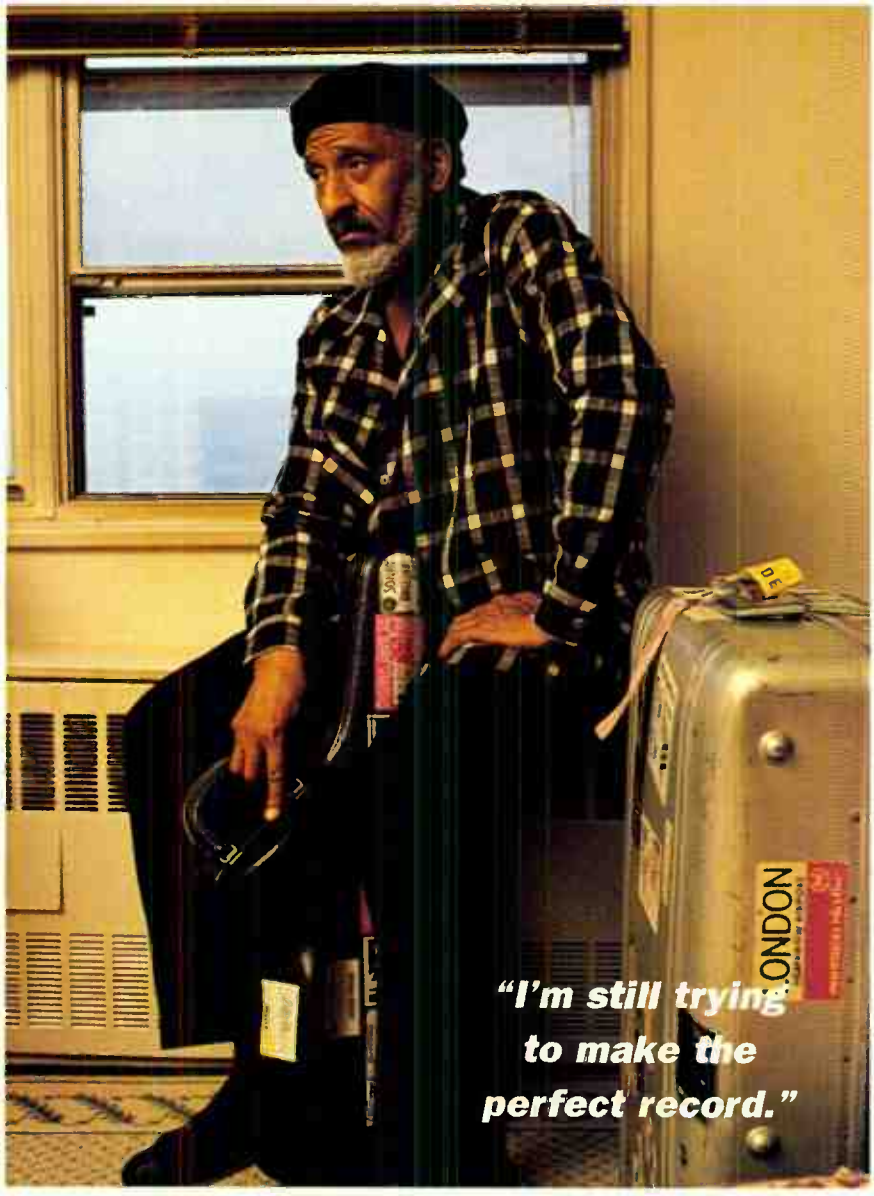


Sonny Rollins

A few years ago you did a show with Branford Marsalis at Carnegie Hall. Everyone was expecting a major cutting contest between the two of you. I mentioned this to him, and he said, "No one cuts Sonny Rollins."

That's very nice of him. People like to see cutting contests. They're okay, but they're the show business aspect of jazz. Years ago I used to see Miles and Fats Navarro play together. It was great. It was just the music, without having to think about the cutting. But if you want to play to the Roman crowd, you have to serve them bread and circuses.

In some respects, though, isn't jazz a form of entertainment?

Okay, I can see that. You know you're going on the stage and performing. But that doesn't mean you have to do tricks while you're playing. You can still play decent music. It's a very subtle line there, but you don't have to play to that instinct of the crowd. It's not a prizefight.

On your latest album, +3, you used two groups, with one playing on two cuts and the other backing you on six.

Actually, I recorded four or five tunes with one group and six with the other. We had enough that we could choose the best cuts. The group with Al Foster and Tommy Flanagan had played together as a unit at different times. The first group I used, with Jack DeJohnette and Stephen Scott, hadn't really played together; they were coming in and doing it together for the first time. It didn't work out as good. That's why we used more of the other group. I'm still trying to make the perfect record for me.

How would that sound?

I'd know it when I heard it. It would be more content than form. In other words, it wouldn't be something that would have some kind of an unusual format, like me playing with some guys from Polynesia. Whatever it would be, even if it's something along the nature of what I've done before, the content would be more important than the format.

What prevents +3 from being the perfect record?

My performance could be more dynamic. I'm a perfectionist. Hopefully my standards will always be more stringent than the standards of my listeners. I'm always trying to do more than what's there. I can always hear places where I could play better. I've heard that in everything I've done. There've been a few times in my career where I find a performance and things are completely magical. One always tries to make that happen all the time, even though the odds are against it. That's where I'm coming from. I'm always trying to raise the level.

Will you ever make that perfect record?

I hope so. I'm still trying. That's the main thing. If I were to say, "Oh, gee, I'll never make it," then I might as well give up. We're still hopeful. That, in itself, is a reward: the quest.

Is that what keeps you playing after 40 years?

That pursuit, yes. I love the music, and it's great to give people something. As long as I can give people something that will make them forget about the other stuff in life for a while, I'll keep playing.

—Hank Bordowitz

John Abbott

Matt Rollings

"Country music is about the Zen aspects of time."

Most of your sessions as a pianist are country music dates. Does this confirm Nashville's stereotype as a center of simple, three-chord, commercial music?

Well, I won't say that stereotype is right, but it is understandable. A lot of the acts in country music sound the same right now. But in my opinion, there's more diversity of talent here than almost anywhere else in the world. It's funny, because sitting in on a stereotypical country music session would lead any musician to understand the diversity of these musicians. I bet there are 30 of us who do 90 percent of the record dates in town, including maybe three different rhythm sections. You could stick any of these guys in any musical situation, and they'd shine.

But on jazz gigs, the performer is usually challenged to stretch. Country dates seem more designed to discourage that.

Any music can be an opportunity to stretch; it's just a matter of what you're stretching. In jazz you're trying to go to a new place, which is not the case in country. It's not about breaking new harmonic and melodic ground. It's more about these Zen aspects of time, feel, and simplicity, which give ample opportunities to stretch in a different sense. These are not chops your average jazz rhythm section player would necessarily possess.

So what sets the great Nashville studio player apart from the pack?

Time. Ninety percent of the time here you're working with a click track, but the natural inclination at a high dynamic point in a piece of music is to speed the tempo up a little bit. What will happen here is the whole band will move from the click together, then slowly move back to the click, so that without the click being monitored you hear the band doing exactly what it's supposed to do.

How far can you extend a chord voicing on a Nashville date?

If it's a haunting type of piece, I like to throw in major seventh intervals; I might play a one, two, major seventh voicing in the right hand, and lower the fifth in the left hand, so I've got this sort of V-over-I voicing but you're hearing this major seventh interval. On a modal-type song, like Trisha Yearwood's "Walk Away, Joe," which was a I-VIm-IV-V progression, that could be played over any one of the chords. You can create these kind of drone textures that way, and weave in and out of the other players' more simple triadic structures.

So country music is evolving a kind of harmonic sophistication that's distinctive from the complexities of jazz voicings.

Yeah, because at the same time that it draws from jazz, you have to have a kind of accessibility that's unique to country music. You need to break that ground slowly because the country audience is maybe slow to change.

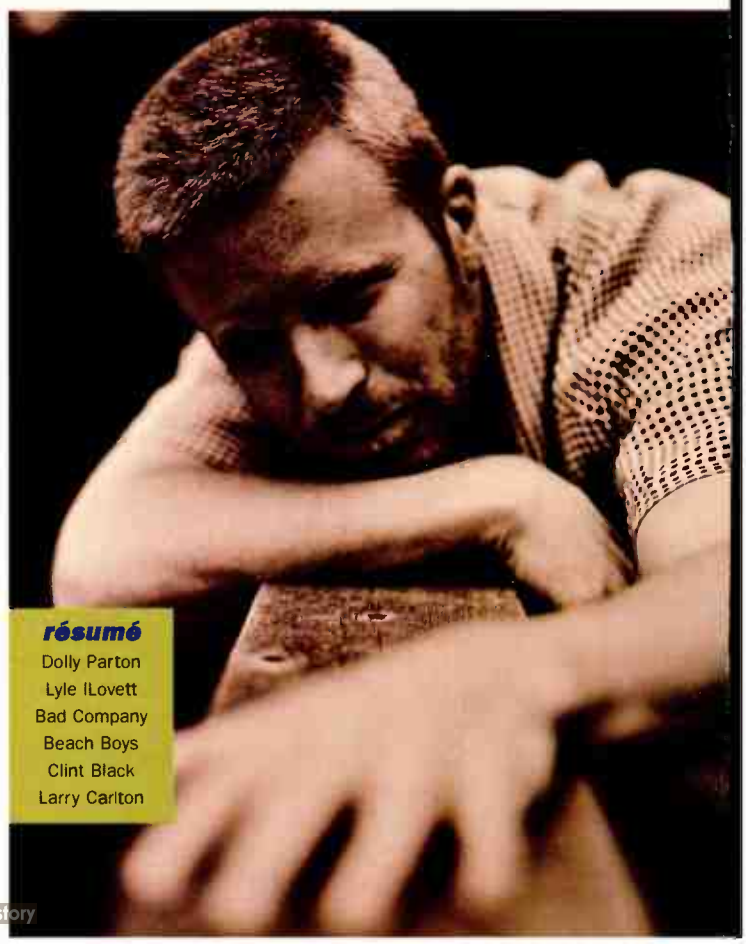
You're still staying away from the beboppish flatted fifths, though.

Not really. In soloing, if I play a Western swing song, I'm drawing from somewhere in bebop, from blues scale pentatonics with chromatic passing tones. But in a harmonic sense, a flat five is pretty left for country music [*laughs*].

You've played a few rock dates recently, including one with Bad Company. Since "the hang" is so important in the community of Nashville musicians, do you have to do a different kind of hang with these guys?

If you do a lot of session work, it becomes an assembly line vibe, so when guys like Bad Company come to town it's refreshing to come into a situation where the structural lines are broken down. But it is true that the ability to make others feel comfortable in a social/musical situation is probably the number one skill for a session player. The greatest player in the world can come into a session here, and if he rubs, he ain't gonna get called back.

—Robert L. Doerschuk



Jeff Frazier

résumé

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letters

kissed off

I always thought Kiss was for kids. I'm always surprised when people my age (late mid-twenties) worship Kiss. I forgot all about them when I turned twelve. Yet here we have an ultimate interview with a person who worships fame to the point of blind faith. (Gene Simmons, Aug. '96) "As long as they're popular, you should like them too," is what Simmons is saying. How deep: spectacle, so you don't pay too close attention. At least he showed good taste in mentioning Corrosion of Conformity. And you're still the only music mag worth reading. You don't have to put anything on your cover, just your name, and I'll know it's worth buying.

bill roess new york, NY

Every Kiss fan is aware of Gene Simmons' high level of intelligence and excellent articulation. But apparently the Spanish Harlem schoolteacher-turned-demonic superstar skipped over the chapter on diplomacy when he read his How to Give a Rock 'n' Roll Interview book. Ace Frehley was a trooper for staying as long as he did; most of us probably would have bailed around the time that *Dynasty* was being shipped, since 90 percent of the material on the dozen or so records Kiss has released since 1979 could drive just about anyone to start drinking heavily. Maybe Paul Stanley should give the interviews for the rest of the reunion tour. He always seemed a little more compassionate—maybe even, dare I say, almost human.

kevin carey tarrytown, NY

rule britannia

Your July '96 issue was absolute tops! Thank you for finally giving the good press that the best bands in the world deserve. The United States needs to wake up and realize that the other side of the Atlantic is where the best pop in the world comes from. But one correction: The Stone Roses have not broken up; John Squire just left. They headlined the Reading Festival this summer and are at work on a new album.

polyanna rhee jrhee@wolfenet.com

Noel Gallagher's opinion that Oasis ranks among the five "biggest" bands in the world begs the question: By what standard? If he's talking about total CD sales, maybe. But if the standard is bands that make original and interesting music, no way. If it's bands that have the most creative influence in rock music, get real. But if it's bands with the most egocentric assholes, he didn't give his fookin' group enough credit: Oasis ranks #1!

doug redding rockville, MD

I am writing to you today to praise you on your July '96 issue. "The Brits Really Are Back!" I have been into the British pop scene for the past six years, and it is nice to finally see the bands in American and Canadian magazines. More and more people are getting into Britpop, because the British artists are finally being introduced properly. I usually have to pay around eight to twelve dollars to get a British magazine filled with all our favorite bands. Thanks for opening peoples' eyes to the Britpop scene. Oh, by the way—the British bands hate being called Britpop.

agnieszka malecki, vancouver, b.c. canada

Your issue on Britrock, as I call it, was wonderful, but I was disturbed by the shortage of space given to the best band in the world—the Stone Roses. What attention you did give them was a little misguided, as you described them as "warmed-over Led Zeppelin" and mentioned only their second album. Their first album was an inspiration to Oasis, Suede, and many others, and it sounds nothing like *Second Coming*. This masterpiece deserves a lot more credit, even if the band members are acting stupid at the moment—continuing to tour without their original guitarist and drummer, for example. Still, this was a fabulous issue, with great pictures and enjoyable interviews.

deniz barki henri.bark@hec.ca

> I didn't have to think twice about buying the July '96 issue of *Musician*. With Damon Albarn, Jarvis Cocker, and John Power on the cover, nothing else could have made my day. America needs to wake up, smell the tea, and taste the crumpets: Britain is making a bold move to take over. They're current, they're brash, and they're brilliant. One day America will realize that we've just been kicked in the ass. Isn't that what Oasis is trying to tell us?
>
> ***mackenzie wilson grand blanc, MI***

This may come as a shock, but not everyone worships the trite ramblings of Noel Gallagher. Some of us are tired of hearing him belch his superiority to anyone who can translate his "fooks" into English. The truth is, though, that many people are mindless farm animals, just waiting to be told what they should and shouldn't like, and Noel is their herdsman, determined to lead them into mediocrity. I say ship him back to Britain, at least until he can write a tune without first consulting a Beatles songbook. We already have enough trash over here, in the forms of Alanis Morissette, Green Day, and Presidents Of The United States.

melissa seely dallas, TX

horns of plenty

Doc Cheatham's recollections of Louis Armstrong (Aug. '96) address the issue that many of us miss in the ongoing debate over retro jazz: the heart behind the notes. I am as impressed as anyone by the facility of the young cats. Purely in terms of chops, Wynton Marsalis, Roy Hargrove, Wallace Roney, and yes, Nicholas Payton, could probably have cut most of the heavy players from the golden age.

But there's more to music than technique and transcriptions. One can make some allowance for nostalgia and the passage of years; even so, Doc's warm thoughts about Louis are ultimately justified by the record. It's his horn that breathes joy—breathes life—into every disc on which he ever played. Even in his most cornball bands he played with a superb sense of architecture; the peaks of his lines went beyond logical construction and into the realm of ecstasy. His vibrato was exquisitely rough, far more human than Wynton's. And nobody has ever played a 32-bar solo as perfectly contoured as the one Louis did with his own orchestra on "I Got a Right to Sing the Blues."

