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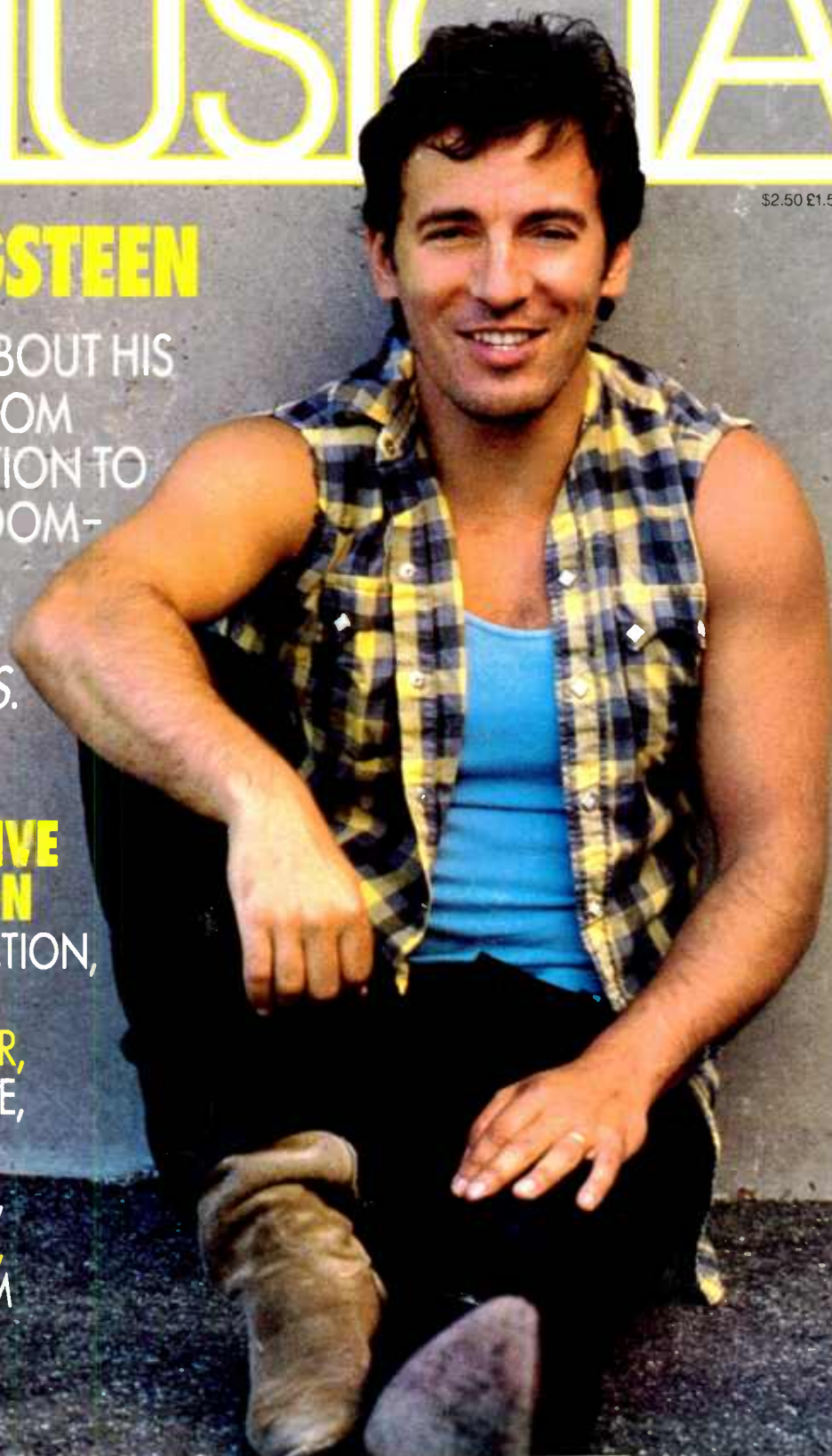
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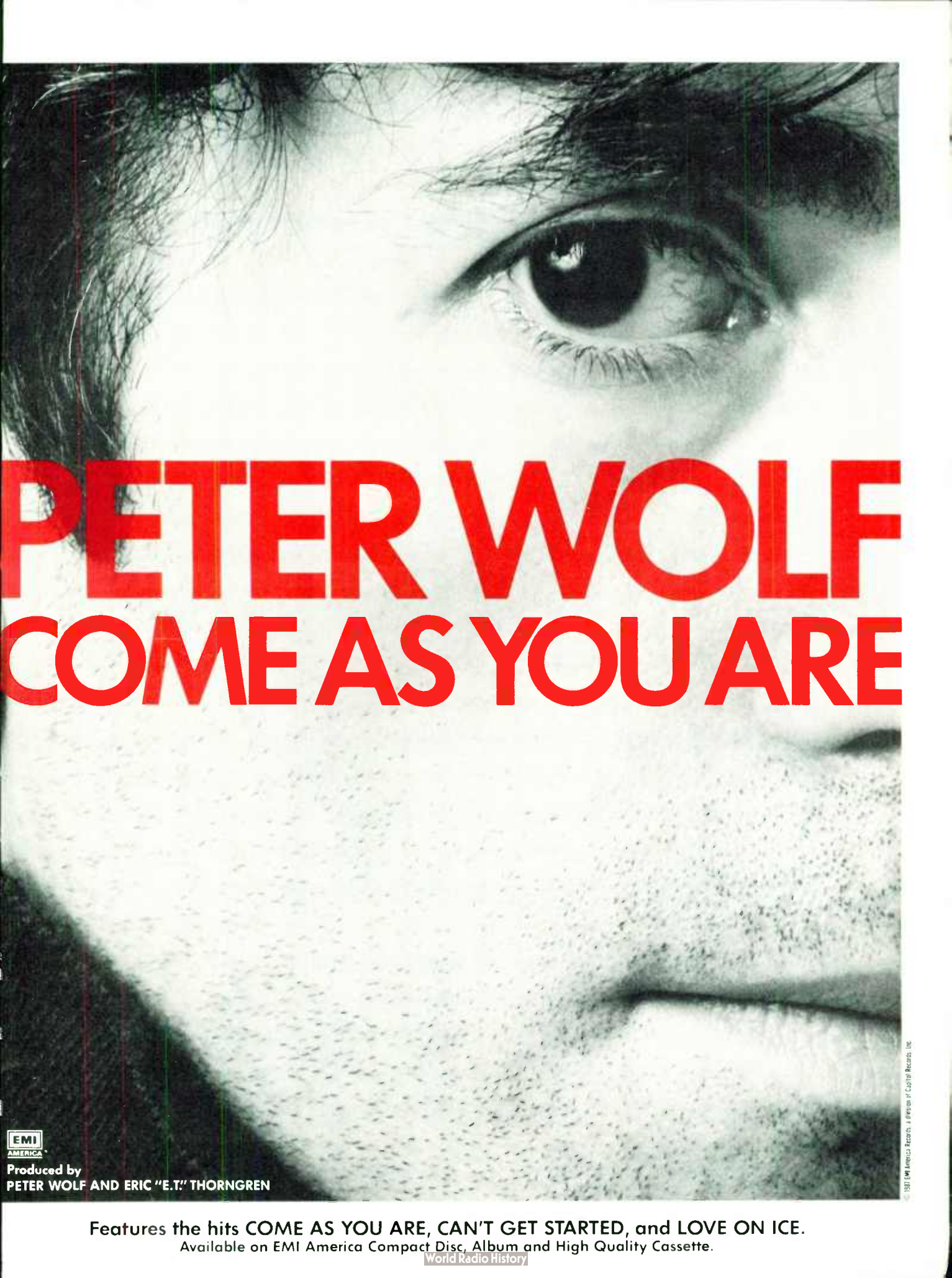
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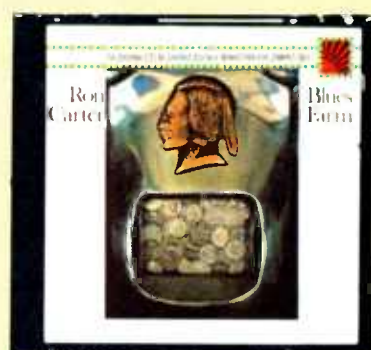
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Bruce Springsteen

Superstardom wasn't just handed to the Boss—and when it came he wasn't sure he wanted it.

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Editor

Jock Baird

Art Director

Gary Koepke

Executive Editor

Bill Flanagan

Senior Editor

Scott Isler

Advertising Manager

Ross Garnick

Pacific Editor

Mark Rowland

(213) 273-7040

Electronic Media Editor

Alan di Perna

Contributing Editors

J.D. Considine Vic Garbarini

John Hutchinson Chip Stern

Rob Tannenbaum Peter Watrous

Timothy White Josef Woodard

Charles M. Young Rafi Zabor

Bob Buontempo Freff

Dealer Sales Director

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Production

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Typography

Ruth Maassen

Assistant to the Publisher

Michelle Foster

Sales Promotion

Peter B. Wostrel June Hayes

Peter Cronin Audrey Glassman

Administration

Denise O. Palazzola

Main Office/Production/Retail Sales

31 Commercial St., P.O. Box 701

Gloucester, MA 01930 (617) 281-3110

New York Advertising/Editorial

MUSICIAN, 1515 Broadway, 39 fl.

N.Y.C., NY 10036 (212) 764-7395

Circulation Manager

James Hall

Subscriber Service

Cathie Geraghty (614) 383-3141

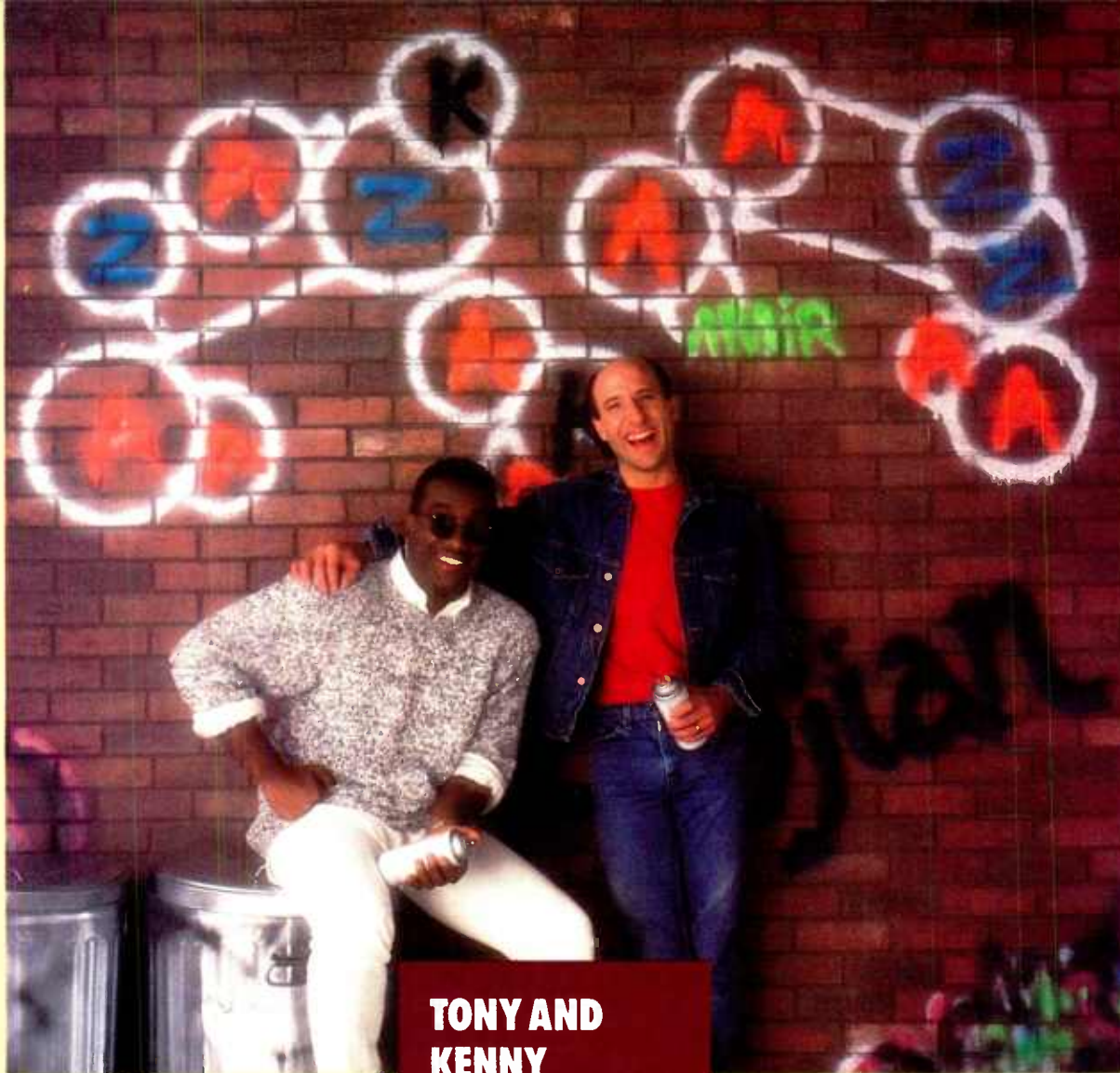
Founders

Gordon Baird & Sam Holdsworth

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TONY AND KENNY ON THE A'S, K'S AND Z'S OF MIXING CYMBALS.

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Thompson takes a similar approach, "I switch around a lot. I've been using a 22" A Ping or a 22" Z Light Power Ride on current studio projects and with my new band, The Distance. And I match them with A Quick Beat Hi Hats—the ones with the flat bottom and holes. I might use K crashes in the studio, but on tour I'll go with A's and Z's. I love the way the Z's cut through on stage. I hit hard and want my cymbals to be heard."

"Music is a series of frequency ranges. I look for the one that isn't being saturated, so my cymbals stick out. For example, recently I was in the studio and tried an A Ping Ride, then a K. But for the music I was playing, the Amir Ride really cut it. It was incredible!" says Aronoff.

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Canadian Furs Trappers

Many fans may have written off the Furs, saying they have sold out—but to me, *Midnight To Midnight* is proof they haven't. Thanks, J.D. Considine, for your thorough and fascinating article, and thanks to *Musician* for printing it and putting the group on the cover.

Joel Gordon
Montreal, Canada



I never thought the Psychedelic Furs (Mar. 1987) would ever make it to the cover of a major music magazine like *Musician*. This is a band I enjoyed consistently through their first three albums. Today they are nothing but a pack of cynical, hypocritical narcissists selling back to adolescent girls a reflection of their own unsure place in an adult world.

Richard Butler's conscious decision after the *Forever Now* album to compromise

above ground? Did he even bother to listen to the entire album beyond the opening title track?

As Elton's career nears the two-decade mark it is increasingly obvious that his contribution to popular music is inestimable. He is the finest songwriter/performer of our time and I am tired of this fact going unnoticed by pseudo-critics such as Considine.

Gary Puleo
Jeffersonville, PA

Quality Tells

Thanks for the quality interviews on Miles Davis and John McLaughlin (Mar. 1987). I knew you could do it. It's great to hear from people with integrity.

Steve Ozark
Columbia, MO

You mean us or Davis and McLaughlin? – Ed.

Down With People

Because you've always been a magazine of taste and quality, I would urge you to speak out (loudly) against *People* magazine and the grossly offensive cover of their recent issue. I refer, of course, to the deeply disgusting photo

ent on *our* label. Sometimes it's as simple as that. We are justifiably proud an artist of Cray's unique abilities selected PolyGram as his recording home. If, as a side effect, that association sends a signal to other talented performers, fine. However, our fundamental commitment to create a supportive environment for our artists is a far cry from the kind of blatant public relations ploy Goodman suggests. In the first place, few artists are going to be fooled by such a strategy. In the second, and as a practical matter, to approach business in such a manner is short-sighted and counter-productive.

Point number two: PolyGram Records, as backhandedly acknowledged in the article, has in recent years worked successfully to rebuild after a long period of inconsistent performance. Along the way, PolyGram executives and other employees have given enormous energy, enthusiasm and creativity. To revisit the past (replete with generic jokes: same setup, simply substitute record company X) misses the point. The more

As for the jokes, they were meant to convey a situation in which a prestige signing would make sense. Considering PolyGram's current success, I'm surprised anyone at the company could (or would) personalize them."

Todd Rundgren

I am quoted out of context by Greg Reibman in his article "Turn It Down!!!" (April 1987) Reibman contacted me at home requesting an interview with Todd Rundgren. I have been closely associated with Rundgren as his road manager, production manager and personal assistant over the past seven years. In response to Reibman's description to me of the article he was writing, I said that I could appreciate his interest in this topic and that "I have often been personally concerned about Mr. Rundgren's exposure to painfully loud volumes when performing live onstage with Utopia." Reibman's stating that I said Todd Rundgren "almost always works at painfully loud volumes" infers that he does so when working in the studio—which is certainly *not true*.

To further confuse things, Reibman states that I "work for Todd Rundgren at Bearsville Studios." I am presently working at Bearsville Studios as production manager. Rundgren has his own recording studio, Utopia Sound Studios. I do not work for Todd at Bearsville!

It would also have been nice if Reibman had paid me the courtesy of asking my permission to be quoted in his article. At no time did he ask if he could interview *me*.

Mary Lou Arnold
Woodstock, NY

Greg Reibman replies: "I am glad to hear that Arnold has changed her mind about the serious problem of audio abuse among music professionals. But I'm sorry she has chosen to blame me for her offhand remarks during my conversations with her."

Fred Goodman replies: "My reporting on the strategy behind Cray's signing came from conversations with PolyGram's senior A&R executive. I found his remarks surprisingly candid and presented them without embellishment."

LETTERS

his frequently brilliant view of the world for the sake of a few more lousy shekels leaves me angry and sad. A major artist has sold his principles down the river.

Gary Kimber
Toronto, Canada

Elton Tests Negative

J.D. Considine's ten-syllable dismissal of Elton John's *Leather Jackets* (Rock Short Takes, Mar. 1987) was doubly revolting—considering it appeared a full five months after the album's release and alongside Considine's glowing review of those eloquent musical sages, the Beastie Boys. Does this guy live

of that smug-faced little worm who murdered the great man named Lennon.

D.L. Cameron
Winnipeg, Canada

Robert Cray

An otherwise insightful profile of PolyGram recording artist Robert Cray (April 1987) is marred by a misleading and slanted sidebar by Fred Goodman. Goodman commits two critical errors of substance in his attempt to analyze the impact of Cray on the PolyGram labels.

Robert Cray was signed because, when he opened his mouth to sing, we fell on the floor. We had to have *that* tal-

appropriate question for Goodman and *Musician* to ask is what has happened at PolyGram Records to generate record-breaking profits in place of substantial losses. That's a story for *Musician* to look into.

Pam Haslam
PolyGram Records
New York, NY

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LOOSE ENDS

That Slick Stateside Sound

Radio doesn't do Loose Ends justice. Sandwiched between ads for hemorrhoid remedies and modeling schools, the band's music sounds much like the rest of the bland, anonymous synthesizer pap that passes for dance music nowadays. But listen to the English trio's third album, *Zagora*, and pleasant little oddities begin to float to the surface like goodies in a dish of stew.

For instance, there's a neat Egyptian-bazaar effect that opens "Stay A Little While, Child," and an honest-to-goodness non-synthesized saxophone solo in the black hit single "Slow Down." Loose Ends itself is an oddity. Though ostensibly a dance band, they show a knack for

music that is unexpectedly cool and richly textured.

"Jazz is really our background," keyboardist **Steve Nichol** says. "It's a lot of influences from when we started and all the people we listened to were sort of jazz-oriented... Joe Sample, Herbie Hancock, Miles Davis... everyone in that era, really."

Like Sade, Anita Baker and precious few others, Loose Ends performs the neat trick of combining jazz sensibilities with commercial appeal. **Jane Eugene's** slow-burn vocals provide a counterbalance to the obligatory hooks and chants. Surprisingly, until she auditioned for Loose Ends, Eugene had never given professional singing any consideration. "She had a different voice," Nichol recalls of the audition. "Extremely fresh, speaking from a musician's point of view."

According to Eugene, Loose Ends looked to America for inspiration with the *Zagora* LP. "At the time we started," she says, "there

were a lot of other bands around that, when their records were played side by side with an American song, you could hear that it wasn't as polished, it wasn't as good. We had decided by then that we wanted to have that same slick sound that was coming from the States."

— *Leonard Pitts, Jr.*

THE SAINTS

Punks, Ten Years After

No less a personage than Bob Geldof once sagely observed, "Rock music of the 70s was changed by three bands: the Sex Pistols, the Ramones

nonsense and the hype didn't really fit. It all became a millstone around our necks."

As an angry and often confused Irish Catholic teenager, Bailey assembled the group in the steamy Australian city of Brisbane. But *I'm Stranded* was a decade ago; the Saints of 1987 are a well-evolved species. The influential tip sheet *Gavin Report*, a publication not given to gushing praise, claimed, "This band is like a careening semi-trailer; you can see it coming fast and furiously." That may be the case in America, where whiz-kid Steve Gottlieb has just issued the mature, textured and charming *All Fools Day* album (and "Just Like Fire Would" single) on his TeeVee Toons label. In Europe, the band's various formations have long enjoyed critical praise and audience approval.

The Saints proved to be the wild card on the recent Australian Made mega-tour down under, winning over a previously unconvinced domestic audience with compelling sets of post-punk blended with soul and a little folk-rock. After the jaunt, producers (and ex-Easybeats) Harry Vanda and George Young consented to produce the Saints' remake of the 1968 Easybeats track "The Music Goes Round My Head" for the soundtrack of the Australian film *Young Einstein*. "I'd never realized that recording could be so damned enjoyable," the erudite Bailey proclaimed. Then he set off to a rural retreat to pen songs at the behest of INXS leader Michael Hutchence and hard rocker Jimmy Barnes. — *Glenn A. Baker*



and the Saints." **Chris Bailey**, leader of the last-named, nods politely at Geldof's patronage but insists, "In the early days it was all hype and

CONCRETE BLONDE

A Cinderella Success Story

I was in Sparks, okay?!"

Though Concrete Blonde guitarist **Jim Mankey** laughingly confesses this dark secret like a killer baring his soul, it hardly seems a hanging offense. Still, for a member of a supposedly hip, cutting-edge trio, the news that you played with a manic pop group fifteen years ago

"And then," recalls Napolitano, mock-solemn, "the major labels—the cigar-chomping moguls—came around. They'd say, 'This three-piece thing is great, but shouldn't there be four of you?' Or 'I've got a Creedence song I want you to try.' We recorded demos for Elektra, but they took so long to make up their minds. We fucked away a year of our lives waiting. It nearly broke up the band."

Recruiting new drummer Harry Rushakoff (whose credits include Harvey Mandel and Alice Cooper) amid the turmoil, Dream 6 saw record-company interest

"I love the name, but I don't know what it means," Napolitano admits, adding, "and neither does he."

Concrete Blonde is currently opening all sorts of doors with their self-titled debut LP, which ranges from the hard thrash of "Still In Hollywood" to the down-home "True." Recently they've appeared on the soundtrack of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre Part II*, opened shows for Cyndi Lauper and taped spots on the dreaded MTV, prompting them to question the price of fame.

"I had mixed feelings about being on MTV at first," Napolitano confesses. "Then I decided it's better for people to see us than Cinderella."

"Listen, there's a lot of things in the 80s that *should* bum you out, but if the music business bothers you that much, you've got your head up your ass. You're leading a very limited existence."

—Jon Young



might indeed deal a crushing blow to your credibility.

And how's this for uncool? Los Angelinos Mankey and singer/bassist **Johnette Napolitano** met in the early 80s while working with Leon Russell, of all people. Breaking away to form the Dreamers, they added a drummer and became Dream 6 with a homemade 1984 EP.

fade, and cut an album of their own. Enter IRS Records, ready and willing to release the results unaltered. The label's only reservation was the name: With everyone from the Dream Syndicate to Vanity 6 already on the scene, a change seemed called for. In his typically oblique fashion, R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe suggested Concrete Blonde.

NEW YORK JAZZ REPERTORY ENSEMBLE

Spike Jones' Priceless Heritage

What has washtubs, nails, a ratchet, a washboard, bicycle horns, stepladders and a siren whistle? Right: a hardware store.

Okay, smartass, so does the New York Jazz Repertory Ensemble. They've *also* got



Dueling Dolbys Make Noise

Until now, Ray Dolby—the inventor known for his noise reduction systems—and Thomas Dolby—the British singer/keyboard player/producer—have been related only by lawsuit. Ray's Dolby Laboratories had brought trademark infringement charges against the performer, whose real last name is Robertson. In return, Thomas Dolby had filed a countersuit.

Relations might be more cordial since the two Dolbys settled the case late last year. A non-financial licensing agreement allows Dolby T to use the surname only with his first name, for entertainment purposes and promotional goods derived therefrom. What the singing Dolby can't do is register the name for commercial purposes, or endorse a sound console, as he did last year.

a Chrysler brake drum, cuckoo and duck calls, a two-octave set of tuned cowbells (from B-flat below middle C) and six starter guns. "We fire off thirty rounds a show," singer/washboardist Todd Robbins says, calmly reloading the pistols with blanks after a typical set. Yet the heavy-metal percussion doesn't terrify audiences so much as delight them. The Ensemble is presenting "The Best of Spike Jones," a musical (more or less) tribute to the late bandleader whose arrangements weren't confined to conventional instruments or good taste.

Banjoist Eddy Davis has been afflicted with Jonesitis since he was a child. He had managed to keep the condition under control and lead a productive life until the owner of New York nightspot Michael's Pub—where Davis plays with clarinetist Woody

Allen—suggested the Spike Jones revival project. In less than a month Davis assembled a septet to recreate Jones' side- and earsplitting arrangements. Spike Jones Jr. donated some of his father's lead sheets. On other songs Cynthia Sayer, banjoist, percussionist and first baggist (she blows up and pops a brown paper one), painstakingly transcribed recordings.

Although smaller than Jones' own City Slickers, the Repertory Ensemble does a creditable job recreating the sound and manic joy of the originals. Davis obviously relishes startling unsuspecting listeners with strained strains of "Holiday For Strings," "Serenade To A Jerk," "You Always Hurt The One You Love" and "Der Fuehrer's Face," among other Jones chestnuts.

And no one is safe: After a two-month stint in New York, the band went on the road. So watch out. "We haven't found the cannons yet," Robbins warns. — *Scott Isler*

WHITE ANIMALS

Methadone For Deadheads

iven the unconventional traits that mark the White Animals—including a member who gave up being a doctor to pursue rock 'n' roll—it doesn't seem too odd that the band considers its *Live!* LP friendly competition for its bootleggers.

Singer/songwriter/guitarist and founder **Kevin Gray**—the man who turned his back on medicine—explains that fans in the group's Nashville home base, and elsewhere, have been trading tapes of White Animals concerts for years. "So we decided to do our own officially-sanctioned live bootleg, since so many people had these tapes.

"For guys like us, it's tremendously flattering that people are willing to set up

this whole network and swap tapes. We thought we'd just throw our hats in the ring."

Say what? *Flattered* by such insider trading? Sounds like the Grateful Dead philosophy, a notion not lost on Gray: "We have a lot of Deadheads who like us. We're sort of methadone for



Deadheads, when they can't get the real thing."

But the Dead link paints a misleading picture of what this neat little band is about—just as *Live!* doesn't fully represent the White Animals' range and charming quirks. The LP showcases the foursome's knack for turning out feisty, catchy, 60s-influenced rockers, but doesn't hint at the reggae or other stylistic

flirtations that have colored the band's records since they formed in 1979.

It also fails to document fully the contributions of soundman Tom Coats, the fifth Animal who not only continually gives the quartet a brilliant live mix, but also drops instruments in and out, creating eerie dub effects. And while *Live!* includes a dose of outside material, it glosses over the White Animals' fondness for whacked-out covers—off-kilter readings of everything from "These Boots Are Made For Walkin'" to "Planet Claire."

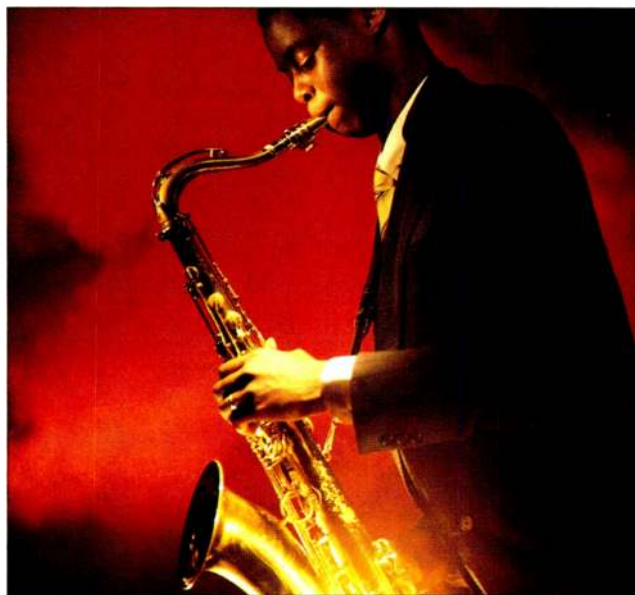
But Gray promises the group's delightfully warped take on David Essex's "Rock On" will grace its forthcoming studio album, *In The Last Days*, along with Bob Marley's "Could You Be Loved" and eight new originals. So when the band tours behind that spring release, there'll be fresh material for that network of bootleggers. Which, no doubt, will mean even more "flattery" for the White Animals. — *Duncan Strauss*

COURTNEY PINE

British Jazz Goes Jamaican

e have a whole different perspective from American musicians."

Soprano and tenor saxophonist Courtney Pine, twenty-three, is a self-assured English guy with Jamaican parents, a contract with Island Records, and a rep as the British Wynton Marsalis. "Because of the way we were brought up—we have different backgrounds and listened to different types of music—there's more of a West Indian tradition here rather than an American tradition. It's tempting, though, to say, 'I want to become the next new American jazz musician,' and



lose my background—which I don't want to do."

Pine, maybe the only person who wanted to become a jazz musician after hearing Grover Washington, Jr. play "Just The Way You Are," recently released his first record, *Journey To The Urge*

Within. It's full of his meticulous compositions and shows off his warm burly tone. Pine is steeped in Jamaican culture—he listened to ska and bluebeat as a kid—but not exclusively: He co-founded the Abibi Jazz Arts, organizing a growing number of

young black Britishers getting involved in jazz and trying to find a black British style.

They're in luck; England's undergoing a jazz boom, allowing them to work fairly often, and the British press is more than happy to praise a jazz homeboy. "There's a [London] club called the Wag that happens every Friday. It's packed like a disco, and they play Blakey's stuff and Tito's stuff and Horace Silver down there. Musicians like myself, who played reggae, pop, funk, are now finding that we're able to play jazz music and exist on it.

"I'm fortunate I'm doing something different in the country at the right time," Pine says, genuinely modest. "I'm getting a chance to set up business, planning my life years in advance. It's a really nice feeling that you can control your own destiny. It's very unusual. I've been blessed that I'm here at the right time." — *Peter Watrous*

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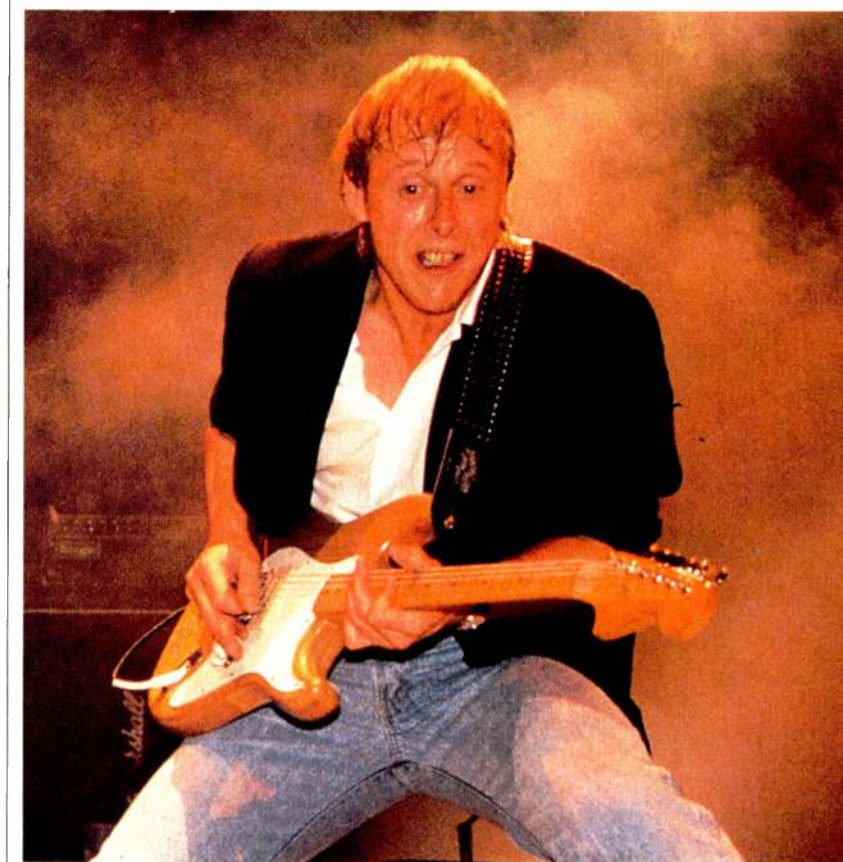
THE EASYBEATS

BY GLENN A. BAKER

AUSTRALIA'S BEATLES REUNITE AND TOUR DOWN UNDER

The offers had been coming in for more than a decade: generous enticements to reform the Easybeats, Australia's most revered and eulogized rock band. Harry Vanda and George Young, the group's master songwriting producers, had always politely deflected the overtures without discounting the inevitability of a final hurrah. But in September the duo suddenly and unexpectedly yielded to popular demand. Last October Vanda and Young took to the road with former comrades Stevie Wright, Dick Diamonde and Gordon "Snowy" Fleet for a major-venue Australian tour. The motivation was a mixture of curiosity, nostalgia and a desire to put the matter to rest once and for all. It came about as a result of the dogged determination of superfan Mark Longobardi, a manager of stand-up comics who was able to put together a suitably attractive proposal and have it accepted just weeks after Vanda and Young had stated publicly (and honestly) that rumors of a reunion were groundless.

The reunited Easybeats had a formidable task which went beyond faithfully recreating an urgent sound of considerable integrity. Just as the Beatles ushered in a new era for British rock, the brash young Easybeats gave Australian music a new identity and confidence, setting it on the road to global acceptance. They were not only refreshingly original but blessed with the same rare charisma as the Fab Four or Rolling Stones. In the mid-60s the Easybeats notched up nine Australian smash hits within eighteen months, and generated a manic fervor which saw airports, theaters, television stations and cars reduced to rubble, fans hospitalized and civic fathers outraged. Impish singer Wright was an idol of cosmic proportions, while guitarist Young had a breathtaking grasp on song structure. In the 80s, Easybeat songs are still valuable copyrights, with recent rendi-



Harry Vanda back onstage: "It feels like five other guys."

tions by the Divinyls, the Plimsouls, Little River Band and Sports.

Saying yes was the hardest part of the Easybeats reunion; momentum did the rest. Drummer Fleet, who laid down his sticks to become a Perth builder in 1967, flew secretly to Sydney for a tentative rehearsal. Wright had been performing regularly since the beginning of the year; bassist Diamonde had emotionally never ceased being an Easybeat. Within days of the Australian dates being announced, concert offers were coming in from America and Europe (where Vanda and Young are major figures under their Flash & the Pan guise). The tour just happened to coincide with Vanda and Young's return as producers of AC/DC—whose Angus is George's younger brother—on the international hit album *Who Made Who*.

"It feels like it was five other guys," Vanda insisted at a pre-tour press conference. "I see the old photos now and I can't relate to me being there. It's like looking at somebody else, and I'm sure George feels the same way... Everything has moved so fast. As it gets closer I

think nerves will set in a bit."

As it happened, there were no shaky nerves on display when the six-date tour kicked off in Melbourne on October 30. The five original members took the stage to a standing ovation for their first concert in seventeen years and delivered a robust ninety-minute, sixteen-song set of astounding passion and energy. The set was primarily devoted to the Australian hits, along with two of Wright's early-70s solo tracks, "Hard Road" (later recorded by Rod Stewart) and "Evie" (ditto by Suzi Quatro). Vanda unleashed fluid blues guitar licks which got him dubbed B.B. Vanda for the remainder of the tour. Stevie Wright, thirty-seven and a confessed former heroin addict, managed a series of cartwheels while dodging fans rushing the stage. Young, initially the most apprehensive, by mid-tour was bopping around the stage in a manner not entirely dissimilar to kid brother Angus.

The audience was not, as might have been expected, mostly devoted baby boomers, but was at least half teenage.

continued on page 24

The sounds created by the D-50's PCM Waveform Generator are far superior to wave table samples found in other synthesizers, which are usually only one looped cycle in duration, and are usually no more than 5 milliseconds. In contrast, many of the PCM Partials on the D-50 are up to 256 milliseconds.

Structures/The combination of the Partials' operation modes can be set by selecting one of the seven Structures. (Figure 2) By choosing one of these Structures it is possible to combine two Synth Partials, or two PCM Partials, or a combination of the two in several different relationships. In addition, the Partials can be cross-modulated by the digitally-controlled Ring Modulator, which helps to create the complex harmonic environment for the resulting Tone.

Unlike ring modulators of the past (which tended to be interesting yet unpredictable), the Ring Modulator in the D-50 is designed to track with the keyboard, ensuring the proper harmonic relationships as you go up and down the keyboard.

Built-In Digital Effects/The final routing of the signal before it reaches the output is through the digital effects circuitry. (Figure 3) But, far from being merely an add-on, the D-50's effects are as carefully thought-out as the rest of the instrument, and likewise just as integral to the creation of new and unique sounds. The first effect is the digital Parametric Equalizer, used to contour the equalization curve for the tone before it passes into the digital Chorus, or we should say Choruses, as the D-50 fields an arsenal of eight chorus circuits—all available simultaneously, configured in any of 16 modifiable presets such as panning chorus, tremolo, flanging and much more. Within each chorus there are parameters set up as to how these choruses interact for maximum effectiveness. Lastly, the signal passes through the digital Reverb, which can also function as a digital Delay, offering various room and

hall sizes, gated (non-linear) reverb, reverse, stereo panning effects that can be routed to either or both of the stereo outputs. The awesome power of these built-in effects means that the D-50 requires literally no outboard effects processing. And just as important, because all the D-50's effects are processed in the digital realm, they are completely noise free.

A Mother of a MIDI Keyboard/The D-50 is also an excellent mother keyboard for your MIDI system, as it is totally dynamic, offering 61 keys in four different key modes (Whole, Split, Dual and Separate). In the Whole mode the D-50 is 16 voice polyphonic, while in the other modes it functions as two 8 voice synths, one for each Tone. All mother keyboard functions

are programmable per patch including a separate transmit channel and a separate program change transmit. As the D-50 is

truly bi-timbral it can function as two MIDI sound modules as each tone can receive on its own MIDI channel. All D-50 parameters and programs can be saved on Roland's new M-256D memory card which

M-256D MEMORY CARD

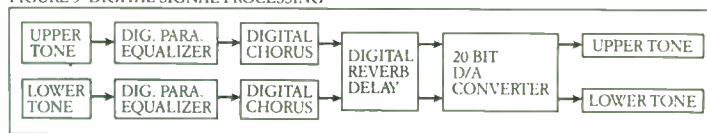


offers 32K bytes of storage in the size of a credit card. All of the D-50 functions can be programmed internally, or externally with the use of the optional PG-1000 programmer, which combines visual clarity and speed for

the programming professional.

Put It All Together/Taken as a whole, the D-50 represents more sound creation potential than most of the leading synthesizers combined. And just as important, it comes at a price that you can afford—\$1895.00. Of course, the only real way to find out for yourself is to play the instrument, but we'd like to suggest you do a little more. Go to your dealer, but before you try the D-50, try three or four other synthesizers first—really give them a good going-over. Then spend some time on the D-50. We think you'll find that the world of sounds you knew before, now seems to be black and white—while the D-50 has just exploded you into a universe of color. The new force has taken you by storm. RolandCorp US, 7200 Dominion Circle, Los Angeles, CA 90040 (213) 685 5141.

FIGURE 3 DIGITAL SIGNAL PROCESSING



PG-1000 PROGRAMMER



INTRODUCING THE D-50

THE BOLD NEW FORCE IN DIGITAL

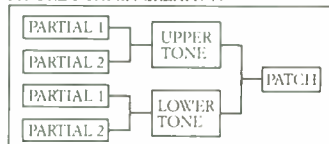
To the Player It's a Dream, To the Programmer It's a Miracle/Imagine a new technology that is so sophisticated that it offers totally new and unparalleled sound creation possibilities, combined with a programming method so logical that it actually builds upon the knowledge you currently have of sound synthesis. That is the essence of the D-50 Linear Synthesizer, a completely new, fully-digital synthesizer realized by Roland's Proprietary LA Synthesis Technology. The sounds created by the D-50 are simply breathtaking, resonating with character, depth and complexity, but with a warmth and completeness digital synthesis has never had before. The reason is that no sound has ever before been created in a manner so complex and rich with possibilities, and yet ultimately so very logical. Linear Arithmetic (LA) is normally used for computing complex mathematical problems in the field of science. In the area of sound synthesis it is an ideal creative method, offering superb

predictions, analysis and control capabilities. Roland engineers have spent years developing a new highly sophisticated LSI chip, code-named the "LA Chip," that utilizes a linear arithmetic technique to digitally synthesize sounds. The "LA Chip" is the heart of the D-50.

LA Synthesis Explained/LA Synthesis is component synthesis on the highest order. To create complex sounds, the D-50 starts with a very simple premise—build sounds from the ground up by combining different types of sounds

together, and then experience the interaction of these sounds on each other. We start with individual elements of sound called Partials. Two Partials are combined to create a Tone, and two Tones are combined to create the Patch. (Figure 1) The D-50 can hold 64 Patches and 128 Tones. Each of the two Tones can be processed individually by on-board signal processing that is sophisticated enough to rival a rack-full of equipment, and includes digital reverb, digital parametric eq,

FIGURE 1 PATCH CREATION



LINEAR SYNTHESIZER

SOUND SYNTHESIS TECHNOLOGY

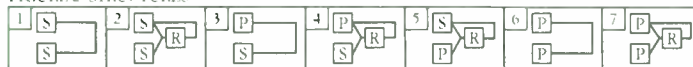
digital chorus, digital delay and more. But before we go too far, let's get down to the basics, the building blocks of LA Synthesis — Partial.

Synthesizer Partial/What is a Partial? A Partial can be either a digitally synthesized waveform, or a PCM sample. Each of the thirty-two Synth Partial contains all the components usually

found in the hardware of an analog synthesizer, presented here as digital software. This includes the Wave Generator (to create a sawtooth or square waveform), the Time Variant Filter, the Time Variant Amplifier, three five-stage Envelope Generators and three digital LFOs.

In this way, even though the D-50 is a digital signal, programming the Synth Partial is very similar to programming on an analog synthesizer, (as these components react in the same way as VCO's, VCF's and VCA's on analog synthesizers) while offering sound synthesis capability beyond the most advanced digital synthesizer.

