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


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

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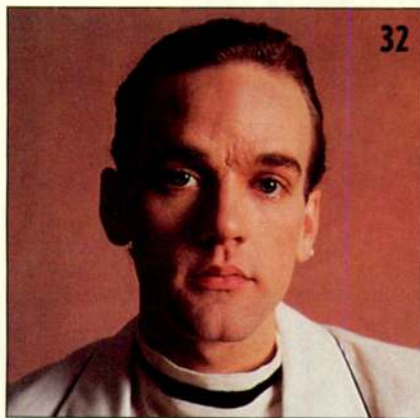
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Cover photograph of Steve Vai by Deborah Feingold/*Outline*, New York City, June 1990. Photographs this page: (from left) Wayne Stambler/*Onyx*; Ralph P. Fitzgerald/*LGI*; Rex Miller.



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Chrissie Hynde

Has rock 'n' roll gotten increasingly corporate in the four years since the last Pretenders album?

When we started selling records in '79, nobody even used that word. Now you have all these snide, smarmy little characters in suits going to their offices every day to do market research. You turn on the radio, and it's like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. It's all format. A real breathing disc jockey doesn't say, "It's a rainy day today. So today we're going to play songs about rain. Okay? Starting with the Beatles. Here we go with 'Rain.'"

Then he comes back, "Here's Jimi Hendrix with 'Rainy Day, Dream Away.'" Come off it! But most rock bands today want all that money and hype and razzmatazz. They really do. Money's not going to be worth anything in 10 years, so I don't know what they're hoarding it for. The population of the world is doubling, there's global warming, and nobody's going to have anywhere to live. People aren't going to ask Donald Trump, "Can I pitch my tent on your land, sir?" They're going to pull out a revolver and blow his head off and pitch their tent wherever they damn well please.

Well, he's probably not even going to own land by that point.

Oh yes he will. He'll think of something. God, I don't even want these people in my mind. We live in a media dictatorship, and it sucks. But look, I'm not just bitching, y'know? I think life's pretty damn amazing, too. Yesterday I was riding bikes in Central Park and this old trombone player and his band were playing "What a Wonderful World" and I was wiping the tears from my eyes, I was so moved. Moments like that, I think, "Wow, this is why I love music!" I never wanted to become one of those pop stars who can't go anywhere without a huge entourage. They're living in some fantasy land, away with the fairies. All Prince does is sit in his studio and eat Mars bars and think about oral sex. Who could possibly find that appealing? Stick a microphone in front of the man and he has no rap. I mean, he has absolutely nothing to say. I want nice, hard-

core, painful reality at all times, and if I need to get away from that, I'll smoke a joint. I want to be right on the street. That's where you see the best-looking guys, by the way, not in some rich man's house. Now here's one guy I wouldn't mind getting to know. Tom Berenger. But only if he looks the way he looked in that movie *Betrayed*. Which just goes to show what kind of feminist I am!

A lot of the songs on your new record, Packed!, are calls for normal romance. Marriage, even. Sounds like you're asking for—

Security? Warmth? Every man, woman and child wants that.

You usually talk rough about love and lust.

But I want a guy to be good to me. Any good love going, I'll have it. I'm not lonely, exactly, though I do get depressed sometimes. But who could live on this planet and not be depressed? Unless you're living in the lap of luxury.

In one review of Packed! a writer took you to task for the song "Millionaires."

I never read my own press, you just disappear up your own ass. So don't bum me out now.

He was wondering how you could say it's us little people against the bad rich guys—

Who says I'm wealthy? Oh, work it out, whip out that calculator! I'm a single mother with two kids. I've been in this business for 11 years and I've made five records, none of which have sold a whole hell of a lot. I've never made money touring, because I've gotta pay for everybody. But even if I were some trust-fund kid and my dad hadn't worked for the phone company his whole life, that doesn't mean I can't see reality as it is.

You've always been active in certain environmental causes and PETA. Does it bother you how trendy activism has become?

I don't care if it's chic. It's like love—get it to work any way you can. Cynics are going to be cynical, anyway. They have ugly minds

and can't approach anything with compassion. I make a joke at a press conference about bombing McDonald's and I got misquoted and people turn around and say I'm telling my fans to firebomb fast-food restaurants. The next thing I know, people are saying, "She had to issue an apology, she had to run with her legs." But go ahead, humiliate me. I've been humiliated by worse than McDonald's. I've been beaten up and tossed out the window. Carry on humiliating! Because it won't make me shut my yap or squelch my desire to fight the powers that be and cut through the bullshit and call a spade a spade. [Sighs] I meant to come back to America and be really positive and not embarrass my parents and look what's happening.

The McDonald's thing was all about painting liberals as terrorists.

What are you gonna do about it? All you



can do is play into their hands and do everything right so you can get to the top. Wanna know who's at the very top of the tree? People that I don't want to associate with! It suddenly smells like garbage in here. Maybe it's my rap.

Maybe your damp T-shirts are moldering in the bathroom.

No, no, no. That's one thing I know how to do! Wash my dirty laundry.

Katherine Dieckmann

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Whole Lotta Hate

NICE JOB Charles Young did on the Robert Plant article (June '90). I still can't forgive Young for raking Jimmy Page over the coals two years ago, however. It's good to know that Plant has four musicians that he can get with and "kick rock 'n' roll butt"! But *this* aging hippie (and proud of it!) misses Led Zep. It's too bad we won't be seeing a reunion this year, but maybe next year. And ye gods, the picture of Phil Johnstone on page 48 is a good Jimmy Page look-alike!

Kim Andrews
Jersey City, NJ

NO, ROBERT PLANT is not such an old hippie: He's an arrant old rich snob who only ever thinks of himself. Why not think of his old fans of the Zeppelin era who supported him throughout those years? I respect his aesthetic solo career, but now is the time to give back to us what we gave to him. No album, just one last small tour to savor that last dose of Zeppelin long over-due. Think of us for a change, Mr. Plant.

Hank Love
Danbury, CT

AS MUCH AS Robert Plant seems to feel it's okay to sample other people's drum sounds for looping purposes, or "nick" guitar lines to embellish his own songs, I do not know of any instance where he and co-writer Jimmy Page have

allowed the same to be done to their Led Zeppelin catalog.

As the recipient of a recent letter from their attorney concerning a sampled riff and scream from "Immigrant Song," which resulted in our artist having to return to the studio to re-record and re-master the cut, I find it ironic that Plant does not extend the same freedom and leeway to artists who wish to sample his work.

Madeleine Smith
Ruthless Records
Valencia, CA

TO HEAR ROBERT PLANT stand up for plagiarism *and* those racist, sexist Hitler youth Guns N' Roses means I'll never spend a dime on his addled warbling again. By the way, what do Petty and Don Henley see in those cretins? Didn't Petty learn *anything* on that Dylan tour? Haven't they ever heard his "The Ballad of Hollis Brown" or "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll"?

Dexter Fitzgerald
New York, NY

Ask the Art Director

GREAT INTERVIEW with Suzanne Vega (June '90). Thanks for the insight into this wonderful singer/songwriter's life. But why was she not deserving of a cover photo?

Donna M. Giardina
Boulder, CO

...But Seriously

I CAN SEE HOW the receding hair-line, funny glasses and bathrobe attire might cause confusion (June '90, p. 84), but isn't that Phil Collins (not Elton John, as your caption reads) performing with the Who in the 1989 *Tommy* show?

Patrick S. Noonan
Lexington, MA

Yeah: and now both these guys are insulted.

A Star Is Boring

WHEN I READ that Margo Timmins cried all the way through *A Star Is Born* (June '90), I realized why Kris' and the Junkies' careers have stalled: due to their taste for mindless drivel. A better title for the article and for their lack of sales would be "The Public Is Bored."

John McCarthy
Carbondale, PA

FRED SCHRUEERS said Johnny Cash dragged Kris Kristofferson out onto the stage at Newport, but prior to that Kris appeared at the Berkeley Folk Festival. This was his first gig—and at Newport I had suggested to Cash that he put Kris on. Later at the Big Sur Folk Festival Kris was not allowed to even sing during a set change. However, the following year at the Monterey Fairgrounds Kris was a star.

Jim Marshall
San Francisco, CA

Garth-on-Hudson

SPECIAL THANKS to *Musician* and Tony Scherman for his review of Garth Hudson's April New York performances (June '90). Some of us in the hinterlands have been anxiously awaiting news of what transpired at St. Ann's, appetites whetted, of course, by a blurb in the New York papers. I've still got one question, though: Can't we hear it too?

Edward Beattie Jr.
Silver Spring, MD

Hot Seat

THANK YOU FOR your special section "The Hottest Drummers of 1990" (June '90). It's great to see drummers no longer take a back seat (no pun intended) to guitarists, vocalists, etc.

Mike Gladden
Croton, OH

No to Technotronic

WHAT THE HELL is a group like Technotronic doing in *Musician* (June '90)? I thought your magazine was about people with a talent for making music with meaning, not people with a talent for taking money from teenagers.

Nat Keefe
Los Altos, CA

Beatin' Up on Pete

SO PETE TOWNSHEND is "a little tired of the guitar group sound" (June '90). He said he would have liked to have heard a saxophone or a synth on Lou Reed's *New York*. He said "people might throw up their hands in horror" in reaction to his comments. Well, you were right, Pete. Don't you realize that an album as powerful as *New York* doesn't need any embellishments? Or that the raw *guitar* sound of the album helps to underscore the lyrics in such a way that any further instrumentation would only be a distraction? I guess not, since you have not made any music as powerful as *New York* in years.


John F. Russell
Red Bank, NJ

Moldy Chips

I FOUND CHIP STERN'S review of the Sonny Rollins album (June '90) a touch puzzling. Does his phrase "how moldy the figs really are" refer to the playing of Sonny Rollins on this album or to Branford Marsalis, who is also present. Is the review a rave or a put-down? It's so ambivalent it's hard to tell.

Vance Allen
New York, NY

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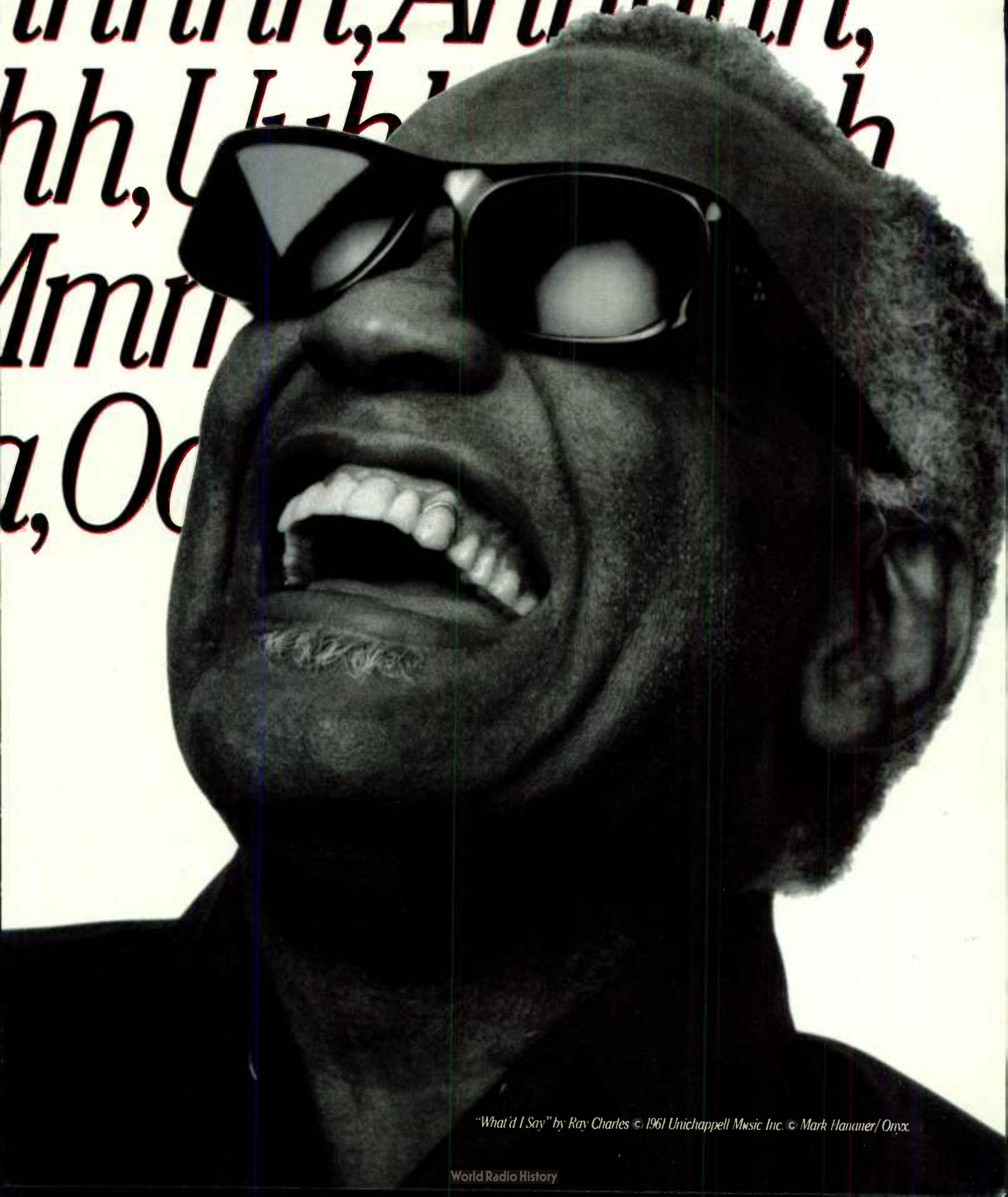
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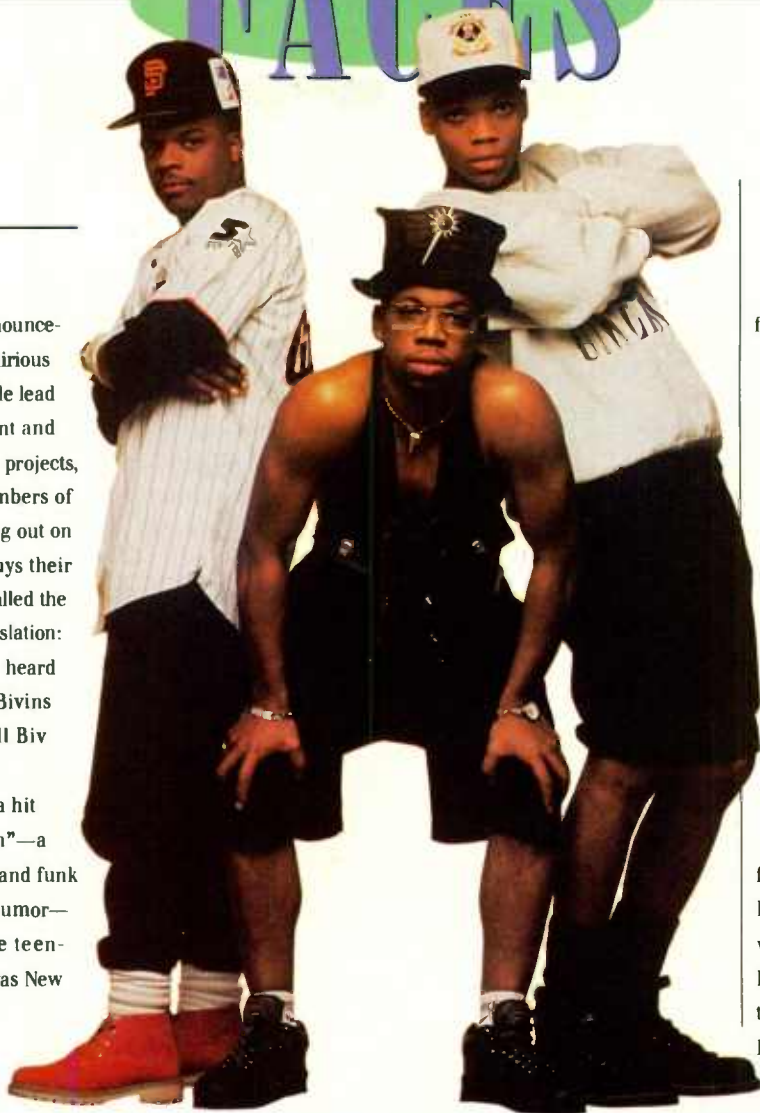
BELL BIV DEVOE

Brand new edition

IT WASN'T the sort of announcement that made you delirious with anticipation. While lead singers Ralph Tresvant and Johnny Gill mounted solo projects, the remaining three members of New Edition were stepping out on their own. These were guys their press bio diplomatically called the "heart" of the group. Translation: the ones nobody had ever heard of—Ricky Bell, Michael Bivins and Ronnie Devoe. "Bell Biv Devoe" indeed.

Ah, what a difference a hit makes. The hit: "Poison"—a fierce chunk of hip-hop and funk with a wicked sense of humor—marks a break with the teen-dream bubblegum that was New Edition's trademark.

Ronnie Devoe says they had long since



tired of that sound. Management "was basically in control of our destiny as far as imagery and records were concerned. We finally said, 'Hey, there's a way that we feel we can relate to the public.'"

So NE dropped their old management, picked up producers Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, and debuted a tougher, more urban sound on their album, *Heartbreak*. Devoe says, "We were just getting into that up-tempo, R&B feel. We knew we would stray more and more into that street thing." The new album, *Poison*, is a crisp collection that more than fulfills the promises (threats?) *Heartbreak* made.

The idea for this project came from Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis. Devoe says his response was, "Wow, why didn't we think about that?" Expect New Edition to reunite sometime next year. Meantime, while the lead singers are away, the group will play. —Leonard Pitts, Jr.



HUNTERS & COLLECTORS: EGGS 'R U.S.

DON'T TELL MARK SEYMOUR that Hunters & Collectors may be on the verge of making it big in the U.S.—frankly, he's heard that one before. "There's all sorts of stock phrases in the industry that encapsulate that kind of neurosis," he laughs. "Like 'primed for success' and 'cracking the American market,' which is a big one in Australia. The image of an egg, and inside there's all this wealth."

"In our country, you have this industry blurb that occurs every so often in the trade pages, where they'll be saying, 'Hunters & Collectors, on the road in the States, gaining fantastic popularity.' They'll talk about it all in superlatives and it's completely wrong, nothing to do with the truth at all. We'll be in some sort of like big gray motel on the outskirts of Kalamazoo just screaming at each other in frustration."

But with *Ghost Nation*, H&C's latest, things are different. "The importance of this record for the band has been that we've really sat down and thought the whole thing through before it started," says Seymour. "We realized that we were sort of tackling a bigger and bigger problem, this thing called the United States of America. We really needed to give ourselves time and breathing space to try and work all that out. We had never really done that before."—J.D. Considine

LOCK UP

Cooking in the melting pot

LOCK UP, out of Hollywood, free mix bad-attitude rock, R&B grit, hip-hopping rap and metal guitar ballistics: your basic integrational pop recipe.

Lead singer Brian Grillo: "I've always been into soul and gospel singers, but then again I grew up listening to punk rock and disco."

Tom Morello is a Harvard graduate and guitarist with a dexterous bag of tricks. "I moved to California with the express purpose of putting together a band with hard rock, funk, hip-hop and soul, with wild guitar going on."

Said wild guitar involves Led Zep-type riffs, feedback washes, rapid-



fire scale runs à la Van Halen and such unusual touches as toggle-switch manhandling. Being a black lead guitarist carries a stigma, still. "If you are a dark-skinned guitar player, inevitably the ghost of Jimi Hendrix comes up. My playing is much more reminiscent of modern guitar players. I love Hendrix but I don't think I sound like him."

"Five years or so ago, they were fearing the electric guitar would be outdated because they are devising these good keyboard samples," Morello laughs. "I took it upon myself to help make the keyboard outdated." —Josef Woodard



CARMEN MCRAE

The lady sings Monk

CARMEN McRAE is so loose on the platform at the Blue Note she often forgets to lift the mike to her lips when she sings. No matter—she's got the kind of voice you don't need to hear as much as just wrap yourself around. Tonight Carmen mixes it up, pulling out standards and Monk tunes and eulogizing Sarah Vaughan. Like her voice, she's big and round, and by set's end the place is swaying along with "The Man I Love."

"Can't find the phrases, child," she apologizes between verses, but no one notices. She's an unqualified natural, one of the last and best we've got.

Carmen used to hang at Minton's, and later, on 52nd Street, where you could stop by to check out, or maybe sit in with, Dizzy, Oscar Pettiford, Art Tatum. "It was the best time for jazz, just beautiful," she recalls—"too good to last." And if we haven't got that today, we do have *Carmen Sings Monk*.

"Thelonious never wrote with the human voice in mind," Carmen says. "He was into instruments; a lot of his

songs are just not palatable for the human voice. You've really got to concentrate. I had to really find out where the music went. Just where you think it's gonna go"—her voice drops smoothly into a baritone deeper than Joe Williams—"it don't go deah at all."

Using a wide vibrato to create dissonances, Carmen gushes warmth as she navigates the trickier twists of Monk's tunes. "Ben Webster used to phrase like he knew the lyrics, which is the way it's supposed to be. I just keep my fingers crossed." Is the contemporary jazz singer's role less creative than interpretive? "No way," she laughs deeply. "It is very creative. It's harder than playing an instrument. I just found out George Benson can't sing lyrics while he's playing. I never knew that. A singer has to know the melody, the lyrics and still improvise, so it takes a lot more from the mind. That's what separates the men from the boys. It's everything."

