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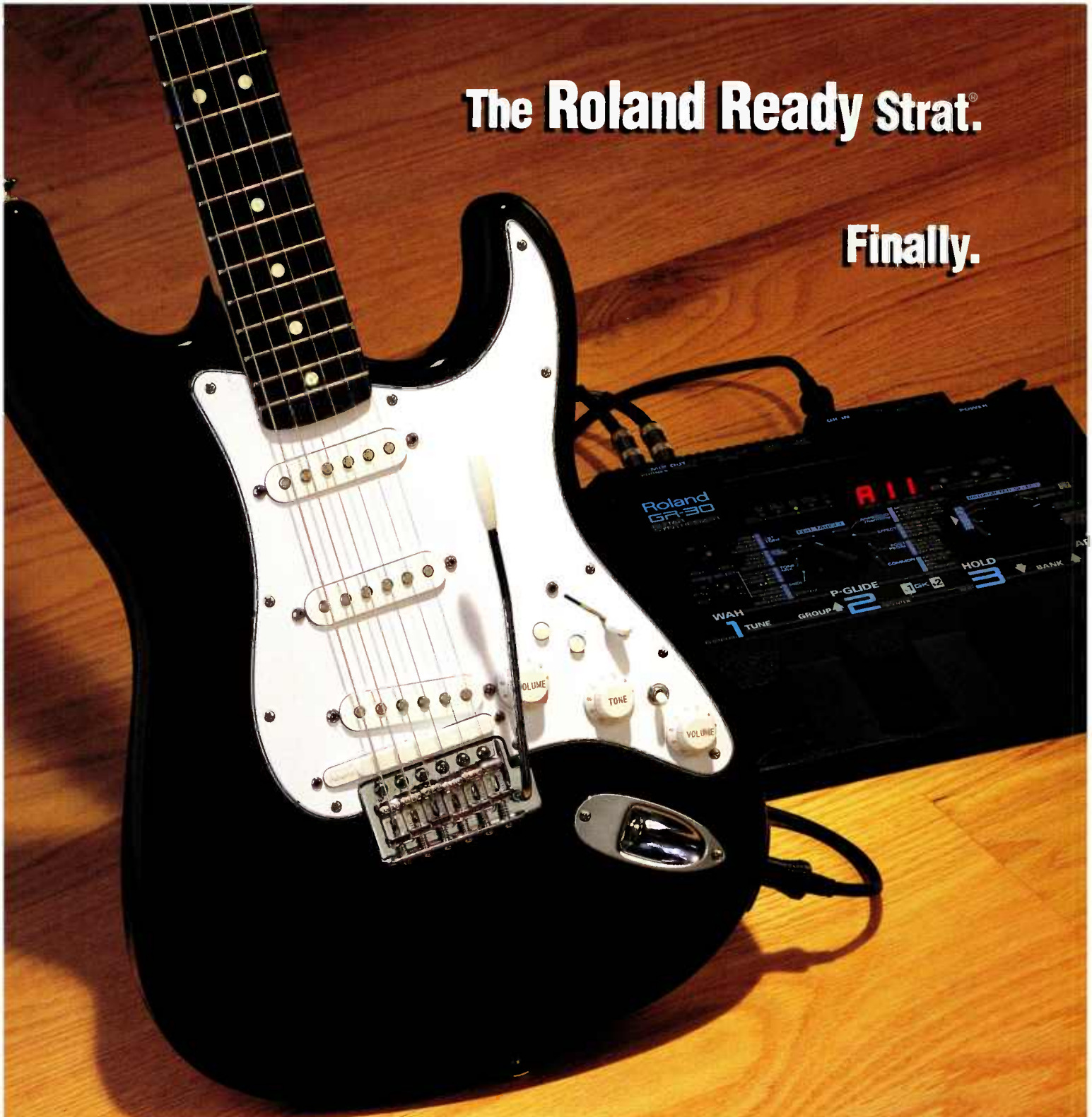
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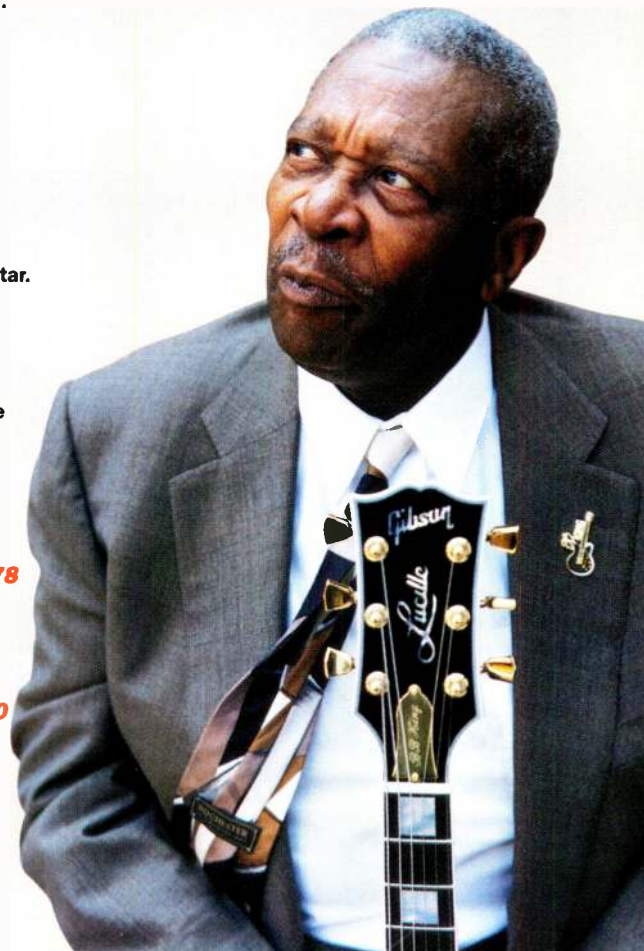
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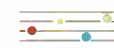
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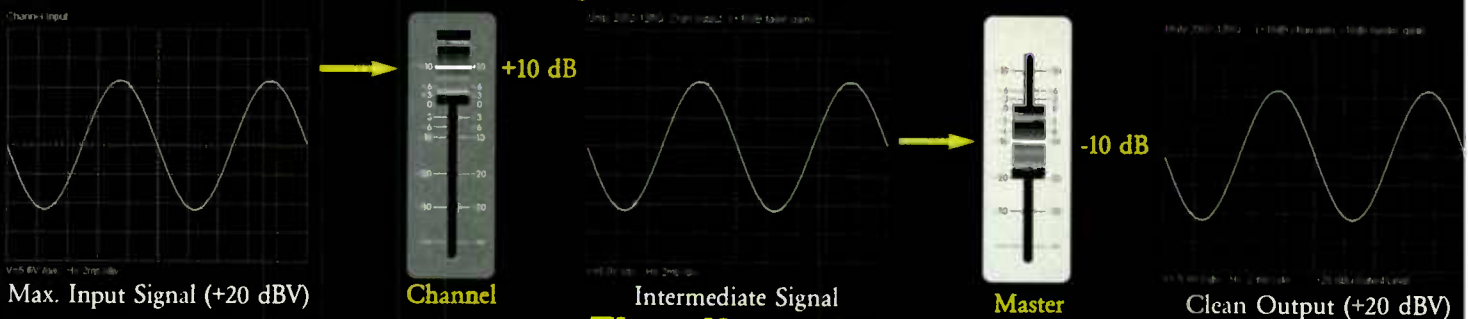
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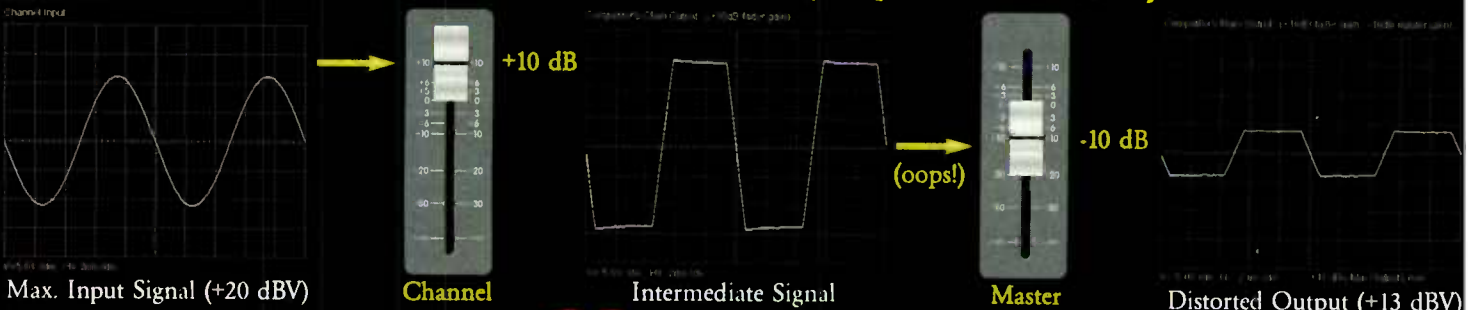
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## second thoughts

Last week I got the invoice for *Musician*. As is my usual practice with these free magazine offerings, I immediately marked it "Cancel," sent it back, and waited for my free issue to arrive.

Today the magazine came . . . and I really like it! I've been receiving *Guitar* and *Guitar Player*, and if I see one more infantile article or ad for Dimebag Darrel I think I'll cut off my Clinton. I'm going to stop subscribing to those teeny-bopper mags and start a two-year subscription to *Musician*. Sorry I was so hasty.

**jerry middlefield**  
**Clookin@aol.com**

[No apology necessary. We're glad to have you on board.]

## tyranny of youth

Any people who don't realize that the music industry as a whole is self-serving and has little or no interest in developing artists' careers need only to read "Don't Sign Anyone Over Thirty" (Headlines, Apr. '98). It's so obvious that record companies are looking for the quick fix to help their "economic crisis." (Yeah, I wish I was that poor.)

The only thing worse than those who are obvious about it are the ones who try to cover their tracks by throwing out a few exceptions to the trend. Tim Devine of Columbia points out that he signed Bonnie Raitt to Capitol. Well, Bonnie was 22 once. If she showed up on his doorstep today as an unsigned artist, what would he do with her now?

Steve Rosenblatt of Capitol is quoted as saying "for every Hanson, there's a Dave

Matthews." Yet these two bands are apples and oranges. The Dave Matthews Band was around for years, touring all over the country and developing a following that allowed them to sell close to 100,000 copies of their independently released *Remember Two Things* without the assistance of any of these record labels. They came with a virtually guaranteed return, built solely on their phenomenal talent and incredible work ethic. It was a no-brainer for the record companies to sign them. To compare that with this marketing creation called Hanson is like comparing the careers of the Stones and the Partridge Family.

The prospect of a long-term career in the music meat grinder is bleak enough for young artists. I can't imagine having the fortitude—or the lack of a grasp on reality—to be over thirty and still be trying my hardest to make it happen.

**chuck woodhams**  
**cdwood420@aol.com**

It doesn't get any more surreal than [Columbia A&R executive] Tim Devine's observation, "If Hanson had bad songs, it wouldn't matter how young they are." Screw the music "business" and all of the toadies employed therein.

**john pierce**  
**jp@gemlink.com**

## working for scratch

A note to Limp Bizkit ("Hang the DJ?," Working Musician, Apr. '98): Although some of the weaker hip-hop DJs may "scratch during the chorus and pick [their] nose," watch it. There's real talent among hip-hop DJs. Some control three or four

turntables, keeping very sophisticated track of each of them and providing artful additions and layers to the attitude of the message.

The art form started out of poverty, where kids couldn't afford instruments and such. I'm very interested to hear Limp Bizkit's music, given that they so casually blow off what I consider a very powerful movement from the ghettos.

**barnaby hazon**  
**bastard@gte.net**

## street songbird

Thank you for your story on and by Kathleen Mock (Headlines, March '98). What was missing was any indication of what a wonderful singer she is. Very often, singers and songwriters for whom I produce demos will ask my opinion about my taste in artists. And I always answer, "One of my favorite singers is Kathleen Mock. She sings in the subways. I don't like Madonna's singing. She sells out stadiums."

In a better world, the New York City subway system would not be able to hold all of the fans that Kathleen Mock deserves.

**michael sansonia**  
**SINGER66NY@aol.com**

## corrections

Apologies to Jordon Schur for misspelling his name in the Apr. '98 Working Musician.

**Send letters to: Musician, 49 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203.**

**Email: editors@musicianmag.com.**

**S**unday morning in Podunk. The air was heavy and cold; patches of snow sat on the frozen mud that surrounded our motel. My guitar player and I were still half-asleep as we loaded the U-Haul, but basically we felt pretty good. Our band had wrapped up a week-long gig at some local lounge the night before. Money was in our pockets, and a five-hour drive to the next venue lay before us. Our lives stretched no further ahead than the six or seven weeks we were always booked in advance. Beyond that, nothing mattered.

At least that's how I felt until a beat-up station wagon pulled up with five guys in it and their own U-Haul on the back. They were older than us, in their forties or fifties, in worn-out clothes and cowboy hats, looking like they'd been driving all night.

The image of that tired band, far from whatever they called home, stays with me. But so does the admiration I felt for people who are so crazy with music that they have no choice—they've got to play. We



musicians are not a practical people; we make decisions that saner folks wouldn't even consider, though to many of us there's no alternative to building a career in music. What if you get a deal with a record company? Does this mean you're home free? Hardly. It's always a struggle.

That's the message in this month's Headlines story. It's not that labels are bad; in fact, they want you to be as huge as you'd like to be. But if "a career in music" is what you're chasing, why not consider more than one strategy? Somewhere between the summit of stardom and the Podunk Motel, you may find the path that's right for you.

A final, sad note: As we went to press we learned of the untimely death of a longtime friend, Melia Peavey. There wasn't a closer or more successful partnership in the music industry than that built by Hartley and Melia. Please join us in contributing to the Peavey house, a fund established by Melia to benefit abused and neglected children. Contact the Peavey House at Box 2898, Meridian, MS 39203.

—Robert L. Doerschuk, editor





*Jimmy Page  
Robert Plant*

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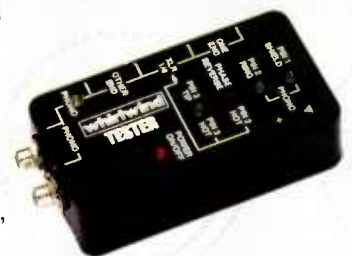
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# whirlwind™



In "Barbarella," from your new 12 Bar Blues solo disc (Atlantic), you mar your playful sci-fi references with one ragged line: "I'm a selfish piece of shit." It doesn't sound like you're kidding around.

When I live in my disease, my drugs come first, and everything else comes after that. I wrote that song when I was using. I was in misery. And I happened to be watching *Barbarella*, and the line stuck out: "Barbarella, come save me from my misery./Can't you see it's a disease?/Shoot the guys and I'll gladly sing a tune for you/And we'll watch *Lost in Space* on my TV."

Was this around the time you went AWOL and wound up hanging out at the Chateau Marmont with Courtney Love?

That was my first arrest. My wife bailed me out, I jumped out of the car, took a cab to my dealer's. I was dope-sick, I got well, I went to the Chateau Marmont. Courtney and I shared suites right next to each other and did a lot of drugs for a couple of weeks.

Didn't you also disappear from a court-ordered rehab several months later? Rumor had it you'd discovered that your band, Stone Temple Pilots, had hired another singer—Dave Coutts, who recorded with the group as Talk Show—and proceeded without you.

Yeah, I did. I left for a day. I was having tooth problems, so I found a hotel doctor who prescribed me two bottles of Vicadin. And I took two bottles of Vicadin in the period of a day and a half. But I was allowed back into the treatment

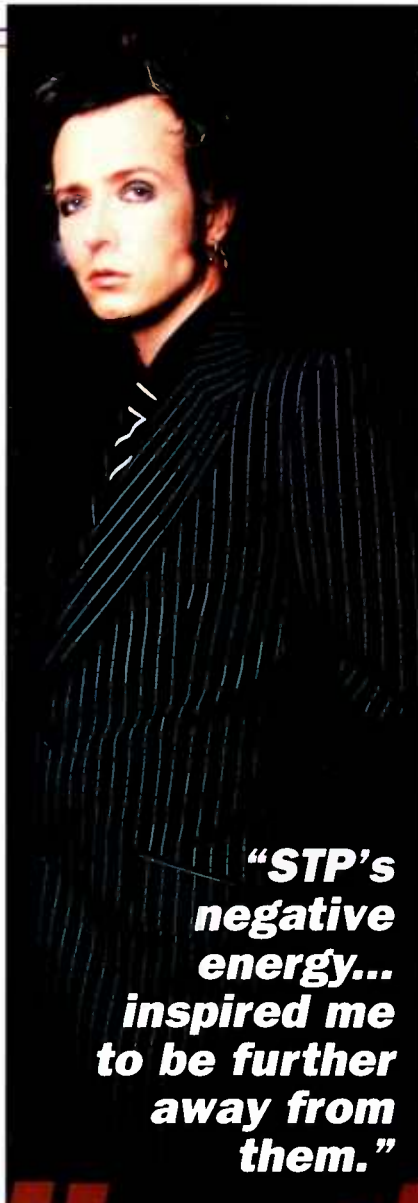
# Scott

center. This was a year and a half ago, and [the STP gossip] was why I left. I decided I'd leave and try to get loaded, but Courtney

and a friend of mine intercepted me downtown; they'd picked up a call I'd left on Courtney's voicemail. My wife came down and stayed for a couple of days, and I took the Vicadin and went back to treatment.

You deal eloquently on this album with your struggle to reach sobriety, as in "The Date." But which important date are you talking about?

It's about the date that my wife and I separated. I wrote the song in half an hour. I went to the studio right after we broke up, wrote the song, then put on a drum track, put down an acoustic guitar track, and electric guitar track, a piano track, a synth track, a percussion track, and then sang the song. All by myself. My relationship with my wife is pretty hardcore—a lot of love, a lot of pain. I think we kind of gave up on each other, because it's always a two-way street. Just like the STP: There may have been my drug addiction, but there was also the jealousy that Robert, Dean, and Eric had toward me being the star and the focal point of the band. That caused so much negative energy that it inspired me to want to isolate more and



**"STP's negative energy... inspired me to be further away from them."**

# Weiland

more, to do more drugs and be further away from them.

The opening, "Desperation #5," states your case adventurously, with scratchy guitars, synth-clicking drumbeat, and ethereal muffled vocals. It's about as far from STP's grind as you could get.

I wrote that song the day after I got out of detox, and I was still loaded on detox meds. That was the first song I wrote for this album, the song that my friends used to talk me into making it a solo album instead of putting [old side project] the Magnificent Bastards back together. They said, "You created this yourself. Why do you want to put together a band and buy houses for four other people? Why not keep the money yourself? Why not have total creative control, like you did with this song?" Half the song was created on eight-track cassette, then it was transferred, pumped through the studio mains at Ocean Way, remixed, and then smalled down onto two-inch tape to compress the shit out of it, make it sound fat. That's why the song sounds like lo-fi and hi-fi mixed together.

How did Daniel Lanois, of all people, hop aboard to mix several of the cuts on 12 Bar Blues?

My A&R person was not completely happy with all the mixes

on the album. He recommended a few names, but I recommended Daniel Lanois, because he's one of my idols. He and Eno are the purveyors of what these dance-trance bands are all trying to be: They've been doing the sound for years. So I said I would love for Lanois to mix these four songs. He got the whole album sent to him, and he called me up and said, "Scott, I'd like to mix every song on this album. I'll do these four songs, but I have to let you know that this is the first album—songwriting-wise and production-wise—that I've been jealous of in ten years." That was the greatest compliment I could ever receive. Now I'm not only working with Daniel Lanois, but we're also becoming musical collaborators, and he's also the guitar player in [touring band] the Action Girls.

And the future of STP?

Once people get bored with eclectic music and wanna hear rock & roll again, we'll get together and make an album that'll save rock. We'll make the next AC/DC *Back in Black!*—Tom Lanham



# Wendy & Lisa

MELVOIN  
COLEMAN

side women

**W**hat are the advantages and disadvantages of going after session work as a team?

**Wendy** (below right): We don't normally get session work as a team. What usually ends up happening is that she'll push me for the gig or I'll push her for the gig. Like when Lisa was doing Ivan Neville's thing she called me, and when I was doing . . .

**Lisa:** Well, you initially got called for Seal back in the Eighties.

**Wendy:** You have to also remember that after we left Prince we did our own records for the first five years, and since then these have

after Prince—a small world meaning the pop world, which is

huge too, of course. But to break out of that in any way is extremely difficult.

*It seemed inevitably that you would be pegged automatically.*

**Wendy:** There's no question, you lose credibility. We have tried desperately to break that mold, which has helped and hindered at the same time, because we are kind of considered a bit too left to make it on pop radio, which is actually okay with me.

**Lisa:** That's always been a hard question. We've been asked that for years now, and I never really know what to say.

The obvious thing is that if I was Joe Schmo I probably wouldn't get hired for anything, so it's definitely got me in the door. But sometimes what I have to offer is either a pleasant surprise or sort of an, "Oh, really? I thought you were going to be a sex kitten [laughs]." That kind of scares me too, when Wendy and I get calls

for something. A lot of times I wonder what they're thinking or which Wendy and Lisa they want. But we're really versatile and we'll rise to the occasion, whatever occasion that may be.

*Were the solo albums an attempt to break out of the sex kitten role?*

**Wendy:** It wasn't an attempt, because we're not really sex kittens.

**Lisa:** Well, it was a little bit of both. On the first album we just did what we felt like doing, and it was apparently viewed as being rather different from the whole Prince camp. Then on the second record we tried to play into it a little bit; we were like, "Okay, you want some funky things? We can do that and we love

doing that." So we sort of run the gamut. Then on the third record we just said, "Fuck that." We're going to do something we want to do. It's been like a hundred years [since Prince] anyway.

**Wendy:** The record we're doing now with Tchad Blake far surpasses any of the work we've done.

*What kind of musical feel does it have?*

**Wendy:** It's as real and as honest and as song-crafted as we've ever been. It sounds great.—David John Farinella



## résumé

Victoria Williams  
Doyle Bramhall  
Seal  
Tricky  
k. d. lang  
Soul Couching  
Michael Penn

**"If I was Joe Schmo, I probably wouldn't get hired for anything."**

—LISA COLEMAN

been the sessions we've done, because we were in a hellish situation with Trevor Horn's record label. We weren't able to put a record out for a certain amount of time. So during that time, we were doing all these sessions and producing people to keep going.

*You mentioned the Prince relationship. Did that narrow your options when you came out of that, or did it broaden possibilities for you?*

**Wendy:** It's been a combination of both, to be really honest. We have fought tooth and nail to try and break away from a small world that existed





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World Radio History





## Digital Editing

MASTERING, PART III

**H**aving already discussed EQing and balancing, we're ready to tackle a mastering engineer's third—and last—major reason for existing: digital editing. Most of today's records aren't delivered to the mastering studio fully assembled. In fact, if the project has been mixed to analog tape, between ten to fifty reels will arrive at the mastering session. This makes it necessary to use a digital audio workstation (DAW), which is commonly used for assembling the reels into a properly sequenced record. But what's made the DAW indispensable is its ability to perform numerous, non-destructive edits—particularly when creating composite mixes.

Example: After setting the EQ for a given track, I might notice that the vocal hook sounds low in the mix. If changing the EQ doesn't work, I'll create a composite edit, using the main mix for the intro, verses, and solos, and a vocals-up mix during the choruses. If this same track is going to be the first single, the label will need a four-minute radio edit, for which I could shorten the intro—but if there aren't any good places to cut in and out, I might want to use the instrumental version for the intro and paste it right into the first verse. Thanks to the DAW, all this can be done easily—the song can be put back together without any hassles because the editing was non-destructive. A few years ago, fixing these problems meant sifting through a week's worth of garbage in search of an elusive piece of analog tape.—*Joe Palmaccio*

*Joe Palmaccio is a mastering engineer at Sterling Sound in New York.*

# Foreign Affairs

**I**f your band longs for national press, national airplay, and high-profile bookings—and you want it all before releasing your first album—it may be a good idea to leave the country: You've got a better chance of achieving these goals in Britain.

Just ask songwriting partners Nepo and Druggy G of the **O**. This punk/pop/hip-hop combo moved to London in 1990 from their home in the New York metropolitan area and landed a deal in 1996 with Polydor U.K. By the time their first single, "Get Wasted Time," came out last fall, the **O** had gotten raves in *Melody Maker*, one of the U.K.'s leading music weeklies, received airplay on BBC Radio One's influential *Evening Session*, and staged gigs at the Dublin Castle, one of London's tastemaker clubs.

According to Nepo, "there's definitely the sense that London is the land of milk and honey" among their musician friends back in New York. "It is easier to get noticed in England because everyone is just dying for the next story—as long as you get credible quickly, before the press have a chance to annihilate you."

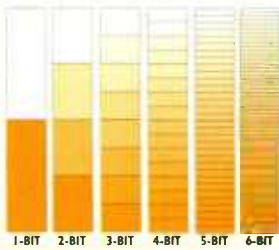
Like bands anywhere, the **O** benefited from smart networking, but the band also found a natural artistic home in London. "They have a love for British music," says Polydor A&R manager Rick Lennox, who signed the act. "They know more about the Beatles than I do."

*(continued on page 16)*





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# ALESIS

RECORDING

ALESIS

World Radio History

(continued from page 14)

The experience of the O—now a threesome with drummer Burnman Devlin—highlights the pros and cons of getting a foreign record deal, particularly in Britain. The intense competition among music companies in this comparatively small country can make the wheels spin faster. Within nine months of their arrival in London in 1990, the O had signed a publishing deal with EMI Music. "If you've got what it takes, there's a lot of people out there dying to sign stuff, and the mechanism to get it moving is far quicker than in the States," says Druggy G.

Although the O signed recording and publishing contracts with U.K. companies for the world, other U.S. acts with foreign deals have kept open their options for America. That allows them to return home with more negotiating clout. An act signed directly to a multi-national label in the U.K. will also see a slight reduction in its royalties on albums sold in the U.S. or other markets under the foreign royalty rate clause in many recording contracts.

But before you head to the airport, take a hint from the O and check your passport. An American musician will need a temporary worker visa to perform or record in Britain. Nepo and Druggy G came to Britain as students but stayed to work. "That is a big rule we broke," says Nepo, recalling how immigration officials booted them out of the country until their paperwork was sorted.

Despite such difficulties, it can make business sense for a young act like the O to venture abroad early in its career. American musicians lose sight of the fact that nearly seventy percent of the world's record sales are outside North America, and that Europe as a whole is a larger music market than the U.S. The O will shoot first for a hit in the U.K., followed by a look toward Europe before aiming to crack their homeland. "The plan," Nepo quips, "certainly is to just have America on their knees begging for us to come back." —**Thom Duffy**



# Hear Gone

**M**usicians typically take their hearing for granted . . . until they have a problem with it. The bad news is that hearing damage is permanent and irreversible, and because it usually occurs gradually over a long period you may not realize you are hurting your ears. The good news is that the damage is preventable.

One proactive thing you can do is to wear hearing protection when you are playing or listening to live music. That means onstage, at rehearsal, and when you go to see other bands. A convenient and inexpensive option is to buy generic foam plugs at your local drugstore or gun shop. If you want to get earplugs that provide a more natural sound, you can buy plugs designed specifically for musicians. A third possibility is to visit an audiologist, get an ear mold made, and be fitted with custom earplugs. Other preventive measures are mostly common sense: Turn the volume down, increase the distance between you and the source of loud noise, and limit the duration of exposure. Finally, be conscious of avoiding loud sounds in everyday life, not just musical situations. If you do happen to be in a loud



## On the Road Again

**T**hose brave souls who try to book their own tours usually come away more familiar with the headaches than the glamour. "I'm pulling my hair out right now," says Boston rocker **Jules Verdone**, who's currently in the throes of plotting her own route to Austin, Texas, and back. "But I have to approach this

with a lot of positive attitude and plenty of coffee."

Like many in the same boat, Verdone is a young artist with little money who's looking for exposure and interested audiences. But with no booking agent to set up her tour, she's left to her own devices and dubious sense of direction. "I can't tell how far New Orleans is from Austin, and I sure don't want to drive fifteen hours if I don't have to," she says.

Nevertheless, armed with a trusty Rand McNally atlas and *The Musician's Guide to Touring and Promotion*, Verdone charts her course and calls clubs along her route, asking for gigs. "We send packages with the *Diary of a Liar* (Q Division) and some flattering press out to the clubs and then call," she explains. "Otherwise we're somebody you haven't heard of on a small label that might not mean anything



# Today, Tomorrow

environment for an extended period, try to rest your ears for a day or so afterwards.