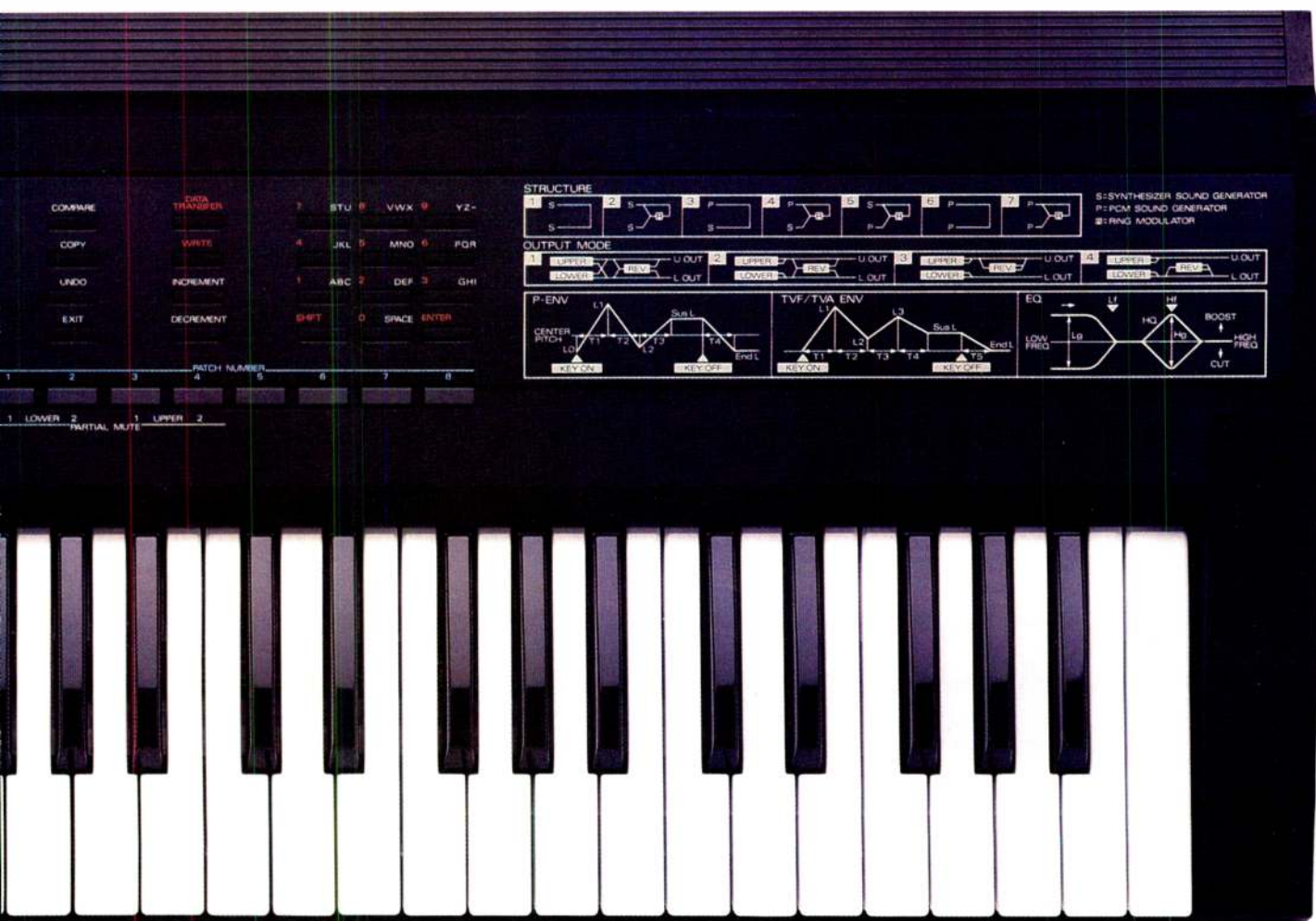
FIGURE 2 STRUCTURES



PCM Sampled Partial/A Partial can also be more than a digitally synthesized signal, it can also be a PCM sample. Resident in the memory (ROM) of the D-50 are over 100 carefully selected 16 bit PCM Sampled Wave Tables which can be used by themselves, combined with Synth Partial or combined with each other. The PCM Partial

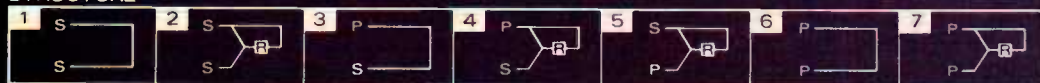
are carefully selected, and digitally processed so that they combine well with other Partial. Some of the

sounds include a wide variety of the attack portions of percussive sounds: marimba, vibes, xylophone, ethnic instruments, grand piano hammer attack (with the fundamental removed), a variety of flute and horn breaths, a range of different string plucks and bows, nail files, guitars, and many more. The Wave Table library also includes Loop sounds and long samples, such as: Male and female voices, organs, pianos, wind and brass instruments, and also Harmonic Spectrum sounds, which are created by removing all of the fundamentals of a sound, isolating its harmonic components.



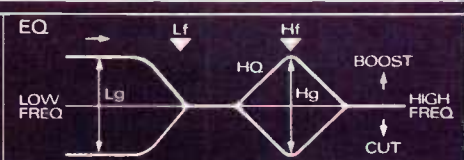
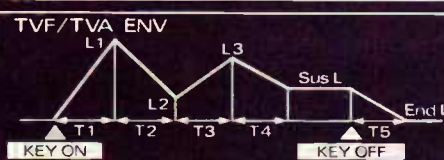
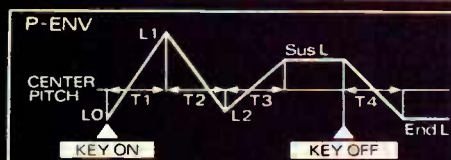
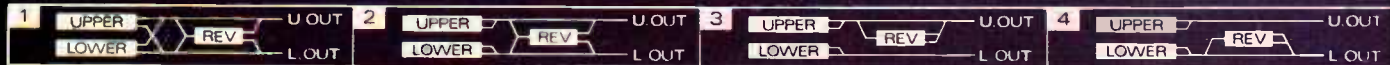
A NEW TECHNOLOGY IS CREATING A POWERFUL STORM IN THE WORLD OF SOUND SYNTHESIS

STRUCTURE



S=SYNTHESIZER SOUND GENERATOR
P=PCM SOUND GENERATOR
◻=RING MODULATOR

OUTPUT MODE



KEITH JARRETT

BY JOSEF WOODARD

THE MOST IMPORTANT MUSICIAN OF OUR TIME? JUST ASK HIM!

Keith Jarrett looks something like a boxer who has just nailed the title after a long absence from the ring. Towel around his neck, the lithe pianist bows before a thundering crowd at San Francisco's palatial *moderne* Davies Symphony Hall and begins athletic gyrations—musically and physically—on an encore of "All The Things You Are." Echoes of Art Tatum and Franz Schubert rock the house.

Backstage, Jarrett treads the hallowed hall lined with the autographed mugs of tux-donning classical artists, and enters the "green room" to bandy with well-wishers. One admirer offers a vigorous handshake and a lofty appraisal: "You are to our century what Bach was to the 18th." Unruffled by the hyperbole, Jarrett moves to another fan and fellow contender in the improvising art—Bobby McFerrin, who graciously expresses his admiration. Jarrett, still reeling from what was only his second solo piano concert since he took an extended leave four years ago, talks about how he wanted to clean the slate, to "deregulate" the format which made him a global sensation a decade ago.

Deregulation may be a part of Jarrett's latest four-year plan towards self-fulfillment, but demystification is not. Consider the title for his five-concert mini-tour: "Serious Drinking and Inner Vigilance: A Program of Solo Piano Improvisation for Hard Listening." It did not promise to be a frivolous night out. But Jarrett is in a comparatively low-key frame of mind this evening, elaborating on standards and spontaneous compositions in his characteristic weave of gospel, swing cadences, romantic idylls and American Indian modalities. "Hard listening" was strictly optional; the music came in palatable, bite-size segments.

The tour title may be a doublespeaking red herring, or an apt depiction of the elements that go into Jarrett's paradigm

of genuine improvisation. The imbibing in question is an internal elixir. "I have to have drunk enough that I'm not concerned with certain things. On the other hand, if I'm not vigilant, there's no music. What I'm saying is basically the reverse of the reason for drinking; it's the reverse, certainly, of killing yourself." He catches himself. "It's not that I'm trying to be philosophical about something that's, after all, only a piano being played."

Two weeks earlier, Jarrett sat down for a rainy-afternoon interview in his lush corner of the world—a tiny town in the rural western edge of New Jersey. His home/studio is accessible only by an unmarked dirt road. Likewise, you could

deceptively simple-sounding project, an unassuming book of etudes for ethnic instruments and virtually no piano.

"If the sound is effective, it should actually have a chemical—some sort of physiological—effect on the listener, so he doesn't have to hear that sound again," Jarrett says of his solo concerts. "The sound was as meaningful as it could be, and that was the message; the message isn't 'now come back and listen to me again.' More and more people were paying more and more money and were less and less open to what might be beneath the surface of what they wanted. So, I think absence can be more powerful than presence."

"If sound is music and came from si-



"After all, it's only a piano being played."

say Jarrett is a paradox waiting to be unraveled. In the throes of an interview, he can be both lucid and evasive, not unlike the terrain of his solo concerts.

And, judging from just the last year of work Jarrett has logged, there is no identifiable pattern or marketing blueprint. In addition to recording Book One of Bach's "Well-Tempered Clavier" and an album of improvisations for clavichord (under Bach's influence), Jarrett re-examined the solo concert (which a friend calls "his tabula rasa shtick") and, most significantly to himself, recorded *Spirits*. The double album set is an unexpected and

lence, then silence is potentially greater than sound. If you stay that watchful while you risk everything, the potential is greater than in any other state. If you stay watchful but you're safe on other levels, then that's like having your phone tapped. Or if you do some serious drinking and lose your vigilance as a result, you're gone."

Jarrett's was hardly a flight from activity to go walk in the woods. He wanted to spread his grasp even further. A wide stylistic berth may be Jarrett's *raison d'être*. After several years of playing in jazz quartets and solo concerts, he put

himself at a crossroads; he worked at classical recital and concert repertoire while satisfying jazz urges with standards.

Of all his musical tendrils, though, *Spirits* is surprisingly dear to Jarrett's heart. He even goes so far as to say that the probing aspects—sonically and musically—of his solo piano concerts were means of “searching for *Spirits* half the time. In that sense it wouldn't be a pianistic thing and it also wouldn't be dynamic except in the violent search maybe for that place...but on the piano that place didn't exist.”

Ironically, the impetus for music of such simplicity came after Jarrett made

his first successful bid in the classical world, playing a New York recital to kind reviews. Though on the brink of an ongoing classical career, Jarrett felt a compelling urge to revert to less fettered expression. He burrowed into his home studio and layered flutes, ethnic drums, an occasional guitar, piano and voice on two cassette decks, jerry-rigging a crude means of multitracking.

“Someone could say, ‘Well, anyone could do that!’ But I know it's taken all my life to make *Spirits*. The process sometimes demands so much of you that the result may seem to contradict the amount of involvement in the process. It

might seem like a casual lack of energy almost, where it might be exactly the opposite.

“I went in the studio and started playing the flute and realized that it was a state of making music that I hadn't been in for a couple of years. *Spirits* was as direct a result of that experience as you could imagine. It's why I'm here. It's what I want to hear if I make a sound.

“In a solo concert, there's an audience and there's me. The lines have to go horizontally because the audience is part of the thing. If I'm making connections, they have to go towards the horizon through the audience. I know it seems abstract, but it's actually quite graphic. In *Spirits*, the lines were straight up and down—from the earth to the sky.

“Only certain ethnic musics I've heard, like Central African Pygmy music, have the same quality of depicting the state of the people that are participating. I had no intention of sounding ethnic, it's just that those instruments to me are musical and intimate to a much greater extent than modern instruments. It just worked out that way. Also, I had them around.”

Of course, Pygmies have no option of playing a clavichord, whereas Keith Jarrett does. The question then being: Was the idea to play instruments on which you had limited technique?

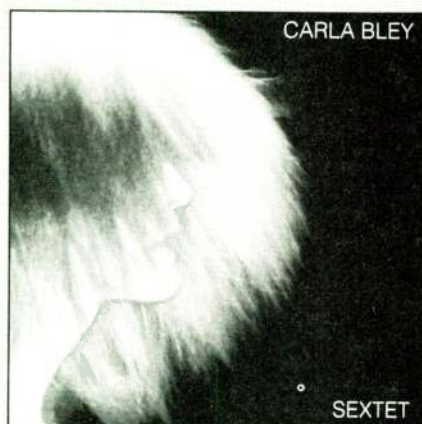
“No. There was no program going into it. It was exactly like a solo concert. I didn't know what I was doing; I mean I was seriously drunk and vigilant enough to record it. Many miracles happened.

“It's not like people playing together. When people play together, it already has to be planned and you can't plan that all the people playing together are going to feel that way at that time.”

Solo work was perhaps a sure fate for someone of Jarrett's gifts. Born in Allentown, Pennsylvania in 1945, Jarrett showed an early aptitude for improvisation as a piano whiz-kid. His stubborn self-reliance carried him through a short stint at Boston's Berklee School of Music and past a scholarship to study with esteemed classical pedagogue Nadia Boulanger in Paris. Acclaim in the jazz world came after stints with Art Blakey, Rahsaan Roland Kirk and with the Charles Lloyd Quartet: one of the earliest jazz groups to secure a crossover pop following. After putting in time with Miles Davis (listen to *Live/Evil* for Jarrett's juiciest—and last—electric piano work on record), he became a crusader for acoustic piano in a decade of electric market imperatives in jazz.

Jarrett's often vocal opposition to the

Carla Bley



Sextet

On *Sextet*, Carla Bley unveils a collection of smooth, lilting groove tunes performed with relaxed finesse by her stellar band—Hiram Bullock (guitar), Steve Swallow (bass), Larry Willis (piano), Victor Lewis (drums) and Don Alias (percussion). “The Girl Who Cried Champagne,” “Brooklyn Bridge,” “More Brahms” and “Healing Power” are some of *Sextet*'s selections which bear Bley's unmistakable and instantly appealing approach to songwriting. WATT 831 697

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wiles of modern production reached one litigational peak: When Steely Dan's *Gaucho* came out, the similarity of the title cut's slinky prologue to Jarrett's own tune "Long As You're Living Yours" (from *Belonging*) was too close for comfort. "They said they were [lifting the theme] in an interview, which is why I then sued them," Jarrett smiles.

"I can make a good analogy about how I felt. On the *Spirits* album, there was a piece on which I liked the melody so much, I decided I could do it a lot better. I made it into a song by virtue of recording it again. The more it became a song, the worse it sounded. The first take is on

the album, and it was because the melody was not in my head as a solid object. It just came out my horn, and it fit with what was going on so well, it sounds like it's playing.

"Then, I thought, 'Hey, it's so nice, I think I'll do it even better.' The Steely Dan tune sounded to me like someone who wanted to do that. They put together some things and made them so tight and solid that all the juice is gone. To me, almost all the production I hear does that in the pop world.

"You can't get more amateurish sounding as a production than *Spirits*, so I'm on the other side of it. Even the tem-

pos aren't tempos. They had a click track and every little device they had makes the music sound better to someone who's not listening and worse to someone who is."

Jarrett is no more pleased with the overwhelming fruition—market-wise—of new age music. "It's taking advantage of the time," he says. "It's taking advantage of people's stress, profiting from it. Whereas, really, if they were going to be so concerned about that, they should just print record jackets with big hands and fingers pointing to the other records people should be buying—like Mozart or something. Somebody at ECM coined a phrase for minimalism—less is less. I've coined a phrase for new age music—less is less than less."

From the outside, it would seem that Jarrett's energies are being diverted into separate directions. But such a perception, he feels, is more symptomatic of the pigeonholing beholder than observant of any inner state.

"So many different things are being done at the same time," he offers. "Where's the personality in all of that? How can I be the same person who does the 'Well-Tempered Clavier' and this clavichord improvisation and work with the trio? It's because it's not about personality. Some people are beginning to realize that in what I do. They're not looking for that *Köln Concert* sound.

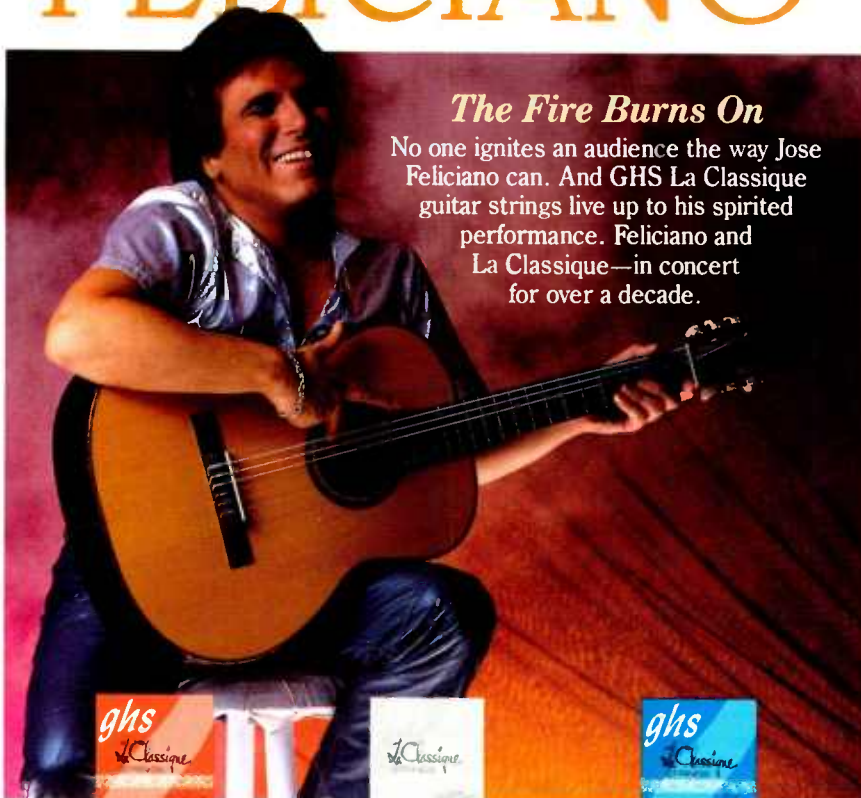
"Back when I was playing with Miles, he had just suddenly started playing ballads, but the bass player was from Motown and he didn't know them. Just spontaneously in the back room, Miles said, 'You know why I don't play ballads anymore? Because I love playing ballads so much.' Sometimes your love for something can get so sticky and then you're not really perceiving things. It's not about staying awake; it's about going to sleep on a nice mattress.

"So few people understood that about Miles. People say, 'Why isn't he playing like he played before?'—same thing with Coltrane. How can the music enter unless it's also searching for an entrance? It can't enter by virtue of being beautiful. I live in the country, and I have to remember to look around. It's beautiful, but that doesn't mean that it's always in my lap. I have to allow it to look for me, too. Then we see each other and if I see the ducks out on the lake, right away I realize what *Spirits* is about. It isn't necessarily going to make listeners fall in love, but if they hear the way it is, it will be able to be—like you said—a tonic.

"It's the next best thing to the ducks on the lake," he teeters with laughter. ■

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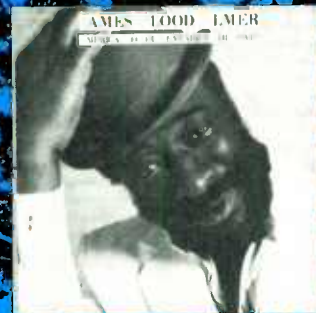
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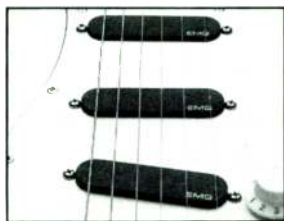
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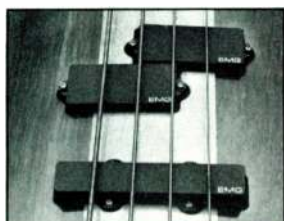
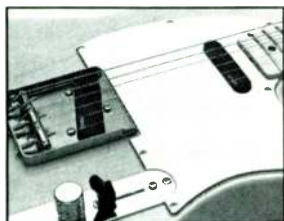
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EASYBEATS from page 14

One notably absent fan was Joe Jackson, who was touring Australia at the time. Jackson was so disappointed at not being able to catch one of the shows that he seriously contemplated rescheduling one of his own concerts. Jackson's name can be added to an impressive list of avowed Easybeat admirers which includes Lou Reed, Meatloaf, the Dead Kennedys, Kim Fowley, Debbie Harry and David Bowie.

There is also no shortage of local admirers. As the tour concluded in Canberra, with Vanda and Young admitting their satisfaction while firmly ruling out the possibility of any further performances, the country's two biggest acts—INXS and Jimmy Barnes—put the finishing touches to a joint tribute version of "Good Times," which stormed to number two on the charts within two weeks of release. The Saints then persuaded Vanda and Young to produce their remake of the 1968 Easybeats song "The Music Goes Round My Head."

"I'm not a nostalgic person and I don't live in the past," Wright says, "but I was very sad when it was over. I went home after the Canberra show and cried. You see, by that point we'd all warmed to it and the original spirit had overtaken us all. I'm used to getting encores with my own band but the response at these shows had a degree of sentiment that I'd never felt before."

For Wright, working with his "four brothers" again required no small amount of personal readjustment. "For years I've been leading my own bands, I've been *the man*. But when the Easys started rehearsing I got relegated back to kid in the group. I must have been acting up a bit about that because Harry grabbed me by the shirt and told me in no uncertain terms to shape up. That's all I needed; it was just like the old days. There were no problems after that."

It was Vanda who, once committed, became the motivating force for the reunion. "It's always been a bit hard to come to grips with what the group means to people," he confided backstage. "In fact it was a bit frightening meeting those expectations. What George and I are doing now, with Flash & the Pan and as producers, really doesn't have a lot to do with the Easybeats. We've had to put ourselves in a different state of mind. But I don't think any of us regret doing it. There have been some emotional moments but the most important thing is that it happened musically." ■

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Albert Grossman is dead. He passed away unexpectedly on January 25, 1986 on a flight bound for Europe, years after he stopped being the most important manager in rock 'n' roll. Years after Bob Dylan left him and Janis Joplin died and the Band dis-Banded and his other acts drifted away or ceased to matter. But somehow Albert Grossman still matters.

Albert Grossman was rock 'n' roll's Citizen Kane—a brilliant mover and shaker who ended up roaming alone through the halls of his rural Xanadu. Albert owned a big part of the town of Bearsville, New York. There was a story that one of his houses was haunted. Some musicians who stayed there reported meeting the ghost of a woman in black. Other ghosts walk those hills now, the ghosts of Janis Joplin and Richard Manuel among them. But Albert Grossman's is the biggest ghost of all.

His presence is still felt by those in the music business, and not just in the sense that Woodstock, the upstate New York artist colony he popularized, is still a haven for musicians, or that his Bearsville recording studio continues to prosper, or that other rock managers try to act as Albert acted. No, Grossman's effect is much more direct than that. Musicians who long ago tried to leave Albert behind still find themselves legally stuck to him. In life, Albert Grossman cast a long shadow, and death has not made that shadow disappear.

Take NRBQ: one of the greatest rock 'n' roll bands going, but as strong-willed as Grossman himself. NRBQ was signed to Albert's Bearsville Records in the early 80s, released one album (1983's *Grooves In Orbit*) and then got on Albert's bad side. So the Bear of Bearsville came down on them. He would not release anything NRBQ recorded, nor let them leave to record anywhere else. NRBQ was trapped in Musician's Hell. Only recently, after a year of wrestling with Albert's estate, was the band emancipated. If Albert hadn't died they would still be in thrall. But compared to some people, NRBQ got off easy; Bob Dylan's been haunted by Albert for years.

Take these new Dylan bootlegs. Since Albert's death, previously unknown "basement tapes" have been popping up in record stores. Few people could have access to

Albert Grossman's Ghost

The first rock supermanager still haunts the music biz.

By Rory O'Connor

Illustration by Steve Ditko

the home recordings made by Dylan and the Band in Woodstock in 1967. Sure, the original *Basement Tapes* were widely copied, but this new stuff was never suspected to exist (not all of it is music to brag about; posterity did not need to know that Tiny Tim was in on some of those sessions). Either one of the ex-Band members is broke and making some fast money, or someone else found a goldmine in Albert's closet. Singer/songwriter Steve Forbert said that he recently came across a board tape from Dylan and the Band's tumultuous 1965 Forest Hills concert in a box of tapes in one of Albert's houses. "I was tempted to steal it," Forbert smiles, "but I *was* a guest." Are less scrupulous

visitors carrying other tapes out of there? One recalls the pilfering that followed John Lennon's murder, and wonders if thieves are robbing this grave, too.

Sally Grossman, Albert's widow, waits until Garth Hudson is settled into his chair. Then, without a word, she hands him two nearly identical dull brown album jackets.

"Oh, no," mumbles Hudson in his unmistakable basso profundo, peering down at the song titles. He sits for a moment, shaking his massive head from side to side. Finally, he looks up. "Oh, no," he intones again. "Oh, nooooo...."

These double albums come as an unsuspected blast from the past, a Zen telegram from an earlier era, to nearly everyone in the offices of Bearsville Studios this crisp new morning. Like Band keyboardist Hudson, Sally had been taken by surprise when I showed up on her doorstep with the "lost basement tapes." She



suggested we see what Garth knew about them.

"I only hope this doesn't end up costing me money," says Hudson mournfully.

"Money?" I ask.

"From a lawsuit," he explains. "There'll probably be one somewhere down the line."

Despite his sad demeanor, Hudson seems more interested in the music than the money. He begins ticking off the songs listed on Side One, Volume One of the new bootleg—"All I Have To Do Is Dream," "I Can't Make It Alone," "I'm Not There," "Get Your Rocks Off" and "Down On Me"—and confirms that, yes, these and all the others have been culled from those legendary sessions. It was the period just after Dylan and

the Band took a ride to the height of fame, glamor—and exhaustion, and then retreated to live in this quiet, upstate New York community which Albert had pioneered. While a curious outside world waited, they sat around for months and jammed like a neighborhood garage band.

"We were doing seven, eight, ten, sometimes fifteen songs a day," Hudson remembers. "Some were old ballads and traditional songs, some were already written by Bob and Richard [Manuel, who hanged himself last year while touring with a re-constituted version of the Band], but others Bob would make up as he went along."

Then Hudson stares down at the albums once again. "Ah yes, 'Sign On The Cross.'" He nods with approval. "That would have been a real good one, but Bob never finished it. We'd play the melody, he'd sing a few words he'd written, and then make up some more, or else just mouth sounds or even syllables as he went along," Hudson says of the man whose lyrics inspired and intrigued millions. "It's a pretty good way to write songs," he concludes.

After perusing the list of songs in front of him one last time, Hudson looks up and says, "There are definitely others not included here."

Asked if he has any idea where the bootlegged tapes might be coming from, Hudson mumbles a suspicion to Sally Grossman that a friend or employee of one of the other members of the Band might be behind it. But when pressed for further details, both he and Sally shut off any further discussion of the topic.

I was pretty blown away when Albert died, like a lot of people, I guess," Bob Clearmountain remembers. "And later, I wondered what might happen to all of this. But now Sally seems totally *into* the studios, and it seems she wants to keep them going just the way Albert was doing it, to respect everything he wanted for them. It's hard for her, but I think she'll make a real go of it."

In Bearsville Studio B, Jim Kerr and Simple Minds are busy mixing their forthcoming live album. If any part of the sprawling Bearsville complex—restaurants, real estate, a record company, music publishing firms, rehearsal barns, an abandoned video center and an unfinished theater/arts space—is happening these days, it's the studios. Throughout the relative lull that followed Grossman's death last year, both studios have been active, with such top groups as the Pretenders, Psychedelic Furs and 'Til Tuesday in residence. The studios have more recently become heavy-metal heaven, as bands like Cinderella and Tesla come in to mix or record. In between, everyone from Marshall Crenshaw to Suzanne Vega has laid down tracks here. Now Simple Minds is back for a second stint.

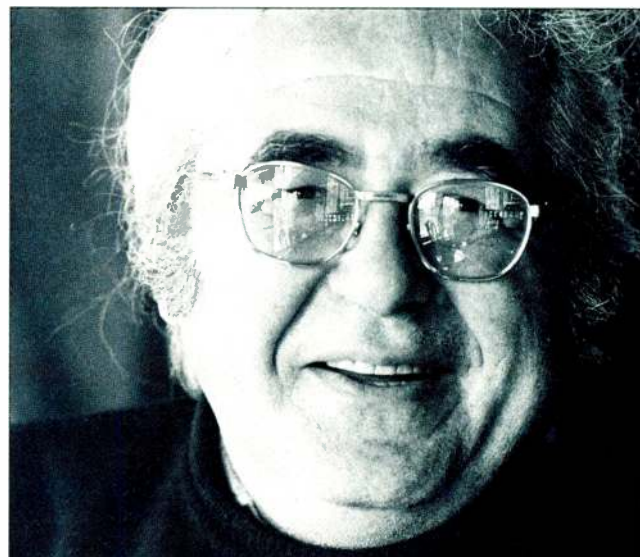
"Do we like it here at Bearsville?" Kerr asks in his lilting Scottish burr. "I guess we must, as the last time we were supposed to come for five days and we stayed for five weeks instead! And now we're back again... For one thing, it's great to get out of the city, and into a place like this to work. It reminds me a lot of the countryside just near Glasgow. But also, naturally, it's due to the sound we get here. To tell you the truth, I don't know much about the technicalities of studios; I can't even change the batteries in my tape recorder without help from one of the roadies! But I *do* know that you can get a *great* sound here, really clear and bright. I don't know how they do it, though... You'd have to ask the engineers and producers."

Jimmy Iovine calls Bearsville "one of the top three or four studios in the world right now."

"The combination of the two studio rooms is one of the best

I've ever worked at," says Clearmountain, who owns a house in the Woodstock area. "The recording room—Studio A—is a very large space that produces a brilliant sound, and it has one of the best Neve boards ever built, custom-made after hearing ideas and input from a producer like myself. And Studio B has an SSL with everything you'd ever need—it's one of the best mixing rooms there is."

Upstairs in the studio office, Jim Kerr, Sally Grossman and I finish watching a cassette of *Eat The Document*, a brilliant film that chronicles the 1966 Dylan/Band tour of Britain. Commissioned and then rejected by ABC-TV, *Eat The Document* was meant as a followup to the previous year's popular *Don't Look Back*. But after ABC turned it down as "totally unsatisfactory" and threatened legal action to get its investment back, the film was hardly shown. In retrospect, however, its herky-jerky handheld verité shooting and quick-cut editing captured the intensity and paranoia of those pre-Woodstock touring days better than any other "document" Dylan ever released.



The Citizen Kane of the 60s.

Taken together, *Eat The Document* and *Don't Look Back* offer a unique insight into the Bob Dylan persona circa 1965-66—a persona composed in part of put-downs, posturing and paranoia that some say was wholly adopted from his challenging, combative, domineering and at times sadistic manager, Albert Grossman.

When the film ends, Sally and I head over to lunch and talk at the Little Bear, one of the two restaurants built by Albert as part of the ever-expanding world of Bearsville. Known as the "Baron of Bearsville" or simply "The Bear," Albert Grossman was a financial wizard who could be seen as either "a teddy or a grizzly, depending on your point of view," as Robert Shelton notes in his Dylan biography *No Direction Home*. But the one thing that everyone agrees on concerning Albert Grossman is that he redefined the role of personal manager, and in the process profoundly changed the nature of both popular music and the music business.

Born in 1927 to immigrant parents, Grossman grew up in Chicago and attended university there, where he earned a

"I could not hear the name Albert Grossman without the hairs on my back standing up."

— Odetta, a former Grossman client

master's degree in economics. In 1957, he opened one of the first folk music clubs in America, the Gate of Horn. Grossman booked singers like Josh White, Big Bill Broonzy, Odetta and Bob Gibson. He also ran the restaurant. Gibson, who says he later became the first artist Grossman ever managed, remembers the Gate of Horn.

"I played the third night the club was open, and I stayed for eleven months!" he recalls. "There was absolutely nothing like it at the time. One unique thing about the Gate of Horn was the fact that if the audience wasn't attentive, if they really didn't *listen* to the act, then they were asked to leave. This was unheard of at the time."

Gibson and Grossman shared an apartment for two years on the North Side of Chicago. Gibson says the club became the hippest spot in town within a matter of months, "the inside place for inside people." Although undercapitalized and with a tiny capacity, the Gate of Horn had a "real impact—it affected people, not only in Chicago but all across the country."

Gibson's memories are confirmed by folksinger Odetta, who was living and working in San Francisco at the time. "There was a phenomenal grapevine in those days, a vital folk scene that stretched from Manhattan through Chicago all the way to the West Coast, where I was. Somehow, Albert heard of me when I was still in San Francisco and wrote asking me to play the Gate of Horn. One sensed that Albert was brilliant, a man of impeccable artistic taste." Soon Odetta too was under contract to Grossman.

Shortly after the Gate of Horn opened, Bob Gibson's recording career began to take off. "In a sense, that was one of the most meaningful things that happened in terms of Albert's future direction," Gibson says. "He became involved for the first time with the record business. Then he came east with me, met George Wein and launched the first Newport Folk Festival in 1959. That in turn got him launched as a personal manager in a big way."

Once he got a taste of both the business and the East Coast, Grossman kept going back for more. Greenwich Village was where it all was happening, where the burgeoning folk music scene had begun to make Chicago's "inside place for inside people" pale by comparison. Soon he left the club business and Chicago behind.

Peter Yarrow was among those active in the Village scene at that time, doing a solo act. He met Grossman in the Cafe Wha? in 1960, and took him on as a manager. One year later, says Yarrow, "Albert said to me, 'I have an idea for this group that is really sure-fire.'" The group was Peter, Paul and Mary.

"Albert was a man of unusual tastes and a different kind of insight into music," says Yarrow, who admittedly had "a special ride and a special relationship" with Grossman that lasted until his death. "He was concerned first and foremost with *authenticity*. Did the music have real substance, value and honesty? But he was also concerned with having impact and influence in the larger world, the heartland. It was a very rare combination.

"Everybody was ready for the change," says Yarrow. "But how could you reach them? How could you tap the public's ability to take in and incorporate our taste? Albert realized that it wasn't enough just to write and perform songs, that there was

a multitude of ways to be successful and to *happen*, to become important, to be wanted by that public. It was necessary to couple artistic success with enormous economic success in order for that to take place."

Under Grossman's guidance, the trio of Peter, Paul and Mary began enjoying some of that success. And there were other, more powerfully original stars burning in the basement clubs of the Village at that time. The brightest was Bob Dylan. Soon, he and Grossman would enter into a long and stormy personal and contractual relationship. The merger of Dylan's artistry, Grossman's business sense, and Peter, Paul and Mary's mainstream appeal was about to take the tiny Village folk scene to the top of the charts.

First, however, there was the matter of Sally Buehler. "I used to see Albert Grossman around the Village back when I was still a student at Hunter College in the beginning of the 60s," Sally says. "Everybody knew everybody else on the street at that time. It was incredible. The folk music scene was starting to happen, the beat poets were all around. Bill Cosby used to test out his new material after hours at the Gaslight. Soon I figured that what was happening on the street was a lot more interesting than studying seventeenth-century English literature, so I dropped out of Hunter and began working as a waitress. I worked at the Cafe Wha?, and then the Bitter End, all over," Sally laughs. "I had real upward mobility as a waitress...Back then, Albert never even said hello to me. He was too purposeful, too busy."

Eventually, Albert Grossman began saying more than just hello to the young brunette dropout he saw everywhere. Then things began to happen fast.

In short order, Dylan signed Albert Grossman as his manager, a relationship that lasted from 1962 to 1971, and which is still being legally resolved. Then Peter, Paul and Mary scored a major hit with Dylan's "Blowin' In The Wind," even before it was released on *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* in May 1963. Soon Dylan, Peter, Paul, Mary, Albert—and Sally—were on a one-way ride to the top.

In 1964 Sally and Albert, thirteen years her senior, got married. "The years between '64 and '70 were a total blur," Sally remembers. "Our life was incredibly intense. Every night about thirty of us would meet at Albert's office on 55th Street to go out. The office was constantly packed with people—Peter, Paul and Mary, of course, but also Ian and Sylvia, Richie Havens, Gordon Lightfoot, other musicians, artists, poets... Then there were tours to England and Europe, command performances for the Queen, and then the move to Woodstock..."

Sally earned her own bit of immortality by posing—languidly—with Dylan on the cover of *Bringing It All Back Home*.

Even as the Village folk scene was just beginning to percolate in the early 60s, Albert Grossman had begun buying property near Woodstock, a countrified arts colony about a hundred miles north of Manhattan. Dylan began spending more and more time in the area as well, first at Peter Yarrow's house, then over at the growing Grossman holdings in nearby Bearsville. Sally's good friend Sara Lowndes was also on the scene.

"I remember the first time Bobby was ever on television, I watched the program with Sara," says Sally. "I probably shouldn't say this, but she thought we were going to watch Bobby *Darin*! Later I introduced them, though they like to deny it now." She snaps back to the present and scowls a little. "I don't want to get into all that now."

Bob and Sara Dylan were married in a civil ceremony on November 22, 1965. The Woodstock era was about to begin in earnest. Meanwhile, Albert Grossman was busy redefining—some say reinventing—the role of personal manager.

David Braun, Bob Dylan's attorney for many years (and Albert Grossman's for a few), says Grossman was "the most successful manager ever...as smart as anyone I ever met regarding business...the man who invented personal full-time management." Braun says Grossman fundamentally altered the traditionally unequal relationship between artists and record and publishing companies.

Elektra Records chairman Bob Krasnow, a friend and business associate of Grossman's, agrees. "What you see today in the music business is the result of Albert," he maintains. "He changed the whole idea of what a negotiation was all about. Albert understood that music was becoming an *industry*."

"He was the first person to realize that there was *real money* to be made in the music business," says Braun.

Soon real money was flowing directly to Grossman and his clients. Whether it concerned record royalties, music publishing, agents, promoters, even overseas licensing of songs, Grossman was breaking new ground in the rapidly growing business of popular music, even as his acts were leading an artistic revolution of their own. Together they made millions.

Grossman used his money to expand in seemingly every direction. He continued to guide the careers of Dylan, Peter, Paul and Mary, Lightfoot, Havens, Ian and Sylvia, Paul Butterfield and Jim Kweskin. He added new rock acts like the Band, the Electric Flag, and most notably Janis Joplin. But somewhere along the line he may have spread himself too thin. Parts of his empire began to crumble and crack, and people started getting angry and resentful.

Among them was Odetta, one of his first successes. "Eventually, my account was no longer being taken care of properly. I tried everything to get attention—crying, screaming, being logical," she says. "Because he began by building his credibility on my success, I later felt so betrayed by him that at one point in my life I could not hear the name Albert Grossman without the hairs on my back standing up."

Other clients began to complain as well. Some felt neglected, and others taken advantage of. Mary Travers said Albert was sexist, and made more money than either Peter, Paul or her. Odetta accused him of racism. And Grossman's relationship with Dylan was deteriorating dangerously as well.

Some listeners imagined references to the Dylan/Grossman tensions in *John Wesley Harding*, Dylan's first post-accident album. When Dylan sang, "Dear landlord, please don't put a price on my soul," it was easy to think he was addressing the laird of Bearsville. And who was the "Poor immigrant...who falls in love with wealth itself and turns his back on me?"

David Braun explains it this way: "Albert got a little avaricious. He began to lose feeling for his artists, and stopped standing in the background. Like all managers, he eventually got to the point where he just couldn't do it anymore."

Braun's opinion is echoed by Jonathan Taplin, another longtime Grossman associate. "In the end, it all just got to be more than Albert could handle. He began to let other people run things for him. He made everybody move up to

Woodstock, then lost his heart for the music and started getting into restaurants and real estate. As far as Bob goes, Albert just got too greedy. He kept a huge percentage of Dylan's publishing rights, at a time when many other artists completely controlled their own publishing."

That Grossman was losing interest in management around this time is confirmed by Sally. "Absolutely. He couldn't wait to get out by then," she says. "He was burnt out."

Even Grossman's most ardent defender, Peter Yarrow, admits that the Bear of Bearsville was losing his touch by the end of the 60s, particularly after the tragic death of Janis Joplin. "He was burnt out and heartbroken. He didn't want to and couldn't any longer do the job," says Yarrow. "But there was an additional element of adolescent rebellion on the part of some of his artists as well, as history was forgotten, and they symbolically broke with their parents by breaking with him..." Then, rather pointedly, he adds, "Look, just as there never would have been a Peter, Paul and Mary, there never would have been a Bob Dylan who could have survived and made it without Albert Grossman. Personally, artistically and in a business sense, Albert Grossman was the sole reason Bob Dylan made it."

Unfortunately, by 1971, Dylan didn't seem to agree—or else no longer cared. After years of growing complaints and mistrust, Dylan fired Albert Grossman as his personal manager. Dylan later told Robert Shelton, "I finally had to sue him. Because Albert wanted it quiet, he settled out of court. He had me signed up for ten years...for part of my records, for part of my everything. He only had me for 20%. There were others who had to give him 50%."

By the early 70s, Grossman's days as a "personal full-time manager" were nearing an end. He discovered he had a life of his own to lead, away from the twenty-four-hour-a-day business of managing other people's lives and careers for them. There were recording studios to build and operate, records to be produced and a record company to be managed. There were publishing companies with more than fourteen hundred songs to account for. There were substantial real estate holdings, and then a music video center with Todd Rundgren, and the long-planned 400-seat theater he never quite got around to completing. And there was fine conversation to enjoy, and good food to eat in the two restaurants he owned...

And in one of them, in 1987, Sally Grossman and I sit looking out over the creek at the fading afternoon sun. Suddenly Sally looks up. "Bob called me a couple of weeks ago," she suddenly blurts out. "You know what that was about, don't you?"

"Did he finally offer his condolences?" I ask.

"No, no, not at all. It was about the lawsuit," says Sally. "I think he wants to settle."

Ah yes, the lawsuit...the one last piece of unfinished business for the pop music world's preeminent businessman. The lawsuit he had filed in 1981 against his former client Bob Dylan, and which his estate was still pursuing.

According to Jewel Grutman, one of the attorneys for the Grossman estate, Albert filed the suit because he felt he had been receiving less than he was owed by Dylan for years on the basis of the management and publishing contracts they had entered into. Dylan promptly stopped paying Grossman anything, and filed in turn his own counterclaims, saying in essence that none of the agreements were legally valid. The case is now before the Supreme Court of the State of New York, with a trial due sometime later this year.

Despite Sally's suspicions, however, Grutman calls the chances for a settlement "unlikely." Although she declines to estimate exactly how much money is involved in the suit, Grut-

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man will say that it is "a very substantial amount." Millions and millions of dollars? "Albert Grossman certainly said it was that much," she admits. Both Dylan and his attorney, Frank Berman, decline comment on the suit.

"Albert's only comment to me about the suit was that he just wanted what he was entitled to contractually," explains Sally. I ask for details of what Dylan said to her in his phone call, but she suddenly gets suspicious and doesn't want to talk about it.

"I shouldn't have even said what I said," she tells me. "Albert always told me not to say *anything* to the press."

The large video screen in the corner of the restaurant shows a scene from *The Last Waltz*, the Band's swan song. As if on cue, bass player Rick Danko walks in.

"We were just watching you on MTV," Sally tells him, after hugs all around. Then she asks if he wants to come over to the studio and listen to the lost basement tapes. Danko says sure.

Meanwhile I try to reconcile my images of Good Albert and Bad Albert. I flash back to some of the stories his friends and his opponents had told me. Bob Gibson, who fired him, called him "one of the most honorable men I've ever known." The once-powerful pop scribe Al Aronowitz, down on his luck and living on welfare in Washington, D.C., had run into Grossman at the funeral of Emmett Grogan; he was invited back to Bearsville, given money and a free place to live for years. Yet Aronowitz calls Grossman an ambivalent man with a sadistic sense of humor who could be kind and cruel at the same time.

Bob Krasnow, wanting desperately to meet Dylan in the 60s, was caustically told by Grossman, "You can buy the best of Bob Dylan for \$5.98. Don't ask to meet him." David Braun remembered Albert and Janis Joplin walking arm-in-arm and

Janis asking Albert why he'd never tried to sleep with her. Albert's reply: "Because if I was bad you'd never forgive me."

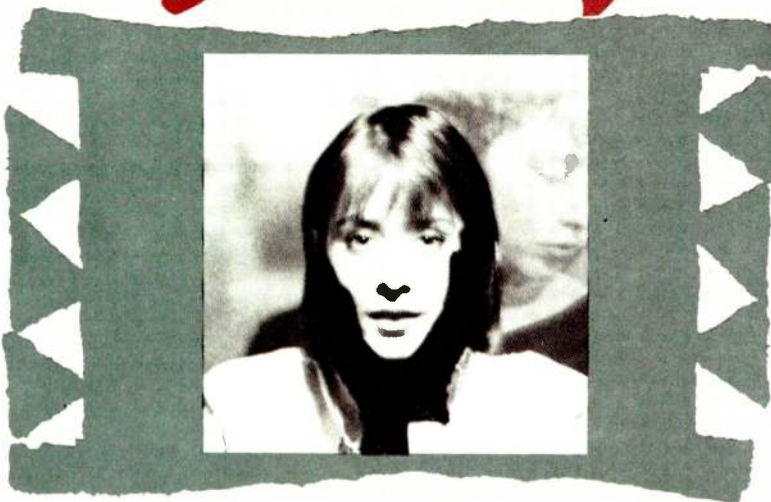
Myra Friedman, author of the Joplin biography *Buried Alive*, told me Albert had been "unwilling to give Janis the kind of direction that could have made the difference in saving her life." His great friend Peter Yarrow told me that Grossman, although "tough, combative and judgmental, showed great warmth and love to intimates." And Odetta, having moved from "dislike and hate to forgiveness," had concluded that she wasn't sure "there's anybody who knew Albert Grossman person-to-person...maybe Sally or Peter...but he was a very private, very lonely and very alone person." Finally Sally said Albert told her how "maybe he knew he was going to die."