Why was Louis so unique? He—like his spiritual predecessor, J. S. Bach—never forgot that life and music are, for the musician, synonymous. The tendency to turn music into an academic discipline parallels the tendency of modern life to devolve into a materialistic competition. It's a shame that only folks who've been around as long as Doc seem to remember when the things that mattered were in better balance.

lee rozakis boulder, CO

talkin' tube amp blues

Hartley Peavey is a good businessman and occupies an important niche in our industry, but his comments concerning old tube amps (Aug. '96) are difficult to understand. These old amps were designed to sound good while playing clean, which they do. Their overdriven sound is in most cases rich, smooth, and quite pleasing, even if this kind of distortion was never an intention of the original designers. What does Hartley mean when he says the early amps didn't work well? Our stable of old Fender, Gibson, Marshall, and Ampeg products function extremely well with only occasional maintenance, such as tube changes.

nick & dean athens
temple of tone, salt lake city, UT

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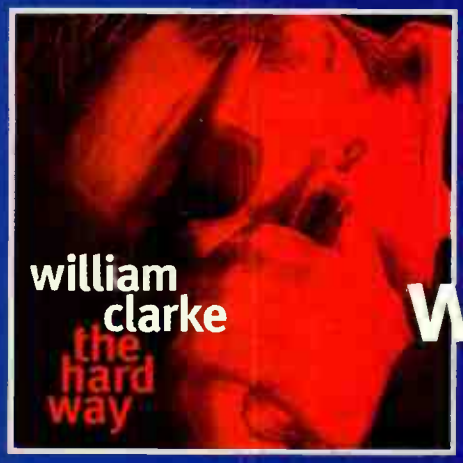
the harder the better



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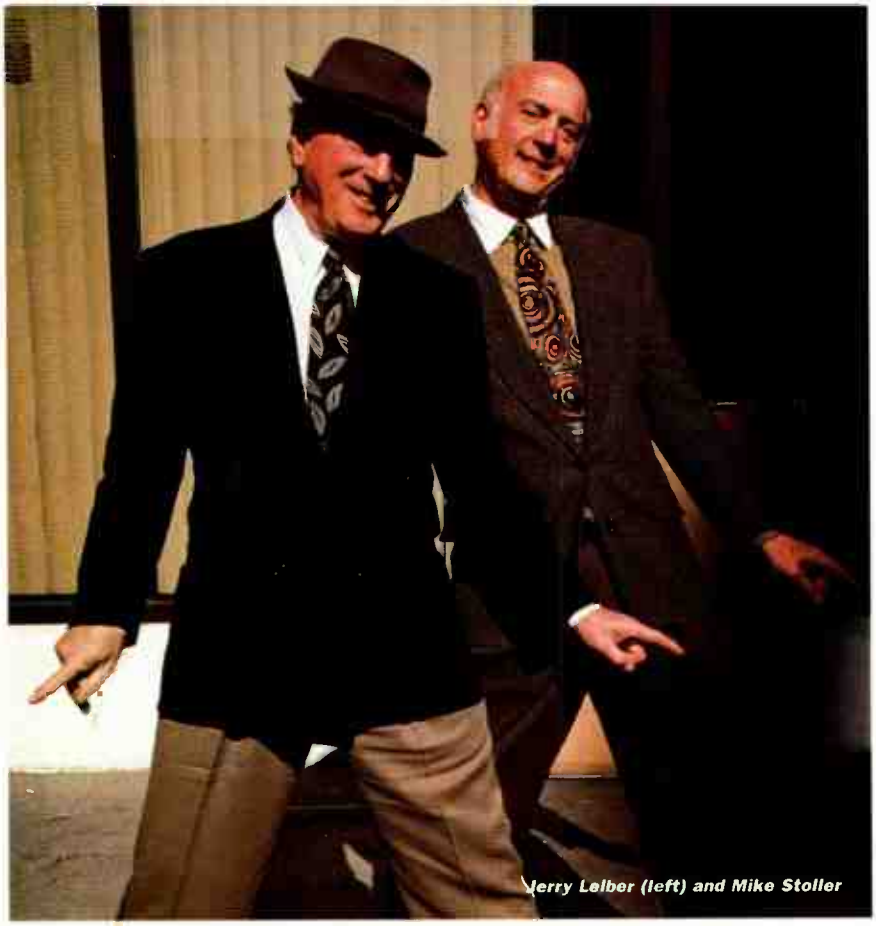


Jerry Leiber (left) and Mike Stoller

Dan Budnik

Leiber & Stoller's Wild Ride With The Coasters

Jerry Leiber: The initial thing to understand about the songs we wrote for the Coasters was that we were writing for a vaudeville troupe, a troupe of comedians. The material was intended to be partly songwriting and partly radio playwriting as we knew it from the '30s and '40s from shows like *The Shadow*, *Duffy's Tavern*, and *Amos 'n' Andy*. Mike scored it very much as you'd score a radio show or a movie. There was all sorts of innuendo and nuance going into those pieces that made them what they were. Never did we say, "Let's write a song about . . ." We never had prescribed notions of writing about a blond who falls in love with a redhead or whatever. Stoller would just sit at the piano and smoke until the ashes were falling in his lap. He'd noodle and doodle and screw around. Sometimes he'd play something that would snag me, and I would start to yell. When I found a line we'd both respond to, we would bear down and go to work.

Mike Stoller: "Yakety Yak" grew out of the first two lines, which grew out of the piano pattern. The title was probably the last thing to come along.

Leiber: For "Charlie Brown", the "fee, fee, fi, fi, fo, fo, fum" was the start of the song. I was stuck with the problem of having to write a follow-up to "Yakety Yak." I was sitting in this office at Atlantic that Ahmet [Ertegun, president of the label] let me use. Then suddenly the line from the giant in Jack and the Beanstalk came into my head. I didn't think it was too original to begin with, but it kept coming back to me and I began thinking, "There's a rhythmic pattern here. This could swing." I got into it, and through a lot of labor it became "Charlie Brown." It actually took a couple of weeks to hammer it out. Compared to something like "Yakety Yak," which Mike and I wrote in about 15 minutes in my apartment in the Village, it was a real problem to write—precisely because it didn't spring out as an idea in its own right.

Stoller: "Poison Ivy," on the other hand, was written and recorded very quickly. There were two takes in the studio. As I recall, we preferred the other side—I can't remember exactly what it was—so when "Poison Ivy" emerged as the hit, it was much to our surprise. I guess sometimes you just don't know.

Leiber: "Poison Ivy" was about venereal disease.

Stoller: Loosely [*laughs*].

Leiber: "Gonna need an ocean of calamine lotion." I mean, what's that about? It wasn't *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. You get simple bright lights, and a guy comes out, and there's a placard that says "This guy's a drunk." He juggles six balls, falls on his ass, and everybody laughs. It really is old-fashioned, vulgar, theatrical comedy. You can't muck it up with a lot of fancy chords.—***Robert L. Doerschuk***

rol

If you co-write songs with someone, it's a good idea to have a "collaboration agreement." As co-writers, you and your partner(s) are "joint owners" of what copyright law calls a "joint work." This means that each partner has an undivided ownership in the song—in other words, when two writers work together, each owns 50% of the whole song; with three writers collaborating, each owns one third, unless you and your co-writers agree to divide the ownership in unequal portions.

Typically, the lyrics are worth 50% of a song, and the music is worth the remaining 50%. This means that, for example, when two people write

John Hersey

Handicapped Access vs. the Real World

by Vic Chesnutt

Vic Chesnutt was confined to a wheelchair 15 years ago after suffering injuries in a car accident. Sweet Relief II, *a compilation album of his songs, was recently released by Columbia to benefit the Sweet Relief Musicians Fund, a nonprofit organization set up to raise funds for musicians in medical and financial need.*

Henry Diltz

Rock 'n' roll clubs are notorious for being especially horrible to get around in. I hate going to them, but there's not much I can do about it. Sometimes I sit around in an alleyway for a long time if I'm by myself before I get up enough nerve to get somebody to help me up.

Some of the new clubs are easier, like the new 930 Club in Washington, DC. The old 930 was pretty accessible, but the stage was hard to get on, and the dressing room was down these horrible stairs into the basement. When they opened the new one, they even built a dressing room on the ground floor.

I can't expect every club to change. If the government starts making the owners of old clubs put elevators and lifts in every little place, all my favorite clubs are gonna be gone. I know the people who run these clubs, and I love 'em. They're willing to come out and haul my ass anywhere I want to go. It's a pain, and it sucks, but they do it and that's nice of 'em. I don't want them to hastily throw up ramps, because they'll be rickety and I'm gonna fall off of one of them.

I want people in wheelchairs to come and see me too—hell, I'd like people from outer space to come to my gigs. Many times I wouldn't go to hear bands, even in my own home town, if it wasn't so accessible. I can't tell other musicians what to do, but for me it's about doing what I can to live with the way the world is. I'll get friends to come with me, because I don't care. I'm going to this party, even if I ruin it.

high mix

your music on the air

the music and one person writes the lyrics, each music composer might assume 25% ownership while the lyricist retains an undivided 50%. But if there is no agreement to this effect, each writer is presumed to own an equal and undivided one-third of the song's copyright and income.

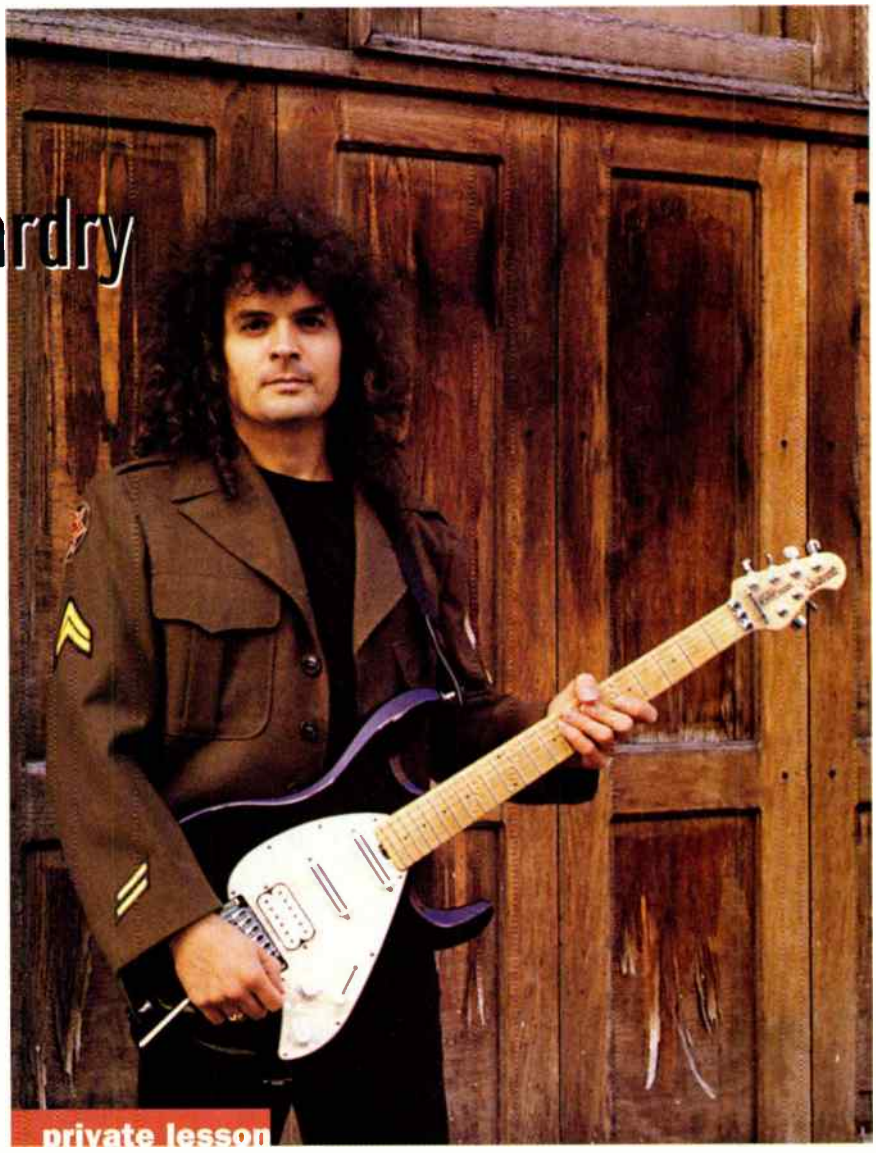
Each joint owner may exploit the song himself or herself, and also grant non-exclusive licenses. A license is permission to use a work; it is not a transfer of copyright ownership. Each co-author is also entitled to a ratable share of income, absent an agreement to the contrary. This means that any income that either collaborating writer receives from commercial use of the song, whether from his own use or from use by an authorized third party, must be accounted for and apportioned to the other collaborating songwriters. These payments must be made in a timely manner—no less than 30 days after receipt, for example. And statements that accompany the payments to the first collaborator must be copied and forwarded with payment to the other collaborators.

I'll have more on copyright agreements next month.

Ned Hearn practices entertainment law in the San Francisco area. Send your questions to him c/o Musician *magazine, 1515 Broadway, 11th floor, New York, NY 10036 or directly via email at nedhearn@ix.netcom.com for possible discussion in future installments of Your Music.*

Vinnie Moore: Pentatonic Wizardry

by Mac Randall



Michelle Morton

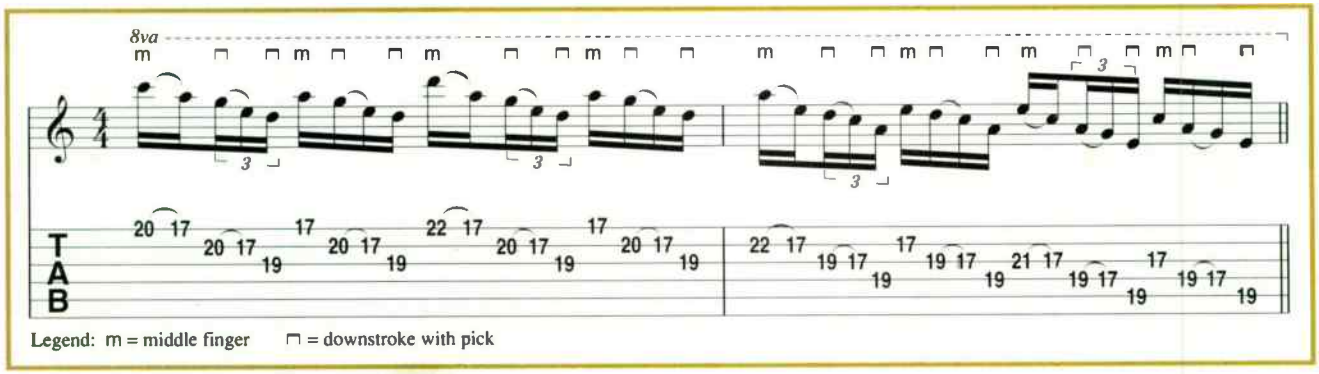
private lesson

Six-string shred god Vinnie Moore is, no doubt about it, a master of sweep picking. But he also knows that to live by sweep alone is a mistake. First, it's one-dimensional. Second, it crosses the taste line and leaves the unlucky sweeper in the deadly realm of Yngwie-ish excess. And so in the last couple of years Moore's incorporated a few new tricks into his right-hand repertoire. Most of the guitar tracks on his latest album, *Out of Nowhere* (Mayhem), were played with a combination of pick and second finger, an approach that's conspicuously more country than metal.

"I never consciously decided to use the second finger," Moore says. "It just happened naturally. But it opens up a whole new door of possibilities; it sounds a lot different when you attack the string with your finger, there's more snap to it. It's also easier to play that way than to have to get every note with the pick. Maybe I'm just getting lazy in my old age." No, don't think so.

If you're looking to work on pick-and-finger alternation, try the exercise below. "You might think I'm picking all this," Vinnie says as he plays it, "but in fact I'm cheating with the second finger." The notes are all out of your basic pentatonic scale, arranged in groups of nine. Moore suggests leading with the finger and covering the next two strokes with the pick (both down strokes), but any kind of alternation you're comfortable with will be effective. Once you've got the lick down, gradually pick up the tempo; it's charming slow, but absolutely seductive at hyperspeed.

"This is one of those licks that makes you sound a lot cooler than you actually are," Vinnie quips. "If you practice it a little bit, it becomes easy, but it sounds hard." Sounds ideal to us.



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Jerry Garcia: technique meets mystique