—Matt Resnicoff

JAMAICA BOYS

The wrinkle factor

THE JAMAICA BOYS, being bassist Marcus Miller, drummer Lenny White and keyboardist Osborne Gould Bingham, Jr. (you can call him "Dinky")—are on a musical mission. "Black music has gotten a little too dependent on electricity," explains Miller. "We've all made records using total technology. But since we've been musicians all our lives, we wanted to make some R&B music and bring back the human element."

On *J-Boys*, the human

element and bygone soul aesthetics meet up with '90s hip-hop. The common J-Boy denominators? A will to fuse musics, to find a good feel and the same hometown: the Jamaica section of Queens, New York, a rich environment for musicians. As White says, "You could walk down the street and listen to a band rehearse something by Jack-

son Five, walk down another street and listen to a band rehearsing some John Coltrane. All the guys coming from Jamaica had to have a certain degree of musicality before they could go out there and be a part of this or that band."

White and Miller know a few things about the joys of playing.

White drummed up a storm in Return to Forever and Miller's recent resume



BOBBY RADCLIFF

Beltway blues

GUESS IT'S something that's endemic to D.C.," muses Bobby Radcliff about the string of versatile guitarists who've spring-

boarded from the Washington area over the years. "Roy Buchanan, Danny Gatton, Bobby Parker—It's hard to call them just blues guitarists."

The same can be said of Radcliff, another D.C.-area native who now dwells on Manhattan's Lower East

Side. His Blacktop album, *Dresses Too Short*, reveals a range of blues influences, from Radcliff's first hero, Magic Sam Maghett, through B.B. King, Buddy Guy and Lightnin' Hopkins. But the tense, articulate chicken-pickin' of Don Rich (Buck Owens' longtime sideman) and the

rounded tones of Scotty Moore are present also, as well as strains of late-'60s soul.

"I'm a blues player," Radcliff acknowledges, "but there's a bit of everything in there. I have kind of a mongrel style. When you're young, you tend to pattern yourself on role models. As you get older you outgrow that, but you never completely leave behind the traces of those influences."

Radcliff's trio, with bassist Dave Hofstra and drummer Dickie Dworkin, provides a minimalist framework for his eclecticism. As diverse as his range is, though, it's blues that's brought Radcliff national attention.

"It's like Muddy said: The blues never dies. It never really went away. It was always there, just like other truly American art forms like jazz and country. Waiting for the times when people really need them."

—Dan Daley



includes production-writing for Miles Davis and work with David Sanborn. "Dinky" adds beef in the vocal department.

The uniqueness of the Jamaica Boys sound may come down to the music's point of origin, often in jam sessions instead of in circuit board meetings. "What it does is give the music wrinkles," Miller says of the working process. "That's the one thing that's been disappearing from R&B music—except in rap."

White agrees: "I want to break down some walls. Who's to say that you can't have a great rhythm and then put some jazz stuff on top of it?" Miller adds, "What we as the J-Boys are trying to do is bring some of that urgency back into R&B, trying to pick up where Sly left off, where Earth, Wind & Fire left off."

—Josef Woodard

KOKO TAYLOR

Rolls on alone

WHEN THE QUEEN of the Blues makes her movie debut, she goes for the gusto. Check out Koko Taylor's brief appearance in *Wild at Heart*, the new film by David Lynch.

"I'm up onstage singing," says Koko, describing her role, "and this man and woman get into a fight and start chasing each other around, beer bottles in their hands. And I'm singing, 'I feel for you baby/You're like a bomb'—real weird from what you're used to hearing me sing. But you know, it was good."

Good also describes *Jump for Joy*, Taylor's latest album, her sixth for Alligator, and the first to

contain a cover version of a song by yet another blues legend... Ted Nugent.

"I wanted something that ain't been milked to death," explains Grammy winner Koko. "And I hadn't heard nobody do that particular tune." So what made her decide the author of "Wang Dang Sweet Poontang" had penned a track worthy of being Kokoized? "The part where it says, 'Jump in the back of my Ford, I'm gonna give you a ride you never could afford,'" laughs Taylor.

Taylor lost her husband "Pop" Taylor a year ago. "It was like chopping off my right arm," she notes sadly, adding that her late spouse was constantly at her side keeping the guys in the band in line and navigating her career.

"And, you know, I miss him from all of that," she says, "but I'm hanging in there and trying to do

the same thing now. It's not an easy job. But I'm doing it. And right now, everybody's getting along like one big happy family."

—Dave DiMartino



THE MUSICIAN CHARTS

Top 100 Albums

The first number indicates the position of the album this month, the second its position last month.

1 • 2	M.C. Hammer <i>Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em</i> Capitol	24 • 11	Paula Abdul <i>Forever Your Girl</i> /Virgin
2 • 1	Sinéad O'Connor <i>I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got</i> /Ensign	25 • 19	Fleetwood Mac <i>Behind the Mask</i> /Warner Bros.
3 • 6	Soundtrack <i>Pretty Woman</i> /EMI	26 • —	Steve Vai <i>Passion and Warfare</i> /Relativity
4 • 8	Bell Biv DeVoe <i>Poison</i> /MCA	27 • 37	Taylor Dayne <i>Can't Fight Fate</i> /Arista
5 • 3	Heart <i>Brigade</i> /Capitol	28 • 31	Mötley Crüe <i>Dr. Feelgood</i> /Elektra
6 • —	Madonna <i>I'm Breathless</i> /Sire	29 • 28	Babyface <i>Tender Lover</i> /Solar
7 • 9	Depeche Mode <i>Violator</i> /Sire	30 • 21	Rod Stewart <i>Downtown Train/Selections from Storyteller</i> /Warner Bros.
8 • 61	Paula Abdul <i>Shut Up and Dance</i> /Virgin	31 • —	Ice Cube <i>Amerikkka's Most Wanted</i> /Priority
9 • 20	Wilson Phillips <i>Wilson Phillips</i> /SBK	32 • 32	Damn Yankees <i>Damn Yankees</i> /Warner Bros.
10 • 5	Michael Bolton <i>Soul Provider</i> /Columbia	33 • 18	Robert Plant <i>Manic Nirvana</i> /Es Paranza
11 • 4	Janel Jackson <i>Janel Jackson's Rhythm Nation</i> A&M	34 • 23	Alannah Myles <i>Alannah Myles</i> /Atlantic
12 • 13	Phil Collins <i>... But Seriously</i> /Atlantic	35 • 29	Linda Ronstadt (Fea. A. Neville) <i>Cry Like a Rainstorm, Howl Like the Wind</i> /Elektra
13 • 40	Billy Idol <i>Charmed Life</i> /Chrysalis	36 • 27	Basia <i>London Warsaw</i> /New York/Epic
14 • 22	Johnny Gill <i>Johnny Gill</i> /Motown	37 • 24	The B-52's <i>Cosmic Thing</i> /Reprise
15 • 7	Bonnie Raitt <i>Nick of Time</i> /Capitol	38 • —	George Strait <i>Livin' It Up</i> /MCA
16 • 10	Public Enemy <i>Rear of a Black Planet</i> /Def Jam	39 • —	New Kids on the Block <i>Step by Step</i> /Columbia
17 • 12	Lisa Stansfield <i>Affection</i> /Arista	40 • 93	Tony! Toni! Tone! <i>The Revival</i> /Wing
18 • 14	Aerosmith <i>Pump</i> /Geffen	41 • 35	Clint Black <i>Killin' Time</i> /RCA
19 • 16	Soundtrack <i>Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles</i> /SBK	42 • 33	Midnight Oil <i>Blue Sky Mining</i> /Columbia
20 • 15	Don Henley <i>The End of the Innocence</i> /Geffen	43 • 26	Technotronic <i>Pump Up the Jam—The Album</i> SBK
21 • 17	Slaughter <i>Stick It to Ya</i> /Chrysalis	44 • 30	New Kids on the Block <i>Hangin' Tough</i> /Columbia
22 • 42	En Vogue <i>Born to Sing</i> /Atlantic	45 • —	Soul II Soul <i>Vol. II—1990—A New Decade</i> Virgin
23 • 25	Digital Underground <i>Sez Packets</i> /Tommy Boy	46 • 39	David Bowie <i>Changes</i> /BWE/RKCO
		47 • 51	Alter 7 <i>Alter 7</i> /Virgin
		48 • 65	Soundtrack <i>The Little Mermaid</i> /Walt Disney

Top Concert Grosses

1	Phil Collins Rosemont Horizon, Rosemont, IL/June 14-17	\$1,665,400
2	Madonna, Technotronic Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, Uniondale, NY/June 11-13	\$1,530,000
3	Frank Sinatra, Al Hirt Radio City Music Hall, New York, NY/June 14-17	\$1,064,450
4	Madonna, Technotronic The Spectrum, Philadelphia, PA/June 16-17	\$976,666
5	Julio Iglesias Radio City Music Hall, New York, NY/June 8-12	\$953,855
6	Madonna, Technotronic Capitol Centre, Landover, MD/June 8-9	\$928,193
7	Janel Jackson, Chuckii Booker Tacoma Dome, Tacoma, WA/June 6-7	\$893,779
8	Rush, Mr. Big Alpine Valley Music Theatre, East Troy, WI/June 16-17	\$886,385
9	Depeche Mode, Nitzer Ebb The Spectrum, Philadelphia, PA/June 15-14	\$403,660
10	Benson & Hedges Blues '90: Stevie Ray Vaughan, B.B. King, Dr. John, others Pacific Amphitheatre, Los Angeles, CA/June 9	\$371,371

49 • —	Milli Vanilli <i>The Remix Album</i> /Arista	85 • 91	Troop <i>Attitude</i> /Atlantic
50 • 76	L.A. Guns <i>Cocked & Loaded</i> /Vertigo	86 • 53	Tommy Page <i>Paintings in My Mind</i> /Sire
51 • 45	The Kentucky Headhunters <i>Pickin' on Nashville</i> /Mercury	87 • —	The Lightning Seeds <i>Cloudbuckooland</i> /MCA
52 • —	Van Morrison <i>The Best of Van Morrison</i> /Mercury	88 • 70	Najee <i>Tokyo Blue</i> /EMI
53 • 36	Eric Clapton <i>Journeyman</i> /Duck	89 • 48	Salt-N-Pepa <i>Black's Magic</i> /Next Plateau
54 • —	The Jeff Healey Band <i>Hell to Pay</i> /Arista	90 • 62	Cowboy Junkies <i>The Caution Horses</i> /RCA
55 • 50	Andrew Dice Clay <i>The Day the Laughter Died</i> /Def American	91 • —	Julee Cruise <i>Floating into the Night</i> /Warner Bros.
56 • 41	Billy Joel <i>Storm Front</i> /Columbia	92 • 67	Luther Vandross <i>The Best of Luther Vandross: The Best of Love</i> /Epic
57 • 68	Linear <i>Linear</i> /Atlantic	93 • 86	Richard Marx <i>Repeat Offender</i> /EMI
58 • 44	Gloria Estefan <i>Cuts Both Ways</i> /Epic	94 • 72	The Church <i>Gold Afternoon Flz</i> /Arista
59 • —	Faith No More <i>The Real Thing</i> /Slash	95 • —	Snap <i>World Power</i> /Arista
60 • 49	Young M.C. <i>Stone Cold Rhymin'</i> /Delicious Vinyl	96 • —	World Party <i>Goodbye Jumbo</i> /Ensign
61 • 63	Howard Hewett <i>Howard Hewett</i> /Elektra	97 • —	Garth Brooks <i>Garth Brooks</i> /Capitol
62 • —	Pretenders <i>Packed</i> /Sire	98 • —	Keith Sweat <i>I'll Give All My Love to You</i> Vintertainment
63 • 55	New Kids on the Block <i>New Kids on the Block</i> /Columbia	99 • 77	Travis Tritt <i>Country Club</i> /Warner Bros.
64 • 38	Quincy Jones <i>Back on the Block</i> /Qwest	100 • 66	Adam Ant <i>Manners & Physique</i> /MCA
65 • 34	Milli Vanilli <i>Girl You Know It's True</i> /Arista		
66 • 52	Faerie Fanny <i>Wake Me When It's Over</i> /Elektra		
67 • 78	The Black Crowes <i>Shake Your Money Maker</i> /Def American		
68 • 46	Little Feat <i>Representing the Mambo</i> /Warner Bros.		
69 • 43	Live <i>Kenny G</i> /Arista		
70 • 74	Elton John <i>Sleeping with the Past</i> /MCA		
71 • 73	The 2 Live Crew <i>As Nasty As They Wanna Be</i> Skiyywalker		
72 • 64	Michel'e <i>Michel'e</i> /Ruthless		
73 • 58	Roxette <i>Look Sharp</i> /EMI		
74 • —	Lita Ford <i>Siletto</i> /RCA		
75 • —	Dio <i>Lock Up the Wolves</i> /Reprise		
76 • —	Perfect Gentlemen <i>Rated PG</i> /Columbia		
77 • 54	Suzanne Vega <i>Days of Open Hand</i> /A&M		
78 • —	Alabama <i>Pass It On</i> /RCA		
79 • —	The Sundays <i>Reading, Writing and Arithmetic</i> DGC		
80 • 56	Michael Penn <i>March</i> /RCA		
81 • 47	Cary Simon <i>My Romance</i> /Arista		
82 • 57	Tom Petty <i>Full Moon Rever</i> /MCA		
83 • 59	Soundtrack <i>Beaches</i> /Atlantic		
84 • —	Giant <i>Last of the Runaways</i> /A&M		

The Musician album chart is produced by the Billboard chart department for Musician, and reflects the combined points for all album reports gathered by the Billboard computers in the month of June. The record company chart is based on the top 200 albums. The concert chart is based on Amusement Business Box Score reports for June 1990. All charts are copyright 1990 by BPI Incorporated.

Top Labels

1	Columbia
2	Capitol
3	Arista
4	Atlantic
5	Virgin
6	Sire
7	Warner Bros.
8	MCA
9	SBK
10	Geffen
11	Elektra
12	EMI
13	RCA
14	Chrysalis
15	A&M
16	Ensign
17	Epic
18	Mercury
19	Reprise
20	Def Jam

Barefoot

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Jazz
Soloists*
get
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with
Big Sur
Drummers.

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*Peter Apfelbaum,
Steve Kindler,
Dave Friesen,
Sulubika,
Carlos Reyes.



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Fingers to the 'Bone

*Trombonist/composer
Craig Harris tries to
break out in Cold Sweat*

BY

Tony Scherman

◆
"You tell me,
why shouldn't
someone have
two completely
different
bands going?"
◆

ONSTAGE, CRAIG HARRIS is an intimidating figure. He scowls, rolls his neck, grimaces, paces. Finishing a solo, he'll give a look of angry, wounded disbelief, as if never, *ever*, will he let himself get suckered into playing another trombone solo. He'll draw himself up to his full height and stare, Napoleonic, out over the audience. He solos from a near-crouch; sometimes he gives a little one-footed hop. He never smiles. He's cat-like, coiled and his body English—his sheer physical presence—threatens to upstage his playing.

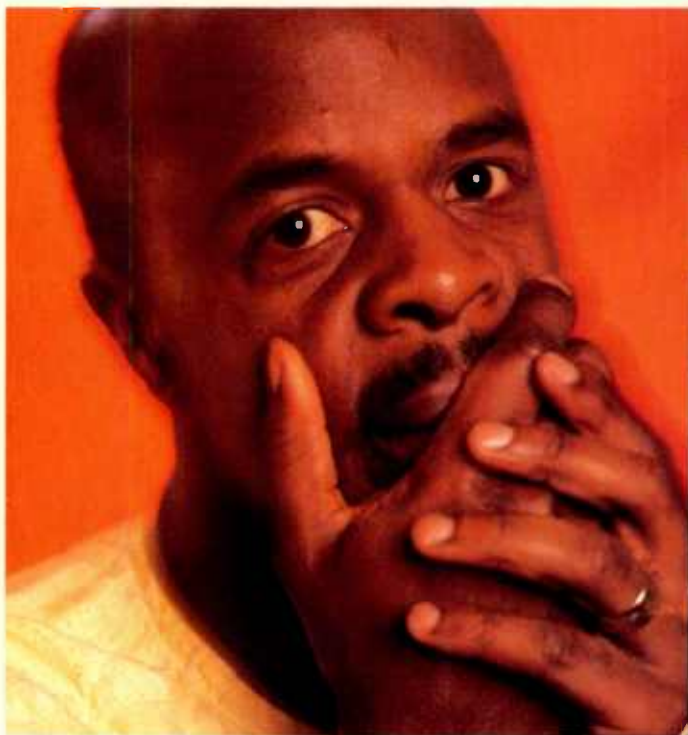
His playing wins out. At 37, Harris is a dazzlingly emotive trombone soloist, schooled in the bands of Sun Ra, Abdullah Ibrahim, David Murray and Henry Threadgill. But trombone playing's only part of his story. A bandleader himself, Harris directs two ensembles, different as night and day: Tailgater's Tales, who soar and rattle through Harris's polyrhythmic, Mingus-influenced pieces, and Cold Sweat, a blistering funk band. As a composer, Harris is one of the most versatile in New York—who else is writing austere new-music string quartets *and* gorgeous jazz ballads *and* ferocious funk charts? Harris is a creator; like pianist Geri Allen, he's an energy source, a moving spirit in turn-of-the-century jazz.

Harris started trombone as a sixth-grader in Hempstead, Long Island; in a few years he was gigging in local R&B bands with names like the Incredible Music Makers, the Majestics, the Soul Brothers. He didn't really discover jazz until college, and then it was trumpeters and saxophonists—*Bitches Brew*-era Miles Davis, the Coltrane of *Meditations*—who inspired him, not trombonists.

"Trombone players were probably the last people who influenced me," said Harris recently, sitting in his Harlem brownstone. "Trombone players were always hidden up in the trombone section. I never wanted to sit in

some section and play parts all *my* life—it's a great thing, a beautiful skill, but I wanted to play, I wanted to play." Lithe and muscular, with a bald, bullet-shaped head, Harris looks like the former three-sport high school athlete he is. He's a musical talker, in love with the flow of words; he'll give the same word a rainbow of inflections.

"If you play trombone and you want to be an improviser, you have to transcend that stereotyped trombone player role. A lot of trombonists can't expand, they don't tran-



scend, they be hidin' up there in the section. They won't say, 'I'm out front: bam.' We trombonists are so happy with our tonguing techniques, we're so happy with our scales and our lip-flexibility exercises, that we forget the big picture, which is *emotion and music*."

A few trombonists, he says, always had the big picture. "There was Benny Green, he was a contemporary of J.J. Johnson except he didn't get all the hype. He was 'the other trombone player.' I never saw him, but just from going through his records I *know* he had the feeling. Curtis Fuller—a lot of people sleep on that man, but he's got the feeling too, *whoa*, has he got the feeling. Al Grey, there's another one that transcends. When J.J. Johnson came here last year, I went to the Village Vanguard about three nights in a row and it was beautiful to see him, the living master, the guy that started all this shit—no, I shouldn't say 'started,' 'cause then I'd be



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forgetting J.C. Higginbotham in the '30s and '40s. Playing in those big-band sections was not enough for J.C. Higginbotham, 'cause you can hear the fire inside, you can hear his story."

Harris's favorites among his contemporaries? "George Lewis and Ray Anderson. Yeah, George Lewis. George Lewis kinda amazes me, George Lewis be way ahead of the pack. He has a beautiful sound, beautiful: piercing and at the same time very centered, very soothing."

Harris's own sound is frank, non-bur-

nished, sometimes huge. He augments the trombone's conventional range with a grab-bag of smears, yelps and high, whinnying harmonics; he can bottom out with a tremendous, rude blat. "Trombone's in the midrange, so it can get lost—to come across, you have to break your dick. You have to throw the sound a hundred miles just to get it across the room. When I'm playing, I'm throwing the sound to the farthest place I've ever been in my life, throwin' the sound to Australia somewhere. That's been the biggest hurdle for me on trombone: endur-

ance.

"For years I worked on getting a huge sound. Now I have to upgrade the quality of that sound, fill up the perimeter with goodies, with cushion. But I never want to lose that *edge*. They won't say so, but a lot of trombone players really want to sound like French horn players; they don't want to deal with the real sound of trombone. Today, you'll see a lot of trombonists doing what I call 'eating the microphone': They take the bell of the instrument and put it over the mike. That way, what you're really doing is triggering the microphone; you get a really soft, warm, round, articulated sound. It's nice, but I'm not interested in it. Listen to Latin trombone, or trombone in the African-American Baptist church—that's more where I'm from. A player like Bill Watrous has the opposite approach from me. My sound's got that edge, right where it's going to tip over and crack. If it breaks, that doesn't bother me so much.

"I try not to play too many notes. Less is best; fast tonguing gets on my nerves. I listen. I hear orchestrally, I hear in layers. I try to *play* in layers. Like if the bassist's playing sixteenth- and thirty-second notes, I may back up and play half-notes. It makes both our stuff worth more. When the band is playing I wanna hear six, seven layers; I don't want no one or two layers. In most music you hear three layers: the soloist, rhythm from the drummer, and harmony. I think there's a lot more levels."