Back in the studio Jim Kerr and Rick Danko are introduced, although it's unclear if either knows exactly who the other is. Danko looks casually at the much-ballyhooed bootlegs, and then starts talking about the Band's reviving career, their recent trip to Tokyo, their new videos and their upcoming gigs in Albany and Long Island. He for one doesn't seem too disturbed by the ghosts in the air.

I ask him if he doesn't at least feel ripped off by the bootlegs. He grins. "No way, man. I look at it this way...Sooner or later I'll probably see some money from this, down the line. In the meantime, I gotta get out there and *play*, you understand? This is what I've been doing ever since I was a teenager back in Ontario in the 50s, man. Besides, I got a couple of kids in college to support. You gotta keep moving ahead, you know? All this stuff was a long time ago. I'm more interested in what we're doing now, in what's coming up, you see?"

I see. Don't look back. ▮

Suzanne Vega



Solitude Standing

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THE MUSIC IS UNFORGETTABLE.**

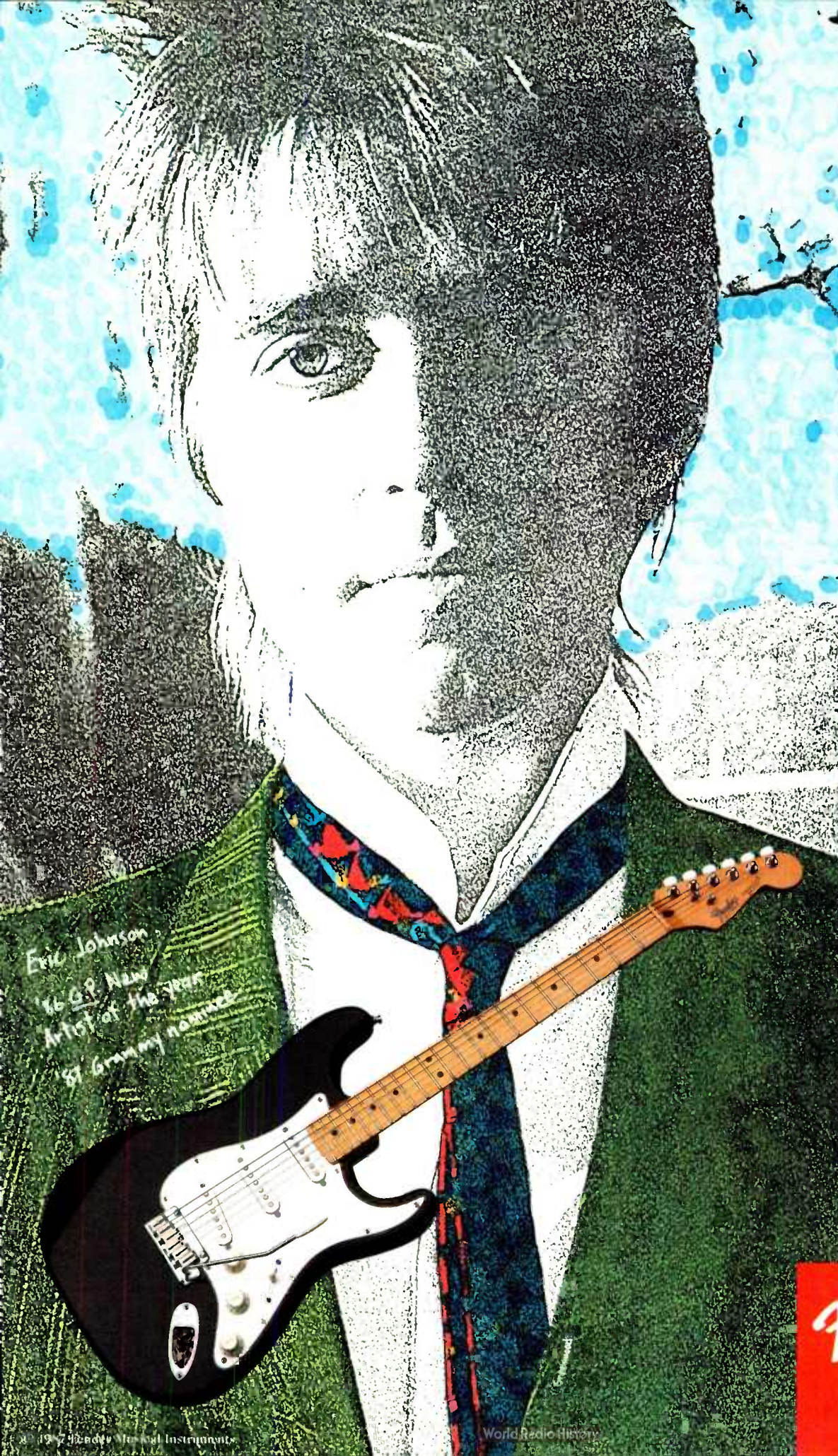
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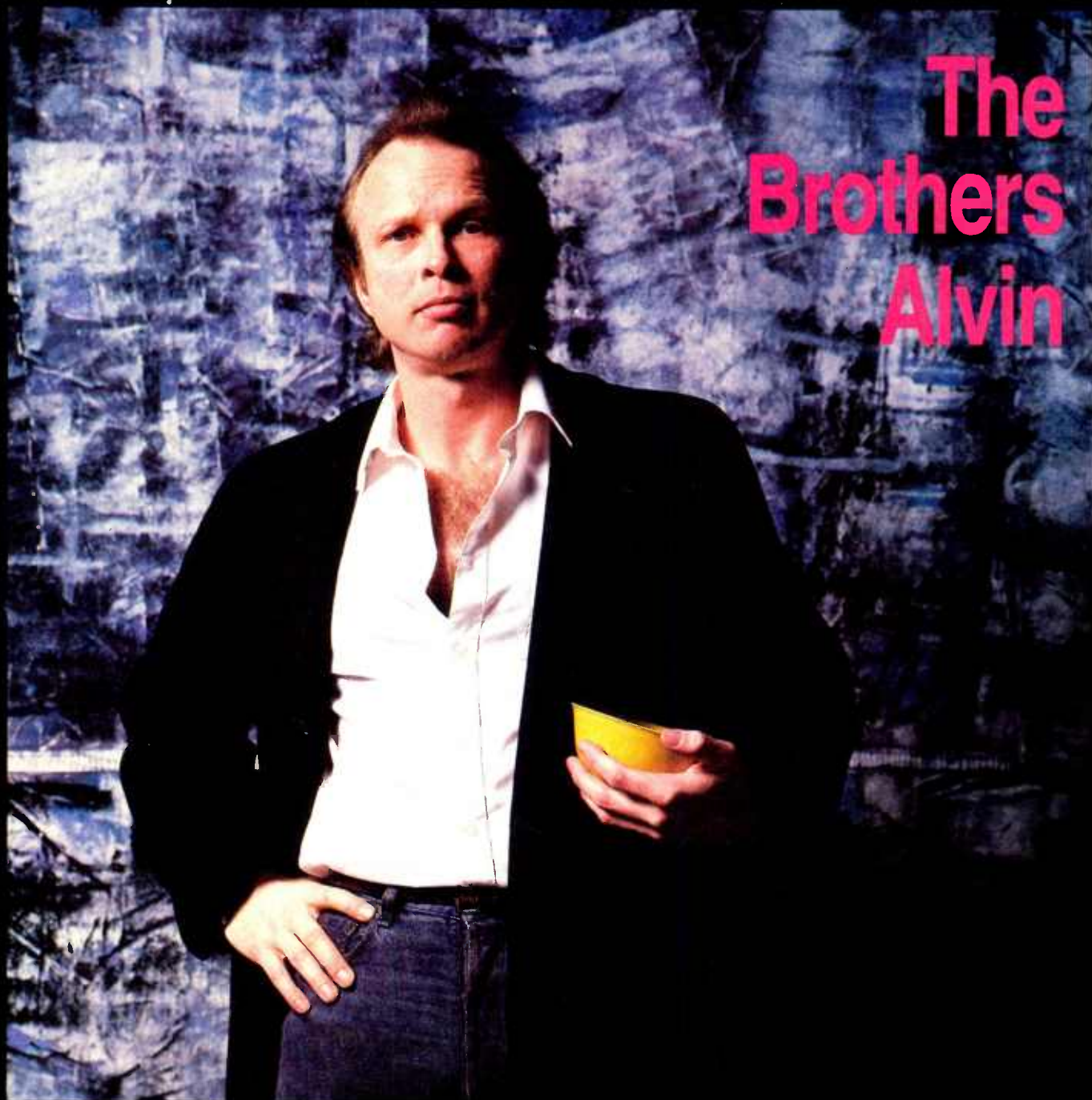
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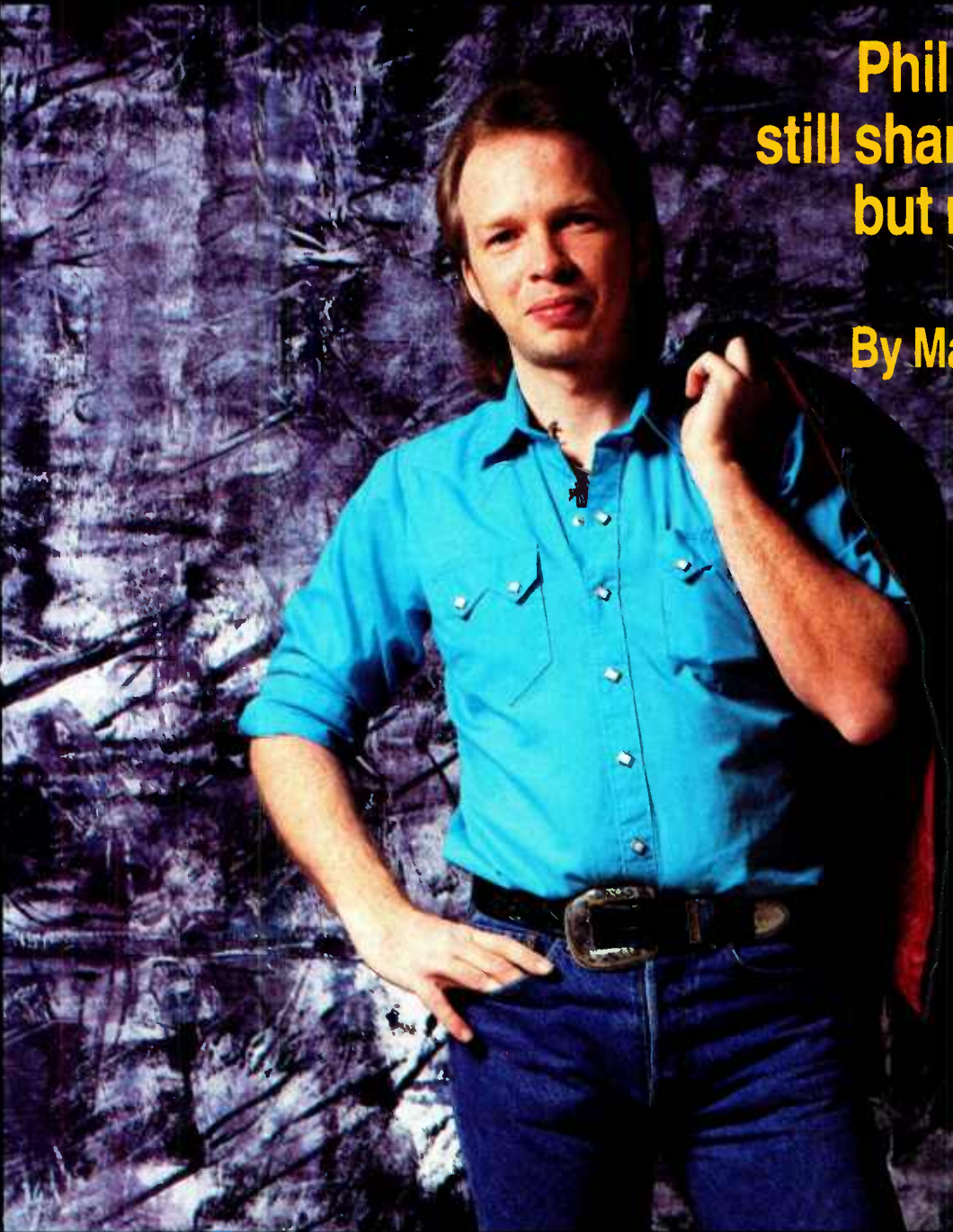
There must be a million guitar players in this land who dream that one day they'll play in a great rock band. A year ago, Dave Alvin was playing in two. "It lasted about three months," he recalls, "and it was killing me. But it was also one of the happiest times in my life. I'd walk around saying, 'Hey, I'm playing in two of the best bands in the world—two!'"

Those bands, X and the Blasters, are still around, but Dave Alvin is no longer part of either one. He left the Blasters last May and X last month; in neither case was the split entirely amicable. But as Alvin points

out, "When I left X they still had a songwriter and they still had a lead guitarist. When I left the Blasters they didn't have either."

You might assume that caused some consternation for the other Blasters, notably Phil Alvin—Dave's older brother and the leader of that band. "But the only thing that bothered me," Phil Alvin declares, "is that everyone else in the world seemed to know before I did. It was like getting left by your wife."

Phil says that with a laugh, for a lot has happened in a year. There was the release of his critically



Phil and Dave still share parents but not bands

By Mark Rowland

FUJI-RDP

acclaimed solo album, *Unsung Stories*,” Dave’s replacement by guitarist Hollywood Fats, and then Fats’ sudden death by heart attack at age thirty-two. There was the formation of Dave Alvin & the Allnighters, intended as a songwriting outlet for its leader, but whose emotional pull—and a major-label deal—eventually frayed Dave’s ties with X. Concurrent was Phil’s own determination to scale back his musical career after several years of seemingly endless touring, so that this great modern blues singer could pursue his true love: theoretical mathematics. Somewhere along

the line, Dave became a singer and Phil a songwriter.

But if you’re expecting a story about estrangement and reconciliation, Phil suggests you look elsewhere. “To reconcile means we weren’t conciliated,” he points out. “And Dave and I have never been on terms other than the ones we’ve been on all our lives; we’re *brothers*. I love my brother, always have—when he quit the band and didn’t tell me, or when I called him

Photographs by Chris Cuffaro/Visages

after Fats died and said, 'I'm over a barrel, will you help me?' and he did.

"We could start yelling at each other any minute," he admits. "There's a lot less yelling going on right now—and a lot less intersection for conflict. We don't share the same living-room anymore; we don't share the same band anymore. When we do intersect, there will be yellin', no doubt about it," he grins. "But right now the jokes are flying pretty freely at the flophouse."

Which doesn't keep Phil from getting the last laugh over his sibling's predilection for playing musical chairs. "Hey, I'm an innocent there," he cracks. "I've known since I was fifteen that you play in *one* band."

Phil Alvin, thirty-four, lives in Long Beach, a pretty coast city that resembles what everyone wishes Los Angeles still looked like. Dave, thirty-one, lives in Hollywood, which spawns fantasy images of what Los Angeles should be like. About halfway between these locales the Imperial Highway cuts through Downey and Bell, an industrial expanse of chop shops, warehouses and taco stands. This is what Los Angeles is really like.

The Alvins grew up here. Appropriately for such earnest exemplars of the blues, they retain a strong affection for those roots. If Dave's stuck on an idea for a song, he likes to "get in my car and drive around an old neighborhood for inspiration." And in a city where early condominiums qualify as historical landmarks, Phil boasts genuine perspective: "Los Angeles County had maybe 100,000 people in 1910, and my grandmother was one of them. There was a basin between the two

rivers, the San Gabriel and the Los Angeles, where you could grow food. The Valley was where the bandits lived, 'cause it was a desert, which you can learn there every summer. Hollywood was where the train stopped. That's why D.W. Griffith got off: There was no reason to go any farther."

The political implications of the waves of emigration to Los Angeles—fed by the depression of the 30s and then fueled quite literally by the automotive boom and attendant suburban dreams of the 50s—weren't lost on the Alvins; their father was a labor organizer. But like silt sifting to a fertile delta, the exodus also brought in bluesmen from Chicago, R&B horn players from New Orleans and jump band sessioneers from Kansas City. They turned Los Angeles into a mecca for traditional American music, at least if you knew where to look. "It was cheaper than New York, nicer to sleep outside, more work in the clubs," Phil explains. "Traditions were allowed to mature. In New York you have to be ready with a plan. Here things could grow at their own rate."

Phil began singing in the school choir in fifth grade, "so I always knew I could sing. I imitated singers, and I was taken with black music—and still am—so that's what I'd imitate, without placing the context. But by the time I was fifteen I was hanging out with Big Joe Turner. By the time I was twenty..."

That respect for oral tradition thematically binds Phil Alvin's *Un'Sung Stories* album, linking such disparate characters as Sun Ra, Cab Calloway and Petie Wheatstraw.

"Now every fifteen-year-old kid in high school knows who Charlie Parker is," Phil observes. "But that wasn't true when I went to high school. Actually, there were five of us," he laughs. "And I told the other four."

The circle of initiates included future Blasters John Bazz and, of course, Dave. But their entree into the world of blues giants like Turner, T-Bone Walker and Sonny Terry occurred, Phil admits, quite by accident. "I was maybe fourteen. We were already playing dances in Downey—John Bazz was the drummer—and one day we ran into this guy who suggested we go hear Big Joe Turner at the York Club in L.A. (I was always big and bald, so you couldn't tell how old we were.) That night we met Lee Allen, who was backing up the band. After Joe sang he came over and took us to a corner of the club and started talking with us, drinking and telling us stuff about the blues and Kansas City and 'Pretty Boy Floyd.' Then I went up on stage and sang 'Wee Wee Baby Blues'—right in front of him!" Phil shakes his head in embarrassment. "To this day I can't believe how audacious that was."

Mary Franklin, who was Lee Allen's best girl, became our manager. Every Tuesday and Thursday we'd drive to her place in Watts, 51st Street and Vermont. In the back of the house lived Marcus Johnson, a great musician who could do anything; he'd played sax and bass on a lot of Jimmy Reed and Little Walter records. One of the most intelligent people I ever met—a pristine man. He played every one of our instruments, showed us how to play Jimmy Reed. Marcus would yell at you: 'Is that what you do? 'Cuz that's not what you did last week. Well, why do I even bother to come and teach you?!' And it made us learn how to play. He lives in Chicago now. The first Blasters record was dedicated to him.

"By the time I was seventeen, though, my singing was getting pretty affected. I had what I call the 'oh yeah' wrecks—putting in that Joe Turner phrase everywhere. Dave Carroll helped me filter that out by the time I was about twenty. I'm eternally indebted to him for that. But I also sang like Hank Williams and Carl Perkins. Big Bill Broonzy was an early influence; I think I sound like him now. I always yodeled. But I



Dave Alvin during abbreviated X stint



Remaining Blasters Bill Bateman, John Bazz & Phil

needed more confidence about what I did.

"Sonny Terry taught me to play harmonica. My mother used to drive me to the Lido Hotel—I mean, I was actively seeking those roots. After doing that for a while it was very difficult for me to go back to school and get my degree. It was very difficult for me to do anything at all.

"I was very protective of David. He was always interested in music, collected records, read all the magazines—of which I cared nothing. I was in bands, Dave wasn't. I associate David with great songwriting. Guitar? I can do that. But I was very proud of him, this thirteen-year-old kid who could sit with you and talk about John Coltrane, you know?

"My sister and I had started by playing the accordion, and then David started playing the flute. He became very good, knew all the fingerings. Lee Allen was ready to give him saxophone lessons. I remember taking David to this jazz festival in Monterey Park. Louis Jordan was there. John Bazz was drumming, Dave Carroll was singing, Gary Massi was on guitar and Dave played flute. Then we went to this bar with Joe Turner and Lowell Fulson, and Dave played flute there. Everyone loved him. I was so proud.

"But see, maybe that's not so good, to have this big brother always acting proud of you. Maybe that has something to do with what's been happening. I have no perspective about that."

The reason I started writing for the Blasters is actually pretty silly," Dave Alvin says. "When we were trying to get a deal our manager said, 'You've got to have original

songs.' So that night we had a band meeting, and agreed, 'Okay, in three days everybody will bring in a couple of songs. I brought in three, and nobody else brought in any. So after that I kind of selfishly declared, 'Well, a band's gotta have one voice, and I'm gonna be that voice.'"

It turned out to be a propitious decision. You can rhapsodize about the intensity of Phil's singing, the R&B panache of Lee Allen, the boogie-woogie bounce of pianist Gene Taylor, or the Blasters' crack rhythm section of drummer Bill Bateman and bassist John Bazz; there's plenty to rhapsodize about. But it's doubtful the Blasters would be recognized as a world-class band without the framework provided by Dave Alvin's songs.

And yet Dave's declaration doesn't ring true. He was not the voice of the Blasters. The band was Phil's idea, and their sound—confident, intense, cheerful and tough-skinned—reflects its leader's extroverted personality. Dave, considerably more reflective and self-conscious, fit the band the way a brilliant lieutenant might suit a general. But carrying out his duty entailed certain compromises.

"It's like being asked to write for *National Geographic*," David says. "You have to fit the format. There is spontaneity with the Blasters, but you're working in a very strict poetic form. You can bend and play inside the rules, but you can't step out. After a while we were moving in different directions. Phil is a traditionalist, that's what he wants. But I've always liked pop music, and I wanted to push the envelope a little. John and Bill were just caught in the middle.

"Writing hooks was real hard," Dave goes on. "Phil doesn't like to repeat things a lot. That comes out of the blues tradition. It's the emotion of the performance as opposed to the pop quality—which I liked. But it became frustrating when the record company would say, 'We need a song that's going to fit on the radio and you don't have any hooks.'"

For seven years and three albums, the Blasters found common ground. There were payoffs: wonderful songs from "Marie Marie" to "Dark Night" to "Long White Cadillac"; performances that secured the band's reputation as among the most exciting in the country; the satisfaction of helping resurrect what Phil calls "American music." By their third album, *Hard Line*, there was evidence that Phil was becoming more flexible as well—"only because we had a gun to his head," Dave says. An additional frustration was Phil's reluctance to



One from column B: Billy Zoom (left) & Hollywood Fats

sing songs that evidenced personal weakness or vulnerability.

"I always wanted to sing my own songs," Dave reveals, "but with the Blasters, because my brother is such a great singer, that seemed kind of stupid. So I'd write songs where there were shared feelings between us. Finally I'd run out of those kind of songs. I had to write about what was mine."

Dave cautiously began to explore other possibilities. He'd become friends with John Doe and Exene Cervenka of X; their shared affection for country music took expression in an informal acoustic band called the Knitters. In late 1985 guitarist Billy Zoom left X, and Doe started to think about reshaping the band's sound. He felt personally and musically compatible with Alvin and Lone Justice guitarist Tony Gilkyson. Why not bring both on board?

"We'd felt restricted by Billy in minor ways," Doe explains, "and Dave was feeling constricted in the Blasters. So we gave him a free hand, hoping that together we could redefine what X would become, using two guitarists."

Dave was ready. Joining a band with two resident songwriters meant freedom to write without the pressure of producing on demand. The chance to hone his guitar work by playing with the mercurial Gilkyson was another incentive. Finally, there was the concept of X itself, as committed to exploring pop's frontier as the Blasters were to refining its traditions.

"Going from the Blasters to X," Dave says, "was like going from Count Basie to Ornette Coleman." He found the release euphoric. "There was a sense that anything could happen. It was a very liberating experience."

But as time went on, that freedom seemed less expansive. "I never felt like my opinion was unwanted or invalid," Dave says. "And the new X record doesn't sound like any other X record. What Tony and I brought is evident. But let's face it, X is what John and Exene made. And in concert, on a lot of songs I had to play what Billy Zoom had played."

"I started missing the confines of the Blasters," he admits, "because I think I write better that way. Some of the songs on the X album—I don't think I could write like that, it's like going off the deep end. I tried writing songs with lots of chords, but my forte is really between three and six."

Dave's defection from the Blasters was also crimping Phil's career—in math. "I've been working on mathema-

tics since I was twelve," Phil explains, "just about the same time I started with music. And I consider myself a mathematician first. Music is what I do for release. My original design was that Dave would go on with the Blasters while I went back to school. I started the Blasters when I was twenty-six and figured I'd quit at thirty to get my degree. I certainly didn't expect anything like this to get going. I had no idea how the record business worked, and I didn't care."

"Then it started taking off. When Dave quit, all I could say was, 'Hey, why don't you just *take* this thing?' Because I was never trying to breed myself as a musician. That's why I always refused to sing or play on other people's records. Even the solo album was done with Dave's prodding. The problem is that if you get to a certain point you seem to generate money, and then if you don't go on the road you go broke. So it's pretty hard to do these two things together."

ALLNIGHT BLASTING EQUIPMENT

On the road Dave Alvin plays one of two Fender Strats—a '63 or '64, with D'Addario strings through 300-watt Randall amps. Effects include Korg digital delay, chorus and sustain. Bassist Gil T plays a Fender Precision bass with Acoustic head and bottom. On steel guitar Gregg Leisz favors a 30s Rickenbacker Flying Pan lap steel tuned to an open D with an E in the low string. He also employs a couple of Emmons pedal steels. Other axes include a '64 Strat and Rickenbacker 360 12-string electric guitar, with Ernie Ball strings. Amps include a convertible Seymour Duncan 100-watt and two blackfaced Fender Twin Reverbs.

John "Juke" Logan is best known for his harmonica; he played the parts of the elderly blues "legend" in the film *Crossroads*. His harp of choice is a Hohner played through a Shure SM-58 mike or a Static JTT 30 Bullet mike. On keyboards he loves the Korg CX3 "for that Hammond organ sound." Amps include a white Fender Super amp and a Super Reverb. Effects include an Ibanez analog delay for the harmonica, and a DOD pre-amp pedal "for really nasty organ stuff." Jerry Angel plays Yamaha, Sonor and Pearl drums with Sabian cymbals.

For the Blasters, Bill Bateman plays "American" drums—Ludwig, Gretsch, Slingerland—and Zildjian cymbals. John Bazz plays a Fender Precision bass and a Randall RB 500 through Altec speakers. Phil Alvin plays a Gibson ES-225 through a Randall 212 amp. Lee Allen plays Selmer saxophones.

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T H E . W O R L D

Wasn't it George Jones who said, 'Who do I pay to get out of this business?'"

Instead of bailing, Phil brought in Michael Mann, a.k.a. Hollywood Fats, whose reputation in blues circles matched his gargantuan physical presence. A longtime friend and symbiotic talent, Fats stepped into the breach with astonishing ease, lending the Blasters a certain swing to complement their explosive power. Following a triumphant debut at the Palace in Hollywood, the band was about to tour Texas and Louisiana when Fats suddenly died.

"I was sitting around with Bill [Bateman] when the phone rang," Dave recalls. "We heard that Fats was in the hospital. By the time we found out which hospital, we discovered he'd died even before he got there. We all knew about his weight and the way he lived it could happen at any time. About an hour later Phil called me saying, 'We've got four or five dates in the South and what can we do?' I was really the only guy who could walk in and play it."

"Fats was a great loss to the Blasters and to the world," Phil says with noticeable emotion. "I feel guilty even answer-

ing questions about him, maybe because if Fats had died outside the band no one would have reported it. Maybe that's what bothers me. But musicians knew. Billy Gibbons still would have called. B.B. King would have called. It's just a shame the guy wasn't on more records. That's what I really wanted to do. The guy was so good he couldn't help make some noise."

Following the Southern swing, Dave stuck with the band for a tour of Europe. The temporary reunion "pointed up the weirdness" of his position. "Here I'd left a band I was part of for a quick tour with a band that was playing all my songs. By the time we got back from Europe, it hit me that I really should be doing my own stuff. I'd missed the guys—but what I really missed were my songs."

A few months earlier Dave had formed the Allnighters; the familiar personnel—including Gilkyson and Bateman—virtually assured its status as a side project on the order of the Knitters. Now he assembled a quintet with less divided loyalties, including drummer Jerry Angel, guitarist Gregg Leisz, bassist Gil T and John "Juke" Logan on keyboards and

harmonica. England's Demon Records offered a contract for an Allnighters album; Columbia expressed interest in U.S. distribution. Before he knew it, Dave Alvin had sidled up to another career crossroads.

"I had been planning to be in X for a while," he says. "If I'd done an album of blues or surf music on my own, that would be one thing. Originally that's how I thought of my album: something for fun. But I couldn't go into Demon or Columbia and say, 'Well, this is just a silly, one-off kind of thing.' Because maybe this is it, this could be my shot. These things just don't come around a lot."

"When it came time either to stay with X or tell Columbia 'no,' I realized I'd never be happy unless I went out on my own. And fall on my face," he laughs. "Or grow up, as they say."

X, with tours already in place for an upcoming album, found Alvin's leave-taking obviously less than welcome. John Doe says the band will remain a quartet for the present but won't rule out a replacement. "Tony's a real competent guitarist," he points out evenly. "He's sad that Dave left, but also feels it may

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give him more room."

But when asked if he'd worried about Alvin leaving because he might have felt as constricted in X as in the Blasters, Doe responds sharply. "That's crass. You mean did I think he was going to fuck us over like he fucked the Blasters?"

He sounds a little upset.

"Upset? No, I was disappointed," Doe answers quietly. "I felt we were achieving a lot. But I think he's being true to himself by trying to define himself through his own music," he adds graciously, "rather than coming through another band."

To that end, Dave Alvin's not taking any chances. The Allnighters' debut LP includes a different version of "Fourth Of July" than what will also appear on the X LP, plus reworkings of three classic Blasters tunes: "Jubilee Train," "Long White Cadillac" and a countrified "Border Radio" ("I always heard that one as a Conway and Loretta song"). The album also includes two ballads ("Brother" and "Every Night About This Time") that suggest Alvin's voice may eventually prove as expressive as his songwriting.

"Well, I'm really more a songwriter

than a singer," Dave avers, "so I have to look back at other people and see how they do it. It always cracked me up the way Dylan would sing; I probably modeled myself after that. When I started playing guitar, if people insulted me I wouldn't take it seriously. My attitude was, 'I'm not a guitar player.' Now I am, but I take that attitude about singing."

"I'm starting to learn my limitations and how to use them. I was taking voice lessons for a while last fall, and then one night I ran into my brother at a Jerry Lee Lewis/Fats Domino concert. We hadn't talked in a long time, and he gave me some great advice. He said don't take lessons, just sing!"

Right now Dave Alvin is trying to write enough songs to fill a second Allnighters record before the band begins to tour. "A lot of country singers who tour a lot, like Willie Nelson, started as writers but they don't do it anymore, and I can see why. But that's what I am primarily, a songwriter, so I have to protect that. I'd like to write some songs for the next Blasters album, if they'll let me."

"Because I'm not a stranger. I still feel like I am a Blaster."

While Dave Alvin gears up for a shot of pop stardom, Phil Alvin is winding down. He attends math class three mornings a week at California State University at Long Beach—no conflict with his music career, he says, since "nobody in the record business does any work before one o'clock anyway." He's genuinely juiced studying artificial intelligence, and tickled to be back in academia. "I just took my first test today, and I loved it," he confesses with glee. "Working against the clock—it's a whole different pace. The whole left side of my body is moving again, I don't feel so uptight."

"What's nice about music and math for me," he explains, "is that math deals with patterns and ideas which are quite intangible, not seen or felt. In music there's a physical performance involved, and that's the part I need. My emotions are totally wrapped up in math, but there's no release for me. For music, my emotions are open and it flows out."

These days Phil calls himself "a mathematician who plays music." That means he's in no hurry to crank up the

continued on page 129

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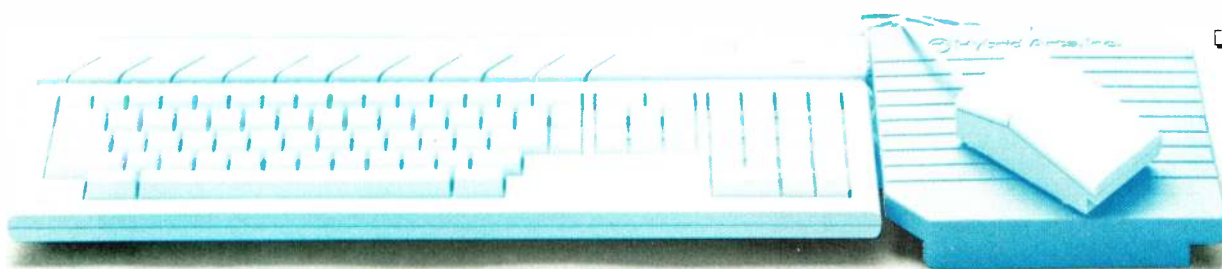
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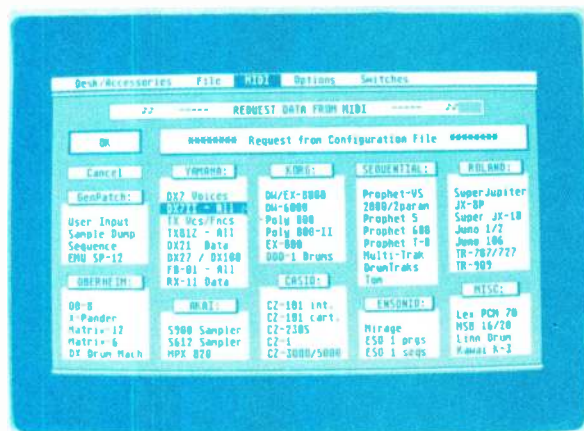
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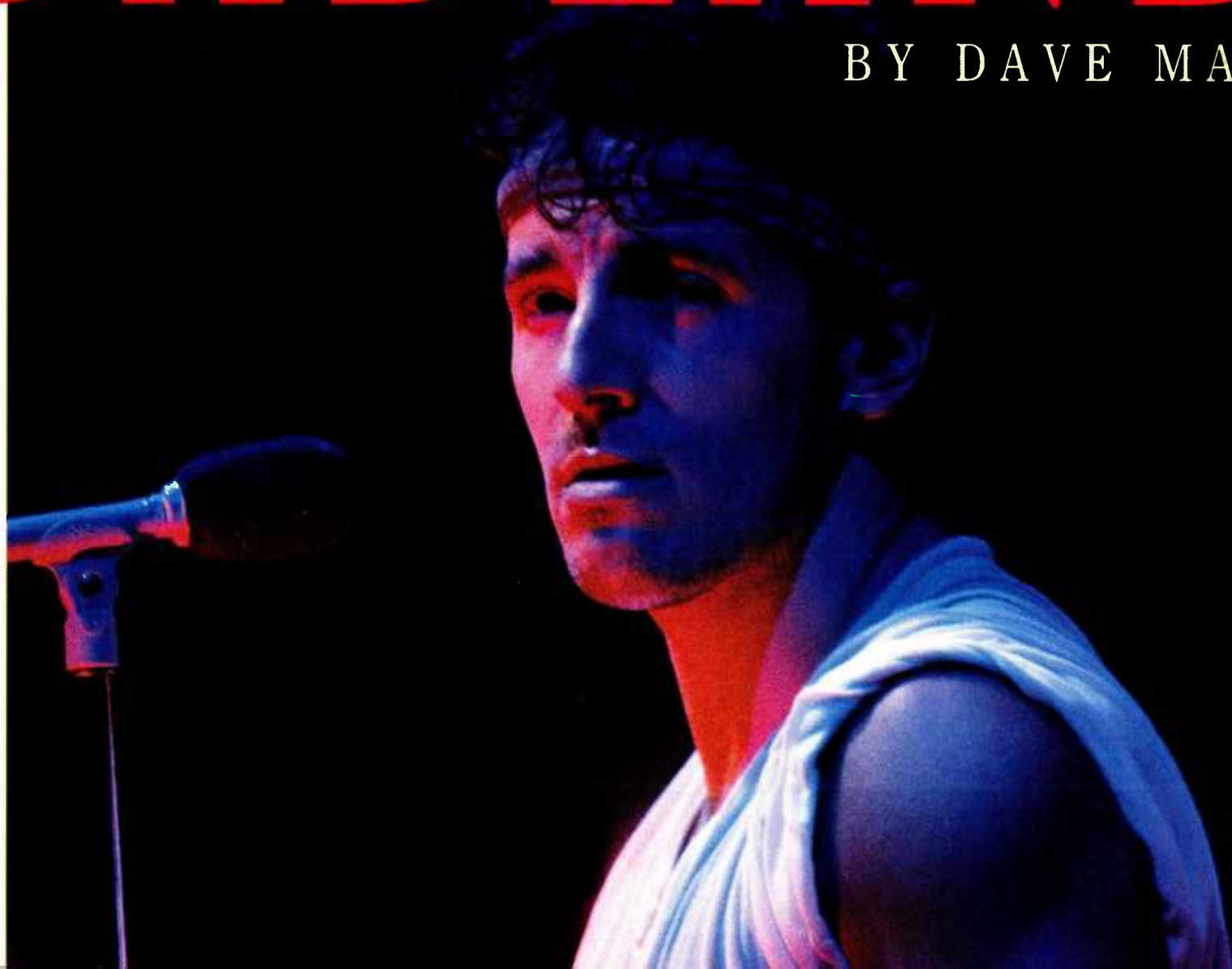
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BADLANDS

BY DAVE MARSH



Glory Days: Bruce Springsteen in the 1980s (*Pantheon*) is a special rock 'n' roll biography. Dave Marsh had exclusive access to Springsteen and those around him during the period when Bruce was weighing the pros and cons of taking the final steps toward the superstardom he embraced with *Born In The U.S.A.* This, the first of two Musician excerpts, covers Springsteen's dark night of the soul—the period of intense professional and personal reassessment that followed the completion of his Nebraska album—and almost resulted in his turning away from rock 'n' roll. It's a story that's never before been told, indeed has barely been hinted at in all that has been written about Springsteen in the last five years. This is the story of Bruce's days in the desert, when he saw the rock crown about to be offered and wasn't sure he wanted it: not the glory or the responsibility. Here Springsteen, still filled with the isolated spirit of Nebraska, has recorded "Glory Days," "Born In The U.S.A.," and a number of songs for a rock album, only to find his heart again wandering away from rock 'n' roll...



NEAL PRESTON/CAMERA 5

In early 1983 the plan was for Bruce to come to California and spend several weeks mixing rock 'n' roll material with Chuck Plotkin. At the same time, Bruce arranged for Toby Scott to install a more elaborate twenty-four-track home studio at his Los Angeles house. But it wasn't quite that easy to change gears from the gloomy and insulated world of *Nebraska* to the more open and friendly space of *Born In The U.S.A.*

For one thing, Springsteen's tightly managed world was in turmoil. Bruce was able to retain such complete command of his work in part because the community within which he made music had for years been stable and protective. There had not been a major change in the band or management in more than five years. Now Steve Van Zandt

was off working on his solo project, preparing to tour and planning his wedding for New Year's Eve, in the process completely absenting himself from the planned mixing sessions. Over Labor Day weekend, his manager Jon Landau was married to former *Rolling Stone* editor Barbara Downey, and he, too, stayed behind in New York. Plotkin had been separated from his wife and son in Los Angeles for months; he had some serious catching up to do. Bruce had broken up with Joyce Hyser, his girlfriend since 1978, soon after the *River* tour ended, and he'd been mostly on his own since then. Aside from Steve, he socialized with the band infrequently, and he didn't have the circle of musician cronies common to most other rock stars. He was back to being a full-time loner.

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"I started in '64... where I was at that moment was the result of thousands of decisions I'd made daily since I was fifteen... My feeling was that I'd created an opportunity for myself and why cross the desert and not climb the mountain?"

Single-mindedness had made Bruce Springsteen rich and famous, an idol to millions, virtually King of Rock 'n' Roll. But just as his music had matured, so had he, and now the loner was beginning to experience his condition in a different way—as nothing more than loneliness.

"That whole *Nebraska* album was just that isolation thing and what it does to you," Bruce said many months after the ordeal was over. "The record was basically about people being isolated from their jobs, from their friends, from their families, their fathers, their mothers—just not feeling connected to anything that's going on—your government. And when that happens, there's just a whole breakdown. When you lose that sense of community, there's some spiritual breakdown that occurs. And when that occurs, you just get shot off somewhere where nothing seems to matter."

It would have been difficult to deny that there was a more intimate connection. Bruce didn't even try, although he was never very forthcoming about how deep and immediate his own sense of emptiness ran and how difficult it proved to dispel. "The *Nebraska* record sounds a lot like me, in the sense of the feeling," he said. "I don't mean in the particular details of the stories, but the emotional feeling feels a lot like my childhood felt to me, a lot of the people I grew up with, the tone.... a story is only good if it's your story in some fashion. Even *Nebraska*, which is extreme emotionally, the thing that makes it real is knowing what that feels like. In a funny way, I feel it's my most personal album."

Wrapped up in his own thoughts, Springsteen thought to clear his head by doing what he always did: Get out and drive. Rather than flying to Los Angeles, he traveled by car, accompanied by his friend Matty DeLea, proprietor of a North Jersey motorcycle shop. They took their time with the trip, lingering in the vast empty American landscape Bruce loved. "And when we got to my house in Los Angeles," Bruce remembered, "I wanted to get right back in the car and keep on going. I couldn't even sit down."

It seemed imperative to keep moving, to try to outrace whatever demons *Nebraska* had dredged up. But as Bruce traveled through the middle American badlands, he felt cut off from real life, so lonesome he could cry.

Springsteen was certainly a person of black moods, but he had never encountered a cloud that rocking out couldn't disperse. Now he'd run into a darkness that floated in off the music itself. A complicated network of forces were at work—his own loner's lifestyle in conjunction with his remarkable antennae for touching the mood of his generation, coupled with the wrenching emotions of making the transition between *Nebraska*'s somber music and the ecstatic rock 'n' roll represented by "Born In The U.S.A." "I thought, 'This can't be happening to me. I'm the guy with the guitar,'" Bruce recalled, as if that should have rendered him immune to the consequences of dwelling upon cosmic questions.

As far as he could tell, music had always given him a kind of immunity from despair. The guitar had been an effective

weapon in forging a better world for Springsteen, and he continually celebrated this. It was hard for him to imagine that it had also served as a protective shield. In truth, Bruce exercised such remarkable control over his work environment not only to enhance the quality of the music he created but also because he wasn't especially eager to be reminded of how many aspects of life—especially home and family, themes central to his work—he had closed off. As long as Bruce believed that he'd found a meaningful pattern to his existence, the trade-off was workable and beneficial. But the moment doubt crept in, the edifice crumbled and, with it, his remarkable assurance about how the world worked.

As a kid, he'd been smart enough to see that the order life had was generally imposed on it, and he'd been strong enough as an adult to work through his vision. But at the bottom of the questions he was asking—about what people believed and why and what happened to those who didn't believe at all—was a sense of the underlying fraud of all order, the undeniable fact that the universe contained as much randomness as structure.

The central tenet of everything Springsteen had ever done was hope. Bruce always had doubts that what worked for him would work for everyone else—he knew how extraordinary his own story was. But he believed in the validity of effort. Now, though, the rituals that made sense of his life had stopped working even for him. Things were spinning out of control.

"I guess for the *Born To Run* record I kind of established a certain type of optimism. After that I felt I had to test those things to see what they were worth. I guess in a funny way I began to do that test after *Born To Run* and through *Nebraska*. Those records were kind of my reaction, not necessarily to my success, but to what I was singing and writing about and what I was feeling—what I felt the role of the musician should be, what an artist should be. The one thing I did feel after *Born To Run* was a real sense of responsibility to what I was singing and to the audience. I didn't have an audience before that, not much of one. I was concerned with living up to that responsibility. So I just dove into it. I decided to look around. I decided to move into the darkness and look around and write about what I knew and what I saw and what I was feeling. I was trying to find something to hold onto that doesn't disappear out from under you. Eventually it led up to *Nebraska*, which was a record about the basic things that keep people functioning in society, in a community, or in their families or in their jobs. The idea is that they all break down. They fail. The record was a spiritual crisis—families fail, your job fails, and then you're gone, you're lost, you don't have any connection to anything. Everything just goes out the window.

"I was interested in finding out what happens then—what do my characters do, what do I do?" In the opening months of 1983, the question was not altogether rhetorical.

In a way, the problem wasn't even that grandiose. Maybe it was just the natural response of a guy in his thirties watching all his friends settle down into domestic routines and feeling himself odd man out. At some point, after all, life as a loner mu-

tates into a life that's just lonely. At thirty-two, Bruce Springsteen seemed to have reached that point. He felt more than ever connected to the image of John Wayne at the end of *The Searchers*, turning away from the site of domesticity and returning to the bitter wilderness.