BY MATT RESNICOFF

CAPTAIN TRETS

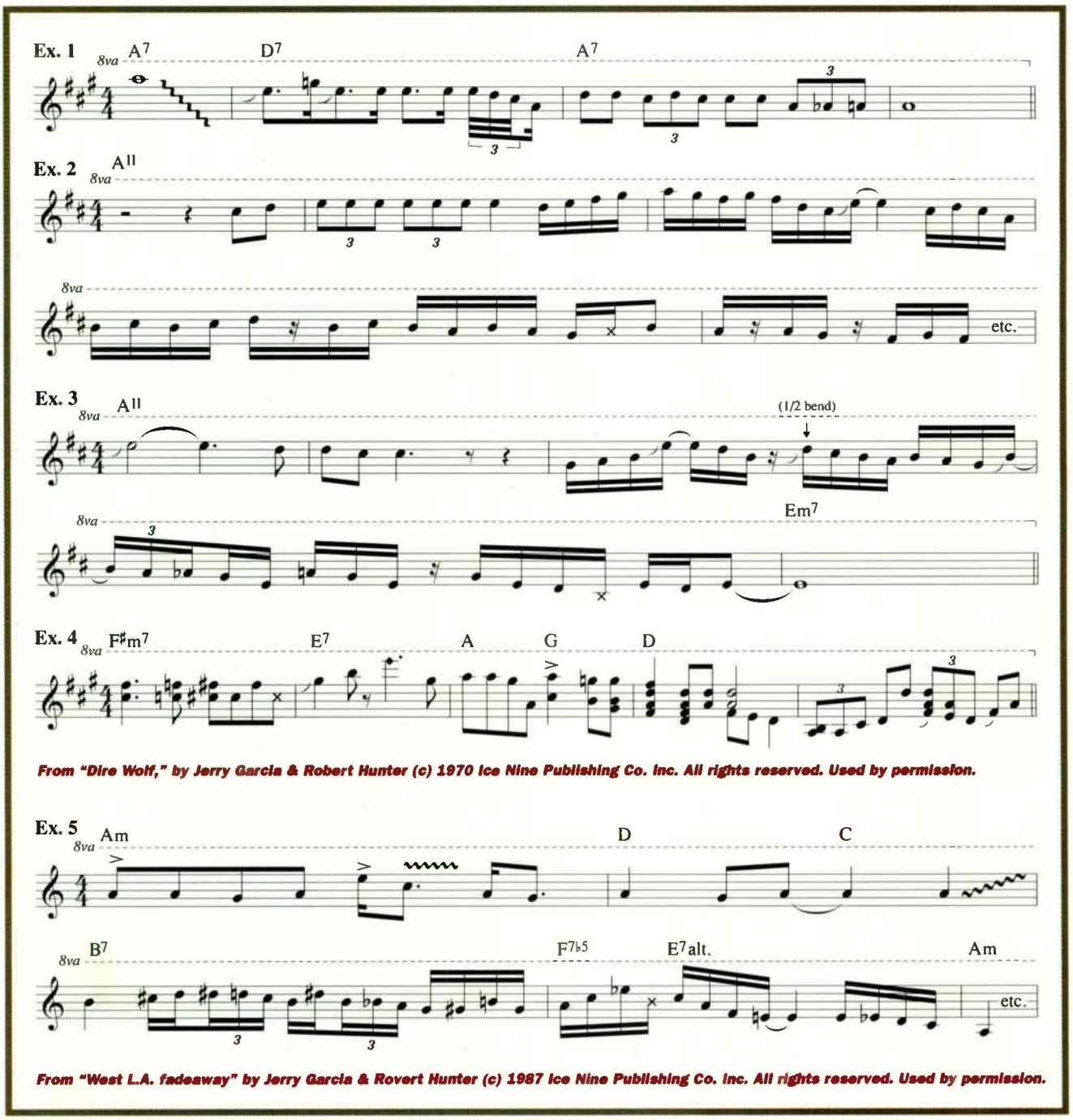
PHOTOGRAPH BY JAY BLAKESBERG

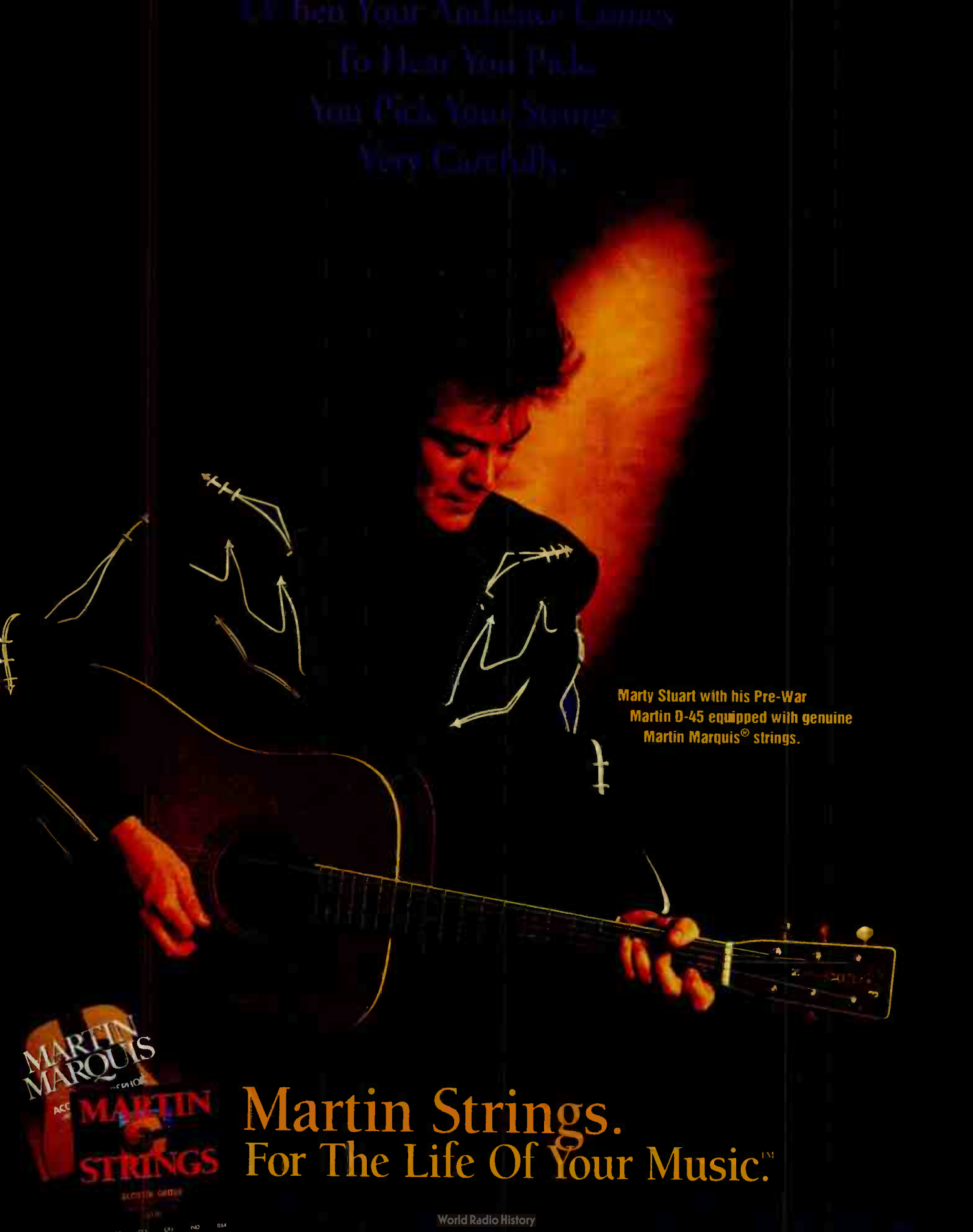
THERE MAY NOT BE A SOUL alive who would reflexively describe Jerry Garcia as elfin, but in his playing, as in his life, there ran a brisk undercurrent of impishness. It's not hard to imagine him dancing through the thicket of the Grateful Dead's music and sprinkling it with melodic gems. The true and abiding image of Garcia is one of complete immersion in the act of making music, hunched over his axe, floating those syncopated lines over ethereal space grooves and achingly rural soundscapes. Most nights of the year, Jerry Garcia, banjoist turned reluctant cultural signpost, could be found leading a hootenanny 'round the rings of Saturn. From more concise and popular material like "Uncle John's Band" to ambitious song forms like the great "Saint of Circumstance," it all served as a playground for Garcia's improvising, which he took to with often freewheeling abandon. A seeker's spark glints off of most everything he played. And to a band for which a ten-minute guitar solo was not an indulgence but a welcome inevitability, the idea of poking around for hours in search of those melodic gems was the most essential motivation for performing.

In that search, Garcia's soloing could be elegiac, even teary-eyed, as often as it was joyous. The sounds he concocted on his custom Doug Irwin guitar—that ingenious hybrid of Gibson's SG, B. C. Rich's Mockingbird, and Fender's Stratocaster—were judiciously shaped for those moods. A prominent advocate of the envelope filter, a device that mouths a "wah" around every note played, he used special effects eagerly but worked hard to make them part of his soloing language.

One elemental signature of that language is a subtle, but ear-catching, tendency to embellish the tonic at the end of a phrase, usually with a quick move to the major seventh and back. In blues and in situations where the seventh scale degree is traditionally flatted to stay within the mode of the moment, this creates a tiny harmonic surprise, which somehow becomes more noticeable the less pronounced it is, as Garcia varied between picking, hammering and pulling off the notes. Notice how at the end of Example 1 (on page 26), this trademark twist adds color to relatively stock note choices over a simple I-IV vamp in A.

Don't overlook the rhythmic figures in this line, which is adapted from a blues cover the Dead did sometime around 1968. (Shows from that period can be heard on the fine *Two From the Vault*, released by the band's own label.) In the second bar, Garcia bends up a whole step from D to E (the D is a grace note that barely sounds at





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the start of the bend) and hits the E five times before playing the blues lick that leads to the next measure; the notes are almost swung like jazz eighths, in which the first of a group of two eighth notes is slightly longer and more articulated than the second. The concept is more explicit in measure 3, where Garcia alternates between straight eighths and eighth-note triplets. This triplet grouping creates what's sometimes called a shuffle feel and gives lift to these improvised single-note lines.

Triplets helped Garcia incite the Dead's more static grooves, as seen in Examples 2 and 3, both taken from a live one-chord vamp performance during the same era. The band grooves in A, alternating between A7 (or A7sus4, or G/A), all of which can be seen as tonic chords from the A mixolydian mode: A, B, C#, D, E, F#, and G. It's common to think of this series of notes as a D major scale, from which A mixolydian is extracted, but that's a roundabout and confusing route of analysis. Better to regard mixolydian, or any mode, as a scale unto itself, with its own set of interval relationships. In mixolydian's case, it's a major scale with a flatted seventh. This way, when you're soloing in real time over an A11 chord, you won't have to mentally transpose to some other major scale before playing your first note. You also won't be tempted to emphasize the root of that other scale, which can make phrases sound lopsided.

The mixolydian patterns in the third bar of Example 2 are somewhat symmetrical, but they dance seductively up and down the scale, targeting key tones like the ninth (B) and eleventh (D) as they head toward the A on the downbeat of the fourth measure, where the line breaks into a new rhythm that implies a sort of conclusion. Garcia's tone and attack at the start of Example 3 recall the early sound of his Bay Area colleague Carlos Santana, but the line evolves into a more personal harmonic territory over the band's one-chord vamp. Check out the chromatic liberty taken at the outset of measure four, a classic Garcia-ism that helps to foreshadow the imminent chord change to E minor.

By the early '70s the Dead had tightened up their studio and songwriting agendas to produce *Workingman's Dead*, a collection of concise tunes which gave Garcia an opportunity to indulge his rootsier hankerings. His fills and solos, particularly his pedal steel break on the concert staple "Dire Wolf," are studded with vintage country ideas, as detailed in Example 4.

This solo begins with rubbery double-stops in F# minor, the relative minor of the song's key, A major. It then moves to E major with a super-high E note, which can be produced on a 24-fret guitar by playing the natural harmonic over the top fret (or, on a shorter neck, wherever the 24th fret would be). The double-stops in bar three outline A and G chords, at which point the G idea resolves to Dsus4 to D major. Then comes a classic country lick, which on standard guitar is best executed in the seventh position, with the pinky barring the notes A and D at the B and E strings' tenth fret. The third finger, sitting on E at the G string's ninth fret and reinforced from behind by the first and second fingers, can then comfortably bend that E up to F#, the third degree of the D chord being played by the band. As the F# sustains along with the A and D, the bend is slowly released to approximate the smooth whine of a pedal steel. This is a movable fingering, transposable all over the instrument for lots of rock and country applications. (A variation is used as the opening lick of "Honky Tonk Women.") The figure on the downbeat of the last bar positively gallops, after which the same country idea is repeated and quickly reversed. [*cont'd on page 38*]

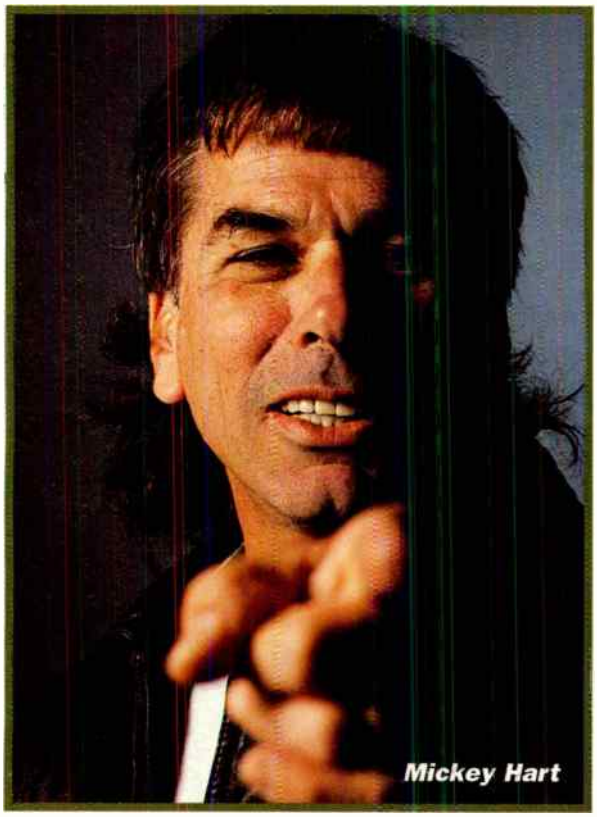
DAYS OF THE LIVING DEAD

Two hours north of San Francisco, you can drive a country road that snakes past a redwood grove, into a driveway that curls around a pasture with a couple of grazing llamas and a pond with a fountain in the middle, and park in a dirt lot by a large red barn. As you enter the door to the barn, which is really a recording studio, you pass a pair of nine-foot-tall drums, propped like silent sentries. Over the mantle of a blazing fireplace, strewn on traveling cases and chairs and in alcoves, are hundreds of percussion instruments gathered from around the world. Closer to the center of the room, sitting up in a large, informal circle, are six female singers from London called the Mint Juleps, Latin beat wizard Giovanni Hidalgo, African bassist Habib Faye and, leading the proceedings from behind an eclectic kit of tools whose genesis runs from stone age to space age, Mickey Hart. The sound they make together is at once creamy and pulsating, limning the borders of dance music, mainstream pop, religious tribal ceremonies—a sonic melange beyond musical category yet strangely all-inclusive. Sorta like that other band Hart used to play in, the Grateful Dead.

"Being the Grateful Dead, you live in your own world," Hart points out. "So you don't really get to meet other people and mix it up. When I started this, I knew approximately where it was going—guitarless sound, mostly tuned percussion, bass and five or six parts on top, and with Robert Hunter's words—but it was kind of like, uncharted seas. Like going for the New World, you know?" he laughs. "Cause we knew there was a new world out there."

No, Virginia, the long strange trip ain't over yet. Jerry Garcia has died, and the Dead, as we know them, have sidled into the past tense. But the other members of that storied troupe, long shadowed by the casual charisma of their late great guitarist, aren't queuing for the retirement home. Indeed, one gets the distinct impression

BY MARK ROWLAND PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAY BLAKESBERG


Mickey Hart

that their sorrow has been tempered by the chance to craft second acts; after 30 years with the Dead, and a present often held hostage by Garcia's vacillating health, it's an opportunity they've had time to prepare for.

"It's been leaving a lot of the old behind," Hart says of the last 12 months. "Creating a new life. And sure I miss Jerry's guitar. But I can't really get him out of my ear anyway—it's embedded there, like a tattoo."

Hart, who seems to be powered by an inexhaustible source of upbeat nervous energy, has been cutting his own swath for awhile. Starting with *Rolling Thunder* back in 1972, he's produced dozens of albums by the likes of Babatunde Olatunji, the Gyuto Monks, and Zakir Hussain, along with his own adventurous projects, exploring the cross-cultural possibilities of world-beat percussion to increasing popular and critical acclaim, which culminated in a Grammy award for his *Planet Drum* in 1992. He's written books on the history of the drum, conversed with Joseph Campbell on its mythic significance, testified before the U.S. Senate on its relationship to medicine. In other words, he's a happily obsessed, self-described "noisician."

"All good shamans are part musicians," he declares. "That's how they cure you and that's how they maintain the trance. Good music *should* be good transcendence: You should get high, you should get uplifted—you should dance, you should sing."

His new *Mystery Box* album and subsequent tour—the reason for today's conclave—have been in the works for years, but since last August, "I threw myself into the music. When Jerry died I walked into the studio and started playing and finishing the record, and I never came up for air." The pop results will probably strike listeners as having less in common with the sound of the Dead than say, Sade (whose *Diamond Life* producer, Robin Millar, assisted Hart here). Conversely, the songs are driven by the lyrics of Robert Hunter, whose collaborations with Jerry Garcia form the bedrock of the Dead's musical cosmology. There's even a direct elegy to Garcia on one tune, titled "Down The Road Again," which Hart intones with quiet fervor, while the voices of the Mint Juleps hover in the background like a choir of angels.

"Hunter doesn't do anything he doesn't want to do—you don't dispatch him," Hart says of his songwriting partner. "But the way I see him, he's like the Wizard of Oz. He's back there going, 'pay no attention.' But there wouldn't be a Grateful Dead without him.

"He and Jerry go way back, you know. They were living together in the back of a van and used to meet in the park—one would bring the can opener and the other would bring the beans."

Just like a couple of bums?

Hart nods. "Just a couple of bums."

Like Garcia and Hunter, Hart's rhythmic accents once complemented the timekeeping of the Dead's other drummer, Bill Kreutzmann. Now, as he prepares to hit the road with a twelve-piece juggernaut, Kreutzmann has moved to Hawaii, phone off the hook and gone surfing.

"It's not for everybody, going out on the road," Hart shrugs. "For me, it keeps me young. I work out every day so I can play and maintain the groove and have long hours of performance. Bill, for now he's had enough. But everyone has earned what they want to do, because everybody has worked so hard at the Grateful Dead. We played how many dates—two, three thousand? I don't know how many," he admits. "But someone knows."

"So, we've earned it. There's no recriminations here." He smiles. "There's absolutely nothing to say, except that it's been a great ride."

Robert Hunter is sitting on the back porch of the Grateful Dead office in San Rafael, chain smoking cigarettes in a stiff afternoon breeze. With his portly mien, frizzy gray beard and balding pate, he suggests Jerry Garcia's fraternal twin—a resemblance that transcends appearance.

"I remember introducing a girl friend of mine to Jerry back when I was about 21 or so," he recalls. "And after she met him she said to me, 'It's hard to know where he leaves off and you begin.'" Hunter chortles at the memory. "Jerry said to me once, 'I created one half of the universe and you created the other.' Of course that was our personal universe," he avers. "But that's the way it was."

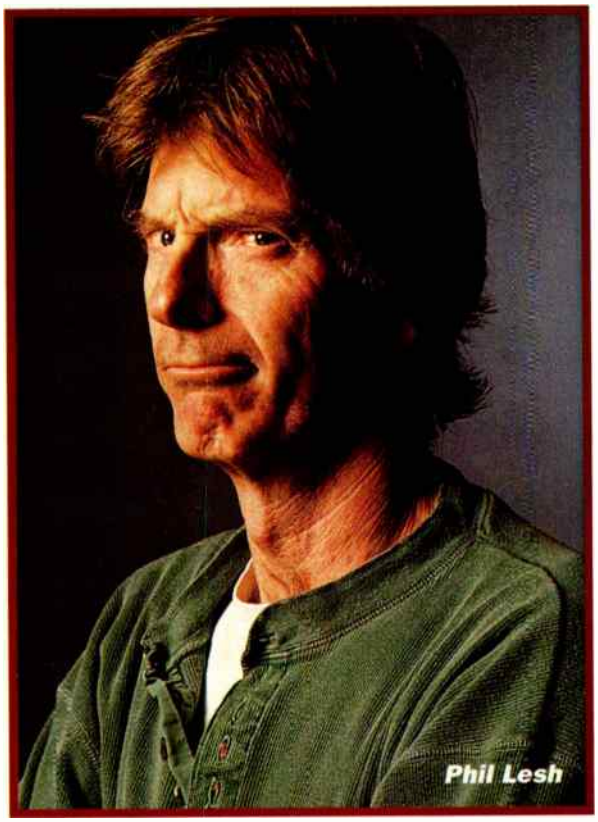
Hunter has been the invisible cog in the Dead's creative machinery, and he's cherished that anonymity. He's written the words to just about every great Dead song you can think of. He helped craft a vision of the Old West, at once mythic and believable, while slipping in philosophical aphorisms richly applicable to everyday life. And he did it in a manner so attuned to Garcia's personality that the transference seemed natural, seamless.

"That might have been why it was good," he muses. "He was the one who was getting the messiah role laid on him, and he didn't have to make the message up, to denounce it or accept or walk any sort of line around it, because somebody else

was providing the words. So we attended to business—we told stories and made up lies, the way you're supposed to.

"We'd played in lots of bands together before the Grateful Dead, so I knew what kinds of songs we both liked. We liked lines like, 'ten thousand was drownded that never got born'—the deep mystery of some of the old folk material. We have roots in those things. I'm a highland bagpipe player, for cryin' out loud."

Hunter tends to pursue such avocations in private. He avoids interviews, or even having his picture taken. But after Garcia died, a funny thing happened: Hunter became the webmaster of the Dead's home page on the Internet, and for several months has been posting his journal entries on line while answering hundreds of queries from the Dead's coterie.


Phil Lesh

"People are mourning the passing of the Grateful Dead as they knew it, but resolving to hold together as Deadheads," he says, "because they understand that the real thing that happened was not the music it was the community. And that still exists."