Harris's fascination with shifting layers pays off beautifully in Tailgater's Tales: Again and again, he makes what's basically a quintet sound like a big band. "I might take the

TOY MATINEE *Two Guys From Rock & Roll*

Meet Toy Matinee, a band of two strikingly different individuals—one a veteran of the studio boards, the other an upstart musician from the S.F.

Bay area's hottest band.

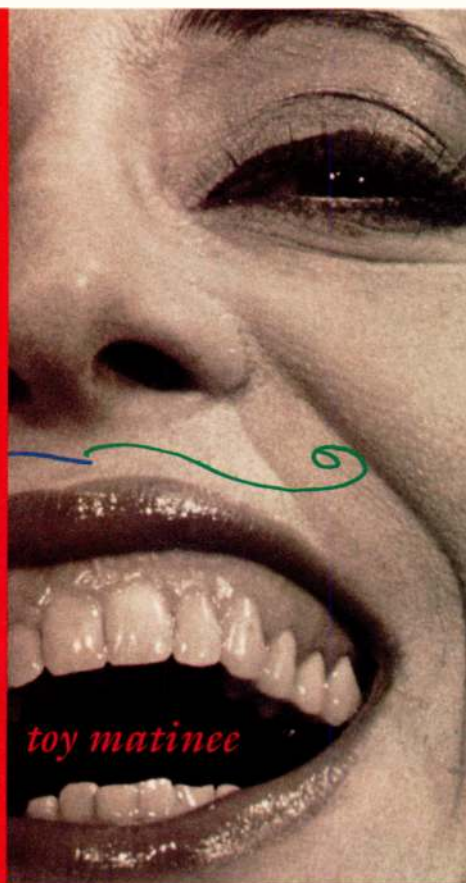
Together, Patrick Leonard—known for his collaborations with Bryan Ferry, Pink Floyd and Madonna, and newcomer

Kevin Gilbert—former frontman for the band Giraffe, deliver the goods on an album of rock & roll that's as pure and provocative as it gets.

Toy Matinee. New, from Patrick Leonard and Kevin Gilbert. The show starts now, with "Last Plane Out."



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toy matinee



toy matinee

The New Album
Featuring "Last Plane Out"

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and Compact Discs.

'BONESPEAK

CRAIG HARRIS has played a Bach 42 trombone for 10 years, a Marcinkiewicz 7G mouthpiece for one. Touring Australia a decade ago with Abdullah Ibrahim, Harris bought himself a four-foot-long *djiridoo*, an aborigine log horn; he plays it to great effect. "I haven't really studied folk music; I just try to apply trombone techniques—the same embouchure, circular breathing—to the *djiridoo*. Instruments like this are the ancestors of European brass instruments." Up in Craig's second-floor music room, the very old meets the very new: He uses a Korg M-1 synth and a Mac Plus computer (with Master Track software) for composing and sequencing.

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Plus keymaster Johnny Neal,

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and ace bass man, Allen Woody.

Featuring Good Clean Fun, Seven Turns and True Gravity.



Produced by Tom Dowd.
"Epic," Reg. U.S. Pat. & Tm. Off. by CBS Records Inc. © 1990 CBS Records Inc.




horns—who people think of as carrying the melody—and have them play rhythm in support of the bass player, who'll play the melody. Or I might write the melody for percussion, with the guitar playing in support. It makes the music much *thicker*."

Harris calls Tailgater's Tales, which he founded in 1986, "my improviser's release. The soloists can do what they want, if they make it work. They can change key, they can change rhythms. Tailgater's Tales ain't about stayin' in no key; music's gone way beyond that now." After two albums, *Shelter* and *Blackout in the Square Root of Soul*, the group is a critics' favorite; it's also been a training ground for promising soloists like clarinetist Don Byron and guitarist Brandon Ross. But Harris has a hard time keeping the band together. He suffers from jazzman's disease: glowing notices, no bread. That's where Cold Sweat comes in.

"If I'm ever going to make money, big money, big, crazy money, it's going to be with Cold Sweat." In late 1988 Harris decided to record a tribute to James Brown; introducing some of his old high-school funk buddies to his jazz friends, he assembled a 10-piece band and cut *Cold Sweat Plays J.B.* It's a wonderful album—churning, happy, danceable—and it far outsold Harris's other records. Touring Europe last fall, Cold Sweat added original tunes, whipped itself into great, tight shape . . . and Harris started plotting his escape from jazz penury.

"So-called rock musicians have always hired so-called jazz musicians to pump their shit up, 'cause that's who the best players are, pure and simple. So I said, 'Why can't we start a pop band too, and hire ourselves?'"

Cold Sweat's second album, due out in November, will consist of rhythm & blues ballads. After that, says Harris, "Cold Sweat's going to go even further into the funk field. No more 7/4 time, not so many solos. We're gonna make music to *dance* to, to listen down to. We got three vocalists, we got live horns, not MIDI horns like most dance music; we got two songs that could be hit dance singles right now. Cold Sweat don't want no Village Vanguard, we want the Ritz!

"You tell me, why *shouldn't* someone have two completely different things going? Cold Sweat could subsidize Tailgater's Tales, it could subsidize all my artistic adventures. It's the most accessible music I'll probably ever make." Cold Sweat may be accessible, but it is not tame. "I'm not here," says its leader, "to play no dinner music." 

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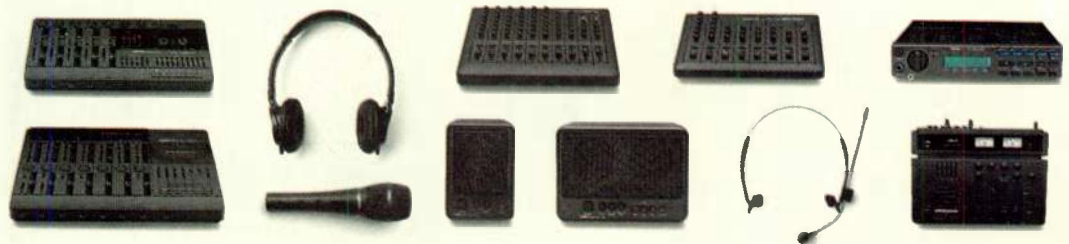
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FOLKLORE

Opening Woody Guthrie's FBI File

*G-men trailed
folksinger from
California to the
New York island*

BY

Daniel Wolff

IN THE SPRING of 1941, Woody Guthrie had just completed one of the most remarkable bouts of sustained songwriting in the history of American popular music. Hired by the Department of the Interior to help promote rural electrification, he had cranked out some 26 songs in 30 days. A startling number of them became classics, including "Roll on Columbia," "Grand Coulee Dam," "Hard Travelin'" and "Pastures of Plenty."

According to Guthrie's FBI file, made public here for the first time through the Freedom of Information Act, it was in June of that year that an unnamed informant accused Guthrie of harboring Communist sympathies. The file's 111 heavily-edited pages go on to chronicle how our country, with varying degrees of competence, pursued one of its greatest songwriters off and on for over two decades. Today, the Guthrie files offer a belated footnote to an era when government surveillance of artists had become shockingly routine.

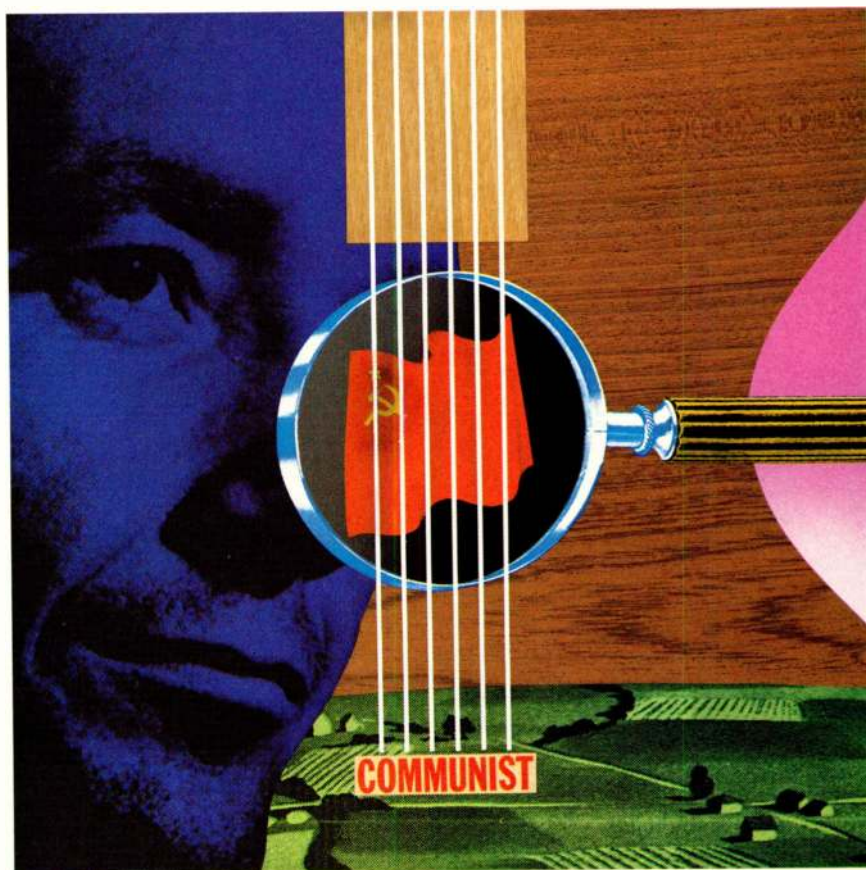
FBI director J. Edgar Hoover quickly gave agents of the San Francisco bureau his personal permission to conduct an investigation as to whether Woody's "activities and

sympathies" were "inimical to the best interests of this Government. . . ."

The trouble from the beginning was finding the man. The bureau soon ascertained that Guthrie was driving a 1941 Pontiac sedan, that the plates were out-of-date, and that he was behind on his car payments (Woody used to describe this means of transportation as "hitch-hiking on credit"). What they couldn't figure out was his location: "Subject said to be travelling about the country" was as close as they came.

When Guthrie was at the height of his powers—recording for the Folkways label, performing at union and communist rallies, and helping to found the "subversive" Almanac Singers with Pete Seeger—the FBI found little on him. In 1943, they were worried about a show he was in called "It's Up To You" and accused Guthrie of having collaborated with Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich. Unfortunately for the bureau, the show was sponsored by the Department of Agriculture to encourage food rationing in wartime.

In 1944, another unnamed informant announced that there were Communists onboard his merchant marine ship. He cited Guthrie (who'd joined the Merchant Marine that year) as one of the sailors "interested in



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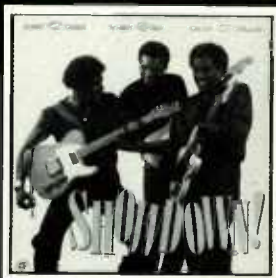
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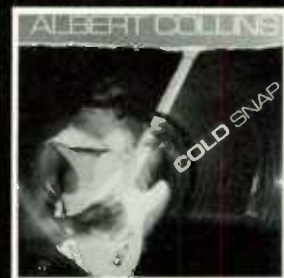
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"A masterful guitarist... awesome chops."
—*Musician*



ROY BUCHANAN: HOT WIRES
"Guitar lovers rejoice! His best album ever."
—*Chicago Tribune*



ALBERT COLLINS: COLD SNAP
"Razor sharp attack... funky, slow-burning intensity."
—*Washington Post*



ALLIGATOR

delivering various packages of pamphlets which had been brought on board by someone in a secretive manner and were kept in the messboy's room. . . ." The bureau even managed to obtain a note, in Woody's school-boyish handwriting, that called Hearst newspaper columnist and violent anti-Communist Westbrook Pegler "narrow-minded" and "silly."

But the real hunt didn't begin till 1950 when Guthrie, in failing health from the nerve disease Huntington's Chorea, was declared a threat to national security.

That summer, the Weavers (all old friends of Guthrie) had the number one single in the country, Leadbelly's "Goodnight Irene." According to one of them, Pete Seeger: "They [the blacklists] must have wondered, how'd we let those sons of bitches slip through our fingers? They're not even supposed to get started, and look, they're right at the top of the hit parade, and every one of 'em's got a legit record of some sort."

Guthrie was no exception. He'd stated in one of his columns for *The Daily Worker* that the "best thing" he'd ever done was to begin

working with the party back in 1936. That had been in California, when the Communists fought to get humane working conditions for Guthrie's fellow Okies.

In June 1950 a Los Angeles informant identified Guthrie as "a member of the Factionalist Sabotage Group." According to the FBI, this group was composed of veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and some ex-members of the Communist Party. The report goes on to claim that the "ultimate purpose of this group is sabotage against the United States during war with Russia." One of Hoover's pet theories was that left-leaning veterans were using their military experience to perfect "techniques of guerrilla warfare." The L.A. bureau was instructed that anyone connected with this group "be closely followed."

The first thing the bureau did was to confirm that Guthrie was living in El Paso with his wife, Mary. He wasn't and hadn't been for a decade; nor was he married to Mary.

The Los Angeles FBI identified Guthrie's "main function (as) getting entertainment on the radio." If that was the case, Guthrie hadn't been very successful. "You have to remember," says Harold Leventhal, Guthrie's friend and manager, "that Woody wasn't a national figure then. That didn't begin till much later, when he was in the hospital dying." In the winter of 1950, using the first large chunk of money he'd ever earned (his bonus from the Weavers' recording of "So Long It's Been Good to Know You"), Guthrie moved his family to Murdock Court in Coney Island. It took a year, but the FBI eventually discovered this and paid a visit.

Apparently the agents didn't invite themselves in. Instead, they checked the mailbox for the correct room number, got the lease from the landlord in order to determine what Woody and his second wife, Marjorie, did for a living (Guthrie described himself as a "Free Lance Folk Singer"), interviewed a neighbor who reported that Guthrie had been getting Communist publications through the mail, and obtained election records which showed that he'd registered with the American Labor Party. Apparently this was damning enough to help convince the FBI to up surveillance, adding a "Security Index Card" to go with Guthrie's "Communist Index Card." (Both were kept as secret files by Hoover since the Attorney General had questioned the legality of these surveillance techniques.)



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In February of 1952, the Weavers were named as Communists before a Congressional committee. That led to a loss of bookings, the cancellation of their recording contract and, eventually, their disbanding. As the nationwide witch hunt intensified, so did Guthrie's struggle with Huntington's Chorea. He was still well enough, according to Seeger, to improvise an inspired verse to "Acres of Clams":

"He asked: 'Will you carry a gun for your country?'

I answered the FBI, 'Yay!'

I will point a gun for my country
But I won't guarantee you which way!"

But Woody's writing, as his biographer Joe Klein says, "was beginning to bulge and warp crazily, like images in a fun-house mirror." He began a series of increasingly disoriented cross-country trips, with FBI agents doing their best to follow. "The various tics and shakes, the slurred speech and other symptoms" which Klein says Guthrie exhibited didn't appear to register. All the informant in Florida reported, after he admitted Guthrie never "indicated any sym-

pathy to the Soviet Government," was that Guthrie was "very egocentric" and seemed "most concerned about himself." When Woody surfaced in El Paso in September 1954, the local informant reported he looked "beat up and has gray hair." Then the bureau lost track of him again.

Guthrie had checked himself back into Brooklyn State Hospital, where he had been "ranting," according to Klein, "about the 'Hoover gang' at the FBI." But his paranoia turns out to have had some foundation. Through a "pretext telephone call" to Marjorie, agents discovered Guthrie was in the hospital, and, in early 1955, wrote Hoover that, yes, it was a fatal disease he was suffering from, but death often didn't come till age 55 or 60. Guthrie was only 44. What's more, since he'd checked himself into the hospital voluntarily, he "can be discharged when he, the subject, desires." The New York bureau therefore recommended maintaining a Security Index Card on a man who was now having trouble lighting his own cigarettes.

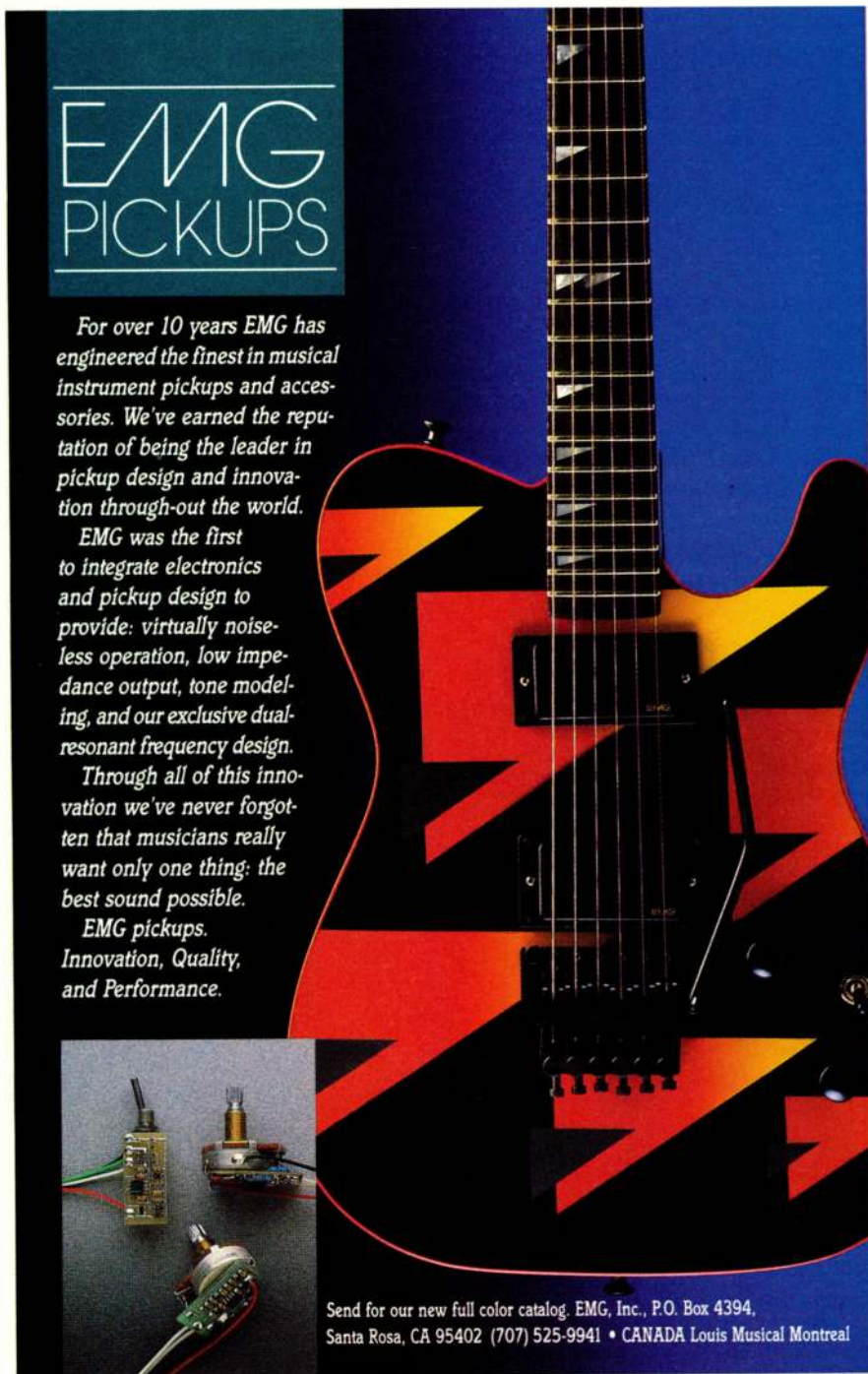
Finally, in June 1955, New York stated that "in view of the subject's health status and lack of reliable first-hand information reflecting Communist Party membership in the last five years, it is believed that his name should be removed from the Security Index."

This should have signaled the end of an investigation based on rumor and innuendo. It didn't. In April 1966, Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall awarded Guthrie a Conservation Service Award for the Grand Coulee Dam songs—the ones Guthrie had written the year his surveillance began. The ballads, said Udall, "summarized the struggles and the deeply held convictions of all those who love our land and fight to protect it." Udall also announced the department was naming a sub-station of the Bonneville electricity project after Guthrie.

That September, Senator Mark Hatfield received a letter (its sender's name edited out of the file) stating that a "local controversy has arisen." Hatfield was asked to

- 1) Ascertain if Guthrie was a Communist.
- 2) If he was, can you take some action to get the name 'Woody Guthrie' eliminated as a name for a Federally owned power station."