As guitarist Gareth Prosser of *Fat* can attest, using hearing protection the right way is almost as important as using it in the first place. "In rehearsals and when I'm at other shows I always wear two earplugs," he says. "but at our shows I'll just use an earplug in my left ear and leave the right one open to keep the feel. I tend to get tinnitus"—buzzing, whistling, or ringing that's usually caused by noise-induced damage—"in the unplugged after we play live. Sometimes listening to CDs on a Walkman while we're traveling brings it on, but only in the exposed ear. I want to get out of the habit of using only one plug live: it's just the psychological barrier of dealing with it."

If you suspect you have sustained hearing damage, contact HEAR (Hearing Education and Awareness for Rockers/www.hear.net) or go to a licensed audiologist and get tested. At the very least, you'll have a baseline to compare to future tests to find out if your hearing is deteriorating. And what about those people who feel it's not "rock & roll" to protect your ears? "When you're young, you feel like you're invincible," says Kathy Peck, executive director of HEAR. "but what's happening is that you're aging your ears and losing your hearing way before you should."—*Jason Zasky*

to anyone. You have to be quick because these [club] people are busy. But being charming and succinct at the same time is almost impossible."

*The Badlee's* Pete Palladino, along with manager Terry Selders, base their booking policy on radio play. "As soon as we get an ad on radio," says Selders, "we attack that market with everything: college radio, local press, regional press. We send posters and promos to record stores and sometimes even free copies of the record if the store didn't buy any from their distributor."

Though the Badlees have a label deal with Polygram and moved nearly 100,000 copies of their debut, *River Songs*, they still handle all of their own business affairs. "You have to be up front [with club bookers]," says Palladino, "and let them know what

kind of airplay you're getting locally. You might have to play for no money, and you might have to play radio station events, but it's free publicity."

DIY booking is something you learn by doing. Contact your distributors and exploit their relationships with area club folks, keep a database of contacts, track your promotional mailings, and most importantly, give yourself a reasonable amount of time—at least three months—to book your dates. And if it means playing Sunday night in Huntington, Indiana, push for a drink special night or some other kind of promotion to draw numbers. "You know what works better than a song on the radio?" laughs Palladino. "A happy hour buffet. Believe it or not, there are worse things than getting outdrawn by a buffet."—*Bob Gulla*



## Dollar General

**G**ot a long road trip coming up? It might be smart to assign some of your band's organizational duties to a reputable business manager—one who already represents acts you're familiar with and who's been in the business for more than a week.

"I see our role as being the CFO of the organization," says Dwight Wiles, a CPA who handles finances for *Deana Carter*, *Pam Tillis*, *Brooks & Dunn*, and others. "We're involved—hopefully—in every financial decision that the artist is going to make, from tax questions to whether to lease or buy a bus. When you start touring, suddenly you've got this little company, and it's good to get started on a procedure that will grow with you."

Good business managers should be savvy to issues such as establishing a separate corporation for touring and another for royalty income. Why? "When you're driving around the country in a bus, you're a walking liability bombshell," he says. "If there's an accident on the road or your lighting collapses, you've established a corporate shield to protect the individuals against litigation."

Probably the most important reason to hire a money manager involves planning for the future. Says Wiles, "We really want to get our artists to the point where if they don't want to work anymore, they don't have to." Who could ask for anything more?—*Bob Cannon*



# New S

*Turntable whiz*

*Kid Koala*

*finds music in*

*the grooves.*

*by ken micallef*



**L**ong before Beck Hansen proclaimed his love of "two turntables and a microphone," innovative club DJs were reinventing the wheel, scratch-style. Eighties hip-hoppers such as Grand Wizard Theodore, Public Enemy, Jam Master Jay, and Scott La Rock were the forerunners to such current turntable terrorists as Invisbl Skratch Piklz and the Xecutioners. In these mighty hands vinyl becomes a mangled tool, bent, pushed, and prodded to extreme levels of turntable athleticism.

But beyond pure spinning and scratching, newer artists such as Canada's Kid Koala are

"When you're playing with a band it's obvious if your part isn't working," says Koala, who studied classical piano for ten years before discovering his turntable fetish at the age of sixteen. "It's a conventional way of looking at music, but it's also more of a challenge. I've been doing this noisy stuff all my life, so now I'm trying to do something more coherent. Sometimes I'll just use the decks as ambient sound and throw in crickets or breeze, just to give it some dimension. People never notice until all of a sudden the crickets are gone."

While Koala shies away from the moniker

it tight." To demonstrate, Koala plays what he calls a "chirp," a simple, back-and-forth, eighth-note scratch with his index finger. "You can double-time the chirp, and maybe add a flair"—this sounds like a swooping windshield wiper. "The chirp with the flair is called the flirp. Do the chirp with the flair right after it, then back to the flirp"—the effect is that of a car engine skipping as it tries to start.

Other techniques in Kid Koala's repertoire include the hydroplane, the crab, and the transformer. "If you took a pencil eraser and pushed it forward along the record, it would bounce," he explains. "It

# Dins on Scratching

using the turntable as a tool within a wider scope of music. Koala's self-released mix tape, *Scratch Scratch Scratch*, is thirty-plus minutes of spoken-word hilarity and musical hijinx that sounds like Public Enemy hanging with Walt Disney on the set of *Fantasia*. Koala's record selection—typically easy-listening Eighties pop and off-the-wall spoken word (including three mint Barbie story discs)—contributes to what he calls his "scratchy land." Koala's Ninjatune debut will come in June, and he has also appeared on *Return of the DJ, Vol. Two* (Bomb) and Ninjatune's *Funkufusion*, and has done remixes for labelmates Coldcut and DJ Vadim.

Using up to three Technics SL 1200 MKII turntables at once (with Shure SE35 cartridges), Koala (23-year-old Eric San) layers records, one over the other, using a Vestax PMC 05 Pro Mixer and Peavey VM2 tube preamp direct to either a Fostex eight-track tape deck or Roland VS-880 eight-track hard disc recorder. Having learned his craft with Montreal group Bullfrog, Koala brings a musical approach to what is largely a land of swooping squeegee sounds and static hip-hop beats.

"turntablist," which is reserved for the elite, there's no doubting his skills. Running the gamut in his daily, four-hour practice sessions, from "military scratches," "orbits," "bananas," "shimmers," "stutters," and "chops," Koala takes a drummer's approach toward turntable technique.

"It's like we're trying to do paradiddles, going back and forth between different scratches, trying to maintain them consistently and cleanly."


For his forthcoming Ninjatune release, Koala layers sounds in the fashion of such sampling genies as DJ Shadow and the Orb, but exclusively live and from vinyl. Over a beat from one record, he'll add bass, drums, effects—whatever is needed. On "Tabu Soda," from *Scratch Scratch Scratch*, Koala laid down jungle sounds from a Sixties easy-listening record, then created a beat on the other two decks. Using the same records on both of those decks, he extracted a beat by focusing on the snare from one and a bass drum from the other; this is called beat juggling.

"I might have a slow song where I'll work on one scratch for five minutes, just to keep

would get caught up in the friction. That's hydroplaning. You're pulling the record back with one hand while pushing it forward with the other hand, letting your middle finger bounce on the record's surface.

"Transforming is bouncing your thumb and forefinger on the record in succession. Crabbing is cutting the sound on and off with the cross-fader, using all four fingers. Imagine snapping all your fingers against your thumb, which is holding the fader. You keep the fader [slightly] open [so that you can hear some of the right turntable as well as the left], and snap your fingers against it. It makes a stuttering sound."

Koala suggests that beginners focus on getting the right sound before hitting the hard stuff. "You want to work with the attack part of the sound, like a snare drum. Use the space just slightly before the hit and the attack, then go back and forth on that spot. Find the attack or it won't sound clean."

Will any record do? "All records are meant to scratch," he laughs. "It's based on complete disrespect for all forms of vinyl and recorded material—but with love." 

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# Jazz Chord Alert!



Stager (left), Elkins, Hanson and Johnson

**H**uffamoose frontman Craig Elkins with an air of comic resignation as his band prepares to close another evening on a Northeast tour. Elkins and cohorts—lead guitarist and songwriter Kevin Hanson, bassist Jim Stager, and drummer Erik Johnson—have been working this material for some time now; it's been over two years since they began recording their Interscope debut *We've Been Had Again*, and maybe a bit of battle fatigue is evident.

But "Wait" has been getting its share of radio play in recent months, and together with another of the album's extractions "James" has helped keep the album in the pop arena, even landing

## Huffamoose bends the rules and flats the ninths

by david simons

the foursome a slot on the *Conan O'Brien Show* three nights earlier. ("We got to hang with Max!" beams a reverent Johnson.)

The ascending riff that launches "Wait" is a monster, the kind of infectious guitar statement that's heard too rarely these days. It unveils a tune with a can't-miss groove, startling chord configurations, and an abrupt key change, all cascading into a super hook ("wait, baby, wait . . ."). For any band, "Wait" would be a career song; for Huffamoose, it's helped keep the momentum going this long.

It's also something of an anomaly in an evening filled with tunes which, though highly melodic and memorable, are much less

(continued on page 22)

(continued from page 21)

formulaic. Hanson penned "Wait," and much of the rest comes from the mind of Elkins, whose love of jazz colorations and quirky imagery provide a bit more of a challenge to listeners this evening. If they've been waiting for "Wait," they've gotten a good sense of what Huffamoose songs are really about in the meantime.

Over beers and the din of the Clinton sex scandal from a nearby TV, Elkins and Hanson discussed the songwriting methods which resulted in the eclectic material on *We've Been Had Again*—and in particular defended their allegiance to jazz voicings.

*Your first producer really objected to some of the chords you were writing into your songs.*

**Elkins:** During pre-production for the record, we were trying to come up with something, and Kevin was fumbling around on the guitar. And this normally mild-mannered guy suddenly blurts out, "That's it! If I hear one more fuckin' jazz chord, I'm getting on a plane and flying back tonight!" That, to us, was the wake-up call to the music industry. Of course, I always think everybody is a wolf in sheep's clothing in this business.

*You do use some pretty wild chords, though, like the one that opens the chorus to "Enigmatic."*

**Elkins:** You mean the A major sharp 11th? My spectacularly refreshing chord changes [laughs]. That's because I tend to write the melody first in a lot of tunes and then harmonize the melodies afterwards. I kind of play around with that kind of stuff, rather than get locked into just a few chords; that sharp 11 just harmonizes the melody there. I need to come up with something that isn't boring to me but isn't too serious either.

*This is a very guitar-heavy record. Are you thinking about the guitar accompaniment when you're constructing the songs?*

**Hanson:** It has so much to do with how the melody worked with the underlying harmonies and how you can build on that, have a part that lets the melody have its own space and then have another that works with it, one that doesn't get in the way. If you have

a song in mind and you want the lyric to really come across, then everything else that goes onto the track is a part of that. But all the overdubs in the world, the slickest, hippest, cacophonous production idea is either completely in line with the lyric or it's not. And a lot of the time it's not. You need the right producer.

*"James," your song about an idealistic, earthy young couple, is especially interesting in that it's written from the woman's point of view, like when you sing "James says that I am his flower girl."*

**Elkins:** We've been getting a lot of flack

made a big statement about growing up. But now I think, so what? He ended up doing what he wanted to do; they own a head shop in Virginia Beach or something. It's also my first attempt at a bridge, after I'd realized that none of my songs had them.

*The lyrics to these songs sometimes sound like stream-of-consciousness—a flurry of images which flow into each other, such as in "Like a Weed."*

**Elkins:** I try to write after I get out of bed, before my mind is totally awake, and I can take these little journeys and not be afraid to write them. So I come up with an idea and let my mind run with it, instead of trying to write a song about "myself" and my experience. That way, I can be who I am and feel comfortable with it. I'm that way as a person: I can't really hold one thought for too long before my mind goes off in different directions. I'm happy that that's part of me when I'm writing songs, because in the rest of my life it kinda fails [laughs].

*That "Wait" riff sounds like you really labored over it.*

**Hanson:** I'd been messing around with the riff for a long time, like three years ago. Then I finally put it to the song, which almost sounds like a show tune to me, the way it's constructed, with those descending chords.

*People who hear "Wait" may be surprised by what they find on the rest of the record. The deeper into the record you go, the more you realize that your writing is less confined to pop song structure—especially by the time you get to "Speeding Bullet," which is almost fusion.*

**Elkins:** We don't write songs as a band; Kevin writes some songs and I write others. That might have something to do with why some things appear unexpected, why there are some twists and turns. So I wrote "Speeding Bullet," which in and of itself is kind of a masterpiece song. Then you've got "Wait," which Kevin wrote, which is sort of a . . .

**Hanson:** A throw-away radio tune?

**Elkins:** Yeah, that's it.

*No jealousy there, right?*

**Elkins:** None at all!

**"I try to write after I get out of bed, before my mind is totally awake, and I can take these little journeys and not be afraid to write them."**

— Craig Elkins

about that lately. When I wrote it and it was released on our independent thing, we never heard anything about the possibility that it could be a "gay" song. And now every radio station we go into that's playing the song, that's the first question they ask. Maybe they're just being hesitant to play it because it could be controversial, and they're trying to clear it up for the people who don't get it.

*Is that song a true story?*

**Elkins:** Yes, and I almost feel bad about the way it came out. It's written about this girl I knew and her boyfriend, and I thought she'd just bought into this guy's whole shtick. There were all these things she thought he was that I kinda thought he wasn't, like he'd told her that he played in some band. He didn't even know how to play the guitar! So I sort of took that idea and went with it and





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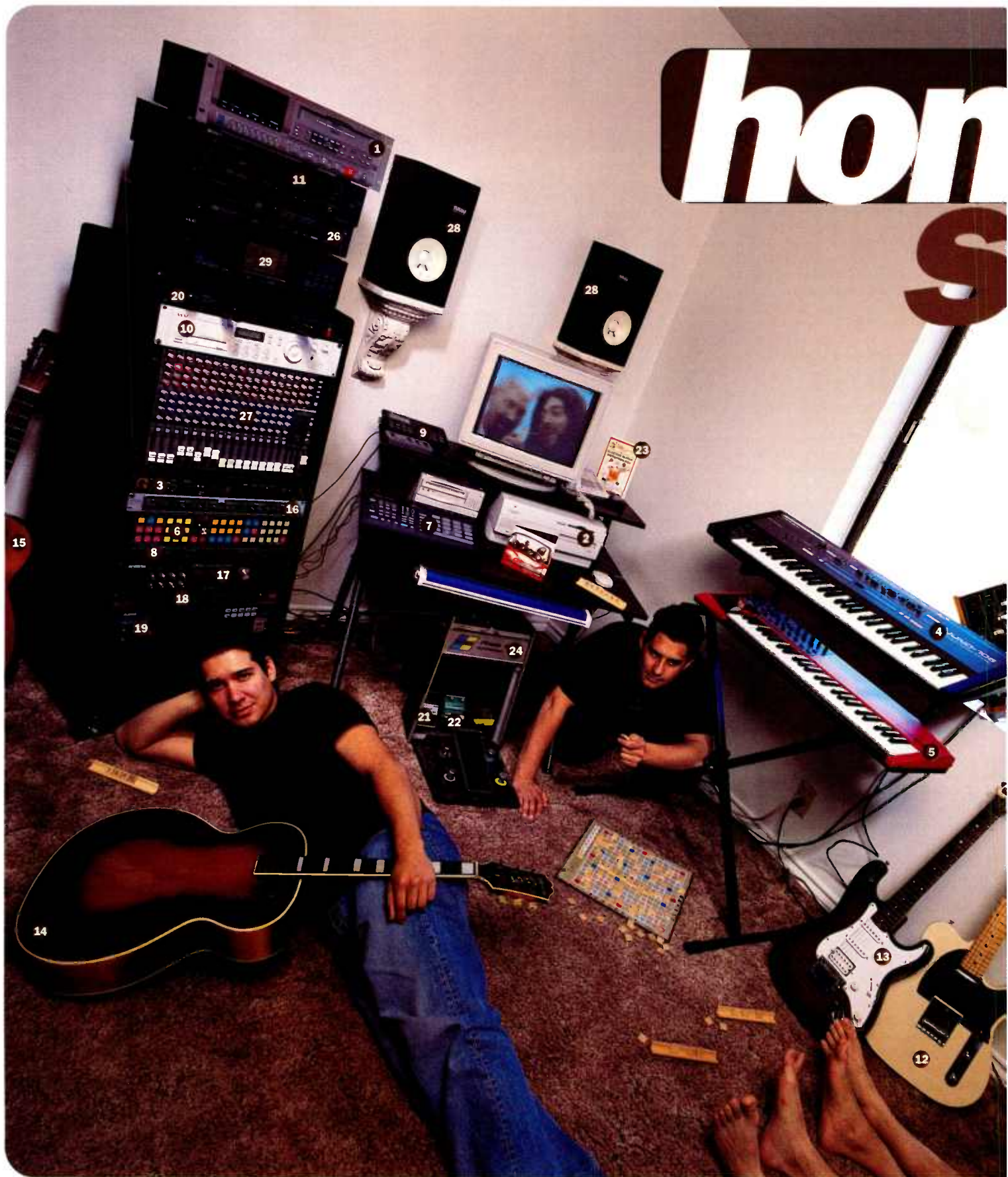
World Radio History





# hon

# S





me  
studio

by alan diperna

photo by phil fewsmith

# Ultrahorse

**U**ltrahorse sound more like they come from London than Whittier, California, a trim L.A. suburb best known as the birthplace of Richard Nixon and epicenter of a big earthquake in '72. But lifelong Whittier residence hasn't stopped Anthony Paul Rodriguez and Art Martinez from making letter-perfect, Brit-inflected pop, enhanced by bizarre, textured electronics. The duo started recording in Rodriguez's tiny home studio, inspired by a shared love of the Beatles, Kraftwerk and early Eighties electronic groups like Fad Gadget, Cabaret Voltaire and Depeche Mode.

"The whole house was just the size of a small room," says Rodriguez, who handles keyboard/programming/sampling/recording/sound manipulation duties while Martinez sings and plays guitar. "The studio equipment was in a closet. Art would do guitar and vocals in the main living space. On Tuesdays, we had to wait for the trash truck to go by before we could record anything."

Under these classic home-studio conditions, the duo made an album-length demo and pressed it up themselves. It got them onto *Musician's Top 30 Unsigned Bands* list, won accolades in several trade magazines, piqued local radio interest and landed them a deal with 911 Records. A lot of their original home studio tracks ended up on their official CD debut, *The Pleasure and Pain of an Automobile*.

Anthony and Art have since moved into larger quarters in Whittier, with a separate room for their studio. But the gear remains the same. Their setup is based around an **Alesis ADAT XT 1** and a **PowerMac 7500 2** running Digidesign Pro Tools with an Audiomeia 3 card and

Performer MIDI sequencing software via a **Mark of the Unicorn MIDI Time Piece 3 3**. As even a cursory listen to *The Pleasure and Pain* attests, Rodriguez is a fan of vintage synth sounds. His primary MIDI synths are a **Juno-106 4**, a **Nord Lead 5** and **Studio Electronics MIDI Moog 6**. (His **Roland R-70 7** drum machine, **Roland U-220 8** and **BOSS 330 9** tone modules are used only for songwriting.) MIDI synchronization was dirt simple for the tracks that became *The Pleasure and the Pain*. "I just striped SMPTE onto one of my ADAT tracks," says Rodriguez.

Much of Anthony's work involves radical processing of recorded or sequenced tracks, bouncing between his ADAT, Pro Tools, an **Akai S2000 10** sampler and ancient **Sony 300 ES DAT 11** (one of the first "gray market" DAT machines available in the US). Art's guitars—which include an **Epiphone "Tele" model 12**, **Fender Stratocaster 13**, **1939 Epiphone Broadway 14**, Ovation acoustic [not shown] and a thrift shop nylon string **15**—all go down to the ADAT direct. "With electric guitars, I'll just pull the cord out of the vocal mic [an AKG 414], put an adaptor on it and plug it into the guitar," Anthony laughs. "I want to get the guitar tone as simple and pure as possible, so I can run it through a bunch of effects after the fact. Sometimes I'll run it through effects over and over again. So if I start with something that's already distorted or effected, it limits what I can do. What I do is set up the ADAT for loop playback, so it keeps playing back

the guitar riff while I'm messing with the knobs and trying out different effects. At the same time, I'll have the DAT machine recording what I'm doing with the effects. Then I can go back to the DAT later, take



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anything I like, turn it into a sample and just place that into the song. A lot of stuff turns into samples, even vocals sometimes. That also gives me back a track off the ADAT."

Signal processing devices on hand include a **Behringer Composer** 16, compressor, **Ensoniq DP4** 17, **ART Multiverb**


18 and **Alesis Midiverb** 19. These devices, like everything else in Ultrahorse's rack, are powered by a **Juice Goose** 20. In the pedal department, Rodriguez uses a SansAmp (not shown), **Boss HyperFuzz** 21 and **DOD Envelope Filter** 22 to mutate sounds. On some occasions, Anthony will even resort to

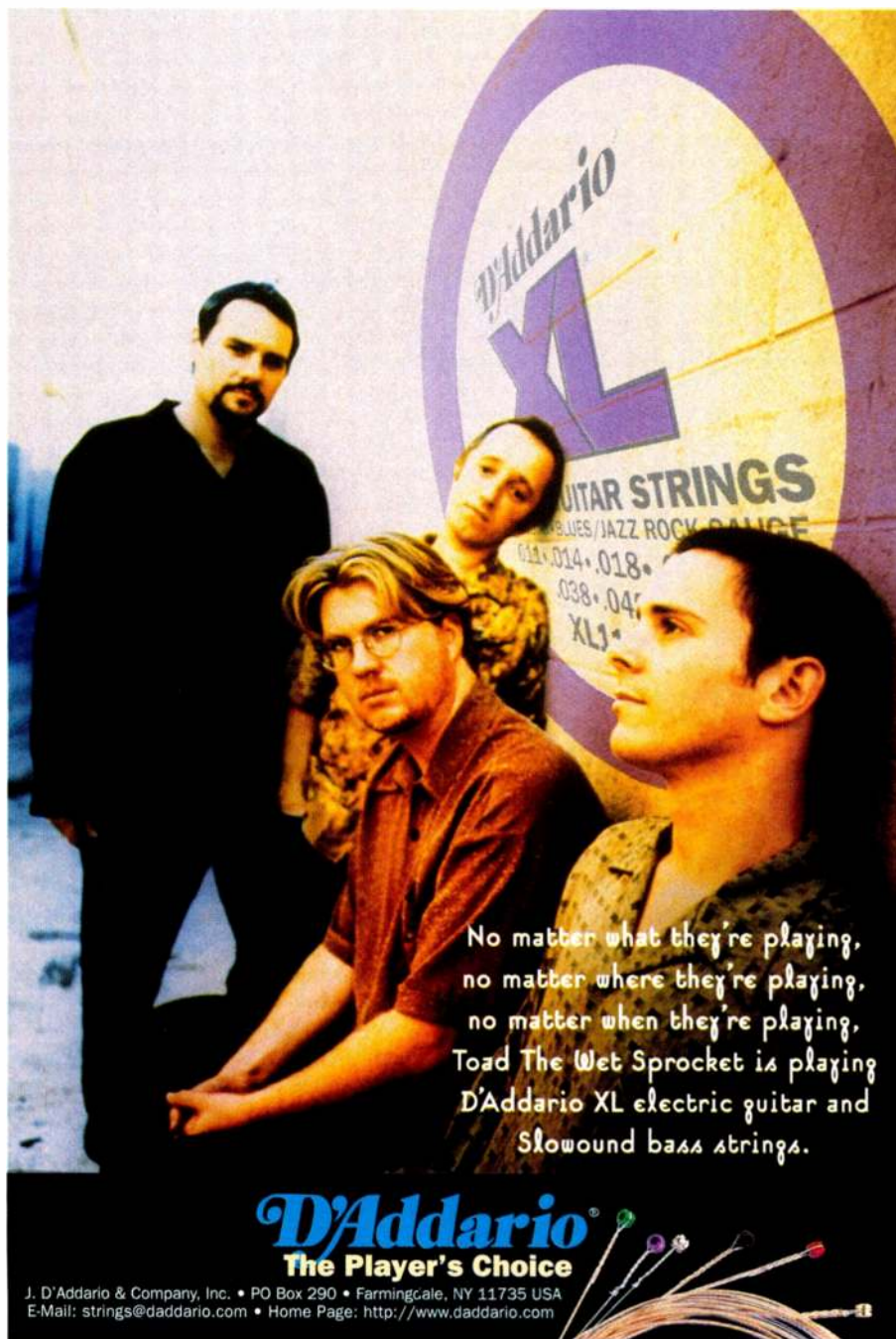
his **Mr. Circuit** electronic distortion box (Fuzz Box 1026) 23. There's also an ancient device called a **Ludwig Phase II Synthesizer** 24. Neither Art nor Anthony seem quite certain what it does; but they agree it sounds pretty cool. For "garbage audio" effects, Rodriguez will record a track onto a cheap mini cassette recorder and then re-sample it. Anthony also likes to go wild on his **Moog Prodigy** 25 while the DAT is running and then sample off choice bits. "The oscillators drift too much just to record it," he notes."

But even MIDI sequenced parts can be manipulated via sampling. "A lot of times, I'll take a sequencer, play it back at twice the original tempo, sample it and then play the sample back twice as slow," Anthony says. "So it's back in time again, but I've got a lower voice out of it—a different sound."

The studio is also equipped with a **Pioneer** CD player 26 (also one of the first ever made) as a sample source. "But a lot of that is done right in the computer, which has its own CD player," says Rodriguez. "A lot of the work takes place inside the computer."

When the lads are done performing and deforming, they mix the whole thing down on a 16-channel **Mackie 1602** board 27, monitoring on **Yamaha NS10Ms** 28 powered by an **Akai AAV405** consumer stereo receiver 29. *The Pleasure and the Pain of an Automobile* project was finished up mainly on Pro Tools and ADAT at the Venice, CA studio of Ultrahorse's producer, Pete Scaturro. ADAT tapes were sent to various session players, who laid on their parts and mailed the tapes back. These performances were digitally transferred to Pro Tools and edited down by Rodriguez. The project was then mixed at 911 Studios in Fremont, CA. The result is an album with uniformly high production values. But Rodriguez says there's a small cult of fans who prefer the original demo version (also titled *The Pleasure and Pain of an Automobile* but issued under the band name The Loveless)—the one the guys recorded entirely at home.

"In the end, what really counts is the songs," he says. "All our songs are completely written out on acoustic guitar before we do anything to them. That's one of our rules. A song should have its own legs. It shouldn't need the aid of all this sound work. That's just a bonus." 