"It is therapy in terms of filling the space for me. I've always been on the periphery of things; they've been Jerry's fans or Bob's fans or Phil's fans, not my fans. I'm exercising my skills as a writer, and if I lose my motivation for five minutes, all I have to do is open my e-mail," he laughs. "But for now I'm setting aside symbols for straight communication. I'm in a unique position to let them know what's happening, and if we know what they want, we'll know better how to give it to 'em. Or perhaps tell 'em out front that we can't."

It takes some listening to Hunter's songs apart from the celebrative atmosphere of Dead shows—especially apart from that—to realize how often dark, even morbid themes course through them. "That's the way I view things," Hunter says flatly. "I can't really write any way else. When things are going joyous I'm expecting a sharp turn the other way. But when things are in a state of crisis or a general down-ness, like right now, I expect the corner to turn on that too.

"A girl was writing me on the Internet that she was glad to have some kind of center to relate to, but that it will never replace the joy of being in the presence of the Grateful Dead. I wrote her back and said if she'd been brought up on a 17-tone scale or a five-note pentatonic, the music she loved so much would just sound weird to her. And if it were 1949 and you were walking to Seattle with your grandmother—speaking from my experience as a nine-year-old—and if at the end of that journey you were to go to the Dairy Queen, the joy that you're speaking of would be just as strong for that cone. So in other words, are you lamenting a joy that is no longer in you? Or lamenting the thing which brought forth that joy?"

Despite such elevated perspectives, Hunter admits to past periods of depression. A slag by critic Lester Bangs in the '70s describing his lyricism as "endless streams of murkily pretentious *non sequiturs*" gave him a dose of writer's block that lasted two years: "Everything I wrote down I said, 'Are these murkily pretentious non sequiturs?'" A reminder from the poet Robert Duncan about the relationship between today's reviews and tomorrow's fish-wrap got Hunter back in gear, "and writing murkily pretentious *non-sequiturs* if I damn well felt like it, thank you very much Lester Bangs." He gives a flinty look. "When he died, I did not shed a tear."

For different reasons, he's not shedding any over Garcia either. "It's funny but I don't feel a tremendous loss, and I don't mean that in any negative way," he says. "It seemed to me that Jerry did pretty much what he was cut out to do, and then cut out. He doesn't seem that absent to me, let's put it that way. There have been periods as long as since he's died where I didn't see him, so maybe the idea he won't show up again seems like an intellectual concept." A short laugh. "I don't think it's denial, but it might be."

Phil Lesh is taking a break backstage at San Francisco's Symphony Hall, where he's been helping to organize a program of West Coast experimental music with Michael Tilson Thomas. Two of the concerts will feature an unlikely Grateful Dead reunion—Lesh, Hart, Bob Weir, and the band's surviving keyboardist, Vince Welnick—augmenting performances of compositions from the likes of John Cage, Steve Reich, and Henry Cowell.

"Michael's idea was to celebrate the work of the pioneers in the field and also to demonstrate how their idea had filtered into the mainstream of music at large—in that sense, Grateful Dead being as much West Coast and as experimental as anybody," Lesh explains. "He felt that our inclusion was in some way a logical step, to deal with the vernacular end of the experimental tradition."

A classically trained musician who has helped funnel money from the Dead's philanthropic Rex Foundation to new music composers, Lesh has long evidenced interest in avant music in general and elec-

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This is Al of Al's Music in St. Cloud, Minnesota.

A good friend of Al's named Scott Stroot walked in one day and spotted a Taylor on the wall. He asked Al if he could play it.

Al said no.

Scott was shocked. Al was usually so helpful and easy-going.

Then Al explained that this Taylor was outside Scott's price range. And he knew that if Scott played it, he would never be satisfied with any other guitar.

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And, as Al was taking it down, Al said,
"Okay, but don't say I didn't warn you."

You know how the story ends. Scott had to have it. And he found a way to pay for it.

When we told Scott and Al we were going to tell their story to you readers, Scott was excited. Al just said, "Be sure to warn 'em."

event last year. I'm not sure it was the most important event of '95," he adds with a wry smile. "But maybe it was."

Well, I suggest, it appears to have been the people's choice.

"It seems to me that if the people had a say in it, they would have voted on Jerry maybe doing a little something about his diet and exercising and drug intakes and all that kind of stuff," Weir replies. "Apparently, people were kind of fond of having him around. I'm not sure he was that aware of it," he adds with a nervous laugh. "Maybe he took the world for granted. Maybe he didn't. But if it had been put to a popular vote, he would have had to change something."

With the Dead's saga apparently at its end as well, Weir took a new view toward Ratdog. What had been a kind of busman's holiday has acquired more serious, ambitions, and with Weir, for 30 years the Dead's second banana, very much in charge.

"When the Dead got started there was not much point in me developing as a lead guitarist," he points out. "Jerry had a few years on me and he'd already displayed a fair amount of brilliance in that position. So I went for the daylight, and a good place for me to go was structural guitar, what they call rhythm guitar. I developed as a guitar player that way because that was what was available. So this is kind of a new thrill for me."

Weir has spent the last few years researching and scoring a musical about the life and times of baseball great Satchel Paige, and professes some excitement as that project hurtles toward production as well. "I'm probably strung out on adventure," he decides. "Back when Neil and I were living in the same room at 17 Asbury Street, he never slept, so I didn't either. He was in some ways a manifestation of Shiva, the Hindu god of creation and destruction. He was there doing it all. He had this hammer that he would flip around—it's kind of hard to describe," he laughs. "But he took us on some extraordinary journeys. And I would lie there with my eyes open and just sort of time-travel. I would leave my body. I was gone.

"So it occurs to me that if I took it easy right now that I might lose my chance to be on the crest of the wave, and I've always

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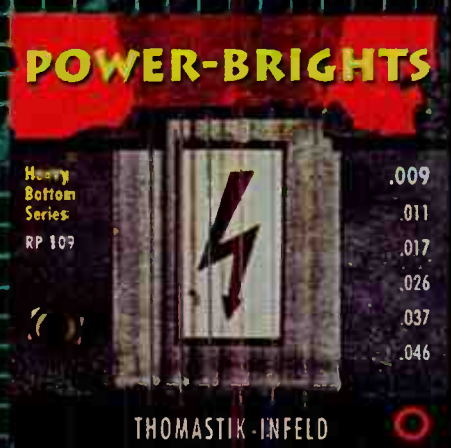

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been where I've wanted to be—and I've always wanted to be *there*. I can't let go and hope another wave comes because, first off, it's not going to be that first wave.

"But you know," he goes on more philosophically, "if you don't take the time to quiet your mind for a while, if you don't learn to relax and knock it off a bit, your thoughts don't get very deep. And it is the deep thoughts that go to more profound levels, the stuff that gets down to pre-vocal thought, somewhere in the realm before it gets to language and to intellect. Those are the thoughts which generally go to the heart of whatever issue you're pondering. Whereas, the superficial thoughts are like a gang of crazed weasels running around, and you may never get there, depending on your luck.

"So it is with music and with playing, writing, singing. You've got to slow down and take a while to come up with some nice lines—then you can work the hell out of it. I've been working on these premises in the last year, because Jerry's departure really did give me pause to think things over for a bit. So I get quiet these days," he says, "and I try to stay that way, every day, for a little while."

garcia techniques

[*cont'd from page 26*] Even as the Dead burgeoned in the early '70s, Garcia explored a number of other gigs when the band was off the road. He also formed long-standing relationships with his partners in the band Old And In The Way, whose bluegrass excursions are preserved on a Rykodisc reissue of their eponymous live album. Garcia's playing grew in far-flung directions from his intricate banjo work of that period: Listen to Old's "Midnight Moonlight" for a taste. And as a soloist, he took the chord-by-chord improvising approach so crucial to country music and adapted it to the Dead's sprawling arrangements.

This occasion warrants reiterating Garcia's real affection for playing. He was, in fact, drawn to it more as a vehicle for learning than as an emotional outlet. During the '70s he cut a set of wah-wah-tinged jams called *Hooteroll* (also Rykodisc) with keyboardist Howard Wales, an influential figure in Garcia's musical growth. Though that record doesn't contain his best playing, its loose feel and unexpected intricacies point up Garcia's willingness to be challenged constantly, even publicly. Remember, the Dead released almost a half-dozen definitive recordings in the short period between '69 and '71, including *Aoxomoxoa*, *American Beauty*, and *Live/Dead*, leaving their impending career as a legendary touring act, as a forum to perpetually recast and interpret what became their "standards." If Garcia became a *de facto* fusioneer in the process, it was an unavoidable result of decades spent navigating strikingly varied progressions; by the end of the next decade, jazz musicians of all stripe were sitting in with him, and his playing would become a striking ornament on Ornette Coleman and Prime Time's *Virgin Beauty*.

Though he favored close intervals in his lines, Garcia often professed an admiration for wide leapers like Pat Martino

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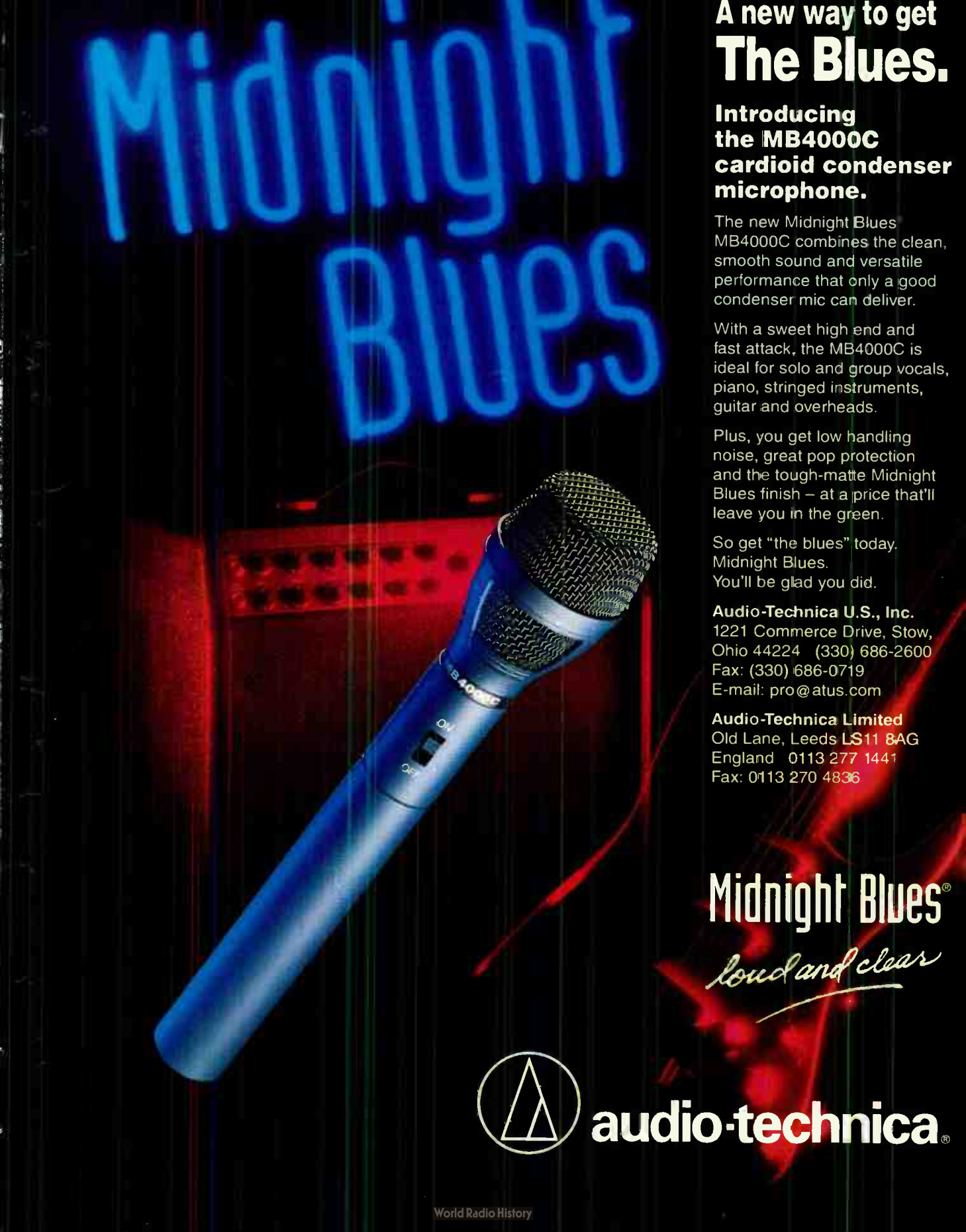
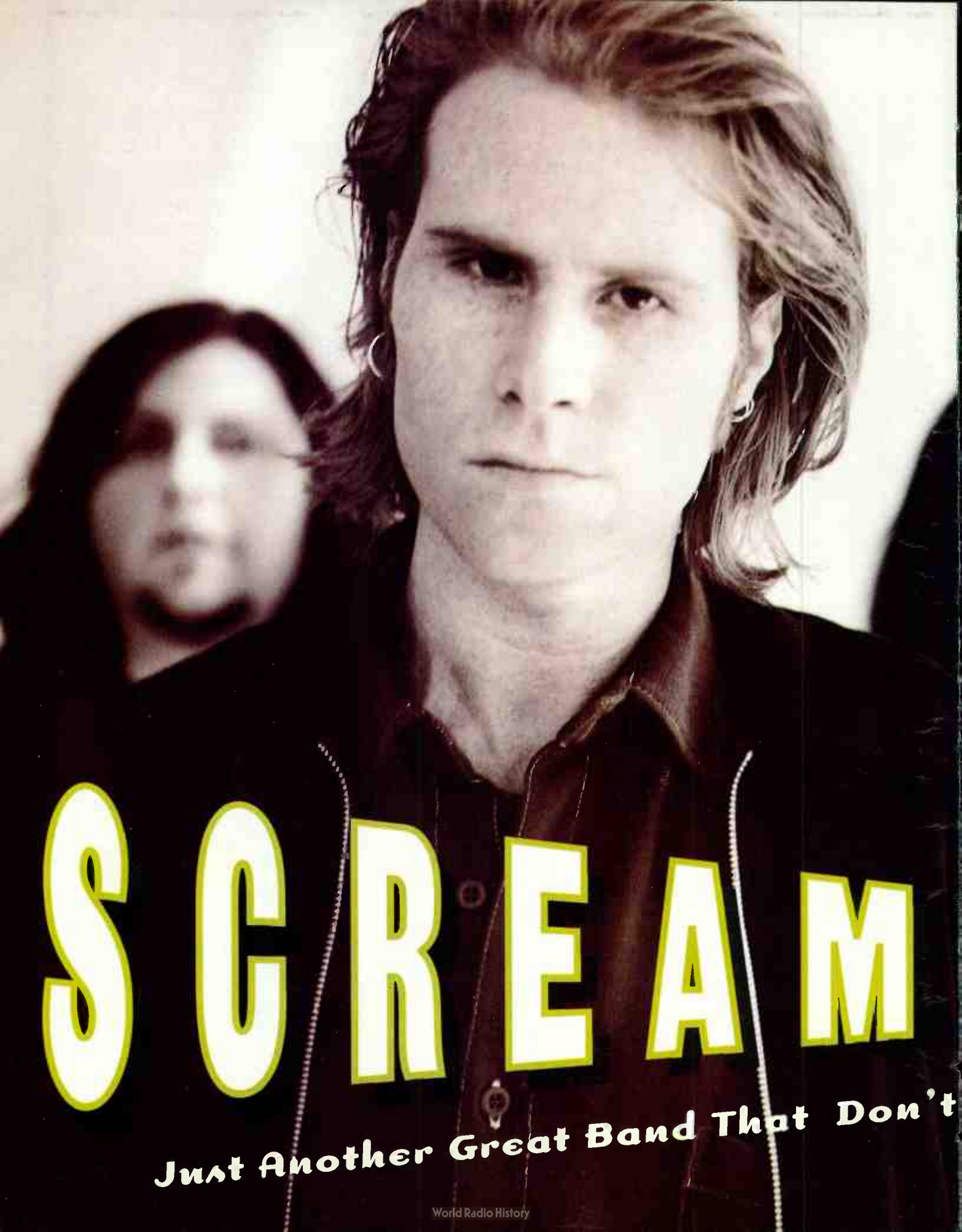
and Frank Gambale. Another of Garcia's spicier earmarks is a slippery use of chromaticism, which he generally put into motion with three- or four-finger left-hand pull-offs. In combination with a liberal use of triplets, the approach yielded a very impressive lick in "West L.A. Fadeaway," notated in Example 5. The tune, from the Grateful Dead's penultimate studio record *In the Dark*, is basically a minor blues played with a funky rock feel, but it contains an unusual measure of B7 added right before the F7-E7#9 turnaround that resolves to A minor.

Garcia starts out his solo in this example with a variation on the song's vocal theme, leads into a tight blues lick, then hits a B to address the B7 chord. The idea begins a little roller coaster of triplets which moves to and from the D# note in bar three, creating a momentum that pushes the line into the ascending A diminished arpeggio (the triad built off the third degree of the F mixolydian that functions as the key of the moment). The line then moves back down to outline a descending F major triad and ultimately comes down a half-step to play the root of the E7 chord. A common yet chromatically embellished blues lick brings it home to A minor.

A ghost note of B on the fourth sixteenth-note of the fourth measure can be thought of as either a passing tone or as the flatted fifth degree of another kind of F scale that fits over an F7 chord: F lydian b7. Typically, a twelve-bar minor blues is constructed as four bars of I minor, two bars of IV minor, two bars of I minor, one bar of #Vb5, one bar of V altered, and two more bars of I minor. The #Vb5 chord—here it's F7b5, which includes the notes F, A, B, C and Eb—sounds ambiguous enough to allow a soloist room to add colorful tones like a flatted fifth. In "West L.A. Fadeaway," the B in bar four wants to resolve to the strong chord tone C, the fifth of the F7 chord. Whether you nail it or just imply it in a progression like this, the flatted five of a dominant chord gives a nice little nudge to the intent of the line.