What he didn't do about it was follow his impulse to jump in the car and drive back east as soon as he'd hit L.A. Instead, he thought for hours about what had happened and began an even more basic questioning of his beliefs and motivations.

"It was very strange, because I felt that I'd done some of my best writing, and creatively I felt real vital. But maybe the thing that I was looking for from music, rock 'n' roll...in some fashion it was either letting me down or it wasn't there, or I was demanding too much or...or... Something was wrong; something was dramatically wrong.

"I think in the end, it was a real liberating experience. 'Cause I said, 'Whoa, I've made a big mistake here.' I always had the idea that rock 'n' roll will *save* you. It will do this, it will do that. Well, it won't. Not in and of itself it won't. It's not gonna. It's not gonna. That's all there is to it. It can't do it for me.

"It doesn't make anything less of it. It's just reality. I had a new sense of realness. And for the first time, I had maybe a sense of limitation, and it was a healthy sense of limitation. I know I walked on with a lot of different expectations after that moment. It did not in any way affect my devotion to my job or my work or what I wanted to do with it. But it may have been something that was as simple as, 'Gee, there's more to life than this.' It's just cliché, but that, in a funny sort of way, is it. Knowing that there are things I need that can only be provided by

people. By contact. By...women. By...friends. You can't be the guy just blowin' the horn on the mountain."

But before Springsteen reached that realization, he needed more time alone, time in which he threw himself back in his work. But not the work of completing the rock 'n' roll album that "Born In The U.S.A." had begun. He worked by himself in his Los Angeles home studio, creating a series of songs descended from *Nebraska*.

It wasn't that he necessarily wanted to linger in that gloomy world. It was more that he couldn't escape it until it was through with him. Meantime, the joy of rock 'n' roll belonged to a separate universe, one in which Bruce Springsteen had temporarily lost interest.

"Whenever you start another record, you start from the point you stopped at," he said. "And when I stopped the *Nebraska* record, I just continued in my garage, in Los Angeles. I improved the recording facilities somewhat; I got an eight-track board. I drove across the country and I got to Los Angeles and I just set up shop in my garage and I just kept goin', you know. That's when I did 'Shut Out The Lights' and 'Bye Bye Johnny,' and I did a version of 'Follow That Dream' and I did a whole bunch of other things. So I just continued because I was excited about the fact that I felt the *Nebraska* stuff was my most personal stuff."

For Bruce, *Nebraska* delivered the goods. "I enjoyed the record a lot, it was easy to make, for the most part; it was a real private kinda record, it was my most personal record, I didn't have to go to the studio to do it. I felt that the distance between me and the audience had been stripped, basically, to



Dying for some action: Hometown Bruce enjoys some anonymity.

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“A rock band is a public service situation. The people that I admired the most were people who did that...or made that attempt. They did not back down. Or turn away. They took it as far as they could take it. For better or for worse.”

its minimum. That the distance between the actual creation of the music and the audience had been stripped down about as close as you could conceivably get it. There was no production values in the way; there was no band; all of these things became non-issues.”

But of course, if the gulf you're trying to cross isn't just artistic but also personal—and in a broader way, social—things don't work out so neatly. “The other side of the coin was that the record seems accessible to me but it obviously wasn't as accessible as *Born In The U.S.A.* or *The River*, for that matter,” said Springsteen, looking back. “Maybe just because of its subject matter, that alone. Or maybe it came out at a time when you didn't hear a lot of anything like that on the radio.

“I had a kid come up to me after the record came out and tell me it was too mellow. It was a young girl and I understood what she was saying; what she meant was that it didn't have a lotta loud noises on it. You know, it didn't have drums and all that thing, and hey, she was sayin', that's what she likes, you know?” He laughed.

“I'm always somebody who has a lot of ambiguous feelings about, not necessarily what I want to do, but the style that I want to do it in. And the *Nebraska* album gave me a lot of privacy. I made the record, it came out, I got in the car, I drove across the country, I might have been recognized once someplace or somethin'. And I was really happy with the record, I really felt that it was my best record to that date as far as an entire album goes. I felt that it was my best writing, I felt that I was getting better as a writer. I was learning things. I was certainly taking a hard look at everything around me.”

So he stayed a while on his mountain, blowing his horn, making soft noises.

Bruce briefly worked with Chuck Plotkin on rock 'n' roll mixes, but his heart was elsewhere. The material everyone already thought of as the *Born In The U.S.A.* album just didn't seem urgent anymore. What held Bruce's attention was the new material he was writing, which sounded like a cross between *Nebraska*, sketchy rockabilly, and some of Neil Young's more melodic late-70s songs. As on *Nebraska*, Bruce built the songs around guitar and voice, but he fleshed them out with a LinnDrum machine and comparatively extensive guitar and voice overdubbing. The result was sketchy and moody. The songs included “Shut Out The Light”; “Sugarland,” a song about disenfranchised farmers (with very different music from the stage rendition); and Bruce's rewritten version of Elvis Presley's “Follow That Dream.”

As everyone soon realized, it was asking too much for Bruce to roll from one record right into another. As Jon Landau puts it, “Most artists who take their work very, very seriously are saying something to themselves, and they need to have time to just digest the experience. Having produced this record, whether it took two minutes or two years, Bruce basically seemed to be quite distracted right away. He was interested in working but not in any heavy goal-oriented fashion.” Wisely,

Landau and Plotkin pretty much left him alone.

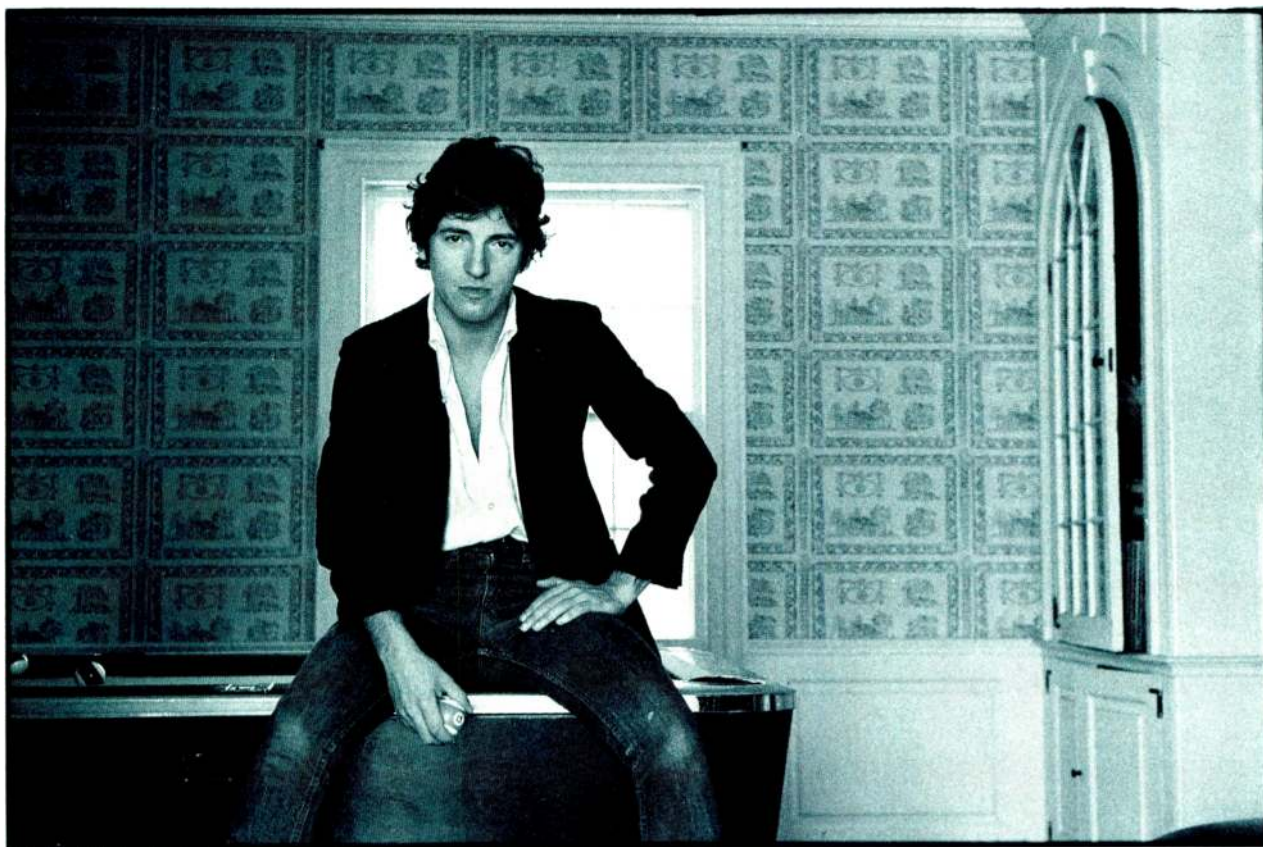
After the holidays, Bruce called Landau and asked him to come and listen to what he'd been up to. In early January, Landau flew to California, listened, liked a lot of what he heard, and realized they were back to square one: Bruce had composed another group of songs that didn't blend naturally with the *Born In The U.S.A.* rockers. Once again, he'd come up with material that was for the most part ill-suited to the E Street Band. Together, they sat down to assess the situation.

Landau and Springsteen's relationship has little in common with such storied pairings as Brian Epstein and the Beatles or Tom Parker and Elvis Presley. As Bruce puts it, “There's basically nothing ordinary about our relationship. I don't know of any other situation even remotely like it.”

Jon Landau has never been a typical manager—or even record producer—any more than Bruce has been a typical rock star. In the beginning, Landau wasn't especially interested in a career as a manager. Even after he proved successful in the job, and other artists frequently came to him, Bruce remained his only client. As Bruce said, “The whole thing really evolved out of a unique type of friendship. Jon just happens to be my manager because nobody was my manager and I need a manager; there was nobody better for the job than him, but our relationship is not based around him being my manager. It's just one of the things that he does for me, and he does it real well. Before he met me, he had never managed anybody but it kinda grew out of the need of that situation.”

Landau grew up in Brooklyn and the Boston suburbs. After attending Brandeis University, he played guitar and banjo in rock and bluegrass bands and worked in a Harvard Square record store, where he met Paul Williams, editor of *Crawdaddy!*, the first rock magazine, which his reviews of rock and soul albums immediately improved. In his early writing he emphasized his rhythm and blues taste above everything else, dwelling especially on the virtues of the records made by Stax/Volt in Memphis and by Motown. At a time when no other major critic paid anything close to sufficient attention to black rock, this made him stand out, particularly since his reviews were more likely to dwell on specifically musical—as opposed to social or lyrical—questions. Later, as editor of all *Rolling Stone* record reviews, a position of great authority in the pop world, Landau was also an early champion of the singer/songwriter movement. The catholicity of his taste was indicated by the first artists he produced. There was an unreleased session with the blues-based J. Geils Band, the proto-punk of the MC5, and the laid-back singer/songwriter stylizations of Livingston Taylor. Landau also served as *Rolling Stone*'s film critic for a time.

The intensity of their friendship stemmed from the very first time Landau saw Springsteen perform, in April 1974 in a tiny bar in Cambridge, Massachusetts. (Another show, about a month later, inspired the famous “rock 'n' roll future” column.) Their friendship rapidly blossomed through a series of hours-long phone calls between Boston and New Jersey, in which the



Darkness on the edge: Once Bruce got out there, he found himself all alone.

pair talked about everything from the nature of the art to the details of record production to the mysteries of Gene Pitney's hit singles. Its first fruit was the production of *Born To Run*.

But all of that is only the relatively public aspect of their story. In the end, there were deeper and less tangible bonds. When he met Bruce Springsteen, Landau was thinking about leaving *Rolling Stone* to become a full-time record producer. He certainly hadn't planned to limit his work to one artist; that was just how the situation developed. And he was willing to let it, because he had absolute faith in Bruce Springsteen's capabilities, not just as a rock star but as an artist.

"A lot of times he won't say anything," Bruce said. "He lets the thing raise itself, rather than letting his opinion or his taste or his own prejudices get in the way. And that creates a tremendous amount of trust in his opinion."

Landau was able to operate this way because he and Springsteen shared a taste for restraint, an aversion to making public relations gestures for their own sake and the desire to present Springsteen's music with as much dignity as they felt the best rock 'n' roll deserved. The same thing applied in private discussions. Consequently, when either was moved to make a stand about something, he spoke with cumulative force.

"The essential part of me and Jon's interaction is that either of us can argue intensely about this issue or that, but in the end the music does the talking," Bruce said. "And we argue until what's right reveals itself, whatever that may be and wherever it may come from. We don't argue until he wins or I win."

"We both have a dedication to the idea, and we're just a couple of guys trying to get to it. That's the essence of our pro-

cess. I don't have a dedication to my viewpoint on any particular issue, and I don't believe that he does, even though he has his arguing position that he feels is right and I have mine. And we'll go at it until what is right or what feels right reveals itself. And I don't know of any time that we haven't agreed on what that was. No one has ever said, 'Well, I think you're wrong, but okay.' That has never happened. It's always come to like, 'Well, all right. Yes,' or 'That seems like the right thing to do.' And I think that's because our dedication is to the idea.

"That's a real important thing about the way we work. And it keeps all the personal baloney that might normally come up in control. One of the things that keeps that under control is the trust we have in each other. From day one, when we first started to work together, I always felt Jon understood what I wanted to do and he was there to help me do that thing. It was as simple as that. He has always made me feel like he is there to help me do this thing that I wanted to do. Consequently, when we get into various different arguments over this song or that song or even if we get frustrated with each other, eventually we work our way through to the answer. And I think that's a real different thing and a real important thing."

Imperious as he, too, might have been when the chips were down, Springsteen had a musician's necessary knack for collaboration. (Songs may be composed in solitude, but they're played—and recorded—by groups.) He was able to grapple with and use the ideas of a diverse group of people, which is the only way he could ever have made coherent albums working with a trio of producers who had quite a bit less in common than Holland-Dozier-Holland.

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A manager's job is to rationalize art, translating abstractions into marketplace terms. A producer's task is similar. Often as not, Springsteen and Landau worked together in just that perspective: artist and translator. But when it came to specific pieces of music, they again violated the cliché. Often it was Jon who worked on instinct, fighting against Bruce's innate conservatism and caution, willing to let a piece that just rocked stand on its own. Bruce tended to be wary of what came too naturally. Landau struck everyone who met him as an extraordinarily controlled and rational person, but he loved wild music, from "Tutti Frutti" to "Kick Out The Jams." It was this one streak of recklessness that often proved most useful in making records and furthering Springsteen's career.

While making *Born In The U.S.A.*, this conflict centered around one song, "Cover Me." Landau says he knew the song belonged in the next (rock) album the moment he heard what was supposed to be nothing more than a tossed-off demo. Bruce was indifferent to the track from the start, often outright hostile to it. It struck him as too light, too pop, too obvious. These were among its virtues, Landau insisted, and anyway, none of that belied the intensity with which Bruce whipped home the crucial line: "Wrap your arms around me and cover me!" Although the song was closer to pop than rock—and in its rhythms closer to postdisco dance music than either—it had a stinging guitar solo. Landau loved its modern sheen; Bruce knew its value—he'd created it, after all—but he wasn't sure what it said about him. The more anachronistic shape of his soul and rockabilly-based tunes was secure and comforting. In all their discussions about the album, Landau kept dredging up "Cover Me" and Bruce kept kicking it back under the rug, radical manager against conservative artist.

When they got together in Los Angeles that January, Bruce wasn't really in a mood to take any decisive actions and Landau was shrewd and sensitive enough not to push too hard. "At the time I felt that maybe this [solo recording] is where the whole thing is going in some fashion," Bruce said. "Maybe the idea is gonna be to just keep the thing real stripped down right now, almost like a *John Wesley Harding* type of thing."

Bruce did have one song that he wanted to try cutting with the band, and in February he flew back to New York briefly and in a short session recorded "My Hometown" at the Hit Factory, the studio at which the rest of the album would be made. "My Hometown" had something in common with the squalid, somber worlds of the *Nebraska* characters, but it was almost quiescent in its portrait of an American worker who witnesses the flower and the rot of post-World War II prosperity.

Successful as that session was, Bruce still headed straight back to his Hollywood solitude, once more leaving manager, band and producers up in the air about his plans.

"I was living in L.A. and Jon was living in New York and I'm not a big person on the telephone so our communication wasn't as steady as it might be during the course of making a record," Bruce remembered. "Really, at the time we weren't consciously making a record. The *Nebraska* record had just come out and we had the bunch of cuts from the studio *Nebraska* sessions. It was just sittin' there, waiting to be mixed, because nothing else ever really happened on it again. We did that in two weeks, the same two weeks we spent tryin' to record some new *Nebraska* stuff."

It seemed to everybody that the problem was isolation, lack of contact and interaction. Bruce put it down to "my new method, which was initially begun for purely economic purposes. What do I spend all the money in the studio on? Writing

the songs. I go in and record a hundred songs; some of 'em I finish, some of 'em I don't. It's a waste of everybody's time and money. Let's not do that anymore. I'll do that at the house. Now that I've begun to do that at the house, there's also something else happening. Nobody's seeing anybody else. The band's not seeing me, I'm not seeing the band, I'm not seeing Jon, Jon's not seeing the band or me. And it's been quite a while."

A few weeks after Landau went west, CBS Records president Walter Yetnikoff made a trip to Los Angeles and visited Bruce. Springsteen and the colorful record chief got along well and they met for dinner and had a great time. But Bruce didn't play anything for Yetnikoff, or even talk about his music.

When Yetnikoff returned to New York, he phoned Landau and expressed his concern. ("He never mentioned it to me," said Bruce, "but I do believe that he was concerned about me making another record in my garage or in my bedroom.") Yetnikoff pointed out that although Springsteen was supposed to be working on his next album, that wasn't really possible, since



Young Bruce contemplating art and Gene Pitney.

his chief record producer and his band were a continent away.

Yetnikoff wasn't trying to pressure Springsteen, exactly. He didn't have much leverage, for one thing, since Bruce didn't need immediate transfusions of CBS cash. Anyway, it was inconceivable for him to make music under duress. What Yetnikoff provided was an outside viewpoint that forced Landau and then Springsteen to face what was actually going on.

Jon phoned Bruce and they had a long talk about what they were trying to do. They agreed that the goal was still to make another album and that whatever else Bruce may have been accomplishing in California, that wasn't happening. "We realized that the studio is important because one of the things that happens is that everybody sees each other," Bruce said. "We get together and the band plays and sometimes we get something and sometimes we don't, but we do have a feeling that everybody's chipping in and working on a project. There's a little sense of something going on."

"So we had gotten into a very isolated fashion of working. Which can appeal to me because I can be a very isolated per-

Springsteen was certainly a person of black moods, but he had never encountered a cloud that rocking out couldn't disperse... "I thought, 'This can't be happening to me. *I'm the guy with the guitar!*'"

son. So we had a discussion on the phone, I think, and it wasn't just through my contact with Jon, it might have been through my contact with some of the other band members. Where I kinda sensed them feeling, 'Gee, what's going on?'

"In our conversation, I believe that Jon did bring up that Walter had said how are we making a record if we're not seeing each other. And that was a good point, because a lotta things that happen between me and Jon come in the course of just a day when nothing's happening. You talk about something and it'll just go in and sit there and then a few months later I'll recognize some aspect of it in something I've written, that this had something to do with our discussion.

"We talked about this; we decided, that's right. Summer was coming up, I'd been in California quite a while. It seemed like it's time to get back, get in the studio, do it the old way. Get the band in, spend a little time in there. And that's what we did."

In early May, Bruce came home—by plane—and went back in the studio with the band.

Simply coming back home didn't end Bruce's turmoil. For one thing, his relationship with the band was still ambiguous. That was the chief reason Landau felt immediately making another *Nebraska*-style album could create serious problems. "To me, Bruce is the most unusual combination of talents that I know of, in terms of lyric-writing ability, music-writing ability, guitar-playing ability, arranging ability, band-leading ability, singing, everything," Landau said. "And when an artist has range, the most exciting thing is when you are doing all of the things that you know how to do, at the same time, at the peak of your ability. As I said to Bruce at the time, the problem with the *Nebraska* thing as a permanent approach or a main approach is that it is tremendous for what it is, but you have so many capabilities that are not utilized that it seems like it's less than you can be."

By making successive albums without the E Street Band, Bruce would seem to be signaling that he was no longer going to work with them. Furthermore, since he'd probably want to tour after the release of the next album, he would have the difficult task of presenting twenty new songs into which the group didn't fit. Another round of enforced idleness might break up the group—players as skilled as Roy Bittan weren't going to sit on their hands forever. In any event, Bruce would be sending a very confusing signal to everyone concerned.

Landau wasn't absolutely opposed to making such changes, but he worried that Bruce hadn't thought everything through. "I just wanted to make sure that, if we were gonna go in this direction, all of these things were thought about. If Bruce had considered them all and said, 'Nope, this is really right; my thing with the band has changed; maybe I'm not gonna use them so much; maybe I'll do a tour without the band....' If he'd been prepared to make all those decisions, then fine. But I wanted to make sure that he understood that those were the decisions he was possibly making."

Bruce didn't want the group to break up, but he wasn't ready

to get back into full-tilt rock 'n' roll, either. As a method of music-making, *Nebraska* struck him right then as more than satisfactory. "There's nothing more intimate than working with yourself," he said. "You're just working with your own thoughts and your own ideas. It's *not* something that you would want to do all the time, but at the time I wasn't exactly sure of that."

Bruce now needed to find music that reflected the ways in which he'd changed, and rock 'n' roll still pulled him toward the same old mysteries, the same old ghosts. For the first time in his life, he felt wary of being in a band and rocking out.

"I think, and this goes to the general philosophy of the whole thing, the thing I liked about *Nebraska* was that it was kind of a private record. And in a way, I was able to maintain more privacy making that type of record. Basically, I'm a private person. So it appealed to me on a lot of different levels. And in a funny way, I'm somebody who has to be drawn out. That is one of the essential things Jon does for me, even in the face of my resistance.

"So I think that there was a point where I said, 'Gee, I could make a record like this, these types of records, and it's satisfying to me.' I was leading the type of life I was leading; it was totally suitable, it filled all my needs in a variety of different ways. I suppose I toyed with that idea because of the protection that it provides."

Furthermore, no matter what Bruce wanted, his relationship with the band *had* changed. The sessions called for in the spring and summer of 1983 were the first since 1975 without Steve Van Zandt on rhythm guitar. Even though Steve's presence was more often felt than heard, his catalytic personality had been an important component of Springsteen's relationship with the E Street Band, especially since Bruce often communicated with Steve even when he was basically noncommunicative towards everyone else. But that summer Steve was touring Europe in support of his first solo record and returning to New York to record his second album, *Voice Of America*, in another part of the Hit Factory.

Steve Van Zandt had evolved his way in and out of Bruce's bands before, and this time he left without much discussion. "I felt that at that point I had something really significantly different to say," Van Zandt said. "Different enough that it would take full-time, it would take leaving."

"Bruce and I talked off and on during this period. And it was just a real obvious point where I was anxious to get on with this new thing, because it was new, you know. I'd dedicated seven years of my life to making that thing happen, and we had accomplished everything that I hoped we could accomplish. It had never occurred to me until then to leave." However, Steve didn't talk much with the rest of the band about his plans—"not until it was comfortable," which was after they'd already done a few weeks' work without him.

The absence of Steve Van Zandt didn't necessarily change Springsteen's rock 'n' roll sound. The tracks without Steve's guitar include "No Surrender," "Bobby Jean," "My Hometown" and "Dancing In The Dark," which retain the same di-

“I’d bring up the ghost of ’75 and say, ‘Oh, that was a pain.’ There were a lot of consequences that Jon was arguing for. And generally I guess I felt I’m the guy that has to face ’em. And I was right.”

versity of sound and feeling as the material Bruce recorded while Van Zandt was in the group. But Steve’s absence still added to Bruce’s uncertainty, and having just had a successful experience cutting solo, he was still inclined to think in terms of recording without the band. As Plotkin said, “It looked for a long time like we could end up with *Nebraska II*.”

With Bruce uncertain of his own direction, the music they made that summer lacked the confidence necessary for great rock ‘n’ roll. They made some decent tracks in those long, hot weeks—“Stand On It” and “Pink Cadillac” among others—but nothing was up to the level of the material they’d recorded the previous May. Plotkin, the closest thing to a newcomer in the byzantine Springsteen recording process, felt almost estranged. He just couldn’t hear the value in the songs they were cutting; he found them forced, the one thing good rock ‘n’ roll can never be. Communication broke down.

Plotkin remembered the summer with a shudder. “Bruce would ask me what I thought about a guitar solo, and I’d say, ‘I don’t know. I don’t know what the song’s about. I don’t know whether the guitar solo’s the right guitar solo, because I’m not getting any hit off the song.’ He’d say, ‘Well, all right then, I’ll just do this guitar solo.’ After two or three of those responses, he just stopped asking me what I thought. I went through a period for about two months where we hardly talked. I was there every day and hardly ever expressed an opinion because he stopped asking me, and I didn’t have any opinion about anything except the songs.

“It sounded like Bruce was trying to recover from *Nebraska*. He was trying to find some new footing, and he was writing stuff that was not really rocking, and it was clearly meant to rock. That was the main thing: He was ready to rock again; he wanted to and he knew that was what he was gonna have to do or he couldn’t finish, and he made a valiant effort to get a series of things to rock that were written from a place inside of himself that was just not rocking.”

Landau, who had gone through less drastic versions of the same process on three other albums, was more sanguine. “Chuck’s job is such that he has always got to be grappling with the music as it is right at the moment. That’s the key to what he’s doing,” he said. “At those particular sessions, I was able to be less concerned about any particular song we were cutting (until we hit ‘Bobby Jean’) than I was about getting a process going, getting us back into an integrated working situation—the producers, the band, making this album together. In general, if I heard something that I didn’t like or was not my favorite type of thing, I wasn’t alarmed by it.

“Besides, the way we jump around is disorienting to anybody. Chuck was still getting used to songs that go into the black hole and you never hear from again.”

As the summer wound down, it became obvious that everyone needed a chance to get out and breathe, away from their nocturnal and pent-up studio existence. Bruce had spent the previous summer getting out almost every weekend to play with friends famous and obscure, joining bands like Beaver

Brown and Cats at Jersey shore bars like the Stone Pony or sitting in with journeymen rockers like Nils Lofgren who were playing nearby clubs. He hardly took a day off all summer. Like everyone else, he’d clearly earned the chance to get some sun and to think about what they’d accomplished.

But workaholics don’t make it so easy on themselves. As August approached, Springsteen proposed not that they needed a vacation but that they were finished with recording and ready to start final mixes. In retrospect, even Bruce doesn’t quite understand his thinking. “When we started to mix the record, I don’t really know what we thought we were doing. We must have thought we had an album.”

The task of proving the point first fell to Chuck Plotkin, who began by asking Bruce to explain exactly which songs were on the record as he imagined it. “I said, ‘Well, look, Bruce, you tell me what it is that we’re gonna mix, what cards are on the table. I’ll wade into the stuff and I’ll take the best rough mixes that we have and let’s string ’em together. I’d like to hear the record before we mix it.’” So Springsteen gave Plotkin a list of songs with a basic idea of their sequence.

Plotkin and Toby Scott went back into the Hit Factory and over five days assembled Bruce’s version of the new album. What Plotkin heard confirmed his worst suspicions: They were a long way from finished. “And I was scared to death because our communication had just dwindled away to nothing,” Plotkin recalled. “That was one of the low points of my involvement with Bruce, because I was just scared to death. I was in a state. I strung the stuff together, and I said, ‘I’m gonna master these rough mixes. Because I’ve got to figure out some way to get him to listen to this as if this is the record.’

“I’m talking to Jon every day about this. ‘Jon, how can I tell him this?’ ‘You just have to tell him.’ I said, ‘My only hope is to get him to listen. I’m not gonna tell him anything. I’m gonna bring the disc down there, and I’m gonna say, ‘Bruce, look, let’s just put this baby on and let’s see how we’re doin’.’ Real nice and easy. And hope that he can hear it. He’ll see the disc—he’s taken a week off, he’ll know. ‘Cause I just can’t say what I have to say. I know he won’t take it from me right now.’ ‘Well, just go down and do your best.’

“So we set up a meeting in New Jersey and I walked in with the reference discs. I said, ‘Let’s put this baby on and hear it.’ Bruce said, ‘What do you mean?’ I said, ‘Well, I’ve got this all put together here. Let’s just listen to it. We don’t need to talk about it.’ He says, ‘I don’t want to listen to it. Charley, you just spent five nights all by yourself in the studio, listening to this stuff. Tell me where we stand.’ And I wanna go, ‘But Bruce, you haven’t listened to a word I’ve said in the last eight weeks. We haven’t talked. What difference does it make what I think?’ I didn’t say this, but that’s what I was feeling. I said, ‘Geez, I really think we oughta just listen to this stuff, you know. We’ll just sit here together and we’ll be able to hear what it is. You don’t really want me to tell ya what I think.’ He said, ‘What the hell do ya think I hired ya for?’

“And I thought [*groaning*], ‘He’s not gonna listen to the



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thing. I'm gonna have to tell him.' So I said, 'Well, I can hear the album. I can hear the album we're making. This isn't it.' [He laughs.] Because I couldn't be negative. 'This isn't it but I can hear it; I know what this record is about. And I know what of what we have is working, and I know what isn't working and I know what's missing. And we're real close. I can make one great side out of your song list, but I can't make two great sides out of it. I can make a great opening side or a great closing side. But I have a feeling that what we have is sort of like marking posts.' I said, 'If you listen to "Born In The U.S.A." into "My Hometown," that's the whole thing. That's the record.'"

Against his better judgment, Plotkin had done exactly the right thing. It came back down to his vision of what it meant to produce a record with Springsteen. "It's simply caring enough



Coming in to rejoin the community.

about Bruce and his records to hang in until the record is right. That is, to hang in with him when his impulse is that it can be better and to force him to hang in with you when your impulse is that it can be better. It's the highest uncommon denominator. It's being able to hold your own in fairly strong company where the issue is: Is this thing as good as it needs to be yet? That's it. That's the job. Just somehow or other mustering the physical and emotional strength to stay at war until the thing is won. That's all. That's it.

"And he bought it—he bought the whole cloth."

What Plotkin was selling (with Landau's essential concurrence) was an alternative vision of where they were at. As the producers saw it, the problem with the album was twofold. First, there weren't quite enough songs that fit together in order to make a great album. Second, a great deal of the best material they'd recorded was *not* on these reference discs. Springsteen's interest in "Downbound Train" had recently revived; "My Hometown" was part of the story from the time it was recorded, and Bruce had always regarded "Born In The U.S.A." and "Glory Days" as the core of the rock 'n' roll LP. But "Cover Me," "I'm On Fire," "Working On The Highway," "Pink Cadillac," "I'm Goin' Down" and "Darlington County," all of them recorded more than a year before, had been abandoned. Those songs were among the best Bruce had ever recorded because they felt almost effortless—not casual or throwaway but sung as if Bruce were for once performing without burdens. In the months since, Bruce had felt just the opposite, and the new songs, no matter how hard the rhythm section kicked, showed the strain. He needed some more songs

and everyone simply had to wait until he wrote the right ones.

Bruce's response to their conversation, Plotkin recalled, was almost immediate. "Two nights later, we went into the studio and he said, 'I have a song I want to cut.' We cut 'Bobby Jean' and it was like the fever had broken."

But just making "Bobby Jean" didn't settle the question. Shortly afterward, Jon Landau drove down to Bruce's house, and that night they did play the acetate of the prospective LP.

"It just wasn't a record; it just didn't sound like one," Bruce said. "I've got a whole bunch of strange little songs that really, they're interesting but don't seem to be mixing. It wasn't that all the stuff wasn't good on it. We had 'Shut Out The Lights' on it and 'Follow That Dream.' Individually the things were good but they just didn't add up—it didn't sound right, it didn't come together. And the difference in sound quality from the garage thing to the studio stuff was too haphazard. It left you flat."

The process had again become mystified and confusing. As Bruce admitted, "Of course, that's the inevitable question: We have a lot of material, why don't we have a record? It's mysterious. And you know time is beginning to tick on and we had seen this before and we didn't want the same type of situation that we had on *The River* and *Darkness*."

The problem was that Bruce had cast aside most of the best material, which remained the songs from the band sessions done during the *Nebraska* period. As he said, when they failed to get mixes of them in California, "then I really dumped on them."

"All the stuff that got thrown out is pretty good," Landau said.

"Aw, no, that's no good," said Springsteen.

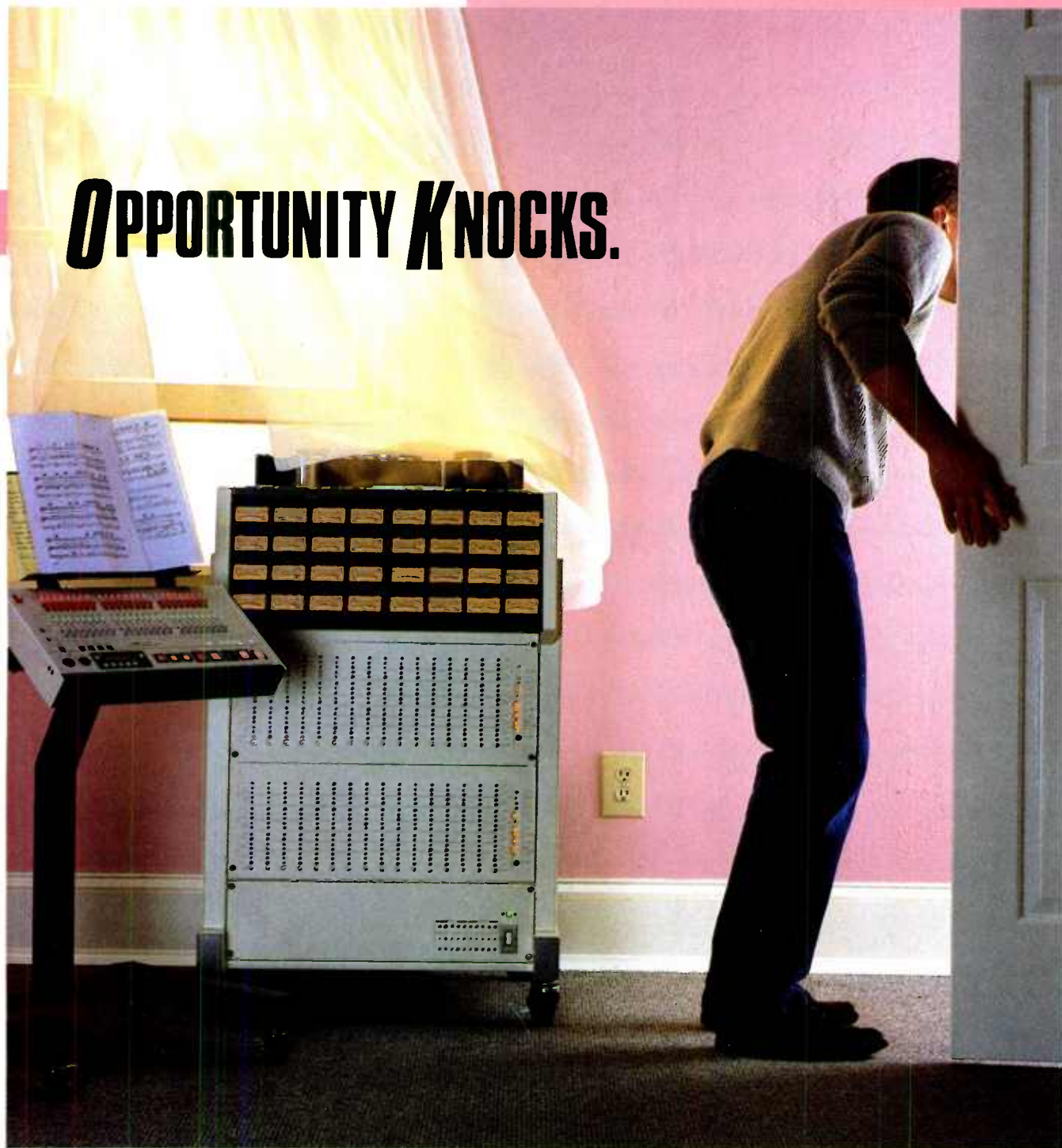
"No, that's good stuff," said Landau and plunged a bit further: It had been thrown out while Bruce was in California; Jon hadn't really had a fair chance to work on it.

"Jon is good like this—he's patient, for one thing," Bruce said, laughing as he described it. "And he waits and he waits, and when he sees I'm down, then he makes his move. We reach a point of some confusion, then it's like, 'Hey, what about this stuff?' This was a central discussion that we got into one night. A lot of these songs had been thrown out without us really discussing the merits of them or whether they should be. And I had all my reasons why I didn't like it. I always have a million reasons. And they're arguable, you know; you can always make an argument.

"So that was when we sat down and we started discussing what type of record we were trying to make. The answer we came out with in the end was, we were making a rock 'n' roll record. Before that we hadn't been trying to make exactly that particular type of record. A rock 'n' roll record. You know, with fast songs on it. Drums. Not too mellow. Something with loud noises on it. And this was a funny thing, because I had a lot of ambivalence about doing it. It's always a trade-off that you make. I guess part of it was I just wasn't sure that was where I wanted to go."

In November Bruce took the band into the studio without Landau and Plotkin to record two songs, "No Surrender" and "Brothers Under The Bridges." Both songs are basically "Bobby Jean" turned inside out. Rather than dwelling on an old friendship at the moment of disintegration, Bruce's new songs surveyed the entire relationship and the values that can grow out of intense adolescent friendships and high school promises rashly made. Both songs obviously reflect the departure of Steve Van Zandt from the E Street Band, but "No Sur-

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render" is by far the more effective.

"No Surrender" recapitulates not only an adolescent friendship but a whole style of recording. Working as his own producer, Bruce came up with his first "wall of sound" arrangement since *Born To Run*. "No Surrender" emerges as (barely) updated 60s trash rock, far from the crisp electronics of the other *Born In The U.S.A.* tracks: Thunderous drums and surging washes of guitar support a vocal chorus straight off a 1965 Searchers album.

The song's declaration of faith in the transformational power of rock 'n' roll struck some as naïve, which was fair enough. The song was written as a character study but was clearly an intimate portrait of Springsteen's own values (an idea reinforced by his repeated dedications of the song to the absent Van Zandt during the 1984-85 tour). It's really a last gasping breath of innocence from a rocker who has embraced adulthood. But juxtaposed with the newer sounds and curdled optimism of "Bobby Jean," Springsteen's other recent song, "No Surrender" became a restless farewell, mingling a sure knowledge of the inadequacy of idealism with a stubborn refusal to renege on ideals.

Brash as it is, "No Surrender" is perfectly confident as it lays out a purely "childish" set of values and acknowledges their continuing currency in adulthood. This is exactly the sensibility for which *Born To Run* was criticized, which means that "Bobby Jean" meets head-on the issues that had set Bruce to asking such hard questions of himself in the first place. Like the guy in "Born In The U.S.A.," he found himself running down the same road he'd always been on, albeit with a new look on his face.

Confident as he may have been, Springsteen was still unsure exactly which songs belonged on the record and what their sequence should be. The way that he makes records, those two steps—selection and sequencing—are the essence of the job. As Roy Bittan once said, "Bruce will throw a hit record off an album, as he did when we recorded 'Fire' and everybody agreed 'Fire' was one of the best songs he wrote for that album. But he would not put it on because it's not what he wanted to say with *Darkness*. Ninety-nine percent of the other artists in the business wouldn't *think* of doing something like that. But to Bruce, what he says is more important than the commercial benefits he could gain from the commercial material. That's the story. That's how he does it. And that's why his albums stand up so well. That's why ten years from now people will be able to play those albums and those albums will say something."

But Springsteen got away with such tactics only because his gifts were so broad. "The guy's a great writer, he's a great singer, he's a great player, he's got great arrangement ideas," said Plotkin. "It's not like producing somebody else's records, where all of those things occupy most of your time and energy and you just cut whatever damn songs the artist can come up with. Most people write eight or nine acceptable songs and that's your album. But with Bruce, there is *no song* that isn't dispensable, in and of itself. And what you're always looking for is: What are we up to with this? What is he saying? What's the guy on about this year? What connects these things?"

"With 'Born In The U.S.A.,' the night he cut it, we knew we had just started the album. On *Born In The U.S.A.*, he actually found what he was going to be going on about before he even recognized it as such."

"When people wonder about what goes on when you make a record for two years, this is what goes on," said Landau. "In other words, the main thing that does *not* go on is taking one

song and overdubbing on it for three months to get it. Earlier in Bruce's career, we sometimes did that. But the process now is the creation of this huge mass of material and then the incredible complexity involved in sifting through it and ordering it and finally creating an album. Because that is what we are doing—we are making an album.

"That song that's not on there might have been one ballad too many or it might have been one rock song too many. And if we had that instead of the song we might take it off for, it might have tipped the overall emotional weight of the side away from where we really want it to be."

So crucial was this process of selection and organization that even once recording was essentially completed there was a fair amount of disagreement about what the record consisted of. Landau and Plotkin both felt that the best possible album would build around the core material recorded in May 1982. Bruce hoped to use more of the 1983 stuff. The difference was extremely significant, not because it meant much commercially—as Jimmy Iovine once remarked to Landau, in order to sell all the album had to be was "Born In The U.S.A." and nine other songs—but because the material created with "Born In The U.S.A." had a cohesion of music and ideas that simply didn't exist among the songs from the other sessions. Certainly, nothing else fit so well with "Born In The U.S.A." and "Glory Days," which for Bruce were always the cornerstones.

Failing to persuade his coproducers, Bruce adopted an oblique stratagem. For the first time ever, he solicited a wide variety of opinions about song selection. The band was polled on its choices, which was the first time *that* had ever happened, but even more outlandish was Bruce's decision to solicit the opinions of assorted crew members and friends. Springsteen's penchant for secrecy made each of his projects something of a mystery even to insiders. Because some exciting songs didn't belong on any given album—though, as "Darlington County" proved, they might linger long enough to find their place—it was risky to have anyone hear them out of context. Now Bruce had not only decided to play about twenty assorted songs for people outside the production process, he was also inviting his friends to list their choices, in sequence if possible.

One by one, he brought folks to his little house on the Navesink River. Seating them at a small table with the notebook in which he kept his lyrics spread out before them, he'd plug them—and sometimes himself—into a Sony Walkman Professional and play selections from half a dozen cassettes containing rough mixes. Then he might leave them alone with the songs for a time while he ran errands or simply got out and ran his daily six miles. When Bruce returned, a short discussion ensued and then the moment of truth, listing the picks. Turning to the back of the notebook, he would inscribe each person's selections.

Bruce took the process very seriously, although exactly what he got out of it is anybody's guess. Maybe it was just another part of shedding his isolation. However intently he listened as each of his friends and associates told him what should be on the record, surely no one had the impression that he was going to put out what *they* wanted. On the other hand, it was his willingness to hear everyone out that was the point. As Chuck Plotkin said, "Just because you're bright and independent and self-possessed and self-contained and ambitious, that doesn't necessitate your locking everyone else out of your processes." That was something Bruce had always believed, but it was only now that he seemed open enough to really try to make it work. Though the final choices had to be his, he paid



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attention and that by itself was rare for any artist. And who knows, maybe the popularity of "Cover Me" in the listening sessions helped put it on the record.

"When we went back in the studio that fall, the process was very focused," said Landau. "We put all this stuff on the table—a tremendous diversity of material—and we just kept playing all the different things, and over time there was a fairly natural consensus to go back [to the 1982 songs] because basically everybody involved came to feel it was the best stuff.

"The beauty of the *Born In The U.S.A.* group was that it had internal balance. I mean, we start with 'Born In The U.S.A.'—this is so intense—and then 'Cover Me'—although it's pop on the one hand, it's in a minor key and it's very dark; the lyrics are very serious. You say, 'Well, we need some relief.' Well, you get 'Darlington County.' It's already there; a great deal of it's there."

Yet as the mixing progressed, Landau remained uneasy. It struck him that even though they'd made an excellent record, it suffered from some of the same commercial flaws as Bruce's earlier albums. For instance, although there were plenty of hit possibilities, there was no sure-shot opening single. Equally important, the album lacked a clear picture of Bruce Springsteen at that moment. Clearly Bruce had undergone a great many transformative experiences since *The River*—or even *Nebraska*—but these weren't reflected in the songs they'd assembled for the new album. Even the newest material, "Bobby Jean" and "No Surrender," looked back rather than forward.