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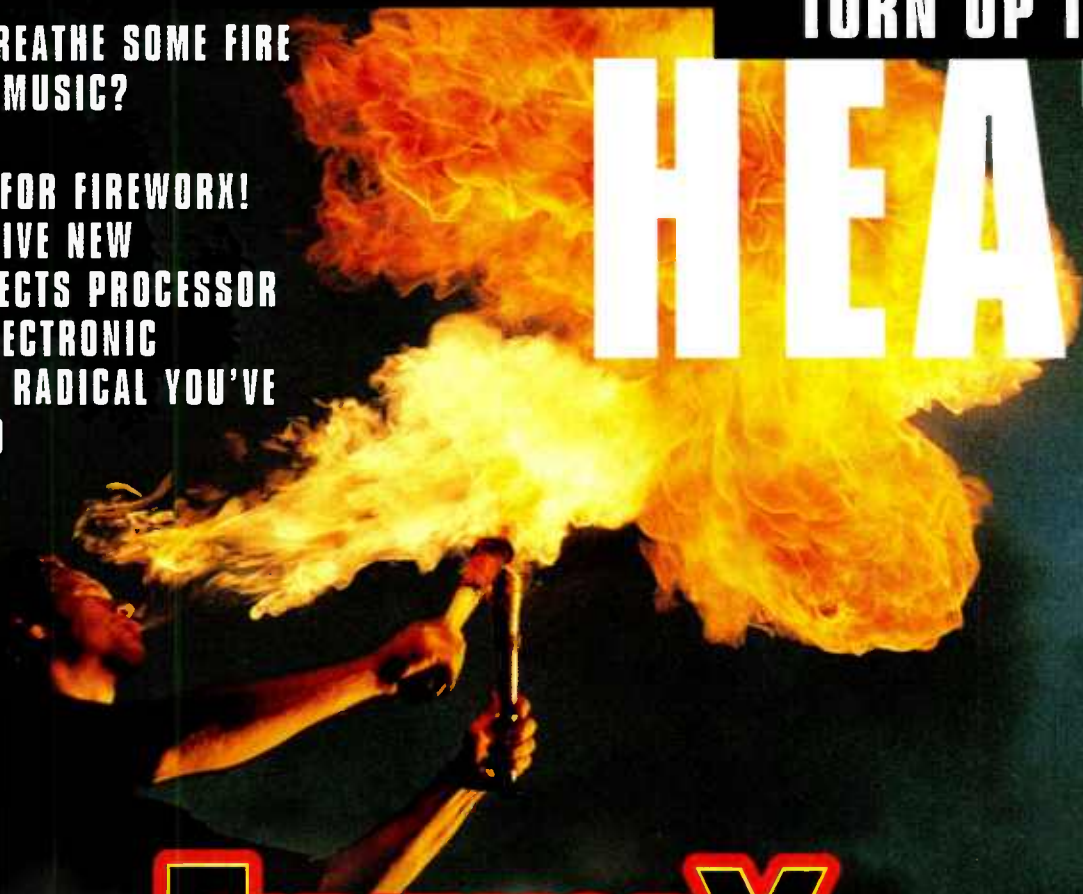


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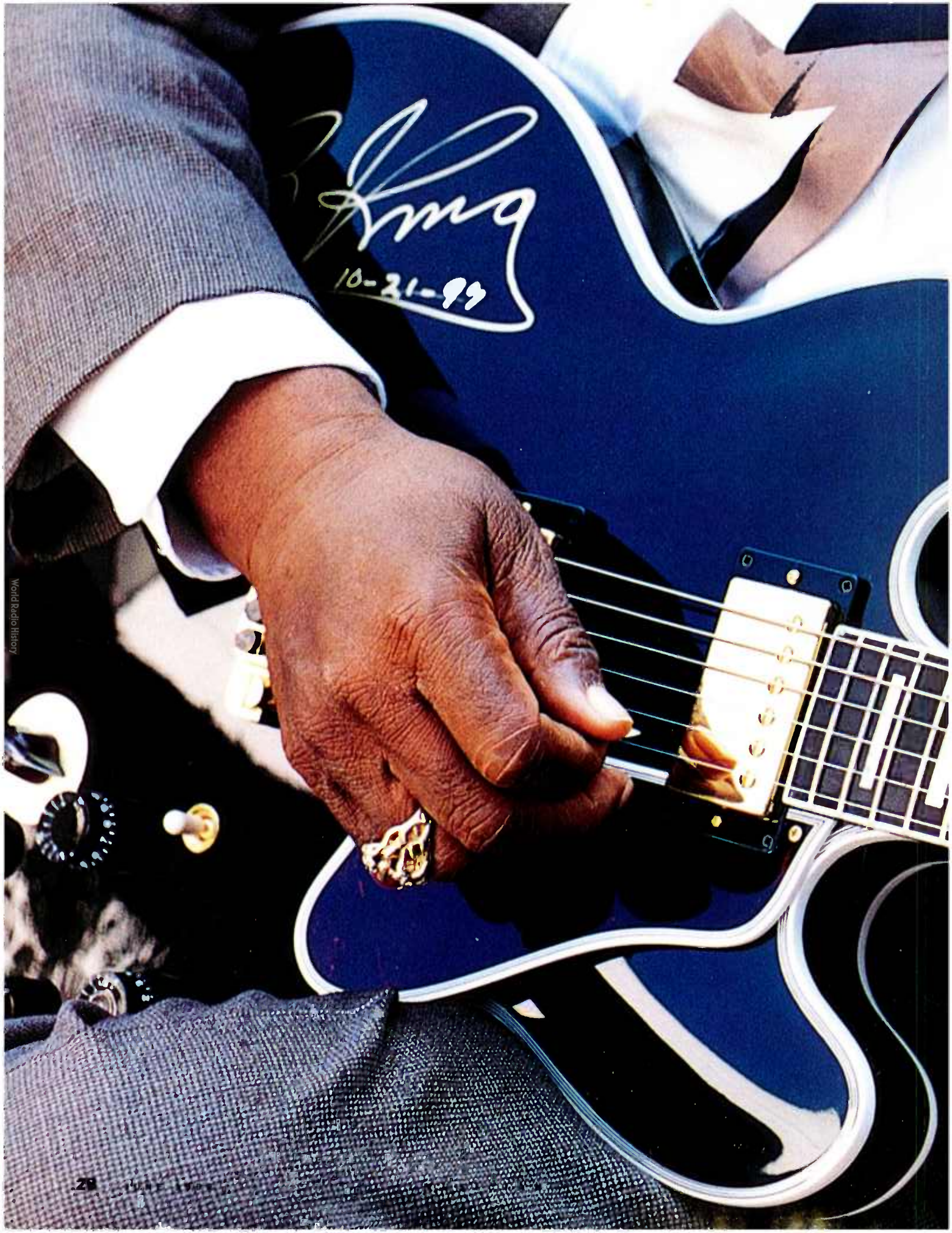
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ALVIN HOOPER PHOTOS

# B.B. KING'S BLUES

A JOURNEY INTO THE SOUL OF MODERN BLUES GUITAR

BY MICHAEL GELFAND

PHOTOS BY  
NATHANIEL WELCH



# FROM HIS MEAGER BEGINNINGS AS A SHARECROPPER

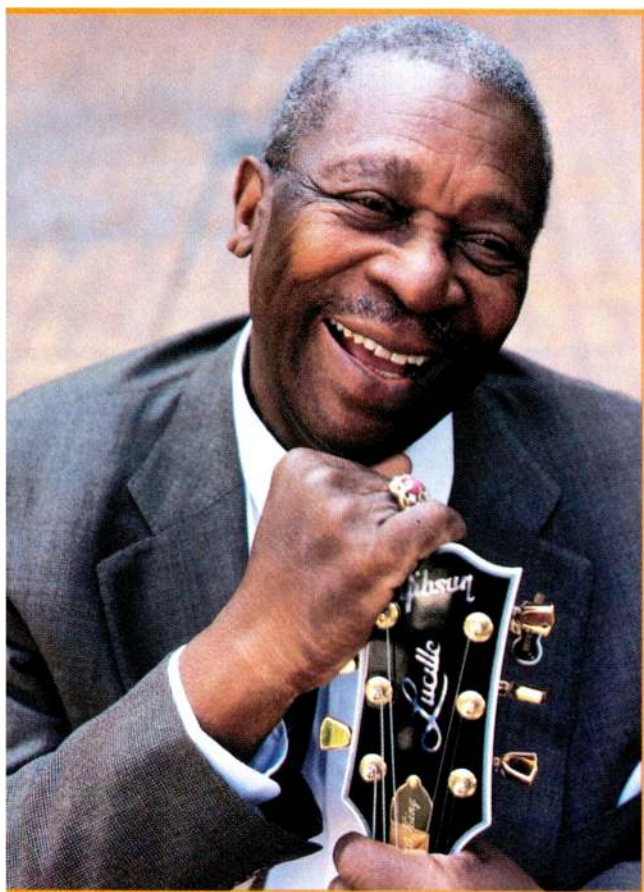
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it was the only way to make money that he could stand. But unlike any of us, King's undying passion for the songs he plays—and has been playing now for *fifty* years—has kept him happily plugging away on the road playing three hundred or so shows a year when, at the age of 72, he could easily afford to retire from the business altogether.

That King has insistently survived financial turmoil and waves of commercial ambivalence throughout the

mention that I was a bit nervous as I prepared to meet with King the day after he received a Lifetime Achievement award from the Blues Foundation. To sit down with someone who's had such an impact on so many people can mess with your head, and if I wasn't already on edge, I felt my calm professional facade crumble when I was told that King had brought his guitar, Lucille, with him just in case I had any technical questions during our little talk. (Maybe we'd . . . er, jam.)

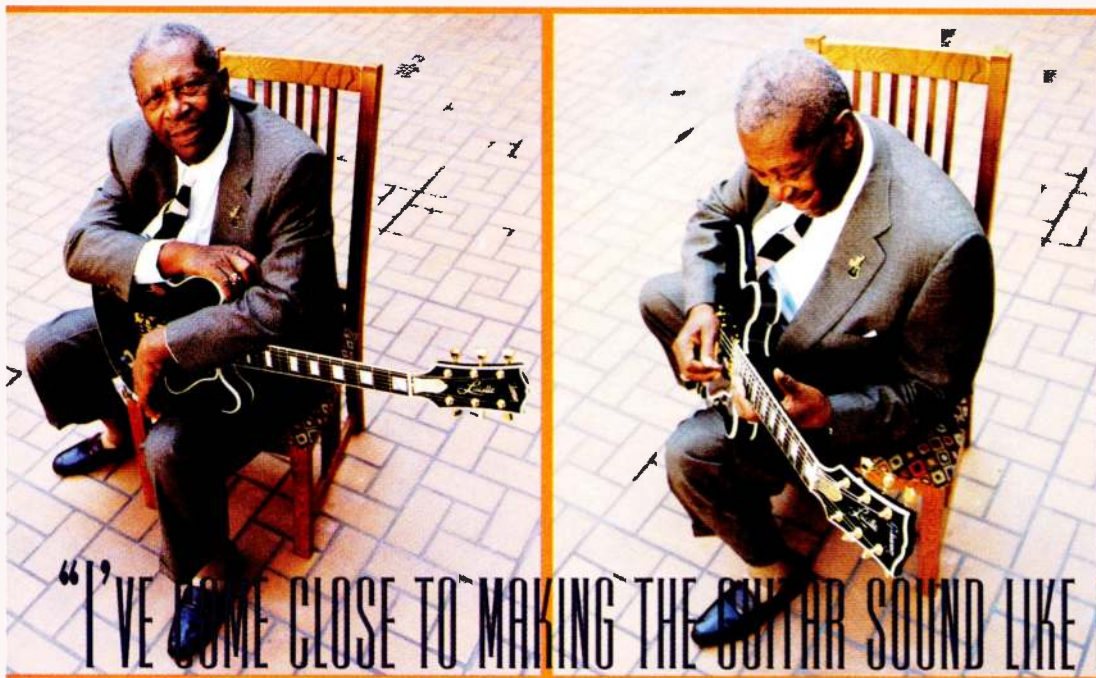
fifteen thousand live shows. With an engaging smile, a hearty laugh, and a rich repertoire of folksy metaphors, King offered keen insight into his own art and recollections of his lifetime as a bluesman. All I had to do was ask.

*You've mentioned quite a few guitarists over the years who've inspired you, and I'd like to know how you found your own style through listening to them: Tiny Grimes, with his sense of quiet support and dynamics, Bukka White and his vibrato, Charlie Christian's swing and use of diminished chords, T-Bone Walker's jazz phrasing, and both Blind Lemon Jefferson and Lonnie Johnson for the way their guitars were hooked up to their feelings. Now to my ears, all of these things are you. I hear you here.*

You missed one—Django Rheinhardt.

What about his playing influenced you?

Who, Django? Whoa!! Django was a mixture of the many [players] that you just



**“I’VE COME CLOSE TO MAKING THE GUITAR SOUND LIKE AN EXTENSION OF ME.”**

course of his career only to rise back into the mainstream's musical consciousness time and again—without ever once having to reinvent himself—is as much an indication of his tenacity as it is a testament to the purity of his musical vision. And such a hardcore belief in himself and his music has paid off smartly—he's revered as a real-life embodiment of the mythological bluesman, has sold millions of records, and has received numerous accolades and awards for his contributions as a gifted guitarist and singer.

So it's probably understandable when I

No, this wasn't going to be like listening to any one of his fifty or so albums on my stereo or seeing him in concert—B. B. King, the living legacy, was going to be right there, standing above me with those thick-fingered hands waiting to throttle my neck if I asked one of those redundant questions he's heard so many times before. But as I'd find out over the next few hours of talking, playing, and gorging ourselves on a fine spread of bagels, whitefish, and lox, King was far from intimidating—in fact, he's inviting, patient, personable, and very humble for a veteran of over

mentioned to me. He had the speed that I wished I could have. The execution . . . my God, he was as good as anybody I'd ever heard, the way he attacked a note. The feeling that he put in it. I don't care if he was playing “How High the Moon” or whatever it is way up high . . . . Whatever it was that he did, like the others you just mentioned, was like somebody sticking a sword through me because I could feel every bit of it.

*How did you get out from behind your influences to say, “This is me?”*

You're not going to believe this, but it's the truth. I could play like *neither*. So



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able to actually master it, but I've come pretty close to making it sound like an extension of me. So it wasn't nothing that I said, scientifically speaking, "Yeah I'm going to take this sound. Yeah, I'm going to do this." None of that. I *wished* I could have said that [*laughs*], but through practicing—never enough, but some—I was able to get the feeling that I am doing a *little* taste of what maybe Blind Lemon did, or all the others. I couldn't play like them, but [a] little bit . . . Think of Frankenstein; I was able to get a finger from this one and so on and so on. That made B. B. King.

A lot of guys got good ears, man. They can hear and they're able to use their fingers. I know a lot of guys now, as they *think* they play. They can play what they think as they're thinking it. For me, I hear something in my head and it takes a few seconds for me to play it. Like reverb: I'll hit the note and it takes a few seconds while I'm thinking to try to play it.

*So you have your own little built-in brain delay.*

Not intentionally. It just happens—my brain doesn't do any good. If I practice, something I'm gonna play, maybe I could do it, but I see

since I couldn't play like them, I had to become somewhat myself because if I tried to play like one of them, I couldn't do nothing—but I think subconsciously maybe a little bit of [them] would stick with me.

I was crazy about the Hawaiian guitar, and I'm equally as crazy about the country lap steel guitar. Then my cousin Bukka White and all the other guys who could use the bottleneck [slide], I loved that sound. To me, all three were similar in some ways. Don't ask me why because I can't tell you [*laughs*], but it seemed to me they all had a bit of that *haunting* sound.

That sound that just constantly stayed with me like a melody in your head.

*It's like a human cry.*

Yes, you got it. I learned then that even though the guitar has a pizzicato style, [*sings descending scale*] "ding, ding, ding, ding," like that, I could hear the guitar start *singing* a little bit like that. Not just "ding," but [*sings sustained note*] "diiiiing," you know? Kind of like singing, or the feeling of a violin.

I was told once that the violin is the nearest thing to the human voice, and I could hear the *guitar* doing just a little taste of that. I still can hear it. I was never

guys just jammin' like we was jammin' last night [at the Blues Foundation event] and all of a sudden a guy thinks of something and he can play it. I'm not that good. I will *feel* it and play it, but not *think* it and play it.

*Your vibrato technique is such a large part of your style that I don't even know how to really start, but where did it come from, and how did you physically arrive at the way you do it?*

I hear it singing. I found that the more I applied that trill, the longer I could sustain the tone. So I don't do it like a lot of people think I do. It's actually from the



wrist; I do it with either finger [pointer, middle or ring], but you get set in certain habits.

*So you're kind of twisting or jiggling your wrist horizontally while moving the string across the axis of the neck; you're doing both at the same time.*

Yeah, that's why I say I don't really do it exactly like you see most people. They think I do it one way or the other, but I don't.

*It almost starts in your hips.*

[Laughs.] I can only feel it from here.

*You have a very note-specific style, and you were just talking about somebody like George Benson in the same way.*

Oh, to me he's one of the greatest all-around guitarists in the world. I think of George Benson like a medical doctor. He knows about some of all of it, and he does it well, but then your specialists are like Barney Kessel, Kenny Burrell, Larry Coryell. They specialize in one thing and

## B.B.'s BANDSTAND BREAKDOWN

With fifty years of road experience under his belt, B.B. King has had a lot of time to figure out exactly what equipment to play—he's also had enough success to have a guitar named after him, so it should come as no surprise that King plays a **Gibson** Lucille Custom. King owns quite a few of these beauties, but he usually plays one for years while breaking in a new one, which he does by placing it on a stand onstage so it can "hear" what's going on. King strings up with **Gibson** GBBS Electric Blues. As for amps, King plays through either a **LAB** 5 or a **Fender** Twin Reverb loaded with two 12" **Altec Lansing** speakers. For vocals, King sticks to **Shure** SM57s.

nobody [can] beat them doing it. If you want to swing, Barney Kessel is the swingiest man I ever heard with a guitar. He plays it like he's playing a saxophone.

*If they're MDs and specialists, what does that make you?*

I think I'm pretty good as a blues player.

*Just pretty good?*

Just pretty good. I have to think like that because the people I just mentioned are playing things I wish I could play. I hear kids today, man, like I heard Kenny Wayne [Sheppard] playing last night. Even these kids playing. They play things I wish I'd played. Because they can hear it and play it *now*. I can't.

*What about the less-is-more theory? You make one note stand out for a ten.*

Well, thank you, but let me say it this way: I've been trying to do it a long time. So I'm a little more steady. It's like driving. Somebody that's

less experienced or a little fidgety will stop quick, but a seasoned driver knows the stop sign is there and starts preparing before they get there. That's the way I am about playing—I know there's something I hear. No need to hurry and do it; just put it in the right spot. It's like the high point in a speech—if I tell you the punch

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line first, the rest of it is no good.

*We're talking about phrasing.*

Well, to me phrasing is like making a person understand your talk. If I don't phrase a certain way, I won't get my point over as well. I *want* you to know that I'm talking about [specifics], so I'm going to take a little more time when I get to that part; leading up to it is like a road that goes many ways. You can explain some of this, but then you can say, "I took the road to Memphis." You

tree was up there eating fruit, so he looked up and said, "Hey guys, throw down some fruit." They said, "If you want some, come on up and get it." Obviously he couldn't climb the tree, so he said "it's probably sour anyway."

I'm kind of like that. I didn't practice enough to have the *speed* that some of these guys have. And I say to myself, "It probably wouldn't work for me anyhow." That's laziness. But in the end, I'm able to connect a note from here,

*thinking, or are you just feeling the words and the power of the melody?*

I am thinking, yes. "What can I do to make this go into that?" Even if it's nothing but expanding the tone, I hear it and I hope the listener hears it. There used to be a guy who had a great band, and his name was Count Basie. Count Basie was a *helluva* piano player. He never hardly played if he didn't have to. But it really set the tone for the band. Even now I can hear him doing it. It was

so timely. It was set in such a place that if you said to a person, "Look here, I want you to set this on *three*"—like on a digital delay—"Set this on *three*, put this on *five*," and it's exact, you know what it is. He knew that long before they came out with digital [equipment]. He knew exactly where to put it.

Well, they kind of talk about me a bit like that—I'm very economical when it comes to the notes. But it's not something I planned, it just happens because my brain just doesn't bring anything



"I WILL FEEL IT AND PLAY IT, NOT THINK IT AND PLAY IT. I'M NOT THAT GOOD."

don't have to say, "I stopped in L.A." But me, I want you to know each one of these places that I may have stopped. "I took Route 66, and later on in St. Louis I stopped into many, many places," and I want you to enjoy that. "There was a beautiful lady sitting over there, and there's a tractor over here, a car there." I'm trying to tell this story in the music.

*You use silences to tell that story, too.*

With silence in some places, you start to say something and let the person fill it in. There's an old story I heard once about a fox. He was coming under a tree and several animals that could climb the

there's a space there, and then somebody gets it on the other end where I pick it up again. So you still can hear it—at least I can.

*Do you feel those spaces, or are they calculated?*

I'm telling a story and I'll stop . . . [pause] and I look at you. [Another pause.] There was a space there, and when I began again I got your attention. That's kind of it. This is not planned. Hey, my head is not that good. I have to play it as I feel it in my inner soul, that this is the way to do it.

*So is there any point where you're*

else in for a while. Through the years I've learned that until you can get something else in, [don't] put it out there.

*That's discipline. Maybe it comes to you naturally, but a lot of people play too much or sing too much. They try to do too much with what they're working with.*

I've heard that. But I think like that fox; I can't climb the tree. That's the way it is with me. It feels good all the time, but it's not always fulfilling because I'd like to do more sometimes. I really would.

*You've said that as a singer you follow your emotions—is it hard to control your emotions when you're up there and*



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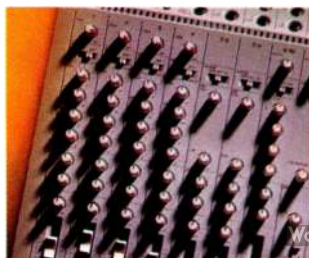
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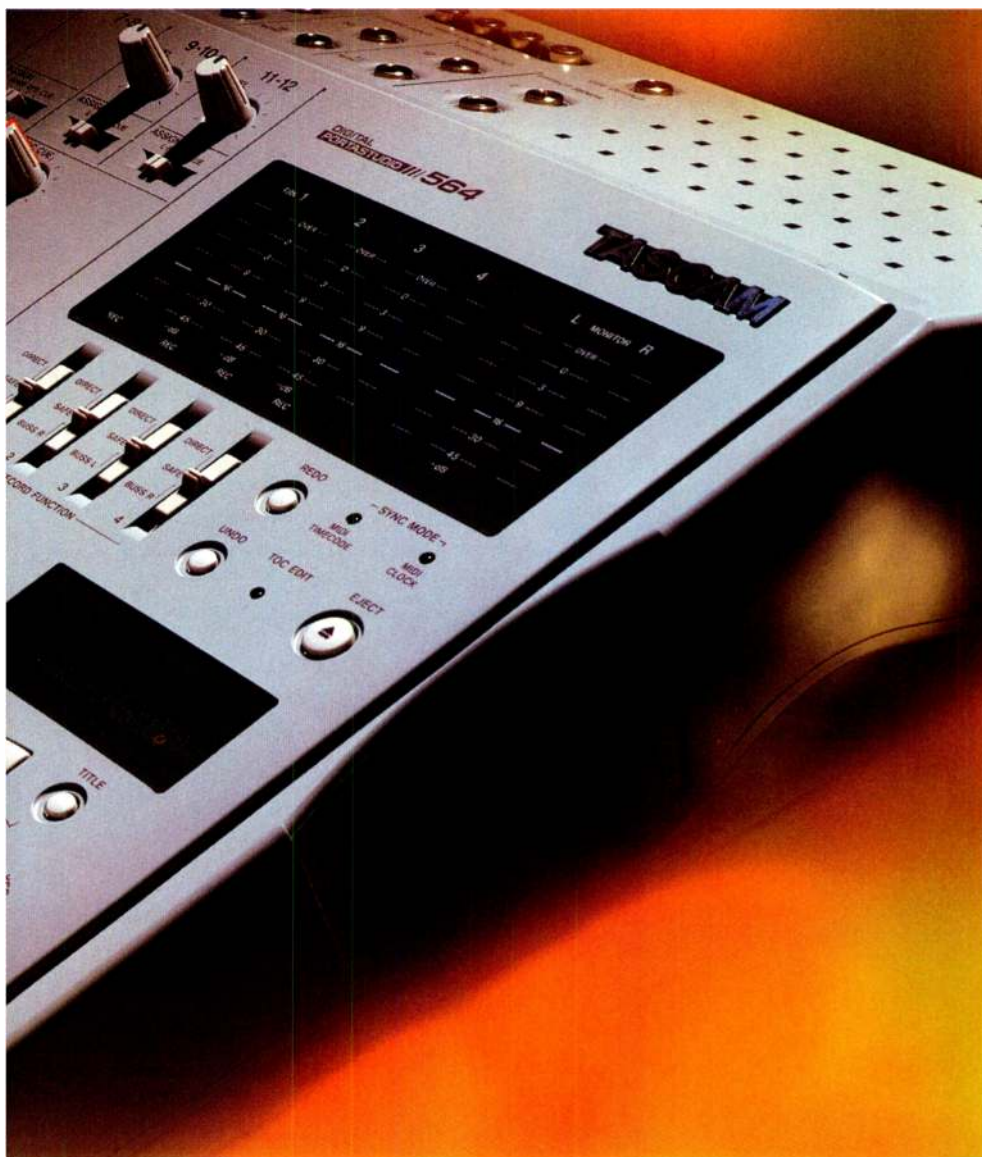
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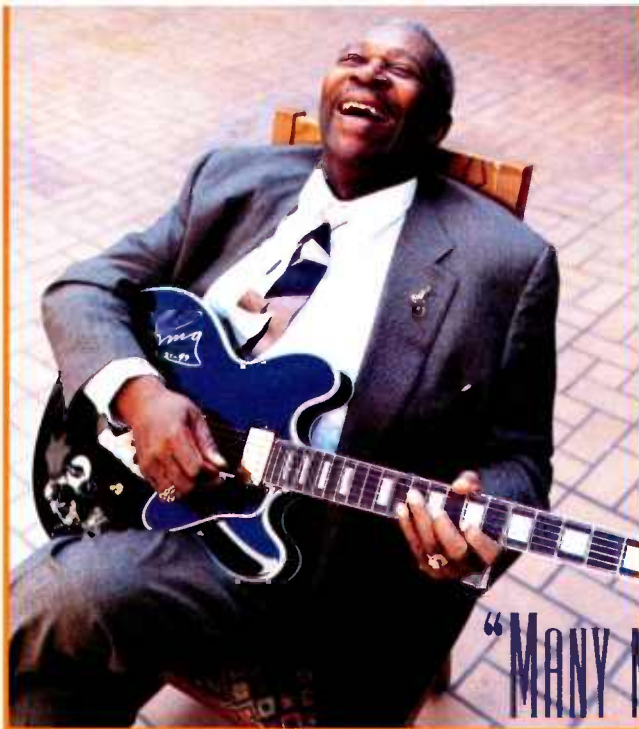
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*you're feeling it?*

There've been many times when I'd be perspiring—I do a lot of that on stage—and I was crying. People thought I was only perspiring, but I'd be crying. There's been many times, but I do think that the average musician or entertainer feels like Henry Fonda: This is my job. This is what I do. I'm not supposed to put "me" in it that much.

I used to go with a girl. She also had a madam, and I used to ask her how could she do this and do that and still love me. She said, "That's my job, but with you it's love." It's the same thing with me and music. I love playing the music. I love it for me too, but I'm playing for you, for you, for you, and for you. And if I get too emotional I won't be able to control it as well. So yes, many nights I've cried onstage. Many times. Something would hit me. Something that



*hard to adapt to such changes?*

I think of it as I do my age. You accept it [laughs]. Everything about my playing and about my singing hasn't been something that I enjoyed—not necessarily enjoyed, but something I thought was great. I thought it was okay sometimes, and I've always done my best, but a lot of times my best wasn't as good as I'd like it to be. But you learn that these are things that's going to happen. Like I just mentioned, you go

**"MANY NIGHTS I'VE CRIED ONSTAGE"**

I dreamed about or thought about, or some lady quitting me, or guys giving me a bad time. It just comes out of nowhere.

*As you've gotten older, or more experienced, your voice has gotten lower, huskier, and more robust. Has it been*

onstage each night trying to do the best you can do, but a lot of times you wish your best could have been better. Well, now my voice is heavier as I've gotten older. I can't hit all the high notes that I use to do, 'cause my voice is heavier.

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*But you get the sauce now.*

You make the best out of what falls into your lap. Well, to answer your question, you make the best out of a bad situation.

*You think it's a bad situation?*

Well, when you can't do things that you used to do, of course it's bad. You make up for it by doing something else.

*So by not being able to hit the high notes, your tone has improved.*

There you go. If you got it, flaunt it. If you ain't got it, use whatever you can get to make it happen.

*Tell me, where do you draw your inspiration from?*

I draw it from friends, ladies, and

to talk to you. Look at the beautiful scenery around me. I feel I'm a very lucky guy. Seventy-two years old and I love every moment of it.

To get off the subject just a moment, I have a couple of friends . . . not a couple of friends, but a couple of idols. One was a keyboard player, Eubie Blake; he wrote a lot of music. He drank, smoked, looked at pretty ladies until he was 100 years old, and he died. George Burns is another. Did the same thing. That's what I'd like to be, like to do: play the music as long but live to 100, if possible. I wouldn't care to go beyond that.

*I'm wondering how you continue to*

a night that I didn't play that, but each night that I play it, I play it as I feel it then. So it's fresh for me. I *love* doing the thing as I feel it *now*. That makes it fresh to me. So I don't have to think about what somebody said, "You sure did stink last night." Great, I stunk last night, but tonight I feel it this way. And tomorrow that way, and so on.

*When rock music exploded in the Sixties, you said you missed the boat. But the Seventies and Eighties came around and you did pretty well for yourself.*

Held on pretty good.

*Did you do something differently? Or did something else change?*

Think of a race track. If you place yourself right there and you don't move, they'll come back to it again. That's what seemed to happen to me. Picture the track, and they finally came back, and here I am. My horse was so slow they caught him again before he got to the finish line, but then they recognized that I may have had something that they missed. This is the way it was in my mind, and God bless his soul, John

# E. MANY TIMES. IT JUST COMES OUT OF NOWHERE."

music. And I also enjoy sitting on the window side of the airplane looking down at how great God has made everything. We keep it cultivated. We try to help and advance it. But how lucky I am to still be here and be alive. Being able

*throw yourself into songs that you played ten thousand times—and you've played a lot of songs ten thousand times.*

Yes, I'm sure I have. But for example, "The Thrill is Gone" is one that I played more than anything. There's hardly been

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World Radio History

Lennon was one who spoke out. I remember reading something where he said he wished he could play guitar like B. B. King. Man, I almost fell out of my chair, you know?