The honor was eventually bestowed, but not before Hatfield had queried Hoover. The last item in Guthrie's FBI file is the director's response that "information in our files must be maintained as confidential. . . ." Two weeks later, Woody Guthrie died. M



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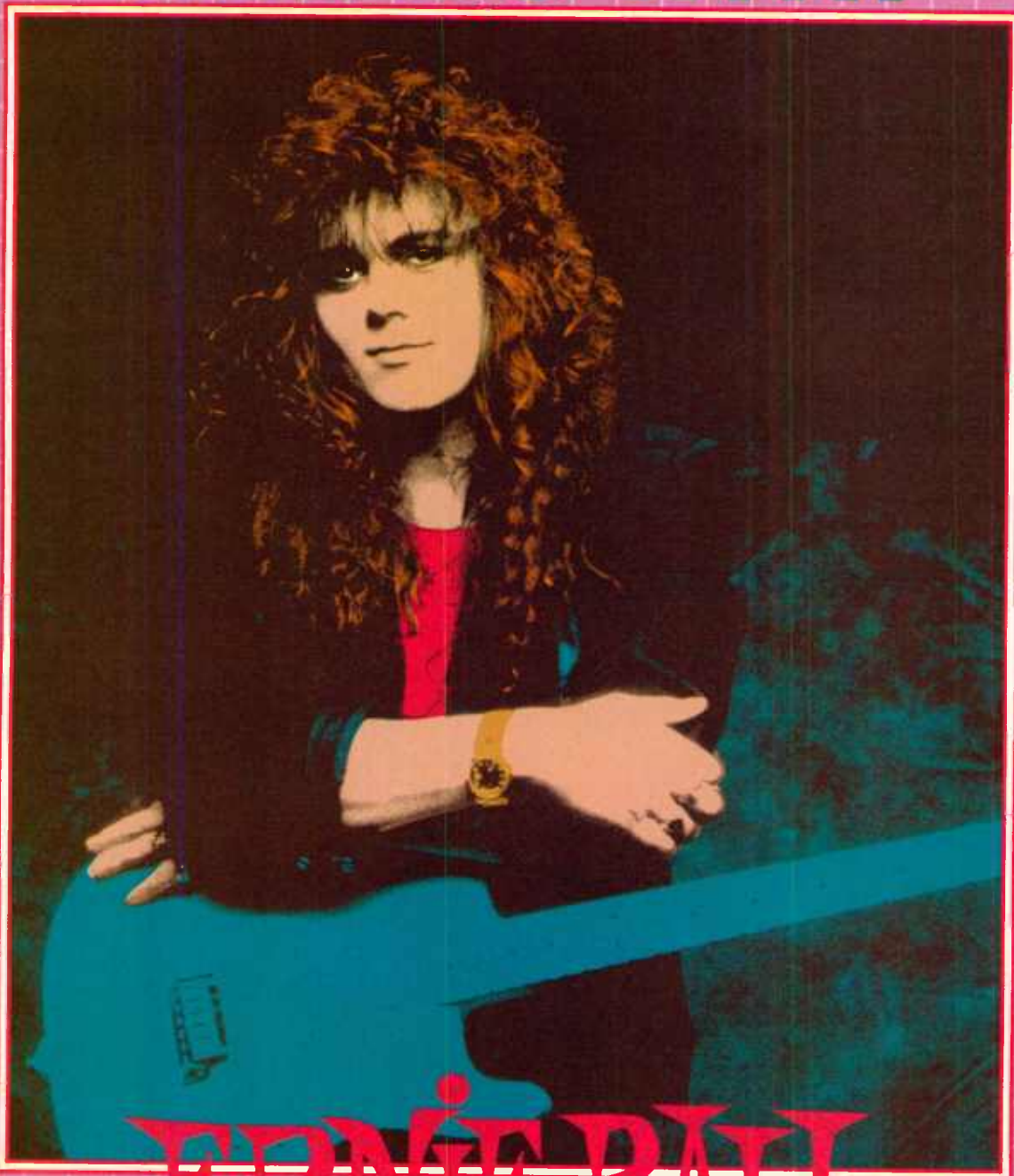


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World Radio History

Michael Stipe on R.E.M.'s Image & Vision



IN THE VERGE OF R.E.M.'S RETURN TO THE STUDIO TO RECORD ITS SEVENTH ALBUM, *MUSICIAN* ASKED LEAD SINGER MICHAEL STIPE TO TALK ABOUT WHAT HE'S BEEN DOING SINCE THE RELEASE OF *GREEN*, TWO YEARS AGO. STIPE HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY ACTIVE POLITICALLY, CAMPAIGNING FOR MICHAEL DUKAKIS IN THE 1988 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND BACKING VARIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS AND PROJECTS. AFTER DIRECTING A NUMBER OF VIDEOS FOR R.E.M., HE

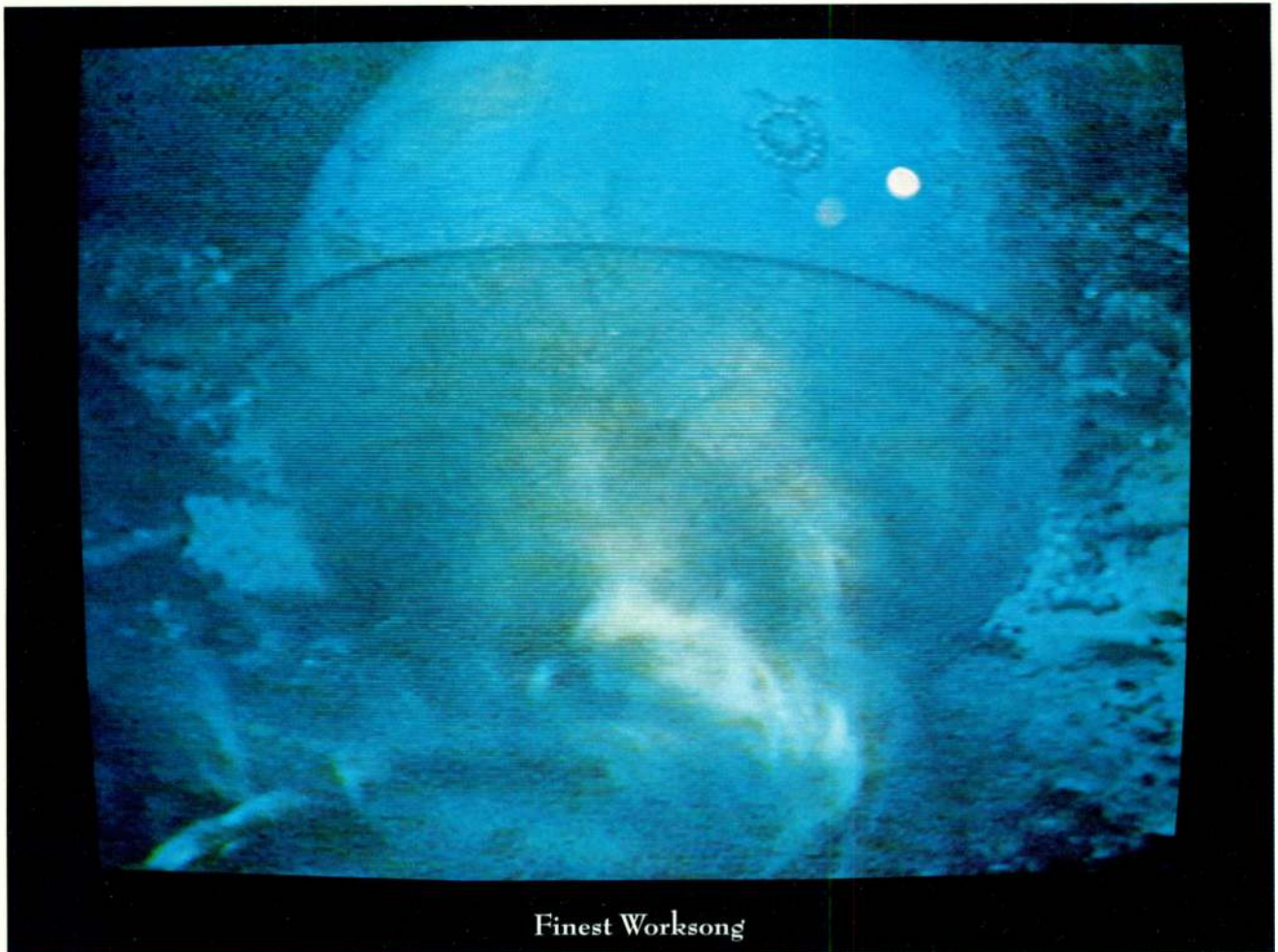


By Katherine Dieckmann
Photography by Lee Crum





rapid eye movement



Finest Worksong

started a non-profit company, C-Hundred Film Corp., along with filmmaker Jim McKay. C-Hundred has produced a series of public service announcements on topics including abortion rights, safe sex and organic farming, with spots directed by, among others, Stipe and KRS-One of Boogie Down Productions (with whom Stipe recently recorded a song about the greenhouse effect called "State of the World"). Stipe and McKay recently edited "Tourfilm," a documentary of R.E.M.'s *Green* concert, to be released by Warners this fall.

Stipe has also been producing various bands, mostly for the independent Texas Hotel label, including the Chickasaw Mudd Puppies, Vic Chesnutt, Hetch Hetchy and Hugo Largo. This conversation about Stipe's multimedia activities began in a back yard in Athens, Georgia, continued on a patch of grass in New York's Central Park and concluded over two cordless phones.

MUSICIAN: *Early on, R.E.M. decided it didn't want to go the standard music video route. Since then there hasn't been a classic MTV video in the lot. You've made videos for "Can't Get There from Here," "Driver 8," "Fall on Me," "Finest Worksong," and "Pop Song '89." When you started directing was it because...*

STIPE: It was because I was the art student. In 1980 we put together our first single sleeve and we needed a design. We all said, "Who should we get to do it?" And Peter [Buck] just said, "You do it," and walked out of the room. It was as simple as that. I always did

Katherine Dieckmann directed the video for R.E.M.'s "Stand."

everything as far as cover art and designing and choosing how to do the videos from there on out. Our first three videos were pretty awful. "South Central Rain" was the only bearable one, because we got to actually play and sing rather than fake it. I refused to lip sync after our first video. I basically hate it in all videos—I mean, you can always tell someone's not singing and it looks incredibly stupid. In "South Central Rain," I'm holding my headphones because that's what you do in a studio when you're actually singing. But it looks like I was about to tear my head off and hurl it across the room.

MUSICIAN: *You do look a tad tormented. When did you start making films? Was it when you were studying at the University of Georgia with Jim Herbert? [Herbert has directed many music videos for R.E.M., including "It's the End of the World as We Know It" and "Turn You Inside Out."]*

STIPE: I made a little Super 8 film before that with a friend. I filmed her taking a bath, and she filmed me, and that was that. Jim Herbert had a huge influence on me, both as an individual and as an artist. I remember seeing his films when I was 19 or 20 and being really stunned. They have a lot of flesh and peculiar movement in them. I think I was kind of a late bloomer in terms of having influences I could spot and name. I would see a painting, but wouldn't identify it as a painter's work as much as just something else passing by. I never differentiated real life from secondary or flat or 2-D life.

MUSICIAN: *What was it like making films for the first time?*

STIPE: I remember editing one in the darkroom all by myself and thinking it was really sexy.



Pop Song '89

MUSICIAN: *My favorite thing someone said about you as a filmmaker is "He doesn't know an f-stop from a bus stop." [Laughter] But isn't it true that with "Finest Worksong" you didn't really know what you were getting?*

STIPE: Yes. Technically, I was clueless. I did know what I wanted to see, and mostly that video followed what I had in mind. Though it became much more frantic through the editing. There's some name for that very fast and aggressive editing—like "throttle" editing or something. [Laughs]

I wanted the image to include the sweat that went into it. We were working really hard making that video, it was boiling hot, and we were all drenched. The footage almost dictated the way it was cut. Plus when we recorded that song, we added a 16 beat to it, a very fast little beat that creates a subtle motion in the music. I had to arm wrestle to get it in, because everyone else in the band felt it was manipulative and kind of crass. It's a subliminal seduction—you don't know *why* you feel so motivated by that song, but it's the 16 beat in the high register. I was very conscious of that beat when I was editing, and that probably affected the visual rhythms.

MUSICIAN: *It's cut fast, but it doesn't subscribe to the usual principle of rapid editing for MTV, which is to suck you into the excitement of a*

"MTV is so rife with gratuitous T&A. Busty models dancing around middle-aged rock singers."

performance, or a band, or an icon, the rock star. "Pop Song '89" sort of played with all that, with you up front without your shirt on. And it had three topless women dancing with censor bars over their breasts—well, you had them, too. That video's become much more interesting in light of the recent movement by neocons to suppress work with sexual content.

STIPE: "Pop Song" was a direct response to something preexisting that I couldn't abide, which was that MTV is so rife with gratuitous tits and ass. Busty models dancing around middle-aged rock singers. This whole phenomenon of videos of . . . I can only call it gang rape. There's a woman who's shot very close up gyrating in some steamy, skimpy outfit, and that's intercut with heroic Steadicam shots of men with four thousand lights on them wielding big guitars. I mean, please.

MUSICIAN: *Can you imagine if a Jesse Helms or Tipper Gore saw the uncensored version of "Pop Song"? After all, it's available on the R.E.M. "Pop Screen" anthology. Any teenager could buy it and see three topless women dancing.*

STIPE: My very blasé answer about record censoring when I've been asked is to say, "Just sticker all of them," and it'll become as innocuous as the bar code. Which isn't really a solution at all—I

mean, the situation is criminal. But it's more a way of showing how absurd the whole thing is. I think censorship is important to a degree, but it's a matter of personal choice. It shouldn't be left up to the government or a regulating body. Obviously, porn magazines shouldn't be available to 17-year-olds. But then it turns into this 15-or-fight issue. Who's to say that 17 isn't old enough now, whereas 10 years ago it might not have been? Those judgments always come from such a subjective place. I don't know what all of this is leading up to in terms of culture in this country, or what brought it on. The political environment we've been living in for the last 15 years has really begun to close in on us. And yet as far as I can see there's not much questioning in the mainstream media about whether these people are wrong or right.

MUSICIAN: *Making a pro-choice PSA right now, and not being affiliated with Planned Parenthood or NARAL or some other official organization, is a fairly risky thing to do. To come out and say, "Pro-choice is pro-life."*

STIPE: To tell you the truth, I've never looked at it that way. I didn't feel I was taking my life into my hands by putting out a PSA that says abortion is a right that belongs to the individual.

MUSICIAN: *Well, let's not get melodramatic. That raises the question of how celebrities can make themselves useful in the service of causes they believe in.*

STIPE: If it brings out the press, it's effective.

MUSICIAN: *It's not as effective as actually making things that might sway consensus.*

STIPE: Meryl Streep certainly helped draw attention to the problem of chemicals in food when she got behind Alar and apples. And C-Hundred and the PSAs are still very much underground. You and I might see them, but as far as America goes. . . .

MUSICIAN: *How did C-Hundred decide to start doing the PSAs?*

STIPE: Through a process of elimination. We asked ourselves, what would be the most effective way, using film, to get complex ideas across with simplicity? Public service announcements seemed to be the best way. In retrospect, maybe they're not. Billboards would be much better, but they're very expensive to rent and you can only keep one up for so long. Also, we wanted to provide a forum for all types of people who are involved in different mediums, and sometimes not even the arts at all, to get a gripe out.

MUSICIAN: *How did you hook up with KRS-One?*

STIPE: We happened to be in Washington, D.C. at the same time, and I called and asked him if he wanted to meet with me. He said yes, and I asked him if he'd like to do a PSA. And he was quote-unquote "down" with the idea. [Laughs] His spot wound up being about world peace. Through that meeting, the collaboration on "State of the World" came about.

MUSICIAN: *There's lots of black-white cross-pollination in music right now, but your song "State of the World" is so low-tech and organic-sounding.*

STIPE: I think Kris wanted it to be real me, and I wanted it to be real him. So there was a reciprocal respect going on. It wound up being a wild hybrid, though it's definitely hip-hop.

MUSICIAN: *It is, but some of the elements are so strange. A gospel voice up against your voice up against KRS-One rapping. And the organ part you played—was that a toy organ?*

STIPE: It's one of those K-Mart organs that you find in churches all over the South, with the chords on the left-hand side and the keyboard on the right. If you hit the black keys, you pretty much can't go wrong. [Laughs] Hip-hop already borrows from so many different types of music, and then churns them through a particular beat. So for me, it wasn't at all unusual to think about introducing off elements—or myself as a vocalist. The first time Kris and I seriously talked about doing the song, I said: "I want to present a challenge: Let's introduce strings to hip-hop." And he laughed and laughed and laughed. Then he said, "Great." So I brought a violinist and cellist into the studio. And everybody just flipped, because it really worked. When you use strings rhythmically, it can be very exciting. As another level of melody in the song, it introduces something that's not at all common in urban-based black music. They're live strings, not synthesized—you can really feel 'em.

MUSICIAN: *In June, you toured Eastern Europe with Billy Bragg and Natalie Merchant. How did that come about?*

STIPE: We were all doing Earth Day in April, and I mentioned I'd been having this little fantasy, or daydream, about going over. I really wanted to perform in Eastern Europe, but it was impossible with R.E.M. Because we're such a big operation now we have to take 17 people along with us, and it costs a great deal of money. Billy said he was already planning to go to Czechoslovakia in June and why didn't I come along? Then he turned to Natalie and asked her and she said sure. It sounds like a

*"Although I do have a
certain integrity and won't
do things I think are vile, I
also have a great love for the
big scam."*

postcard cliché, but I've never felt the spirit of revolution as I felt it in Czechoslovakia. We performed right around the time of the election, and most of the people we met were voting for the first time in their lives. You could hear jazz music in the streets. It was so electric.

MUSICIAN: *What music did you perform?*

STIPE: It varied from night to night. We all did a John Prine song called "Hello in There," and an old, old country song called "Dallas." Billy did his regular set and was very well-received. He'd been there before and has quite a following. It was pretty overwhelming for me to sing a song like "Disturbance at the Heron House" in front of people who are truly revolutionaries, who put their lives on the line last November and way before that. It was perhaps the most educational overseas trip I've ever taken. Regular touring leaves you with very little time and an ample amount of exhaustion. But most everywhere I've traveled, I've tried to avoid that cloistering thing that touring can bring on, and get out into the street every day and learn something about where I am—usually by not sleeping.

MUSICIAN: *In the last two or three years, you've taken on the role of record producer. You never did that before, did you?*

STIPE: I never felt that I had the capacity to. Plus I was constantly on the road, or in the studio, or making videos. Now I have more time to pursue things outside of R.E.M. You know, I love pop music, but I don't feel at all contained by it. A lot of the projects I've done outside of R.E.M. are very much on the edge of what R.E.M. is about.



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WINGER

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ATLANTIC

MUSICIAN: With Vic Chesnutt's "Little" you have a singer and an acoustic, then suddenly you hear this weird Farfisa-sounding organ.

STIPE: Actually, that was a standard synthesizer piccolo. I ran it through an amp about the size of a cigarette pack and miked it from across the room, and so lost the high end and the midrange. All this and it still came out sounding like a piccolo! [Laughs]

MUSICIAN: Or the background vocals that Lynda [Limner, lead singer in Hetch Hetchy] did with Vic. You had her do that one vocal and wound up using the exact same track for another song.

STIPE: You'd never know what song they were intended for, either. In fact, we were saving tape because Vic was using only two tracks, for guitar and voice, and I didn't see any reason to go onto a second reel of tape and run up expenses. So what we did was record two songs over each other. And by chance the vocal never got turned off for the second song. The beauty of economy! It goes back to the whole "followers of chaos" ethos. Jim Herbert always says, "Half of getting there is knowing when to stop." That's especially true for recording, because in the studio the options are limitless. My band has always been able to deal with that pretty well, because we operate by a principle of negation. We know exactly what we don't want to do, and do the rest. As a result, sometimes everything gets thrown in, which is why *Murmur* is such a chundering behemoth. I see these really talented bands around me, and it pains me if they don't get the recognition they deserve. Not that fame is everything, but everybody needs someone to say, "I love what you're doing and I believe in your vision."

MUSICIAN: Green was much more straight-up than a lot of your earlier records. R.E.M. moved toward something far less complex and layered, certainly compared to *Murmur*.

STIPE: I don't think *Green* is any less weird than *Murmur*; it's just that we realized the value of subtlety. At least the little strange things.

MUSICIAN: You mean they're played down in the mix.

STIPE: Yeah. There's a level of gimmickry you want to avoid. Nobody likes to listen to something that seemed like a really good idea at the time, but winds up sounding like a bad joke. Two months later you slap yourself on the head and say, "Oh shit, why did I do that?" Also, with the label switchover from I.R.S. to Warner Brothers, I think we all wanted to make something that would represent a new beginning. And *Green* was it—something very simple and direct. I see a lot of affinities between *Green* and *Murmur*, actually. Even lyrically. Though other people might have a hard time seeing it.

MUSICIAN: Most of the songs on *Green* follow classic forms, though. It seems like your more experimental side has come out more in these producing projects.

STIPE: In terms of R.E.M., I'd say wait until the next record to pass any kind of judgment. Because I think it's going to be vastly different from *Green*. Not as a reaction against it, but just in terms of where we all are right now, as opposed to where we were then.

MUSICIAN: Either you move another notch in that direction, which is basically commercial, or you'll move horizontally, which would be much more interesting.