This lick can be played in several fingerboard locations, with a number of fingerings for each. By beginning from bar three in the ninth position with your pinky on the B string's twelfth fret, your first three fingers will be set up to play the pull-offs on the E string; then, your second three fingers will be forced to play the same rhythmic figure on the B string. The fourth and third fingers will also be in line for the G-string/B-string slides to A*b* and B, and then for the slide up to the A diminished triad, which should be voiced A (pinky), C (ring finger), and Eb (index) on the C, B and E strings, respectively; your pinky will be at the fourteenth fret at this point. Then, by simply bringing down your middle finger, which is now directly over the twelfth-fret B, you can proceed with the slide up from B to C and descend through that thirteenth-fret F triad in bar four with the second, third and fourth fingers. It's awkward but the lick seems tailor-made to strengthen these relatively weak fingers and economize motion for intensely creative passages. Think Jerry knew something all along but just wasn't letting on?





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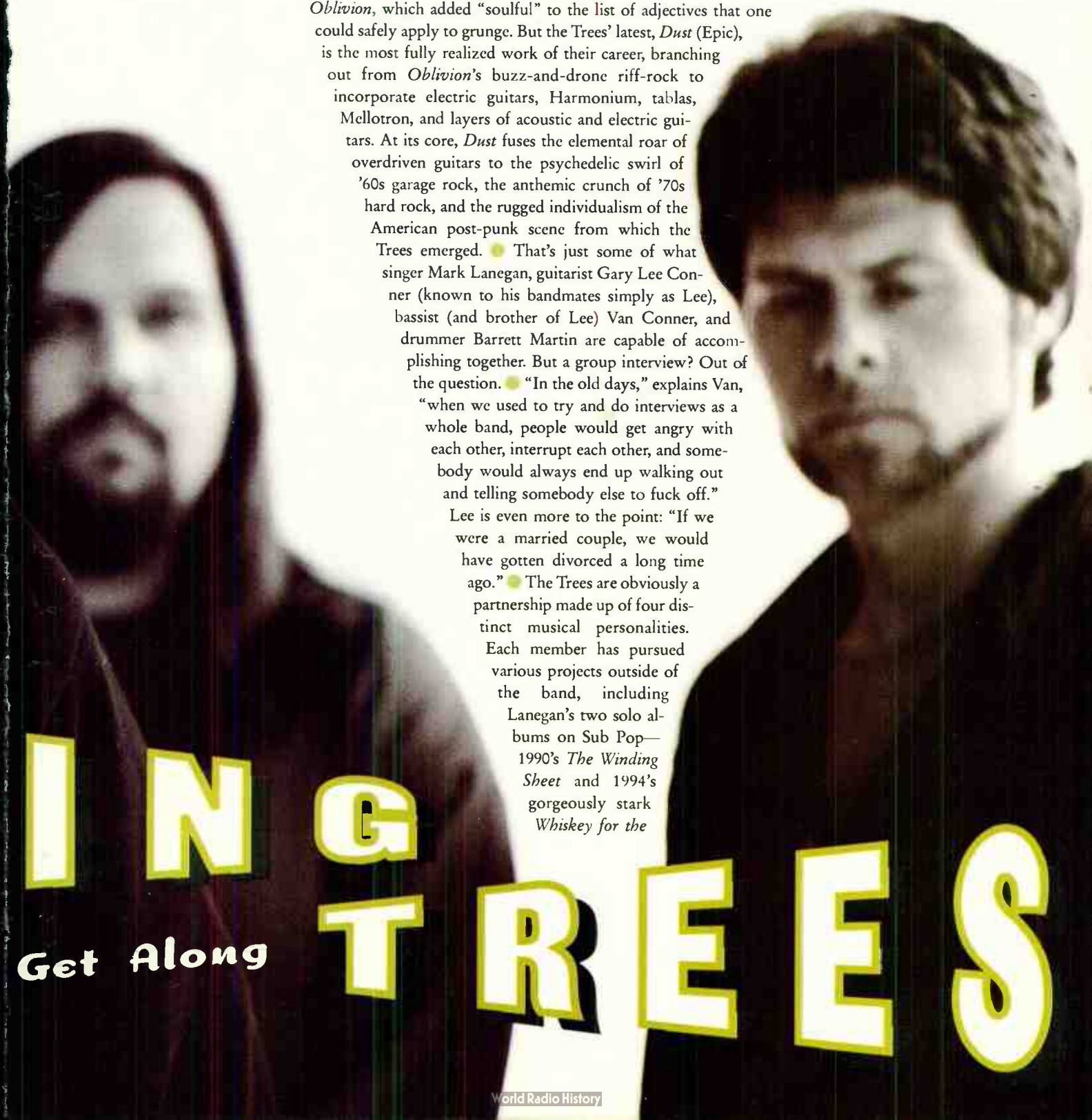


Get Along SCREAMING TREES

THE FOUR MEMBERS OF SCREAMING TREES DON'T DO interviews together. It's a little odd, if only because the Seattle-based group has accomplished a lot together over the past decade—writing, recording, and touring behind eight full-length albums and a couple of stray EPs. Of those releases, the best known is 1992's commercial breakthrough *Sweet Oblivion*, which added "soulful" to the list of adjectives that one could safely apply to grunge. But the Trees' latest, *Dust* (Epic), is the most fully realized work of their career, branching out from *Oblivion*'s buzz-and-drone riff-rock to incorporate electric guitars, Harmonium, tablas, Mellotron, and layers of acoustic and electric guitars. At its core, *Dust* fuses the elemental roar of overdriven guitars to the psychedelic swirl of '60s garage rock, the anthemic crunch of '70s hard rock, and the rugged individualism of the American post-punk scene from which the Trees emerged. That's just some of what singer Mark Lanegan, guitarist Gary Lee Conner (known to his bandmates simply as Lee), bassist (and brother of Lee) Van Conner, and drummer Barrett Martin are capable of accomplishing together. But a group interview? Out of the question. "In the old days," explains Van, "when we used to try and do interviews as a whole band, people would get angry with each other, interrupt each other, and somebody would always end up walking out and telling somebody else to fuck off." Lee is even more to the point: "If we were a married couple, we would have gotten divorced a long time ago." The Trees are obviously a partnership made up of four distinct musical personalities. Each member has pursued various projects outside of the band, including Lanegan's two solo albums on Sub Pop—1990's *The Winding Sheet* and 1994's gorgeously stark *Whiskey for the*

Holy Ghost—Van's side project Solomon Grundy, and Lee's band Purple Outside. Martin is a member of the Seattle supergroup Mad Season, which features Alice In Chains singer Layne Staley and Pearl Jam guitarist Mike McCready. Yet in the end, despite the feuds and side projects, the Screaming Trees remains central, and the circumstances surrounding the making of *Dust* prove it.

In 1992, hoping to capitalize on the success of *Sweet Oblivion*, the Trees set out to release a quick follow-up. What they got instead was a three-year delay during which the band wrote and recorded two complete albums. By unanimous agreement the first, for which they'd returned to *Oblivion* producer Don Fleming, was scrapped, or as the group is apt to put it, "aborted." It was the kind of difficult, expensive, and emotionally taxing decision that has caused lesser bands to call it quits. But the Trees wrote more material, cut new demos, and hooked up with producer George Drakoulias (Black Crowes, Jayhawks). The result is an album that achieves new heights of beauty for the Trees and settles into deep, cavernous grooves.

"It was nice to have access to George Drakoulias' full warehouse of guitars," says Van. "He brought in this huge stack of Polaroids of guitars and amps, and we could pick out whatever we wanted to use. It was like being in a funhouse of equipment. We used this true stereo double-speaker amp to do the stereo tremolo at the beginning of 'Look at You' and George brought in this really cool double-neck Danelectro Longhorn that had a bass and a guitar on it. We used that on 'Halo of Ashes.' I think we loaded up all 48 tracks on a couple of tunes."

The Trees also wanted to use a Mellotron, so Drakoulias rented two of them and asked Tom Petty's keyboard ace Benmont Tench to come in on the sessions. "Benmont is a stump-the-band kind of guy," Van recalls. "He can play any song you can think of on guitar or keyboards. He set up with a Mellotron on either side of him and an Orchestron in the middle, and all we'd have to do is tell him what key the song started in. Within two takes he'd have it down."

TOP; BARRETT MARTIN, BOTTOM; MARK LANEGAN

Along with Tench's keys, which embellish eight of *Dust*'s ten tracks, there's a gutsy cameo guitar solo by Mike McCready on "Dying Days." Then there are piles of acoustic and electric guitars, from wicked wah-wah flourishes and growling, overdriven leads to chorused arpeggios and watery washes of tremolo. But Andy Wallace's fine-tuned mix skillfully blends the guitar and keyboards, highlighting the density of the arrangements without burying any of the disc's hooks and melodies. It wasn't the first time the Trees had attempted layering of this sort. But it's the first time it worked.

Barrett Martin is the newest member; he joined back in 1991, just a few months prior to the *Sweet Oblivion* sessions.

Surrounded by an impressive collection of exotic, mostly acoustic instruments, including a bass marimba, several Baliphones, Burmese temple gongs, Tibetan vibrating bowls, and two sitars, Martin admits that he was "totally amazed to be playing with the Trees."

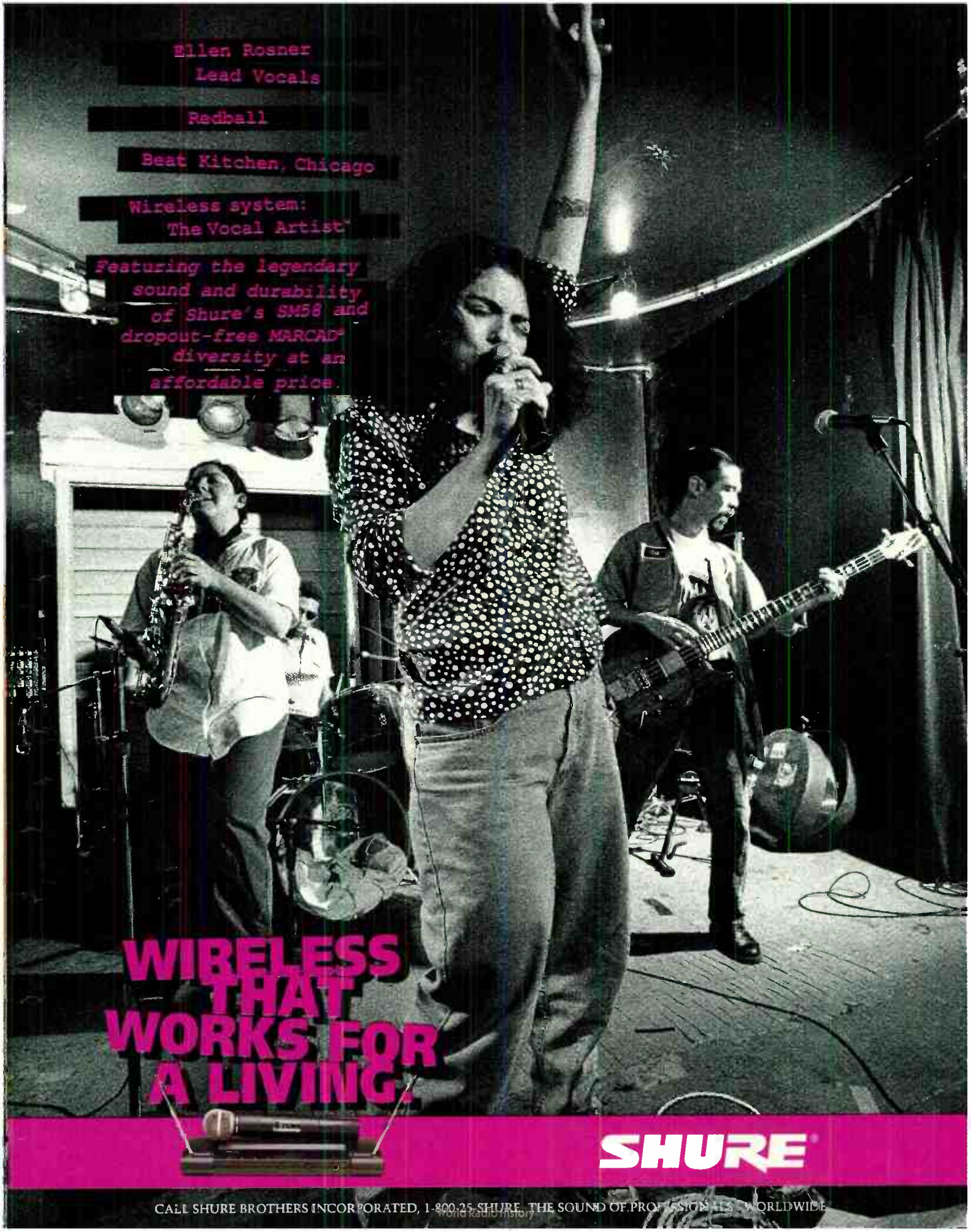
"They had decided that *Sweet Oblivion* was probably going to be their last record, so they wanted to make the best record that they could. I rehearsed with them for a few months, we recorded, and then immediately we went on tour. It was like the band was being reborn. I'd met Van before and I knew that I had the same ideas about music that he did, so I had a feeling I would fit in. It just felt unified, like a band on a mission."

Martin's fascination with Eastern, Arabic, and Indian musics is clearly reflected on *Dust*, particularly on "Gospel Plow" and "Halo of Ashes," where he plays Harmonium and tablas. But it's his positive energy and unbridled enthusiasm for making music that's had the biggest impact. As Mark Lanegan points out, "Barrett has made all the difference. He's positive, and Mark Pickerel, our original drummer, was really negative. I truly love Mark as a person, but when you have three other guys who are negative in their own different ways, having that fourth negative personality is just too much. I mean, you've got the brother dynamic, which is never easy, and then you got me. I'm not so easy to live with either."

We were using all kinds of wacky instrumentation on our early records, but it always sounded like shit," offers a rather sullen Mark Lanegan between sips of root

Charles Peterson

Contributors: *Matt Ashare writes about music for the* Boston Phoenix.



Shadow of the Gibson

Yes, **Gary Lee Conner** does own an Electro-Harmonix Screaming Tree, the trebly overdrive pedal from which the band got its name. "It reminds me of the gnarly, high-endy sound on the lead for 'Taxman'," he says. But on *Dust*, Lee opted for a Jim Dunlop Fuzzface. Live, he prefers a ProCo Rat distortion pedal and either an old Thomas Organ Crybaby wah-wah or a DeArmond wah pedal. His two workhorse guitars are a '63 Gibson SG and a '72 Les Paul Custom. Amps are a different story. "For amps I'm totally in flux. I was using Mesa/Boogie Rectifiers but on the album I used a whole bunch of different amps, including what I think I'm going to use on tour: a new reissue Orange that Gibson is distributing called the Overdrive 120."

Lee's brother **Van Conner** calls himself a "traditional Fender with Ampeg guy." He played his Fender Jazz bass with Bartolini active single-coil pickups and his early '70s P-Bass through a '69 Ampeg SVT and an older 8x10" cabinet on *Dust*; he also used a smaller flip-top Ampeg B15. On tour he's taking an Ampeg B4B head and running it through two 15s, and running a '69 SVT head through a cabinet with eight 10" speakers. "I also might have the SVT power one of two 18s for Barrett's monitor."

Barrett Martin admits that he's pushing for the two 18s because he "can't stand waiting for the bass signal to come through the monitors. I've gotta be feeling Van's vibe." His main set is a big Tama ArtStar, his cymbals are hand-hammered Sabians, and his sticks are "big Pro-Mark Lincoln Logs." Martin still has what he and the band refer to as the "Battleship," an old Tama RockStar set covered in brushed aluminum. "It's the same as the SwingStar except the year I bought it they changed the name to RockStar. I used it on all the Skin Yard U.S. tours and then on the *Sweet Oblivion* tours. It's all beat up but when we used it in the studio, it just kept sounding better and better."

Though he's the first to admit that he's "not a technical guy at all," **Mark Lanegan** knows that he usually sings through a Shure SM58 microphone. He also owns a black and white Fender Strat that Kurt Cobain gave him and a Gibson J-200 that he uses to write songs. "At home I usually just run my guitar right into my Tascam four-track or headphones," he says, "but I have a big vintage Orange combo amp for when I need to be loud."

beer at a brew pub located a couple of blocks from his downtown Seattle apartment. It's been rainy and gray for the last three weeks, and that's been affecting his mood. But even without the weather, it's been a tough couple of years for Lanegan. Kurt Cobain was a close friend; he gave Lanegan an as yet unrecorded song, a black and white Strat, and sang backups on *The Winding Sheet*. Lanegan was also pals with the late Jeffrey Lee Pierce, longtime leader of the Gun Club; they'd been collaborating on some songs before Pierce died earlier this year.

"The crazy thing is that Jeffrey wanted me to be the singer," remembers Lanegan. "And he was one of my favorite singers."

Obviously, the feeling was mutual, and rightly so. For all of *Dust*'s experimentalism, the band's most distinctive feature is still Lanegan's gutsy baritone wail. The deep, growling conviction of his nicotine-stained, whiskey-scarred voice has always set the Trees apart, first from the band's labelmates on the California punk label SST in the late '80s, and then from the flood of grunge bands that flowed out of the Northwest a few years ago. Lanegan seems to summon the powers of heaven and hell with the sound of his voice, conveying much more than the sum of the words he sings. As Lee Conner puts it, "He knows how to put that extra little spark into a song and take it over the top."

As far as Lanegan is concerned, the "aborted" album was symptomatic of the band backsliding. We were tired and hating life and it showed."

His songs do tend toward the foreboding, and melancholy end of the emotional spectrum. For Lanegan, though, it's just part of being true to his muse. "It would seem weird to make something that's happy-sounding," he says. "But the truth is, usually we're pretty happy when we're making a record."