From the time they'd returned from the late summer break, Landau had adopted an unusually aggressive posture, something that only the manager/producer/best friend could do. "Part of Bruce's whole thing with Jon is that he has to bang into Jon," observes Plotkin. "Because Bruce is Jon's exclusive client, Jon really does get to take the position, 'Look, Jack, this is my career, too. I've spent the last three years of my life on this. Chuck made a Bette Midler record; everybody else has other things. But this is my record, too.' He gets to say things... He doesn't have to say, 'Bruce, you don't want to do this. You don't want to put out a record without an obvious opening single after all this time.' He just says, 'I don't.'" It's not quite that easy, but the point is well taken nevertheless.

Landau confesses his own impatience. "I felt like, 'Let's get on with it now.' So I started to behave somewhat differently than I have in the past. At this point, we'd been working together for so long that I just felt I could say things in a real direct fashion. Bruce knows that I know that he's always gonna make his own decisions; I'm gonna participate in them but he's gonna make them in the final analysis. And I'm gonna respect them, whatever they are."

In March, toward the end of the mixing sessions, Springsteen, Landau and Plotkin spent a long Sunday reviewing everything they'd accomplished so far. It was an impressive body of work, and with the late substitution of "I'm Goin' Down" for "Pink Cadillac" (which was bumped to become the B side of the first single) they'd finally reached complete consensus on the song selection. Late in the afternoon, Plotkin left for the studio. Jon and Bruce would meet him there later that evening. Sitting with Bruce in Springsteen's room at the Lyden House, the East Fifty-third Street residential hotel where Bruce and Chuck had been periodically holed up since the previous summer, Landau blurted out what had been bothering him about the record.

Bruce recalled that Landau spoke "unusually forcefully," an understatement by Jon's own account. Landau wanted a first

single, and by that he meant more than just a guaranteed hit. "When I used the word *single*, in my own mind I meant it in a much bigger sense. The type of single I was talking about was a single that would truly represent what was going on. And I was also searching for a way to express the idea that I wanted something that was more direct than any one thing that was on the record. As I said to Bruce, a song where a person who is a Bruce fan, who stayed with you on *Nebraska*, even if it was mysterious to him, a song where that guy's going to say, 'Yeah, that's Bruce; that's what he's all about, right now, today.'"

"I don't have a song like that," Bruce said. Landau persisted, arguing his case strenuously and in great detail. "I don't know if I was doing it to be provocative or what. I was just doing it. I was saying things I hadn't planned to say," he remembered.

Springsteen balked, then exploded. "Look," he snarled, "I've written seventy songs. You want another one, *you* write it."

Landau took it on the chin but got in the final punch: The point wasn't just that he wanted such a song—although he frankly admitted that he wanted this as much as Bruce had wanted *Nebraska*—but that the album *needed* it, that it would be artistically incomplete until such a song existed.

By the time they left for the studio, Landau and Springsteen had calmed down, but both found the experience "weird," mostly because neither of them was given to such emotional roughhousing, at least not with each other. "It was a very explosive few moments, and it subsided very quickly and we went off and worked on the mix," said Jon. "It was as close as we get to almost the atmosphere of an argument, but it didn't hang in the air at all."

But later that night, alone in his hotel suite, Bruce found himself replaying the discussion. Sitting at the end of his bed in those hours before dawn that he still treasured most deeply, he picked up his acoustic guitar and began to strum a simple riff. He'd already thought up an opening line: "I get up in the morning," he sang and stopped. No, he thought, *I don't wake up in the morning. What do I do?* "I get up in the evening," he sang softly and thought, Well, how do I feel about that? "...and I ain't got nothin' to say/ I come home in the morning, feeling the same way/ Man, I ain't nothin' but tired, tired and bored with myself."

Telling the story even a couple of years later, Bruce still seemed a little bit in awe of what happened next. "It was just like my heart spoke straight through my mouth, without even having to pass through my brain," he said. "The chorus just poured out of me."

*You can't start a fire, you can't start a fire without a spark
This gun's for hire, even if we're just dancin' in the dark.*

By sunup Landau had what he'd asked for: a song that summed up Bruce Springsteen's life at that moment. It was exactly what the album needed. But it was also far, far more—the most directly personal excavation Bruce had extracted from himself since "Born To Run," a song whose intimacies ran bitter and deep. Even the song's quotations from rock 'n' roll classics were cuttingly ironic: Bruce Channel's mournful "Heeey baby!" and Elvis' "Have a laugh on me/ I can help" each mutated into a statement of frustration.

In a way, the song was about everything Bruce had withstood since *Nebraska*. Through it all, Bruce's songs remained stoically philosophical. In "Dancing In The Dark" he finally let his bottled-up confusion explode. Through its verses, "Dancing In The Dark" sounds not so much bitter or angry as just plain *irked*, ticked off at events.

[illegible]

When he recorded the song, Bruce snapped off every line as if it were so brittle it might well shatter, and as if he didn't give a damn. Lonesome as some of those lines were, they were aggressively sardonic, too. "I wanna change my clothes! My hair! My face!" he cries, bemoaning "livin' in a dump like this," attacking his own loathing and fear of aging and responsibility and competition and the unending tug of each of these things. "Dancing In 'The Dark'" becomes a jeremiad, as well as a replay of his rancorous discussion with Landau, this time with Bruce playing both roles. Juxtaposed against "You can't start a fire without a spark" is the rejoinder: "You can't start a fire, worrying about your little world fallin' apart."

This is a protest song worth keeping—a marching song against boredom, a battle cry against loneliness, and an accounting of the price the loner pays. And on top of that, it's also the moan of an extremely physical person who can't wait to hit the road again: "There's somethin' happenin' somewhere/

Baby, I just know there is," he sings, and again, "I'm dyin' for some action." He was well on his way to finding as much as he—or anyone—could handle.

Landau and Springsteen talked about all the changes that had occurred since *Born To Run*. In a sense, the conversation was a way of reassuring each other about the new album's potential to create a massive, really disruptive success.

From the time they'd begun, Bruce had never been sure that he wanted to release such an album. "And then, of course, Jon tends to argue for the other idea, the louder noise. A lot of the things that I'm verbalizing now were implied at the time. And I'd bring up whatever—the ghost of '75—and say, 'Oh, that was a pain.' There were a lotta consequences that Jon was ar-

guing for. And generally I guess I felt I'm the guy that has to face 'em. And I was right." He laughed. "So on one hand, this always undercuts Jon's arguments in these areas, a little bit...but not that much," he added, sobering up again.

Bruce's arguing position was in favor of quiet, personal music—soft noises—that satisfied him and kept his profile low; it was all he needed to do. He stuck to it as he and Landau talked the matter through not one time or ten but over and over again for weeks. He simply wasn't sure that he wanted to be that big, that exposed.

"We had made a record [*Nebraska*] that was pretty off center for me, which I think is good. And I think those records should be made and I want to make other ones. But they're not the only records to make," Bruce said. "But that's where I was left—I was left out over there. And I spent a lotta time by myself, for a long time, where I did not have a lotta contact with everybody else. So I just kinda hung out there. That was part of the problem—it wasn't really that great a place to be left hung out at. But that's where it was and so then when we began to make a new album, the whole process was one of slowly kinda moving back, until bang! I locked in, I knew what we were gonna do, I knew what I really wanted to do. So Jon's place in this is he's just kinda there coachin' me. And we do this through arguing, and sometimes I just have to say a bunch of things and then once I say 'em, they're over. I'm arguing with myself is what I'm doin'.

"Part of myself is saying, 'Hey, don't do that, why do that? It's nice like this.' And then the other part of me is saying, 'Yeah, but if you could pull this off.' And then the other side: 'If you do that, you know, you're hangin' way out there and who

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needs it?' I'm sure it goes on inside of anybody who's a public figure and I suppose it goes on inside of everybody to one degree or another."

It went on with special relevance around the issue of what kind of record *Born In The U.S.A.* was going to be, however. The new trend in the record industry was for blockbuster albums keyed to a string of hit singles—Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, which produced seven top ten hits, is the archetype—resulting in mega-platinum sales: five to fifteen million copies (*Thriller* sold thirty-eight million). Coupled with the heightened visibility due to video exposure (in the wake of MTV, music video programs had proliferated from the networks to local cable channels), the result was the most intensely saturated sort of fame. Just the kind of thing that Bruce had been dodging since *Born To Run*.

Born In The U.S.A. had numerous potential singles—seven of its songs became top ten hits and there were at least two others ("Bobby Jean" and "No Surrender") which would have had a good shot if they'd been issued on 45. Clearly, if Bruce allowed this music to reach the public, his public profile would soar, and that was something that always—and justifiably—made him skittish. One way of looking at the whole arduous process of constructing *Born In The U.S.A.* was that it was a way of avoiding the specter of such celebrity.

"But at the same time, the big question came up. I had worked hard to get through a certain door and I had an opportunity that I had created for myself." Consciously or unconsciously, Bruce's image of standing in a doorway, trying to decide whether to walk through, again threw him into the realm of John Ford's *The Searchers*.

In that film's final scene, all the other characters enter a house, but John Wayne is left standing outside, framed in the doorway. He adopts a noble posture, holding his left arm with his right, but the film ends with the door swinging shut on him, forever barring him from what's inside the house.

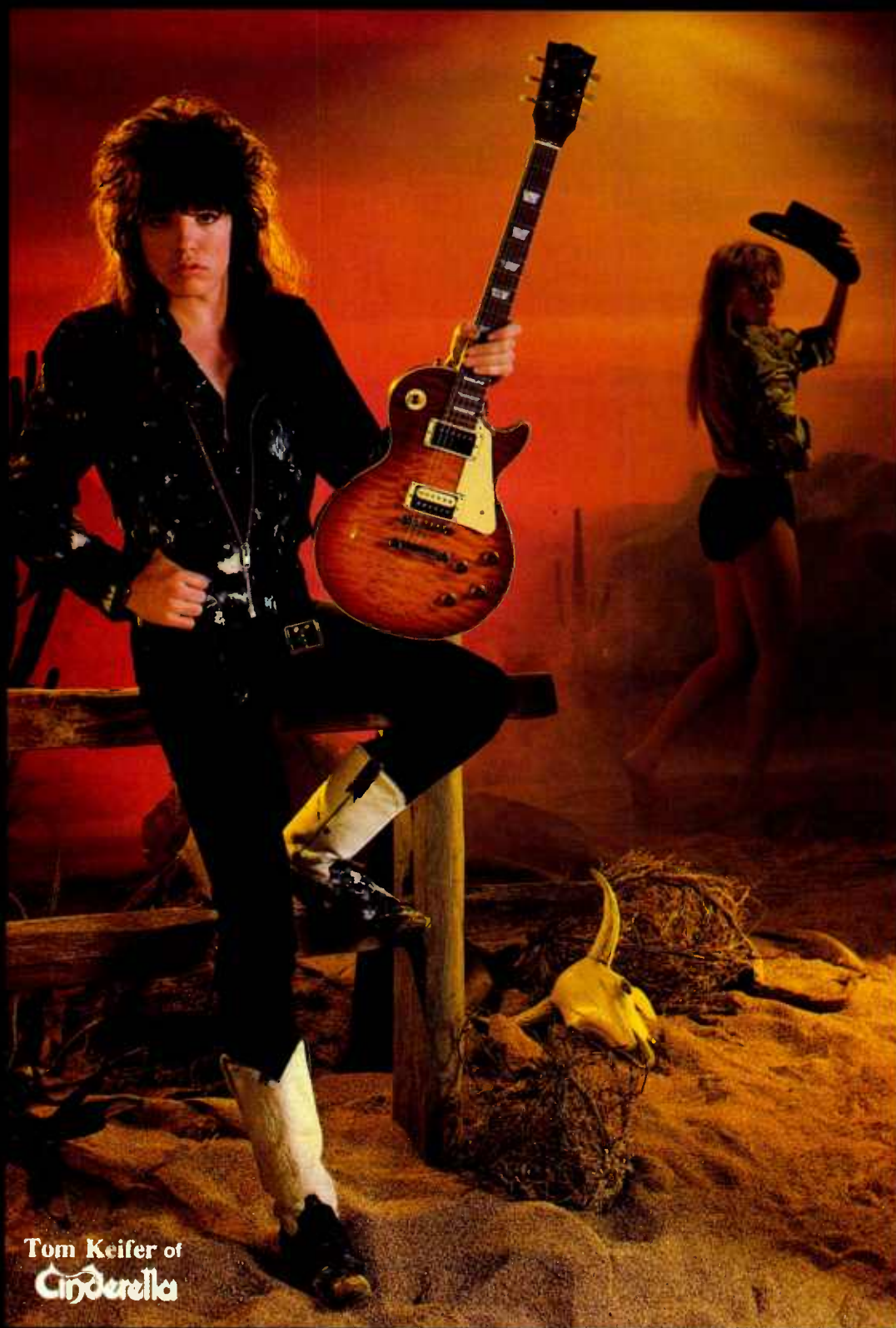
"The John Wayne character can't join the community, and that movie always moved me tremendously," Bruce said. But if the experiences *Nebraska* and its aftermath had dragged him through had any value, it was to reinforce his desire to belong to just such a community, to cut him loose from the illusion of the romantic loner, to make him understand that in real (not mythic) life, making your stand all by yourself is a miserable impossibility.

"In the end," Bruce said, "it was a variety of things that kinda threw the argument in one direction, but my feeling was that I'd created an opportunity for myself and why cross the desert and not climb the mountain?" So, at the last moment when he could have turned back from superstardom and its threatened betrayal of self, class and quality, he pushed forward precisely because it seemed the only way to preserve those things he most cherished.

"This was '84 when this was happening and I started in '64, and that had been twenty years. And where I was at that moment was the result of thousands of small decisions that I'd made daily since I was fifteen. The decision to stay inside and play guitar, the decision to watch the band all night long instead of chasin' girls around the CYO or whatever. The decision to watch the guy's hands on the guitar. The decision to quit school, to take my chances. There were just hundreds, thousands of 'em, throughout my whole life. And we had 'Born

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In *The U.S.A.*—we had that cut, and that was kinda sayin', 'All right, come on.'

"I knew that that particular song was just a song that comes along once in a while, even if you write good songs. It had some power to it that seemed to speak to something that was so essential, similar to the way that 'Born To Run' did. It's not that you have better songs or worse songs, but that's a particular type of song.

"And I wrote that song with an intent. I had an intent. And I put a rock 'n' roll band together with an intent. And the intent... was a loud noise intent." He had been speaking soberly, but now he found himself cracking up at the very idea. "I guess that I felt that the rock band is there for use by the public. It is a public service situation. And I felt that essentially when it came down to it, that was my idea from the very beginning, because that was where my roots came from. The people that I admired the most were people who did that or tried to do that or made that attempt. They did not back down. Or turn away. They took it as far as they could take it. For better or for worse."

Jon Landau was not insensitive to what an enormous decision he was prodding his best friend to make. On the other hand, he continued to push in that direction for a simple reason: "I believed with all my heart that Bruce could do this." As they tumbled around the issue, Jon reminded Bruce that they had created structures that could withstand everything a massive hit would bring, a protective community that would help deflect some of the superstardom mania and might absorb and productively channel the rest. It was a huge task and a bigger risk. The question was whether Bruce was ready to take it.

"Me and Jon sort of get into these types of arguments," Bruce said. "And what is happening at the moment is, the answer is already there. We're not figuring something out, really. I'm in the process of centering myself and Jon is assisting me in doing this.

"At different times in my life, because obviously you can't stay there all the time, I'll go off to this side or that side. And particularly when I'm out of contact with Jon for a long time. Basically I'm a guy [who has] extreme emotions and extreme feelings but I act right down the center, most of the time. My behavior and my actions tend to be very focused and very centered. They always have been. So I would say, Jon's daily job is essentially that he centers me. And if I get way out on one side, we may have a series of discussions and eventually I'll feel myself coming back to the middle. So at this period this is kind of what was happening.

"It gets me in contact with what my real feelings are, what I really want to do. So essentially, it came down to a pretty simple thing. In the end, as much as I hate to say it, but in the end, what we did, that was what I wanted to do. You know, even if I had very strong feelings in the other direction—and I did. And what I wanted to do was what I'd set out to do. And if I had the opportunity to do it, I really wasn't going to be able to do anything else."

In the end, then, Bruce Springsteen accepted the mass mania—and all its consequences, imagined and beyond belief—because he really did believe what his songs said, including the part that didn't just welcome everyone's participation but openly and actively solicited it. So he chose the Loud Noise, and *Born In The U.S.A.* was up and running. ■

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PROGRESSIVE

The days when the drummer's job was to keep nothing but straight time, thank you, are long gone. Nowadays, when sometimes you can't tell the men from the machines without a scorecard, it takes imagination, audacity and musicality to survive. In the midst of regression, here are five percussionists who are making progress.

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PERCUSSION ILLUSTRATION BY TAMAR HABER-SCHAIM

PERCUSSION

GINGER BAKER'S CRACKS IN TIME

BY CHIP STERN

"If you knew Time as well as I do," said the Hatter, "you wouldn't talk about wasting it.

It's him...I dare say you never even spoke to Time!" – Lewis Carroll

I don't really want to be reminded of the past," Ginger Baker says firmly with the measured regret of a survivor. Nowhere is there a hint of the titian-maned drummer's legendary braggadocio, from the late 60s and early 70s, when he burst on the American music scene as the rhythmic force behind Cream—the progenitive improvising power trio in popular music. Then, like a polyrhythmic Muhammad Ali, he'd proclaim his prowess—the world's greatest drummer—and offer to take on all comers.

"Yeah, that was about the same time, wasn't it," Baker nods with a rueful smile. "That was a sort of thing he did. I don't know—kind of madness really. How'd Elvin Jones put it? 'Delusions of grandeur.' That about sums it. I'm not terribly keen on a lot of stuff I played with Cream, actually," he chuckles. "The studio version of 'Sunshine Of Your Love' is probably the thing I played best on of all the Cream things. I listen to some of those things now and I hear how I could have played them a lot better. I don't know...you get to a stage

where you get too busy, play too much; this is a part of maturing—of getting older. I was obviously trying to show everybody that I could do it—that's where I was coming from. And now, I don't care. Lots of guys have got faster hands than me. But I don't really want 'em; I don't really need 'em for what I got to say—and I'm saying something. I don't care what anybody has to say about that.

"You see," he adds softly, "I'm a frustrated musician; I think of the drums as an instrument—I try to play tunes on



them, to tell a story. Philly Joe Jones heard me do a thing once, and he said just that: 'It sounds like you're telling a story up there.' And that was like the biggest fucking compliment I've ever received in my life. Philly Joe was one of the cats I looked up to; he didn't have to say anything to me. Back then, you know, I was very much into time things, and as I didn't have as much control of time, I used to occasionally lose myself—which is not a very good thing to do. And nine times out of ten I'd come out of it right, simply on feeling—you can hear time and come out of it. But now I'm much more conscious of time because I've been doing it that much longer, where it's not so much a matter of thinking about it. I just know more than I did then. *I'm much more in control of time, whereas before, time was in control of me.*"

The cycles of time grind slowly in the mountainous countryside of Italy. Like the broken masonry that litters the land, history itself seems to disappear in this ancient place. Change comes slowly, if at all, and life is what you make of it. Here, between the cracks of time, Ginger Baker has slipped through, leaving his demons safely in the past, renewing his spirits, his family and his art, leading the simple life of an olive grower.

"Well, I don't grow them—they grow on the trees," Baker deadpans. "I'm taking care of 200-odd trees. Music now is not quite the main focus of my life. I do a few gigs to help keep the farm going, really. I rebuilt this old stone house on the property—a lot of work. Sometimes if I've been doing a lot of work around the house, I'll count to myself, but I start off at around 79...80...81...82...83...84... and I'll do that all the time. I have some good friends out here—I like this kind of life. I'm not into the cities at all; I'm afraid there's too many bad things there."

"You see, I've come out on the side of life. There was a time when I didn't care if I died too soon at all—now I do. Still, I don't know if I fancy getting a bit older, somehow," he reflects, adding that "I ain't scared of dying at all."

Approaching his forty-eighth year, Ginger Baker still cuts a remarkable figure. Stretched out on a hotel bed, the drummer appears to have emerged full-blown from Charles Dickens, what with his long gaunt frame, weathered features and fiery red hair. He puffs peacefully on a long, multi-chambered pipe of copper and wood, absentmindedly gazing at the television as

if he might be supervising so many elves and urchins, his feet decked out in calf-hugging leather boots, suede and cuffed. His blue eyes twinkle slyly, concealing more than they tell, and when he extends his hand in greeting, the graceful spokes of his wrist form a remarkably gentle grip. This is the madman Ginger Baker? Where are the lion's claws?

"Listen," he confides earnestly, by way of caution on the care and feeding of temperamental Anglo-Irish drummers, "I can be a terrible fucking monster at times, especially with the people I like. Strangely, I don't know why."

I point out that his dubious reputation for virtuoso drumming stemmed, according to legend, from his use of speed—which enabled him to play fast.

Baker snaps to attention. "Yeah, this is extraordinary. Everybody was abso-

than ten pounds in the last, maybe, thirty years. I've always been between 140 and 150 pounds. During the last Cream tour, I was driving along in the sunshine in my hired car between San Francisco and Los Angeles with the radio on, and all of a sudden they stop to announce, 'We've just had this news that Ginger Baker has been found dead in his hotel room of an overdose of heroin.' I'll admit to being a little out of me head—but this is unbelievable. And that's another thing—I've never been *that* actually out of my head. The only reason I used things like that were solely for my music. The first time I used it I played a gig that night, and no one in the band knew I was using. And all the band turned around and said, 'Fucking old man, you played great tonight.' I was gone; I was all of nineteen or twenty and I thought, 'That's it!'"



Baker and "tricky" producer/patron Bill Laswell on location

lutely convinced I was a speed freak, and I wasn't; I was a smack freak, which is not speed—it's the opposite. I'm naturally a very speedy person. It's really quite strange. It seems like in America, they're good about making up strange stories about people."

Like how on the Blind Faith tour you were below a hundred pounds and passing out onstage from speed?

"That's a lot of crap," he says firmly. "My weight has never changed more

The dangerous illusion of smack, carried through from the hard-bop days of the 50s, was that it conveyed a certain kind of cool. An intensity yet a certain...

"...relaxation. It's a relaxant, that's true. That's why they use it for pre-meds. They do! That's one of the things that helped me to get straight: A friend of mine is a surgeon. I got down to where I could look forward to one turn-on a week. Then I got down to where I haven't done it in five years. It's good news."

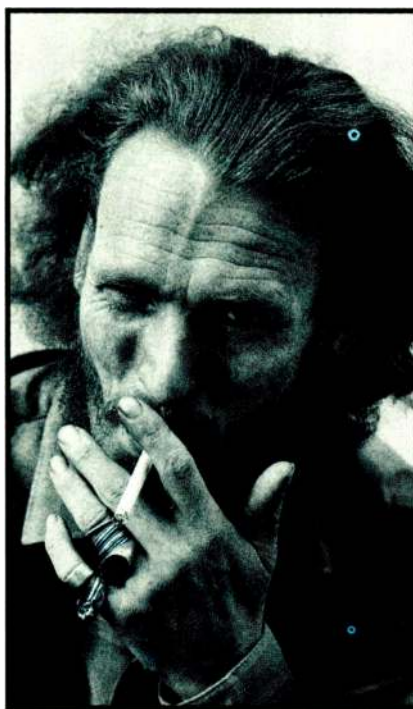
Certainly is. Because, for all the potential Ginger Baker promised when he made his breakthroughs with Cream—opening up the backbeat groove of heavy blues music with jazz-like accents and displacements, stunning use of drum and cymbal tonality, and a fiery emotional thrust that transcended mere timekeeping—the period between Cream/Blind Faith/Airforce/Fela & Africa '70 and the musical renewal midwifed by bassist/producer Bill Laswell on Public Image Limited's *Album* and his own *Horses And Trees* is marked, sadly, by the diffidence of a junkie in the company of some of the 70s' most vapid wankers.

"Very true," Baker notes with his characteristically remorseless honesty. "It fucks your brain up, you know. Mentally I wasn't terribly interested in what I was doing musically. I was only doing it to get some money, really." He adds distantly that "I'm fitter than I've ever been. I'm playing better than ever."

When Ginger Baker plays well—and his recent work is fulminating, yet deceptively simple and direct—there are few drummers who can be more musical. He has a natural's gift for making the drums speak, for getting inside a groove to the breathing inner pulse of a rhythm—for finding the cracks within someone else's time wherein he can dig and dig and push them to levels of intensity they never suspected they possessed. Surely Eric Clapton never sounded so bold, soaring and committed as when Ginger Baker was kicking him in his arse. In short, Ginger Baker can swing, a lesson apparently lost on his legions of rock clones.

"That's something I've always found amazing—because I never played rock 'n' roll. I can't see how Cream ever got slated as a rock 'n' roll band, 'cause it was basically improvisation on a lot of blues stuff and original material with a very jazz-blues influence. How did I become this great rock 'n' roll drummer? A few years ago I played rock 'n' roll with Hawkwind for two months, and nearly ended up shooting myself; jumping out of a high window—because it was dreadful.

"I've always been—first and foremost—a jazz player. Because I went from traditional jazz into big bands, while playing all sorts of different music; I'd just got married, and as a working musician you take any gigs you can get. And I went from that into playing really heavy modern jazz. Then Alexis Korner came along with Blues Incorporated, which is sort of an introduction to playing blues; a mix of straight jazz players and blues



60s Baker, "a little out of me head."

players, but the jazz players in the band had all come through trad, like myself and Jack Bruce and Dick Heckstall-Smith. For my style of drumming the connecting link is very definitely Baby Dodds, the father of all modern drummers. He sort of hooked up a sense of the African thing with the Western school of military drumming. And from there I got to listening to Zutty Singleton, Big Sid Catlett, and then obviously ended up with Max Roach, and you can't go any further than Max, I don't think—for me. Max Roach is the king of drummers. The power of his basic time is so strong, that when he goes into these complex figures and times on top of that, everyone can follow what he's doing."

Had Baker always known he was a drummer? "I don't know," he chuckles. "If ever I listened to music I was always immediately listening to the drummer. I was not from a musical family—a family of builders, bricklayers basically. 'Course at that time, my idea was to become a professional cyclist, but...see, making a drum sing is all in the way you hit it, and that was the thing that straightaway I could do naturally—holding the sticks in me hand and playing with 'em. The kids at school always used to be on me to play. I had this desk with a wooden top which was hollow inside. And I just started drumming inside, and the kids

used to dig it and leap about and start going stupid—get 'em all dancing. So there was this party with a band playing, and the kids all kept insisting that I play. So I sat down, and I could play the drums the first time I ever got behind a real kit. It's a gift, actually. You discover you can do something—just like how my kid sounds like me.

"So I made my first kit out of biscuit tins—a toy kit. Then I'd only been playing three months, but I got an audition with a trad band—quite a good one, actually—and told 'em I'd been playing for three years. So I showed up at the audition with me tin drums—told 'em my regular drums were broken—and they were incredulous. But I got the gig, and straightaway I went home and told me mum, so she lent me fifty quid and I bought a good drum kit. All calf skins in those days—used to down 'em myself. Still do. Use a teaspoon. I knew within three months of having a kit that that's all I wanted to do. In fact, at the great age of sixteen I come home and told my mum I was leaving the job next week, and I was leaving home as well. And nobody could believe it, but I did it. Because one week I actually earned twelve pounds playing the drums."

It was during this period that Baker dug deeper into music, doing the kind of homework which marks the difference between drummers and musicians, learning the basics of composing, transposing and the piano. "Yeah, I can't in fact play tunes on the piano, but I can play any chords you'd like to ask for, and I can write. See, I was playing with a big band at this Irish club, and this horn player couldn't figure out how I was playing every single note of the jig right. This cat caught me reading the tenor part over the tenor player's shoulder. It was a big band and you had to read, right? And he said, 'Why don't you study a bit of harmony?' And he told me two books to get: one was *Basic Harmony* by Piston, with all this figured bass and basic rules of traditional harmony; and I sort of married that to the Schillinger method. For instance, you're not supposed to employ parallel fifths and octaves, which I tend to use sometimes; also, in Schillinger, he'll always have two lines moving in opposite directions, and I write a lot for horns like that."

Indeed, that contrapuntal element is also one of the hallmarks of Baker's drumming style, where his hands and feet sound as if they're going in opposite directions, then suddenly they'll change partners like in a square dance. This dis-

tinctive swelter of crossing patterns owes something to the drummer's knowledge of harmony; to a London visit by the Duke Ellington Orchestra, where drummer Sam Woodyard's remarkable double-bass drum virtuosity turned young Ginger's head; and to a 1959 meeting with the godfather of British jazz drummers, the great Phil Seamen.

"Phil Seamen was a hell of a drummer and a beautiful cat. He was the one who got me into African music. One night we went to his flat, right, and there's loads of African drumming records. You see, African time is very simple, but very complex. In African music everything is layered—time is more evident in the rhythmic pulse. *The Africans modulate rhythmically, whereas in western music a piano player might modulate chordally.*

"They'll start with a four, then put a six over the four; then they play on the two threes of the six; and then a twelve over the four and an eight. You see, in Africa, especially with the Yoruba, all of these are going on at the same time—and nine times out of ten it's a little kid playing the four. And he just sits there all night long and never changes, playing four to the bar. And the other drummers change the patterns on top of that four and it'll sound very different, and yet the tempo remains steady. I've been practicing this a great deal lately, and I'm playing some extraordinary things, both solo and with this group of African drummers I've been working with. I might play eight beats to the bar on one bass drum, four on the other, and with your hands playing twelves and twenty-fours and threes and sixes. It goes into the realm of madness. It sounds as if you're playing things incredibly fast, when you get the bass drums coming in between the triplets. It's mixing those up, you know; minim triplets, three beats over four comes in a lot of African music, but at the same time eight beats over four. If we were boxing you wouldn't see it coming. There's no doubt where it comes—it always lands on the second of the three, the one you don't see. That in-between beat is the basis of what I've been doing for years, man."

Yet with all the changes in Ginger Baker's life, it's been a long journey to the artistic crossroads he stands at today as an elder of the drums. And the Ginger Baker on *Album* and *Horses And Trees* is only beginning to scratch the surface of his immense potential. But the power of Johnny Lydon's songs and Bill Laswell's canny arrange-

ments begin to present a truer picture of the drummer's creativity and drive. Baker, who has been known to take a highly uncharitable view of his work, allows how "I quite enjoyed it, yeah.

"Mostly I just did a lot of drum tracks. Bill come out to find me in Italy. He's very good at sort of getting things together. He knows what he wants, so I did what I could and tried to play it.

"See, Bill tricked me a bit, I think; I don't know whether he meant to or what. But I was under the impression I was doing the same sort of thing I did for Lydon; just laying down some tracks that Bill was going to use—I didn't know he was going to use it as my album. I did some of the tracks straight off of the Lydon session, in fact; we had some extra time in the studio. I played with Bill on one track live; other than that it was me and Aiyb Dieng, the talking drummer. Then Bill added various things and made it sound nice. I was actually amazed by some of the stuff, the way it turned out. 'Ease' on the PiL album was a very strange track. I wasn't at all happy with it when I heard it, because I didn't know where Bill was at. I thought it was just too busy for a drum track. But Bill's brilliant, I think. And that incredible guitar by Steve Vai he put on top. And Shankar. I was actually there when he did his solo on 'Uncut.' I think his violin is an extraordinary thing.

"There's some incredible stuff there," he says proudly. "I think it's only just begun, actually, which I hope. Because there are some very strange effects that can be done with harmonizers on drums, very amusing, like 'Makuta.' Bill and [engineer] Jason Corsaro at the Power Station get a great drum sound. It's good playing with people who don't come around sticking gaffer tape all over your toms. So many drummers sound like they're hitting a practice pad or a lump of wood or a chair. If they hear tone in the bass drum they think something's wrong. Man, drums got to sing—like an instrument. I tune my drums; they're in tune with the guitar—I've always done it that way. And when musicians are tuning up, I tune up as well, right. And some of them used to get riled up, because here's two of them trying to get in tune with each other, and I'm tuning up me tomm. And when you're the youngest person in the band everyone would tell you, 'Fuck off, man...shut up, we're tuning up—leave it out!'" he laughs lustily.

"That's why I play Ludwig drums, because they're the easiest I know to tune up. Last time I came to the States with a

friend, three years ago, Bill [Ludwig] III got me together a kit on short notice—there wasn't a lot of money on that tour—and it took me longer to set it up than it did to tune 'em up. There are drums I've played where you can sit and tune them for two hours and they don't sing, never sound right.

"I've got two virtually identical Ludwig kits, with mahogany shells—one here and one in the States. I've got Ludwig Silver Dot heads on them. They're great; they really let you find the drum's natural tone and natural resonance, which is what I like. I used a Ludwig snare drum on about half the tracks, and the rest is on the same old Leedy snare I've been using for twenty-five years.

"The cymbals are the same Zildjians I've been playing for years. I've got a 22-inch Medium A with rivets that's over twenty years old, and a pair of 14-inch high-hats that are that old, too. I picked up a new pair of high-hats in London, a pair of Quickbeats. They sounded great there, but the old ones have got the edge. Underneath that ride I've got a 20-inch Chinese, and on the ride's right I've got one of them new 20-inch K rides. I've been experimenting with some of these funny hammered ones. Some of them are really quite incredible. The dust-building effect is quite interesting. I've got the old K crash cymbal, a 16-inch Dark Crash they called it, and I've got various effects. I've got one of those 20-inch Earth Ride jobs with the most incredible bell sound on it, right out in front of my kit. And I've got a 13-inch A Flat Top that's several years old now and still sounds very nice."

Though he doesn't dwell on it, inevitably, Ginger Baker is shadowed by his past. In retrospect, part of what made Cream's Ginger Baker-Jack Bruce section so galvanizing was the tension between their uncomfortable accommodations rhythmically, between Bruce's loping melodic gallops and Baker's web-footed ritual overdrive—all the while Clapton surfing for dear life over this unpredictable wave. It was a pinwheeling groove, continually unfolding and coming back together. It could be quite windy and empty, but at its best live (the ragalike development of "N.S.U." and the buoyant New Orleans shimmy of "Crossroads") it had the transcendent danger and discovery of good jazz. I miss it. Ginger doesn't.

"I gave up hassling and hassling with Cream and Blind Faith. The 60s was when everything sort of amalgamized

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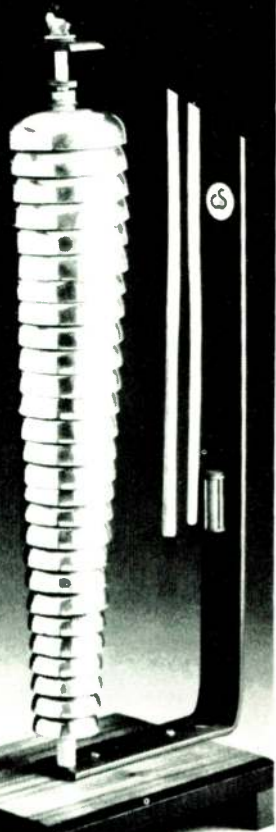
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into one movement and it was really nice. Since then it's diverged off into a thousand little splinter groups, and I don't like that. As for Cream...basically there was a time when I wanted to do it [again]. There was a time when I really needed some money—everything had gone positively haywire. And I actually asked the other people if they'd like to do it and the reply I got from one of them—who will remain nameless—was 'I'm not doing it just to help you,' see. Now—so I've heard—they're both quite keen to do it...I'm afraid I'm not. I would have done it seven years ago for the bob, and I think perhaps it would have been a very bad thing to have done. I wouldn't have learned the things I've learned over the last seven years. You see, I'm not rich anymore. In fact, I'm just an ordinary farmer, and I have found really good friends, and they certainly don't include the other members of Cream. The rich successful bit, I'm not fucking interested in. I got a letter some three or four months ago, offering me teley-phone numbers as a gift to redo it. I don't want teley-phone numbers. Not only do I not want teley-phone numbers, I want to play only with who I want to play with. And that doesn't include either Jack or Eric at this moment, and I don't think it ever will—those days have gone.

"The only thing that kept Cream going as long as it did was the fact that it got successful. I would have been ready to knock it on the head after the first three months. It was my idea—it was my band, in fact, originally. Eric had been to sit in a few times with Graham Bond, and I was about fed up with working in Graham's band. Jack I'd played with in many different bands over the years. So I went to see Eric and asked him to join us. For me, it was like a plan from the beginning to make number one records, and it did just that. The reason I stayed with it was because it would have been stupid not to; everything we did turned to gold.

"With Cream, I was pushing it out of Eric, that's all there is to it—Jack, too. And he really enjoyed it—I think it scared him a bit, though. Jack and I were competent and complete musicians—I don't think Eric can read music to this day—which I would think is essential. I went through a period of thinking he was the most wonderful guitar player in the world, when I was playing with him. With hindsight, he's very rhythmically limited—he has to have a drummer who plays really straight time.

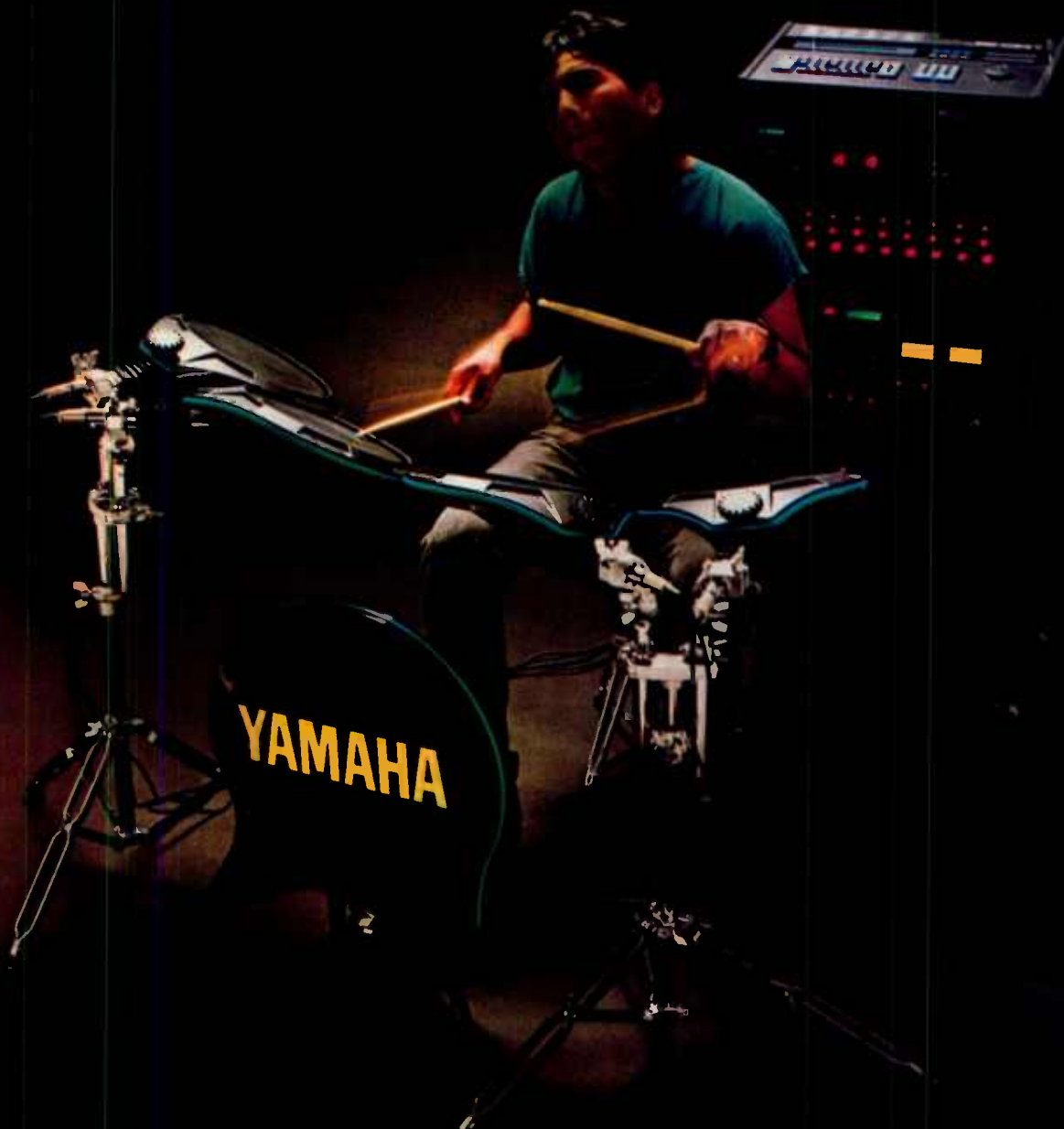
"I think Blind Faith was so short-lived

because I was in the band. Eric didn't enjoy that at all; the first gig at Hyde Park he was very offhand. I think the Blind Faith album is better than any of the Cream albums. Perhaps it would have been better with a stronger bass player; Stevie [Winwood] and I together would have carried anything, I think. Stevie is an absolute gentleman. He's also the best keyboard player I've ever played with. We had a play some years ago, just he playing piano and me playing drums, and we swung our fucking house.

Cream swung the fucking house, too. "Sure, musically a lot of it was very good. [But] in the recording studio for *Disraeli Gears* and probably half of *Wheels Of Fire*, I was very heavily Bacardi & Coked because I was *that* fucking annoyed at the time. I could see what was happening and I wasn't particularly happy about it. And the only thing to do was to go and get totally pissed and forget it. Things just happened internally that were fucking stupid. They insisted on buying other people, other than me.

"I did all the work looking after the business side of it, which to this day one or maybe both of them—one for sure—consider that I didn't do very well. I know fucking well I did—we all three still get paid from Cream. And I know from what I get, which is the least...Eric probably gets less writing royalties than I do, but I think Eric benefited more than anybody from Cream—that's an absolute fact. But Jack gets a whole heap of money from the writing of it, right. See, after this whole thing came up where they wanted to be a cooperative band, totally ignorant, both of them, of the work I'd put in to get the band off the ground. Not on the road—in the office. Whenever we weren't on the road, I was in the fucking office—where they weren't, you know. They totally disregarded all this because I said, 'Okay, if it's a cooperative band, then everything has to be cooperative; all the writing should be done under a group name, and everybody earn from it,' which is still in my opinion the fairest way to do it. It didn't happen. So it became a competition to see who could write the most songs. Jack would turn up at every rehearsal with fourteen songs.

"So the first album was probably the happiest, and the last album, where actually we were equal on the writing thing, and all the others had some good stuff—but things don't ever get taken into account. I was watching the African Aids Concert with Jack, and he got angry at Eric for playing 'White Room.' I didn't



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point it out at the time, but the intro to 'White Room,' which is in 5/4, was my idea. I never got any credit for it and I never will. But I don't give a fuck. That wasn't what it was all about. I'm sorry, I've got a very bad fault, as Jack pointed out; I've a memory like an elephant and I never forget a slight, and I've been slighted by both of them, and they can both go fuck themselves as far as I'm concerned. I'm staying on my own; I don't need them, and I don't particularly want them. I can't get on with either of those people anymore."

You played recently with Jack Bruce and Bireli Lagrene at a festival, right?

"Oh my God," Baker sighs. "Yeah, I was very disappointed with it."

But Bruce thought it turned out fantastically. Why didn't you dig it?