STIPE: I love the horizontal. I've always despised the idea of the

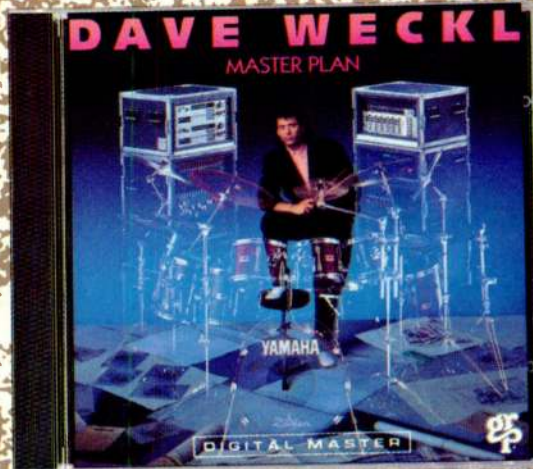
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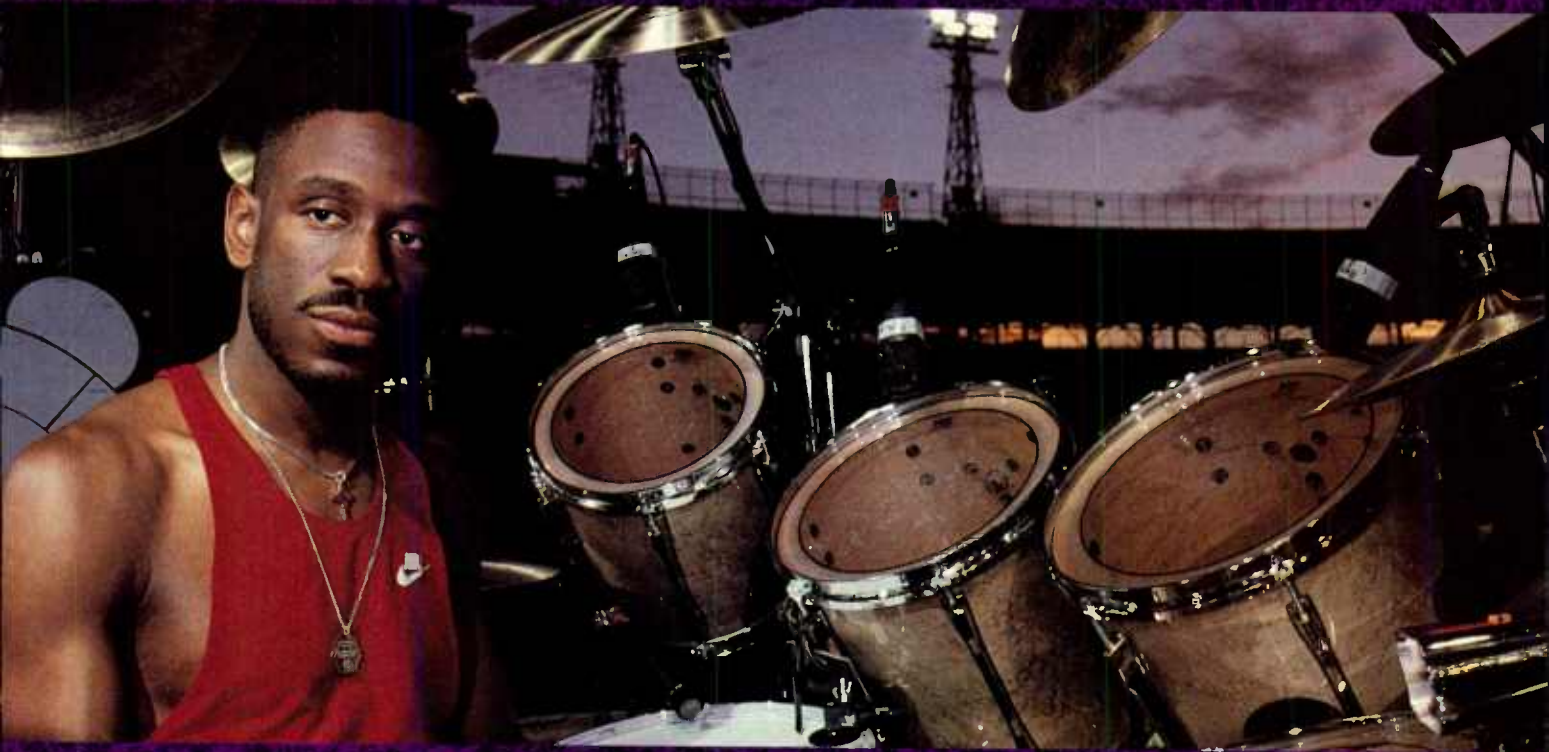
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upward climb, and that pressured way of thinking that says that each record has to do better than the one that preceded it.

MUSICIAN: *R.E.M.'s in a funny place, because it's always been presented in an anti-rock star mode. Yet you're so successful.*

STIPE: And it's all been presented under the umbrella of integrity. In a sense, a lot of that had to do with me being incredibly shy and unsure of myself. As a graphic artist and video director and person in charge of the videos R.E.M. has put out, as well as being a performer, all that stuff came out of not knowing things, and doing what little I do know. I guess I've tried to alter the idea of commodity, to the extent that I don't want to

see myself in pancake makeup lip-synching with dancing girls and bears. Although I do like flashing lights. There's an incredible struggle inside of me that's been going on since I first stepped onstage, and has applied to everything I've ever worked on, and that is although I do have a certain amount of integrity and won't do things I think are vile, I also have a great love for the big scam. And to me, for something subversive to move into the mainstream and be accepted by a lot of people is the ultimate victory. I have so many ideas, and there are so many things I want to do still. I realize now that I've really got to apply myself if I'm going to get even the smallest fraction of those ideas done before

I'm 84.

MUSICIAN: *You used to be perceived as very withdrawn and kind of monosyllabic—like you say, shy. Lately, both through the clarity in your singing and in your activism, that image has flipped right around.*

STIPE: I think I finally decided to respond to the fact that people look at me as a media figure. And without being too pompous about it, I feel like they look to me for inspiration. For advice or direction. The time had come for me to speak out, so I did. I've never really had all that much to say about my band. Because I maintain that what I do comes not from intellectualizing or dissecting, but from a subconscious place. My reptile brain, if you will. Put quotations around that. And a big "har-har-har, he laughed heartily." But to examine too closely what I do musically is to destroy it. Certainly, people are interested in me as a person because I'm in this band and I have this singing voice and write these lyrics. And I'm pleasing. Good. Sometimes great. Above all that, R.E.M. has maintained some level of believability over a period of time. But it's kinda tedious to think about it all too much. Though that could be a real cop-out on my part. Is there a good synonym for "cop-out?" It just sounds so Starsky and Hutch.

MUSICIAN: *Well, it's not like you ever plotted: "Okay, let's have three mainstream-ish pop hits and a couple of real wild cards." Creativity is a combination of formal knowledge and intuition, history and accident. The tendency of the media is to make it seem predetermined.*

STIPE: Well, the tendency of Michael is to lean towards the mutable. The complexities within my lyric-writing and persona and all that stuff aren't willful. I've never sat down and said, "Now I'm going to be strange." I've been accused of that, and it's a real insult. Besides, it's too easy.

MUSICIAN: *But you do possess this bizarre combination of being truly naive about certain things and incredibly sophisticated about others. I've seen you try to lower the sound on a TV by turning down the volume knob on a stereo! [Laughter] And yet you're very savvy when you edit videotape or work in a recording studio.*

STIPE: It's like the meek farm wife who lifts the two-ton tractor off her husband because his leg is trapped underneath it. And prior to that, she couldn't even get the milk bucket off the porch. I guess I react accordingly in emergency situations. M

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When I was a young man my friend Paco took a job road-managing the Allman Brothers Band. Although Southern rock was not my cup of gumbo, my friend's enthusiasm lured me into the Allmans' company on several occasions. The first time I was introduced to Gregg Allman, a man of considerable charm and inconsistent attention span, he said, "Mister Flanagan, I'm glad to finally meet you! I've heard you're one of the few people in this business who knows what's real and what's bullshit and how to tell the difference!" Gee, I thought, I'll have to give "Whippin' Post" another shot. Gregg and I spent the whole night hanging out, going to a jam session, a party, and finally back to his hotel where he played songs on an acoustic guitar until dawn. The next time I saw Gregg he greeted me by saying, "Mister Flanagan, I'm glad to finally meet you!"

One cold winter night, after an Allmans concert at Boston Garden, I found myself in the back of a long black limousine with Gregg and the group's guitarist, Dickey Betts. I don't think the two of them were getting along very well. Those who knew more than me about the Allmans claimed that there was a sort of sibling rivalry between Gregg, the younger brother of the band's late leader Duane Allman, and Betts, who was Duane's protégé. Maybe that was true. Or maybe (for this was late in the band's career) they were just sick of each other. Gregg talked constantly as we rode along. Betts just stared out the car's dark window.

Gregg was complaining about the war in Vietnam. "That was a war that we had nothing to do with," he declared. "Many lives taken, many families broken, for absolutely no reason at all. I shot a bullet through my foot so I wouldn't have to go. A .22 Saturday Night Special. We had a foot-shootin' party, me and my brother."

"You and Duane shot yourselves?" I asked.

"No," Gregg said. "He got called first. I took him to the induction center and he had on a pair of pink panties. He was swishin' and sayin'," Gregg affected a lispin' voice, "Where's my pistol? I want to shoot those bastards!"

"He came out to the car at halftime crying. My brother didn't cry very much, but they had him scared to death, man. There's the

goddamn bus waitin' there to take his ass away right after he raises his hand. He said, 'Man, it didn't work.'"

Dickey Betts, who had been lost in his own thoughts, turned his head slowly toward Gregg with a look of amazement.

"Who are you talkin' about, Gregg?" Betts asked.

"Duane."

Betts eyes narrowed. "You sayin' Duane wore pink panties?"

"To the induction center."

"Oh!" Betts, obviously relieved, turned his attention back to the world outside his window.

Allman returned to his story: "The army didn't buy this pink

panties shit at all. Duane came to the car and he was weepin'. I said, 'Ah, shit, man. Just tell 'em you ain't gonna fuckin' go! That's it!'

"He said, 'Yeah, that's really gonna work, you dumb shit!' But sure enough, he went in there and, come down to the end of it where you raise your right hand to take the oath, Duane put his hand in his pocket. The sergeant was screamin' in his ear, 'You son of a bitch! I'll see your ass in Leavenworth!' Duane said, 'No! No, I'm not goin' over there to kill people I don't even know, don't even know why I'm doin' it! No!'

"They said, 'Alright, you go on home. We'll see you in court. You'll be bustin' rocks at Leavenworth. We'll get you 10 to 20.'

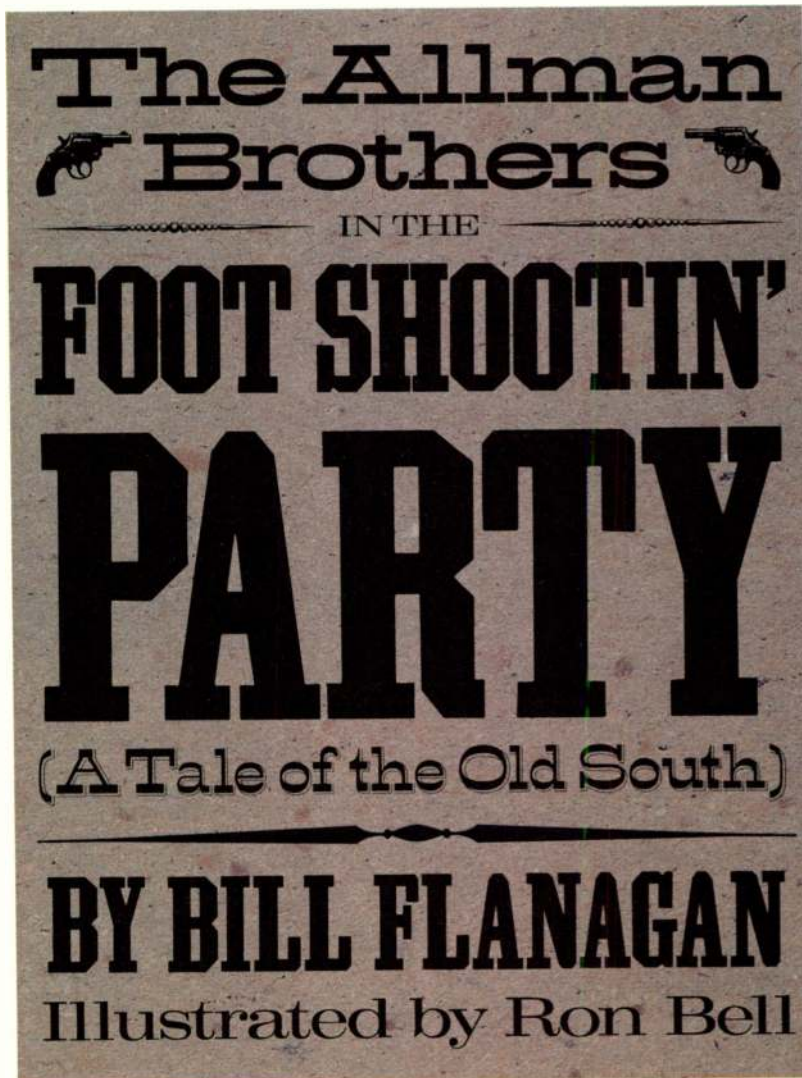
"Well, they lost his file. He never heard from 'em. But he was sweatin' there for a few months.

"Then I got my 'Greetings.' We had just had our first chance to record. Duane said, 'Shit, man! What do you mean gettin' drafted?' That's the way he was. I said, 'I didn't send the letter! Don't get on my case! You were lucky! They lost your file! I might not be so damn lucky! Now tell me what I'm gonna do. This is serious. There's a damn war goin' on!' This is when they were pickin' the names on TV. My birthday was the first damn one they picked. Bingo. First damn ping-pong ball. I was watchin' it on TV and I said, 'Shit.' By this time I'd heard about napalm and all.

"I spent the first afternoon gettin' myself pret-ty drunk. I was high. So I said, 'I'm gonna shoot myself, man.'

"Duane said, 'How you gonna play the gig, man?'

"I said, 'I'll shoot myself in the foot.'



"He said, 'Hmmm, that might work.'

"Duane said, 'We'll have a party. We'll get real good and fucked up, we'll get a box, fill it with sawdust, put it in the garage and take care of business. Right after that we'll put you in the car, take you to the hospital, and take you from the hospital straight to the induction center. We'll time it.'

"About three days passed. We had the party. A bunch of girls over there, a bunch of whiskey.

"I drank half a quart of whiskey. I was three sheets to the wind. I was about ready to shoot myself so I went out there. I came back in. I said, 'Duane, we forgot somethin'.' He said, 'What?'

"A fuckin' gun!"

"So we rode over to the 'other side of town' as they referred to it back then and said to the first black dude on the corner, 'Hey, man! I want to buy a pistol!'

"Hey, man. What are you talkin' about?"

"I said, 'We want to buy a .22 Saturday Night Special.'

"He said, 'I might be able to take care of that.'

"I said, 'Good, how much is it?'

"How much you got?"

"Twenty-five dollars."

"Well, that's how much it is."

"So we got the gun and three bullets and went home. I was thinkin', 'Now I gotta do this.' Drunk as I was, I was still fixin' to shoot my own ass. I mean, this is gettin' serious. So I sat down and I was studyin' my foot chart. Here's the long bone and it comes to a V with the bone next to it. I figure I want to put the bullet right between

'em so I crack both but don't break either one. Let the bullet pass right through. Then I took a knife and carved a line down the nose of the bullet so it'd leave a little piece in there. 'Cause if you've got any metal in your body the army won't take you.

"I had a target drawn on my shoe. On my moccasin. I set my foot up there, took the pistol, cocked it back . . . and I said, 'Oh my God, what am I doin'? Am I crazy? I'm about to shoot myself!'

"Pretty soon Duane comes in. 'Well, I didn't hear no noise, goddamn. You gonna do it? Shit, boy, put up or shut up! We got all these people over here expectin' a foot shootin' party!'

"I said, 'Look, man, you're talkin' about a bullet in my foot!'

"He said, 'I know, man. Don't worry about it. Come on. I'll shoot

you.'"

Gregg imitated a drunken Duane picking up the gun, stumbling around, and accidentally pointing it between Gregg's eyes.

"I said, 'Wait! You're gonna miss and hit me in the fuckin' head!' So I went back in the house to drink some more whiskey and Duane followed, callin' me names and gettin' me madder 'til I said, 'Well screw you, man!'

"I grabbed that pistol, drew a bead on my foot and *bam!* Flames shot out of that damn ol' cheap-ass pistol and scared me to death. I don't know where that propulsion came from but I was straight up off the ground. Duane was out the door and caught me on the fly.

"For three seconds I thought I was dead. Three seconds. Then it numbed up to my thigh. I got in the damn car, wrapped a towel around it, and joked around on my way to the hospital. The first thing they did at the hospital was give me morphine. Now I'm *really* fucked up.

"By now the leather from the moccasin had sunk into the bullet hole. I looked at it and turned to my brother and said, 'Duane! There's a target drawn on my left shoe! They might just figure out what the *hell* we were up to!'

"Duane says, 'Oh no!' But just then the doctor comes in and wheels me into the damn room. I thought, 'Oh, shit, now I'm goin' to jail for sure.' The doctor says, 'What have we got here?' He rips the shoe right off, throws it behind him, and never recognizes the damn target. By this time Duane comes in

and he's drawn a target on the other shoe!

"All the doctor did was stick a tube of what looked like Blistex in the hole, bandage it up, and send me home. I got back outside with that big bandage on and said, 'Shit! The moccasins are still in there!' So Duane snuck back in the O.R. an' stole those shoes. How he got in there I'll never know.

"Duane took me to the induction center and they said, 'What the hell happened to you?' I said, 'Man, I was up in the attic looking through my collection when my favorite .22 Magnum went off!'"

The limousine came to a halt and the chauffeur opened the door.

"It healed up later," Gregg sighed. "But by then I got off by being 'Sole surviving son.'"



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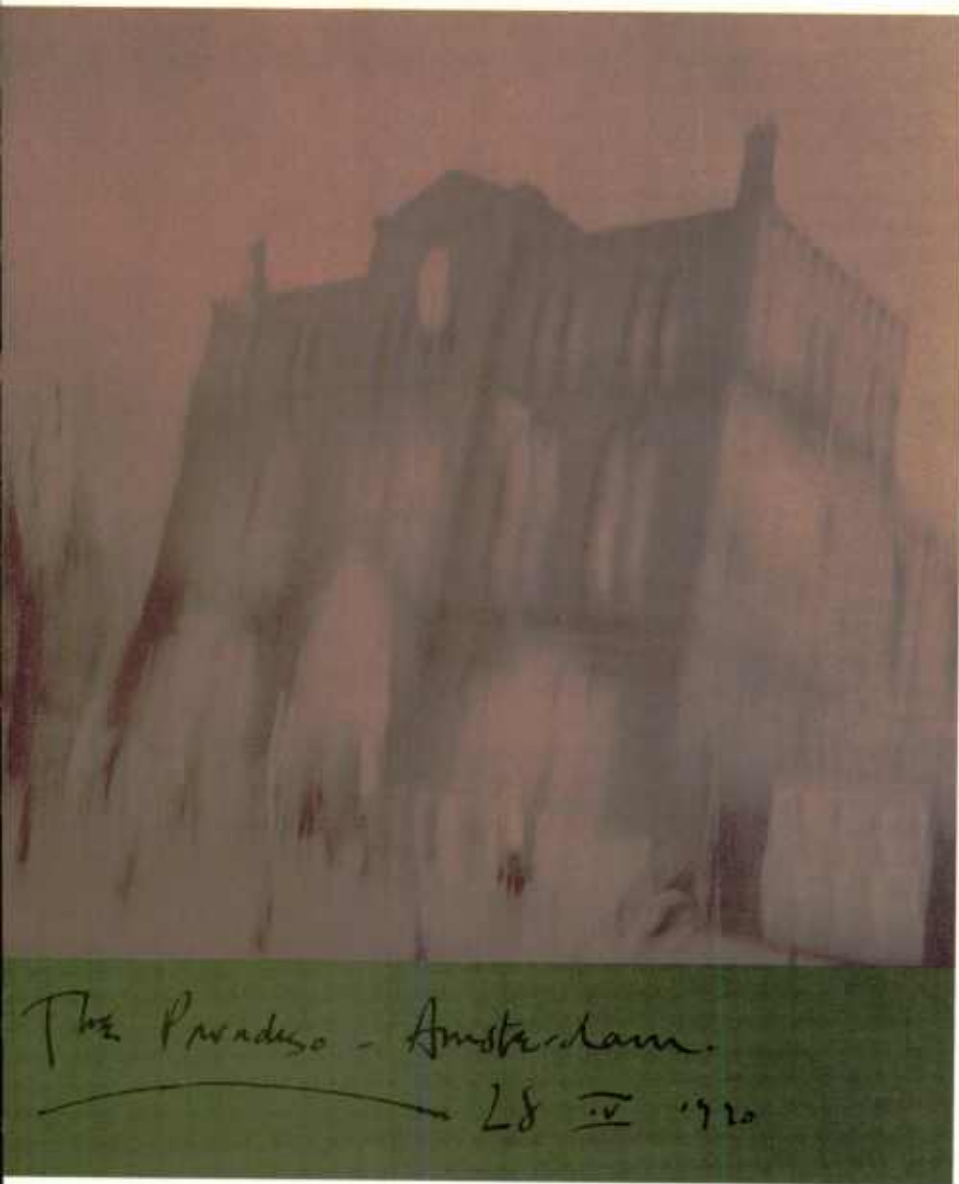
CHURCH

*These
veteran
sonic
trippers
want
you to
take
a leap
of faith*

STORY BY
Mark Coleman



HOLIDAY



PHOTOGRAPHY BY
The Douglas Brothers



The Church don't care if you read any further. In fact, these Australian gods of guitar-thunder pop have specifically

requested that their fans skip over this story. Oh, it's nothing personal. They just happen to think that music journalism is an absolute crock.