I think that's the only time that everybody else started to pay attention to the guitar. Not the singing. I was *rarely* thought of as a singer. But a guitar player.

Which as you said earlier was different. It did things that have never been done before because I played with a lot of treble. I didn't have all the speed that a lot of the guys had. I wasn't so traditional with the blues that I couldn't be called a blues purist. But then I wasn't radical enough to be called something else, so I just wound up being B. B. King, you know?

*You said that you need the road to fulfill your goals?*

Oh yeah. The road is how I make money.

*Are your goals fulfilled or are you still chasing them down?*

I'm still chasing them. One of the things, though, I have had pretty good investments. My manager helps me out in a lot of cases. I could stop work today and I could live very comfortably the rest of my life and not have to work anymore. But there are other things that I want and want to do, so the road will help me to do them. Educationally, financially, spiritually, and in many other ways.

*You've said that one of your goals was "to express the longing in your soul and the joy in your heart." What are you longing for today? What is it that's coming through? I'd imagine you're a very different person then you were forty years ago.*


Yes, I'm bigger [laughs].

*What is it that you're looking for?*

You asked me a while ago, did I think that there was still something I haven't done that I would want to do. There are many things, and I don't even know what they are. I just know it's many things to be done. Some maybe I could do. Some maybe will come my way. But I know this is not the end of the world. It's not the end of B. B. King today. I'm still alive. And anytime a man doesn't pursue things that stand in his mind, he gets stale. Like I usually say, when you retire you die. You don't necessarily die physically, but mentally you die. Right now I'm *alive*. There's a lot more I want to do. I don't know what it all is, but I know there is something out there that I can do. Especially musically.

*Are you a singer or a guitarist first?*

Neither. I don't think—I used to think that I was a good singer when I left Mississippi and went to Memphis, and I started hearing Roy Brown and a lot of other guys singing. Then I thought, "No, I don't think I'm such a good singer." Then I started to hearing a lot of the other guys play like the people we mentioned long ago play a guitar and then I said, "Well, I ain't so good at that either." So it's the combination of the two make me exist.



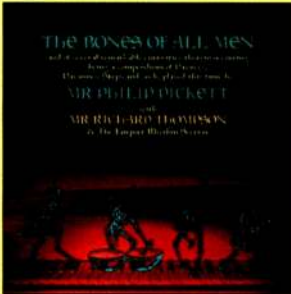
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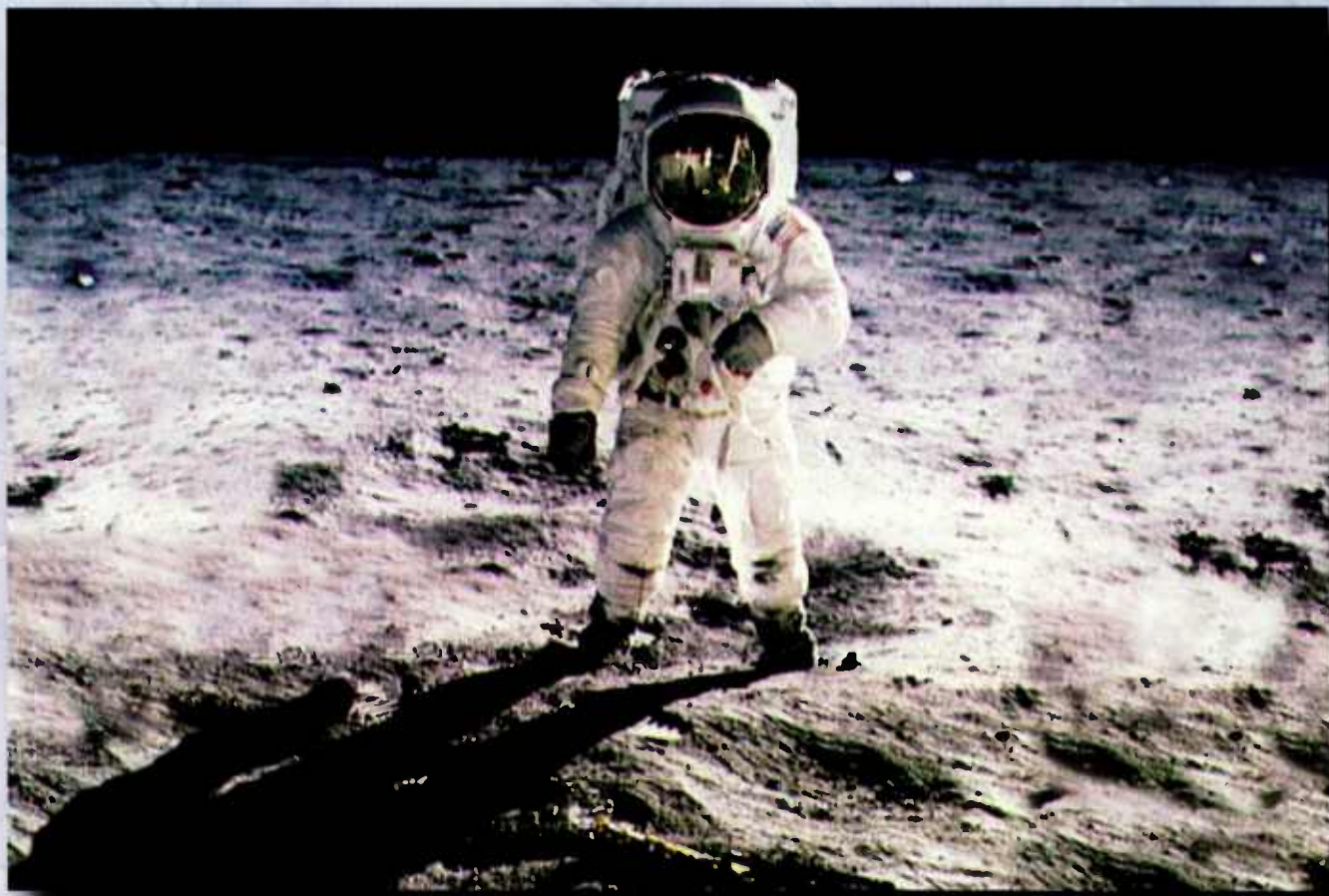
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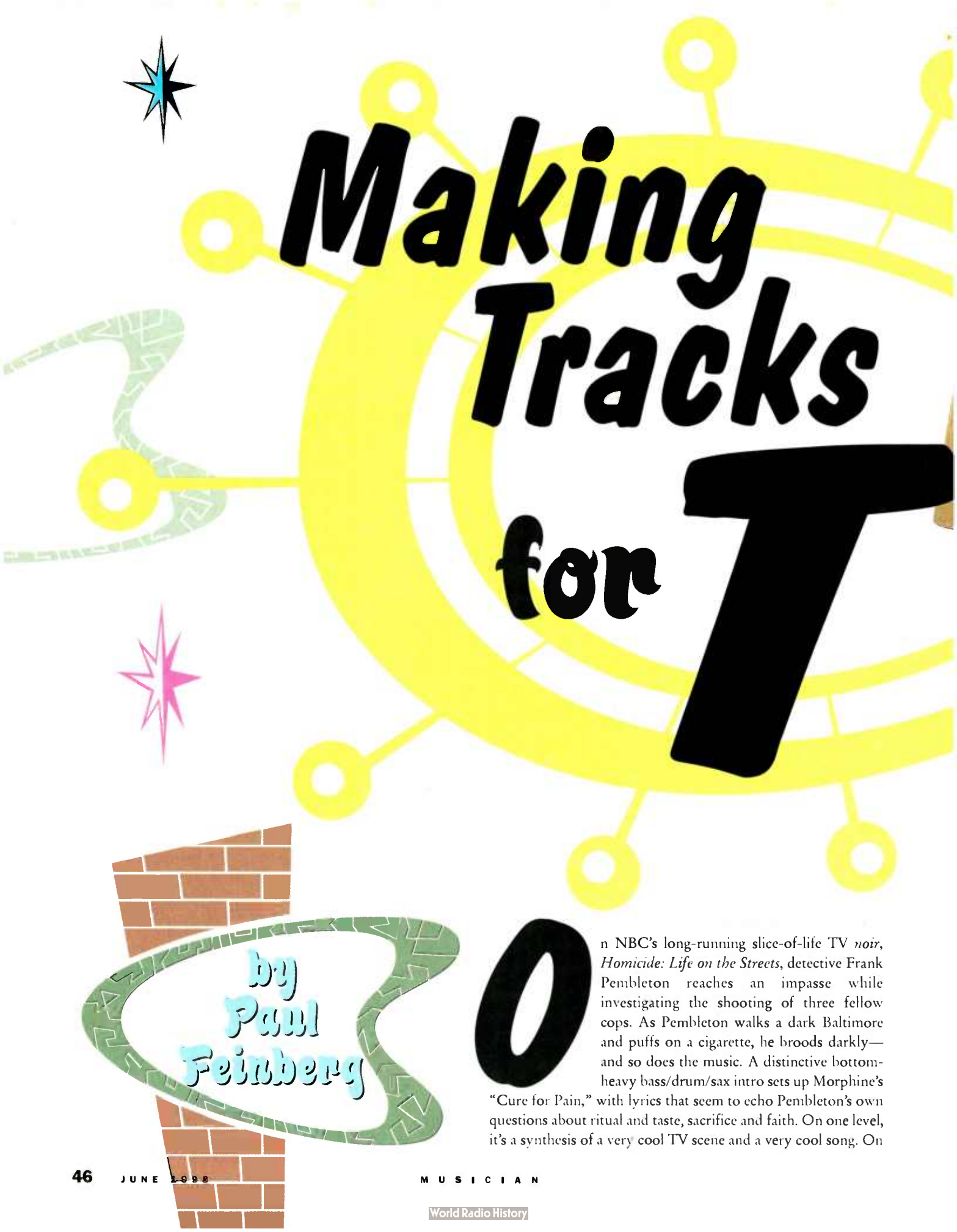
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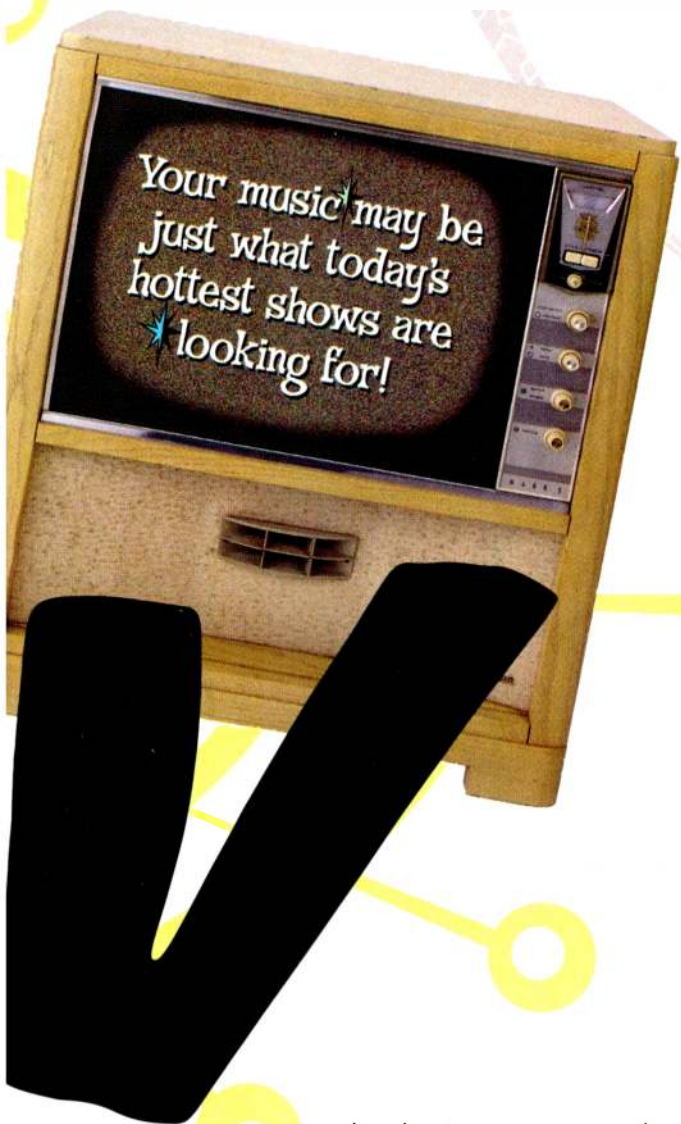


by  
**Paul  
Feinberg**

# O

n NBC's long-running slice-of-life TV *noir*, *Homicide: Life on the Streets*, detective Frank Pembleton reaches an impasse while investigating the shooting of three fellow cops. As Pembleton walks a dark Baltimore and puffs on a cigarette, he broods darkly—and so does the music. A distinctive bottom-heavy bass/drum/sax intro sets up Morphine's "Cure for Pain," with lyrics that seem to echo Pembleton's own questions about ritual and taste, sacrifice and faith. On one level, it's a synthesis of a very cool TV scene and a very cool song. On





the other, it's representative of a sea change in the often rocky relationship between popular music and television.

Rock and TV grew up together in the Fifties, and in the four decades since it's hard to say which medium has more thoroughly dominated American culture. But when it comes to prime time, they've never been an easy fit. Through the Sixties and Seventies, pop music on television was defined by sitcoms like *The Monkees* and *The Partridge Family*, or variety shows hosted by Olivia Newton-John. In return, self-respecting rockers shunned television as terminally unhip. When was the last time you heard Bruce Springsteen or Led Zeppelin on a classic Seventies-era rerun? Answer: You didn't.

Then came *Miami Vice*, which was described by its creators as *MTV Cops*. Just hearing Phil Collins' "In the Air Tonight" over the show's promotional ads set the tone for a series which became one of the defining shows of the Eighties.

Now it's the Nineties, and bands like the Violent Femmes appear as themselves on *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, with their

characters integrated into an episode. Even more common is the use of music that until recently belonged solely to the radio, employed to lend a style or feel to a program in ways never tried before. From *Beverly Hills 90210* to *New York: Undercover*, the merger of music and television is vastly different than when Davy Jones walked onto *The Brady Bunch*. For indie-rock faves like the Cowboy Junkies or the Subdudes, *Homicide* offers a chance to be heard by more couch potatoes in one night than they'll ever reach on the radio. And even among big-name artists, TV's stigma seems to have dropped from the radar screen.

R.E.M., for instance, one of rock's classier acts, regularly licenses songs to TV. Back before *The X-Files* and *The Simpsons* made the Fox network relevant, the band rented its hit "Stand" to be the theme of a now long-forgotten series called *Get a Life*. More recently, several songs from *Monster* were licensed to *Party of Five* during that program's first series, well before the show became a teenage viewing staple, causing Val Joseph, one of its producers, to semi-seriously assert that R.E.M. had saved the show.

"We put television in the same category as movies [and] consider it another form of artistic expression," says Bertis Downs, the band's longtime lawyer. "If they want to use our music to enhance a certain scene or set a certain tone, we generally say yes. We've always liked our music to be used in movies and television shows as long as we don't object to the content. [But] we always see things on a case-by-case basis."

R.E.M. does retain a blanket policy against licensing music for commercials. But many artists and bands give up that kind of veto power to their publishing companies, which make an increasing amount of money placing their clients' music on TV. Producers of contemporary shows aimed at young audiences, meanwhile, are every bit as determined to showcase music which will fit the tone and demographic of their series.

*Party of Five* associate producers Val Joseph and Bruce Nachbar, for instance, made an early decision to make music a significant element in that show. At first, they used a different song each week as the theme, eventually settling on the BoDeans' "Closer to Free." (The band actually cut a new version of the song to fit the show's length requirement.) These days, the *POF* soundtrack reads like a Triple A all-star lineup: Tori Amos, Joe Jackson, Rickie Lee Jones, and Shawn Colvin, among others.

There is no set formula for how a show chooses its music. Sometimes the script is specific; other times a reference sends the producers out to look for an appropriate song. On *Party of Five*, the music heard by the audience is generally

scripted to be heard by the characters—on a radio, a CD, or even live. Joseph and Nachbar say they look for songs that seem appropriate for the characters. Once those choices are made, their music supervisor John McCullough approaches labels and music publishers to clear the song for use. "Our music supervisor is basically a liaison between our show and our lot at Columbia," Joseph explains. "Who the artist is will [affect] the clearance process. Sometimes the artist owns everything lock, stock, and barrel. When we used a Lyle Lovett song, the final okay came from Lyle himself."

But big-name artists often respond with their own agenda. There are plenty of stories of stars who say no to a song that works perfectly, only to come back with a request that their latest single be used instead. Sometimes shows counter

by working around a reluctant artist. For example, Van Morrison controls the use of most of his work and uniformly turns down requests. He doesn't control his first album, though, and a number of songs from this collection made it onto *The Wonder Years*.

Not too surprisingly, final decisions often hinge on time and money. Tight production schedules are a fact of network television, so the less red tape to cut, the better. As a result, certain musicians are used over and over, based in part on their reputation for being fair and easy to deal with. Also, each show has a set budget to spend on music, so if \$10,000 goes to one top-of-the-chart act, the rest of that week's music has to come from less expensive sources. This obviously works to the advantage of less celebrated bands or solo acts who want to







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World Radio History

**"We use unsigned bands because we have finite money. And for budget reasons we use songs that are considered demos."**

take advantage of the opportunities that television provides. "Usually in one or two cases per episode [we use an unsigned band] because we do have finite money," Joseph admits. "And for budget reasons we use songs that are considered demos."

"We'll listen to just about anything, because it's important that we know what's out there," he continues. "It's not important that it's being played on the radio if it's good music and right for *Party of Five*. And it doesn't matter whether it's a local band and they have a CD, or whether it's an artist represented by a large company."

*Homicide*, unlike *Party of Five*, uses mood music, often in a montage setting. Because the music is not driven by the taste of the program's characters, music director Chris Tergesen says he can pretty much play what he likes. "But it has to be appropriate for the moment," he explains, "and not too much 'on the nose.' It has to have a little more thought and finesse."

Whatever his standards, the formula seems to work. *Homicide's* music has become such a familiar ingredient that you can access its show-by-show log on

the Internet (start with [nbc.com](http://nbc.com) and follow the signs), along with a site where you can order the albums from which the songs were culled. The show has featured artists from Tom Waits to Louis Armstrong to John Lee Hooker to Counting Crows.

Like Joseph and Nachbar, Tergesen says he listens to tons of stuff and is open to all suggestions—clearly an advantage for musicians who have yet to catch a break. In that regard, television is becoming more eclectic and open than radio or MTV. "I have connections at a lot of smaller labels and hear stuff where maybe it's not released, or just released and it's a much more independent venture and not gonna become mainstream. That sort of stuff gets sent to me, and I sift through it and try to find ways to use it."

Over at Windswept Publishing, it's John Anderson's job to facilitate the placement of his artists' songs on shows like *Homicide* and *Party of Five*. Just how the process works depends on the artist, explains Anderson, who reps such acts as the Spice Girls, Tony Rich, and Sky Cries Mary. Like record companies, publishers advance artists money, then make back the advance by finding uses

for their songs. But bigger acts still often hold final approval and base their decisions on personal taste. John Mellencamp, for instance, turned down \$50,000 for a movie project he wasn't interested in being involved with, then turned around and licensed the same song for a tenth of the price to the TV program *Northern Exposure*.

With lower-profile artists, Windswept usually makes the call. "With a lot of the younger bands, yes, we have final approval," says Anderson. "They're entrusting Windswept to be the caretakers of their songs. [We] collect for them, license for them, whatever we can do to increase the income." That income is usually split evenly between the writer of the song and the publisher; if the show wants to use a version that has already been recorded, the label will also get a piece of the pie as owners of master recordings.

Record deal or no, it's often in the interest of a new writer or band to hook up with a publisher, says Anderson, to increase the chances of their music being licensed—and heard—on a television show. Case in point: Windswept client Alan Mirikitani, who handles the vocals, guitar, and songwriting for his band the Buddha Heads. The band has released one album in the States and several in Europe and Japan. But because the Buddha Heads music has a classic, bar band feel, Anderson has had success in placing Mirikitani's songs on the air. That income gives writers a chance to keep their band going between records.

"It's a way to generate income and momentum all the way around, as opposed to just going out and playing live," says Mirikitani. "I had a song in the first episode of *ER*, it played in the opening scene for a minute and a half or



## TV PITCH TIPS

two minutes on national TV. The royalty check comes in quarterly, and it was in the thousands. What's cool about it is, it's kind of faceless because they use it as source music in bars a lot."

Mirikitani cautions against being known only as a writer for television. "It's a two-edged sword," he says, pointing to the *Friends* band, the Rembrandts, who had a huge hit with "I'll Be There For You," the theme from NBC's monster sitcom. "Those guys can retire at this point, but [being known only for your association with a TV show] is kind of the kiss of death. The money is beyond belief, but to keep a band together, I might keep it in the background."

Still, it's hard to gauge what impact working on television has had on any band. The BoDeans are currently looking for a label, despite their *Party of Five* exposure. Hootie and the Blowfish were on *Party of Five* before they broke out, as was Garbage on *Homicide*, but no one at those shows is taking credit for the success of these bands; at best, it was a contributing factor. R.E.M.'s

Downs has no idea what impact of television has had on that group's sales; in fact, she says, the band doesn't consider that question when licensing a song.

On the other hand, the right TV appearance can create a buzz. It happened to Boston-based Buffalo Tom when they went on *My So-Called Life*,

because MTV decided to rerun that episode *ad nauseam*. As a result, the Buffalo Tom sequences—which featured their songs "Soda Jerk" and "Late at Night"—were seen world-wide over and over. "Initially, we didn't think twice about it, but the songs we put on there eventually got bigger and bigger," recalls

Buffalo Tom's Chris Colbourn. "We got a lot of letters from kids saying, 'Where can I buy this song?'"

Mark Sandman, vocalist, bassist, and principal songwriter for Morphine, also likes the way *Homicide* used "Cure for Pain." "They did a good job. I like the show, plus Steve Buscemi was in that

There are several ways in which aspiring musicians, singers, and songwriters can get their music onto television shows. Though there aren't that many songs used each week, the good news is that the musical needs of contemporary television open the door to all styles and to established, signed, and unsigned artists. Just keep these points in mind:

### SIX STEPS TOWARD GETTING YOUR MUSIC ON TV

**1.** You'll need some quality recordings of your music. Whether you're showing off the band, the song, or both, and whether you're looking for a publisher or label or trying to attract a TV producer's attention, good clear versions of your songs are essential.

**2.** This is a songwriter's medium as much or more than it is for performers. Focus on writing your best music, not just your best guitar-hero vehicles. "It takes a while," says Alan Mirikitani of the Buddha Heads. "You need to build up a catalog of songs. Then you need a publisher who can pitch the songs for you. I'm trying to develop as a songwriter as well as a musician as well as with the band, so there are many different avenues and ways to go."

**3.** You'll want to find a publisher for your songs. According to Windswept Pacific's John Anderson, "There are always tapes being sent in, just like with a record company. There's an A&R department here, and our people are always going to clubs and looking for talent." Publishers will actually assemble demo albums of their acts and send them out to labels, so being with a publisher can certainly widen your field of contacts.

**4.** In a word, hustle. Anderson says that publishers respond to bands that have business savvy as well as stage presence. Get your tapes out, and make sure you're getting your music into the right hands and the right people into your gigs.

**5.** Go straight for the television producers and music supervisors. You should be able to get a sense of what a show is looking for by watching it. A few calls will let you know who is picking the tunes. Once you have a name, send them your tape, DAT, or CD. As noted in the article, these shows need to find music from smaller acts. While they don't have their own A&R departments, they do have ears. "We'll listen to just about anything, says *Party of Five*'s Val Joseph, "because it's important that we know what's out there. Whether it's being played on the radio is not important; what counts is that it's good music and right for *PO5*."

**6.** Finally, don't be shy. Let people know you want to be on TV. Jules Verdone, who's new album is receiving some serious indie buzz, told her publicist she wanted to get her song "Baltimore or Less" on *Homicide*. So the publicist mentioned this to a reporter, who passed it along to the show's music supervisor, who then told the publicist, "Send me the CD." *Homicide* has been picked up for next season—now maybe Jules will be too.—**Paul Feinberg**

scene and he's one of my favorite actors." But Sandman remains ambivalent about working in television. "As a songwriter, I'm not totally comfortable with it. I'd just like to take it case by case. It could be used in something really awful or really violent."

In that sense, Sandman was lucky. Though Morphine is now with

DreamWorks, their songs are controlled by Ryko and can be licensed without their input. "We don't necessarily approve of every usage," he admits. "That's probably true of some other groups too. My point is that anyone seeing our music in something shouldn't assume it's cool with us, because it's not necessarily the case. There's nothing

inherently wrong with TV, but if I had control I would just look at it case by case." Sandman says he'd prefer to compose directly for TV or film, as he did for the movie *Get Shorty*: "I'd much rather write original music for anything than have them use one of our songs, because the song is not about what they're saying on the screen, but it's naturally interpreted that way."

Buffalo Tom's Colbourn has a different perspective: "In our case, I was surprised. It had an impact. It moved people. It wasn't literally how I presented [the song], but my vision of the song is totally different than anybody else's is. I have no problem with that."

**Television  
is no longer  
synonymous  
with  
selling out.**

Despite these differences, there seems to be consensus on one point: Television is no longer synonymous with selling out. Studios and producers are actively seeking music to enhance their shows, and many musicians are understandably eager to explore these options. As *Homicide's* Tergesen says, "Maybe it's indicative of the fact that television is moving more toward the hip, music kind of culture. Dramatic television is getting much hipper, much more real, and in my opinion much better than it was in the Sixties and Seventies."

Perhaps more to the point, the most creative people making television shows these days grew up on rock & roll—just as today's most relevant musical artists grew up watching TV.

*Contributors: Paul Feinberg is a freelance writer living in Los Angeles. This is his first story for Musician.*

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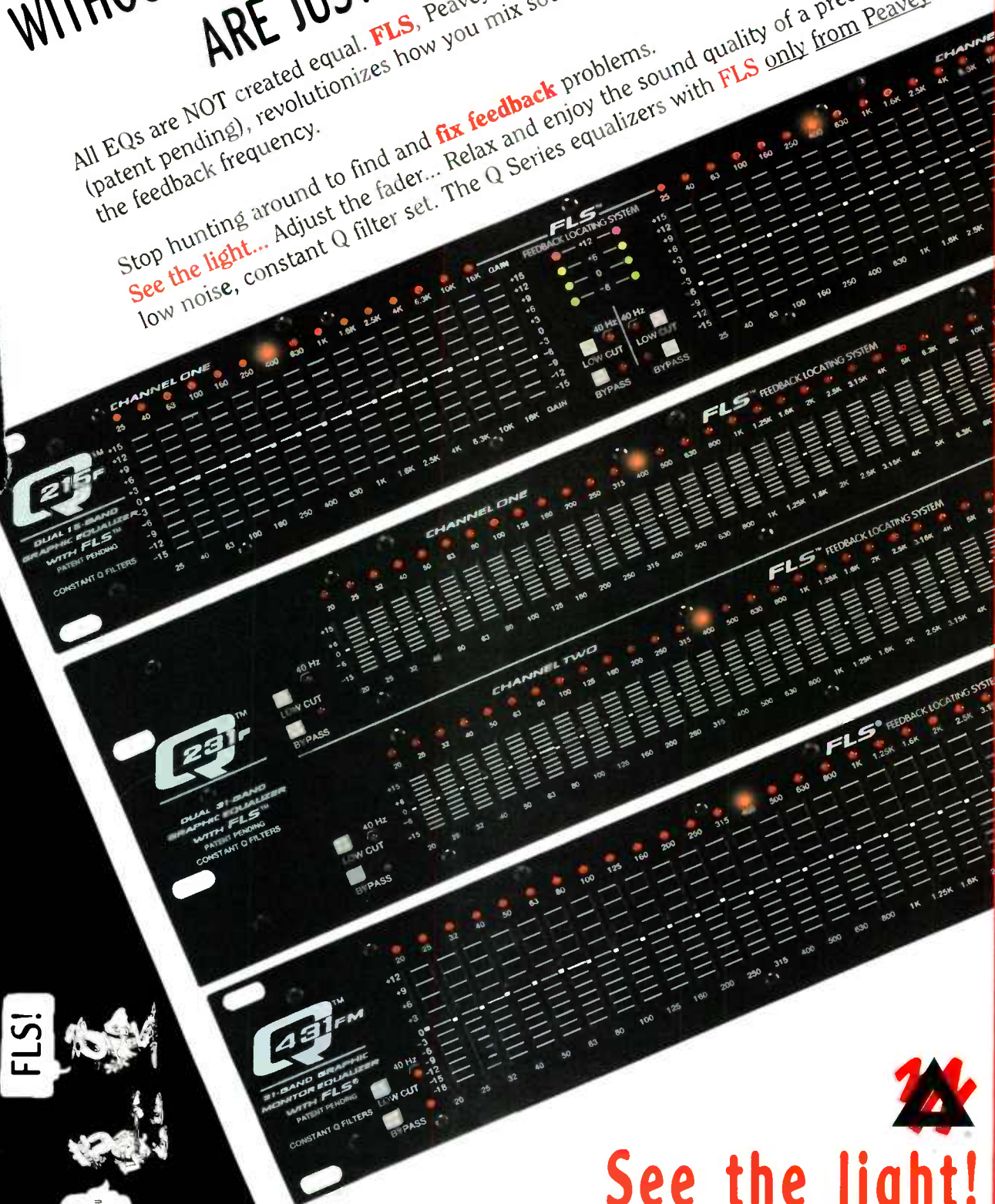
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# GIRELLI The N XPEC





*Myth of the Deal -*  
**TATIONS**

STILL DREAMING ABOUT SIGNING WITH A  
MAJOR LABEL? MAYBE IT'S TIME TO WAKE UP.