"Because Jack's gone down a different road than me, time-wise. That is exactly what has happened. Even in the Cream days, and before that with Graham Bond, this thing came up. Seven-eight and all this crap—7/8 to me is like, forget it. Playing in times like that is insane, is wrong—it's nothing to do with time. *Time moves itself in four—time is the fourth dimension.* Time is four. That's all it is. Everything else that happens in time is *on* four—seven isn't. We used to do all that 7/8 and all that avant-garde jazz shit. Now I just want to relax and play time—*real time.*"

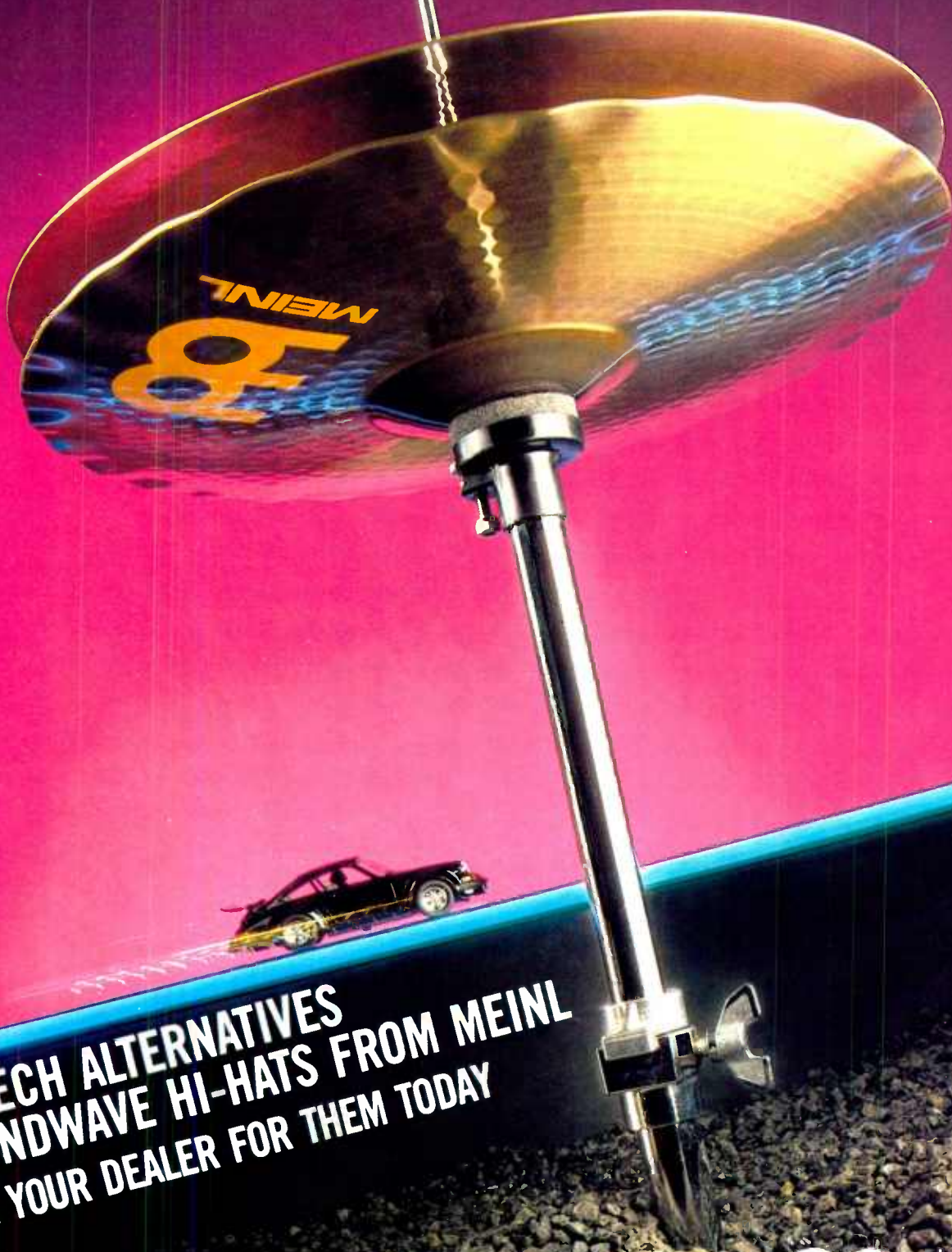
"I want to see people dancing when I play. With my band of African percussionists, we did this thing in Germany; we'd come to an audience that was sitting down, and before the first number was finished they're all on their feet moving—from the power of the basic time. If the time's right, then everybody can relate to it—*everybody!* It's just natural. Like walking or breathing or looking out a window. It's there—it's always there."

"It's what Elvin Jones said: 'You've got to know where the one is—if you don't, forget it.' If you know where it is, you can change it. You can play three for a while instead of the one, you understand? But you always come back to one because you know where it is."

"There's this other form which involves some people I know, which is to go into the realm of what they call free time. *Time isn't free, man. No way is it free. It is a di-mension.*"

Maybe they're not playing time, then. Maybe they're playing space.

"Well, in that case, let them play it. I'm going to stay here with my feet on the ground and stay with my own beliefs. *Time is my master.*"



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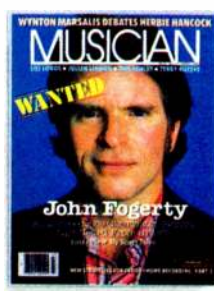




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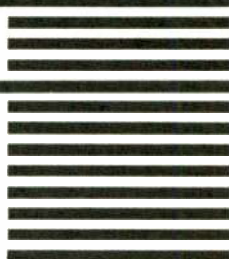
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THE SUBLIME SIMPLICITY OF IAN WALLACE

As with most instruments, learning to play the drums involves mastering their ever-increasing complexities, graduating from the simple to the intricate. But becoming a successful drummer often requires distilling those complexities to the bare essentials, foregoing the intricate for the simple.

Ian Wallace is a case in point. After marking time in the English pub scene of the late 60s, the lanky lefty went on to play with the Bonzo Dog Band and then joined King Crimson. Burned-out on "cerebral rock," he joined the group's opening act, English blues guru Alexis Korner, during an American tour and subsequently moved to L.A. After stints with Bob Dylan (*Street Legal* and *Live At*

Budokan) and Billy Burnette, he got his foot in the studio door as a reggae specialist, thanks to his work with David Lindley on *El Rayo-X* and *Win This Record*, and has since juggled sessions and tours with Southern California's rock elite—Crosby, Stills & Nash, Bonnie Raitt, Don Henley and Jackson Browne.

"I think the feel is the most important thing," stresses the thirty-nine-year-old. "In any kind of music, it's got to be there. I think most young musicians tend to overplay—I know I did. Because they want to show what they can do—which is a natural thing. But you watch any great musician, any great drummer, and most of the stuff they do is based on

feel and simplicity. I mean, one of my favorite drummers is Steve Gadd, and he plays very simply, but differently. He's got the most tremendous feel."

Growing up in Bury in Lancashire, England, between Liverpool and Manchester, Ian began his musical experiments on guitar at age twelve. "The big group in England at the time was the Shadows," he recounts. "I didn't know how to tune the guitar properly, but I learned all the notes to the Shadows' hits. Then when I was about fourteen I got interested in traditional jazz. I went to see Acker Bilk when he came to my town, and I went up to the front to get an ice cream before the band started and saw a drum kit for the first time. And something came over me; I thought, 'That's what I want to do.' The next day



I got all my albums and my guitar, and traded them in for a little snare drum and a cymbal."

After the obligatory amateur bands, modeled first after Cliff Richard & the Shadows and then the Beatles, Wallace gained his first professional experience with a group called the Warriors, featuring future Yes vocalist

Jon Anderson. "We backed the Hollies a lot, so I got a lot of tips from Bobby Elliott, a fabulous drummer. And Graham Nash co-produced our demo."

After the Warriors' demise the drummer freelanced as a sideman for years in pick-up groups, backing American artists ranging from Lou Christie to Otis Spann. "I was always greatly influenced by American musicians," he points out. "At the same time, though, when I first really started playing the drums, the big thing was the Beatles. And I grew up in the same part of the country as them; I used to play at the Cavern in Liverpool when I was seventeen, and I was greatly influenced by all the drummers I watched there. There was one guy called Roy Dyke, who was in Remo Four—hell of a drummer. Or the guy in Wayne Fontana & the Mindbenders. He was the first guy I saw playing a Ludwig kit, and he was louder than shit! And of course Ringo definitely had his own style, a driving, sloppy style. I guess I got some of that, but I've listened to everybody."

Wallace describes his musical tastes as "very catholic; there's not a lot I don't like. I'm glad I stayed in Germany, in clubs like the Star Club in Hamburg during '66 and '67, six hours a night. At the time I wasn't glad—having to play top forty. But if it feels good, I like it. I love real jazz. I hate 'fuzak,' or 'con-fusion'—although I don't include Weather Report in that; I like them."

His list of other influences and favorite drummers shows the range of his taste; they include Tony Williams, Buddy Rich, Steve Jordan, Vinnie Colaiuta, Ringo Starr, Charlie Watts, Jim Keltner, Ritchie Hayward, Elvin Jones, Russell Kunkel, Bernard Purdie and Jeff Porcaro. "I'm a Steve Gadd groupie," he admits; "I think he's incredible. Simon Phillips is excellent, too." Two important influences were non-drummers: "Lonnie Mack taught me how to play simply," Wallace points out. "He explained how to play behind the beat, how to play spaces. I already had some idea, but he sort of unlocked the key. Tim Drummond was in that group, and he taught me a lot about



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bass players and drummers playing together. Because the King Crimson thing and all that was totally different."

Ian moved to the States in 1976, while touring with Steve Marriott's All Stars, and joined guitar legend Lonnie Mack the following year. He appeared on his 1977 LP, *Lonnie Mack And Pismo*, which featured a guest appearance from multi-instrumentalist David Lindley. "When David finally started putting his solo album together, he was looking for someone who could play reggae," Wallace details. "I knew the basic moves. You know, in a lot of reggae stuff the drums are straight rock beat, and it's the bass and the rhythm guitar that provide the reggae feel. The bass player never starts a phrase on the one. If you listen to some Marley stuff, the drums are just playing one on the bass drum, two on the snare—rather than the other way around—and that's just a straight rock beat. Other stuff, it's different; the most basic reggae beat is two and four on the bass drum—completely the opposite of what everybody's learned to play. A lot of drummers can't think that way; I don't know why, because it's not very hard. I love it. It's just a matter of listening, really. Get a bunch of Marley records and listen to the drummer—Carlton Barrett. He's got more soul than any of them."

Wallace credits Lindley with "giving me a lot of freedom and a lot of great ideas." In addition to earning him a reputation as a reggae monster, Lindley's solo debut, *El Rayo-X*, also featured Ian on his most pedal-to-the-metal rocker, the incandescent lap steel workout "Mercury Blues," which achieves about the biggest drum sound since "Street Fighting Man." "That was a combination of the genius of Greg Ladanyi and me whippin' the shit out of it," Ian reveals. "Greg, who engineered and co-produced David's album, put me on a riser with a piece of sheet metal on top of it to get a very live sound. The first session for that album, we must have spent four hours niking the drums. I'm glad we did; it's the best drum sound I ever had."

You won't find IAN WALLACE plastered across a double-set of bass drums for any of the Englishman's gigs. His attitude towards being a sideman is refreshingly healthy. "I might do my own record one day," he shrugs, "but I'm not really bothered about that right now. The most important thing is to play for the vocal, play for the song, and then play for whoever is taking the solo. You mainly think of the structure of the song, the dynamics. And on sessions, lyric

sheets can be very helpful—more so than charts. That applies to anything, whether it's Don Henley or King Crimson. There's a danger when you're doing sessions and somebody gives you a chart, and you just start reading it. After a while you lose the feel of the thing. If I do a session and somebody gives me a chart, I usually look at it—'Okay, that's there, and that's there'—and just use it

continued on page 112

WALLACE WALLOPS

Wallace's standard drum kit is a Yamaha Recording Custom, "like what the 9000 series used to be. I'm using 12-, 13-, 14- and 15-inch toms, all mounted, and a 22-inch bass drum, sometimes 20-inch. The reason I'm using smaller toms and no floor toms is because I think a good engineer, both live and recording, can get just as big a sound from smaller toms and can control it better. Even with today's technology, you tend to lose a lot with big toms; it spreads out so much the human ear can't hear it. And I can angle the 14-inch and 15-inch better, and have them higher up. Next year will be my tenth year endorsing Yamaha.

"I'm using a Noble & Cooley 7-inch snare drum, from Michigan, which I'm absolutely in love with. They're hand-made like the old drums from the 30s and 40s, with maple. I've also been using the DW5002 double bass drum pedal. Instead of using two bass drums, you've got two beaters and an extra pedal by the high-hat. I just changed from Paiste cymbals to Zildjian. I love Paiste, but I was looking for more individuality in cymbals, and when I first started playing years ago I used Zildjian. I have a combination of Zildjian K's and A's. It varies, but basically I've got a 20-inch K ride, one 17- and two 18-inch crashes, 8- and 10-inch splashes, and a 19-inch China. A guy at the Zildjian factory turned me on to the high-hat I'm using, which is a combination 13-inch K top, which is really thin, and a Z bottom, which is pretty thick. Then I have four Simmons pads that trigger the Simmons SDS 7 and the Emulator SP-12, and with the Simmons MTM I can assign the patch to either one or both. My sticks are Vic Firth 5B American Classics, sort of medium."

Juxtaposing his electronic gear is Ian's ever-growing collection of antique drums: "I've got a couple of Radio King snare drums and a Wallburg made in 1907, with wooden hoops and twenty lugs. The bass drum that came with it splits in the middle and has little screw latches. It's velvet lined, so you can put your traps in it. And I just got a wooden snare—I don't have a clue as to what it is—but the hoops don't go up on the head, they're below."

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STEVE SMITH: LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO JAZZ

One theory has it that the size of venue a band plays is in inverse proportion to the actual worth of the music being proffered: that in art, bigger is decidedly not better. Music in humbler locales—i.e. jazz clubs—gains in sophistication and true grit. In short: Arena rock is a far cry from the jazz life.

Steve Smith has been there and now he's back. The ex-Journey heavy hitter was given his walking papers after the mega pop band's last album, *Raised On Radio*. But don't cry for him, Argentina; Smith is taking the opportunity as a disguised blessing, a chance to pursue the jazz-rock ambitions of his pre-rock star era.

At present, Smith is touring the country with his own fusion unit, Vital Information. The mode of transport: a van carrying five men and a drum machine, city to city, shoulder to shoulder. "This reminds me of nothing," he explains from the Seattle Travelodge in the midst of a two-month tour promoting the band's third record, *Global Beat*. "Even back in high school, I never did anything like this. I always just played locally. I went to Berklee and got drafted right out of there into Jean-Luc Ponty's band. I went right to flying to every gig and single hotel rooms. I bypassed the club thing. So now it's a totally new experience.

"In jazz, you don't get a hit record and then all of a sudden get successful. It's a grassroots process of building your audience by touring and exposing your music that way. But the music's the payoff. That's the only reason that I and everyone else is doing it, just because we like playing the music."

The latest chapter of Smith's winding career may, in fact, be living, grooving proof that success doesn't always spoil good intentions. Smith had been leading something of a double musical life in the past few years—moonlighting with Vital Information while beating time for one of the world's most bankable pop groups. His Journey stint had come to a logical end: "I really enjoyed the time that I was there. But then, unfortunately, the thing deteriorated. By the end of it, it was a drag. Nobody liked each other. We weren't having a good time. It was time for me to move on."



It was also a prime time for the "other band" to put its best feet forward. "We tried to make it as serious as we could while we made those first two records, but because I was still juggling two careers, I could never really focus on this. Finally, after leaving Journey, it was the thing to do. I made a commit-

ment not to play rock 'n' roll and to really focus on jazz. I was offered some good rock gigs, but I turned them down.

"If Mick Jagger and Jeff Beck call me up, I'll play," he snickers. "It would have to be really exceptional. I don't want to just join another Journey-type band."

Vital Information started as a sampler of fusion subidioms: The debut LP varied from ethereal waxing to raging guitar bombast. As of the latest album, the band has developed into an accessible, melodic project in the vein of the Yellowjackets, lacquering on semi-ethnic rhythms while David Wilczewski's sax gently sweeps. Smith's good name is, no doubt, the band's selling point, but the drummer resists the temptation to put his kit up front. Instead of dispensing flash, Smith meshes with the hired hands on percussion and sticks to the business of keeping the groove in check.

"For the music that was written, that was the most mature drumming I could do," he comments. "I see myself as a frontman kind of drummer, as well as a functional kind of drummer. It's hard to describe; whatever the music calls for, I'll do—so I didn't showboat or try to feature myself.

"The other thing is, we changed the name of the band to Vital Information, without my name on it. It has more of a group sound and not just like a drummer's record. But then I still stuck in those [drum solo] segues where I really played and stretched out. I wanted to get that in there, and that seemed to be the best way to do it."

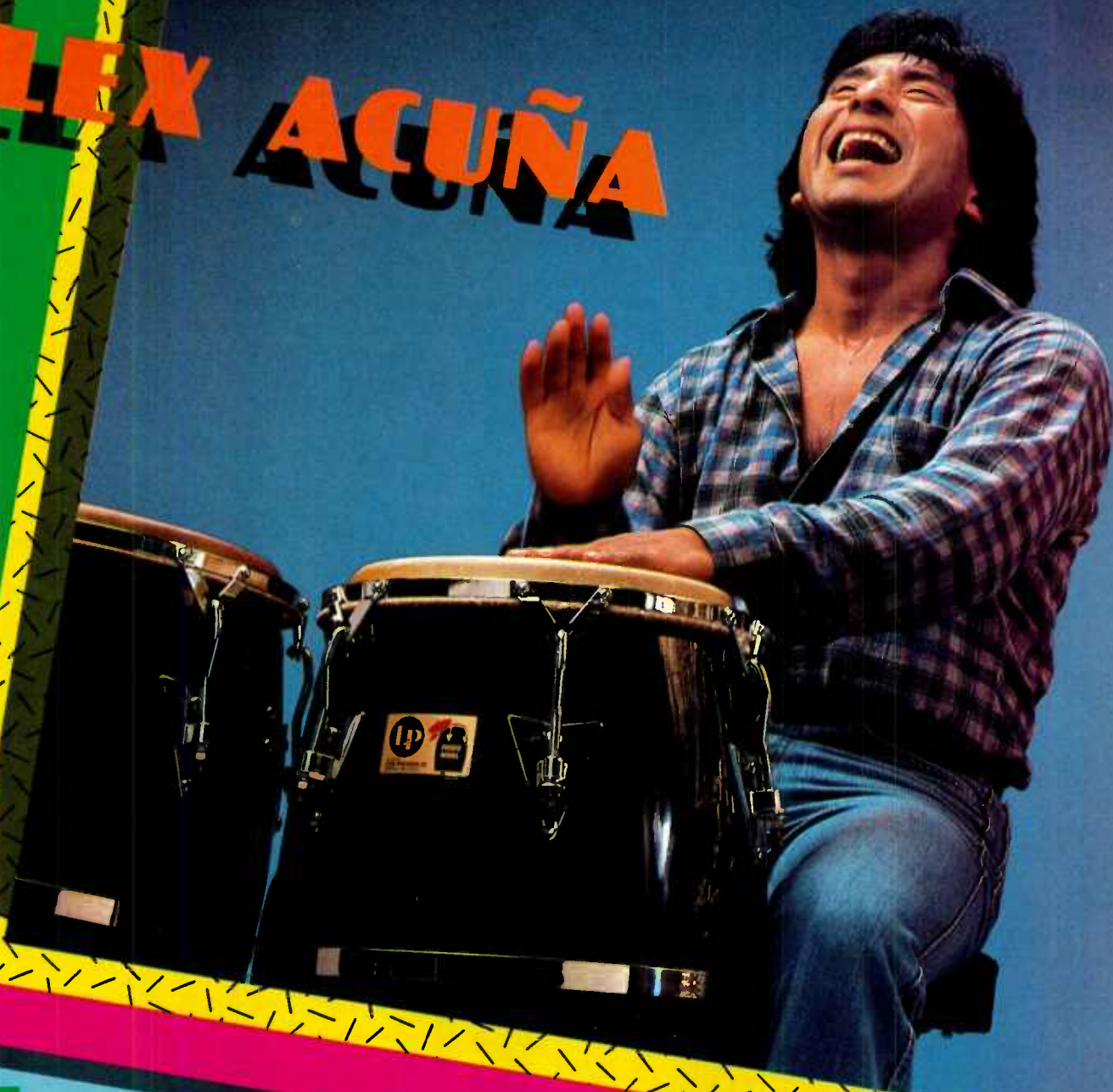
It could be that Smith is applying the lesson of economy and concision of energy imparted through his rock days. The approach changes from the vinyl to the live experience, as well. "When I'm playing a record, there's a different criterion," he insists. "I'm trying to capture a really good performance on tape that will live on; I want to be controlled and smooth and real relaxed sounding, so it bears repeated listenings. But live, I want to be all those things—to feel good and be relaxed—yet at the same time, I really want to generate incredible



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BY JOSEF WOODARD

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energy and excitement. I'll take chances on things and sometimes I'll blow it, too. I wouldn't do that on a record."

It's doubtful that many arena rock bashers spent as much time as Smith studying jazz greats at close range. As a young Bostonian raised on jazz drums, Smith lived around the corner from the Jazz Workshop and could be found there frequently, soaking in the lessons of Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, Eric Gravatt...and, at a tender age, the straighter, sterner stuff of Buddy Rich.

At age nine, Smith found himself immersed in jazz, while his pals were gorging on the 60s rock revolution. Smith's parents linked him up with Bill Flanagan

(no relation to *Musician's* own), a drum teacher who had studied with George Lawrence Stone, author of the *Stick Control* book of exercises—a near-biblical reference book for drummers. Smith plunged into this jazz-intensive realm.

"Innocently enough, that's how I learned to be a jazz drummer. Being nine years old and starting at that point, I figured, 'This is the way it is.' I didn't choose it; it just happened to me. The background is rooted there. Growing up, in high school I found Cream and Hendrix—I got into rock 'n' roll as well."

Smith's interests broadened as he expanded his technical vocabulary and learned about musical realities. While

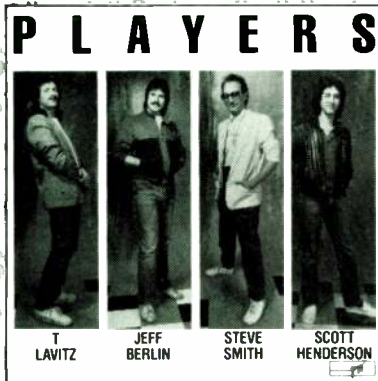
still in high school, he became a young recruit in the jazz band at neighboring Bridgewater State College on the south shore of Boston. There he met fellow ringers bassist Tim Landers and saxist Wilczewski, with whom he kept contact and later invited to be Vital Informers.

"At about the same time, I was playing in a rock band. I also had my tuxedo and played weddings with an accordion and clarinet player. Whatever. I didn't take the route of the guy struggling, trying to make it with a bar band. I was always the jazz guy that was a sideman. That continued while I was going to Berklee—playing as much as I could."

During his four-year stay at Berklee—from 1972 to '76—Smith had as classmates many of the musicians who would, in the 80s, comprise a second generation of fusion aces. Smith remembers with fondness the noisy halls where he was sharing practice rooms with the likes of Mike Stern, Neil Stubenhaus, Jeff Berlin, Casey Schuerel and John Robinson. "These were my best buds," Smith recalls. "We used to play all the time. I

continued on page 108

FROM GOOD ALBUMS COME GOOD PLAYERS



T
LAVITZ

JEFF
BERLIN

STEVE
SMITH

SCOTT
HENDERSON

Bill Bruford's Earthworks



EARTHWORKS

Django Bates Iain Ballamy Mick Hutton

SMITH'S SMITHY

For his acoustic foundation, Smith plays a Sonor Signature kit with an ebony finish. His 22-by-18-inch bass drum, 14- and 16-inch toms and a 6½-inch snare are fitted with Remo clear Ambassador heads on the bottoms and pin stripes on the tops, with the exception of the snare, for which he prefers the Remo Emperor Rough Coat. Zildjians are the cymbals of choice, with a 20-inch K ride and 13-inch K/Z high-hat.

While not an avowed advocate of technology, Smith has gradually integrated electronics into his setup. "It's part of being a modern drummer," he says. "I still like the acoustic drums. I'm just going to augment the acoustics with electronics. I don't like playing an all-electric set. With the Journey records, they wanted me to use electronics, so I used the Dynacord stuff. With Steps, they wanted me to have an electronic setup, and that's when I put a rack together."

The rack, a 22-space model, houses a Kawai mixer, a Dynacord Add-One, a Dynacord Percuter, a Roland SRV-2000 digital reverb, a Korg SDD-3000 digital delay, a Simmons SDS5 and a Marc MX1+ pickup system. The Simmons is triggered from the tom toms, while the Dynacord Add-One triggers from the kick and snare. His Percuter pads offer sampled percussion sounds—cowbells, timbales, tambourines, cabasa, etc. He uses Peavey sound reinforcement.

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ROOKIE SENSATION: MANU KATCHE

Big time. I'm on my way, I'm making it," sings Peter Gabriel, as his drummer brings a tight smile to pursed lips, laying the foundation for the coliseum- and chart-shaking funk. Manu Katche is smiling a lot these days, and not just at bassist Tony Levin's dome as it prowls the stage before him. The Big Time? "Yes, it's big for me. It's very, very big. It's a dream," says the Paris-born Katche in a thick French accent that can't hide his sincerity.

"I was a big fan of Peter and of Genesis, and I couldn't think that I'd be able to play with him today." So shocked was

Manu that he first didn't believe the message from Peter Gabriel left on his answering machine last year. "I didn't trust it at first," he says. "I thought it was a joke." Katche jokes a lot as he walks the cavernous halls of the Oakland Coliseum before the performance, but tries to disguise his joy during the show, where he mixes solid, Stax-influenced rhythm and blues grooves like "Sledgehammer" with dramatic tom tom runs, adding sampled drum and percussion effects to some African-based rhythm arrangements that use talking drums, surdu, congas and calabash.

"With a song like 'Sledgehammer,' we found that it was just playing for fun," says Katche, lighting a cigarette and folding his legs on the table in front of him. "Music is fun. It should make your head move. I like to groove. I like to swing. When I play I like to move on the drums. And when it's working you see the other musicians moving also. Maybe a different way of moving, but they're moving. And for me, I think,

'Okay, that works,' because they're moving and really into the beat."

Movement has always been an important part of Katche's life. At the age of five, his parents started him in classical dance. "That was difficult for me, because I was shy," Katche recalls. "But I liked it very much. I still like to watch dance: classical, jazz or ballet. And whenever I play percussion or piano, even if it's classical music, I kind of move. It's hard to explain, but it's like

grooving. Even if it's classical music."

Manu studied classical piano from age seven to ten, and at fifteen enrolled in the Conservatory of Music in Paris to begin studies as a percussionist. At the Conservatory, Katche was listening to American and British pop, as well as jazz-rock fusion. By the time

he started playing the drums on his own at seventeen, Katche says he was listening mostly to African music and American jazz. After graduating from the Conservatory, he passed an entrance exam for France's equivalent of the Juilliard School of Music, but waived admission to continue teaching himself jazz/fusion.

As Katche sharpened his skills on the drum set, he began getting called for studio work in Paris. He recorded and toured with French star Michelle Jonasz for six years, and at the age of twenty-eight is a battle-hardened veteran of the French session scene. He might find it hard going back to that after doing Gabriel's extravaganza, but maybe he won't have to. Since recording most of the *So* album with Gabriel in Bath, England, Katche has done Joni Mitchell's new record and a soon-to-be-released project by Robbie Robertson, which, like *So*, was produced by Daniel Lanois.

Bassist Larry Klein worked with Katche on Gabriel's album and Amnesty International tour, as well as on Joni's record, and finds the drummer refreshing. "When most American drummers hear a song and are trying to figure out how to approach it, they think in terms of certain preset idiomatic directions, beat-wise," Klein says. "When they hear the song they try to find a category to put it in and then apply this preset beat. Whereas Manu is a lot freer in the way he thinks about a song, in that he listens to the pushes and the accents and all the different things going on in the music, and formulates an approach from scratch instead of reverting to preset ideas. It's much easier to get something innovative or new sounding when you're working with someone who has that kind of intuition, because a lot of playing on a record is intuitive magic."

Magic had nothing to do with Katche getting the call from Gabriel to help on the *So* album. Manu had worked a session for a French singer with Tony Levin in Paris, and was one of the only musicians on the job who spoke English, so he wound up talking with the bassist most of the time. When Gabriel's regular drum-



Peter Gabriel's French Discovery Is Turning Heads with his Fresh Ears and Hot Hands.

BY ROBIN TOLLESON



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mer, Jerry Marotta, couldn't tour, Levin recommended Katche. And when Gabriel also heard raves about Manu from a trusted Senegalese musician, he invited the drummer to play on his record without hesitation. "It didn't look like an audition," says Katche. "It was really like I was there to play and record. That was the feeling I had, and it helped. I could give more, feeling that he trusted me. Peter knows how to handle you without being hard. He says to play what you feel, and we'll discuss it.

"All the people like Peter, Tony, Joni Mitchell—they're very simple and humble, no problems," continues Manu. "That's my big, big lesson. Most of the time in France, singers have to have it their own way, and don't respect you as a musician, don't have any consideration. But the people I've met here, Peter or Joni or the musicians, are really different. These people take the time to explain things to you. They respect you and have consideration for you. And after we cut a track they would say, 'Come on, Manu, what do you think of the guitar?' Or, 'What do you think of the keyboard?' You're very involved, and I think that's the most important thing. If you think, 'I'm really with those guys,' then it's like a band. You just want to play and give what you can give."

Katche went to the Gabriel session expecting to play on two cuts, and wound up playing on practically the whole record. But it wasn't all easy for the drummer. "I remember at first during the rehearsals I was lost because I was listening to Peter's voice, and to what David Sancious (keyboards) or Tony Levin was doing. But Peter said, 'That's okay, Manu. Just play it like you hear it.' He was really with me and helped me a lot. In the studio in France you have to make two songs in two hours. In English or American work it's more laid back, because you've got more money. I was not really used to working this way at first. It gave me a little more trust in myself, because it was exciting to get to work on the same album with Jerry Marotta and Stewart Copeland."

Working on the Joni Mitchell record was also an exciting project for Manu. "She wrote the lyrics, and would explain their meaning and what she wanted to hear," he says. "It was not work. It wasn't play—it was just human contact. The musicians really wanted to speak together and have a good time."

Mitchell had used drum machines rather heavily on her previous album,
continued on page 94

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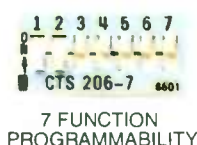
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Dog Eat Dog, but this time chose to keep technology at a minimum, or more importantly to keep human ideas flowing at the maximum. "You don't have to ignore drum machines, it's a part of our technology now. Peter was one of the first using a drum machine, and it can be very interesting. But I don't think it's very interesting if you program a drum machine instead of use a drum part. If you think, 'I'm not going to use that drummer because he's too expensive or it's going to take a long time,' I don't think that's a good way. With Joni we used drum machines, but in a lot of different ways—a lot of programming of percussion and

drums, more like what Peter does."

In the show with Gabriel, Kathe plays along with the Linn 9000 and an Akai S900 sampling machine. "I'm used to the drum machine," Manu says. "I practice using a metronome, and in the studio I use a click track in my headphones. I like to play without the drum machine, but it doesn't bother me. I'm not listening to the drum machine, just hearing it and moving inside it. I think that's a different way of working and it's very good. 'Cause sometimes you are playing a very basic beat and can program in some percussion to play along with, or you can program the machine to

play a simple beat and then you don't have to play two and four every time."

Most of the Linn 9000 programming was done by Gabriel, who was involved in sampling all sounds used on *So*. "It's not like common drum patterns; he uses percussion and other things. Peter plays drums too, but he doesn't think with the limits of a drummer, so he programs in different ways. It's hard to play off the parts sometimes because it doesn't click on the first downbeat, so sometimes I wonder where I am. But that's fun. I really think it's a different approach to drumming. You have a new element that you can depend on to play two and four while you fill and play more classical-type drums. It's more free for you to play."

During Gabriel's live show, the drum technician changes the programs of sampled sounds because Kathe doesn't have time to keep up with that and play. "We sampled from Peter's older records, like 'Biko' or 'San Jacinto' for the kick and the tom," says the drummer. There are no electronic drum pads onstage to trigger the sampled sounds—the triggers are up near the batter head, on the inside shell of his acoustic drums. "When you hit the rim you get the sound of the sample, when you hit the skin you get the sound of the drum and the sample. I'm not really into pads. They hurt me a lot, to tell you the truth. I like to play acoustic drums, and I know for sure that you can work fast enough on acoustic drums and trigger what you want."

As this leg of the Gabriel tour nears an
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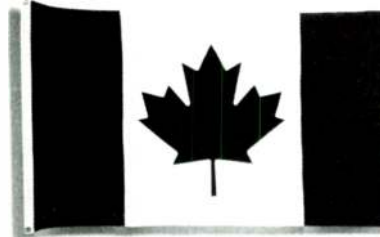
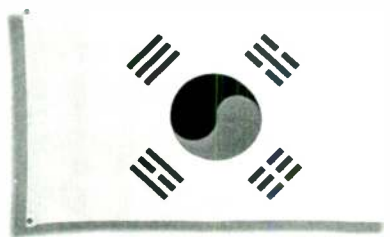
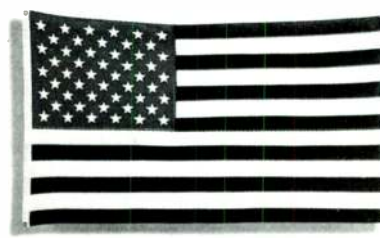
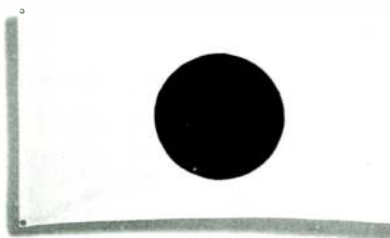
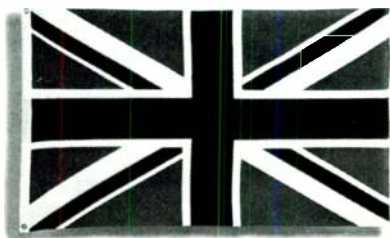
KATCHE'S CANS

I play a Pearl kit," says Kathe. "Pearl toms, kick and hardware. The cymbals are Zildjian. I love Zildjian. And the snare is a 7½-inch-deep Noble and Cooley hardwood. It's a wonderful snare. The guy from Zildjian brought it to me and wanted me to try it. I usually like big snares and metal snares, but I tried this one, handmade, and the sound! The sticks I'm using are a Rock model by Calato. I sweat a lot, so I put tape on the sticks for grip."

"Manu's triggering system is a home-made setup," says DT (né David Taraskevics), Peter Gabriel's drum technician. "It's a Simmons pickup on the drums, and that runs to a Roland Octapad to get a MIDI note number. So each tom and the kick drum have a note number when that's triggered. That ends up going through a Garfield Drum Doctor, and eventually ends up in an Akai S900 sampler, which is where the sounds are emitted from."

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BILL BRUFORD'S FEARLESS "BRITISH JAZZMEN"



It's Back to the Clubs for the Percussionists' Drummer, Who Finds Art on a Budget Can Be Fun.

BY FRED GOODMAN

If Bill Bruford is to be believed, something is going on in Great Britain's clubs.

Bruford ought to know. After walking away from Yes as they approached the apex of their commercial success to drum through the more challenging Frippian modes of King Crimson, there was little room to question whether the percussionist was searching for the music or the moo-lah. There were also the fine bands under his own name with guitarists Allan Holdsworth and John Clark, bassist Jeff Berlin and keyboardist Dave Stewart—plus a stint with Genesis, a reanimated

King Crimson and an acoustic sparring with keyboardist Patrick Moraz that produced two underrated albums and duet tours. Obviously, we're talking about a man who knows where the action is.

Nor is it just the bands. Bruford's ability to find the heartbeat of any time signature sometimes masks his endless dedication to color, timbre and shading, traits that make him less a drummer's drummer than a percussionist's drummer. One of the earliest disciples of electronic drumming, Bruford seems ready to greet every new technological advance with an enthusiasm normally reserved for the invention of the wheel.

But it is not the chimera that "new is better" that Bruford chases, rather the aural vision of new rhythm, new color. If he

finds it in a MIDI-capable drum, then that's where he finds it. And if he finds it in a hand-made, primitive instrument that he whirls around his head, then that's where he finds it, too. On his new album, *Earthworks*, Bruford finds some of what he's looking for with the help of a musical arsenal that includes both of those instruments. And oh yes, he also found a band.

Which brings us back to Bruford's claim that something is going on in his native U.K. That something, he says, is a new generation of British-born jazz musicians developing their own sound.

"Since the war, when visiting American jazz musicians came over, the British have been considered inferior jazz musicians," Bruford says. "And rightly so. But over the last five years,



that's changed. The kids know the music. Nobody knows how—there aren't any schools for it or anything like the U.S. fusion academies. But they have enough confidence in themselves now to do something besides going to Ronnie Scott's to gape at Wayne Shorter."

Well, if you've got to gape at somebody, Wayne

Shorter isn't a bad choice. And there's even some evidence that the saxophonist was a prime influence on Great Britain's most celebrated young jazz musician, reedman Courtney Pine. The twenty-two-year-old Pine is reminiscent of a certain set of young American trumpet- and saxophone-playing brothers in that he has outstanding technical abilities and is firmly rooted in the music's bop era. Yet Pine just doesn't strike you as being significantly different from American jazz musicians. Bruford's band *Earthworks*, however, is another matter.

"*Earthworks* is British jazz," Bruford says. "I think that over the years jazz has evolved from its uniquely American origins to a more international music. If there's something distinctly British in the music of *Earthworks*, then we've done our job."

What separates the young players in Great Britain from their counterparts in the Colonies? A good deal, Bruford says.

"These guys are disgustingly self-assured and have a lot of poise," he says. "But study they do not. They listen like crazy, and they're happy with their feelings. And I think it's because there has been no scene in the U.K. In England, if you're a young musician you're going to starve anyway, so you might as well keep your dignity."

"Some of it also is a response to the Trevor Horn corporate and accounting productions," he adds. "These kids can't afford the equipment and they know they'll never sound that good, so they eschew it. The whole thing is kind of like punk that way. It's hard to get them to play a lot of notes because they're afraid of sounding like fusion players. And what they want to play is muddled in with a lot of the third world music and political stuff going on now."

The disgustingly self-assured line-up Bruford's *Earthworks* boasts is saxophonist Iain Bellamy, keyboardist and trumpeter Django Bates and bassist Mick Hutton. Bates and Bellamy come to the group from Loose Tubes, a twenty-one-piece jazz orchestra, and have also worked with the Charlie Watts



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big band. And it would be impossible to miss Bruford's point about their lack of fear after even the most cursory listen: the *Earthworks* album travels a terrain of vast influences from North African-inflected melodies to ECM-esque ballads to out-and-out blowers. It's pretty obvious that these guys can do it all.

Although Bruford likes to point to the album's brass band-influenced "Up North" as one of the more distinctly British touches, it may be that *Earthworks* is more Britannia than British, drawing from the four corners of the globe for something to make life warmer

and spicier on a dreary London night.

But there's also another factor that separates *Earthworks* from the scene that produced Courtney Pine, and that's Bruford himself and his quest to master the emerging technology associated with his instruments. At this point in his career, it seems unlikely that Bruford would undertake anything that didn't afford him the opportunity to continue exploring electronic drums and other new devices.

"In *Earthworks* we take a slightly different tack than someone like Courtney would," he says. "We're making a horri-

ble mess of some perfectly nice samples and access to technology."

To do that, Bruford enlisted the aid of former bandmate Dave Stewart, who helped set up the samples. Along with vocalist Barbara Gaskin, with whom Stewart works and records extensively, Stewart was able to provide Bruford with precisely what he was looking for. "On one of the album's tracks, 'It Needn't End In Tears,' we used samples of Barbara's voice, pedaled back and forth slowly, to create a kind of gaseous effect," says Bruford. "It's how you want to offset a saxophone solo in 1987."

Although Bruford used acoustic drums and "whirled" instruments, the drumming on *Earthworks* is heavily electronic. "Electronic drums were brutal to play at their invention," he says. "I know, I was there. They had gotten a lot better by 1986, and for the first time a drummer was MIDI capable."

"I marvelled at this. I mean, at last I could use my instrument as a composing tool. And the horn players who work with me are equally excited by the developments for the drums. They want to hear something besides 'ding-ding-ding' going on behind what they're playing."

As a member of *Earthworks*, Bruford sees his job largely as "providing an electronic middle for the warm top and bottom provided by the horns and bass. The use of upright bass is deliberate, to distance the group from fusion."

Bruford could have his pick of projects, but takes satisfaction from the fact that the group "had to earn our recording contract." With a tour of Japan already under their belts, *Earthworks* will be hitting U.S. shores this summer for a modest tour. Nor was the recording process a lavish affair. "We were all together in this tiny studio," Bruford recalls. "We had to put the sax out in the lobby—you can even hear a telephone ringing in the sax channel on one of the album's tracks. And we had to go with a take that includes a dead bass drum mike on another. Tunes like 'Pressure' were done live unless they needed choreography between the different drums or there were logistical problems. Wherever possible, playing live is what these guys do best. There was very little splicing. I guess the record's budget was a discipline itself."

Bruford, who enjoys a longstanding relationship with Simmons Drums (he's something of a Chuck Yeager-type for their new gear), is able to work with a level of sophisticated equipment that few musicians can match.

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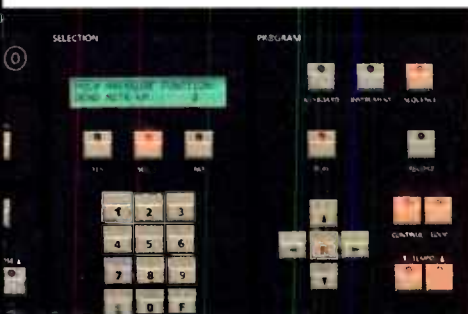
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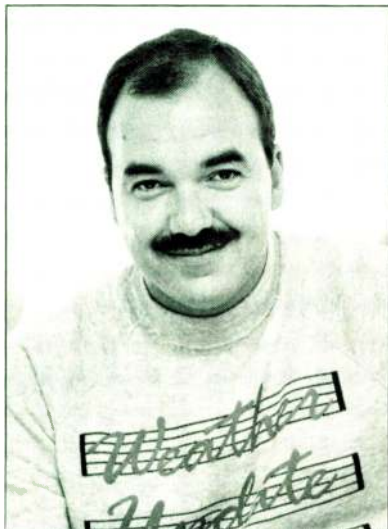
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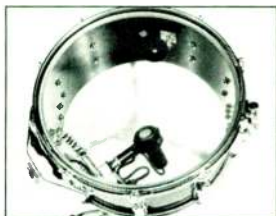
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He recently participated in a heavily electronic date for ECM, backing guitarist David Torn on the *Cloud About Mercury* album. Torn, a Woodstock, N.Y.-based player, is developing into one of the more distinctive electronic voices on guitar. The rest of the band featured Mark Isham on trumpets and synthesizer, and Bruford's former King Crimson mate Tony Levin on Chapman Stick and synthesizer bass. For his parts, Bruford relied exclusively on Simmons and synthesizer drums.

Bruford feels that the cost of new technology and instruments is leaving many creative young British musicians far behind their American counterparts. "I'm fortunate because I have access to Simmons," he says. "But in London, a sax player is still a sax player."

Although Bruford gets to play whatever Simmons can build, he has found that even Wonderland has its problems. "My instrument is less developed than a lot of other ones," he says. "I can't settle with it because they keep developing it and the one they have next week is more seductive than the one that I've just learned to use. The SDX is "infinitely playable under stick control."

"I'm working as fast as I can," Bruford says with a resigned laugh, "and I feel like I'm doing my best. It was fun to talk with Torn about this—about how staying up with this stuff and being a bandleader is hard. But it's my work." ■

DRUMWORKS

The eclectic nature of Earthwork's repertoire requires an equally diverse percussion setup. "Simmons has been very helpful," Bruford says.

For electronic drums, Bill has been calling 40 different MTM MIDI interface patches onstage. He uses a 12-pad Simmons set, and a Simmons SDS7 brain. A Yamaha DX21 synthesizer is also used, although it is kept offstage "to make life a little easier." Other electronic equipment includes a Yamaha SPX90 multieffects and a Combo amplifier. There's also a Korg SG-1 sampling grand, an Ensoniq Mirage, Yamaha DX7 and "a couple of (Sequential Circuits) Prophets."

For acoustic drums, he uses a Tama Superstar set with Paiste cymbals and a back rack "for call-and-response between drums and cymbals." He uses Pro-Mark sticks. And the "whirled instruments" are made for Bruford by a London performance artist. They are metal with rubber bands wrapped around them to create various pitches when whirled over the player's head.



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Most drummers cross the sound barrier at one time or another in their careers. Maybe it happens after the third hour in the studio, hitting the same tom over and over while the engineer struggles to get just the right tone. Perhaps it comes at a big outdoor show, when crummy miking and a ham-handed sound mixer wrecks your whole performance. Or it could come at a small club, when the whole band has to turn down and your kit just doesn't sound the same when you can't slam-dunk it. Crossing the sound barrier is that sudden, irrevocable realization that technique is only half the game, and that what comes out of your kit is as important as all that practice you put into it. And once you make that breakthrough, no matter how much acoustic drums remain your first love, you're ready for electronics.

Of course, we've been pitching the merits of electrification for some years now, but the last six or eight months have witnessed an absolute explosion, especially MIDI percussion. It used to be that going electro meant picking up one company's kit and learning to love it. Now any self-respecting contemporary setup will mix all kinds of pads, pickups, interfaces, drum brains, samplers, synths and even, incredibly enough, miked acoustic drums. In addition to drum-like playing pads, we've seen electronic cymbals, electro marimbas and vibes, MIDI shaker/maracas, a guitar-like "rhythm stick" and even the now-legendary MIDI body percussion suit, complete with kick drum on your foot.