"The whole thing is meaningless," declares Steven Kilbey. "It can't mean anything because it's writing about things that don't mean anything in the first place." He means "things" like melodies and lyrics; Kilbey is the Church's bassist, lead singer and principal songwriter.

"Ninety-nine percent of all articles demystify something that you like," he continues, warming to his subject. "It's funny: You get people who like really obscure music because nobody's fucking written about it and stripped away everything from it. What can we possibly say that can enhance the record? It's not like building a house or designing a bridge or making bread. All we can do now is detract."

Welcome to the wild and wonderfully out-of-whack world of the Church. The pleasure, apparently, was all mine.

"I don't think people should know what we're like," Kilbey insists. "Nothing's worse than finding out 'what they're like.' Surely, what they're like should be 100 percent expressed in the music and what they're like outside of *that* is gossip or eavesdropping. The more information you have about the Church, I think, the less likely you are to appreciate our new record. 'Cause if it just falls out of the blue, then it exists on its own terms, and describes itself and is alluring to



itself. The more you know about us—where we live and who's got children and how much money we've got and what our attitudes are toward homosexuals—it starts to limit the

interpretation of the record, it really does."

"You may as well shut that tape recorder off," says guitarist Peter Koppes with a grin, "and just come on holiday with us."

Well, I did and I didn't. For the record: The Church are all in their early 30s. Guitarist Marty Willson-Piper lives in Sweden with his wife and daughter, guitarist Peter Koppes and his family live in Australia, as does Steve Kilbey. Longtime drummer Richard Ploog was given the boot somewhere in between the conclusion of *Gold Afternoon Fix* last year and the Church's world tour; for the moment, he's been replaced (and then some) by J.D. Daugherty. Like any mid-level-and-climbing band, the Church aren't rich: They bitch about money all the time, half-seriously. Despite Steve and Marty's macho joke-cracking on the tour bus, their attitudes toward homosexuals are no doubt just as liberal as their attitudes toward everybody but journalists.

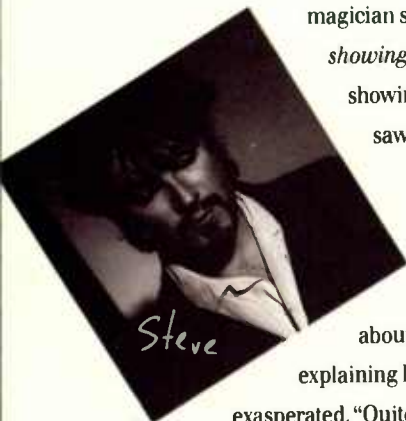
But buried deep in Steve Kilbey's anti-interpretation diatribe are some clues to understanding the Church and the nearly spiritual appeal of their timeless psychedelic music. Get past his defensive zeal and you begin to sense the resolve and creativity that's kept this band going—and growing—for more than 10 years, through three U.S. major-label deals, several managers, various marketing schemes and now myriad solo offshoots.

"To me, the analogy is like this," says Kilbey. "A magician does an amazing trick and everyone in the audience says, 'I wish I knew how that trick was done.' It's natural for people to want to know how the trick is done. But imagine if there was an interview where the

magician said, 'Yeah, well, there was half a girl showing in one side of the box and half a girl showing in the other, so it just looked like I was sawing her in half!'"

"There's not going to be anyone at his next gig," says Peter Koppes, chuckling again. Kilbey is not amused, though.

"So if we try and explain what we're all about," he continues, "we're like the magician explaining his trick." He's beginning to get exasperated. "Quite frankly, we go into a room and we make



"I'M NOT DOING

THIS SO THE WARS
WILL STOP, I'M NOT
DOING THIS SO
THE ETHIOPIANS
GET FED, I'M DOING
THIS BECAUSE
I ENJOY IT AND

I HOPE OTHER PEOPLE
ENJOY LISTENING
TO IT." ~STEVE KILBEY





it up 'cause it sounds good and I just write down the first thing that comes to mind, anything because it sounds good. THERE'S REALLY NOTHING MORE YOU CAN SAY!"

"It's a doodle, really," volunteers Marty Willson-Piper. "A doodle that leads to something else and that leads to something else . . . you balance it until it gets to a point where you say, 'Well, that's enough.' The Church only exist on a musical level. We don't exist on a message level."

"Our music is totally hedonistic," says Kilbey, accompanied by the vigorously affirmative headshaking of his bandmates. "It exists only to be enjoyed. There's no aftershock or attempt to change the world or people's thinking. I'm not doing this for Australian Rock. I'm not doing this so the wars will stop. I'm not doing this so Ethiopians will get fed. I hope those things happen, but I'm not doing this for anything else other than the fact that I enjoy it, and I hope other people enjoy listening to it."

"And it seems like there's something wrong with that!" notes Willson-Piper, incredulously. "It's really great to go onstage and play guitar or whatever it is: People enjoy us, we enjoy each other, we enjoy writing the songs together and working 'em out, making 'em happen and having dynamics and EXPLODING into the chorus



three-quarters of the way through a set on the eighth song . . . people come back and say, 'I really love the way you did that.' Why isn't that reason enough?"

"Simple pleasure is the most important thing," Kilbey interjects. "The sun shining on an open field on a nice day is more important than Pythagorean fuckin' theory. The sun shining on an open field means more than the collected works of western literature over the last 10,000 years."

"That's really true," says the band's bus driver, between burly gusts of laughter. We've been driving past open fields all afternoon, en route from Germany to a concert in Amsterdam; before the interview, I gawked out the window at passing tulip patches and windmills while everybody else reads books or magazines.

"You don't eat a pizza and then go back to the chef and say, 'But what did this pizza mean,' do you?" continues Kilbey. "Why can't music be like that?"

"But if you have such a spiritual feeling about the sun coming up," counters Peter Koppes, "eventually it creates superstition. The Aztecs went and killed people every day, made sacrifices to ensure that the sun would come up the next morning. And scientists used Pythagorean theorems to figure out that the sun coming up every day isn't as important as the earth revolving. Maybe some interpretation is interesting, *after* you've enjoyed the music."





"I don't know... that doesn't mean fuck-all to a bear," Kilbey snaps back. "I think music eliminates the human rational thing and goes to the animal part."

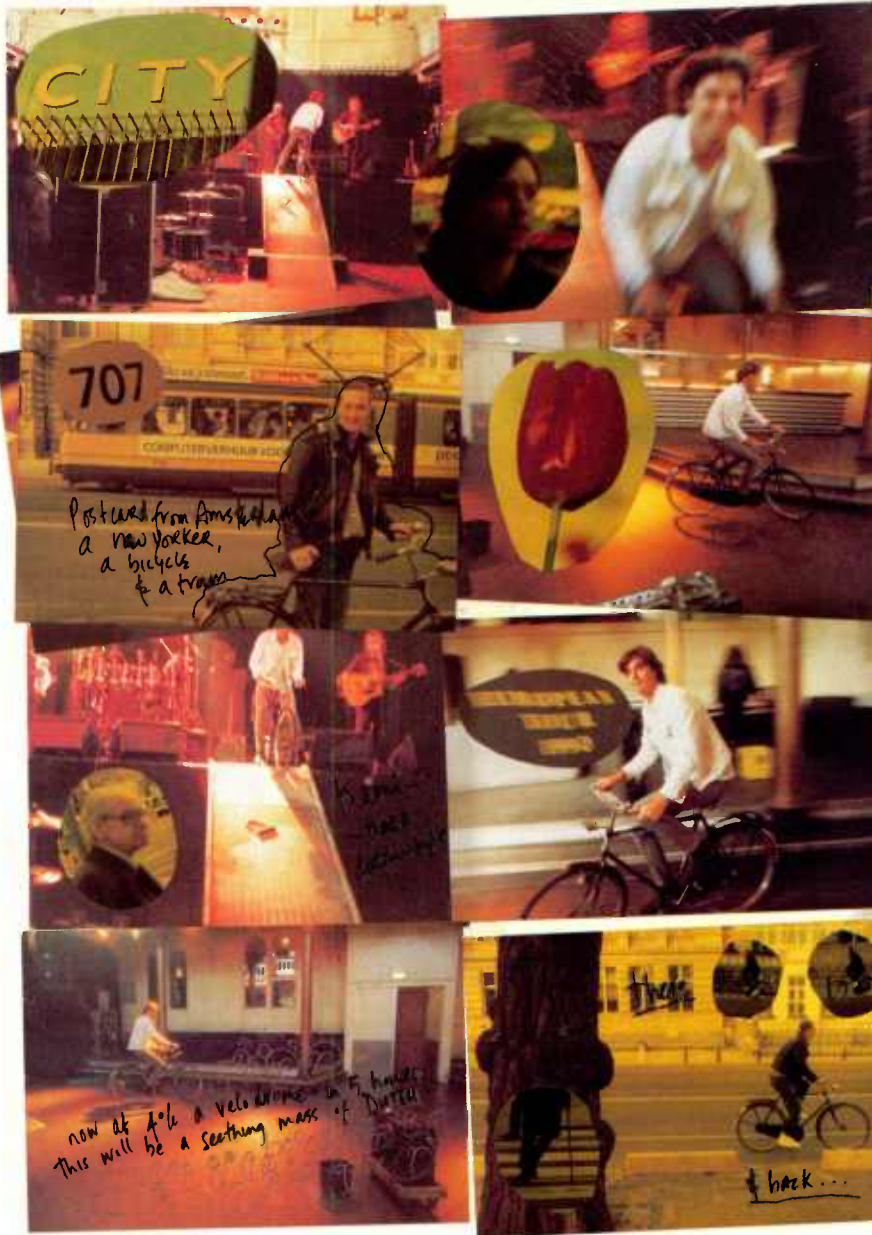
Superstition is what fuels the Church, and what makes them a great rock 'n' roll band. Stubbornness and insularity have kept them afloat throughout the turbulent '80s; over the past 10 years they've honed a consistent musical vision while ignoring any and all outside influences. The Church are so steadfastly true to themselves, so resolutely un-trendy that they can seem like hippie throwbacks—or hopeless squares—to the uninitiated.

At the same time, none of their seven albums sound especially nostalgic. The Church have always employed the sonic tools of the late '60s, but with their own distinct touch and a consistent, post-punk sense of purpose. The endless, dense guitar 'n' amp permutations transmit cosmic melodies, and the dreamy, atmospheric verses linger amid the feedback; at this point, the Church have musical tripping down to a science.

Gold Afternoon Fix is probably the most well-rounded and sharply focused portrait of the group to date. The vocal contributions by Willson-Piper ("Russian Autumn Heart") and Koppes ("Transient") are as strong as any of Kilbey's numbers, and the riffing guitars span the bright CD spectrum. Kilbey's singing seems more impassioned, and his lyrics are slightly less impressionistic (or impenetrable) than before. The throbbing pulse of "You're Still Beautiful, Baby" underscores the pity and disgust of the lyrics; it's both the catchiest and the most concrete song the Church have ever done.

All that said, *Gold Afternoon Fix* itself probably won't win all that many new converts for the Church; their records have always seemed incidental, even though they don't all sound the same. There's something about hearing this group perform live—an elusive but crucial quality—that just can't be captured in a recording studio.

"We have a name for it," Peter Koppes explains a while later. "We call it *gusto*. *Gusto* sorta enters the atmosphere and it's not what Marty's playing and it's not what I'm playing. Something just pops in,



and it's not just a drone. Sometimes you'll hear rhythmic things—violins doing stabs! That's how our style evolved. *Gusto* happened accidentally, it kept recurring and we kept looking for it. A lot of the keyboard lines and violins and orchestral things that we'll use in the studio are just something that's been evoked by the guitar combination anyway.

"We've dropped some of that jingle-jangle thing," Peter admits. Interestingly, the ringing, Byrdsian chimes of the 1984 *Remote Luxury* album are the very thing that introduced, and endeared, the Church to a rabid American cult. "A lot of other bands jumped on it; they do cyclic arpeggios on the guitar and it becomes very bland. That sound was associated with us and R.E.M., so we've dropped it for a more syncopated, reactive thing between the guitars.





"Everyone will have money, everyone will be comfortable, there will be solar power and abundance for everybody and people will only work if they want to and that's going to free up the musicians and eliminate the need for Milli Vanilli."

~Steve Kilbey

"But people keep trying to apply that lead-and-rhythm guitar distinction to us: They still ask, 'Who's the lead guitar player?' Despite the incredible demystification of music these days, people can't seem to think of a group as a democracy. The way we play guitars, it's almost like a complement of rhythms—or at least that's what we've tried to develop."

"The Church has become this situation where we concentrate on the chemistry," Marty Willson-Piper reckons when cornered. "There's this chemical three-way thing that happens between us. We work on working together, you know? Rather than trying to convince each other of our own ideas, we try to find an area that we all like, so we can create this sum-of-parts, where the parts could only be created together."

Steve Kilbey describes the Church's unique working relationship in metaphoric terms. "It's like in Sweden, where they've got people

building cars in little groups. They build cars the way they want to build them rather than on an assembly line. People taking pride in their work, rather than a big boss saying, 'You put on the windshield wipers.' That's the way the Church works. The Cure works that way now too; they all write songs together. After a few years, it has to be that way. Three people can dream up better stuff than one person. The Cure," he continues, "are far bigger in America than the Church, and I think Robert Smith doesn't give a fuck about the charts or



commerciality. He just goes in and does the stuff that falls out of his head accidentally... and people love it!

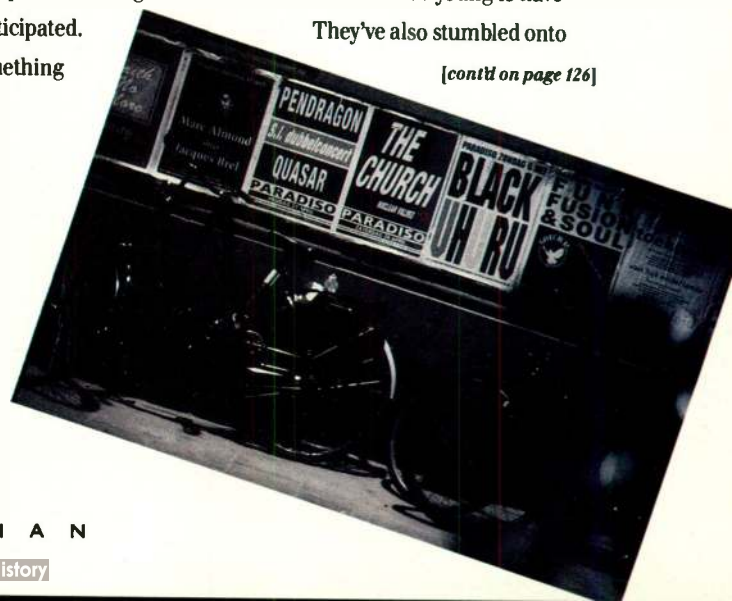
"I think what's going to happen is sometime in the future, somehow, the

world is going to pass through all its problems, most people will enjoy a total leisure society and that'll be great because once more everyone will have money and everyone will be comfortable and there will be solar power and abundance for everybody and people will only work if they want to and that's going to free up the musicians to make the music that they want to make and eliminate the need for Milli Vanilli and all that kind of thing."

Sure, Steve Kilbey actually believes that fantasy. The Church are true believers in the

hippie ethic; they've got the fanatic, unshakable convictions of disciples old enough to remember the '60s but too young to have participated. They've also stumbled onto something

[cont'd on page 126]



CHURCH SERVICE

MARTY WILLSON-PIPER plays four guitars onstage: three electric Rickenbackers and a 12-string Takamine acoustic. "There's room for adventure with Rickenbackers," he says. "An unknown quality. It's hard to make them do certain things, but once you work on it, you can get some really unique sounds out of them. Whereas with a Fender, you immediately start sounding like anybody. Using the Rickenbacker makes it easier for me to have my own sound."

"I won't use old guitars on the road anymore because I had some stolen. The guitars I use onstage now are brand-new, customized to sound like the antique guitars I use in the studio. My electric 12-string is one of 1000 made in Roger McGuinn's own design; Peter Buck turned me on to that one."

"I'm playing through two stereo Vox amps; mid-'60s models with the tone controls on the back. They're being run out of an Ibanez Huey 405 multi-effects unit. I've got a Boss distortion pedal and a Boss turbo distortion pedal: One's the modern version of the other. I tend to use the older one."

Marty and PETER KOPPES both use D'Addario strings, and Marty flips the thick and thin strings on his 12-strings just because he likes the sound of it. "I can tell when somebody's done it to their guitar by listening to the record," he claims. "I'll wager that the guy in *Midnight Oil* has his guitar restrung like that."

Peter Koppes plays three Fender guitars onstage: a Jazzmaster, Telecaster and Stratocaster. "The Jazzmaster and Telecaster are Pre-L models," says Peter. "The Strat is supposed to be a pre-L; the body has a pre-L plate, but it's got an L-series neck on it. The Jazzmaster's a funny guitar; it's as thin as a Gibson SG, with P-9 (aka

soapbar) pickups on it. Those are old, single-coil Gibson pickups, beautiful, powerful pickups. Single-coil pickups have got a wider range than humbuckers."

Peter describes his amplifier set-up as "a very dynamic quintaphonic system. There are five sources of sound . . . actually it can be seven at times. It works with a basic stereo system: a chorus split into one Vox and two Leslies. The Vox gets the same echo as the Leslie, plus another echo, and the Leslies have a stereo effect between themselves because they're revolving speakers. And there's another line that I use to run tape-loops and non-direct reverb into a Roland JC-120—which is also a stereo amp. So altogether it's like seven different speakers, which is monstrous and huge and orgasmic for a guitarist."

STEVE KILBEY plays a late-'60s Fender Coronado bass through a vintage Gallien-Krueger amp. "Don't you want to know what kind of strings I use? Rotosound: roundwound, medium gauge, long scale." "They're not roundwound," interrupts Marty Willson-Piper. "They're half-wound. He likes 'em, but I have to remember 'em."

J.D. DAUGHERTY's road kit includes Yamaha Recording Series Drums, a 22" bass drum, 10", 12", 13" and 16" toms with the R.I.M.S. mounting system. J.D.'s snares are a Noble & Cooley/Zildjian 14x7, a mid-'70s 14x6½ Ludwig Black Beauty, and a 14x6½ Bradley Jarrah. He plays Sabian cymbals (8x10" splashes, 16", 18" and 20" medium thin crashes; 20" crash ride; 14" Fusion hi-hats, 18" Carmine Appice Chinese; special order 24" Chiria), DW Turbo pedals or a Pearl P-90 double pedal with Roller attachments. He uses a Pearl Porcaro Rack with Pearl and Yamaha hardware, a Roland Octapad 11, an Alesis HR-16 drum machine, and Lexicon reverbs with Regal 1A sticks and Manny's Music 1A sticks.