— *By Peter Spellman — Illustration by Danny Wilson's Satellite Studio —*

# When Bob Dylan

SANG "THE TIMES, THEY ARE  
A-CHANGIN'" THIRTY YEARS  
AGO, HE HAD NO IDEA HOW  
RIGHT HE WAS. WHAT'S  
HAPPENING NOW IN THE  
SYMBIOTIC WORLDS OF  
BUSINESS AND CULTURE

could make the Sixties seem like nothing more than the opening act of a drama that is already revolutionizing the ways in which we all pursue our dreams—hopefully for fun *and* profit.

We're talking about more than music. As the millennium winds down, we're witnessing a shift from an industrial society to one based on information, from atoms to bits, brawn to brainpower, manufacturing to service, and from mainframe to microprocessor. People are starting to buy and sell in new ways. Electronic networks, like neural passages, are eliminating many of the "frictions" of

traditional exchange.

Since music is itself a form of information, it's not surprising that smaller companies—the indie labels—are growing in overall market share. Small companies can be

flexible in organizing within an increasingly fluid environment while offering many of the same products and services provided by their bigger competitors. As society shifts from mass market to mass customization, these indies will adapt more easily to the needs of their customers—and their artists.

This lesson hasn't been lost on the major labels; by creating boutique subsidiaries and either signing distribution agreements with or acquiring indies, they've demonstrated their awareness of what's driving the album market today. Even so, with competition heating up, a



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“bottom-line” approach to investment continues to drive the industry. This may be good for the company, but not necessarily for artists—particularly newcomers and those who lack clout. In this scenario, a tiny number of superstars make enough money for their labels to do business, and the vast majority of artists do not. Indeed, a spokesperson for the Record Industry Association of America, a major label trade group, estimates that about 85 percent of all current releases do not recover their production costs; for debut albums, the percentage is even higher.

Responses to this pressure to perform have varied. Over the past few years, several labels have turned to the business world for the kind of guidance that can steer any corporation, whether manufacturing CDs or widgets, toward solid profitability. Michael Dornemann, CEO of BMG, came over from top management positions with IBM and BMW, and after losing several top music executives in '96, Warner Music Group hired co-chairmen Terry Semel and Bob Daly, with much experience in films—they still run the movie division—but little in music. Others embraced “music people”—executives such as Tommy Mottola at Sony, whose artist-friendliness and musical sensibilities could be considered assets as important as financial chops. Still others invested in CEOs who

combined the best of both worlds, such as Doug Morris of MCA/Universal, who is respected both for his business chops and his production work on “Smokin’ in the Boys’ Room” and other chart-busters.

Both approaches have proven vital in

*“Bottom-line investment drives  
the record industry.*

THIS MAY BE GOOD  
FOR THE COMPANY,

*but not necessarily for artists.*

the complex task of surviving in the record industry. Yet even the most skillful label heads have their hands full when attempting to pilot these massive vessels through the reefs of public taste. Few things are more difficult than predicting what will sell and what won’t; just as the majors catch up with a “new trend,” they often find that the market has shifted and listeners have moved on to something else.

As the costs of producing and marketing music increase, other divisions within the corporations frequently begin to exert a greater influence over decisions as to which artists can be counted on to be successful enough to return the company’s investment. The day-to-day

work of dealing mainly with one part of the picture—whether the music, the image in the video, the radio media, or the press—can result in different staff assessing the potential of artists in different ways and developing their own agendas rather than working toward a shared overall vision.

Tensions and turf battles, especially between A&R and marketing, are a normal part of the work climate at many record companies. One major label president tells *Musician* that when he assumed his post, he was “astonished at how little the departments in my company communicated with each other on projects that demanded a joint action. One of my first decisions was to call all staff members out of their offices and into the hallway for an ad-hoc pow-wow, just to dramatize my concern.”

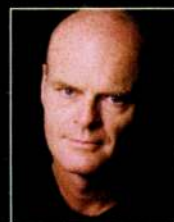
The main problem faced by artists signed to major labels is simpler: There are too many other records fighting for attention. Each album may have a formal marketing plan, but that plan can be cut short if another record shows signs of exploding. Company resources will then tip in favor of the smoker while the commercial possibilities of other releases are left untapped.

This problem can be compounded by job turnover at the labels. One typical scenario: An artist’s champion—often the



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**PAT MARTINO**

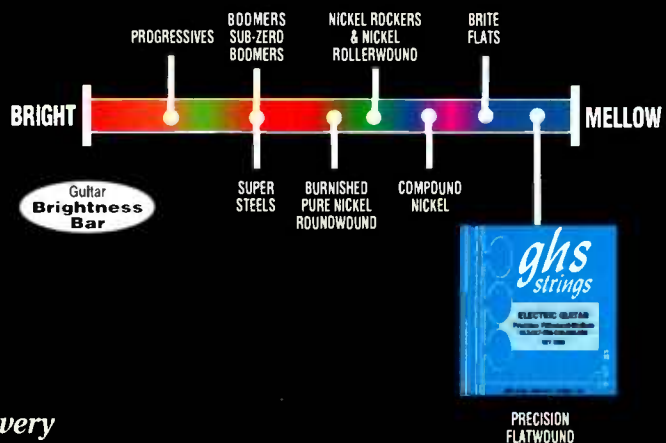
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A&R person who initiated the signing—leaves the company, and the artist, no longer a priority, stays tied to the company for several more years. And it doesn't have to be someone's departure that changes an artist's destiny; it may also be the arrival of a new executive with a different agenda, or problems that befall the label as a whole.

Many in New England are familiar with Little John, an award-winning act that filled rooms, pre-tested its product, and had strong industry representation when it signed with EMI Records in 1996. A generous recording advance enabled band members to quit their day jobs and focus on recording their major label debut. The future looked rosy. But once the record was completed, rumors began circulating that EMI Records was going to close. Many of the familiar executives with whom the band was dealing were suddenly unavailable. Promotion staff began updating their résumés . . . and then the boot fell. The label was shuttered, and dozens of acts were thrown into limbo, including Little John.

There are times when a label knows that a particular release isn't going to make it but goes through the motions anyway. This is done to maintain a relationship with an artist, lawyer, or manager, and is variously described as a "political signing," a "grace and favor deal," or a "courtesy signing." If a manager represents a successful act, for example, that manager can often use the incentive of future access to that act to persuade companies to sign other artists.

On the other hand, superstar acts may be able to get deals for their friends, with senior record company staff issuing contracts merely to keep those stars happy and maintain a working relationship, rather than for creative or short-term commercial reasons. Says one major label marketing director, "It was often easier to put out a record than fight with a manager who was important to the company."

All of this helps explain why so many newly-signed artists never go on to record, much less release, a second album. The paradox, of course, is that even as chances dwindle that any one artist or band will be able to build a career on a major label deal, music itself will flourish as it did long before a



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corporate megastructure rose around it—as it has, in fact, throughout history. The challenge for musicians is to consider other ways of putting their work before the public. Here are a few suggestions:

**DIY** Even the best A&R people, the ones most driven to find and promote new talent, are overwhelmed by demo tapes. Fact is, there just isn't enough time for them to listen to every unsolicited tape. They even have a hard time getting through tapes they receive from managers, attorneys, and other insiders. If you're lucky, maybe—just maybe—a college intern will screen your tape. But they're busy too.

What about all those stories about a band getting signed on the basis of an unsolicited demo tape? As Tim Sweeney notes in his excellent *Guide to Releasing Independent Records* (TSA Books, 1996), these tales are “remnants of the Sixties and Seventies.” He goes on to suggest that the best way to get a record deal today is to prove to the labels that you don't need them. In other words, if you can show that you can fill rooms, release and sell your own record, and get press and radio play without major label backing, then they'll more likely knock at your door. Just ask Ani DiFranco or Brett Gurewitz.

## CREATIVE COLLABORATIONS

The music biz is more driven by relationships than most industries. Networking is a key to getting ahead. Each musician should try to meet just two new people each week who may be able to help his or her career—that adds up to a hundred potential contacts per year.

It's also important to honestly assess your abilities. What are the most important personal qualities and skills to have in this business? I'd say perseverance, talent, interpersonal and business skills, and basic computer abilities. Figure out which of these you can bring to the table, and then find others who can bring the rest. Very few people can bring them all, so team up.

If you're in a band, then you already have a self-contained team. Each member should figure out which area he or she could best cover: getting gigs, making phone calls, mailing packages, building the database, doing market research,

maintaining the gear, etc. Success is a team effort, and the sooner you begin building that team, the sooner you'll start making progress.

Don't look for collaborators in just the most obvious places. Sometimes the most interesting work comes from places you'd rarely investigate for musical resources. This past year my partner and I teamed up with some scientists who were developing a middle-school educational project called *Microcosmos* at a local university. We provided the soundtrack to a film about the “dance” of micro-organisms in pond water. Fueled by a National Science Foundation grant, this project paid well, but its real beauty lay in the unusual collaboration: Audiovisual producers, scientists, musicians, film directors, and educators—people who don't normally traffic with each other—joined together to create the work.

## EMBRACE THE TECHNOLOGY

Digital tools and resources are vast, plentiful, and increasingly affordable. Desktop multitrack recorders, MIDI, digital samplers, keyboard workstations, personal computers, and the Internet are broadening our options for creating, performing, producing, marketing, and distributing our music.

Specifically, technology empowers those musicians who want to end-run the corporate vehicles. A personal computer can be wired up to act as a full-color publishing house, a TV studio, a recording studio, or an island in the seas of cyberspace. Using digital home recording equipment and independent studios, it's now possible to produce a quality album for as little as \$2,400—about a hundredth of what it could cost to record a high-overhead project for a major label.

In the end, building a career in music is no longer about hoping for attention from a paternal label. Your future is in your hands, and your strategy is there for the grabbing: Talent + Information x Energy = a better chance at Success. 🎵

*Contributors: Peter Spellman is career development coordinator at the Berklee College of Music and director of Music Business Solutions. You can reach him at [www.mbsolutions.com](http://www.mbsolutions.com).*





## *Romance with a Martin*

At a Pacific beach, Amanda Bradley plays on her new Martin D-1R a song her husband Michael wrote for her: "The Eyes." His gift of that Martin made her eyes, he says, "wide as they can get."

"My husband Michael surprised me last year and gave me a new Martin—the D-1R. I was thrilled. You see, I owned a Martin a long while ago, but sold it. I'll never sell my Martin again. I'd rather lie in a ditch and sleep under an old candy wrapper.

"I've been playing the guitar since I was 11. I'm not a professional musician, but love to play. I play at home with my family after a hard day's work as a tour guide at a nearby landmark castle. I take my guitar camping, and to the beach. At Montana de Oro, we met a fabulous guitar player who walked over when he heard me playing. 'Isn't that a Martin?' he asked. 'I could tell by the sound from way across the campground.'

"Not long ago I was thinking, 'I don't play well enough to play a guitar this good.' I repeated my thought to a guitarist we were talking with at a campground. He said, 'That's not true. Your instrument should always be better than you are.' I'd never thought of it that way before, and he's right. The fact is, I'm playing better with my new Martin than ever before."—**Amanda Bradley, Los Osos, California**

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## 1 Gallien-Krueger 700RB amp

Don't let the smaller size, name and sticker price fool you—the 700RB blamp by Gallien-Krueger (\$749) is actually an improvement on the 25-year old design of the 800RB. The GK model #'s refer to the amp wattage x 2, and while it's also 400 watts, the 700 refers to the 350 watt full range amp only, though there are 50 watts in the tweeter. All this name confusion could have been avoided by calling it the 800 Super Fancy bass amp or something, but what the heck. The most notable difference is that in the blamp section, which many 800 users often bypass altogether, there is more power in the low end and less in the high, finally righting the tendency to brightness with the 800. Additional features include a post/pre switch with an adjustable level control, a direct output with a ground lift switch and knob controlled voicing filters instead of switches for greater control. The tuner output and tuner mute switch also make it more user friendly for onstage tuning. GK makes durable bass amps that are extremely versatile in the number of bass sounds you can get, and this is a welcome addition to their line. ► **Gallien-Krueger, 2240 Paragon Dr., San Jose, CA 95131; voice (408) 441-8081.**

## 3 DigiTech XP-300 Space Station effects pedal

If you like experimenting with effects but don't want to mess with multiple pedals and tripping over patch cords mid-song, a wise choice would be the new Space Station XP-300 from DigiTech (\$240). A wide range (there are 30 factory presets) of truly distinctive effects make this a really interesting musical tool. One effect sounded like I was playing underwater, while another gave a very 2001 sonic eeriness, truly living up to its name. Besides the many out of this world effects, the Space Station is very functional, and can be used as a basic volume pedal, chromatic tuner, ring modulator, and resonator as well as delivering interesting reverse delays, octa-bass effects, and synth volume pedal swells. ► **DigiTech, 8760 South Sandy Pkwy., Sandy, UT 84070; voice (801) 568-7672.**

## 4 GR P4 Bass

A bass is a bass is a bass, you may say. But small things make big differences, and the P4 bass by GR Basses (\$1249) has some intriguing features that increase playability and give you a greater resonant bass sound. The curved heel shape makes room for enhanced reach when playing high on the neck, something to consider if you're a Peter Hook kind of bassist. Also, the ergonomic side set tuning pegs are a welcome sight for sore hands. For greater resonance, the bridge is custom made with large radius saddles and pickups by Basslines Music Man with your choice of solid ash, alder or poplar body with maple neck. ► **GR Basses, 295 Trade St., San Marcos, CA 92069; voice (760) 761-1131.**

## 6 Nady Platinum 802 Wireless Series

John Nady, who won an Emmy for achievement in the wireless microphone field, brings us a compact wireless system for instrument, handheld, lavalier, or head mics that has all the features of pro systems, but priced for an amateur. The Nady Platinum 802 Wireless Series (\$469 to \$519 per application) uses a two channel UHF system with a condensed rack mountable receiver, fixed mic level XLR outputs, and dual front-mounted antennas. The 120db range offers up a pure, realistic sound in the UHF band. ► **Nady Systems, 6701 Bay St., Emeryville, CA 94608; voice (510) 652-2411.**

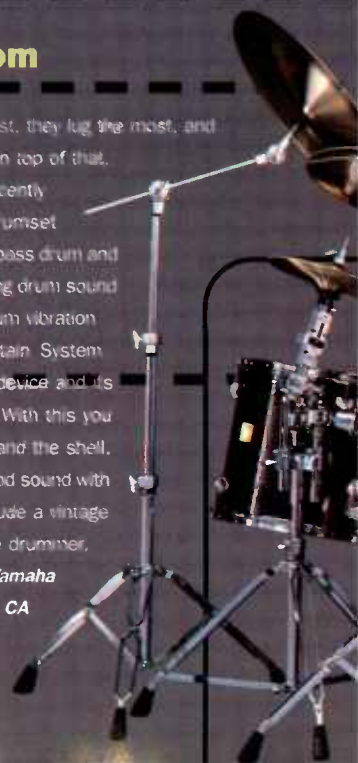
## 2 Alesis ADAT-XT20 Recorder

The new ADAT-XT20 (\$2999) eight-track digital recorder pulls off the amazing hat trick of costing less than its predecessor (the ADAT-XT) while adding major new technology and features. Like all new ADATs, it uses Alesis' new Type II 20-bit format (with improved A/D and D/A converters), making professional-level audio resolution and dynamic range available to everyone from the home studio demo-nut to slick, cooler-in-the-hallway commercial music studios. As far as compability goes, no problem: you can interconnect any combination of ADAT-XT20s and original 16-bit ADATs and ADAT-XTs (for up to 128 tracks) and the ADAT-XT20 can even play 16-bit S-VHS tapes recorded on older machines. Like the original ADAT, this promises to redefine the state of the art in home recording. ► **Alesis, 1633 26th St., Santa Monica, CA 90404; voice (800) 525-3747.**

# fast for

## 5 Yamaha Maple Custom Absolute Drumset

The drummers have it rough, they sweat the most, they lug the most, and they have the most screw-in-a-lightbulb jokes. On top of that, their equipment can be the costliest. Yamaha recently introduced its Maple Custom Absolute Drumset (\$3565) with this in mind. With a 7-ply all maple bass drum and 6-ply toms and snares, you get distinct, resonating drum sound with more attack. Two things really enhance drum vibration without restriction: the Yamaha Enhanced Sustain System (YESS) comes standard as the set's mounting device and its new small lug design with single-bolt mounting. With this you get a minimum of contact between your mount and the shell, further providing free vibration of the drum for good sound with stability. The choice of five lacquer finishes include a vintage golden wood and a snazzy silver sparkle, so the drummer, while sweating like a pig, can still look cool. ► **Yamaha Corp. of America, P.O. Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622-6600; voice (714) 522-9011.**





1



2



3



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5



6



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by maureen herman

# My Sedona

**Rivera's Sedona Acoustic-Electric Amp brings about a convergence of harmonic proportions**



**W**ith the growing popularity of bands like the Jayhawks, Wilco and Freakwater as well as increasing numbers of musicians being included in the No Depression (a.k.a. alternative country) genre, a lot of acoustic guitars are showing up at gigs where once there were only Fender Strats, whammy bars and people dressed in black. But simply having an acoustic guitar on stage doesn't guarantee that it'll sound like an acoustic guitar when you plug it in and start playing. For guitarists, a realistic acoustic sound at high volume is critical as

a textural element; for the rest of the band, it's a vital clue to both intonation and phrasing.

Unless you're a purist and prefer miking your guitar through the PA, it's more than likely that any acoustic guitar you choose to amplify uses piezo pickups to send a signal to your amp. As you probably know by now, those piezo pickups sound very different than the magnetic pickups, *i.e.* single-coil and humbuckers, found in electric guitars. (Unlike magnetic pickups, which respond

to changes in a magnetic field, piezo pickups respond to pressure sensitivity.) The resulting problem, as Jayhawks guitarist/singer Gary Louris points out, is "in general, an acoustic guitar through a regular guitar amp sounds like, well, an electric guitar." If you're inclined to go the unplugged route and take your chances with the PA, the monitors, and the soundman, so be it. But if your set list ranges from country-flavored ballads to punk-tinged rock tunes, the need for a versatile amplifier that can do the job is almost a necessity.

Enter the Rivera Sedona Acoustic-Electric two-channel amp (\$1,995). Named after a town in Arizona where both crystal-bearing hippies and magnetic fields converge, the Sedona is an extremely versatile, all-tube, 60-watt acoustic/electric guitar amp that delivers glistening acoustic tonality and electric crunch with plenty of volume. (A 100-watt version is available for \$2,495.)

Though the Sedona isn't the first combination acoustic-electric amp, it is a

*(continued on page 68)*



(continued from page 67)

distinctive and well-made rig that really does what it's intended to do. Designed by Paul Rivera in collaboration with Nashville guitarist Doyle Dykes, the basic concept of the Sedona is to provide two different channels to serve your acoustic and/or electric needs: CHANNEL ONE is for electric guitar exclusively, while CHANNEL TWO is for acoustic or electric—you choose between the two with the SELECT control (via the pull-out volume knob on CHANNEL ONE) or the FS-7 footswitch (included). Both channels have their own controls: CHANNEL ONE features VOLUME (with aforementioned SELECT control), BASS, MIDDLE, TREBLE, and MASTER (with pull-on BOOST), while CHANNEL TWO is very similar, offering pull-on BRIGHT control on the TREBLE knob, a pull-on NOTCH filter on the MIDDLE knob, and NINJA control on the MASTER knob, which I'll get to later. (Other front-panel features include high- and low-gain inputs, REVERB, and PRESENCE controls, ANTI-FEEDBACK controls, and switches for POWER and STANDBY.)

All this flexibility would be worthless if the amp didn't sound good, but Rivera made sure it would by stuffing the Sedona with some pretty serious innards: five 12AX7 tubes in the preamp stage help offer up a wide array of tones, while the Sedona's power stage employs two EL34 power tubes to deliver your sound to a single 12" JBL speaker and a custom-designed, high-powered Electro-Voice dome tweeter; optional extension enclosure cabinets, 12" speaker (\$695), and 15" speaker (\$895) are available if you need to push even more air.

For general guitar tone comparison, I played a Gibson CL-30 Deluxe dreadnought and a beautifully beaten-up Fender Strat (courtesy of Dan Murphy from Soul Asylum) through both the Sedona and Golden Smog's admittedly low-watt but favored '68 Fender Princeton Reverb amp during breaks in their recording session at Ardent Studios in Memphis, Tennessee. (Golden Smog is a side project for members of Soul Asylum, the Jayhawks, Wilco and Big Star.)

There was no need for a blindfold when I played the Gibson through the Sedona in a

clean setting and then through a similar setting on the Fender (which also had a JBL speaker)—the Sedona amplified the full range of the Gibson's string sound with all the nuances and warmth of the original instrument, while the Fender simply amplified noise and gave me a muddy, distorted sound. Also, despite the newness of the Gibson and its shiny new strings, the Sedona's versatile EQ—particularly the tweakable mid-range NOTCH control—gave me exceptional control over mid and bass tones, whereas the Fender amp had to be fed loads of bass EQ to eliminate screeching, which resulted in a loss of clarity.

The Strat initially sounded better through the Princeton than it did through the Sedona's CHANNEL TWO (which leans toward the bright side), but with the tweeter disengaged by pulling the FREQUENCY knob and a little tweaking of the master and secondary volume

**One of the biggest problems plugged-in acoustic players ever confront is feedback, but with the Sedona, feedback isn't an issue.**

control, I was able to warm up the tones considerably. Electric guitar sounded best through CHANNEL ONE, where for ease of stage use, you can have different settings for each channel. I found a killer guitar sound that would make the Butthole Surfers proud by setting CHANNEL ONE with the BOOST off, MASTER at 4, VOLUME at 7, BASS at 7, and MIDDLE, TREBLE, REVERB and PRESENCE set fairly flat. CHANNEL ONE had a nice crunchy guitar sound. CHANNEL TWO is cleaner on the electric though, if you're going for that sound; it will just be more difficult to switch between songs with your acoustic unless you mark your settings.

One of the biggest problems plugged-in acoustic players ever confront is feedback, but

with the Sedona, feedback isn't an issue. In fact, I was amazed by the amount of volume I pulled from it in its acoustic mode. Thanks to clearly-labeled ANTI-FEEDBACK pull knobs, this feature caused Louris to exclaim, "Hey! It actually works!" as a deafening squeal was quickly squelched. It functions like a parametric EQ but with cut only, so you can sweep the FREQUENCY as well as vary the LEVEL manually with the corresponding knobs. Distinct, resonant notes were clearly amplified with a beautiful warm tone, and loud enough to challenge a volume-crazy bandmate.

While I didn't have any problems with the Sedona's performance, there were a few aesthetic details that I didn't care for. The look of the amp is a strange reddish-brown, but I am told by Rivera that it is attributed to the red earth which "Sedona Red" is named for. And while it's purely a vibe thing, CHANNEL TWO's boost knob is named NINJA, which is a bit juvenile for my taste—I almost didn't want to pull it out because I was afraid I'd suddenly be wearing a headband and start playing "weedly-weedly" guitar licks. But truth be told, the NINJA control added a versatile and distinctively grungy kick to both acoustic and electric guitar sounds. Another small bummer is that at 70 pounds the Sedona is heavy for its size, even for a well-seasoned equipment lugging musician.

If anything I was most surprised at how much I liked the Sedona as an electric amp. I was expecting the promise of good acoustic tone—which I got—but I thought it might be average as an electric amp. Surprisingly, this really is a dual amplifier well worth the seemingly high sticker price; especially when you consider that it comes equipped with excellent tube reverb, a built-in direct box, and an active effects loop with level controls. You're getting two amps in one; you can play your electric with distorted abandon and you won't have to depend solely on the drunk soundperson to get your tender make-the-audience-cry acoustic song sound right tonight.

The real considerations here, as with all equipment investments, are: will it perform, will it last, is it worth it? I have to give a head-bangin', foot-stompin' yes to all three. I think any acoustic-electric guitarist will find this invaluable as a great-sounding, well-made and innovative amplifier worth its hefty weight in gold.



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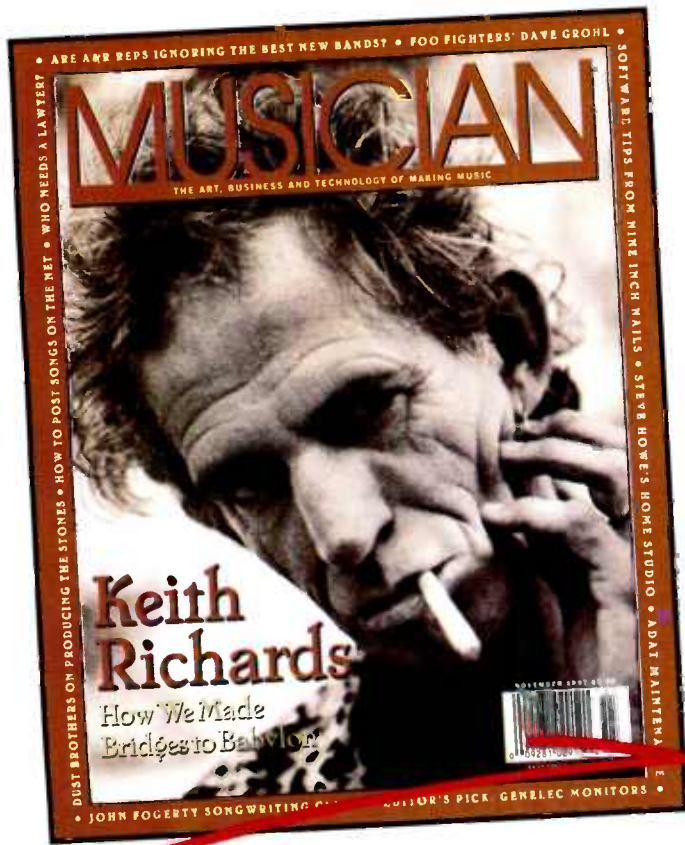
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# productindex

Here's our product guide which lists the equipment and page number where the players talk about the gear they use. Feel free to call or fax the manufacturers listed below for specific information on what the best players play.