But since this may sound too much like a commercial for technology, let's begin with the drawbacks of electronics. It is a bit less immediate a medium, both in getting everything set up and working right, and in that an electronic sound is always just slightly removed in time from that moment the stick hits the pad. Exactly how removed is still debated—can you really hear a couple of milliseconds of delay? Most players can't hear it, but can somehow feel it. Still, compared with the time lags encountered in synthesized/MIDI guitar, bass, wind and even keyboard instruments, percussion is blazingly fast—something about a stick hit-



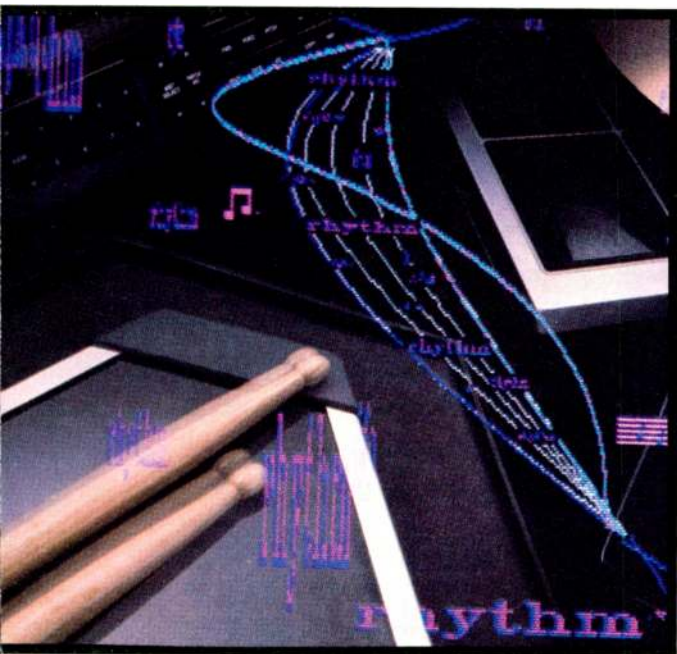
ting a hard surface is very definable and convertible. Newer, more sensitive playing surfaces can also pick up subtle dynamic shifts that used to be indistinguishable.

But the problems of system setup, reliability and ongoing improvement are easily overcome. Expect to lose some playing time in solving knotty little problems created by bad cords, poor reinforcement systems and occasional micro-freak-outs (even the most extreme champions of MIDI will admit it isn't like plugging a guitar into an amp and letting fly). And that ham-handed sound mixer could still ruin your whole day. But if you've already crashed through that all-important sound barrier, you know it's worth the headaches. And who knows, maybe it'll keep you from being bounced off the album by that big-time producer who favors drum machines.

The world of electronic percussion gear is divided into four functions: pads and triggers, which send a voltage signal; sound sources that play when the trigger signals tell them to; trigger-to-MIDI interfaces, which convert the voltage signal to MIDI digital information; and sound sources that play when MIDI information tells them to. Some kits combine all four functions; other products do only one thing and need to be fitted into a system. If you bought a decent non-MIDI electro-drum kit a year ago, for instance, you've got functions one and two. Add three and four and you're state of the art, baby. If you've got functions one and three, on the other hand (pads going right to a MIDI interface), you can dispense with function two and go directly to a MIDI sound source.

What exactly does the trigger consist of? At its most basic, it's a transducer piezo pickup mounted to pad; smash the pad, the electrons in the sensor get all agitated and push a voltage signal down your basic guitar cord. A trigger can be anything from an acoustic drum with the transducer pickup mounted to the head, all the way to incredibly sophisticated controllers. Although all triggers send electrical current, not all are equal and interchangeable. While many send voltage to trigger a drum note and otherwise send nothing, some keep constant voltage going and trigger the note by interrupting that voltage. Always try a brain or interface with the pad you plan to use when buying anything, or you could be unpleasantly surprised.

The evolutionary tide in pad design



With MIDI Now a Big Part of 1987's Electronic Equation, Systems and Samples Are In, Boredom Is Out.

BY JOCK BAIRD

has gone inexorably toward a floating head scheme, putting the pad surface on foam mounting so it has some give. This also isolates it from floor and stand vibrations (even the successful Roland alpha-Drum pad was recently redesigned in a floating suspension system). One of the virtues claimed for the Yamaha PMCI pads is that they float a tad more, allowing the player to really smack 'em without a huge volume increase. Pad playing surfaces have also steadily evolved toward rubber rather than the brittle, "riot-proof" plastic heads of earlier years, although some kits use a plastic film similar to regular plastic drumheads. The Swedish ddrum won a number of converts by using regular tensionable drumheads with hoops; mounted over foam discs, they can be tightened with a garden-variety drum key. The ddrum also has an unusual 45-degree angle bass pedal worth trying out.

The most striking development in pads has been in the area of pickup placement. In your basic unit, the volume of the strike is unnaturally dependent on how near the transducer you hit it. There's also only one sound per pad. The SDS9's snare broke the one-pad, one-sound tradition with a separate pickup on the pad's edges for a rim shot or timbales sound; the ddrum and Dynacord snares have incorporated this feature as well. The new Roland PD-31 snare pad goes these two better by putting a different trigger on all three edges as well as the center for four separate outputs. But the biggest breakthrough in sounds per pad comes courtesy of the new Simmons SDX's "zone intelligence" system. It divides each drumhead into sixteen zones, and has the capability of putting different sounds on each. An electronic steel drum? Sure, if you wanted one, but a more subtle use of zone intelligence is to reproduce the specific tone of an acoustic drum, which sounds different closer to the edge than near the center. By recording the exact sound at any given spot on the head and putting it on the same spot of the SDX pad, you can build a perfect electronic model of an acoustic drum that lets you use all your hard-won acoustic-based technique.

Simmons has also come up with an alternative to one-dimensional transducer pickups. Incorporated into the SDX, it consists of two plastic laminates, each with a printed circuit on one side. The two printed circuits are laid face to face, and then the electronic voltage sent out is altered when a stick pushes the two surfaces closer together. The SDX pads' sensors send two separate sets of infor-



Futurist now: Simmons SDX

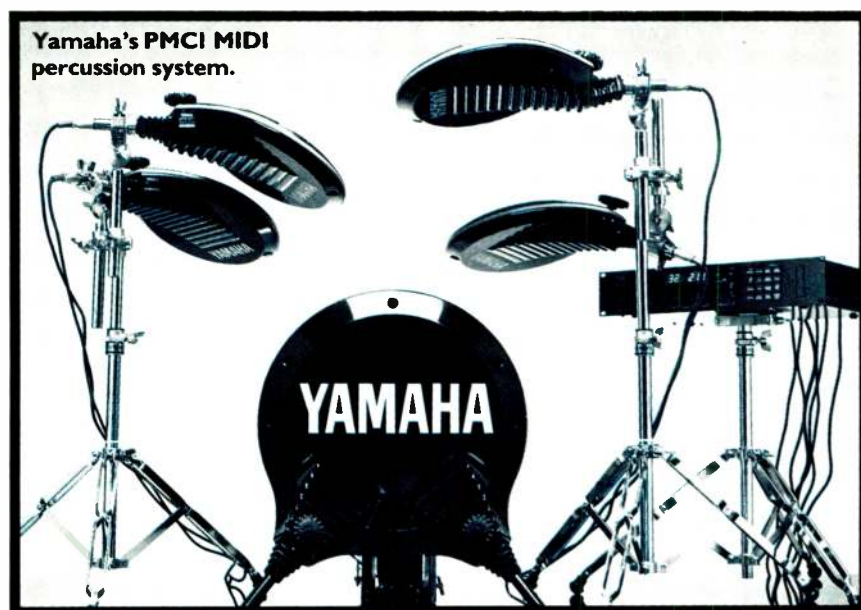
mation: velocity and location on the pad—the sixteen zones are actually printed on the circuits. These two sets of information are then digitally interpolated according to how you set up the kit. This double-laminate force-sensing pickup scheme—unzoned—is also found on the Simmons Silicon Mallet.

So much for the first of our four ingredients. Now we need some voices for the pads to trigger, and these are usually provided by a drum kit "brain." The most common of these are simple analog synthesizers which electronically create an oscillator and then filter and amplify it. You can tune it, change the decay or attack envelopes, add pitch bends if desired, and mix in noise, the electronic equivalent of snare wires. Most brains allow you to store and recall how you've set up your drum kit, although the number of savable kits and the variations in sounds available obviously vary with price. Good-sounding purely analog electro drum kits include the Tama Tech-

star and the Pearl Drum-X and Syncussion-X series (the seminal Simmons SDS5 was also an analog kit). Thankfully, the glut of generic cheapo import analog drum kits has declined in recent years.

Synthesis gave electronic drums its first trendy signature sound (can you hear a SynDrum or Synare now without giggling?) but it was digital sampling that kicked electronics into high gear. Sampling, also called Pulse Code Modulation or PCM, consists of slicing a sound's waveform into micro-second pieces and converting the pieces to numbers which microprocessors can understand and get down with. Thus any real-world sound, from drums to car crashes, can be recorded and triggered at will. Sampling made its first big impact on the percussion world in the form of EPROM chips, which had all the sonic information permanently "burned" in them. To change a sound, you just pull the chip out of its "ZIF" socket and replace it. Custom sounds can be put on an EPROM by small companies, libraries can be purchased, or you can even buy your own programmer from Oberheim or Simmons. Two years ago, EPROMs were the de-facto percussion standard for everything from drum machines to drum kits, and they're still in wide use, but disk drives and cartridges have picked up a lot of the sampling workload.

Electro drum brains use sampling in four ways. First there's the total hybrid, in which every voice uses both analog and sampled voices, the classic model being the Simmons SDS7. The Dynacord ADD-One also has analog sound generators to add to its samples. Then there's the divided hybrid, in which the toms are synthesized and the snare

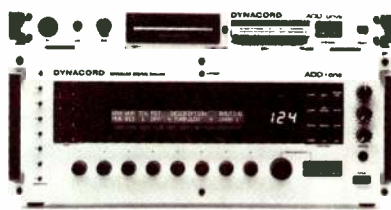


and kick are sampled. The Simmons SDS9 and SDS1000 use this format. All the above are EPROM-based. The Roland DDR-30 alpha-Drum is the progenitor of the third type, completely sample-based using built-in, non-changeable PCM voices. The DDR-30 is limited in that it uses only four basic samples per drum, but it allows you to edit the pants off each by altering any of sixteen parameters like pitch, pitch bend, attack, eq and gating. It's a good example of how much can be done to a sample by modifying the playback.

The final type of sample-based electro drums are also completely sample-based, but allow the user to mix and match custom sounds. The ddrum is one: it uses cartridges adapted from EPROMs and stocks a large library, but to change the sound in any big way you have to burn a new chip. The ddrum's fans say its samples are studio-quality. The \$4000 Dynacord ADD-One brain, which despite its analog options is primarily sample-based, has considerably more playback editing capability, what with 28 parameters to fool with. It can also put thirty sounds on a circuit board and three boards in a unit, so you've got ninety voices on call, including cymbals. If that ain't enough, there are EPROM expansion slots available. But the committed user-sampler will want to get to shell out another \$1200 for the ADD-Drive, a separate disk drive sampling unit. The ultimate sample-based kit, however, may be the Simmons SDX, which has 16-bit sampling at 44.1 kHz (the compact disc standard) and has a Macintosh-power computer to visually edit and assign the sounds. A disk library of all-star samples is also available; sequencing and SMPTE synchronization expansion packages are due later this year. Of course, at upwards of seven grand you pay for what you get.

When looking at a brain's features, you may be confused by the ability to save both "patches" and "kits." One is a sound, the other is how the sounds are tuned and otherwise edited and assigned to the pads. Three toms would probably use the same sound retuned; you could have ten kits using different setups of the same sound. Or you could put three sounds on one kit. Another aspect of programming is the ability to chain non-consecutive kits together so you can step through them onstage with a remote footswitch. Now on to MIDI.

In case you've been on Mars lately, MIDI is a digital protocol through which instruments of many different manufacturers can talk to each other. If you could



Dynacord ADD-One with ADD-Drive

turn a drum pad into what's called a MIDI controller, hitting it would trigger notes on anything from a keyboard synth to a drum machine. The MIDI connection is made with a 5-pin plug similar to a DIN plug—note that MIDI sends no sound, but only data; a controller tells an instrument to play a given note at a given volume, but leaves it up to the second instrument to say what the note will sound like. What does this mean to a drummer?

First off, notice that most of the brains we've been talking about electronically reproduce mainly drums, albeit in interesting ways. But the real breakthrough in electronic percussion is the unlimited vocabulary of sounds you can access through MIDI. Take cymbals. Most sampled drum kits don't have enough memory for a good crash—that can take several seconds to decay natur-



Swedish sample-based ddrum

ally. But full-service samplers have a lot more memory and flexibility and can easily hold gorgeous cymbal sounds. All manner of arcane percussion instruments can be put on disks. You can play pitched instruments, and put whatever note you want on each pad, or even different chords.

Some brains we've been looking at have MIDI implementation as part of the package: the Roland DDR-30, Dynacord ADD-One and Simmons SDS9 brains are all MIDI-ready. The Yamaha PMC1 system has no sounds of its own, but uses MIDI to access other units. If you don't have one of these four you will need a trigger-to-MIDI interface. This is a device that takes the pad's voltage spike

and turns it into a MIDI note. Interfaces have a set of phono plugs coming in and going out; you plug your pads directly into the interface and then connect the lines out to your usual drum brain. Then, by using the MIDI out on the interface, each pad can either drive the brain as before or trigger a separate sound source, or both. Since the DDR-30, ADD-One and SDS9 have MIDI ins, they can also be used as MIDI sound sources. In a big setup, you may not put every pad into the interface—perhaps you'll keep your kick and snare direct to the brain and only MIDI up your toms, leaving more channels free for extra pads.

By now there are an extraordinary number of good interfaces available. The most powerful and flexible is still the \$1200 Simmons MTM. The interface section of the SDS9, despite being eighteen months old, is excellent nonetheless, flawed only by its single-character (with one dot) display. Simmons duplicated most of it, but added a second character in their \$400 TMI. Roland just debuted the PM-16, which has a whopping sixteen trigger ins and outs for its \$595 tag. A nice feature is its concave buttons so it can be controlled with a drumstick. Roland's time-proven Octapad can also be used as a trigger-to-MIDI interface, since it has six trigger ins as well as eight onboard pads. JL Cooper makes the \$650 MIDI Drum Slave interface, with 12 channels. Casio has the DZ-1, an eight-channel \$300 unit made to serve their new DZ-30B and DZ-20S drum pads. And Phi Tech has the Translator 2, at \$250 the most affordable way to hop on the MIDI express. All trigger-to-MIDI interfaces, whether part of a drum brain or free-standing, have to be able to accomplish at least two major functions. For every pad coming in, it must be able to assign a separate channel and MIDI note. Let's look more closely at both jobs.

The MIDI spec has sixteen independent channels. By setting various pads on separate channels, they can talk to different instruments listening on their respective channels. You might have a sampler with cymbals on channel one, a drum machine with Latin percussion on two, and a drum brain (which has to have MIDI in) on channel three. Merely by changing an individual pad's channel, you can change the instrument you're playing—to accomplish all this, though, you have to be in what's called MIDI mode 3, polyphonic, as opposed to omni.

Note assignment is a tad more involved. MIDI converts all musical notes to a number between 1 and 128 (though

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not all interfaces will send all 128). If you want to play a pitched instrument and have each pad play a different note, you use the MIDI note assignment function to put each note on the right pad. Of course, a note could also mean a different sample—in the case of a drum machine, sounds are arbitrarily assigned note numbers, so you change MIDI notes to put the cabasa on the pad instead of the cowbell (on some instruments you could also change the note assignments of the listening instrument). This is not usually a difficult job—the easiest way is to activate the MIDI note function and then step or dial up or down while you keep hitting the pad. Since a drum machine usually has only sixteen voices, you'll hear no sound on some notes.

There are other worthwhile tasks some interfaces can perform. The most interesting involves changing the note assignments according to how hard you hit the pad, sometimes called dynamic pitch shifting. The harder you hit, the higher the note; you could presumably play a melody with this feature. The Yamaha PMCl and the ddrum can both do continuous, a.k.a. crossfaded, dynamic pitch shifts. The SDX can also crossfade samples by reading velocity. Another way to do this is not continuous MIDI note change, but either/or. This is especially useful for samples, because a violin bowed hard is not simply the sound of a violin bowed softly played louder. Thus, if you hit softly, you send the lightly struck drum sample while a hard strike will trigger the sample of your best head being broken. The Simmons MTM sends two different MIDI notes depending on velocity; the Roland PM16 sends three; the ADD-One can send up to eight. Another variation is the Roland DDR-30 and PM-16's ability to change the amount of pitch bend according to velocity.

Sending a patch change by MIDI to another instrument is also a big plus—then you merely change your memory program on the interface so you don't have to reach over to change your listening sound sources. The Yamaha PMCl, Roland DDR-30 and PM-16, Casio DZ-1 and Simmons SDS9, MTM and TMI all do this; the Dynacord and Translator 2 do not. Another slick trick is to take a foot pedal input and send that over MIDI. You'd start by using it as an open/close high hat switch, but by "remapping" it, you could have it control anything from a pitch bend to a patch change. The Dynacord, Casio, Yamaha and Simmons MTM units will all convert pedals to MIDI. Also very useful on an

NEW APPROACHES TO NATURAL DRUMS

Sometimes the price of innovation can be cosmetic chaos. You keep making little improvements in things like hardware and head mounting, and then realize nothing looks like it goes together anymore. That happened to **Tama** in the last year or so, and they decided it was time for a sweeping, unified rede-



sign. The result is the \$3000 **Artstar II** and the \$2000 **Granstar** drum kits, whose most immediately noticeable change is the centerpiece tom holder and its T-shaped Gobot look. It uses what Tama calls an "Omniball" fitting that allows for drum adjustment in any direction. Another new wrinkle is the ability to bring the tom inward and outward without poking a resonance-reducing hole in the drum shell. The rest of the "New Directions" hardware has also been completely redone, from bass drum spurs to rims. Both Artstar II and Granstar share mostly the hardware, though the Artstar has a new lug design that is sonically insulated from the shell—this improves projection and sweetens tone.

The top-of-the-line Artstar II kit is lacquered maple, while the Granstar uses birch with a special sheet covering that's said to take more abuse than conventional finishes. The covering tends to give the Granstar shells their own sound characteristics, not as resonant but with more direct attack. Finishes include pastels with a lot of silver to reflect stage lights. Tama was putting some other new approaches into a snare line called Artwood, which sports a classic, antique look. Using a tuning system designed by custom snare-builder Billy Gladstone, both top and bottom heads on the Artwoods can be tuned from the top, ending those memorable bottom-head adjustments spent fumbling with the key or dropping it on the floor. The "Freedom Lug" design is different, too, raised

above the shell and not resting on it. The Artwoods come in 8-, 6½- and 5-inch depths, and are available in 14- and 9-ply birch and solid and 8-ply maple.

Pearl is another drum maker that's separated their hardware from the snare's shell—they call theirs the "Free Floating System" and offer it on a brass snare. Pearl also has a new chain pedal, the P-880, that has a felt channel for guiding the chain, making the whole pedal quieter. The snare and pedal innovations are part of Pearl's new maple Custom and birch Studio series. Those aren't the only all-new kits, either. **Remo** has the blue-chip Encore and Discovery kits. **Sonor** has the mid-line Performer Plus. And **Yamaha** has the entry-level, rock 'n' roll Power Road kit.

Another acoustic drum rethink is to completely detach the head from the shell and suspend it only from the lugs—**Gary Gauger** tried this and thought the sound was markedly fuller. He invented a pretuned head system that was supported from the rims, and named it, logically, **Rims**. Then he noticed the heads sounded pretty darn good without the drum shells, and thus was born the **Rims Headset**. Both have recently been improved by the addition of tunability.



Shell or no shell, drum miking remains a hot spot of percussion activity. **Beyer** is the latest to enter the fray with a new line of five microphones dedicated to specific drum miking tasks. For snare and high-hat, there's the M 422, with a low-end rolloff to isolate them from kick or floor tom frequencies. The M 422 is compact enough to go right up to the snare for extra crispness. There's also low-end rolloff on the M 420, specialized for rack toms. Then there's the M 380, a high-sound-pressure supercardioid workhorse that's designed for the kick. The M 380 has a figure-eight polar pattern for getting all kinds of variations in kick sound, or to expertly mike a pair of congas or timbales. For floor toms there's the classy M 201, while the MC 713 gold

continued on page 129

A photograph of the band Neil Zlozower performing live on stage. The band consists of four members: a lead singer on the left, a guitarist in the center, a drummer in the background, and a keyboardist on the right. They are illuminated by colorful stage lights.

PAT. APPL'D FOR

interface are line-in attenuation controls, not to be confused with sensitivity controls. This lets you use other input signals like a taped drum part to trigger a MIDI note. The Roland PM-16, Yamaha and Simmons MTM all have this feature.

It's in the area of programmability—saving and loading all those complex new note, channel and whatever assignments you don't want to redo each time—that differences show. The Translator 2 can't save anything—it also has a more limited selection of note assignments than the others. The Casio DZ-1 can only save four setups. While the Roland PM-16 can save 64 setups, the interface in the DDR-30 is only global, that is, MIDI assignments have to be done on top of the stored program, not stored with it. The Yamaha PMC-1 has 32 memory slots, but has a RAM cartridge for 32 more. The Simmons TMI and SDS9 have 40 MIDI setups (the SDS9 stores them with the kit) while the MTM holds 99. The Dynacord ADD-One goes to 128.

The final link in the electro percussion chain are MIDI accessible sound sources, and here's where the real payoff comes. Any sound, any instrument, any sequence, is now yours to command. The industry standard percussion sampler/sequencer is unquestionably the E-mu SP-12; at around \$2800 it's no cheapie, but handles everything from long cymbal sounds to sequenced bass parts. There's also a disk drive option that can put thousands of samples on your kit. Sequential Circuits' new Model 440 is making a bid to take the dedicated percussion computer lead away from the SP-12, and only time will tell whether its SMPTE synchronization features and more powerful sequencer will pull it off.

The world of keyboard samplers has plenty for the percussionist. Units like the Akai S900, the Casio FZ-1, the Roland S-10 and S-50, the Korg DSS-1 and the E-mu E-max all are great values in the \$2000-\$3000 range. And the Ensoniq Mirage still sounds awfully good at around \$1200. You may find a piano keyboard is a luxury and a rack-mount "expander" version suits percussion better. A lot of synthesizers can also produce inventive drum sounds. Yamaha's done a lot of work on FM synthesized percussion sounds, especially for their big-bucks rack the TX816; a new disk library of FM percussion can be loaded through the QX1 sequencer.

Two new MIDI-accessible racks from Simmons are especially worthy of note. One is the SDE, a box of synthesized

percussion voices that includes everything from vibes and glockenspiel to gongs and congas. There are 20 onboard sounds and 40 available through a cartridge. The SDE is a simple MIDI expander unit, but the new Simmons MTX9 is quite a bit more. It combines its MIDI-accessible voices with a very flexible 3-channel mixing system so that you could patch it in-line to an existing electronic drum kit, plugging three toms directly in and then using the thru jacks to send the trigger signals along to a brain. Or you could use it separately as an add-on system to an acoustic or electric kit, or even as a stand-alone percussion station. The MTX9 has thirteen onboard sampled voices which sound terrific, especially mixed with analog toms. You can alter the pitch, decay and echo parameters and put together and save 40 setups. The MTX9, which sells for \$700 without pads and \$900 with, may be the precursor of electronic units that can fit anywhere in the trigger-to-brain-to-MIDI-to-expander signal chain.

One more very important device you can MIDI yourself up to is a sequencer. This could be as basic as a drum machine, to get more human, dynamically subtle drum patterns, or a full-scale computer or hardware sequencer in which the drummer can directly input his own parts. You'll find it infinitely easier to edit, sync and mix in MIDI, and you may not even have to wait those three hours for a decent drum sound.

Electronic percussion is getting so complex, we've probably left out as much as we've included in this walking tour. Now that MIDI has begun stirring the percussion stew and new controllers and new techniques have started appearing every month, it's definitely time to crash through that sound barrier and create your own sonic boom. ▀

SMITH from page 88

wanted to be a sideman with McCoy Tyner or play with Weather Report or John McLaughlin, do something like that. My first opportunity to do that was playing with Jean-Luc Ponty."

Through Jeff Berlin's recommendation, Smith joined the Ponty band and got his first taste of the spotlight. But it was small stakes compared with what lay ahead. According to Smith, though, his rise to Journey came more out of a desire to expand musically than a get-rich-quick impulse. Moving to Los Angeles with Wilczewski, Smith had decided to pursue playing rock instead of jazz, joining up

with Ronnie Montrose.

"Jean-Luc got me into playing with double bass drums, playing loud and strong and playing in big theaters versus little jazz clubs. I really dug that. But I also felt that to make my playing more well-rounded, I needed more rock 'n' roll experience—to make me a better fusion player. I feel that to play great fusion, you have to have roots grounded in jazz and also experience in rock, so you can create your own interpretation of fusion rather than imitating players that have already done that. I don't want to be a second-generation copy."

Montrose's instrumental rock attack served as the opening act for Journey and soon Smith was scooped up into what was to become a bona-fide hit machine. The marriage began on solid ground. "When it started, the reason I worked out so well as the drummer for the band was that they were still playing the older material which was like rock fusion, as well as breaking in the newer material, which was pop rock. I could fit both genres. Perry really wanted R&B rock 'n' roll grooves, which I could do. Then Neil thought he was John McLaughlin, so I could do the fusion thing with him and everybody was happy.

"What the turning point was on that last record was that we didn't write the music collectively. We had written everything as a band, but this time the three writers wrote everything with drum machine and synth bass. The parts were etched in stone. I was thinking, 'Hey, wait a minute; this is a group?'"

"All of a sudden I was demoted from being a band member to like a session guy. That just didn't work out, because I'm *not* a session guy. I'm a band member and I have a certain way of approaching tunes. I had my own interpretation, which, to them—or basically to Perry—wasn't what he wanted to hear. He wanted Larry Londin to play the stuff. 'Okay, that's great, but do it on your own record. This is a Journey record. Are you producing yourself or [a Journey] record?' He ended up producing himself, so I got produced right out of the record. That ended that."

Was Smith, then, a victim of technology? "No, I wouldn't say that. I was a victim of people not continuing with the band spirit. People trying to take over a situation that was a collective energy. Okay, they used technology, but I'm not a victim of technology because technology doesn't do it by itself."

Integrity or not, the prospect of leaving a lucrative position for what would

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surely be more modest circumstances must seem the tail end of a Faustian pact. "It was a very difficult thing to walk away from," Smith admits. "The money involved was so much that it's incredibly persuasive. I put up with a lot of abuse because of that. In retrospect, it wasn't a good thing to do and I should've walked away from it earlier. But I didn't and I learned the hard way."

Smith—determined to reclaim his jazz roots—wasn't without employment long. He embarked on a clinic tour for Sonor drums, but was interrupted by a phone call from Michael Brecker on behalf of Steps Ahead. Peter Erskine had

left the band to play in Weather Update. Smith's subsequent stint with Steps was something of a trial by fire for the drummer, whose jazz credentials were not entirely recognized. A gig at New York's Bottom Line last October found him neatly in the band's rhythmic pocket, with a commanding response from crowd and press.

Released from his arena duty, Smith professes to have a new lease on musical life. His connection to rock, though, is not entirely severed. In addition to playing with Vital Info, he plans to record with Ahmad Jamal and possibly appear on a live Steps Ahead album. Smith recently

cut an instrumental heavy metal album with guitarist Tony McAlpine and bassist Billy Sheehan for the Shrapnel label. It might seem that Smith is now back on track, reasserting his musical evolution after a long, fruitful detour journey.

Smith sees it differently. "What I wanted to do eight years ago was play rock 'n' roll. So I've been doing what I wanted to do all along. If I just started to do this eight years ago, forget about it. Who would even want to hear me? 'Who is this unknown guy, trying to do this?'" he laughs gustily.

"Plus, what would I base my playing on? I just didn't have enough experience to be this far evolved. I needed all this stuff to get to this place." ❧

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KATCHE from page 94

end, the drummer plans to go back to Paris and work with Preface, the pop band he had formed there before he was called by Gabriel. The group is working on its first album after releasing a single in France on Phonogram. Katche wears the hats of composer, arranger, producer, drummer and vocalist in the keyboard-guitar-drums trio, and describes the music as between Steely Dan and Scritti Politti. "We have our own style, but it takes time," he says.

Katche is not the hulking figure of a Stewart Copeland on the drums, but he nevertheless 'plays tall,' lifting his arms so high that he was actually playing down on the bells of his cymbals during Gabriel's set, sometimes raising his left hand demonstratively before coming down with a backbeat as if conducting his band-mates, leaning forward and back while singing into a headset microphone. As powerful as he is on "Red Rain," splaying cymbals abuzz and laying into the toms, and as strong as his march is on "No Self Control," leading to a manic, full-throttle, skin-bursting climax, much of Manu Katche's beauty is in how he can back off, let down and play a drum part so tastefully as to highlight everything around it—as on the track featuring Kate Bush, "Don't Give Up."

"Peter suggested just a kick, high-hat and cymbal. I told him that I heard it in 4/4 rather than 3/4, and he said 'go for it.' I like those kind of drum parts where it's not burying everything, it's just into the music. I like that way of playing the drums," smiles Katche. "I think it's more like playing keyboards, like melody. Instead of always bashing, it's more musical." ❧



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WALLACE

from page 85

as a reference and start concentrating on the song. That's what it's all about.

"When I play a particular style with someone," he continues, "I try to get as much of that music as I can, the best stuff. I try to get inside his head and see what he's playing and how he's feeling. But I always listen for the same things—to the singer, what the bass player's playing, the melody, the form, the dynamics. You can't play all-out all the time; there's up places and down places, hard places and soft places. You've got to be aware of that."

During his tenure with Lindley, Ian fit in sessions with his old band-mate Jon Anderson, two Don Henley albums, Greg Copeland (produced by Jackson Browne), Keith Emerson, Bonnie Raitt, Stevie Nicks and Graham Nash, and produced the first single by country-rocker Rosie Flores.

"I get a lot of enjoyment playing with different people and doing sessions," he smiles, "because first of all, it's a little bit of venturing into the unknown. You never know what they're going to want or what's going to happen. Also, if it's with good people, and these days invariably it is, you learn something you can use, and gain a broader vocabulary."

One factor that broadened his vocabulary dramatically was incorporating electronic drums into his setup. What does he think of the machines that are encroaching on time-keepers' livelihoods? "I love 'em," he enthuses. "I'm of the philosophy that it takes a drummer to program them, and it takes a perverse and weird mind, to make it really good."

By the end of his stint with El Rayo-X he had begun using a digital delay on his snare, but the perverse and weird minds of both him and his handleader had already surfaced in other areas. When percussionist Baboo Pierre left the group, Ian was turned loose to provide all sounds and fills, so to his Yamaha kit he added a gasoline can, a set of timbales, an extra timbale on its side (to hit only the rim), an extra snare (an old Ludwig Accrolite) situated under the high-hat, and a few Dragon drums.

These days, however, most of that is gone in favor of outlet strips and electronic patches and samples. "With Crosby, Stills & Nash I got a Simmons SDS7, but being with Henley was the perfect opportunity to use that, so I got into electronics in a big way. 'Boys Of Summer,' 'All She Wants To Do Is Dance' and 'Sunset Grill' all use drum machines, so

we had to go into sequencing, and I had to program the Simmons electronic drum's brain as well as the Linn 2. I had a 16-channel Yamaha mixing board behind me, with separate outs for all the stuff, with a Yamaha Rev 7 and SPX-90 for digital delay and reverb, and it was all triggered by the keyboard player. With Jackson Browne I'm doing the same thing, except instead of using the Linn, I've got an SP-12, which is the Emulator drum machine that can sample, and I use the Simmons pads to trigger sounds from Jackson's studio stuff, and I use one of those little Boss metronomes to get my tempo before the song. For example, on 'That Girl Could Sing' there's a slide guitar sound that Lindley used at the beginning of the instrumental chorus, and I'm playing that on the Simmons live. I sampled it, and it's in the SP-12. I've also got a Simmons MTM, a MIDI trigger.

"Electronics is a necessary evil, but I've really gotten into it. It's almost like having another gig. There's acoustic drumming and then there's electronic drumming—it's all specialized stuff. Some drummers don't care to have anything to do with it, but if you want a job, then you'd better learn about it—fast."

What Wallace is learning now is a shift in dexterity: Though left-handed, Wallace is hoping to swing to the right. "I've promised myself that when I get some time I'm going to woodshed and start playing a right-handed kit, open-handed like Billy Cobham. I can sort of play right-handed, but it's my feet I need to work on. My kit now is an exact mirror image of a right-handed set. Phil Collins' is the same way."

As if he didn't debunk enough drummer stereotypes already, Ian has also begun studying drums and music theory. "I've been buying drum books for the first time," he laughs, "and I went to the Dick Grove School of Music and learned basic harmony and keyboards. I really enjoyed that. It helped my writing, but it also helped tremendously with playing the drums. I'd recommend any drummer do that. Knowing what different chords are, you sort of know where the other instruments are coming from." Toward that end, Ian recently completed building a home studio, centered around his Akai 12-track, and co-wrote a song that Don Henley plans to record.

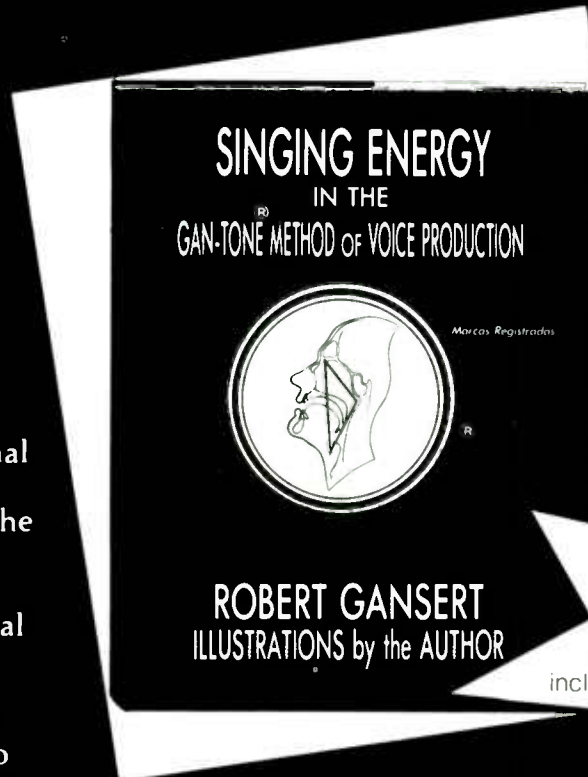
Is playing with the likes of Henley and CSN less demanding than playing art rock with King Crimson? According to Ian Wallace, "Nothing is ever 'less demanding' if you approach it with the right attitude; it's just different." ■

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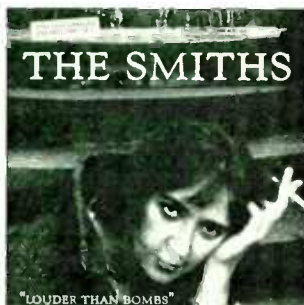
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HEAVEN KNOWS THEY'RE LISTENABLE NOW



THE SMITHS

Louder Than Bombs
(Sire/Warner Bros.)

Now dig this: *Louder Than Bombs* is the Smiths' most convincing work to date. An odd pronouncement for two discs compiling a grab-bag of tracks ranging from '84 to the present, perhaps, but the Smiths are no ordinary band. Not everyone can make the tired old format of guitar-voice-bass-drums sound fresh again, and precious few would dare inject the music with humane values that fly in the face of rock 'n' roll convention. Here, the Smiths do both, and they make it look easy.

If you've admired the Smiths' elegant simplicity in theory, only to find their LPs monotonous in practice, *Louder Than Bombs* is a godsend. Piling up twenty-four surprisingly varied cuts, it makes a good case for the band's versatility, a strength often obscured by a certain commanding frontman. Anyway, seek and ye shall find noisy rave-ups ("Hand In Glove"), artfully-crafted pop ("Is It Really So Strange?"), hazy folk ("Back To The Old House"), nouveau rockabilly ("Shakespeare's Sister"), and so on. Source spotters will get a charge out of "Sheila Take A Bow," a stylish offspring of Bowie's glitter rock, and "Shoplifters Of The World Unite," boasting a grand, sweeping refrain that's pure T. Rex.

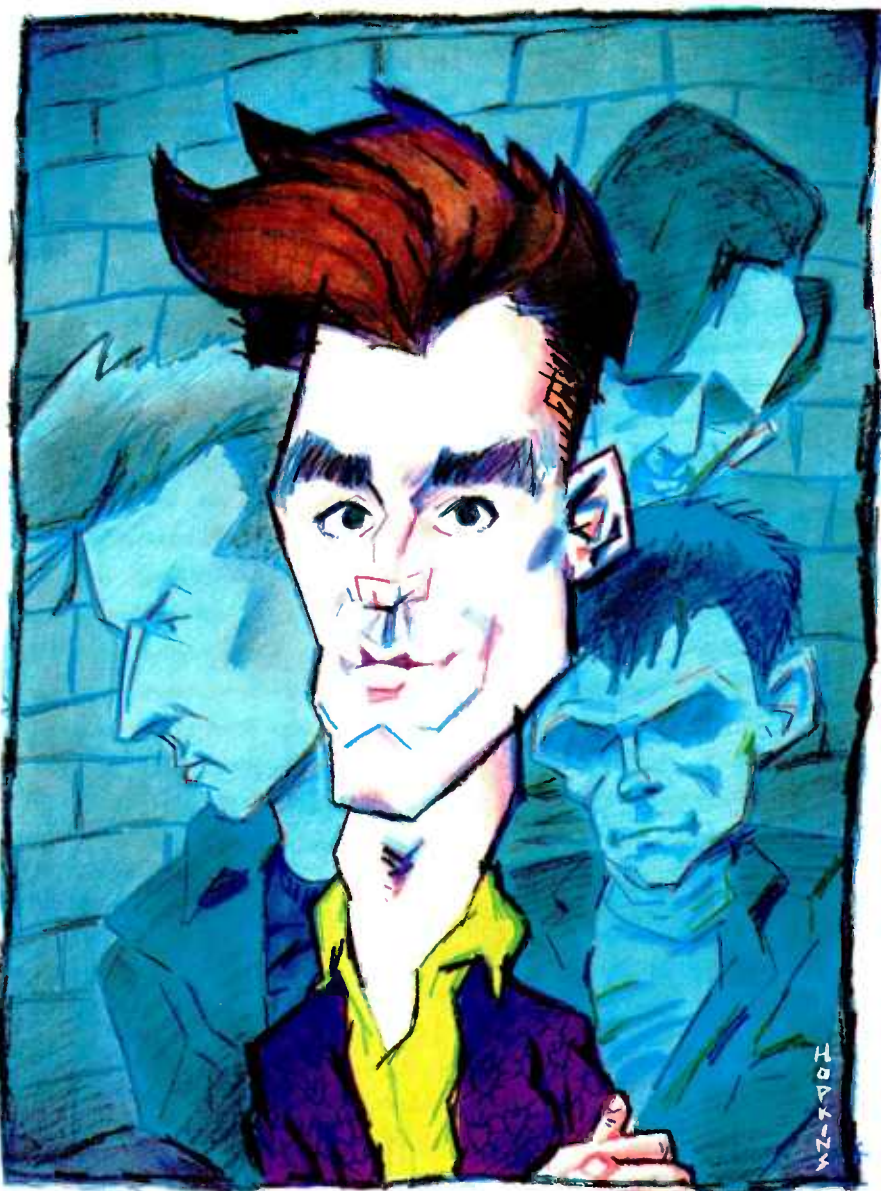
Of course, whatever the Smiths' virtues, this is Morrissey's show. So the guy's not the greatest technical singer in

the world—he is a vivid presence whose languid crooning harbors intriguing complexities. Folks put off by his non-hetero orientation or flippant poses do themselves a disservice. Morrissey's lyrics diagram true-life situations that anyone possessing a heart, broken or otherwise, can relate to. After close encounters with the nervous prospective lovers in "Girl Afraid," the rejected suitor of "William, It Was Really Nothing," or the randy boy in "Stretch Out And Stay," don't be surprised if you blush from the shock of recognition.

Morrissey achieves some of his best effects by spinning psychological tall tales. The lilting "Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now" exaggerates self-pity to laughable extremes; "Please Please Please Let Me Get What I Want" (ain't

he got great song titles?) gently strikes an aching note most people would be ashamed to voice. But we all experience these gut-wrenching feelings at one time or another, which is why *Bombs* is so valuable. Juggling self-mockery and high melodrama, Morrissey understands what it's like to be overwhelmed by emotion, and provides comfort by saying so.

In "Panic" he issues a call to "burn down the disco," explaining, "The music that they constantly play/ *It says nothing to me about my life*" (his emphasis). This handsome collection remedies the situation with unsentimental songs for and about the uncool—individuals made foolish by desire, paralyzed by shyness, or desperate to find an identity. Like his spiritual kin Pee-wee Herman, Morrissey says it's okay to be different, to be

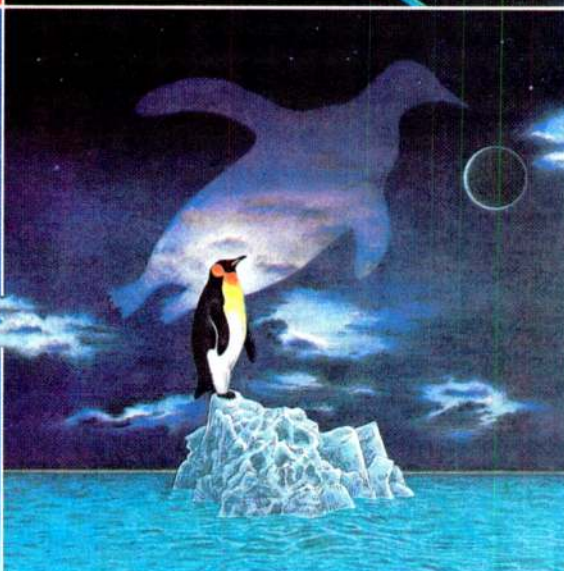
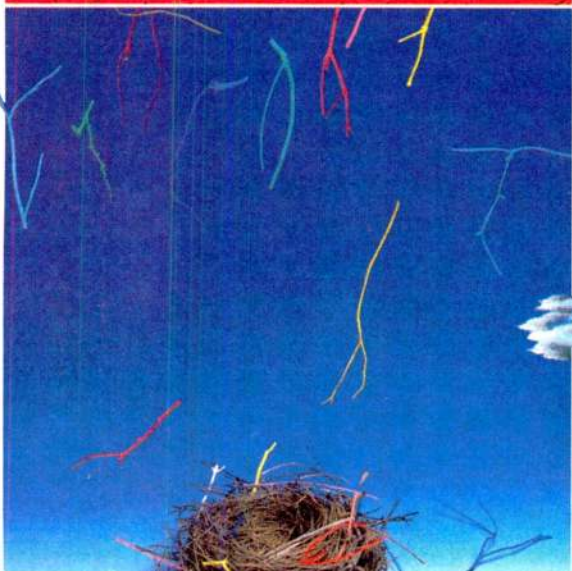


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Though Johnny Marr tends to get lost in the glare of Morrissey's offbeat charisma, his superlative guitar work provides the perfect backdrop for the singer's flamboyance. Marr doesn't take many solos, preferring to shadow the vocals and insert inventive fills that keep tunes crisp and tasty on repeated spins: He amplifies the bittersweet mood of "The Night Has Opened My Eyes" with a stunning little figure, while "Half A Person" reveals his knack for constructing breathtaking melodies.

Oh sure, a few tracks misfire, and Morrissey can be pretty overbearing. No big deal. *Louder Than Bombs* shows the guys have their priorities in order, placing compassion for the audience above all else. Thus making the Smiths one of the most radical bands around.

— Jon Young



FATS WALLER

The Complete Fats Waller, Volume IV
(RCA/Bluebird)

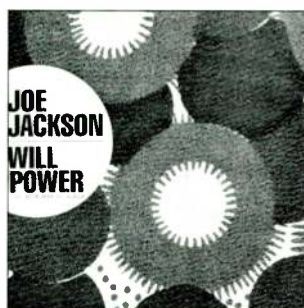
This must be one of the longest-running serializations in record biz history. Volume I of the recordings Fats Waller made with his Rhythm for Victor and Bluebird between 1934-42 appeared twelve years ago, and since the current two-fer only brings us to 1936, it's likely we'll be into the 1990s before the complete collection is finally assembled. Few musical figures merit *that* much waiting, but Waller is clearly among them.