As if to emphasize his point, the sun suddenly breaks through the clouds and nearly blinds him. "God damn, that's nice," he enthuses. "It just takes a second like that to really feel [*con't on page 94*]

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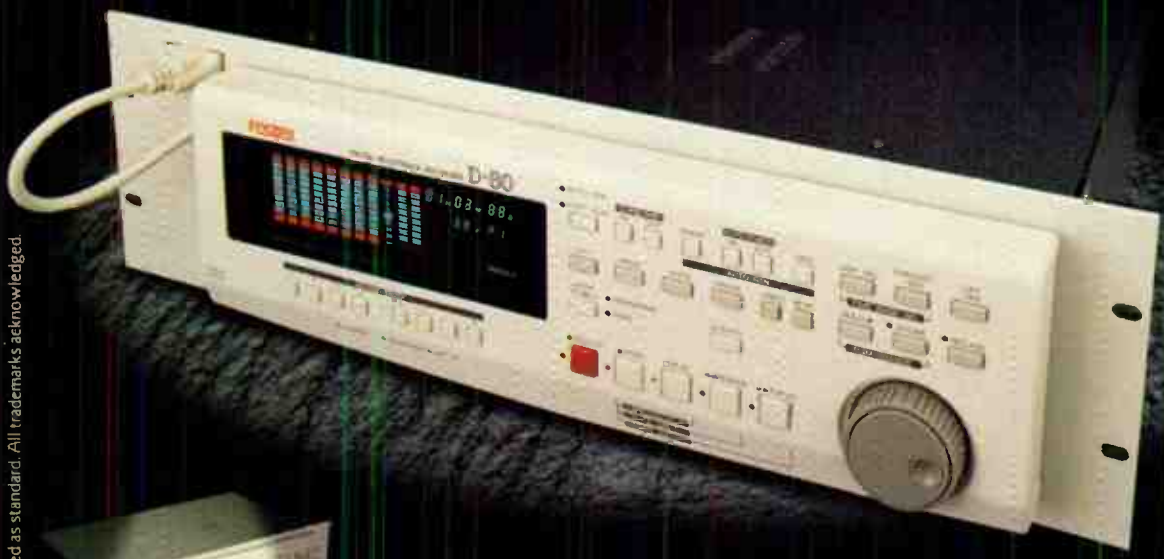

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orbital

push a button, pull a fader—and change the way the world plays.

One steamy day last July, Phil and Paul Hartnoll, known collectively as Orbital, began their soundcheck at New York's Irving Plaza. Some six hours later, around midnight, they would begin their actual show; now, save for a few scurrying technicians, the house was empty, with open gear boxes scattered on the dance floor.

Up on the stage, Phil, the older brother, stood to the rear, smoking forlornly. Paul, hemmed in on three sides by a horseshoe of keyboards, drum machines, mixers, and other devices, wandered around, nudging a slider up and down, standing still for a moment or two, then moving over to tweeze something else. All the while, as an Orbital sequence thundered from the P.A., he muttered darkly, to himself at first, and then to the world at large.

"Something is seriously wrong here. Everything is fucking up. . . . I can't possibly work out what's wrong. . . . All we can do is change venues."

The problem—a buzz emanating from one of the mixers—was eventually solved. What remained was a more vexing dilemma: In a world dominated by real-time entertainment, how can anyone call what acts like Orbital do onstage a performance?

To the tens of thousands of devotees who have gathered at Glastonbury and less celebrated tribal sites to watch the brothers Hartnoll punch tracks in and out, this is a non-issue. Thanks to the technology of electronic music, the phenomenon of the club DJ, and the emergence of remixing as a legitimate spin-off art, the line between what garage bands, grizzled grungers, and shred-heads see as studio and stage work has been blurred, if not erased. The consistently engaging work released by Orbital on their four albums makes things even more academic.

Yet the feeling persists that there's no real qualitative difference between appreciating this sort of music on disc and . . . well, on disc. Does a style that centers on tweaking prerecorded tracks allow for the kind of spontaneity, the risk-taking, that people have always expected from improvised music? When pushing

by Robert L. Doerschuk Photography by Jay Blakesberg

paul (left) and phil hartnoll set the controls

buttons and tweaking timbres is as physical as a performance gets, what exactly does performance mean? We brought this question up over lunch with the lads.

To many band-oriented players, electronic music is still something of a novelty.

Paul: Well, the first thing I'd say to them is, don't think of me as a musician. I'm a composer. My score sheet is this computer program. I play my parts, and instead of thinking, "Ah, this works," and writing it down on a score sheet, I hit Record on the computer and write into there.

How did you get into music technology?

Paul: We always had a piano in the house, until our dad got rid of it as too bulky and replaced it with a home organ. We found that by pressing the Rock and Bossa-Nova rhythm presets at the same time, it sounded a bit weird. And with the auto-accompaniment buttons, if you held down two notes, you'd get a high-energy [*articulates quick yodelling oscillation between two notes*]. We used to get into making it sound like Depeche Mode by pressing all of the buttons and percussion stops. I also did a basic form of multi-tracking by using Rock Drums and playing bass, recording it with a tape recorder on the other side of the room. Then I'd replay that tape into another recorder while playing guitar over what I'd already done. Then, around '84, Phil got a drum machine . . .

Phil: A little Korg Latin Percussion thing, about £200. That started us off into electro music—Cabaret Voltaire and things like that.

Paul: Then I got a four-track, which really opened things up. Our early four-track recordings had more akin to New Order and Sisters of Mercy than what we're doing now.

Was there a single piece of gear that really woke up your creative juices?

Paul: The sampler blew me away.

Yet on your latest album, In Sides, *there don't seem to be that many samples.*

Paul: Ah, but that's the thing. There are *tons* of samples on it. We used samplers the same way other people use the synthesizer. We'll take a tiny sound from, say, a Ray Conniff album—a trail out of a string chord, say. Instead of starting with a square wave, we start with this sound. Then we synthesize it. I'll spend a day at a workshop of someone we know around the arches underneath King's Cross station, hanging my DAT microphone into a drain to get revolving stereo drip noises. These weird bits of sound could be drum machines or not; you just don't know. It's like an electric guitarist . . .

Phil: . . . with his pedal effects, exactly. You know how much they enjoy changing the sound of their guitars. They're just as much sound sculpturists as we are, but we take it to an extreme. Sounds can be very inspiring.

Paul: We started "Out There Somewhere?" with a voice that's really slowed down. The sound that follows, this metallic ring, was half a metal beer keg on the

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drum stand with me holding the stereo mike inside and smacking it hard, then moving around and recording the reverberations, but leave off the beginning, so you'd get this [*articulates throbbing crescendo*], again really low.

How did you shape the envelope on that sample?

Paul: In our E-mu samplers. I like our E-64 and EIII. They've always been best at being a synthesizer that's a sampler, rather than a sampler with a bit of synthesis thrown in. We also used an Ensoniq DP/4.

So here we are, at this cafe in Union Square. If you had your DAT machine here, what would you do?

Paul: For a start, if I was looking for percussion sounds, I'd find myself a piece of metal and give that [iron] fence over there a good whack, from different angles and also holding the microphone at different positions—put it near where I'm hitting, or hang it from the top. I'd

orbital gear: a stage perspective

ALL OF THE MUSIC PERFORMED onstage by Orbital is prerecorded on 48 tracks. The Hartnolls manipulate these tracks from their positions within a U-shaped configuration of gear. Paul handles the three-tiered stand on the left side, as seen from the stage looking toward the audience. The top tier contains one of the group's Alesis MMT-8s and a Roland Jupiter-6, which is Orbital's main source for lead sounds. Below, left to right, are a Roland R-70, three more MMT-8s, and a Novation Bass Station, from which most of the "old school" bass sounds and long vocal samples derive; the sequences for each show are stored in the MMT-8s. The bottom tier holds a Roland R-8 drum machine, from which Paul triggers rolls, flams, and other fills; labels for the R-8 sounds include High Q Break, Planet, Old School Roll, and Satan Extra Hat Tune. Two E-mu items, an E-64 and an EIII-SX, sit next to the R-8; these samplers, with a total of 16 outputs, are reloaded several times throughout each show. A Roland TR-808 drum machine stands alone, below this bottom tier.

The middle section of this U, facing the audience, consists of two Mackie mixers, a CR-1604 and an SR32-4. Phil is in charge of fading parts in and out with this setup. Sliders on the SR32-4 control parts being played through the Jupiter-6, the Bass Station, a Sequential Prophet-5, and a Korg Wavestation—the main source of high string sounds. Drum patterns from the TR-808 and -909, among other parts, are mixed on the CR-1604. An Ensoniq DP/4 stands below the Mackie boards.

Both Phil and Paul tweak the gear in the stands to their right. These include a Roland Bass Line, SH-101, and TR-909, a Korg Prophecy (used along with the Bass Station for bass parts), and an Oberheim sampler.

The band was planning to buy its own monitors—brand yet to be determined—as we went to press.

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sneak around behind people who were having good conversations.

Phil: There's not much thought behind it. It's like a day trip out.

Paul: But it doesn't have to be like that. When I went to that workshop, I was concentrating on recording specific sounds. There were these plastic industrial pipes; when you hit 'em with a table tennis paddle, you'd get this *twanng* sort of sound. I went after that, but I also discovered things like putting the mike up these pipes while wood was being planed in the background: I got this brilliant sound, the resonance of the tube with the planing. That's the start to one of the tracks on *In Sides* ["Adnan's"].

Phil: We did another different thing for *In Sides*. A friend of ours is a really good drummer, so we took him into this commercial studio that's below this little room we use for our studio, set up all these mikes—up on the piano, down at the end of a didgeridoo—and did a day's work getting different styles of drumming and clean tracks on [Alesis] ADATs from separate kinds of close-miking.

Paul: We also did distant miking to get '60s types of sounds or overdriven distortion. We built up this big collection of tapes that we troll through now for our own breakbeats, so we don't have to steal four bars of somebody else's drums. It's a lot more complex than just taking a breakbeat from a record, because you can reverb the snare and have the bass drum come out really tinny . . .

Phil: . . . because it's all separate. Also, you can speed it up, loop and trigger different parts differently.

You've said that much of what you wrote on In Sides *was inspired by the state of the world, friends who have passed away, pollution, spiritual crisis, civil war. Is there an example you can point to that illustrates a musical manifestation of some concern of yours?*

Paul: "Dwr Budr," the Welsh title, was like that. It means "dirty water." It started with these sounds that reminded me of water lapping on the shore. It's quite sad; it took me back to when I lived in Brighton, looking at the dirty water.

You wouldn't specifically sample the Brighton seashore to do a piece about pollution there.

Paul: Maybe, if we had the idea beforehand. We haven't done that in ages, though. For me, it was like, "Well, this works as the sound of the seashore. I don't need to back it up with the sea." All I'd like to see, in terms of results, is that someone feels some sort of an emotional response. If it relates to something in their life, rather than ours, I don't mind at all.

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ANATOMY OF A LABEL

INSIDE ATLANTIC'S HIT-MAKING MACHINE

Every Wednesday afternoon at three o'clock, a group of about thirty men and women representing various promotional, sales, and marketing departments at Atlantic Records convene in a conference room in the record company's midtown Manhattan offices for a meeting. The atmosphere could be depicted as a cross between a college seminar and a pep rally, with staff members alternately cheering each other on and zealously debating each other's opinions. Voices are raised on occasion, but as is usually the case with seminars, someone inevitably breaks the tension with a joke or goes off on another tangent before things can get ugly.

The self-described ringleader of these proceedings is senior vice president and general manager Ron Shapiro, a sort of corporate variation on the hip young professor. Despite the laid-back tone he sets as mediator, Atlantic's GM is all business, even as he discusses subjects that most of us would consider less weighty than the stuff we learned in history class.

Shapiro is bothered by a rumor that because Hootie and the Blowfish were riled by some snide remarks Jay Leno made about their last album title, they plan to make no television appearances other than David Letterman's *The Late Show*. "We have to get them on the *Tonight Show*," Shapiro stresses. "Leno is twice the audience of Letterman. I think they should do Conan O'Brien too."

Linda Ferrando, the vice president of video promotion and media development, has doubts. "I think that's overkill," she says. "There's no mystery. We

BY ELYSA GARDNER

ILLUSTRATION BY MCDAVID HENDERSON

practically know their blood type!"

Shapiro isn't swayed. "There's no way to be mysterious about Hootie anymore," he insists. "Mystery," he adds dryly, " is not what sells thirteen million records."

In the hipper-than-thou '90s, big labels are under more pressure than ever to discover and nurture talent, particularly artists with "alternative" credibility, while still achieving the sort of sales figures that keep Jay Leno calling. None has pulled this trick off more deftly than Atlantic. For the past two years, their artists have sold more albums and gotten more airplay than those on any other label. While part of this success owes to middle-of-the-road pop acts like Hootie, Atlantic's roster features some of the biggest names in modern rock, among them Stone Temple Pilots and Tori Amos. And through the distribution and marketing of subsidiary labels like Mammoth and Curb, the Atlantic Group—an umbrella organization formed in the early '90s—has helped to give wider exposure to artists like Joe Henry and Juliana Hatfield.

Val Azzoli, co-chairman and co-CEO of the Atlantic Group, traces Atlantic's metamorphosis from a refuge for aging pop icons and hair bands into a hip cash cow to his predecessor and mentor, Doug Morris. After being tapped by company founder Ahmet Ertegun (who shares Azzoli's title) to spruce up the joint, Morris created the Atlantic Group and empowered Azzoli, a former artist manager, to develop a marketing department that would service the Group's projects, from adopted rock indies and a reorganized Nashville division to, eventually, specialty imprints like Atlantic Theatre, Atlantic Classics, and Celtic Heartbeat.

"The way Atlantic had been set up," Azzoli explains, "was: Sign a band, get it on the radio, and get it selling in stores. But things changed in the late '80s. Radio wasn't as powerful, and people started wanting to discover bands in a different way. So the blueprint was: Rely less on radio promotion, and more on artist development. We set up a marketing side, with product managers. The press and tour development

Contributors: *Elysa Gardner is a contributing editor for* Musician.

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became important. The idea was, let's develop artists again. Let's forget about going for the flavor of the month.

"The problem with the music industry is that everyone's thinking about the first album. I'm more concerned about the fifth album—because if we've reached that point, we've all made a lot of money."

Of course, some bands make a lot more money than others. While *Cracked Rear View* didn't become the tenth best-selling album of all time overnight, there were early indications that Hootie's members would be able to make down payments on those dream homes long before album number five.

When Atlantic signed Hootie in 1993, the band had already built a following through four years of touring and an independently released EP that sold 40,000 copies, largely on the strength of a track called "Hold My Hand." *Cracked Rear View*, released in July 1994, included a version of this catchy song as the first single. Radio was initially reticent. "The whole radio world was in the alterna-craze," explains Andrea Ganis, executive vice president of promotion. "So the first eleven months were very difficult."

An accompanying video met with more encouraging responses on MTV and VH-1, while on network television, Hootie found a patron saint in David Letterman, who invited them on his show repeatedly. But as sales of *Cracked Rear View* edged past the million mark, senior staffers at Atlantic realized that plenty of folks who considered even Letterman and VH-1 left-of-center might also appreciate the bands easily digestible roots-pop. So in the spring of 1995, the folks in charge of product development at Atlantic kicked off the Hootie television ad campaign.

"We bought time on everything from *Good Morning America* to Country Music Television," says Vicky Germaise, the label's senior vice president whose responsibilities include product development and video promotion. With sales and television exposure soaring, the many AOR stations who had added Hootie to their playlists were joined by Top 40, adult-contemporary, and even college formats.

By June 1995, Hootie's album

sales had topped the three-million mark, and Azzoli, perhaps a little giddy, raised the stakes. "Val said, 'I wanna do something we've never done before,'" Shapiro remembers, grinning. "Take $200,000 and put this record in the front of every store in America, and try to push it to six million. Little did he know the Pandora's box he was opening!"

At the time of *Fairweather Johnson's* release in April 1996, *Cracked Rear View* had generated more than 100 million dollars in gross revenues for Atlantic, and was still in the Top Twenty on the *Billboard* albums chart.

Another TV ad debuted shortly before *Fairweather Johnson's* release, and an arrangement was worked out with the Wal-Mart chain so that stores across the country would stock copies of the album adjacent to the cash register. As of late June, Hootie's follow-up effort had already gone double platinum—not a sure sign that the group would match the impossible precedent set by *Cracked Rear View*, but evidence enough that Hootie won't be available for frat parties anytime soon.

In the wake of Hootiemania, the powers-that-be at Atlantic have been busily searching for their next cultural phenomenon. Their bright hope of the moment is a 22-year-old singer named Jewel Kilcher. Jewel's debut album, *Pieces Of You*, was released in February 1995; what's happened since is a slow-build Cinderella story that may establish her as this year's Joan Osborne or Sheryl Crow.

With its spare acoustic arrangement and '90s-flower-child lyrics, Jewel's first single, "Who Will Save Your Soul," wasn't an easy sell for the promotion department. "Joan Osborne hadn't broken yet," Shapiro says, "and 'Who Will Save Your Soul' was not something that modern rock radio wanted between Nine Inch Nails and whoever else they're playing."

In this case, the most likely route to success was extensive touring. "We had seen that immediate reaction to Jewel's live performances while she was playing locally in San Diego," says Karen Colamussi, the senior vice president overseeing marketing, including merchandising and advertising. "We knew that we needed to get her out on the road." First, a residency

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tour took her to a different key city each day of the week; later she opened for various Atlantic artists, among them goth god Peter Murphy, whose fans often didn't quite know what to make of a cute blonde strumming a guitar and singing about peace and understanding.

"We created a schedule for Jewel," says Shapiro, "where whatever market she was in, she'd be busy from eight in the morning until midnight. The publicity department had to get her three or four interviews, whether they were with fanzines or daily newspapers. Promotion had to put her in a radio station and make her sing, even if they wouldn't [add the single]. Tour marketing had to set up coffeehouse appearances after the shows, so that she'd be performing twice in each market." There were also walk-throughs of college campuses and record stores, where the exhausted young singer would greet fans and potential fans.

Jewel's big break came with the holiday season. In November, VH-1, having already embraced the "Who Will Save Your Soul" video, aired an episode of its *Duets* in which she joined several women singing alongside Melissa Etheridge. Within a month, Jewel was invited back to *Late Night With Conan O'Brien*, and landed appearances on *Entertainment Tonight* and *The Tonight Show*. This in turn, paved the way for renewed radio support, appearances on MTV's *Alternative Nation* and *120 Minutes*, and spring and summer tour dates supporting, respectively, Bob Dylan and Neil Young. At press time, "Who Will Save Your Soul" was in the Top Twenty, *Pieces Of You* was fast approaching platinum status, and Jewel was starting work on a second album.