**ACTODYNE GENERAL**, 5561 Engineer Dr., Huntington Beach, CA, 92649, (714) 898-2776: Lace Helix guitar, **83**  
**AKAI**, 7010 Sequel Dr., Aptos, CA, 95003, (800) 433-5627: S2000 sampler, **25**; AAV405 stereo receiver, **26**  
**ALESIS**, 3630 Holdredge Ave., Los Angeles, CA, 90016, (310) 558-4530: Q20 multieffects processor, **80**; DG8 digital piano, DM pro 64-voice drum module, **82**; NanoTracker MIDI sequencer, Studio 24 inline mixer, **83**; ADAT-XT20 Recorder, **64**; Midiverb, **26**  
**ANTARES**, 444 Airport Blvd. Ste. 207, Watsonville, CA, 95076, (408) 688-8593: ATR-1 software, **83**  
**AUDIO-TECHNICA**, 1221 Commerce Dr., Stow, OH, 44224, (216) 686-2600: AT3525 mic, AT3528 mic, AT3527 mic, **81**, AT4054 mic, AT4055, **82**  
**BEHRINGER**, P.O. Box 9031, 575 Underhill Blvd, Syosset, NY, 11791-9031, (516) 364-2244: Composer compressor, **26**  
**BEYER-DYNAMIC**, 56 Central Ave., Farmingdale, NY, 11735-6906, (516) 293-3200: MK2-T Stereo Vitalizer, Qure dual-channel equalizer, **80**; MCE condenser mike, TG-X 10 dynamic percussion mic, **81**  
**BOSS**, 7200 Dominion Cir., Los Angeles, CA, 90040, (213) 685-5141: 330 tone module, **25**; HyperFuzz, **26**  
**CAD**, 341 Harbor St., Conneaut, OH, 44030, (216) 593-1111: VX2 large condenser tube mic, **81**  
**CRATE AMPLIFIERS**, 1400 Ferguson Ave., St. Louis, MO,

63133, (314) 727-4512: VC508 low-watt tube amp, **81**  
**DANELECTRO**, PO Box 2769, Laguna Hills, CA, 92654-2769, (714) 583-2419: U2 guitar, **83**  
**DBX**, 8760 S Sandy Pkwy., Sandy, UT, 84070, (801) 568-7660: DDP, 586 Dual Vacuum Tube Preamp, **80**  
**DIGITECH/DOD**, 8760 South Sandy Pkwy., Sandy, UT, 84070, (801) 566-8919: Studio S100 signal processor, **80**; Talker guitar effects, RP3 multieffects processor, Space Station multieffect pedal, Control 8, RP 7 Valve tube guitar preamp, **83**; XP-300 Space Effect pedal, **64**  
**DIPINTO GUITARS**, 214 Market St., Philadelphia, PA, 19106, (215) 923-2353: Satellite guitar, Mach IV guitar, Belvedere bass and guitar, **83**  
**DRUM WORKSHOP**, 101 Bernoulli Cir., Oxnard, CA, 93030, (805) 485-6999: ARC snare system, **82**  
**E-MU**, 1600 Green Hills Rd., Scotts Valley, CA, 95066, (408) 438-1921: Audity 2000 synth module, **82**  
**ENSONIQ**, 155 Great Valley Pkwy., Malvern, PA, 19355, (610) 647-3630: DP4 signal processor, **26**  
**EPIPHONE**, 1818 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN, 37210-3781, (615) 871-4500: "Tele guitar", 1939 Broadway guitar, **25**  
**EVENTIDE**, 1 Alsan Way, Little Ferry, NJ, 7643, (201) 641-1200: DSP4500 Ultraharmonizer, GTR4000 guitar processor, **80**  
**FENDER MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS**, 7975 N Hayden Rd., Scottsdale, AZ, 85258, (602) 596-9690: Twin Reverb amplifier, **35**; Passport system PA, **80**; Stratocaster guitar, **25**  
**FDSTEX**, 15431 Blackburn Ave., Norwalk, CA, 90650, (562) 770-2700: eight-track tape deck, **19**; DP-8 digital audio patchbay, **83**  
**FURMAN SOUND**, 30 Rich St., Greenbrae, CA, 94904, (415) 927-1225: PQ-3 parametric equalizer, **80**  
**G & L**, 5381 Production Dr., Huntington Beach, CA, 92649, (714) 897-6766: Comanche guitar, ASAT Z-3 guitar, **83**  
**GALLIEN-KRUEGER**, 2240 Paragon Dr., San Jose, CA, 95131-1306, (408) 441-7970: 700RB bass amp, **81**; 700RB amp, **64**  
**GENERALMUSIC**, 1164 Tower Ln., Bensenville, IL, 60106, (708) 766-8230: Equinox synthesizer, **82**  
**GIBSON**, 641 Massman Dr., Nashville, TN, 37210, (800) 283-7135: Lucille Custom King guitar, GBBS Electric Blues strings, **35**  
**IBANEZ**, 1726 Winchester Rd, Bensalem, PA, 19020, (215) 638-8670: AS200 guitar, **86**  
**KAWAJI**, 2055 E University Dr., Compton, CA, 90220, (310) 631-1771: MP9000 digital piano, **82**  
**KORG**, 316 S Service Rd., Melville, NY, 11747-3201, (516) 333-9100: 88-key N1 synthesizer, 61-note N5 synthesizer, TR-Rack synthesizer, SGproX stage piano, **82**  
**KURZWEIL**, 13336 Alondra Blvd., Cerritos, CA, 90703-2245, (310) 926-3200: Audio Elite System, K2500, Percussion System, **82**; ExpressionMate, **83**  
**LABELLA**, 256 Broadway, Newburgh, NY, 12550, (914) 562-4400: 5 amp, **35**  
**LEXICON**, 3 Oak Park Rd, Bedford, MA, 01730-1441, (617) 280-0300: MPX 100 signal processor, **80**; 284 low-watt tube amp, M112 Stubby Stack, **81**; MPX G2 guitar effects processor, Signature 284 tube guitar amplifier, **83**  
**LUDWIG & MUSSER INDUSTRIES**, P.O. Box 310, Elkhart, IN, 46515, (219) 522-1675: Phase II Synthesizer, **26**  
**MACKIE DESIGNS**, 16220 Wood-Red Rd. NE, Woodinville, WA, 98072, (800) 258-6883: 1602 mixing board, **26**  
**MARK OF THE UNICORN**, 1280 Massachusetts Ave.,

Cambridge, MA, 2138, (617) 576-2760: MIDI Time Piece 3, **25**  
**MATCHLESS**, 9830 Alburdis Ave., Santa Fe Springs, CA, 90670, (310) 801-4840: AC-30 amp, **86**  
**MIDIMAN**, 236 W Mountain St., #108, Pasadena, CA, 91103-2967, (818) 449-8838: S.A.M., Pipeline 8x8, **83**  
**MUSIC INTERFACE TECHNOLOGIES**, 13620 Lincoln Way, Suite 320, Auburn, CA, 95603, (916) 888-0783: audiophile speaker cables, **83**  
**NADY SYSTEMS**, 6701 Bay St., Emeryville, CA, 94608-1023, (510) 652-2411: Platinum 802 Wireless Series, **64**  
**NEW SENSOR CORP.**, 20 Cooper Square, New York, NY, 10003, (800) 633-5477: Bass Bulbs envelope filter, **83**  
**NORD LEAD**, 923 McMullen Booth Rd., Clearwater, FL, 34619, (813) 796-8868: synthesizer, **25**  
**OMNIRAX**, P.O. Box 1792, Sausalito, CA, 94966, (800) 332-3393: sidekick rack, Fido rolling CPU cart, **83**  
**PEAVEY ELECTRONICS**, 711 A St., Meridian, MS, 39301, (601) 483-5365: Tube Sweetener, VC/L-2 dual-channel compressor, XR 2012 power mixer, **80**; XR 684 power mixer, MP 5 power mixer, RQ 1606 non-powered mixer, RQ 880FX non-powered mixer, SRC 4018 FC non-powered mixer, vocal 100 stomp box, **81**  
**RIVERA R & D**, 13310 Ralston Ave., Sylmar, CA, 91342, (800) 809-2444: Sedona Acoustic-Electric amp, **67**  
**ROLAND**, 7200 Dominion Circle, Los Angeles, CA, 90040, (213) 685-5141: VS-880 eight-track, **19**; SC-880 tone generator, XP-60 workstation, SPD-20 drum machine, **82**; MC-505 dance music sequencer, SP-808 Groovesampler, JX-305 Groovesynth, **83**; R-70 drum machine, U-220 tone module, **25**  
**SENNHEISER**, 1 Enterprise Dr, Old Lyme, CT, 6371, (860) 434-9190: Evolution series mics, **82**  
**SHURE BROTHERS**, 222 Hartrey Ave., Evanston, IL, 60202, (800) 257-4873: SM 57, **35**  
**SLINGERLAND**, 741 Massman Dr., Nashville, TN, 37210, (615) 871-4500: Legends series drum kits, Studio King Touring drum kit, **82**  
**SONY ELECTRONICS**, 3 Paragon Dr., Montvale, NJ, 7645, (201) 930-1000: DPS-V55 multieffects processor, **80**; 300 ES DAT, **25**  
**STUDIO ELECTRONICS**, 18034 Ventura Blvd., Ste. 169, Encino, CA, 91316, (818) 776-8104: MIDI Moog, **25**  
**STUMP PREACHER GUITARS**, 12604 N.E. 178th St., Woodinville, WA, 98072, (425) 402-1935: guitar, **83**  
**TC ELECTRONICS**, 705-A Lakefield Rd., Westlake Village, CA, 91361, (805) 373-1828: Gold Channel mic preamp, **80**  
**TECHNICS**, 1 Panasonic Way 1C-8, Secaucus, NJ, 7094, (201) 392-6140: SL 1200 MKII turntables, **19**  
**VESTAX**, 2860 Cordelia Rd., Ste. 120, Fairfield, CA, 94585, (707) 427-1920: PMC 05 Pro Mixer, **19**  
**VIBRO-TEK INDUSTRIES**, 12911 109th Ave., Surrey, BC, V3T 2N1, Canada, (604) 951-1677: Double Whammy, **83**  
**VIRTUAL DSP CORP.**, 4119 125th St. S.E., Everett, WA, 98208, (425) 338-5221: DSP MidiaXe PitchPerfect, **82**  
**VOODOO LAB/DMC**, 5312-J Derry Ave., Agoura Hills, CA, 91301, (818) 991-3881: Pedal Power, **83**  
**YAMAHA**, 6600 Orangethrope Blvd., Buena Park, CA, 90622, (714) 522-9011: EMX 2000 power mixer, **80**; "EX" workstations", **82**; Maple Custom Absolute drums, **64**; NSIOM monitor, **26**  
**ZOOM**, 575 Underhill Blvd., Syosset, NY, 11791, (516) 364-2244: RhythmTrak...234 drum machine, **82**



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- 222 5/97 Greatest Songs of All Time, Ben Folds Five
- 223 6/97 Bad Times For The Music Business, Pavement
- 224 7/97 10 Landmark Albums & Productions, Supergrass, US3
- 225 8/97 Aerosmith, Paul McCartney, Papas Fritas, Chick Corea
- 226 9/97 Why Musicians Are Broke, Radiohead, Michael Penn
- 227 10/97 Blues Power!. John Popper, Sugar Blue, Peter Green
- 228 11/97 Keith Richards, John Fogerty, Dust Brothers, Dave Grohl
- 229 12/97 Bjork, Billy Joel, Mike Watt, Jane Siberry
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# Keep Track

- of -

# Your

# Tracks

**I**magine this scenario: You get a call from your composing partner, who tells you that the demo you sent in for that TV theme a few weeks ago is one of three versions up for final consideration by the show's producers. "They want us to send another demo," he adds, "that sounds exactly the same except with a new bass sound and some more sound effects."

Sounds like a piece of cake—until you try to load the sequence back into your digital sequencer and realize that you have no idea where you stored the audio files, including the sax part from that hot-shot studio player you hired. After a frantic search through

your hard drive and all the disks from your removable drive, you finally find it—only to discover that the file is corrupt. "If only I'd backed it up," you cry.

The moral, of course, is that you're asking for trouble if you don't have a system for storing and backing up the various audio and data formats that you use. Even a modest home studio will likely have DAT tapes containing

***A guide to organizing and protecting your studio data***

mixes, some sort of multitrack format, synth patches, samples, sequence files, and maybe even hard disk recording files, so the need for organization is obvious. If you put off keeping records for too long, you might get to

***by michael levine***

*(continued on page 74)*

**MASTER PROJECT SHEET**

Title \_\_\_\_\_ Client \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Tempo \_\_\_\_\_ Engineer \_\_\_\_\_

**Recorded on:**

ADAT \_\_\_\_\_ Tapes(s)# \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_\_

STUDIO VISION \_\_\_\_\_ Sequence File Name/Saved To: \_\_\_\_\_

Sequence File Backed Up To: \_\_\_\_\_

Audio File Name/Saved To: \_\_\_\_\_

Audio Files Backed Up To: \_\_\_\_\_

**Sync Info:**

Master: \_\_\_\_\_ Slave: \_\_\_\_\_ Sync Method: \_\_\_\_\_

SMPTE Start time \_\_\_\_\_ Offsets \_\_\_\_\_

Frame Rate \_\_\_\_\_

**Synths And Modules Used:**

SYNTH NAME	PATCH OR COMBINATION	SAVED TO:	BACKED UP TO:

**Mix Info:**

Mixed To: \_\_\_\_\_ ID#(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Backed Up To: \_\_\_\_\_ Sample Rate: 44.1k \_\_\_\_\_ 48k \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**Figure 1. A typical master project sheet.**

(continued from page 73)

the point where you can't find important mixes, disks, samples, or multitrack masters without going through time-consuming and tedious searches—if you find them at all.

This article offers some suggestions for organizing your tracking and backup procedures, so you can spend your time making music instead of looking for data.

## logging your sessions

Record-keeping systems are critical during sessions, because you need to be able to quickly access the information from the various media in your studio. The most fundamental tool for this job is the track sheet, on which you write down what part is recorded on which track, as well as any comments regarding the various takes. Without a track sheet, it's only a matter of

time before you accidentally erase something important. Plus, if you ever have to revisit a project, a track sheet will help you remember critical details from each session.

Making your own track sheets is a snap, but if you'd prefer you can purchase pre-made versions. A good source for track sheets and other recording forms, both on paper and disk, is a company called **Songwriter Products, Ideas, and Necessities** ([407] 321-3702).

There are also software programs that allow you to input your track and session data on your computer. If you're an ADAT or DA-88 user, consider Track Manager Software from **Creative Input** ([800] 869-4678). This simple-to-use database program for the PC or Mac allows you to enter in, save, and print your session data, including track information, credits, SMPTE start

times, offsets, and sample rates. In addition, it helps those who own more than one machine to keep track of the multiple tapes that get used on a single project.

There are also two new comprehensive (and therefore more expensive) studio management software packages available for both Mac and PC. These programs, Studio Suite from **AlterMedia** ([800] 450-5740) and Session Tools from **Apogee Electronics** ([310] 915-1000), not only allow for entering track sheet information, but also permit users to input tape library data, generate invoices, and execute a host of other functions. These applications are geared more to commercial studios, but they could serve well in a project studio environment.

If you record to hard disk only, there's less need for a track sheet because virtually all digital recording software lets you input track information into your computer and usually print it out as well.

Audio from your multitrack, however, is far from the only type of data you need to keep tabs on. You probably also have MIDI "virtual tracks" and patch and sample data, as well as synchronization information. One of the best ways to keep your finger on the pulse of this cornucopia of sound files, sounds, and data, is to use a master project sheet.

## making a master project sheet

The purpose of this form (see Fig. 1) is to give you an "at a glance" overview of all the data from your session, including file names, storage and backup location, and tempo, as well as synchronization and mixdown specifics.

Because every studio uses a particular combination of equipment, you won't be able to find any commercially available forms for this purpose. But all you need to make your own is a decent word processor and a printer.

A good way to design a master project sheet is to divide it into sections. The top section should contain spaces for basic song information, such as title, date, producer, and tempo.

The next section should be dedicated to whatever multitrack formats reside in your studio plus your MIDI sequences. Make a space to write in the title of your master tape or disk—it's important to be systematic



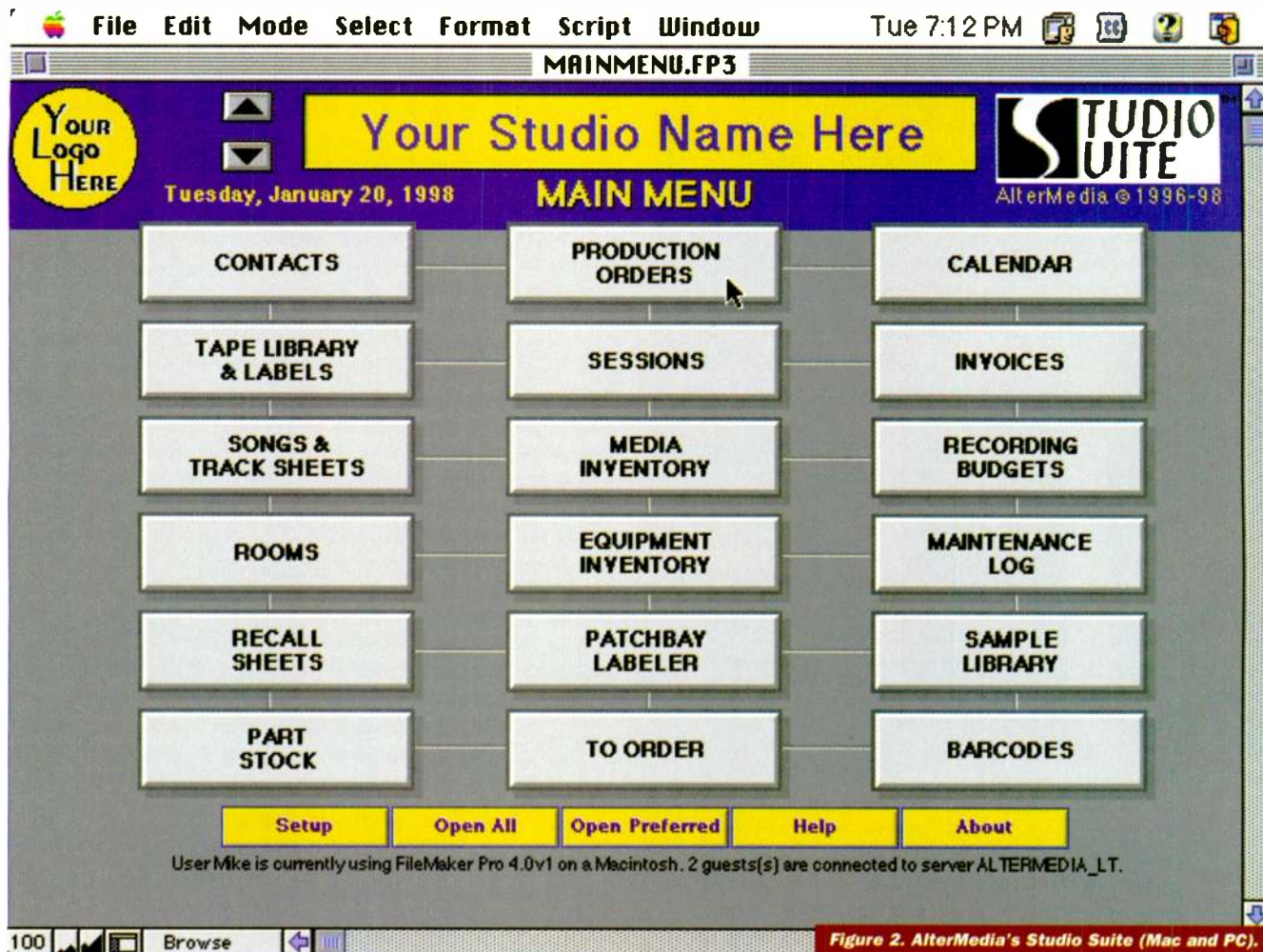


Figure 2. AlterMedia's Studio Suite (Mac and PC).

when filing and storing your masters—as well as the start time, the sequence name, and where it's saved and backed up. If you're recording direct to disk, also include a space to indicate where the audio files are written and where they're backed up.

The third section should contain sync information: what sync method—MIDI Machine Control, a SMPTE stripe on the multitrack—was used, if any; which machine—your sequencer, your multitrack—was the master; which was the slave; what was the SMPTE start time of the sequence; whether any offsets were used and what SMPTE frame rate was.

Below that you'll want to make a section devoted to MIDI patch and sample information. The easiest way to do this is in the form of a table. Set up the table so that it has as many rows as you have MIDI instruments in your studio. You should have at least four columns, one for the synth or

module name, one for the patch or multi (combination) patch that was used, one for the file name if you saved your patch data to a universal librarian, and the last for where that file was backed up.

The final section should contain information about the mix. The title of the DAT master (or whatever two-track format you're using), the DAT ID number of the mix (or numbers in the case of multiple mixes), and the title and ID number of the tape it's backed up to. Also, make sure to have an area to indicate the sample rate.

### organize your backups

I know you've heard this before, but you're asking for trouble if you don't back up regularly when using a computer. You put a lot of effort into your music, and you don't want your hard work to go up in smoke when a hard disk dies or a floppy is corrupted.

It's very likely that during a typical

session, you will generate or use hard disk audio files, sequence files, patch librarian files, and samples. With the exception of your samples, which are in most cases file types proprietary to your sampler, all of these formats are saved on your computer. Audio files are especially big and can take up hundreds of megabytes of disk space.

It makes sense to back up all the files for a given song into a single folder or directory. An easy way to do this is to use a backup utility program (such as Backup, which is included on Windows95, or Retrospect or Disk Fit Pro for the Mac) and routinely back up all of your files to a large removable drive such as a Jaz or Syjet when you're done with your session. It's easy, fast, and convenient, but not cheap. Removable media are quite expensive—for example, single Jaz disks sell for around \$120.

One way to keep your costs down is to

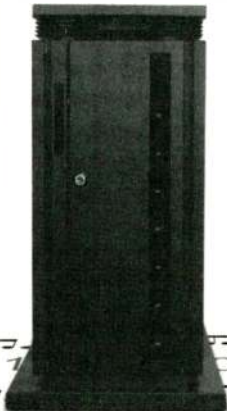
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## studio techniques

(continued from page 75)

archive finished projects from your removable drive (or wherever you backed up your session data) to a recordable CD-ROM drive (CD-R), which gives you long-term, non-volatile storage. Although they're not erasable, the "multisession" feature, which is now standard in CD-R drives, allows you to archive data to your CDs in as many "sessions" as it takes to fill the 650 megs of a disk. Depending on how many tracks of audio you're using, you can probably fit at least three or four full songs on each CD-ROM. (If you want to be able to reuse disks, you could instead purchase a CD-RW drive, which is a new erasable CD format. Bear in mind, though, that it's not completely compatible with conventional CD-ROMs.)


Not including the price of the hardware, backing up to CD-R costs about 1.3 cents per megabyte, which is about a tenth of the cost of removable media. Plus, most CD-ROM drives let you "burn" audio CDs as well, which for a musician can be pretty handy. (Bear in mind that in most cases, when you're "burning" an audio CD, as opposed to a CD-ROM, it must be done in one pass.) In addition, you can archive data from your sampler in its own native format and make your own sample CDs.

Despite the price difference, CD-Rs do have some disadvantages. For one thing, you can't read audio files directly off a CD-ROM—it's too slow. In order to reuse the files, you must first transfer them to a hard drive of some sort. A hard disk recorder can, however, read files directly off a fast removable such as a Jaz or Syjet.

Other backup formats include tape drives, DAT (data), and magneto-optical drives, all of which (except for Glyph and some other new magneto-optical drives) are much slower than removable drives and don't present the advantage to musicians that CD-Rs do.

There's little productivity to be gained from having the latest and greatest gear if you have no systems in place to efficiently handle and store the information. But by implementing strategies such as the ones described here, you can make big strides toward organizing and safeguarding your valuable data.

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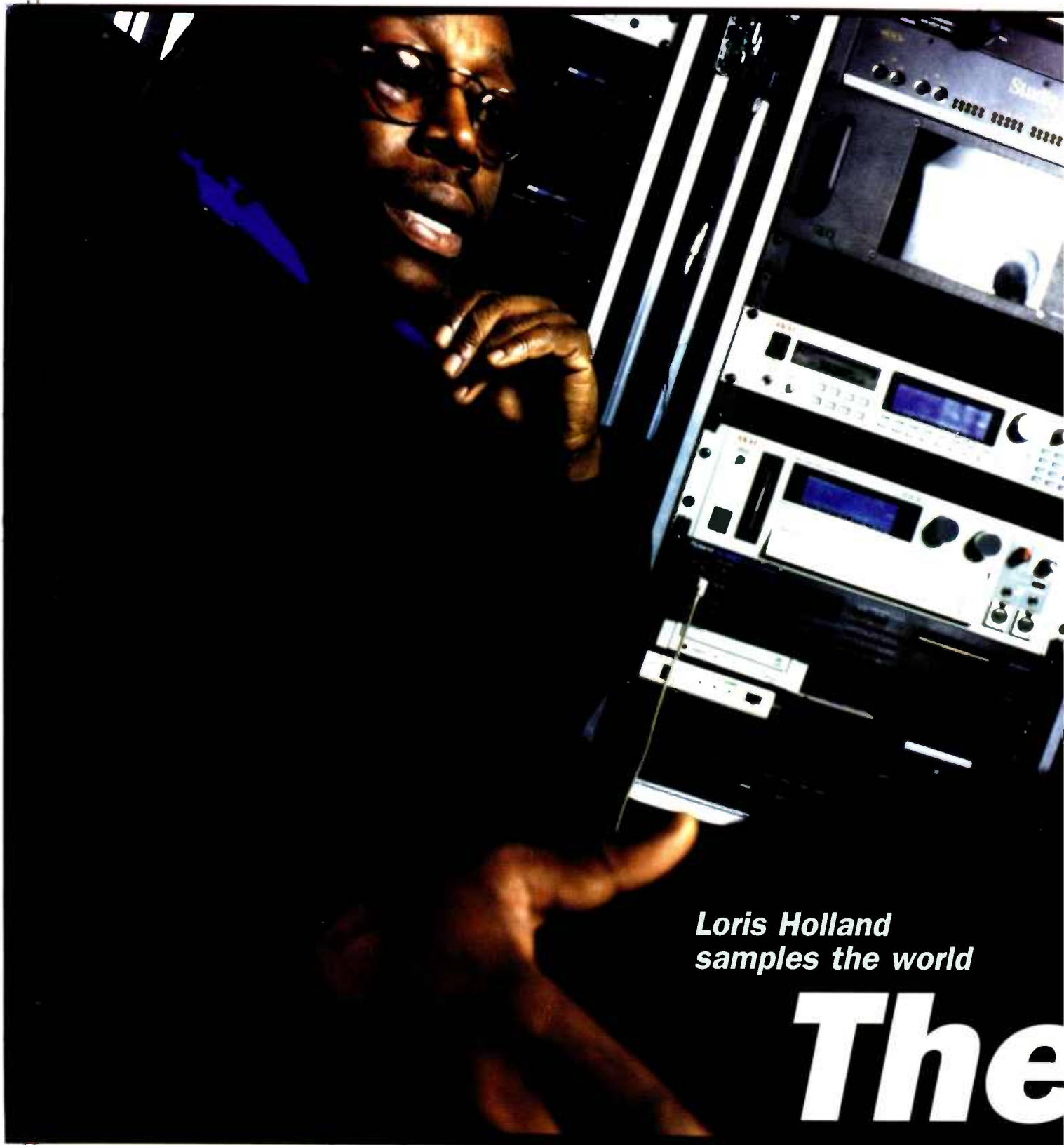
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*Loris Holland  
samples the world*

# The





**L**oris Holland isn't exactly a household name, as he'll be the first to admit. "I'm the guy behind the scenes, but I don't mind being low-key," the keyboardist confides. "I was a teenage prodigy—'was' being the operative word. I studied classical music at the Royal School of Music in England. But I started playing in reggae bands when I was twelve, though I could only be in a band for about two weeks until my parents would find out and I would have to quit." He has since enjoyed a successful, albeit somewhat anonymous career, writing and producing for major artists like Mariah Carey, Al Green, Patti La Belle, and Ruby Turner, as well as grinding out catchy jingles for the likes of Coca-Cola, MCI, Xerox, and Kentucky Fried Chicken.

These days, Holland spends most of his time in a custom-built composing studio at one of Manhattan's top ad agencies, though he's still taking on album projects. His main axe is a rack-mounted Akai S3000XL sampler. "It's right next to my keyboard controller, at perfect eye level," he laughs. "The guys who designed and wired this room (Burello Sound, 212-721-3181) are awesome; they're really into ergonomics. I can work here for hours with everything at my fingertips. I'll sample things like weird old records and then join the samples together, time-compressing as I go. I'll grab a hi-hat or a snare with a kick in some little hip-hop inflection and then make up my own sounds from combinations of these snippets."

Demonstrating, he plays a smooth, funky bass/drum/wah-guitar loop. "This is a song where the whole groove is based on this single one-bar sample. The guitar was sampled separately; it actually was in a whole different key, so I pitch-changed and time-stretched it and then flew it back in." Holland's unique touch becomes apparent when he plays the song both with and without the sample loop. The difference is subtle but significant. Though mixed in at a very low level, the loop adds a distinctive organic quality; when it's muted, the soul of the music seems to evaporate.

Holland's been working with Akai samplers for years. "The S3000XL has lots of hip features, and it doesn't buzz when you hook up a SCSI hard drive, like my old S1000 did. I put all my bass and drum sounds into it. I also like using it for vocals, so I can trigger them via MIDI from my sequencer. This way, they're locked for the whole song. But I don't like what the S3000XL does to the sound of the vocals—the onboard A/D converters make them kind of boxy—so I always bring them in through the digital inputs, straight from DAT."