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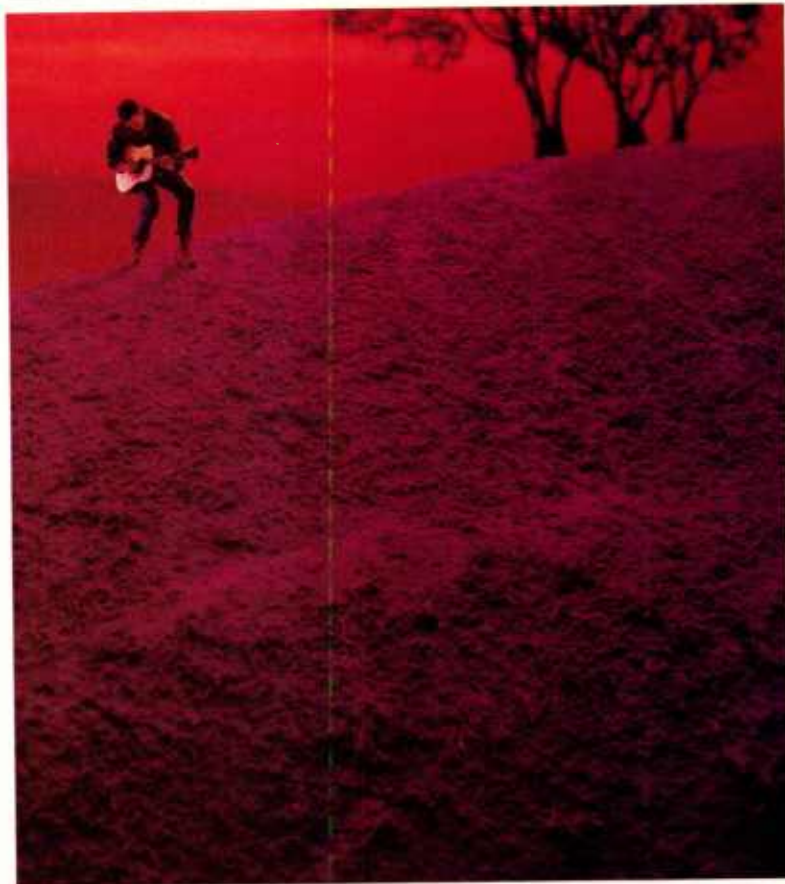
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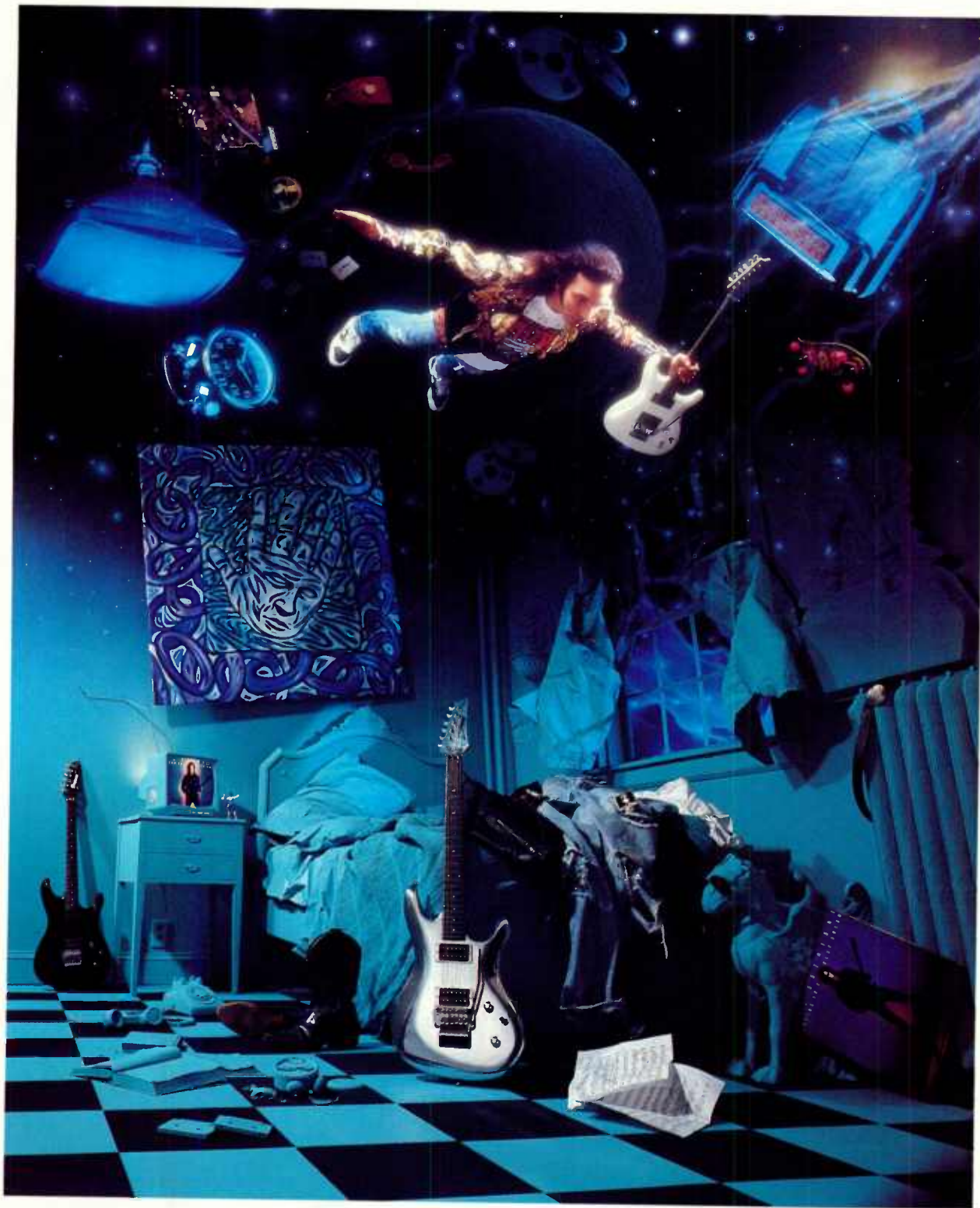
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The Latest Temptation of

STEVE VAI

The Angels tell him to make great music, but the Devil whispers, "Play with Whitesnake!"

"I PREPARE DIFFERENTLY FOR MUSIC THAN MOST PEOPLE MIGHT," SAYS STEVE VAI. "I FASTED FOR FOUR DAYS TO PREPARE A TRACK CALLED 'FOR THE LOVE OF GOD,' TO BE PERFECT FOR THE PERFORMANCE. I HADN'T PICKED UP THE GUITAR FOR ABOUT SIX WEEKS, AND I WAS BLEEDING UNDER THE SKIN. IT WAS EXTREMELY PAINFUL, BUT IT WAS A UNIQUE MOMENT TO WITHSTAND BOTH THE HUNGER AND THE PHYSICAL PAIN. THAT'S THE KIND OF STATE OF MIND I NEED TO BE IN. I FEEL VERY CLEANSED WHEN I'M FASTING, SPIRITUALLY AND PHYSICALLY. THE HUNGER PAINS ARE STRONG FOR ABOUT THREE DAYS, AND THEN YOU ENTER THIS NEW SENSE OF BEING. YOU FEEL LIGHTER, CLEANER, BECAUSE

YOU HAVEN'T PUT ANYTHING INTO YOUR BODY. YOUR BODY IS EATING OFF ALL THE DISEASED CELLS THAT ARE THERE. IT'S AN ACT OF DISCIPLINE."

VAI PAUSES, MOURNS A FEW MORE CELLS. "SOMETIMES I DO THINGS, AND I DON'T REALIZE WHY UNTIL LATER. MORE AND MORE MEANING IS REVEALED LATER ON. IN ORDER TO MAKE YOUR PASSION A REALITY WITHIN YOURSELF, YOU HAVE TO FIGHT THE DEMONS, DEMONS OF LUST, OF GREED, OF ALL THE NEGATIVE EMOTIONS. LET'S TALK ABOUT, SAY, GREED. LET'S SAY YOU FIND A WALLET WITH A THOUSAND DOLLARS IN IT AND IT'S GOT THE NAME AND ADDRESS OF THE PERSON WHO LOST IT. HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE GOING TO

Photography by Deborah Feingold

BY MATT RESNICOFF

return that wallet? That's one plane of understanding of that event. On another plane, there's a warfare going on, a war over what to do. There are events in my life where I have to go to war with a simple decision, but that simple decision is a building block of a great empire. And there's a lot of passion involved with those decisions. The extremes are two very powerful statements."

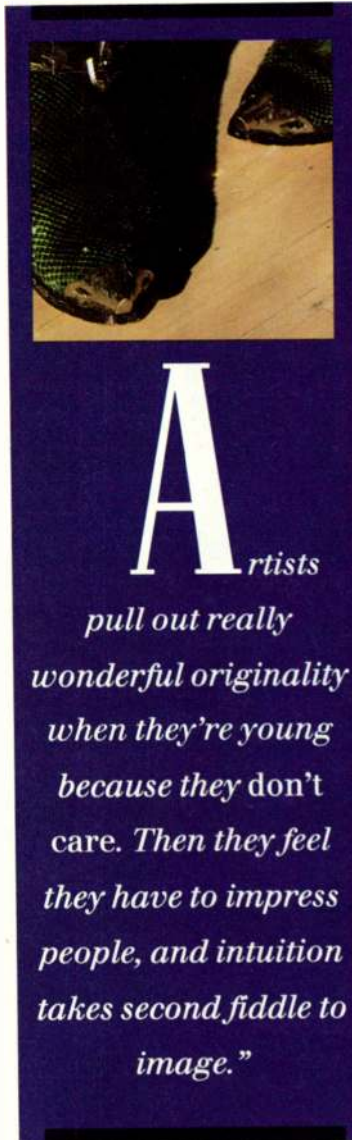
A musician's passion usually takes shape as improvisation, that hell-or-high-water urgency that leads to the creation of music at once unplanned and inevitable. In that turbulence, composition is warfare. Composition seeks to tame or batter the unrulier improvisational impulse into a noise someone else wants to listen to. That can create problems. It's no easy feat for an artist to double back on precisely what makes him who he is—that unblocked rush when he's barely aware of his instrument, or the crazy ideas that visit in a haze just before waking—and slap it down on the chopping block. Passion needs sympathetic surroundings to flourish. More often, passion likes to be left alone.

Steve Vai is a young guitarist blessed with instinct and ideas, and for the last couple of years, he's been caught in the musician's most dreaded tug of war—the struggle between the need to let the music create its own form and the desire to make something that other people can understand and enjoy. He can't turn around without a product endorsement contract being shoved in his face, or a rich aging rock singer trying to stuff his pockets with bullion in exchange for a lift on Vai's coattails. Everybody loved him as Frank Zappa's little guitar stuntman, reading and writing charts that would have left most third-year theory students cross-eyed and limping. He moved 250,000 copies of *Flex-Able*, a wildly unclassifiable backyard experiment recorded when he was 19, without a wisp of promotion. He was the baby everyone accepted with the bathwater when he moved on the next year to reconstruct the band Alcatraz in the tortured wake of Swedish metallurgist Yngwie Malmsteen. Huge audiences laughed right along with his guffawing guitar when he did a nobleman's job of purging the Van Halen from David Lee Roth's solo revue. He even wowed new-wavers with virtuosic cameos for Johnny Lydon's P.I.L. Musically and ideologically, he manifests the loftiest interests of anyone with long hair and chops. Hell, Vai doesn't go around betting he can play faster; he goes around fasting so he can play better.

In late 1989 Vai finished *Passion and Warfare*, a watershed record for progressive music and a generous feedback for his varied following: two parts lust, two parts guitar masterstroke, two parts Zen self-renunciation, one part *Joe's Garage*. It's a record Vai poured his whole life into, in four months. He's that focused. Then the phone rang, and on the other end was Whitesnake. Lots of units sold, but nauseatingly run-of-the-mill. Their guitar player injured his hand just as the basic tracks for their album *Slip of the Tongue* were completed and they needed a fill-in. Next thing he knew, Vai was back in the arenas and

his new baby's college was paid for 40 times over. Vai's playing was amazing. That's passion. Whitesnake's music wasn't so accommodating; an apple from a snake is always rotten. That's warfare. He's starting to feel the heat already.

"I get a lot of flak," he groans. "I mean, I didn't *know* I was going to get this much flak. But the bottom line is, I'm playing to 10,000 or 15,000 people a night and the record's a million eight." Is Steve Vai the first great musician of his generation to sell out *before* people got tired of him? That's a good question.



THE BUMPERSTICKER AFFIXED to Stevie's bedroom door in Carle Place read, "AND ON THE EIGHTH DAY, GOD CREATED FRANK ZAPPA." That's about as much familiarity as Johnny and Theresa Vai had with their 19-year-old son's new employer when they made their way backstage to meet Zappa after a 1980 performance at State University of New York's Stony Brook campus. Johnny's a liquor salesman, sincere and eminently likable. He offered his hand.

"Hi, Mr. Zappa."

"My name is Frank."

Laughter broke the tension. "Frank, I appreciate that my son is playing with you, but tell me"—the short, silver-haired gentleman hunched forward and spoke softly—"is my son any *good*? Is my son a musician or is he just a banger?"

Zappa was a gentleman, too. He looked squarely at the couple and said, "You can be proud of this boy. He's gonna really go places. This boy is great. This boy's a virtuoso."

When he was asked to join Frank Zappa's band, young Steve was a hired gun, an avid transcriber who handled exacting nomenclatural tasks that often found him hunched over piles of manuscript for nights on end, when most of Frank's other little Italian virtuosos were out doing sessions or having lurid songs written about them. "Learn this," Frank might say of a series of wicked intervals, "and play it in 7/4 at these eight different tempi." Luckily Vai had been plucked fresh out of Berklee College of Music, where he'd been killing time between classes in big-band arrangement by composing his own

abstruse guitar instrumentals and blowing up amplifiers. He came to Zappa highly developed, ears wide open.

"Sometimes I don't really hear things for what they are until later," Vai says. "Like with Frank, it was just totally his bag, his trip; there was no opinion, there was no discussion, but I enjoyed that, because Frank's got incredible vision. He's simplistic, but at the same time it's very complicated. On a production level, Frank has a certain approach and that's how I cut my teeth; maybe that's why I'm so neurotic about production these days. Going from Zappa to someone like Ted Templeman, or to Eddie Kramer with Alcatraz, I was outraged. Kramer was a rock 'n' roll producer and he let a lot of things go and I couldn't allow that, because I saw the way Frank did things. I was 18 years old—and boy, Zappa paints a very strong

Grooming: Adele Fass Licata
for Pierre Michel Salon, NYC

picture. When it came time to record with anybody else, the way they did it was wrong. After a while I realized that there are a lot of different schools of thought, things that you can take and things that you should learn not to do. I mean, there's a lot of things Kramer did that I wouldn't even consider, that were to me just *mistakes*. Like printing at 15 i.p.s. and hitting the tape so hard that it completely distorts, where the meters are totally pinned. He took a certain bombastic approach that had its moments, but things suffered. And then there's Ted Templeman, who I never appreciated until later, when I realized what he was doing was a real rock 'n' roll statement, a *dirty* rock 'n' roll thing. I was from the polished school of thought.

"To be honest with you, I learned more about what *not* to do from working with other people. That's besides Zappa. When it came time to do *Passion and Warfare*, I was more myself than anybody else. In the past, I've always ended up being frustrated, because I didn't find the right people who were willing to spend the time on my vision, or even take my vision into consideration. With *Passion and Warfare* I was totally left to my own devices. I wouldn't give up that freedom again for anything. *Anything*. Now, I've also come to understand that a person can get stale and stagnant sometimes. Maybe you *do* want the input of other people. But I'm at a point now that I choose whose input it will be, and I choose *what* I want to take. I work *with* them. I'm going into it having re-

searched them, respecting their expertise, finding out their ideas, their enthusiasm and their technical abilities. That's all very important. There's a lot of posers out there, man. There's a lot of people that slide on the hooks of their past success."

Vai chuckles, although at the moment he doesn't really seem amused. "I don't want to mention any names. But they're going to give you a product that's either what they think is right, or is a product of their drug-induced delusions. I don't want to talk about them. The bottom line is, I've learned that it's not wrong to want to work with somebody else. I might do the next few albums totally on my own before I hire a producer. And if I do hire anybody for anything, it's because I want to have a different look, I want to have a different sound and I want to use their expertise. It'll be *my* decision to trust them, not that I'm just forced into it."

For Vai, growing up meant growing up in the public eye, which usually means that ego and humility are at constant work against one another. There's rarely a point at which a young musician

consolidates his ideas, when he's acting and not just responding; every five minutes you find out there's so much more to learn. "It's funny; creatively, as soon as I realized you can take one track and then record on another track and then another track, the wheels started turning, and I had everything I needed. Technically, I didn't know what was going on, so I just forced myself into situations and made mistakes. That's the only way to do it, really. *Flex-Able* was complete experimentation in production; it was never really intended to be released, because it was just my learning how to produce, how to put things together. I was very stubborn in the past and I still am. I argued a lot, which the press really doesn't know about, because they perceive me as this really nice guy. I am a nice guy, but still, I'm neurotic when it comes to the music. I'd be asking questions *constantly*, to the point of being a nuisance. But there's a way of walking on eggshells when you're working with big egos. You have to have the right balance of being interested and being interesting—of complementing and questioning. And listening.

When somebody knows you're *listening* to them, it'll give them more incentive to teach you. But then I would say, 'Well, then why don't you do this?' or 'Then let's do *this*.' I'd come up with an idea and realize exactly how to make that idea reality and that's when the trouble would start. So I'm not a nasty guy, but I really want to see things done a certain way, and it's been so in vir-

tually every situation I've ever been in. Except Frank; his ideas were just so far above what I could have conceived at the time."

"I WANT TO PLAY the guitar."

It's an afternoon in the middle of 1972, and Stevie Vai's just announced to his family that he wants to change instruments.

"I said, 'Goddamn it,'" laughs Johnny Vai, "you've got those two accordions, your teacher says you're doing damn good, what do you want to go to the guitar for?"

"He was always very interested in music, even as a little kid," Theresa Vai says. "I used to buy him things for Christmas that were always music, because he was very interested in it, and it kept him occupied."

"He had a little play piano, you know."

"The organ, John, he had a little organ, things like that. We never did buy him a guitar. He did that himself."

"At 12 years of age, he was playing that accordion, and he was



Whitesnake: Rudy Sarzo, Coverdale, Vandenberg, Vai and Tommy Aldridge. "I like to play in big arenas and run around and exert that attitude and energy."

playing great! His teacher said he was absolutely marvelous."

"The guitar is something that was his own thing, that he liked and he picked up. He bought one at a garage sale or something for five dollars, and then we bought him one when he showed that he was really interested in it."

Did Steve ever take lessons with Joe Satriani at the house?

"No, Steve went over to his house because he only lived maybe a mile away," remembers Mrs. Vai. "He loved it. He just applied himself to it day and night. He just practiced, practiced, practiced, and that was it."

"Yeah, we used to go up and bang on the door to bring him down to eat."

What do you think of your son's new record?

"I love it!"

"It's really very good," says Theresa. "I know he poured his heart and soul into it, and how hard he worked, because we were out in California when he was doing it. He would sleep during the day, because he didn't want to be disturbed while he was working."

"He puts his mind onto something, that's it. And ideas are flowing through his mind *always*. He could be sleeping and he gets up in the middle of the night and writes something down."

"This is him," adds Mom.

Vai wrote, arranged and recorded *Passion and Warfare* in his home studio, free from distraction and absorbed by grueling stretches of tape and signal manipulation, to place his highly complex pieces in an accessible sonic frame. The staggering technological obstacles he faced putting this record together—countless guitar tracks are jockeying for bandwidth at any given moment—make the majesty of the performance that much more remarkable. The focus is often on modal improvisation, probably a holdover from Zappa's lengthy guitar orations on LPs like *Shut Up and Play Yer Guitar* and *Tinseltown Rebellion*, but the music makes such uproarious dynamic leaps that it's often tough to tell exactly what's going on. Vai can be so acute it hurts, like he's playing your tongue with a piece of barbed wire; at other times, he's subtle, distant and bewilderingly murky. He's as comfortable with the sensitive caress of a pick on a ringing string as with smoldering left-hand legato. Even at his most dizzying moments Vai is dramatic without being overbearing. On *Passion and Warfare*, guitars summon koto tones, speak as glides, glisses and growls, ramble and rumble and tell a story of the soul.

But making it look easy is only half the struggle; it's making it feel like something that shows just how deliberately Vai can dispatch his high-level training. His backward guitar parts actually were conceived rhythmically, and *work* that way. And on "The Riddle" the lead melody line goes through a complicated series of modal changes, from Lydian, to Lydian sharp five, to Lydian flat seven, to whole-tone ideas, to a Hungarian scale of sorts, and then Aeolian. It's all over one single repeating, wide-open chord, but he makes it evolve naturally. "I hear it in my head, and I can tell if it's going to work or not," he says.

"It's very rarely that I have to wait until it's on tape to see that. I believe I'm blessed with that, but it's a curse when you know what's going to work and you have to work with people who don't. I don't mean to say that demeaningly, but it was a luxury to sit there and say, 'I think I'll do this,' and not have to answer to anybody. It was what I heard in my head, and then making it reality on tape had to encompass, 'Okay, is it going to work, and how is it going to lead from one part to another?'" In the case of "The Riddle," that process began with a

specific conception: "It was, this is the bass pattern and the kick pattern. I want that to go through the whole song, and I want to superimpose different moods by using different modes on top of everything. Each mode has a mood to it. You can look at them as major scales with this, that and the other thing altered in them. Or you can look at them as colors, as sounds, as ambiences, as experiences in your life. They set up a tonality that can dictate your whole mental being. That's where the beauty is in music. I did a series of columns for *Guitar Player* called 'Martian Love Secrets,' and I tried to use these tonal situations to reflect certain experiences in people's lives, to have them *create* certain experiences. The letters I got were really funny. I'd say maybe 20 percent of the people got what I was talking about. The other 80 percent thought I was on Venus."

"LET ME SAY just one thing, please." Steve's father is adamant. "The guys in Whitesnake are *great*. They're great."

You mean, they're great guys.

"Well, they're good musicians too. That... what's that big guy's name?"

Adrian Vandenberg.

"Adrian Vandenberg? The guy's had three successful albums. He's a *very* successful musician. Rudy does a *hell* of a goddamn job, and that drummer, Christ, he's unbelievable! And David has the charisma. For chrissakes, he could carry *anybody*. I think Stevie's lucky he's with them."

Really?

"Yes, I do. My wife and I both think he's lucky to be with them. I mean, excuse me, he's lucky to be with a group that he likes that much. And they seem to harmonize, you know."

It really seems lucky only from a purely mass-exposure standpoint.