Jewel's success has already become a template to guide Atlantic strategy for another up-and-coming female singer-songwriter with neo-hippie tendencies and no professional surname. *Hello*, the debut album of Poe, was released in October 1995, and although its freewheeling blend of folk-rock, hip-hop, jazz, and computer-generated ambient music quickly attracted attention from the print media, the album's first single, "Trigger Happy Jack," hasn't done quite as well on radio. "I'm (going through) hell with Poe right now," Ganis admits. "But we're gaining ground every week with alternative radio, and we're going to start crossing it to different formats."

Colamussi points out that being cybersavvy has allowed the singer to take full advantage of Atlantic's fledgling multimedia department. "Poe is very into new media, and can speak that language. So as she's been out on the road, we've set up a site for her in these on-line coffee shops, where after her show she will go to do an on-line chat. She's actually met a lot of fans this way."

Like most successful businesses, Atlantic Records seems to adopt this general m.o.: Be pragmatic about your losses, and milk your victories for all they're worth. As Colamussi puts it, "We don't necessarily prioritize; we let the consumer prioritize. It's our job to let them tell us what they're willing to put $20 down on a counter for."

And once the favored artists have been determined, they're coddled and doted on just as favored children would be. In a casual meeting held by the video promotions and media development staff one afternoon, about a month after Ferrando had debated Hootie strategies with Shapiro, the feisty department head expresses her dissatisfaction with a TV campaign, organized in conjunction with the video show *The Box*, in which fans of the sports-loving group could win athletic equipment and a trip to Dallas.

"I don't know if they like Dallas," Ferrando says worriedly—referring to the football team. "I want to be, you know, sensitive to the band, and I know that—being guys, after all—they have ties to whoever their sports teams are. I know Darius is a huge Miami fan..."

Cohn interjects. "I think the reason Dallas was picked," he explains, "is because of Hootie's (tour) itinerary. There happens to be a Dallas (Cowboys) game the day before their concert, and some sort of soccer championship the day before that...It just sort of snowballed."

Ferrando is still frowning. "We need to double check. It would be, like, a nightmare if they were watching TV going, 'What? We're giving people a trip to Dallas? We hate Dallas.' I'm just trying to cover all the bases, that's all."

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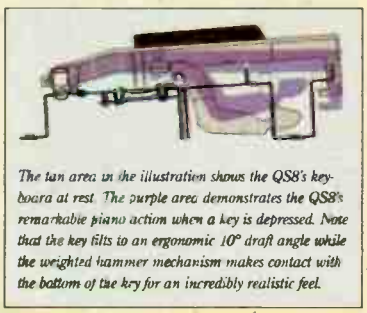

The tan area in the illustration shows the QS8's keyboard at rest. The purple area demonstrates the QS8's remarkable piano action when a key is depressed. Note that the key tilts to an ergonomic 10° draft angle while the weighted hammer mechanism makes contact with the bottom of the key for an incredibly realistic feel.

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1 stedman sc3 mic

Those three switch positions on the front of Stedman's SC3 condenser microphone ($998) stand for three different sonic modes: Vintage, modeled after classic tube condensers; Bass Cut, optimized for low-frequency attenuation; and Enhanced, for more detailed high-frequency response. Electronics include a low-noise tube cathode follower equivalent circuit, and a custom balancing transformer that keeps distortion down at all frequencies. ***• Stedman, 4167 Stedman Dr., Richland, MI 49083; voice (616) 629-5930, fax (616) 629-4149.***

2 furman ha-6a headphone amp

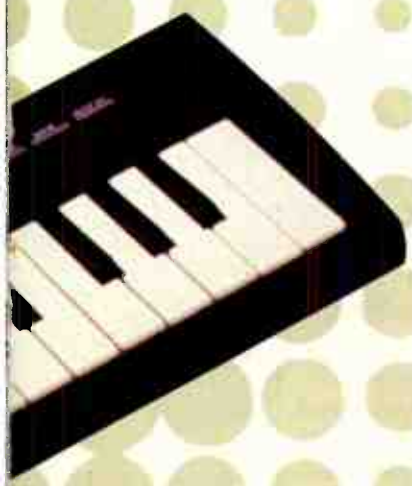
Having trouble hearing what's going on? Furman's HA-6A single-rack-space stereo headphone and monitoring amplifier connects to any mixer's line out, and its front panel has six inputs, each with its own volume control, which should be enough for most bands (the Willem Brueker Kollektief excepted). The HA-6A provides a built-in power amp, delivering 20 watts per channel. It retails for $419 unbalanced, $453 balanced, and is easily expandable with Furman's $79 HR-2 headphone remote box.

• Furman, 30 Rich St., Greenbrae, CA 94904; voice (415) 927-1225, fax (415) 927-4548.

3 midiman keyman 49

Designed for the idle keyboard dabbler, Midiman's Keyman 49 makes a rock-solid MIDI controller at a tantalizing price ($129.95). Weighing in at three pounds and measuring 24.2" x 5.6" x 1.92", the 49-key controller has 10-note simultaneous output and is the only keyboard in its class that supports a sustain pedal, so bang away and let those notes ring long.

• Midiman, 45 E. Joseph St., Arcadia, CA 91006-2861; voice (818) 445-2842, fax (818) 445-7564.



4 modulus sonichammer bass

Ballistic musicality is just what Modulus' new SonicHammer series of basses is all about. Helping the musical aggressor's cause are a substantial 24-fret, 34" scale graphite bolt-on neck with phenolic fingerboard, swamp ash or alder body, Gotoh bridge, and Bartolini MME three-coil pickup and NTBT tone system with active bass/treble controls. The regular SonicHammer'll run you $2199, the Deluxe model (with a figured maple top and greater choice of colors) goes for $2399. • ***Modulus Guitars, 575 Seventh St., San Francisco, CA 94103; voice (415) 703-0500, fax (415) 703-0979.***

5 ross mta1200 power amp

If you read Julian Colbeck's article on sound reinforcement in our September issue, then you know just how key a power amplifier can be in making or breaking a band's onstage sound. Pumping out 1200 watts and weighing only 18 pounds, Ross' MTA1200 ($995) does the job with admirable efficiency. An internal two-speed fan keeps the heat down, while an internal limiter prevents clipping. Each MTA1200 also comes equipped with circuitry that monitors the output signal to protect both amplifier and loudspeakers without affecting sound quality. • ***Ross Systems, 1316 E. Lancaster, Ft. Worth, TX 76102; voice (817) 336-5114, fax (817) 870-1271.***

6 line 6 axsys 212

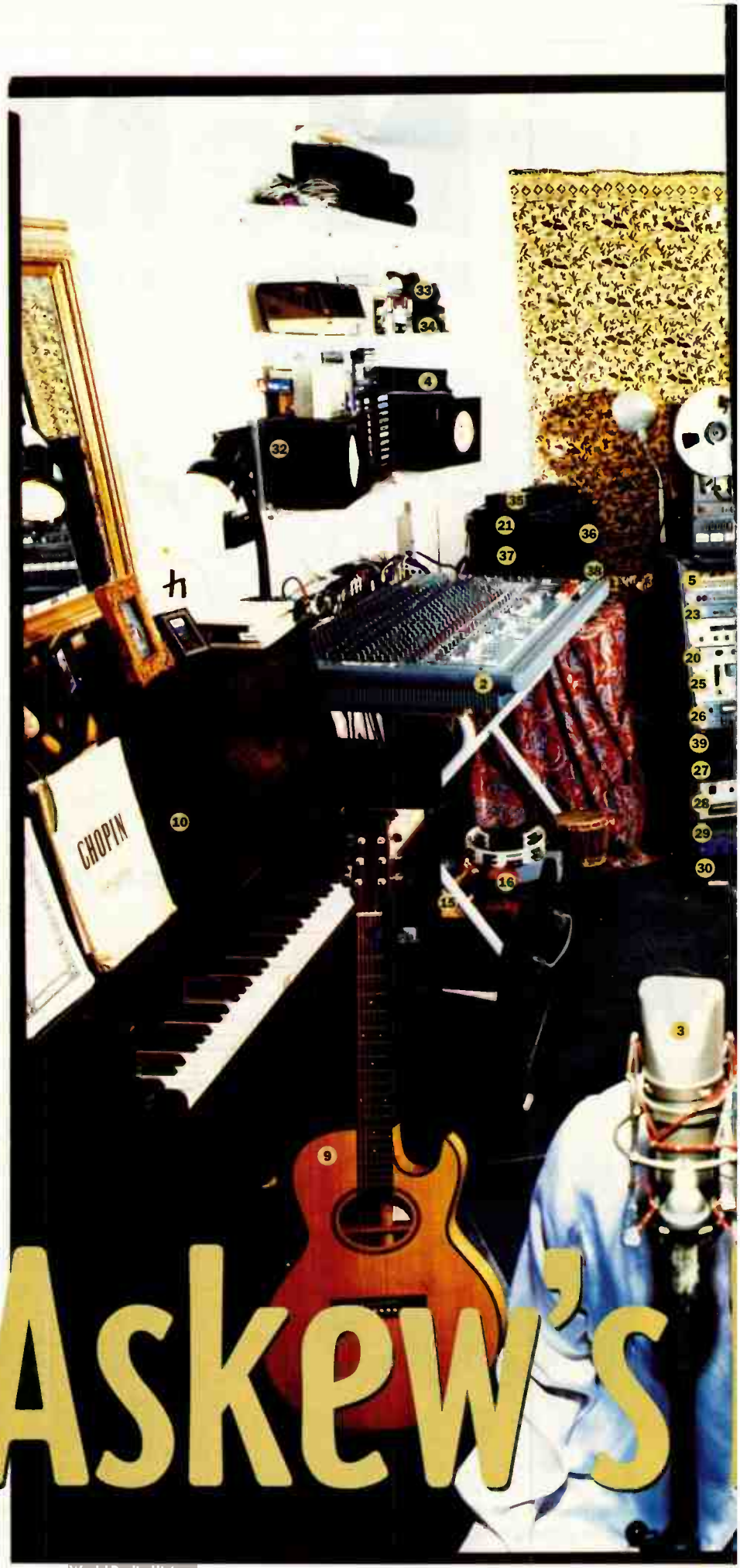
At first glance, Line 6's AxSys 212 ($999) looks like just another 100-watt stereo amp with two 12" speakers. But those extra buttons and flashing lights are the giveaway: This li'l guy uses software-based digital signal processing to emulate the sounds of classic amps, both tube and solid-state. There are 17 24-bit digital stereo effects onboard, including physically modeled spring reverb. • ***Line 6, 11260 Playa Ct., Culver City, CA 90230; voice (310) 390-5956, fax (310) 390-1713.***

Joy Askew's

IF YOUR MENTAL picture of a recording studio runs something along the lines of a windowless concrete bunker, prepare yourself for a shock when entering the New York abode of singer/songwriter/keyboardist Joy Askew. Her home studio, affectionately dubbed the "Lo-Fi Lounge," takes up a sizable chunk of her apartment's living room, and with its colorful tapestries and big windows looking out over Manhattan's Upper West Side, it's one of the liveliest recording environments you're likely to see. "I need a lot of light and a feeling of space in order to work," Askew comments, "and when I first saw this place nearly three years ago, I instantly felt that I could work here. And it's true; I've done more work here than I've done in my life."

That work includes Askew's first solo album, *Tender City* (Private Music), which was recorded almost entirely in this room. Before stepping out on her own, Askew was best known for her work with Joe Jackson and Peter Gabriel, and fans of those artists will find much to admire in *Tender City*: finely crafted melodies, passionate eclecticism, and a distinctively English brand of soulfulness.

By the way, your eyes are not deceiving you; that really is a reel-to-reel tape machine in the background (a **Tascam 38** eight-track 1, to be exact), and that really is the machine the album was recorded on. Askew has yet to join the digital age, though she's contemplating a move to Tascam DA-88s. "I'm a typical musician," she explains. "I've never had much money. And when I've had some, I've always put it back into what I'm doing. That's why I still have this eight-



Eli Hersko

home studio

track, which I bought in '87—I never made enough to replace it." However, Askew did make enough on the last Peter Gabriel tour to invest in a **Soundcraft Spirit Studio 2402** 24-channel mixing board 2. "I love it," she says with unrestrained enthusiasm.

Next to these two pieces, Askew counts the **Neumann U87A** microphone 3 as the most important equipment in her studio. "With that mike, it's the same as going into a professional studio," she says. "Just record it flat and watch the meters, and you can't go wrong. It picks up everything, including the street noise outside, but who cares? You're not going to hear that on the final recording." For the last couple of years, the Neumann's been held in its place on the mike stand by a pair of Joy's old hairbands: "This is the Lo-Fi Lounge, after all," she laughs. Two other mikes, both **Shure SM57s** 4, wait on the nearby shelf, ready at any moment to be plugged into the ProCo PM 148 patch bay 5.

Though an **Apple Macintosh Classic** 6 running **Mark of the Unicorn Performer** software and a **Macintosh PowerBook 520c** 7 sit nearby, Askew remains suspicious of computer technology. "It tends to get in the way," she says. "I know people tell me it can do all this marvelous stuff, but whenever I've been around it, it gets the better of the humans."

Better, then, to stick with good old-fash-

BY MAC RANDALL

MUSICIANS INSTITUTE

HOME STUDIO PRESENTED BY
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ioned instruments, like a Fender Squier Stratocaster, Washburn Festival Series EA30N acoustic guitar, Hamilton upright piano (made by Baldwin—"My neighbors love the sound of this," Joy quips), Korg CX3 organ, Roland RD-300S digital piano, and Sequential Circuits Prophet-5 synthesizer. Sitting in front of the Hamilton, Askew discusses the subtleties of miking a piano. "The first time I did it, I realized that there must be a hundred different places for the mike. So I tried five different positions and I recorded all of them, but I could have spent weeks on it. I usually put it slightly towards the top, just above the opening, which I prop up."

The Peavey Classic 50 amp is safely non-digital, as are the pedals strewn around the room: a Boss SD-1 Super Overdrive, MXR Dynacomp, vintage Boss Chorus Ensemble, and Boss FV-50 volume pedal, located right next to a Yamaha sustain pedal for the RD-300S. (The electric guitar part on *Tender City*'s "Big Sky" was recorded with the Dynacomp going straight into the board.)

"The Boss chorus is quite similar to the vibrato on a Hammond," Joy says, "so I put the Korg organ through it and then through the Dynacord CLS 22 Leslie simulator. Each stage distorts it more, so you get that bit of grit that you want."

Slightly more high-tech noisemakers include two Lexicon LXP-1 reverb units (used primarily for vocals and drums), a Mark of the Unicorn MIDI Time Piece II, dbx 160x compressor, Eventide H3000SE Ultra-Harmonizer, Akai S1000 sampler, Roland D-550 synth module, Yamaha SPX90 effects processor (27), and an Akai S900 sampler. The JL Cooper MSB MIDI switch box and DeltaLab Effectron II digital delay are both broken, but the Power User Syquest drive isn't.

When Joy wants to hear her work, she can choose between Yamaha NS-10M monitors or headphones by AKG and Sony. At the mixing stage are an Aiwa portable DAT machine and Onkyo TA-2028 and TEAC R-400 cassette decks. It's all powered by a Proton D540 stereo amplifier, while a Furman PL-Plus power conditioner keeps the current running smooth.

"I never imagined that I'd make my record here," Joy confesses. "Now I'm wondering whether I should make the next one in the same way. I very well could. Sometimes I feel really hampered and say, 'I only have seven tracks and I'm running SMPTE.' But other times I don't feel limited at all. The important thing is not to judge, not to compare yourself to anything else. I have to keep telling myself, 'It's your ideas you're working on here, not somebody else's.'"

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Masterers of the Universe

Revealed: The secret world of mastering (parental discretion advised).

by E.D. Menasché

The digital revolution, the coup-de-DAT which brought affordable recording to the masses, has gone a long way toward popularizing the means of production. For many, making a record has lost some of its mystery, at least technically.

But even if musicians know from tracking and mixdown and random access editing, mastering, the final stage of the production process, remains a mystery. Just the name seems to conjure images of wizard-like "masters" in star-covered robes and white beards drinking strange herbal teas, working out of secretive quarters, presiding over a bubbling array of strange potions and tools, doing. . .*something* to make an already complete mix sound better.

"People find mastering so mysterious because it's deceptively simple," notes Scott Hull, chief engineer of NYC's Masterdisk Corporation. "It might be simple, but it can be remarkably effective." It's also extremely important, especially if you want your music played on the radio. A good album, no matter what the genre, offers the listener a sense of unity. There's something unsettling about flipping on a CD and having the volume and tone of the music jump around seemingly at random. And if that kind of inconsistency is annoying at home, it's death on the radio. One of mastering's primary functions is to take sometimes disparate material and turn it into a smooth, digestible product. "The mastering house has the reference monitors, the gear, and the mastering engineer to alter the product and bring it into line, fixing anomalies," explains Steve Hall of Hollywood-based Future Disc Systems. "Especially when the product has been recorded in lots of different studios, the mastering process helps add continuity, sometimes even change the dimension of the music."

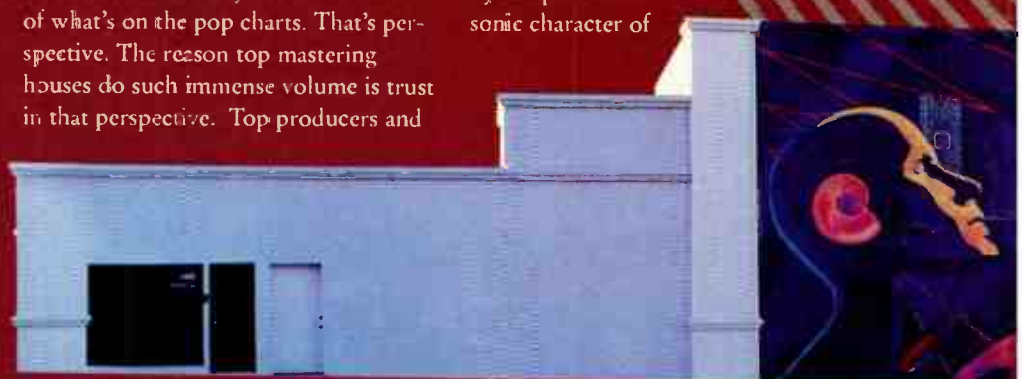
A mastering engineer's perspective on your work comes not from sitting through endless hours of pre-production, tracking, and mixing, but from hearing your music fresh in the context of a steady stream of other finished mixes. If the production approach often involves micro-managing—breaking an album down into songs, songs into parts, parts into sections, etc.—the mastering process is macro in scope: Here is a collection of complete pieces of music. Unite them.