Holland takes a unique approach to layering sounds. "I'm sure the way I do it is really backwards, but it works for me. After I find the samples I like, I load them into the S3000XL and assign each one to a different MIDI channel. Then I trigger all the sounds from my sequencer

[C-Lab Notator, running on an Atari 1040ST]. This allows me to hear the layered sounds in a musical context, against the other tracks. When I'm satisfied with the blend, I use the S3000XL's digital output to record it to DAT. Then I fly it digitally from the DAT back into the sampler.

"I'm not a techie, but I know what I want to hear. Sometimes I know how to get it, and lots of times I stumble onto it—I love when that happens, because it's magic. One time I loaded an 808 program into the S3000XL and I accidentally set it to Omni mode, so when I hit Play on the sequencer, the wildest thing happened: The whole song started coming out at once, and it sounded absolutely amazing. So I immediately sampled it [onto DAT] and I made it into what I call a 'walla drop-in,' which I've used on a couple of tunes." Holland demonstrates by playing a single note on the keyboard, and a potpourri of analog percussion sounds fly out of the speaker in an infectious polyrhythm.

"Another thing I've done," he enthuses, "is to sample a loop and then cut it up into little pieces, assigning each piece to a different MIDI note. Then I can play it back in its original form by playing a scale on the keyboard, varying the timing if I like—or I can mix up the order by playing different note patterns. For a really strange sound, you can even reverse some of the cut-up pieces, so some of the drums are going forward and some are going backward. Once I've reconstructed the loop this way, I can either record the note events into my sequencer or resample the whole thing into DAT and then fly it back digitally into the S3000XL."

Although the S3000XL has optional onboard signal processing, Holland prefers to use outboard gear for that purpose, though minimally. "I usually sample sounds unprocessed, but it depends on the kind of music. On a pop song, I'll want to keep everything clean. If it's hip-hop or something funky, I'll want it to sound crazy, so I might process and then sample. Sometimes I sample from cassette just to add some hiss, or I'll dirty the sound by adding vinyl crackle samples."

Every producer has at least one horror story that reveals how technology can save the day, and Holland's got a classic: "I did a session with this singer from Motown and recorded fourteen tracks of vocals to make a comp from. Two days before we're supposed to mix, I get a call that the engineer's accidentally wiped the seven choice tracks! The singer was already out of town, so I had to sample every single line into the Akai and go through it word by word, fixing the pitch where it was a little sharp or a little flat. On some words, there was no 's' at the end, so I would sample an 's,' bring it in, and, using the sequencer, line it up so it fit on at the end of the word. But I did it all in the S3000XL, and in the end it sounded great. The A&R guy called afterward and said, 'Wow, I never heard her sound so good!' Of course, I never told him the true story, because as a producer, you've got to protect your artist. And she was a

great singer; she just had some problems on a few of the tracks, and unfortunately those were the tracks I had to use. Now, of course, there's pitch-fixing software that lets you tweak things automatically, on the fly—but I had to do it the hard way." 🎧

# Akai Guy

by howard massey

# Return of the Son of NAMM

**S**o you thought last month's report on the Winter NAMM convention was the whole story? Hah! In addition to the recording gear, software, and the industry trend toward digital convergence covered in our May issue, this spectacular show offered enough new stuff to fill—well, another Musician Technology article. Hey, we'll prove it now!

## signal processing

You can never have too many ways to fold, spindle, and mutilate your signal, and NAMM provided lots of new toys for these purposes. **Lexicon** debuted the highly affordable (\$249)

by *howard massey*  
and *michael gelfand*

*More new gadgets  
and gewgaws for  
the modern musician*

on the success of its Tube MP preamp models, **ART** added two new affordable single-channel retro boxes (both priced at \$249): the Tube EQ parametric equalizer, and the Tube PAC, which provides both a mic preamp and a compressor. **Peavey** introduced its Tube Sweetener (\$299), which sports catchy SUGAR and SPICE knobs for saturation and tone control, and the VC/L-2 (\$1,249), an all-tube

parametric equalizer/ preamp (\$299 or \$333, depending on whether you need unbalanced or balanced I/O), a product first introduced in 1975. At the high end of the curve, **TC Electronic** announced the Gold Channel mic preamp (\$2,495), which provides true 24-bit A/D conversion and internal 96kHz processing, and **Eventide** debuted the DSP4500 UltraHarmonizer (\$5,895), which includes all the programs from the GTR4000 guitar processor.



MPX 100, and **DigiTech** countered with its Studio S100 (\$199). **Alesis** unveiled the Q20 multieffects processor (\$999), and **Sony** demoed the DPS-V55 (\$550), which provides four discrete mono (or two stereo) inputs and outputs. **dbx** showed their first-ever digital dynamics processor, the DDP (\$599), which features tape saturation emulation technology. Also on display at the dbx booth was the first in a new line of "Silver Series" processors: the 586 Dual Vacuum Tube Preamp (\$999). Following

▲  
**dbx's**  
**586 Preamp**

dual-channel compressor/limiter which uses a new kind of technology called OptoDynamics.

We got invigorated at the **beyer-dynamic** booth, where a new tube version of the company's Stereo Vitalizer (the MK2-T, priced \$899) was being demoed, as well as the intriguingly named Qure (\$470), a dual-channel 3-band parametric equalizer which uses solid-state circuitry to emulate tube effects. **Furman** joined the retro race by announcing its reissue of the PQ-3

## live sound

**Fender** may be best known for their guitars and basses, but they've also developed a cool line of PA products. New at NAMM was their self-contained and highly transportable Passport system (\$899), which includes a powered mixer, speakers, and microphones—there's even an option that allows it to run from a car battery! Other hot new PA products included self-powered mixers: the **Yamaha** EMX 2000 (\$999), which includes a 200-watt stereo amp and onboard digital effects; the **EVI Audio** PSX2000 (\$3,000), with dual 500-watt amps and onboard digital effects; and several items from **Peavey**, including the XR 2012 (\$1,999),



# WMM

which has dual 600-watt amps and digital effects; the rack-mountable XR 684 (\$769), which has dual 200-watt amps and effects; and the eminently affordable MP 5 Plus (\$399), with a single-channel 150-watt power amp and thoroughly retro spring reverb. Peavey also showed a number of non-powered mixers, including the RQ 1606M (\$999), in a 16x6 configuration; the RQ 880FX (\$899), which has four mic inputs and four stereo line inputs, plus onboard effects; and the SRC 4018 FC (\$1,399), an 18x4 FOH mixer, built into a flight case. The company also unveiled what may be the first ever stomp box for singers: the Vocal 100 (price TBA), which includes a mic preamp, compressor, and multieffects.

## amplification

For once it was the lower-power amps that made most of the noise at NAMM. Both **Crate** and—surprise—**Lexicon** introduced low-watt tube amps for guitarists: Crate's VC508 combo (\$250) delivers five watts through a small, 8" speaker in an open-back cabinet, while Lexicon's 284 (\$999) is a 6-watt amp that's primed for studio recording or live playback (with the help of a power amp) via the company's new M112 Stubby Stack 12"

speaker enclosure (starting at \$399). For bassists, **Gallien-Krueger** showed its biamp-capable 700RB bass amp (\$749), which is

preamp section, a slick, back-lit VU meter, simple rotary controls, and an excellent sub-harmonic octaver circuit. And **Johnson** debuted a 250-watt tube guitar amp head, the Millennium JM250H (\$1,399), which, like the company's earlier JM150, uses modeling technology to emulate the most popular vintage amps.



**A-T's 30 series mics**

## microphones

As long as people want to sing, there will be new microphones, and this NAMM show more than supplied the demand. In the high-end arena, **CAD** debuted the VX2 large condenser tube mic (\$2,249), which is available with an optional 24-bit, 96kHz digital output module. **beyer-dynamic** unveiled a new family of MCE condenser mics aimed at the project studio market, as well as the TG-X 10 dynamic percussion mic (\$149). **Audio-Technica** introduced their new "30 series" mics, initially composed of the AT3525 (\$399), a cardioid condenser with shock mount, and

the AT3528 and AT3527 (both low-profile condensers, priced at \$299; the former is a cardioid, the latter an omni). The company also launched a new "40" series of hand-held

rated to deliver 350 watts to a woofer and 50 watts to a tweeter, while British manufacturer **Klystron** displayed ten different Bass Magnifier high-powered bass combos (\$1,499-\$2,199), all of which feature a hybrid

the AT3528 and AT3527 (both low-profile condensers, priced at \$299; the former is a cardioid, the latter an omni). The company also launched a new "40" series of hand-held

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cardioid capacitor mics intended for live applications, including the AT4054 and AT4055 (both priced at \$499, the former with low-frequency roll-off and the latter with a flat frequency response). And **Sennheiser** launched its Evolution series, consisting of eight dynamic mics, each tailored for a different application and priced at less than \$350.

## synthesizers & samplers

A lot of jaws were hanging open at the **Yamaha** booth, where a new line of "EX" workstations was being showcased. Each of these puppies has multiple sound generation engines (including physical modeling, sample playback, and good old analog) as well as multiple signal processors and advanced arpeggiator functions—they even have the ability to sample themselves! Flash ROM, digital I/O, and SCSI options are also available. Three



models will initially be offered: the 76-key EX5 (\$2,695), the 61-key EX7 (\$2,195), and the rack-mount EX5R (also \$2,195).

New offerings from **Korg** included the 88-key N1 (\$2,099) and 61-note N5 (\$1,900), both of which feature extremely large LCD displays and a staggering 1,269 onboard

programs (not to mention 39 drum kits). The company also introduced rack versions of their Trinity workstation (the TR-Rack, \$1,399) and their SGproX stage piano (the SG-Rack \$899). **Roland** showed a rack-mountable Sound Canvas tone generator, the SC-880 (\$1,095), and the XP-60 workstation (\$2,095), which features unusually, 61



weighted keys. **Waldorf** introduced the decidedly retro Virus (\$1,695) and MicroWave XT (\$1,995)—both models sport tons of knobs for real-time control. **Generalmusic** debuted two models of a new synth, the Equinox (\$2,195 for the 76-key version, \$1,995 for the 61-key). **Alesis** unveiled its first-ever digital piano, the DG8 (\$1,999), and **Kawai** followed suit with its MP9000 (\$2,195), which uses advanced "harmonic imaging" technology. **Kurzweil** suggests that when you hit the lottery, you consider purchasing their new Audio Elite System (\$9,995), which consists of a thoroughly maxed-out K2500, with every option known to man (and woman). And **E-mu** announced a new synth module, the Audity 2000 (price TBA), which features a 16-channel arpeggiator (!) and eight MIDI-syncable LFOs per preset—not surprisingly, it's designed for rhythmic applications in dance music.

## drums & percussion

Speaking of rhythm tracks, there were lots of new offerings for those who tap and thwack. **Zoom**—best-known for its low-cost, teeny-tiny signal processors—introduced its low-cost, teeny-tiny (but big-sounding) **RhythmTrak...234** drum machine (\$329). **Roland** debuted the SPD-20 (\$895), which includes hundreds of onboard drum and percussion sounds. And **Kurzweil** announced its first entry in this category, the

Kurzweil Percussion System (\$1,995—snappy name, guys!), which includes a set of pads and pedals as well as a controller "brain." Since this doesn't include any onboard sounds, you might want to hook it up to the new **Alesis** 64-voice drum module, the DM Pro (\$899).

There was less evident innovation in the

acoustic drum category, but both **Drum Workshop** and **Slingerland** displayed some cool products. DW's Advanced Radial Control (ARC) snare system (\$59) retrofits to any 13" or 14" snare drum. Whatzit do? Glad you asked: It keeps your snare loose and in its most resonant state; instead of pulling the snare up against the drum's bottom head, the ARC system causes the snare to arch against the center of the bottom head, resulting in more consistent attack and sound. And Slingerland displayed its new Legends series, which includes Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich Signature five-piece kits (\$1,149), as well as a more moderately priced Studio King Touring series (price TBA), which uses RIMS mounts as found on all Studio King drums but replaces the die-cast hoops with steel rims.

## guitars, basses & effects

Perhaps the most exciting guitar product at NAMM comes from a new company called **Virtual DSP**, whose MidiAxe PitchPerfect MIDI guitar system (\$3,595 with chrome hardware, \$3,995 with gold) employs six separate piezo pickups built into the MidiAxe tremolo bridge and a proprietary hex preamp to mix each string's signal into a single, electro-acoustic sound that tracks brilliantly. Guitar-to-MIDI conversion from the MidiAxe is possible with any MIDI-equipped synth or computer, and future software upgrades will be downloadable via the company's Website.



Capitalizing on the excitement surrounding the prior introduction of its Lace Helix guitar, **Actodyne General** will be offering the very same dual compound radius—*i.e.*, twisted necks (price TBA)—found on their innovative guitars as an aftermarket product.

If cutting-edge MIDI technology and twisted necks offend your vintage taste, you'll be pleased to know that **Danelectro** is reissuing its low-budget-but-highly-regarded line of U2 guitars from 1956. Along with the lipstick pickups and dual stacked tone and volume controls we've come to expect from these vintage items, the new U2s feature an adjustable truss rod and closed-back tuning machines, and come in eleven sweet colors from the Fifties, including Blue Suede, Daddy O Yellow, and Malt Shop Creme.

If you've ever wished you could see fret locations better on dark stages, British manufacturer **SimS Custom L.E.D.** has what you need. Their customized, retro-fit LED systems (\$490-\$775) can be fit to the front or side of any guitar or bass neck without removing the fretboard, and can be turned on or off with the flick of a switch. It's available in red, gold, green, and electric blue. **G&L** used one of Leo Fender's last pickup designs—the Z-coil pickup—in their resurrected Comanche (\$1,500) and ASAT Z-3 (\$1,500) guitars. The Z-coil delivers a single-coil sound with the noiseless benefits of a humbucker, along with accentuated highs and lows. **DIPinto** took an ultra-retro, cartoonesque approach to designs for its Satellite and Mach IV guitars (both \$1,600) as well as their Belvedere bass and guitar (\$2,150), while **Stump Preacher** splashes fantastic

cross-bending in various string configurations—without the need for a locking nut or bridge tuning pegs.

One of the biggest bombshells at the show came from **Lexicon**, a company best known for its studio-quality reverbs and signal processors. The hot news was their new line of "Custom Shop" guitar electronics devices, developed in consultation with legendary Hendrix/Zepplin producer Eddie Kramer. Initial offerings will include the MPX G2 guitar effects processor (\$1,799), which includes both digital and true analog effects and two separate audio paths so it can be inserted before or after an amp, and the aforementioned Signature 284 tube guitar amplifier (\$999).

An exciting line of guitar effects were also on display from **DigiTech**, including the Talker (\$299), a digital vocal synthesis processor, similar in function to the Framptonesque talkboxes of the Seventies, the identically priced RP3 multieffects processor, and the Space Station multieffect bass pedal (\$240). Also new for '98 are a revamped guitar MIDI controller (the Control 8, \$149) and an updated tube guitar preamp (the RP-7 Valve, \$399). Meanwhile, **New Sensor** showed its prototype Bass Balls envelope filter (\$105), and for those of you who are tired of buying 9-volt batteries for your pedals, **Voodoo Labs'** Pedal Power (\$199) offers eight 9-volt outputs, eight DC power cables, and an auxiliary AC outlet.

### DJs R Us

**Roland** has a new line of "Groove" products for budding DJs. These include the

melodies just by gesturing with your hand. Kinda brings new meaning to doing the wave!

### assorted other techno toys

**AnTares** wowed 'em with their ATR-1, which incorporates their Auto-Tune software (previously available only as a Pro Tools plug-in) in a hardware rack device. Expected to list for \$1,199, the unit is said to perform, believe it or not, real-time pitch correction on any analog input signal. A version with digital I/O is expected later this year. **Alesis** debuted NanoTracker (\$249), a MIDI sequencer addition to their "Nano" series, as well as Studio 24 (\$799), a new inline mixer. **Kurzweil** showed the ExpressionMate (\$395), an add-on that provides a ribbon controller, arpeggiator, and breath and foot controller inputs.

Digital signal translators are another hot item. **Fostex** unveiled their DP-8 digital audio patchbay (\$349), which converts multiple channels of ADAT I/O to S/PDIF and vice-versa. **Aardvark** introduced the AardDDA digital audio distribution system (\$595), which passes signal from an AES/EBU stereo input to six AES/EBU outputs (S/PDIF adapters are available as options), and the Sync DA (\$795), which has a similar function, instead distributing digital clock signal (from either a word clock, AES/EBU, or optional S/PDIF input to five word clock outputs and a Superclock output). And **Midiman** showed their S.A.M. (\$299) S/PDIF-to-ADAT converter (will the second-generation product be "Son of S.A.M.?"?), which includes an onboard eight-channel line-level mixer, and their Pipeline 8x8 (\$899), which provides eight channels of A/D and D/A conversion with ADAT digital I/O.

Finally, if you're not yet living in the digital world,

**Music Interface Technologies** (MIT) have something for you: a

series of \$100 (yes, you read that right) audiophile guitar, bass, and speaker cables, said to significantly remove noise and increase transient response. And the folks at **OmniRax** showed some new studio furniture products, including the Sidekick rack cabinet/desk (\$325) and the Fido rolling CPU cart (\$100).



**AnTares' ATR-1**

psychedelic finishes on the bulbous, polyurethane bodies of their Stump Preacher guitars (\$950-\$1,250). Also notable was **Vibro Tek Industries'** Double Whammy split vibrato system for both bass and guitar (\$279), which enables independent whammy action and even

MC-505 Groovebox dance music sequencer/sound module (\$1,595), the SP-808 Groovesampler (\$1,695), and the JX-305 Groovesynth (\$1,495). The MC-505 and SP-808 both have a hip feature called D-BEAM; this is an invisible infrared light that allows you to bring in effects, change filter settings and pitch, or even improvise complete



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# One Pilgrim's Progress

## Eric Clapton

*Pilgrim*  
(Reprise)

**E**ric Clapton's entire career has been a pilgrimage toward musical integrity. *Pilgrim*, his first collection of (mostly) original material in nearly a decade, embodies both milestones and missteps in that journey. Co-produced by Clapton and keyboardist Simon Climie (who also co-wrote half the tracks), the album is an eclectic mix of Clapton's tried-and-true sound along with a number of ambitious but largely unsuccessful forays into dance and hip-hop.

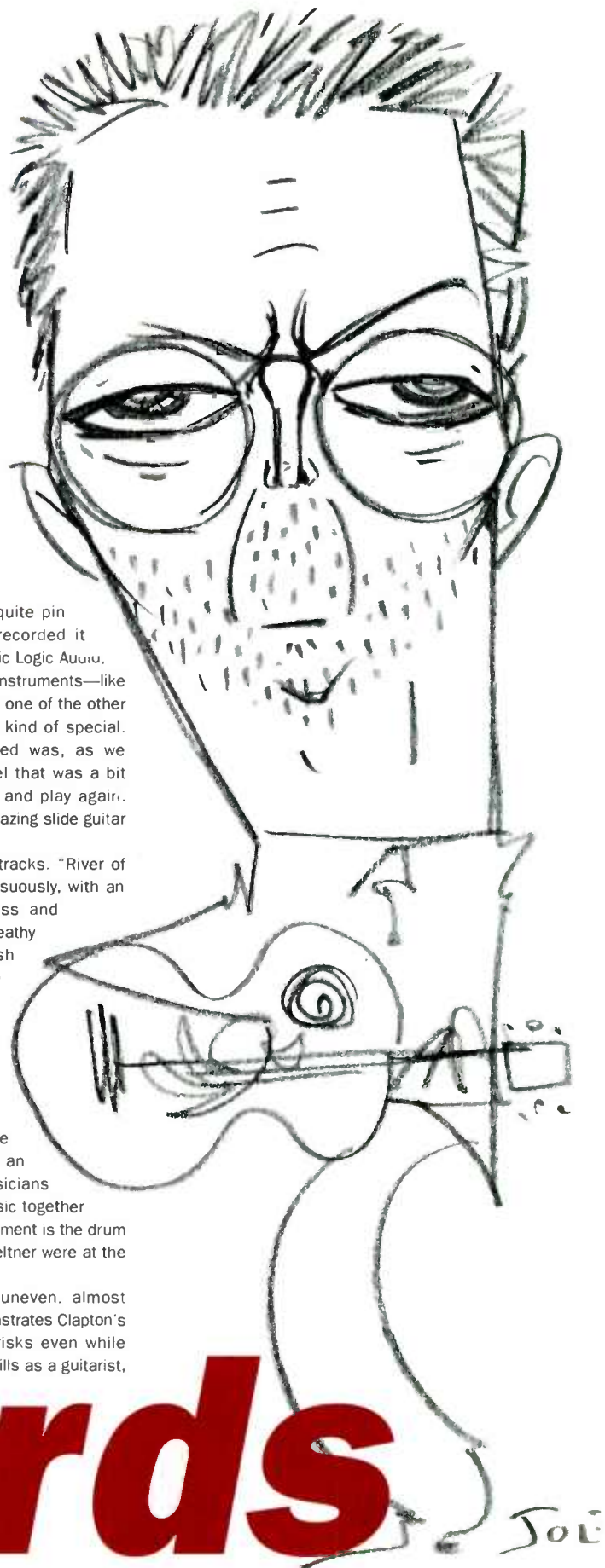
It may be too soon to be calling him MC Eric, but that's where a lot of *Pilgrim* takes you. Drum machines, guitar loops, super-phat bass lines, live strings, and techno-oriented pads (assembled in England's first Pro Tools 24 system) abound here—indeed, half the tracks were mixed by dance specialist Mick Guzauski. This makes for interesting listening, to be sure, but all too often the production distracts rather than complements the musical content. Songs like the tedious title track and "Inside of Me" require a huge leap of faith to accept the dichotomy of skip-a-beat drum samples and boombox bass underlying Clapton's fuzz guitar and weirdly overcompressed vocals. Other tracks, like "One Chance" and "She's Gone," don't slide quite so far down the slippery slope and are considerably more successful.

On the other hand, "My Father's Eyes" is one of the strongest songs Clapton's ever written, with a guitar hook, catchy melody, evocative lyrics, solid drumming from Steve Gadd, and an emotionally charged vocal, all wrapped in a glossy yet unobtrusive production. "The song had this

quality that you could never quite pin down," recalls Climie. "We recorded it about three times. Using Emagic Logic Audio, we time-stretched some of the instruments—like some of the dobro parts—from one of the other versions, making them sound kind of special. Then what generally happened was, as we messed around and got a feel that was a bit different, Eric would come in and play again. That's when he does all the amazing slide guitar stuff, things like that."

There are other standout tracks. "River of Tears" unfolds slowly and sensuously, with an ever-climbing arpeggiated bass and washes of backing vocal and breathy synth pads providing a lush backdrop for Clapton's gentle yet intense guitar work and pain-ridden vocal. "Sick and Tired" is the one hard-core booze jam on the album: Written and recorded in just six hours, with the later addition of strings and just one guitar overdub, it provides an intimate glimpse at great musicians making uninhibited, joyous music together late at night. The only jarring element is the drum machine: If only Gadd or Jim Keltner were at the session!

Ultimately, *Pilgrim* is an uneven, almost schizophrenic album that demonstrates Clapton's willingness to take musical risks even while falling back on his venerable skills as a guitarist,



# records

# ON POINTBLANK

## JOHN HAMMOND



This new album features Little Charlie & The Nightcats on the first twelve tracks. J.J. Cale produces the last three songs, which feature John Hammond dueting with Washboard Chaz.

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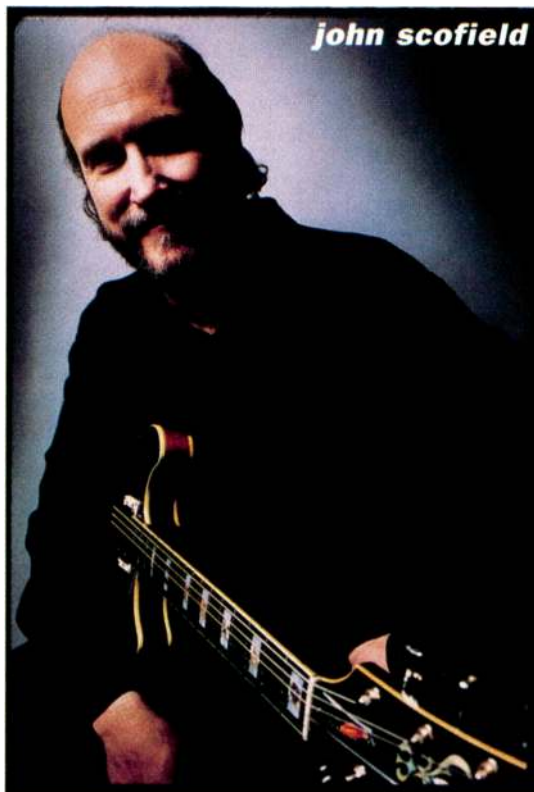
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## records

songwriter, and vocalist. Half of it sounds best when played on a boombox, the other half when played in the quiet of your home with the lights down low. Depending on your point of view, the glass is either half full or half empty.

—Howard Massey



### John Scofield

*A Go Go (Verve)*

Talk about a project whose time had to come: Having worked the inroads of gritty funk and twisted jazz from New York to Hawaii, John Scofield joins with Medeski, Martin, and Wood. It's as natural a fit as grits and gravy. Matching influences from the Meters to Nina Rota to Albert King, these heavy hitters downplay their separate roles on *A Go Go*, uniting like one nation under a groove.

"We tried to make a record that is very in-your-face and immediate," explains Scofield. "We didn't use a lot of effects. We all agreed that we wanted it real plain and clear."

Playing his Ibanez AS200 electric through a Matchless AC-30 amp, Scofield blends seamlessly with John Medeski's eerie Hammond organ swells and the nudging, conversational rhythms of drummer Billy Martin and acoustic bassist Chris Wood. This is a band record in every sense of the word, as if the guitarist had long yearned for the glee of simple chicken-scratch comping within MMW's demented organ trio approach. These may be Sco's tunes, but it's really MMW's record.

"John is a special player, and I love what he brought to the tunes," says Scofield, "as did Billy and Chris. It was a real simpatico session. Sometimes Medeski would play stuff that I would never have imagined. The solo on 'A Go Go' cracks me up. That funny organ sound and the [Hohner] Clavinet is like a weird 'Dance of the Sugarplum Fairies.' All three of them came up with a vibe that added so much to the music. They were doing such a good job that maybe I let them have the spotlight."

Ahh, an album of subtle pleasures. No overheated exchanges or hot-shot trading here—instead, a soothing funk balm. "A Go Go" may be the most memorable track, as Scofield and Medeski double-dribble the hopscoth melody over a rather polite groove. But as surprisingly well integrated as these players are, you do long for a little scorch amid the slow burn. Many of these tunes simmer in near-boiling temperature—"Hottentot," which quakes with a wonderfully manic nastiness, is the one exception. But "Deadzy" is pure oddball finery, a twilight zone of bent chords, acoustic bass horror, and moody *noir*. Sco and band also sync perfectly on "Kubrick," where the misty melody of a Forties-vintage Martin acoustic is matched by ominous piano notes and resonant mallet interplay.

Frank Zappa once said, "Jazz isn't dead, it just smells funny." Somehow, some way, John Scofield keeps stinking up the joint. Listen,

and smell the burn.

—Ken Micallef

### Bonnie Raitt

*Fundamental (Capitol)*

No true fan would have begrudged Bonnie Raitt her belated commercial breakthrough under the aegis of Don Was in the late Eighties. After a painful descent from sizzling blues mama to failed pop star over the previous two decades, it was startling—and inspirational—to see this gifted singer and slide guitarist flourish while still young enough to savor success, albeit via a glossier approach than purists might choose.

Now it's time to put a bit of grit back into the stew. Produced by Raitt in tandem with Mitchell Froom and Tchad Blake, *Fundamental* is a tantalizing amalgam of vintage sounds and fresh insights that parallels her partners' work with Los Lobos. Classic and brand-new at the same time, this terrific album boasts seemingly endless twists and a ton of straight-ahead soul. Oldsters can find plenty of what made Bonnie lovable in the first place. Penned by NRBQ's Joey Stampinato, "I Need Love" features a cool boogie feel, while John



Hiatt's "Lover's Will" captures Raitt at her torchy best. She also doles out generous helpings of killer slide, injecting salty riffs into the Stonesey "Blue for No Reason" and wrenching a chilling howl from her axe on "Spit of Love."

But *Fundamental* is no nostalgia trip. "We weren't interested in retro music," says Mitchell Froom. "We were creating hybrids, juxtapositions that sound natural but with elements you wouldn't necessarily think of going together. Bonnie said she didn't want to make a record like her recent ones; she wanted to explore and have fun."