Why? Begin with a deceptively sugary piano technique that masks a wealth of harmonic sophistication and swing, add a band of journeymen (including Billie Holiday's wonderful guitarist Al Casey) whose teamwork is as seamless as the Boston Celtics'; top it off with the disarming vocals and wisecracking adlibs of the greatest jazz showman of his time. A disciple of stride pianist James P.

Johnson, Waller's enormous size belied an agility which allowed him to pound tenths with ease while skinning melodies like a man flicking icing from a cake. A wonderfully orchestral pianist (Art Tatum was an admirer), Fats was also his own best orchestra. There wasn't a show tune too maudlin to be redeemed by his effervescent arrangements and comic asides, though it's clear from the song selections on this volume and others that he never lacked for challenge. Indeed, rarely has a gifted artist feasted on so little.

To get a better sense of what Waller could achieve as a singer and pianist, a fan would do well to search out the RCA France *Serie Black & White* of his solo piano radio transcriptions. But this volume, like its predecessors, does an admirable job of presenting the popular Waller of the thirties, whose 78s regularly sold millions. This issue's an improvement on previous offerings though, in part because Waller's band seems so uncommonly relaxed, yet willing to kick up storms on otherwise forgettable numbers like "Big Chief De Sota" and "Black Raspberry Jam." Fats also sends up "Until The Real Thing Comes Along," a fresh turn on that hoary chestnut. Which may be the true wonder of his music: Immersed in that forgotten era of show tunes and chunky swing, Fats Waller still tingles with wit and vitality.

— Mark Rowland



JOE JACKSON

Will Power
(A&M)

Joe Jackson's ballsy willingness to tackle any musical genre is admirable, but in the words of Clint Eastwood, a man's gotta know his limitations. Let Jackson's self-confidence go unchecked too long and he's apt to start performing brain surgery on his friends.

It's hard to say exactly what the balding brainiac had in mind with this record.

It sounds sort of like a movie score, sort of like jazz fusion, a tad like bastardized classical. What it mainly sounds like is a full orchestra wandering aimlessly at the behest of someone with a fat wallet and a fuzzy idea. You've got your sounds of the orchestra tuning up, your romantically stormy piano passage, a boy soprano warbling a hunk of Duke Ellington's "Solitude," twittering strings, sweeping strings—every cliché in the book, and not the slightest trace of a recurring, clearly defined melody to knit this unwieldy pastiche together.

Time was, Jackson worked on a canvas scaled to his talent. His hit single of 1980, "It's Different For Girls," was wonderful, and his interpretation of Thelonious Monk's "Round Midnight," included on Hal Willner's 1985 tribute to the jazz giant, was a beautifully inventive variation on a theme. Things changed with *Night And Day*, a Gershwinesque, pseudo-jazz song cycle awash in the ambiance of a 1940s supper club, and a success despite the emotional depth of an episode of *Moonlighting* (or perhaps because of it). Since then there's been no looking back for Jackson. But even *Big World*, last year's three(!)-sided concept album about global politics and a bunch of other things the highly opinionated Jackson felt compelled to share his views on, was a modest folly compared with this latest conceit. Surely Joe Jackson must have a friend bold enough to inform him that access to an orchestra doesn't make a man Stravinsky. — Kristine McKenna

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Ultimate Breaks & Beats, Vol. 1-14
(Street Beat)

You gotta figure any critical theory that makes sense of the massive musical and cultural incongruities between, say, Disco Italiano, Tom Jones, the Monkees, Mountain, James Brown, the Black Motion Picture Experience, Z.Z. Hill, Rufus Thomas, 7th Wonder and the Wild Magnolias has to be the work of some sort of genius. You also gotta figure, given the diversity of social background going into this stuff, that the criteria bringing it together have to do with function; else why waste precious time making the connections? Yup, there's money involved, but more importantly, every one of these discs (except *Vol. 8*, which's been deleted) features a break—that precious few sec-

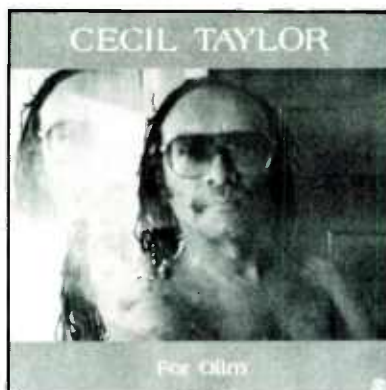
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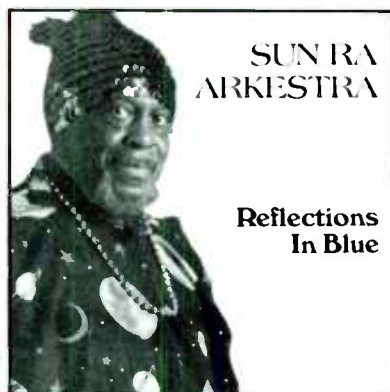
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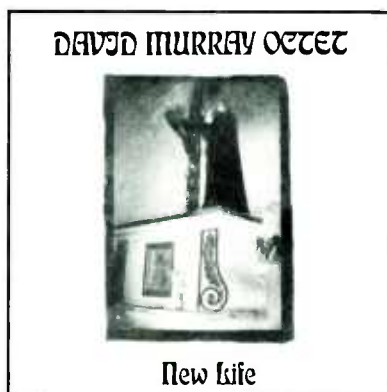
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onds of a drum beat, guitar line, bass line, funny one-liner—that can be repeated as a rhythm track or used as an especially pungent example of street musique concrète.

Let me put it another way: These thirteen records are all I've been listening to. They're the things that make up recent rap and hip-hop records—Billy Squier and the Meters liberally douse the Stetsasonic album, the Wild Magnolias' "Soul, Soul, Soul" graces Schoolly D's "Saturday Night," "Blow Your Head" by Fred Wesley & the J.B.'s graces Public Enemy's "Public Enemy #1"—and it's a thrill picking up the references, and marveling at the intelligence and knowledge that young black kids show in amassing all this information and using it.

But the big fun comes from listening to the records, since they all share a monstrous beat. My guess is, now that English people have exhausted R&B, soul, jazz and disco, the next—and last, since there isn't much left—thing they'll rip off from black culture is what comprises the bulk of these discs: pre-disco soul/post-James Brown funk from the early 70s. To them, it's great period music. For street kids, it's a heavy beat, and something to use to detail their own creations.

More importantly, the series brings back the clavinet/wah-wah guitar sound, woefully neglected in the recent past. Not only are there classic breaks/tunes—"Walk This Way," "Apache" by the Incredible Bongo Band, "Funky Drummer" by James Brown—but beautiful cultural moments. "Impeach The President," a timely agit-prop ditty by the Honey Drippers ('73) opens for the Head Hunter's "God Make Me Funky," while Thin Lizzy's "Johnny The Fox" clears the way for "Ashley's Roachclip," by the Soul Searchers. Blaxploitation flic music, soul, funk, metal, you name it, it's here. Hip-hop necessities, cultural documents and the best party records ever.

— Peter Watrous

CHARLES BROWN

One More For The Road
(Blue Side)

They don't make records like this anymore. Hell, a lot of labels won't even bother re-issuing them. You know the type: a tough, blues-based singer holding forth on a set of standards while a cool, understated rhythm section walks the line between jazz and R&B. It was all the rage in the late 40s and early 50s, and history ever since.



Yet here's Charles Brown—thirty-one years after he took "Driftin' Blues," along with Johnny Moore & the Three Blazers, up the "race" charts—turning in a set of blues and ballads so stylistically assured the only thing missing is the occasional crackle and pop expected of a vintage recording.

For all that, there's not a hint of revisionism or revivalism to the session. Rather than try to recapture a past, Brown has managed the far trickier task of showing how well a particular style matures through years of refinement.

To understand the difference, compare *One More For The Road* to Jay McShann's 1978 recording, *The Last Of The Blue Devils*. McShann was roughly of the same generation as Brown, though more closely identified with jazz than R&B. But *The Last Of The Blue Devils* was an almost archival piece of work, more interested in recreating the sound of McShann's Kansas City bands than in trying to show what the band-leader had learned since then.

One More For The Road, on the other hand, is all about musical growth, showing that Brown has broadened his approach and interpretive sense, so that the same Nat King Cole cool he applies to "Route 66" fits handily with the citified country of "Who Will The Next Fool Be" and the bluesy sophistication of "One For My Baby." Brown's piano playing is

equally balanced, and meshes well with the liquid tone of guitarist Billy Butler.

In fact, it's hard to think of anything this album *doesn't* do well, except satisfy the listener's desire for more. Here's hoping we don't have to wait so long. (225 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10012) — J.D. Considine



THE REPLACEMENTS

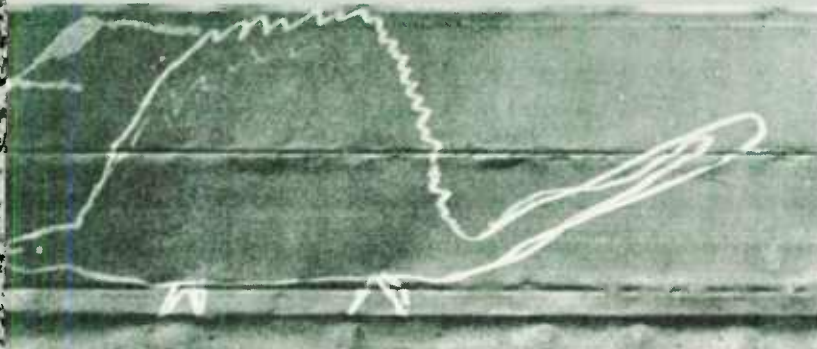
Pleased To Meet Me
(Sire)

The Replacements' followup to their breakthrough *Tim* (breakthrough in that the album finally focused songwriter/singer Paul Westerberg's raging idealism, not in any commercial sense) is their version of the Rolling Stones' *Exile On Main Street*. Like that classic LP, there's brilliance hidden beneath murk here, as well as murk masquerading as brilliance. There are more horns, background vocals and production gimmicks than on any other Replacements offering, but most of the time the additions nourish the songs instead of inflating them. And on the best of the unencumbered tunes, "I.O.U." and the edge-of-adulthood anthem "The Ledge," Westerberg is affecting. He's also as slick as sandpaper.

This is the Replacements' most expansive album: To make a record as sloppy as *Exile*, they had to tighten up. Having fired lead guitarist Bob Stinson, Westerberg, usually content with chugging rhythm parts under his unwavering declamations, handled all the guitars himself (a second guitarist was hired after this album was recorded). An idiosyncratic hard-rock stylist whose friction with Westerberg enlivened many of the band's tunes, Stinson is genuinely missed, but Westerberg's more spacious lines and fills are strong enough to carry his new songs. The album's centerpiece is its single, "Alex Chilton." A heartfelt celebration of this long-time cult favorite

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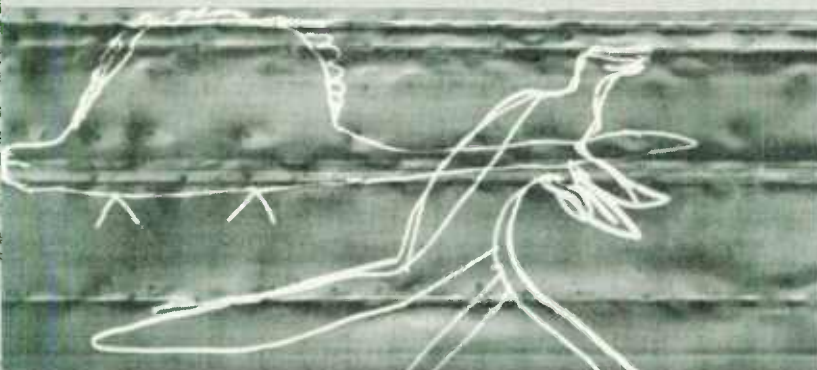
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and an irreverent rocker worthy of him, it juggles images whimsical and direct over a Clash-worthy beat. "I'm in love/ What's that song/ I'm in love/ With that song," goes Westerberg's naked chorus, suggesting how much Chilton's songs mean to him without letting that inspiration deaden his own.

Each of the Replacements' albums has been closer to the rock/radio mainstream than its predecessors; may this be the one that belatedly garners that mass audience.

— Jimmy Guterman

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Sun Records—The Rocking Years
(Charly Records)

In an interview with Martin Hawkins that appears in a fifty-page booklet accompanying this twelve-record, 219-track overview of Sun Records' rockabilly era, producer Sam Phillips describes his function:

"I saw my role as being the facilitator, the man who listened to an artist for his native abilities, then tried to encourage and channel the artist into...a proper

outlet for his abilities. I wasn't interested in just a good singer; there had to be something distinctive."

That laboratory aspect is delineated in lavish fashion on *The Rocking Years*. If this boxed set, compiled by Hawkins and fellow Sun documentarist Colin Escott, is ultimately ticketed for collectors only, it does provide fascinating insights into



the way Phillips and his right-hand man Jack Clement reconciled their aesthetic curiosity with notions of commercial record-making.

To be sure, *The Rocking Years* has its shortcomings. Charly has exhaustively (some would say *exhaustingly*) documented the recordings of major Sun artists for a decade, issuing boxes and two-record collections on Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison, Charlie Rich and Billy Lee Riley, as well as scattered LPs by talented lesser Sun-lights like Sonny Burgess, Warren Smith and Carl Mann. While representative samples of most of these singers' work is also included here (thanks to a seemingly bottomless supply of Sun outtakes and alternates), the focus of this set is elsewhere. One-shots, could-have-beens, should-have-beens and never-wases are the true stars here, as Phillips turns his studio at 706 Union Avenue into a school for nascent rockabilies. That laborious method worked for prize pupil Elvis Presley, but few of the students on *The Rocking Years* moved to the head of the class.

Yet what a class it was! Some of these obscure musicians are astonishing: Wailing Ray Smith, boppin' Edwin Bruce, hard-rocking Ray Harris, and gloomily introspective Jimmy Wages stand out from the pack. So does Barbara Pittman, a distaff 'billy who could have given Wanda Jackson a run for her money. Curiosities abound, among them primitive early sides by Conway Twitty (recording as Harold Jenkins), Mickey Gilley, Charley Pride (!) and Dickey Lee of "Patches" infamy. Sometimes Phillips'

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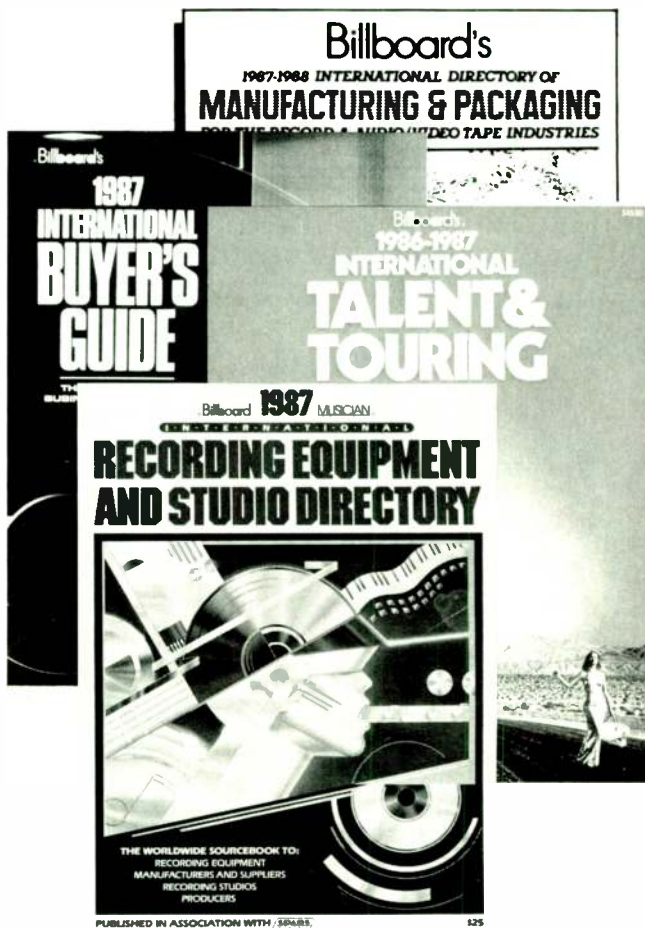
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misguided good intentions hit home with a vengeance—a side of unreleased material by the mediocre Jimmy Williams comes close to torture.

Uneven and esoteric, *Sun Records—The Rocking Years* is still an important document that takes a deep look at Sam Phillips' passionate, risky and unique record-making style. More than one of his charges say it plainly in their interviews—the guy had moxie.

— Chris Morris

THE STYLE COUNCIL

The Cost Of Loving
(Polydor)

Pretentious and proud of it, Paul Weller offers an inviting target. Despite a severe lack of funk, the Style Council's head honcho persists in presenting his own take on contemporary black music. To boot, his voice is a bland instrument, a major handicap when you're trying to portray romantic passion or provoke outrage at injustice. Let's not even talk about the self-indulgent sleeve notes he signs The Cappuccino Kid.

Don't misunderstand: Weller is dead serious and honorable in his intentions,

so *The Cost Of Loving* can't be dismissed easily. His love songs and political tracts have a clenched-fist intensity that demands respect. Too bad he didn't figure out how to swing a little along the way, 'cause this painfully sincere platter provides all the fun of a big swig of castor oil.



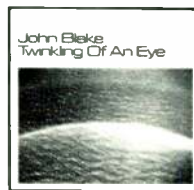
Unfortunate yet not surprising, for Weller sees a world where the masses are duped by keepers of the status quo, and where institutional cruelty undermines small-scale relationships. Although the connection between the personal and political can be tenuous, his gift for specifics shows what a clever composer this often indifferent performer can be. The plodding "It Didn't Matter," enlivened briefly by Weller's Nile Rodgers guitar,

depicts "crystal hearts just waiting to be smashed," while the punchier "Fairy Tales" forecasts revolution, succinctly noting that "their laws today will be tomorrow's crimes." All the pieces fit together on "Heavens Above," a creamy lament reminiscent of Marvin Gaye's topical period.

Weller champions equality, though one wonders how fair his own regime would be. For all his concern with societal ills, Mr. Earnest seems blissfully unaware of sexual politics in his songwriting; devotional tunes like "Waiting" and "Walking The Night" could easily be adapted for a smarmy Vegas balladeer. And Weller's presuming to articulate his sisters' sensibilities in "A Woman's Song" is more than a little suspect, however tender the sentiments sung by female bandmate Dee. C. Lee.

Doctrinal considerations would matter less with hotter grooves, but the supporting cast offers few distractions. Lee has strong pipes and little finesse; keyboardist Mick Talbot boasts the dubious ability to make a brawny Hammond organ sound wimpy. Still, uptight lefties such as Weller do provide a needed antidote to genial bozos with horrendous attitudes. And Lord knows we've suffered enough of those. — Jon Young

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SUNDAY — JULY 12

- 2:00 PM
DJs & MCs: The Battle For World Supremacy—Trials
- 5:30 PM
Nightclubbing Around The World
UK Major Labels
Marketing Metal
Songwriters & Publishers: A Mock Negotiation
Music Trends In The Underground
- 7:30 PM
Recording Engineers
Alternative Commercial Radio
Dance Music Issues
Censorship: Still A Burning Issue

MONDAY — JULY 13

- 10:30 AM
Keynote Address
- 12:30 PM
A Million Dollars Worth of Mistakes
Music For Peace
Merchandising: The New Profit Center
Dance Oriented Rock

- 2:30 PM
A & R (Arguments & Recriminations)
Publicity Workshop
Rhythm Radio: Meeting The Pop Challenge
Alternative Rock Retail
Hi-NRG: Frontier Or Boundary?
Album Radio Conclave (Radio Only)
- 5:30 PM
Managers
DJs And Remixers
Commercial Music: Is It Art?
New Technologies: The Hardware Revolution
International Publishers Debate: The European Licensing Controversy
Crossover: The New Hitmakers (Radio Only)

TUESDAY — JULY 14

- 11:00 AM
Rock Criticism
Recording Contract: A Mock Negotiation
Talent & Booking Workshop: Getting New Bands On The Road

- Radio G.M.s: The Big Guys Talk Music Money
Benelux: A Market Survey
College Radio Conclave (Radio Only)
- 12:45 PM
The Future of Music Video
South Africa (Un)Revisited
Australia: A Market Survey
Pool Directors' Conclave
- 2:30 PM
Metal: Headbanging Around The World
Songwriters
Crossover: Pop Radio's New Attitude
The Record Deal: A Follow-Up Workshop
Dance Music Retail
Accounting & Bookkeeping Workshop
- 5:30 PM
Record Producers
American Rock Indies: A Reality Check
Big Record Retailers: Is There Room For New Music?
Jazz/New Age
Canada: A Market Survey
Attorney Clinic: The Whys & Wherefores of Getting a Good Lawyer

WEDNESDAY — JULY 15

- 11:00 AM
Talent & Booking
Independent Labels & Distribution
The Big Comeback
Copyright in the Digital Age
College Radio: The Fresh(man) Format
Songwriters & Publishers: A Follow-Up Workshop
Japan: A Market Survey
- 12:45 PM
Alternative Promotion & Marketing
International Talent & Booking
Germany/Austria/Switzerland/
Scandinavia: A Market Survey
Rap: America Surrenders To The Street
- 2:30 PM
DJs & MCs: The Battle For World Supremacy—Finals
UK Independent Labels
Small Club Booking Conclave
Music Business Insurance Clinic
- 5:30 PM
Artists
Management Workshop
State of the Artist's Recording Agreement: An Advanced Discussion

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Julian Cope
Saint Julian (Island)

Melodic, energetic and joyously addictive, Cope's songs magically combine the best elements of garage-rock crunch and post-psychedelic embellishment, affording Cope both the lush overdrive of "A Crack In The Clouds" and the title tune as well as the idiot bliss of "Pulsar" and "Space Hopper." It makes for some wonderfully memorable listening, and the semi-psychedelic grunge of "Planet Ride" and the punchy power riffs of "World Shut Your Mouth" sound like instant classics. If this album doesn't make Julian Cope some sort of star in America, it won't be for lack of merit.

Jody Watley
Jody Watley (MCA)

As the female third of Shalamar, Watley didn't exactly enjoy the highest profile in pop music, but that will change in a hurry. Between her versatile voice and the all-purpose groove her producers provide, this could out-*Control* Janet Jackson. Partly that's because Andre Cymone and David Z. echo Jam/Lewis/Jackson throughout "Looking For A New Love," though Watley does a mean Madonna ("Some Kind Of Lover") and Grace Jones ("Still A Thrill"), too. And on "Learn To Say No," with George Michael, Watley not only shows she's her own woman, but that she'll make her hits the old-fashioned way: She'll *earn* them.

Andy Taylor
Thunder (MCA)

As depth is so seldom expected from one-time teen idols, it's a bit of a shock to hear how much this former Durannie delivers on his solo outing. Between the resonant raunch of "I Might Lie" and the Mott the Hoople-stomp illuminating "Don't Let Me Die Young," Taylor manages—at least occasionally—to live up to his guitar-hero potential. If only his ballads and singing were so strong.

Bryan Adams
Into The Fire (A&M)

Sure, Adams can crank out Stones-style rhythm riffs better than anybody since

Keith Richards. But where Richards' riffs refine the melody, leaving room for the rhythm section to work in, Adams boxes his band in with stiff, overly structured slabs of sound that crunch nicely, but rarely swing. That, in a nutshell, marks the difference between a classic and a commodity.

Tom Verlaine
Flash Light (Fontana import)

Verlaine sees little point in tailoring his tactics to fit the times, which is why the tunes here sound so similar to his earlier output. Not that it's a problem; few guitarists can twist as much menace out of a few notes as Verlaine does through the outchorus to "Cry Mercy Judge," just as few singers match the poignance he pulls from "The Scientist Writes A Letter." And if those are considered uncommercial traits in this country, more's the pity.

Steve Tibbetts
Exploded View (ECM)

By tying his attack to a maelstrom of Afro-Indian percussion, Tibbetts' emphasis on texture suggests a tremendous amount of movement while working with essentially static rhythmic elements—which as theory seems awfully dense. Translated to actual sound, the way Tibbetts' shimmering acoustic guitar picking locks into the layered congas, tabla and what-not is astonishingly graceful, his broken-glass approach to electric utterly incendiary.

Wednesday Week
What We Had (Enigma)

Thanks to Don Dixon's deft production, the band is finally able to capitalize on the muted melodicism of its debut. All they need now is some way to keep Kristi Callan from sounding so much like the fifth Bangle. (1750 E. Holly Ave., Box 2428, El Segundo, CA 90245-1528)

The Celibate Rifles
Kiss Kiss Bang Bang (What Goes On)

Like most Australian guitar bands, the Rifles aren't exactly long on subtlety, meaning that three or four doses of the band's ragged, over-amplified rave-ups

might leave the more melodically inclined longing for something a mite more hookish. But that noisy enthusiasm is the hook, making the Celibate Rifles perhaps the most audacious guitar band since the MC5, and this their best album. (Box 570, Rockville Centre, NY 11571-0570)

The Washington Squares
The Washington Squares (Gold Castle)

To say the Washington Squares are to folk music what the Stray Cats were to rockabilly isn't entirely a dismissal; the Cats rocked pretty convincingly when they weren't busy trying to have hits. Still, nobody can be "authentic" this long after the fact without seeming bogus—especially when the folk group the Squares most accurately recall is Fleetwood Mac. (3575 Cahuenga Blvd. West, Suite 470, Los Angeles, CA 90066)

Hipsway
Hipsway (Columbia)

You've heard of Simply Red? Say hello to Utterly White.

Public Enemy
Yo! Bum Rush The Show (Def Jam)

This is rap the way most pop fans fear it—mean, lean and uncompromising. While it's true the only thing bigger than rapper Chuck D.'s vocabulary is the chip on his shoulder, it's equally true that the best jams here boast more compressed energy than anything since Run-D.M.C.'s "Sucker MCs." And, the lyric's implied misogyny aside, "Sophisticated Bitch" boasts a Vernon Reid guitar solo nasty enough to melt any rock box.

The Ravi Shankar Project
Tana Mana (Private Music)

Attempts at rock 'n' raga are usually so vile that even the most devoted fans ought to be excused for approaching this album with dread. Yet between Shankar's indefatigable lyricism, synthesist Frank Serafine's technological empathy and producer Peter Baumann's ability to blur electronic and acoustic instruments, *Tana Mana* delivers on all levels. (220 E. 23rd St., New York, NY 10010)

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

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**Joe Malinga***tears for the children of soweto* (Canova)

In 1980, Malinga, a South African alto saxophonist, put together a huge-sounding octet to play township-flavored jazz, kind of like Abdullah Ibrahim, but with a touch of Oliver Nelson. It moves more than Ibrahim's group, has the passionate, warm friendliness of all South African music, and is completely at odds with the more predictable sound of alienation and anger you'd expect. (N.M.D.S., 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10019)

Joe Henderson*State Of The Tenor, Vol. II* (Blue Note)

Henderson's a boss tenor, and like *Vol. I, II* is a masterpiece of intricate rhythms and harmonic daring, an out-and-out explosion of improvising. The trio setting, with Ron Carter and Al Foster, suits Henderson fine, giving him plenty of leeway for blowing. He takes it, and if his tone isn't the ascetic masterpiece of twenty years ago, it's been replaced by an accumulation of musical ideas that makes each solo baroque.

Various Artists*After Hours/Lift The Bandstand* (Rhapsody Films Video Tapes)

After Hours film noirs its way through a mock jam session with Coleman Hawkins, Roy Eldridge, Johnny Guarneri, Milt Hinton and Cozy Cole. Elliot Ness should walk in at any moment; instead, Hawkins introduces a masterpiece of a solo on "Lover Man" with a few utterly abstract a capella flourishes, while Eldridge rips apart "Sunday." *Lift* mixes concert footage of the Steve Lacy band with scenes of Coltrane, Monk and others—musicians Lacy crossed paths with—plus long narratives by Lacy himself. It's blunt, upfront, and, like Lacy, sometimes witty; it may be the best jazz biography I've seen, mixing pungent playing and well-edited (i.e. non-interfering) digressions from the music. (Rhapsody Films, Box 179, New York, NY 10014)

Kenny Baron*What If* (enja/Muse)

Baron's an overlooked figure, partly because he's been typecast as a mainstreamer, partly because he's been making trio records—classic ones at that, which haven't commanded enough attention—and partly because he's been working in Sphere. *What If* should change all that. A quintet date with a tough John Stubblefield on tenor and a mid-blossom Wallace Roney, the next important New York trumpeter, the record astonishes with its variety—four quintet tunes, a drum/piano duet, a solo piano feature, a trio tune—and its visceral forcefulness. It's an 80s version of an Andrew Hill date; by that I mean he'll play Monk and Parker as well as his own originals, mixing dissonance and sweet swing.

Sumi Tonooka*With An Open Heart* (Radiant)

To hear a young pianist as self-possessed as Tonooka is revelatory: It reminds you that originality is possible. She's made her phrasing and touch personal; her lines breathe. Working with Rufus Reid and Akira Tana helps, and her compositions, which draw structurally on a variety of rhythms, are rock solid without a moment of indecision or mistake. Technique is mastered by imagination, inspiration restrained by intellect. She comes to her own conclusions, which is what jazz is all about. (N.M.D.S.)

Benny Morton/Jimmy Hamilton*Blue Note Swingtets* (Mosaic)

Blue Note's often typecast as a label from the 50s and 60s that perfected a sound associated with a conservative avant garde. But for the first ten years of its existence, it recorded swing players—Edmund Hall, Art Hodes, Sidney Bechet, Albert Ammons and the brilliant players here. Recorded in 1945, these dates have their share of masters like Ben Webster, Ray Nance, Harry Carney, Oscar Pettiford, Sid Catlett and more. It's classic small-group swing, with all

the nuances of the players' idiosyncracies—Webster's velvet fist approach to ballads, for example—amply laid bare. (Mosaic, 197 Strawberry Hill Ave., Stamford, CT 06902)

Clark Terry/Red Mitchell*To Duke And Basie* (enja/Muse)

It's an album of duets, mostly using Ellington and Basie-associated tunes as jumping off points for blowing. But the blowing comes as a gust of oxygen; Terry's lines sail by, each note sculpted with just the right growl to impart meaning. Mitchell's bass ambles good-naturedly, stopping to lay out a chord once in a while. It's the type of record to play over and over again, the type that resonates with personality.

Steve Kuhn*Life's Magic* (Blackhawk)*Mostly Ballads* (New World)

Kuhn hasn't made a record in six years, and here he comes with two. *Life's Magic*, done with Ron Carter and Al Foster at the Vanguard, shows off his spiky, intelligent lines and percussive comping, plus the near-incredible intuitiveness of the rhythm section. *Mostly Ballads* shows why he's one of our most resourceful pianists, a man who can prop up the tired harmonic ways of "Body And Soul" and "Round Midnight" by turning the piano into a field of shifting emotional moods.

Ann Sexton*Love Trials* (Charly import)**Ella Washington***Nobody But Me* (Charly import)

If obscurity determined greatness, as it sometimes does, then these two soulsters would be heavies. Actually, they are heavies, but not because they're obscure. Both are archetypally self-assured singers in the mid-to-late 60s, gospel-trained, Stax mold, and both could easily have had hits had better combinations fallen into place. The material is generic, as are the emotions, but hell, it works.

BY PETER WATROUS

GRP

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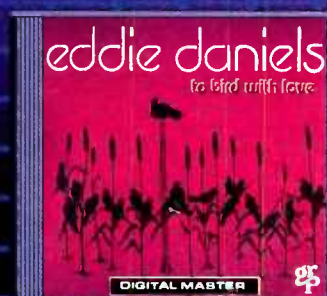
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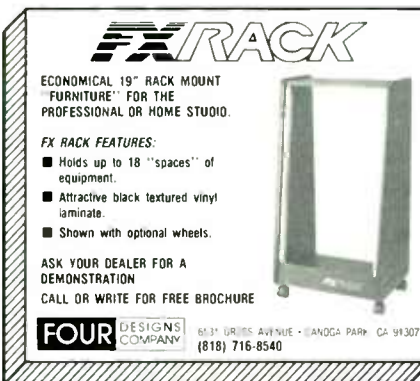
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ALVIN from page 42

Blasters' recording schedule. "If you stay in this business long enough you learn that the rate of one record a year is based on record companies desiring to keep up their annual profit. The companies make all their money from records. But, publishing rights aside, most musicians make eighty percent of their money from the road. So if a musician wants to maximize his business profit—not his ego—and you're on the road without your gate declining, why make a record? What's the point?"

"Besides," he laughs, "we couldn't put out a record now if we wanted."

For one thing, the Blasters are still looking to replace Fats. (At this writing, the leading candidate is ex-X guitarist Billy Zoom.) After writing some new songs himself, Phil expects the revamped Blasters to hit the road for a few months this summer, then cut an album.

Apprised of Dave's desire to contribute songs, Phil sounds unenthusiastic: "All that does is turn the politics of the matter over to David, which helps me not at all. I become timed and pressured by it. Before, David was timed and pressured by me. That's a part of why he left."

"You know," he says, "David was working at a falafel stand before the Blasters. He didn't know what he was going to do, no idea. And that's a difference between us: He wants that success. But if I was the most successful songwriter on

the planet right now, I would be further behind in my goals of success than I am.

"The whole history of rock 'n' roll on radio has been to remove the human element and install the corporate. Sometimes the human element breaks through. But after two generations everyone knows there is human music and corporate music. You can like either one. Sometimes one can even be the other. But there are two distinct strains, and their goals are completely different. I am not a corporate musician." ■

DRUMS from page 106

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Another miking system developed by **Randy May** has been making inroads—actually inroads inside the drum. May's EA system uses an internal shock mount that can be rotated for sound variations. No, you don't have to drill your precious shells, and the mount doesn't disrupt the drum's natural sound. The system is available in several mike cartridges, including the Shure SM57, the AKG D-112, and Sennheiser 409 and 421. Right now May is offering good deals on a snare-kick combo, ranging from \$239 for the Shure to \$500 for a pair of Sennheisers.

Before we go, we'll leave you with some heavy cymbalism courtesy of **Zildjian**. There's a new line of "special effects" cymbals, beginning with the EFX #1, which is said to produce a high-

pitched, piercing tone useful for accents or splashes. Then there's the new China Boys, which combine a swooping edge and square bell with those interesting computer-hammered textures in the Z Series. And certainly let's not forget the K Zildjian Custom cymbals, a pingy ride type that can also, according to Zildjian, "open up enough to produce the dry and trashy crashes that characterize the K Zildjian sound." Better reserve a couple for Oscar the Grouch. — **Jock Baird** ■

BUDDY RICH from page 130

me and he said I was a good drummer if I ever got around to hitting the drums. And I remember my reply at the time was that it was a good line, and that I was really happy he'd taken the time to sit down and compose it, however long it took, and that I hoped he would continue to work hard on those lines since it gave me publicity. I was sorry he stopped.

Reading those things about myself never bothered me, but I can't fathom how Buddy Rich could not understand or enjoy the playing of a Tony Williams, even as brash and radical as Tony is. He took a lot of chances that a young Buddy Rich took, too. Yet he put Tony down. I would expect more of Rich.

He always knew how to push other drummers' buttons and make them feel insecure. He was an exceptional, exceptional musician—when he walked into a club and sat down in front of another drummer, it would really intimidate that drummer. Maybe he'd sat down on the other guy's kit, gotten the acknowledgment of the audience and made the other drummer feel peculiar and not play his best. Then, of course, the guy would have to get up and go shake Rich's hand and say how honored he was and Buddy wouldn't shake his hand. He was a pretty tough character.

To have had a relaxed but intense Buddy Rich, someone who was secure in what he did yet secure enough to pass it on to youngsters, to say, "Hey, this is where it's at, if you're gonna do it," would've made for a lot of good players. And, I don't know, I think he would've been that much better a person for it. Personally I've always wanted to teach and help people, to be part of a working relationship of passing and gathering information about life. I'm here; I'll be gone at some point. Maybe someone will miss me and maybe they won't. The whole idea for me is to make my impression now. The same thing was happening with Rich. He made his impression. ■

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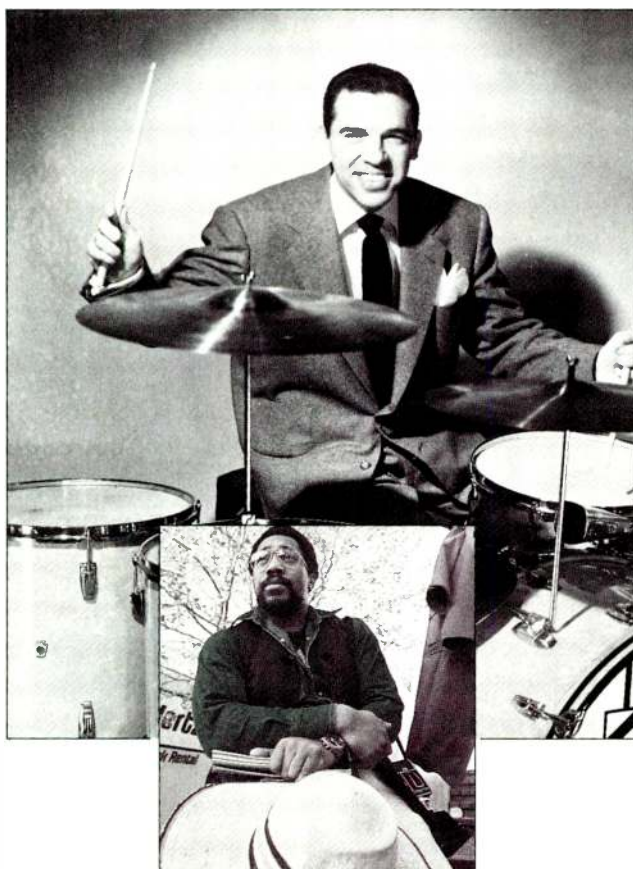
BUDDY RICH 1917-1987

BY BILLY COBHAM

Buddy Rich was unbelievable. I first heard about him in the 50s—I couldn't afford to hear him live, but I would see him on television every so often. And I would be spellbound. To a young kid, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, having the same technical facility he had seemed insurmountable. But as time went on, I found out that Buddy's speed and flashiness were really just the topping, the icing on the cake. What was going on under it all was his command of the feeling, the time, the conception of where one was. It was the way he could play and leave air in between the notes. Sometimes the space was more important than the notes he would play—one of the things I learned from Rich is how to play the spaces even though he played a lot of notes. Somehow he was a master of doing that, as is or was Max Roach, Art Blakey, Roy Haynes or Elvin Jones in their own way.

Buddy always conveyed the impression he had strong control and understanding of every instrument in the bands that he worked with, supporting them in a way that was really unique unto himself. To my knowledge he didn't read or write music, but he had ears like sonar, because he could hear every *thing*. I've heard stories where he would have someone else play the chart and he would just listen once, maybe twice, and then go ahead and play the whole thing at the gig sight unseen. He could sit down at pretty much any set of drums and make it work, because he knew how to do what was necessary to get by. He could have the worst cold in the world, with a busted arm, with back muscles that ached, and still know what to do to play musically. And that's a secret you come to by experience, by really stopping and thinking about how certain things worked. It may have been instinctive—Frank Sinatra once said, "The bum is a genius and he doesn't even know it," but I'll bet you Buddy Rich had done an awful lot of thinking.

He was so good at supporting the solo-



ist. At the solo's start, he would establish in no uncertain terms where the time was, where the one was. All you'd hear would be his bass drum, high hat and a ride cymbal—maybe a smattering of snare drum, but only where it made some sense. It would give the soloist a feeling of security, a base to work from. As the solo built, he would play with more authority and intensity, always utilizing the patterns being played by the soloist to his advantage. He would almost regurgitate it right back at you, keeping in mind the band might have a little shot here, a little shot there. He would set it all up as an orgasmic kind of thing, like one whole situation. He would make instruments naturally become part of the band. The whole room would be one feeling, and that was all generated from the drum kit.

He played a very dominant set of drums, very, very strong. He played with authority. When he supported you, you got supported from the very first note to the end, and either you could

hang in there or you couldn't. It could be solo heaven, but it could also be solo hell, because if you weren't up to it, in terms of musical stamina, you would be buried by what he did. And I like to feel this is where Buddy and I are both the same kind of drummers. It's not about playing loud, it's about being there for every note. Buddy played with a *force*, and I think that's very intimidating to a lot of soloists, because a good player on another instrument naturally wants the limelight and doesn't want the competition.

Buddy's competitive spirit had a negative side, however, especially when it came to understanding the music that came after him and the next generation of drummers. I, for one, could never say, as Buddy often did, that the music of today is not worth anything, is terrible. You can't just turn around and say, "What I do is very special and it's all that should be done." You have to continue to go to school, stay open. You can't ever stop

learning. I would've been interested to see what Buddy could've done had he studied computer technology and MIDI. Would've been monstrous.

I'm no psychologist, but perhaps Rich's negative attitude to other drummers was part of his times. In the bands in the 30s and 40s it was rare to see two drummers at once, so the drummer was always competing for his work—and there were hundreds of exceptionally great drummers around at that time. It was life-threatening, a dog-eat-dog cut-throat affair. I tend to believe that carried over, that Buddy always put down younger drummers out of fear that anyone else getting as much attention as he did might take the job away somewhere down the road. All I know is I could never tell anybody that I'm the greatest, that I'm the best. That's not true. I'm not in competition with anybody.

I got a first-hand taste of this part of Rich's personality in an article where Buddy was asked what he thought about

continued on page 129



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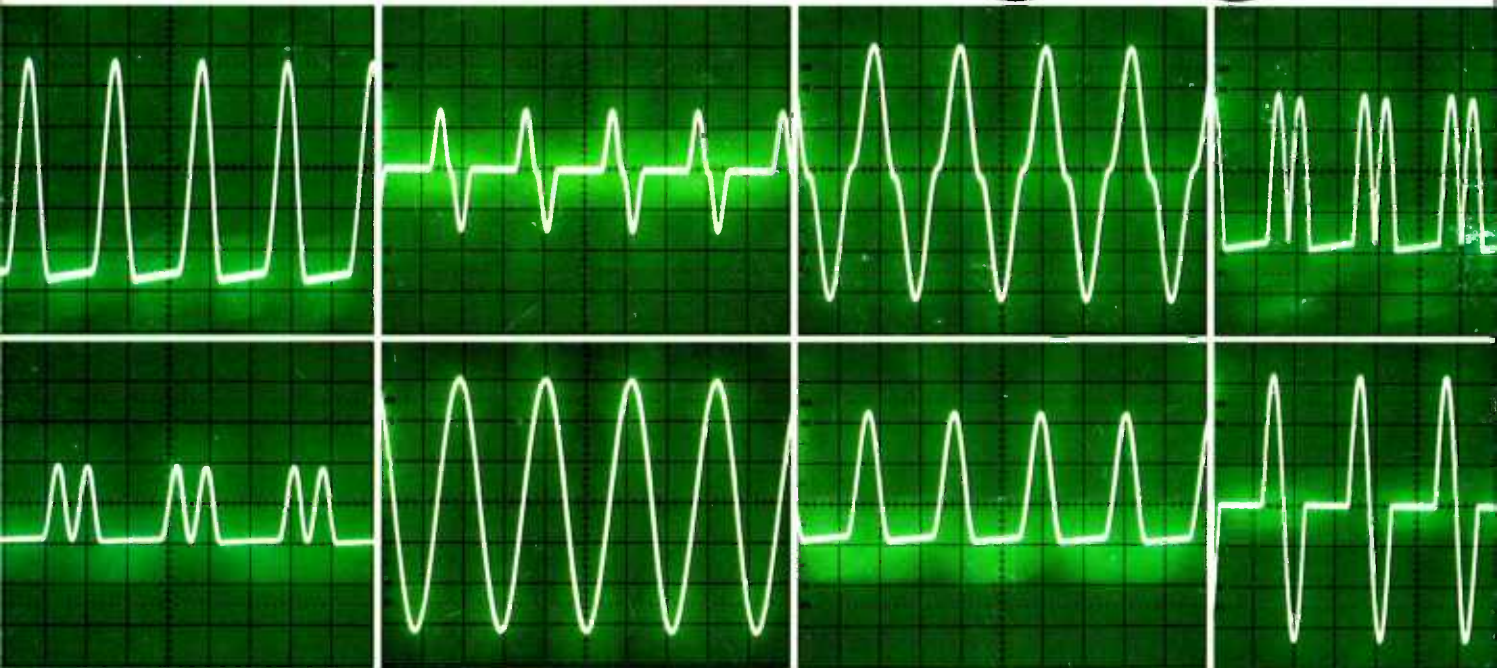
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