The top mastering facilities deal with a staggering amount of material. Denny Purcell of Georgetown Mastering in Nashville reports that at any given time, his facility has handled about 40% of what's on the country charts and 18% of what's on the pop charts. That's perspective. The reason top mastering houses do such immense volume is trust in that perspective. Top producers and record labels still take the trouble to send their music to be mastered because they understand the importance of that final, well-tuned listen.

Mastering involves several steps. Mixes come in on 1/2" analog tape, DAT or some other digital format. The material is EQed and compressed using specialized high-end gear, then edited before final transfer to a master Sony PCM 1630 (from which CDs are produced), lacquer or glass disk (for vinyl), and sometimes, a cassette bin master. Several copies of a song might come out of the mastering studio with different levels of compression and EQ, optimized for radio or CD.

If you're mixing to DAT, conventional wisdom says you should set the machine to 44.1kHz, the CD sample rate. The idea is to avoid any coloration when transferring the audio to the PCM 1630. But toting a digital master into the mastering studio does not mean the music will remain in the digital domain before final transfer. In fact, in many places, it won't. Depending on the material and the tastes of the engineer, your DAT will run through high-end digital-to-analog converters, then experience most of its tweaking in the analog domain before being transferred to digital. While industry pundits point to a purely digital future, many engineers continue to have their hearts in the analog world. Analog mixes (usually to 1/2" tape with and without noise reduction) still make up a huge percentage of the top pop and jazz projects released.

The first thing you'll notice when you walk into a mastering studio is the almost total focus on the listening experience. If a production facility is defined by the power and sonic character of



the mixing console and outboard gear, the mastering studio's physical focus is on the monitor speakers. A mixing console is like a city connected by hundreds of roads leading in different directions. A mastering console is more like an intensely lit room, where decoration is kept to a minimum, and everything is in immediate reach. Since a mastering console is designed to handle only two channels of audio, flexibility is not as important as sonic clarity.

A good mastering room will have a pretty short list of gear on hand, all of audiophile quality and often either custom-built or heavily modified, including digital-to-analog converters, both digital and analog equalizers, compressors, 20- and 24-bit analog-to-digital converters and some kind of digital workstation system. There's very little use for traditional time-based effects like reverb; these guys are fanatical about the integrity of the signal path, which means they keep it as short as possible. Patchbays are a no-no. Compared to a fully equipped recording studio, automation is minimal.

"Most of the analog gear we use is designed for the best possible signal, and that's usually achieved by forgoing VCAs (voltage controlled amplifiers) and things like that," asserts Hull. "Plus, we tend to work song by song, making our changes as we listen, so there's not much need for deep automation."

Then comes the monitoring system, which is, in essence, the mastering engineer's professional universe. Monitors can consume more than 25% of the construction budget of a room. The speakers, power amps, acoustical treatment of the rooms, even the cables that connect the components, are built around the ears of one person, often for that person alone. In a facility like Masterdisk, walking from room to room will reveal staggering contrast, from Howie Weinberg's wall of speakers to Scott Hull's single set of Dantec towers. According to Hull, mastering engineers themselves often avoid working in the rooms of colleagues. "Changing rooms will make any good mastering engineer anxious. You lose your entire reference, and you have to know the context of what you're hearing so you can judge frequency response, level, transients, distortion, and so on."

The view outside (below left) and inside (above) Hollywood's Future Disc mastering studio.

A good set of ears must often be augmented by a diplomatic tongue. Mastering engineers sometimes find themselves in the middle of political battles that have been raging for the entire length of a project. Scott Hull tells the story of a band who came into a mastering session with each member saying they thought the master was okay but they couldn't hear their part clearly enough. Enhancing all of the parts with EQ would have turned the music into mush. "I made them each the master they wanted, then did what I thought was best and sent that off to the record company. The record executive, who knew the situation, called me a few days later and said, 'This sounds good. We'll use it and tell the guys you did what they wanted.' That's what we did, and they were all happy."

Even artists not pushing an ego-driven agenda might want to make suggestions to the mastering engineer based on playback in the mastering suite. But if they haven't heard much music in that particular room before, they may not fully understand what they're hearing. While a mastering engineer might allow some outsiders to go so far as to adjust EQ or compression, it makes them extremely uncomfortable. "The worst scenario is when a client tries to EQ without knowing monitors," says Denny Purcell. "I have a select list of engineers who EQ with me, but only a small group." Better you should take a reference home, listen to it under familiar surroundings and report back later with comments.

While the hourly cost of mastering is

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records

Tricky Treats

Tricky
Nearly God
(Island)

In dance music, you rarely find the kind of radical restructuring that turns up in rock. Instead of offering abrupt shifts, dance music evolves slowly and subtly, as producers focus on the fine points, tinkering with textures and goosing the groove.

That's not the way Tricky works, though. With the record he's dubbed *Nearly God*, he takes dance music's sample-and-loop aesthetic and inverts it; the pulse augments the music's textures instead of the other way around. So, even though the 10 tracks here play off the aural vocabulary of hip-hop, ambient, and dub, they forgo the kind of rhythmic urgency normally associated with dance music. Tricky's beats tend to be hesitant and oblique, shifting in and out of focus like figures in a steam bath. He relies so much on overlays and uneven loops that it's often hard to find where the "one" falls in tracks like "Poems" or "I Be the Prophet." Even when the pulse is relatively metronomic, as on the loping 6/8 groove of "Together Now," Tricky still likes to throw an occasional spanner into the works, knocking the track out of time just enough to leave dancers stumbling.

But by freeing the music from the tick-tick-tick tyranny of clock time, Tricky also allows his music to flow like water. It follows its own fluid logic, pooling here, eddying there, or rushing like rapids further along. "Keep Your Mouth Shut" is a near-chaotic assemblage of samples, beats, loops, and vocals that, from a strict pulse-oriented point of view, don't fit together at all. Yet as discrete as these individual parts may seem, there's a unity to the whole, as the overall play of unrelated sounds mirrors the lyric's notion of two people talking at, not to, one another.

The vocals are *Nearly God*'s secret weapon. With a cast including Neneh Cherry, Alison Moyet, and Terry Hall, as well as regular Tricky collaborators Martine and Björk, the album could have easily become a star vehicle. But rather than let his singers play diva, Tricky exploits them for texture and emotional weight, distorting Cherry's voice until she sounds almost like Prince on "Together Now," and having Moyet howl in bluesy agony through "Make a Change." It's an amazing equalizer, lending this project such an inspired consistency of purpose that *Nearly God* ends up sounding wholly divine.—***J.D. Considine***

Spike Jonze

chuck's cuts

by charles m. young

Barkmarket
L. Ron (American)

In-your-face electric guitar tone, in-your-brain riffs, jagged shifts of texture combine for a cubist late-period Led Zeppelin effect. Not tuneful, though it does grab the ear and rearrange your consciousness. Slide playing this aggressive just seems to dissolve linear thought and make your knees weak. Imagery in the lyrics is cool enough that the usual screaming of vaguely defined alienation actually achieves some catharsis, as opposed to the usual annoyance.

Sheila Chandra
ABoneCroneDrone (Real World/Caroline)

Chandra is brilliant. Each cut is a long drone—some airy, some murky—with various subliminal melodies plucked out of the overtones. Lots of bands have flirted with drones, eventually arriving at a recognizable song. For Chandra, the song is the drone. Terrific for zoning out, vehemently not recommended for driving, lest your soul drift into the ether while your car drifts into a bridge abutment. And that which you see glistening there in the sunlight is brilliant.

Gerry Goffin
Back Room Blood (Genes CD Co)

This is *the* Gerry Goffin, who wrote all those great songs in the early sixties with his former wife Carole King, and then some more great songs on his own. He hasn't forgotten how to write, how to be indirect and still have the song mean something, how to be direct and not bore you with bullshit you've heard a million times before. And he's angry as any punk: at death, at capitalism, at former lovers, at organized religion. Sometimes he's bitter ("A woman can be like a gangster") and sometimes wise ("If Jesus was a capitalist/Why didn't he sell the loaves?"), always compelling. Singing falls about halfway between Dylan and Randy Newman, which is to say he can phrase his own nifty melodies.

Dig
Defenders of the Universe (Radioactive)

Consider the album title, then consider that in the first song the singer is calling himself an asshole and a shithead and a cold sore and a maggot's dream and whatever—is that the alternative universe or what? Endless careening between grandiosity and diminution, whereas if they'd been part of Gerry Goffin's generation, they'd have just blamed their girlfriends. Maybe that's progress. Anyway, these guys pull it off musically. Rollicking chord progressions, catchy melodies, energetic vocals, possible irony redeem alternative frame of mind. If these guys get huge, I'll dig listening to the crowd chant along with that first song ("Whose Side You On").

Various Artists
Mute Beat (ROIR)

Japanese dub has grown to the point that historic reissues are now in order? Apparently so. I wasn't aware of the scene, or of this album the first time it came out, in 1986. Relies minimally on effects for trippy ambience, relies maximally on trumpet and trombone horn section playing simple-but-tight melody fragments over the throbbing dub bass, with occasional solo. Musically substantial enough for jazzheads, trancey enough for aspiring rastas.

Rats of Unusual Size
The Prime Directive Cannot Be Denied (Wagon Train Records)

One school of early punk lyric writing offered ridicule of popular culture, creating farcical jokes in the manner of especially brutal novelty singles instead of emoting about how horrible the world was. Gleefully disregarding many of the language taboos that have arisen in the last twenty years, the Rats operate in that satiric tradition, generating some solid laughs as they gnaw on targets drawn mostly from television ("Shatner Rap") and pop music ("Barry White's Big Balls"). They're willing to appall but pull up short of malicious. Most fun is "AARGH!!", a chant-along affirmation of the pirate's life, which isn't all that different from the rock musician's life. Don't overlook the clever guitar antics. When was the last time you heard the *Fat Albert* theme song?

Linda Perry
In Flight (Interscope)

I heard her sing in a big hall once when she was fronting her previous band, 4 Non Blondes, and I thought, "This woman doesn't need a PA system." In other words, Perry's got a voice like the particle beam rifle that Arnold Schwarzenegger wields in *Eraser*—it'll blow holes through concrete walls and X-ray your skeletal structure. Over a variety of accompaniments here, mostly without loud distorted guitar, mostly with dark subject matter, she doesn't have to blow a hole through the wall on every note, displaying lots of other tricks and not once making me want to stick a big wad of bubble gum in her hair, like I do with Mariah Carey.

Sleepy LaBeef
I'll Never Lay My Guitar Down (Roundar)

Rockabilly veteran LaBeef hasn't lost anything off his fastball over the years. If anything, he gets better as he gets older. Maybe vocal cords need extra years to ferment properly for true resonance, or maybe it's just accumulated wisdom. Whichever, LaBeef can hit those basso profundo low notes like no one else except maybe Johnny Cash and Bobby Nunn from the Coasters. So when he tells you to have a good time, he isn't just urging you. That's a command to get down. Very useful at parties. Very useful for waking up in the morning. Band smokes in midst of swampy approach, with each musician getting his/her moment. You're expecting the cool guitar; the cool blues/boogie piano is a rarer treat.

Lach's Antihoot
Live from the Fort at Sidewalk Cafe (Shanachie)

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product index

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AMPEX MEDIA, 401 Broadway M/S 22-02, Redwood City, CA, 94063, (800) 227-8443: 16-track, **18**

BARTOLINI, 2133 Research Dr. #16, Livermore, CA, 94550, (510) 443-1037: active single coil pickup, **46**

BOSS, 7200 Dominion Cir., Los Angeles, CA, 90040, (213) 685-5141: SD-1 Super Overdrive, Chorus Ensemble, FV-50, **74**

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[*con't from page 46*] better." And then, by some eerie coincidence, Kurt Cobain's very Lanegan-style unplugged reading of the Vaselines tune "Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam" wells up from the jukebox as Lanegan pushes his reddish blond hair off his face and basks in a few stray rays of light.

Though Lanagan is responsible for the lyrics, most of the band's material orginiates with Gary Lee Conner. Onstage, Lee is the wildman of the band, pounding his guitar, rolling around on his back, and literally throwing his considerable weight around. As he puts it, "The live thing has always been different—it's just about getting up there and thrashing through the songs."

Playing bigger venues has given Lee more room to move, but it's also made it harder for the Trees to approximate the dense roar of their recorded material. So this summer, for the first time, the band is bringing a ringer, former Kyuss guitarist Josh Homme, to fill out the sound.

Even without Homme, the band is a big, guitar-powered steamroller in front of 1000 fans at a Boston club. Before long, all 300 pounds of Lee are bouncing around the stage, his right arm swinging into some fierce Pete Townshend-style windmills, and his foot pumping hard on a wah-wah pedal. Barrett bears down on the muscular backbeat of "Shadow of the Season," pausing on the bridge to pound on some medium- size hand drums to the left of his kit, while Van rides the low E on his Fender Precision. And Lanegan stands rooted at center stage, his hands gripping the microphone stand as if it were the only thing keeping him from being whisked away by the tornado of power chords.

"This is the 'we decided not to murder each other' tour," Van kids before the band kicks into a furious version of "Bed of Roses" from 1990's *Uncle Anesthesia*. It's a good thing homicide's been ruled out. After all the interviews, photo shoots, side projects, and solo albums, this is what the four members of the Trees do best.

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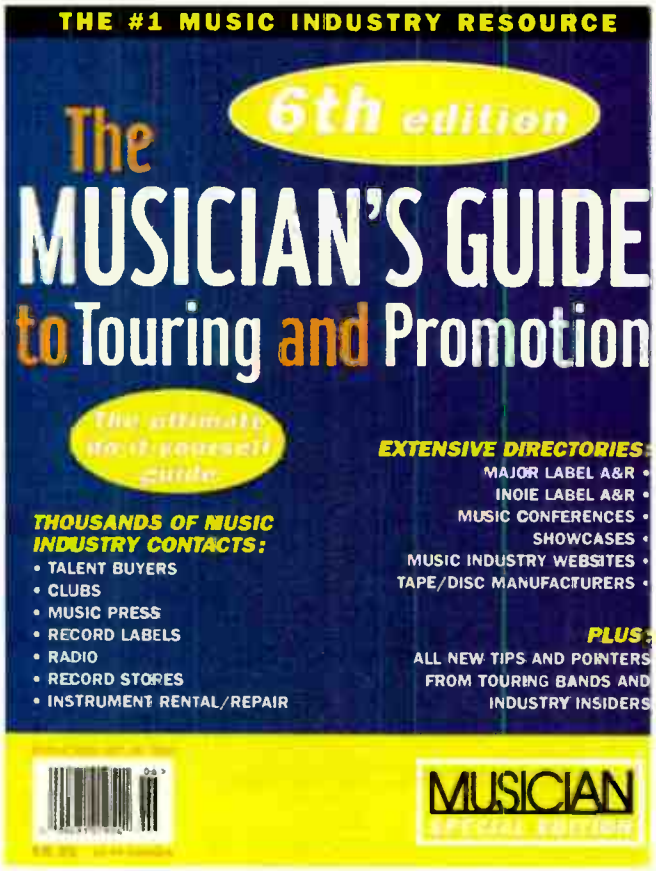

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Remembering Ella Fitzgerald

(1918-1996)

The death of Ella Fitzgerald closes the book on the era of classic jazz singing. Stevie Wonder and Tony Bennett, two of the greatest singers on the scene today, share their thoughts on this definitive American artist.

Stevie Wonder: I met Ella in 1977. I was doing a show in Bogalusa, Louisiana, and since it was my birthday the guys in the Wonderlove group took me to see her perform in New Orleans. It was really a double surprise, because she said she was going to do this song she had just begun to do with her group, and she loved this song a lot. And it turned out to be "A Summer Soft" from my *Songs in the Key of Life* album. That just blew me out completely. Then at the end of her show she called me up, and we sang "You Are the Sunshine of My Life" together.

Ella definitely inspired me. You can hear that very clearly in the kind of vibrato I used when I recorded "Overjoyed"—it was faster than normal for me, but I purposely did that just because I always imagined that this was a song she could sing so beautifully.

She was definitely the best singer at working with different kinds of musicians. I mean, you talk about singing with Chick Webb, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and the many great bands she was with; you could hear all that history in her voice, yet she was still able to make you feel comfortable even while she kept everything in control. You had that feeling with her that she could take a song anywhere and yet stay enough with it to give anybody the chance to get it.

When I think of Ella, I especially think about how she was able to put the proper emphasis and syncopation onto the words. That's very important, because the way you phrase says something about who you are as a person. Ella's syncopations were unique; they brought out the essence of the line. Just one syncopation in a line can do it, and make the difference between the line being flat or very clear and definite.

Also, there was a sexiness to hearing Ella sing. Lots of people think of sexiness as just talking soft, but it's really about knowing *when* to do that. When you sing, your voice is dancing; it's very physical. I got that a lot from Ella too. She'll be missed, but thank God we've been blessed with technology that lets us hear her for ever and ever.

Tony Bennett: She couldn't wait to hit the stage; she loved to entertain people. I used to meet her at airports, and she was practically jumping up and down, she was so eager to get to the gig. And she was so humble—really, a very normal human being. I used to take my daughters over to her house every Christmas Eve in California when they were little girls. She'd open that beautiful door on her house and say, "Oh, it's my daughters!", and welcome us and cook us a great meal. We had beautiful times together.

Everybody loves to scat these days, but the hardest thing to do is to sing the melody and make it believable. You have to do what the composer had in mind, and Ella would do that better than anyone else. She would turn a phrase here and there, but it was always at the right time, and she kept it very melodic. She gave the true reading of the song. It wasn't autobiographical; it was biographical of the composer who wrote the song.

But what I really liked about Ella is something I'd like to share with all the young musicians coming up: She didn't have to take drugs. She lived longer than all of the entertainers who did take drugs. They all died tragically in the '40s and '50s, and think of how much more they could have contributed. Ella could do so much more than the other singers, because she stayed sober. Aside from her music, that was the greatest contribution she made.

michael ochs archives

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