The best example of their eclectic audacity may be "I'm On Your Side," described by Froom as a "reggae/African/Appalachian" concoction. Amidst a merry swirl of sparse dub textures, crackling snare drums, and hillbilly accordion, Raitt delivers

a fiery romantic invitation only a fool would decline. Then there's the goofy yet wonderful version of J. B. Lenoir's "Round and Round." Mixed with Raitt's muffled voice to one side, framed by jaunty guitar and bass, this spacey country blues has a mesmerizing, off-kilter grace. "We used one of those funny old mics that plugs into a reel-to-reel tape machine, and she sang the hell out of it," notes Froom. "Bonnie told us later, 'That's the reason I worked with you guys,' but at the time we didn't think much about it. We were just goofing around, making a cool noise."



Elsewhere, Froom and Blake avoided kookier extremes, concentrating on the primal power of Raitt's voice. "I used this great mic, a Telefunken Elam 251 from the Sixties," Froom says. "It's a tube mic with a really big sound, a particularly nice high end, and a lot of air and warmth. It won't take super intense midrange volume, but Bonnie doesn't sing particularly loud."

At any volume, Raitt can evoke overwhelming regret or desire in a few impassioned lines. From the sleepy lust of "Cure for Love," featuring searing guitar by Los Lobos'

This may not work for every musician, warns Jim Heath, a.k.a. the righteous rockabilly rebel, Reverend Horton Heat. But here's an interesting technique he stumbled across while tracking his latest rambunctious disc for Interscope, *Space Heater*. He, bassist Jimbo, and drummer Scott Churilla had booked pricey, clock-ticking time at a posh Illinois studio, Chicago Recorders. A real gun-to-the-temple session. "So all our stuff was set up in this great studio," says Heath—who, in his interview outfit of baseball cap, Social Distortion jacket, and horn-rimmed spectacles, looks nothing like his slick-haired, Nudie-suited, onstage self. "And I walk in there, and I'm goin' 'Shit! I don't have any songs!' And some guy's goin' 'So. Y'all have some good new stuff, right?' And I was mumblin' 'Uhhhh . . . no.'"

According to the Rev, the gospel for most tunesmiths is this: "You

## Rev. Horton Heat A Songwriter's Revelation

write a song out on paper, you practice it, you get the guys in the band together, the band works up the song, then you play it in front of crowds until the song gets tight. And then you go into the studio." All fine in theory, he agrees. But that night in Chicago, long after his Heat-mates had left, with some expensive engineers still looking on, Heath had an epiphany. "After a little while of just sittin' there," he says in a deep Texas drawl, "I just started writin' stuff out. Then I got 'em to give me a click track, and I did a recording with a guitar part that I thought would be something basic to fit over it. And once I got that, I was basically in there.

So the next day, when Jimbo and Scott came in, it took them only a coupla hours to learn the little tricks of the song"—which was one of *Space Heater's* most propulsive cuts, the chucka-chucka "Lie Detector."

"And in that two hours, I'd gotten another song. And, well, to make a long story short, I figured out that I could write and record a song a day. We were there for three days, we got three songs."

Naturally, Heat didn't see the need to run up any more exorbitant bills. He high-tailed it to Good Vibe Records in Dallas, which featured an intimate demo studio. "I went in there every day at eleven, and I'd just be in there playing my guitar. One thing would lead to another, and I'd type some words or go have a drink and come back and write some more, and then, there ya go! By about five o'clock, I'd have a song! If Jimbo and Scott weren't there, I'd make my own drum part, just do the whole thing. And if they were there, it became much more of a collaboration than it's ever been."

Heath wrote/recorded at two different demo locations in an intense couple of two-week blocs. "And I came out with thirty songs!" he beams proudly. "Purty fun, huh?" Sixteen made it onto *Space Heater*. But to what does the good Reverend attribute this rain of compositional manna? He guffaws. "It's just fun, man! I love to write, love to record. And I'm to the point now where I don't even wanna own any personal recording equipment, because I can just go into a studio without any songs, and I'll have a song. By tonight. Written and recorded!" —Tom Lanham



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## records

David Hidalgo, to the tender "Fearless Love," to the airy "One Belief Away," *Fundamental* celebrates raw adult emotions with no sugar coating. Not surprisingly, most of Raitt's vocals were cut live in the studio, with little doctoring.

For textural spice, Froom and Blake employed such touches as a marxophone (a cousin to the autoharp), unusual percussion, and Hohner Clavinets and other less common keyboards. But Froom downplays the importance of offbeat trappings, since the star is the real story. "We didn't set out to make a strange record. I think it sounds sexy and juicy. Some people might say it's a reinvention, but it's really just her backyard. All the dirt we were playing in, Bonnie knows inside-out. If it works *that's* why it works."

Believe it. It works.

—Jon Young

## Ray Wonder

Good Music

(North of No South Records)

Initially released overseas back in 1996, *Good Music*, the second full-length album and fourth overall release by Swedish pop geniuses Ray Wonder, made its way to the States late last year, but who knew? In any event, this diversified collection of eleven sophisticated but playfully intelligent songs take more than a few cues from XTC while raising the bar up a notch. Much like XTC forebear Andy Partridge, Henrik Andersson builds vocal melodies that lead Ray Wonder through implied chords, twisted tempos, and unorthodox meters, with oblique lyrics that paint pictures of everyday life punctured by freak circumstances and supernatural occurrences.

According to Ray Wonder drummer Per Helin, the group's uncanny knack for converting quirky hooks into pop candy has more to do with innocence than complex machinations. "From the very beginning it was more or less an accident," he insists. "Our first release, *Hurray*, was meant to be a demo because we had only played together for four months and hadn't ever played the instruments we were playing before then." Such conscious naïveté allowed each band member to approach his respective instrument without theoretical grounding or, for that matter, any conceptual plan in mind—thus Helin's peculiar avoidance of the groove, Toft Stade's angular, loping bass lines, and the staccato guitar licks interspersed throughout by Andersson and Ludvig Boss, who doubles on a Wurlitzer keyboard.

"Of course it's on purpose," Helin insists. "The idea was to put bars together by following the melodies. I try not to think too much about simple grooves and just go with the melody lines; that's pretty much a strong idea in the whole group. It's not like we're thinking, 'Let's do a song in 5/4 or 7/4.' Melodies aren't always 4/4, so we develop around a melody; we're not trying to rearrange it so it becomes 4/4. Also, it's very exciting to play those kinds of rhythmic arrangements."

The excitement shows. Bursts of melody in

"Souvenir," "Cha Cha," and the brilliant "Hold Me Tight" guide Helin's hard-driving, inside-out beats and Stade's snappy bass. Meanwhile, "General Hugging Center," "What I'll Do," and the brooding "Darta"—with an homage to the Grateful Dead thrown in for laughs—rely on simpler melodies and a trunkful of blues shuffles and vaudeville beats to impart Ray Wonder's special Scandinavian sauce.

Helin is the spoon that stirs that sauce. To keep his beats fresh and effervescent, he abandoned his Ludwig kit and switched between six different sets that were in the studio. He also opted to set up in a small stone room instead of a larger main room "to keep the drums sounding tight and alive." Was that how he managed to come up with such great beats? "No, I think it was the old coffee in the coffee mugs I played," he muses. "They sound so good because [the coffee] was dark. It should be cold and at least one week old." Remember, you read it here first.

—Michael Gelfand

## Rigo Star

Attention! (IMA)

Rigo Star may be the premier soukous guitarist of our time, though he's probably best known among casual pop fans less for helping to propel the careers of M'Bilia Bel or Kanda Bonga Manthan for guesting on Paul Simon's *Rhythm of the Saints*. While more than capable of whipping up a dancing frenzy, however, Star's own sensibility harkens to the more romantic traditions of Sixties-era Congolese rumba, a style built around the languid grace of French-sung, Spanish-tinged melodies.

On *Attention!* Star has crafted a contemporary version of this classic form, in which tastefully employed electronic keyboards and MIDI-patched guitar sounds widen the tonal palette beyond what you'd hear from a Sixties group. Another update is that here Star *is* the group; aside from vocals by Congolese singer Sam Mangwana, occasional horn charts and some massed vocal choruses, everything about this album, from production to songwriting to musicianship, is Rigo's own.

Congolese rumba tends to take shape in two parts: At first winding melodies about love, politics or social conditions are intoned with full-throated emotion; after a short pause, the rhythms surge into double-time and those reverberant guitars take over, shifting the accents over hypnotically repetitive melodic phrases to create a giddy helium-like effect. Here Star handles a few of the lead vocals himself, displaying a pleasing high tenor, though he emphasizes that he wrote all the songs on the album with Mangwana in mind. "I know all the styles of music in my country," explains Star, who, like many of the prominent musicians from the Congo (formerly Zaire), currently lives in Paris. "And I know how to compose for him, as well as for M'Bilia Bel. His style is slower than mine but I





## rigo star

didn't want to make any of the styles too different on the album."

The emphasis on vocals probably won't thrill hard-core fans of soukous—rumba's somewhat discofied cousin—especially as Star's acoustic-electric guitar work is often mixed far into the background. ("That's because I didn't mix the album," he laughs, "but I like it anyway—in rumba the vocals *should* be on top.") Too bad: his understated approach is more reflective and sophisticated than typical soukous workouts, an intriguing amalgam that owes equal debts to Dr. Nico and George Benson, with blues, Hawaiian and flamenco influences in evidence as well. A self-taught guitarist whose acoustic playing rings with a gorgeous vibrato, Star may be something of a global music sponge, yet *Attention!* remains refreshingly free of the kind of techno gloss or 'worldbeat' contrivances which make so many other 'crossover' records sound sterile. At once resolutely modern and retro, Star ultimately pulls you in with the same quality which gives all great

music its cachet as a global language—he sings and plays from the heart.

—Mark Rowland

## Emma Townshend

*Winterland (East/West)*

Sometimes art relies on a simple gut reaction, a "Hey, this really affects me, but darned if I can explain why" kind of instinct. *Winterland*, the shimmery debut from the piano-playing daughter of Pete Townshend, is a vibe thing, pure and simple. There's a moment, three songs into the set, when it all falls into place, when you understand that this artist *believes* and probably made this record for no other reason than to please herself. Trying to convey a twilight trip through her native London in "Walk at Night," Townshend employs gentle, perambulating chords, her supple voice trailing slightly behind the melody until it reaches a minor crescendo with the repeated line "I can see a

black dog's eye. . . . I can see a black dog's eye." And she twists each syllable, drawing them out with a stark sonic beauty until you can almost picture this mysterious, mist-shrouded hound, his eyes glinting with the merest hint of moon.

The best albums always feature such minor epiphanies—songs where sound and vision are perfectly aligned. Townshend is no Tori-type grandstander; she seems to know exactly what each number needs, and isn't afraid to keep things to a skeletal minimum. Mostly, *Winterland* is just her and her piano, a dusty old artifact she stumbled across in a London keyboard shop. She recorded herself at home too, via a gift from dear old Dad, an Akai 12-track. "And twelve tracks is really such a nice amount; it really disciplines you," is her theory.

Similarly timbered singers have trod this interpretive turf before: Kate Bush, of course, as well as Soraya, Robin Holcomb, and Beverly Craven. But Townshend, who refused a label deal a decade ago to study botany and horticultural history, borrows a great deal of imagery and inspiration from her own backyard garden. Her music is leafy in texture, verdant in color.

She's no purist, though. Townshend paces her loping "Ghost Kitchen" with clanking syndrums, and syncopates the obsessed-fan-soliloquy "The Last Time I Saw Sadie" with trippy sampled affectations and spectral layers of vocals. Like an antique automaton retrofitted with spanking-new battery packs, *Winterland* is an original work that also takes no Who cues whatsoever—no crunchy riffs, no Mod postures, no wild windmill guitar flourishes. Rather, it's one of those fine-wine discs that has to be savored over time. You'll either absolutely adore it, or you won't.

—Tom Lanham

## Ryuichi Sakamoto

*Discord: Untitled 01*

(Sony)

Pianist and keyboardist, soundtrack composer, electronic dance music pioneer with the Yellow Magic Orchestra, actor, model: Ryuichi Sakamoto is a polymath who's produced both brittle fop-pop and austere contemporary classical works—and he looks marvelous in basic black. A fitting amalgam of these diverse attributes, Sakamoto's latest album presents a concerto in four movements for orchestra, piano, electric guitar, and DJ, celebrating his classical training (at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music) while acknowledging his aptitude for improvisation, his minimalist tendencies, and his modern, even fashion-forward vision. Exploiting cyclical structures and dense minor-key tonalities that result in absorptive, trance-like themes, the four movements of *Discord: Untitled 01*—"Grief," "Anger," "Prayer," and "Salvation"—are each intended to represent a mood or emotion," according to Sakamoto," but without dynamic development like typical Beethoven symphonies



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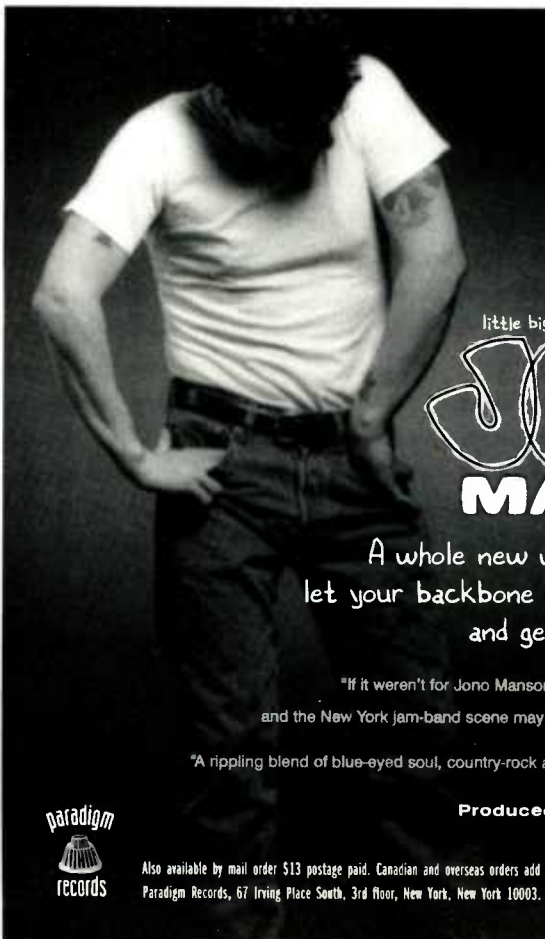
**ryuichi sakamoto**

have, either within each movement or between the movements. For that purpose, the minimalistic repetitions of 'infinite melodies' fit well."

Sakamoto scored the orchestral parts—predominantly for string section abetted by oboe, harp, French bassoon, English horn, and, in "Anger," snare drum—but left the piano, guitar, and DJ parts open to improvisation, though the score indicates where *not* to play. Guitarist David Torn's glassy Lexicon-assisted loops surround the orchestra with long-decay washes, while DJ Spooky, a.k.a. Paul Miller, contributes subdued data intrigues in the right channel. The guitar and DJ sounds are low in the mix, often more color

than core composition, and while Torn's distinctive textures—some of them processed vocal samples—are easy to detect, it's often hard to pinpoint the contributions from Spooky's turntable. Nevertheless, says Sakamoto, "I knew while I was writing the score that David and Paul were the right musicians, since the guitarist and DJ required diversity of musical styles and knowledge. I knew they were the only ones who could understand what I wanted."

Sakamoto cites Glass, Gorecki, Arvo Pärt, Mahler, and Wagner's *Parsifal* as primary influences on *Untitled 10*, which, in its contrast of romantic harmonies and chilling dissonance, also suggests—even quotes from—Argentinean composer Alberto Ginastera, Luciano Berio, and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Somewhat less exalted influences inform the work of Amon Tobin, Chocolate Weasel, and Talvin Singh on *Anger, Grief: The Remixes*. Featuring utterly predictable drum & bass deconstructions that neuter the orchestra's emotional power in favor of tired club gestures—percolating jungle beats, re-



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re-recycled hip-hop grooves, tabla samples—this record prompts a question: Why club-mix a symphony? Perhaps Sakamoto was out to produce the techno era's equivalent of *Deep Purple with the London Philharmonic: Concerto for Group and Orchestra*. Alas, he has succeeded. Playing in traffic at the crossroads of fashion, composition, and clubland, Sakamoto proves himself an artful dodger who ably directs the flow and looks good in uniform. But on slippery terrain and untested roads, even the coolest drivers should proceed with more caution.

—James Rotondi

## Izzy Stradlin

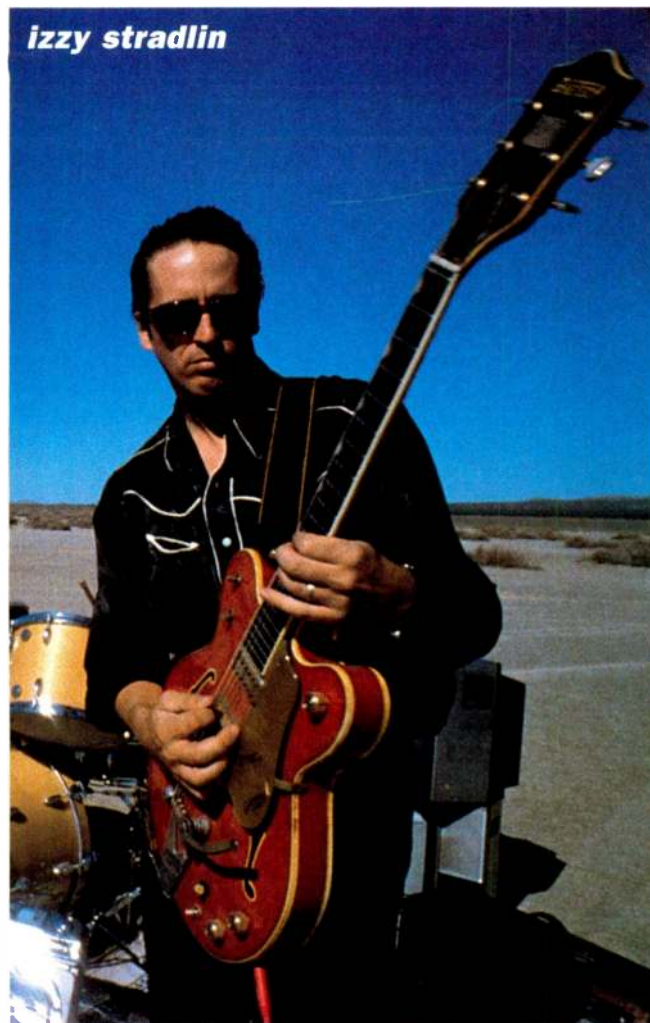
*117 degrees* (Geffen)

**A**in't It a Bitch" may be the best Rolling Stones song the band never wrote. That's because Izzy Stradlin penned the tune, which kicks off the second solo album from the former Guns n' Roses guitarist. The song's mid-tempo groove, coupled with Stradlin's workmanlike vocals and pleasing open-G tuning, sets the laid-back tone for the album. On the other hand, *117 degrees*, produced by Stradlin with Eddie Ashworth (Sublime, Ju Ju Hounds) and Bill Price, is peppered with raw aggro outings such as "Parasite" and the revved-up "Methanol." The combination didn't congeal overnight.

"This record stretches for a long period of time. We started it in '93 or '94," Stradlin explains. "Then last year I turned in what I wanted to be the record, and there were no slow songs on it; they were all thrashers, real hard rock, fast stuff. The label said, 'No go.' I said, 'Okay, fine.' They wanted some of the slow stuff from earlier sessions, so this record was a compromise. But it worked out okay."

On *117 degrees* Stradlin's secret weapon is a holdover from the Ju Ju Hounds in the person of Georgia Satellites guitarist Rick Richards. "Rick's instinctive. I never have to tell him anything," muses Stradlin, who is mainly a rhythm player in the Keith Richards mold. "He plays what I would play if I could. It's like having an extra pair of hands." Growing up in Indiana, Stradlin played drums; it was only after moving to L.A. in 1980 that he segued to string instruments, in part because his drums were stolen from his broken-down car. Which helps explain this album's percussive thrust; drummer Taz Bentley's double-kick playing is especially potent on "Grunt," a driving instrumental that travels through classic rock-influenced soundscapes and genres in the tradition of Edgar Winter's "Frankenstein."

Stradlin, who employs former G n' R bandmate



Duff McKagan on bass, likes paying homage to his influences, as a raved-up but obvious cover of Chuck Berry's "Memphis" and an original song, "Freight Train," make clear. The latter draws from the dirty nonchalance perfected by the New York Dolls, reflecting Stradlin's own devil-may-care musical outlook. That attitude permeates many of the best cuts here, from the sexy saunter of "Old Hat" to the beer-joint-jukebox mellowness of "Bleedin'" and the countrified rumble of "Here Before You." A lack of ego and a believable, likable guilelessness about influences and intentions is rare these days; coming from a guy who made his reputation in Guns n' Roses, it seems downright strange. "Hey, I'm just the guy with the record deal," Stradlin protests. *117 degrees* makes you glad he's got one.

—Kathleen Turman

## Bernard Butler

*People Move On* (Creation/Columbia)

**B**ernard Butler spent the first half of the decade as one of British pop's most high-profile sidemen, first as a guitarist/co-songwriter in Suede, then as a collaborator with the likes of Edwyn Collins and Bryan Ferry. But

while holed up in his home studio, Butler made a liberating discovery: He could sing. "And the minute I started singing, it immediately changed the way I played guitar, the way I wrote songs . . . everything," explains the soft-spoken 27-year-old. Thus began his stunning solo debut.

You'd be hard pressed to find many similarities here with Butler's earlier work, save for some exceptional guitar playing. Instead, he's crafted a warm, engaging album that recalls classic references—Townshend, Beatles, Buffalo Springfield—without resorting to Noel Gallagher-style thievery. His songwriting is mostly acoustic-based, though with a flair for drama; both the title track and the opener "Woman I Know" begin quietly, with gentle Nick Drake-like vocals, then build to soaring choruses with bold strings and the strong, soulful voice of backup singer Denise Johnson. "She's a real presence," notes Butler. "Besides, I thought it would be cool to have a real, professional singer."

But it's Butler's approach to recording guitar parts that keys this album's sound. "I've really gotten into small amps," he explains, specifying a '64 Fender Vibro Champ and an old Ampeg VT-22. "It was mainly guitar-amp-mic-desk, with virtually no processing. I was reading about how the Byrds recorded the intro to 'Mr. Tambourine Man' with just a Rickenbacker [running direct] through a desk, using a Fairchild compressor, and that was one of the greatest guitar sounds ever." So Butler did just that on "When You Grow."

Playing all the guitar, bass, organ, and piano parts himself, Butler chose to record at the history-steeped Rak Studios of North London. "I know it's sort of famous, but you'd be shocked if you went in there, 'cause it's a bit run-down," he confides. "It's got a Seventies ATI desk that's barely stuck together with gaffer tape, and the outboard consists of, like, two old AMS delay units. That's all you get, really. But the live room is amazing. It's the best drum room I've ever been in—very dark, with old wood on the walls and floor, and a bit shabby. The environment you play in is much more crucial than the equipment you're using."

Butler moved on to Air Studios to record strings and overdubs and to complete mixing. The result is an album of exceptional sonic clarity, as Butler was determined to keep things minimal. "It's quite easy to get louder and louder," he says. "It's hard to make things softer." In the end, though, it's the richness of his songs that makes this album as compatible with speakers as to an old pair of headphones.

—Dev Sherlock



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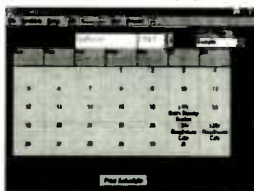
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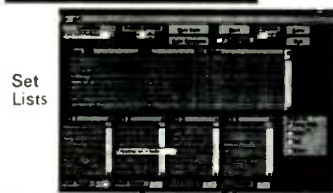
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# Kenny G's Breathless Success

**K**enny G held a music marathon Monday, setting a world record for playing the longest saxophone note. The star held an Eb for 45 minutes, 47 seconds. . . . He got the idea after he met Mark Young, publisher of the Guinness Book of World Records, and learned the book didn't have a record for the longest note. Young encouraged the sax man after he saw his circular breathing technique (breathing through his nose while he plays).—USA Today, Dec. 2, 1997

"This is a dream come true," said Kenny G backstage in the press room at last night's 1999 Grammy Awards after receiving a record fourteen Grammys for his groundbreaking album *The Note*. "I truly believe that this is my best work. To have my peers agree is icing on the cake."

*The Note*, on which G plays an uninterrupted 45-minute-47-second Eb, won in categories including Record of the Year, Song of the Year, Jazz Contemporary Album, Instrumental Jazz Contemporary Album, and Jazz Instrumental: Contemporary, as well as Lite Jazz, which was awarded for the first time this year.

(The sax man graciously announced that he plans to return his award for Traditional Polka, which he apparently received because no Traditional Polka albums were released this year.)

"This is really a culmination of everything I've been trying to do my whole career," said an exhilarated G backstage. "I've gradually been making my music more predictable and thus less noticeable. But for the first time, I've managed to record an album that truly blends in with whatever the listener is doing. Played at the right volume, it's completely unobtrusive."

G was eager to give credit to his collaborators, especially co-producer David Foster and co-writer Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds, who shared Song of the Year honors with G for the single "Minutes 12 to 15."

"When I was going into the studio," G said, "I was fully intending to play an F#. I realize now how dull that would have been. At the last minute, David and Ken talked me into playing an Eb. Boy, do I owe them." (A fifteen-minute practice run on F# is added as a bonus track on *The Note* CD.)

## On the MOR charts, length does matter.

The Grammy success of *The Note*, which was released in early 1998, may have been predictable. Last September, he garnered his first MTV Video Music Award for the Herb Ritts-directed "Minutes 12 to 15" video—a black-and-white freeze-frame of G in profile. Even the critics have come around: *The New York Times* said *The Note* was "as melodically sophisticated, interesting, and adventuresome as anything Mr. G has done so far." Next week, Arista is releasing the fifth single from the album, tentatively titled "Minutes 32 to 35." Richard Clayderman, Andreas Wollenweider, and Zamfir have expressed interest in covering the work. G refused to confirm or deny rumors, however, that he is considering a duet version of *The Note* with Whitney Houston or Mariah Carey.

On the legal front, G announced that his lawyers are close to reaching a settlement with hip-hop impresario Sean "Puffy" Combs, who sampled portions of the album on his 1998 hit "I'm Missing You Worse Than Ever."

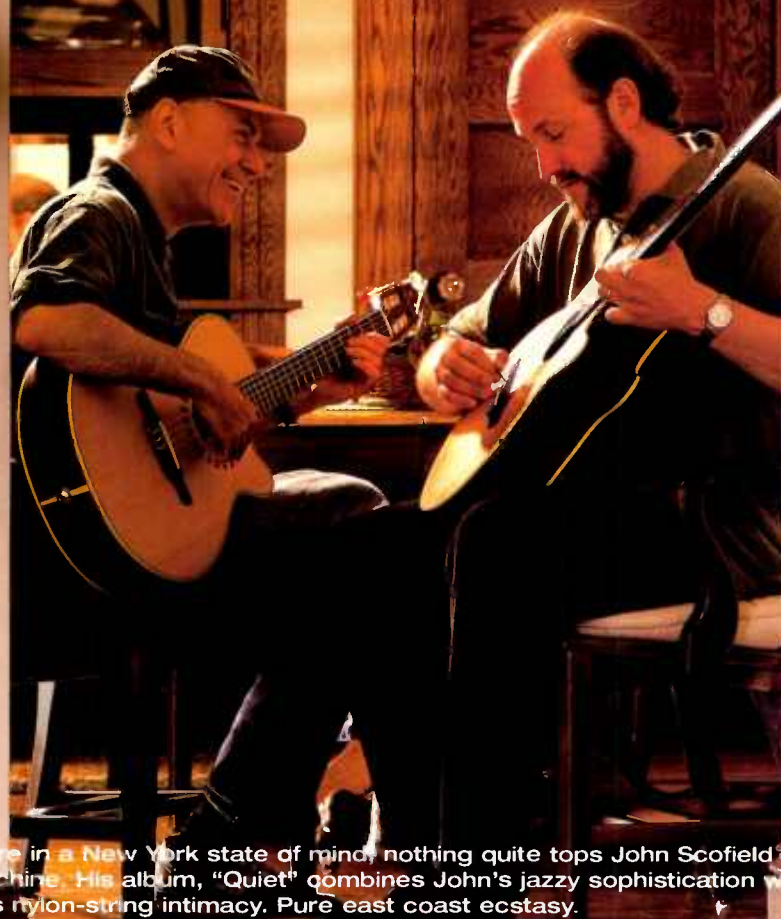
Ironically, given the huge success of *The Note*, Arista and G almost didn't release the album at all. "But I decided I owed it to the fans," he said. "My theory has always been that my public will buy anything. This album proves it." —Tom Conroy



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