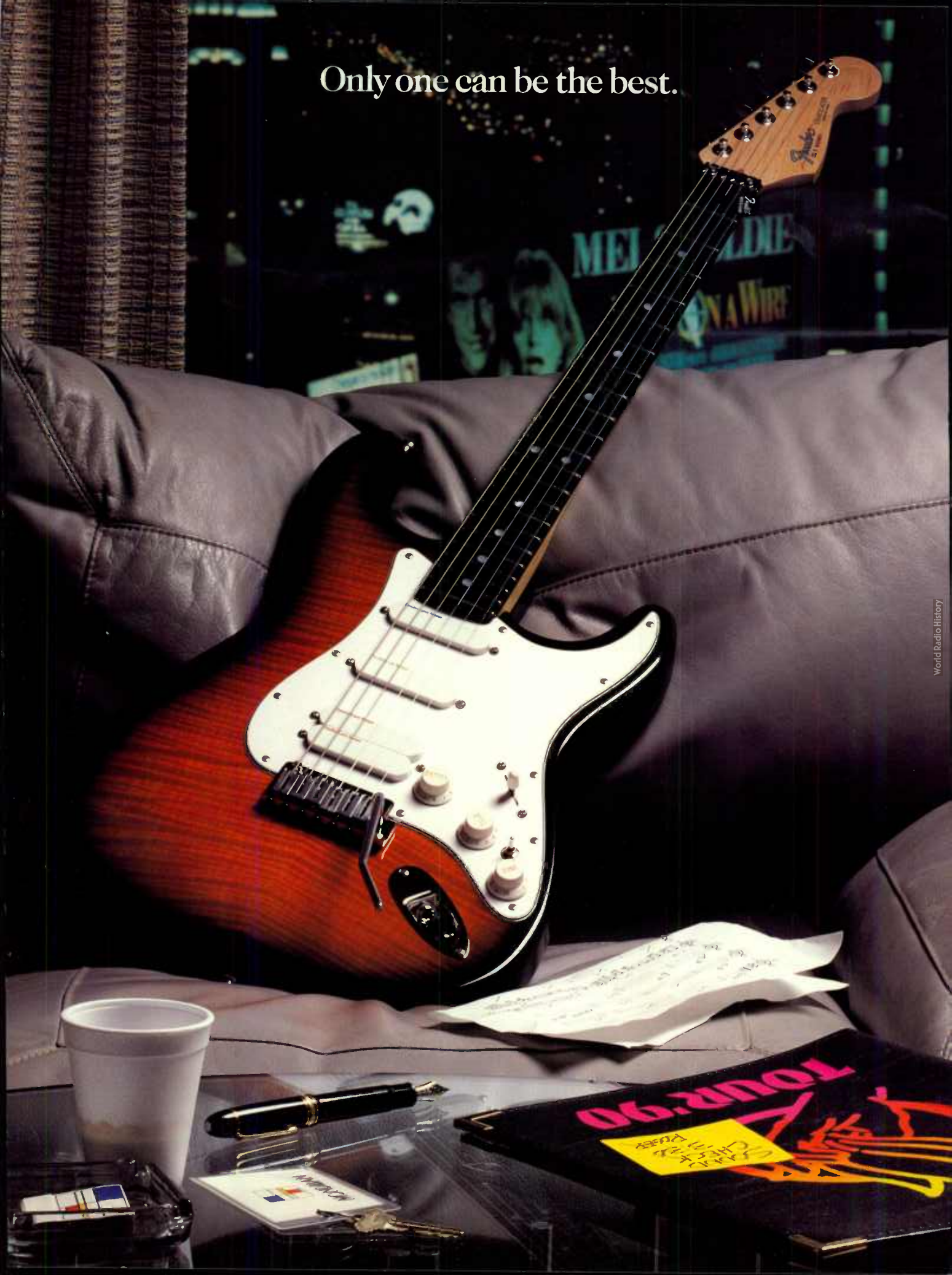
"Yeah, yeah. But a lot of his solos that he has, he plays his own music. David is making a star out of *him*. We've got a lot to be thankful for there, you know."

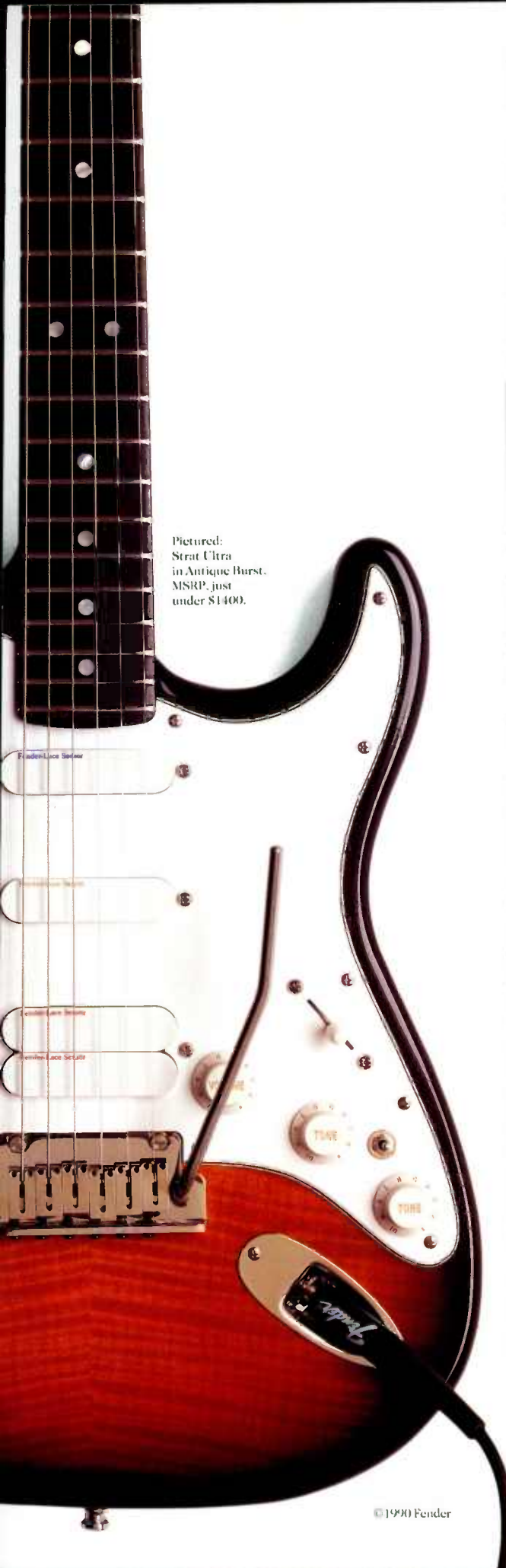
Vandenberg, who once led a group bearing his surname, has yet to record a full album with Whitesnake. He had repaired one guitar track and was called in as a body for a video flogging an album called *Whitesnake* that singer David Coverdale was intent on rescuing from commercial evaporation. Goosed along by excellent timing—no Van Halen album in sight in 1987—and the cunning promotional implementation of Coverdale's girlfriend's thighs, the pop-metal



You
could play a
Zappa song
on the radio
as if it was a hit
single, and it
would be a hit
single. It's all
a matter of what
they shove down
your throat."

Only one can be the best.



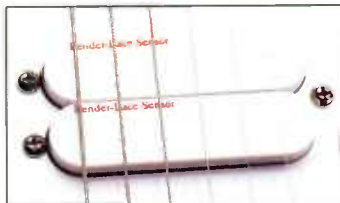


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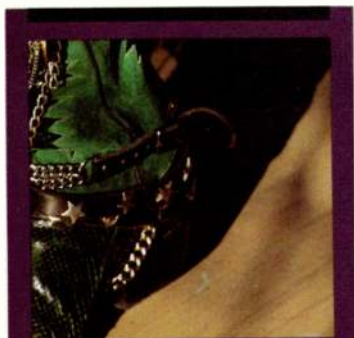
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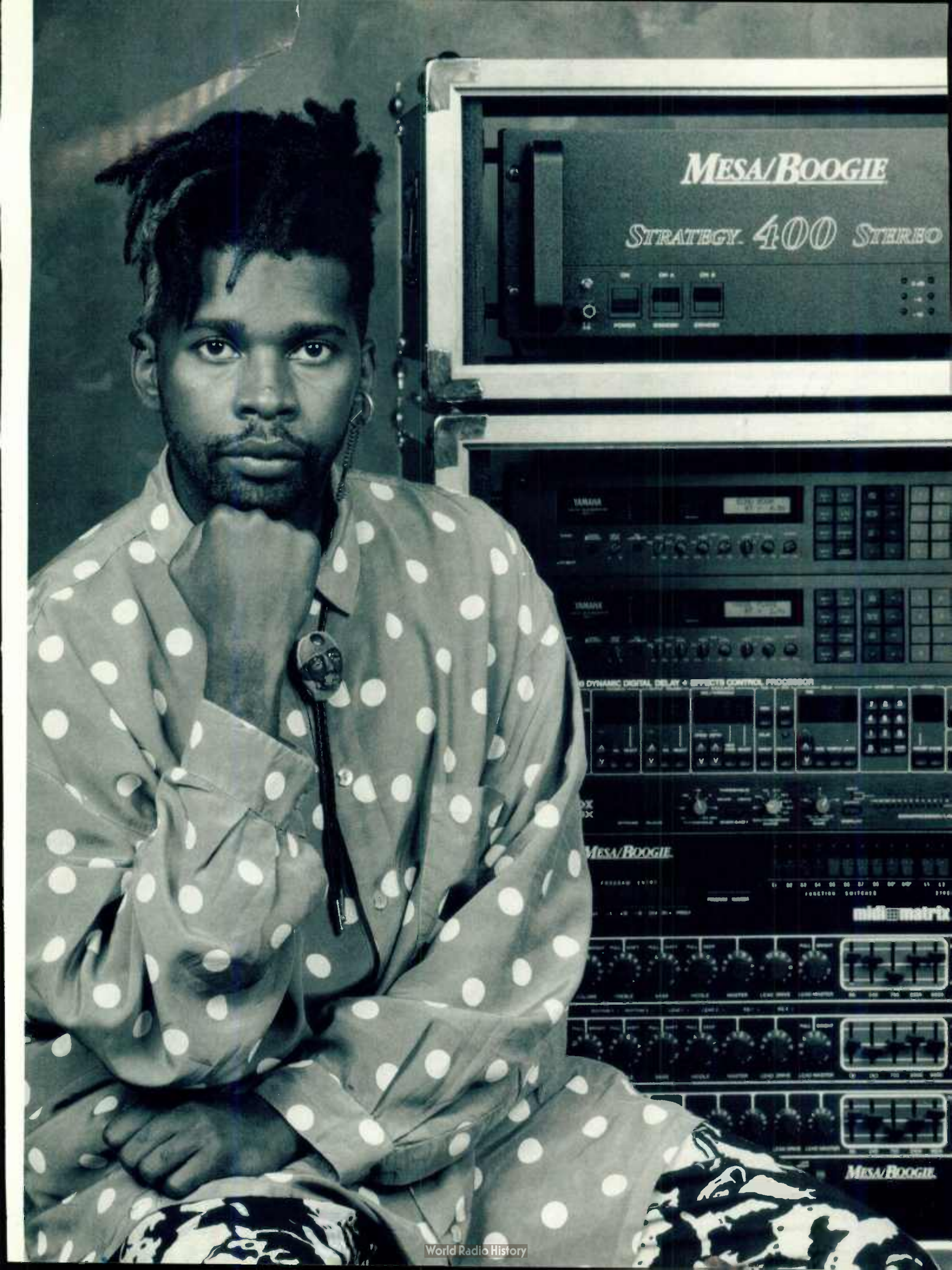
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be digestible. Then there are obscure musicians like Allan Holdsworth, who, like Vai, possess a more unique, elusive character that sets them apart as artists. It's strange that someone as offbeat as Vai has thrived in the music industry.

"Well, you know," Steve laughs, "you have to look at the company I keep. I mean, I've surrounded myself with some of the best in the business. Frank Zappa, David Lee Roth, David Coverdale, that's instant recognition, almost instant acceptance. It's instant musical credibility, that's for sure. I had to have some substance in order to make that acceptance a reality, though, or else kids would see right through what I do. I'm grateful that I've got some substance that kids can grasp onto. Otherwise, if I would have started from day one doing stuff like *Flex-Able* and *Passion and Warfare*, who knows what would have happened? I might be on the same acceptance level of someone like Holdsworth. But I don't think that's good or bad. I think Allan Holdsworth is an artist, and he has no choice but to do what he does. He has no choice but to say, 'Look, this is what I do. Buy the record, or don't. I'm not changing.' I'm able to make a certain type of rock statement that puts me in a different light than some of the more artsy people. But by the same token, I'll turn around and do an artsy album."

In most of Vai's post-Zappa projects, it was almost a requisite for his involvement that he'd be in on the music from the ground up. Whitesnake was really the first thing he jumped into after most of those decisions were made.

"Well, I totally arranged all the guitar parts."

Yeah, but not their contexts.

"Do you think that it seems strange even with something like *Passion and Warfare* being released?"

If anything, it makes the dichotomy that much more striking.

Vai answers, "Eighty percent of the people in the Whitesnake audience will take *Passion and Warfare* and the musicality might go over their head, okay? I believe that 100 percent of those people, if given the chance, would enjoy listening to the record. I could be a daydreamer, but I actually think since the music touches me so deeply, that it has to do a *little* something for everybody. I could be wrong. Now, with *Passion and Warfare*, I really had no intentions of putting a band together and touring with it. You see, I'm still at a young age where I like to go out and play in big arenas and run around and exert that kind of rock 'n' roll attitude and energy. There are few bands that I can *do* that with. David Lee Roth was one of them. There wasn't another band that I would consider joining that I could do that with. Whitesnake was perfect for me: first of all, to play with some great musicians in the rock world on an aggressive rock album, and at the same time, have *Passion and Warfare* come out and do what it's going to do. *Passion and Warfare* will be introduced to people who might not normally buy it if I *didn't* join Whitesnake. It's sort of my way of helping to educate that other 80 percent in that type of music. If they come to the show and they like Steve Vai, they might give his record a chance and realize that there's another whole scheme of things going on. You see, you will perceive Whitesnake differently than you might perceive *Passion and Warfare*. But there are kids out

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there who will perceive the Whitesnake album a lot stronger, so I can't say it's any more or less viable than any other form of music."

I tell Vai that from talking to him and sensing his priorities and loves, I suspect that every time he gets onstage with Whitesnake he feels that the gig is beneath him.

"Yeah, well, it's weird. A lot of people think I should feel that way. And to be honest with you, musically, I wish that the world accepted the music on *Passion and Warfare* more than they accept rock 'n' roll. But there's a certain energy and a certain experience you feel when you're on a big stage with a singer like Coverdale screaming. I enjoy that feeling, and I enjoy not having the pressure of being the one who's up front all the time. And the music is simple—yeah, you hear it. I know it. I know it's simple music. I can play you some pretty insipid music." Vai chuckles. "But the Whitesnake stuff, as far as I'm concerned, stands with a certain integrity in rock music, in heavy metal rock music. I wouldn't start comparing it with other albums, but in rock 'n' roll, it's a different world altogether. I am talking right now to one of my favorite magazines, and for me to get an interview in there . . . But you have to realize that I also talk to *Metal Edge*, and they don't want to hear about these things. They want to hear about the crazy things on the road and what happened last night at the show, and there's a certain side of me that enjoys doing that. There will be a time where I'll sit back and be the total musician, but right now it's a lot of fun to run around and play simple rock songs onstage. I knew what I was getting into when I did it. I knew that there was going to be a lot of questions, but you see, I also knew that I was going

to be releasing *Passion and Warfare*, and I knew that may answer a lot of questions. What it'll probably do is just turn Steve Vai into a big enigma." He laughs. "What is he all about *really*?" But I don't want to put up any boundaries. As long as I do what I feel is right and I'm not ripping off the kids, then I can go on."

ATWHAT POINT in his career did your son seem happiest?

"You know, you really couldn't say," says Mrs. Vai, "because with each one, there was a certain newness. I think his happiest was when he went with Zappa. He was dying to be part of the band. He was only 19 years old, and Frank Zappa was his idol from when he started playing the guitar."

"You think about minor-league ballplayers that finally make it into the big league," Mr. Vai says. "Stevie made the big leagues when he went with Frank."

"And of course, you know that there were no drugs involved, which was one of the big things with rock 'n' roll and heavy metal and everything, and it was just fantastic to know that this was all clean."

"We were so fortunate that he went with Frank."

"IT WAS PROBABLY one of the major turning points in my whole life."

Vai is staring at the ceiling, remembering his young and innocent days. "It's very hard to put my finger on. I have certain theories. And if you want to hear it . . . I mean, this is very personal, but I'm at a time in my career where I'm gonna let the kids know exactly what I'm all about, take it or leave it. I've always been careful in the past,

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but . . . basically, I was hanging out with Zappa, and he's an extremely cynical character, you know, but he's very funny too. I had an identity crisis and I started to take on Frank's cynicism and his disgust for the world: 'Everybody's an asshole, everybody stinks.' But what I didn't realize about Frank was he also has—he'll never, ever admit it—a respect for certain people, too. And he has a great sense of humor about his cynicism. I never had that, but I tried to have it and I started running around saying to myself, 'Oh, the world is a bunch of assholes.' And I was searching for answers. I had pondered the question of God, but I really didn't understand what it was all about. I didn't have my *own* understanding; I heard a lot of other people's understanding. And God is a very personal thing, even to atheists. It's extremely individualistic in its beliefs and its realizations, and I didn't have any. I just knew the *word*, you know. I didn't realize what was going on around me. I entered this really deep depression, for about a year-and-a-half, where it was just complete anxiety. I didn't know what an anxiety attack was, but I was experiencing them all day long. It was probably the most miserable time of my life: I couldn't smile, I couldn't laugh. And I just started deteriorating, really deteriorating, physically and mentally, spiritually. I was looking for a way out.

"If I told you the things that I saw and the way I viewed stuff, if I told anybody, they would put me away. I'm serious. I actually believed I was going insane. I had nothing to grasp onto; I had no idea of why we were here. I was pondering those questions, which I believe a lot of us go through, but it must have hit me really deep, because there

was nothing happening in my life that I should have complained about, or that I should have let take control like this. Everything on the outside looked like it was going great: I had a good gig and I was making a couple of bucks, I was working real hard, living with a bunch of buddies and having a great time. But that didn't matter. Happiness, real, true happiness transcends any environmental parameters. So what happened was, mysteriously this book appeared in the mail, and it was called *The Magic in Your Mind* by U.S. Anderson. It was a pretty simple book—it just talked about the ego and certain beliefs—and I started to connect with things in the book that filled the yearning in my heart. I decided I had to change my life, because I had hit rock bottom. I became a vegetarian, I quit smoking and I basically cleaned up a whole lot. I stopped eating garbage, and started reading metaphysics and spiritual-minded books, hanging out at the Bodhi Tree, a metaphysical bookstore on Melrose Avenue. I started to grab at truths and things started to open up to me. I realized I was becoming fulfilled; I was getting my own understanding of what I believed God to be and what we were here for. It just grew and grew and grew. I mean, it was the oddest thing, because when you pray and you meditate, you're brainwashing yourself. You're brainwashing your subconscious to open you up. And I started to do things like make cassettes that I would play to myself in my sleep, with suggestions on how I should feel. You see, a lot of times, people are miserable because they like to be miserable and I was like that. But I gotta tell you, it's much better being happy. And sometimes, even though you don't believe it, you have to tell yourself things like, 'I'm

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WHAT STEVIE'S SPANKING

LITTLE STEVIE VAI's home studio has blossomed into quite an impressive facility, outfitted with a rebuilt API console and an all-transformer 3M recorder. The racks are lined with Eventide Harmonizers and other outboard processors, the walls with Marshall and Roland amps and the floors with fluorescent specimens of the Jem 777 solidbody guitar he designed with Ibanez—a Tom Anderson prototype of that axe is the only non-Ibanez electric Steve used on *Passion and Warfare*.

Also on hand are a gaggle of Guild acoustics and a Coral sitar. He mikes his cabs with Shure SM57s (one to a speaker for proper phrasing and tone), or takes a direct buss to the JC-120 and back in stereo for the console. His power amp is a MESA/Boogie Strategy 400. "I would usually pop in and out of seven different Marshalls when recording," Steve recalls. "I had this weird power surge in the studio and was blowing up an amp every hour. It happened after each verse of 'The Riddle,' so each of the five verses is a different amp."

Ever since he dug out a cavity on the face of his guitar so a Floyd Rose vibrato could be pulled sharp without hitting back against the top, Steve's been out to introduce new tech ideas to the mainstream. The Ibanez seven-string Universe guitar produces much of what's heard on *Passion and Warfare*, notably in "Liberty," parts of "Erotic Nightmares" and "The Riddle." "It goes way down to a low B," Vai observes. "Michael Hedges gets some beautiful stuff out of low notes on the harp guitar; there's a beautiful ambience when a low note is ringing with a melody on top. I'm a big fan of that sound." Like his Jem 777, the seven-string doesn't actually bear his signature, though he's quick to point out the instrument's many conceivable applications. "If you're a classical player, you get a kick out of that low B. If you're a jazzbo flying through a chord scale, you could use that bottom string for walking way up high while you've got melodies going. If you're a rock 'n' roller, just plug into your Marshall and play low fifths and it'll move the hair on your arm."

Steve's certainly not the first to use a seven-string guitar, but he's in it with Ibanez up to the gills. "Oh, sure I'm involved with it on a business level," he affirms. "I designed the guitar, they make it, and if it sells, we all go to heaven in a little rowboat."

not such a bad person,' 'It's gonna be a good day,' 'From this day on, I'm gonna become healthier and happier.' That's what I used to tell myself. I didn't believe it. When I was sitting in the bathroom throwing up my guts, I said, 'What the fuck's going on here?' I started to tell myself, 'Look, just tell yourself this stuff, even if you don't believe it.' I believe each day I become happier and healthier. It's when you forget these things that you start to slip down again. We all go through phases, but you've just gotta force yourself into being up."

Is *Passion and Warfare* a good medium ground?

"Absolutely. It's been 10 years now that I've been feeling great. Throughout that period, there's been extreme ups and downs. I think *Passion and Warfare* is a good average of the ups and the downs, even though there are extremes within it. I'll tell you, at this point in my career, anything I say, anything I do, I don't want to have to make excuses for anymore. I'm just going to do it. That's the only way that I can be real to the people who really enjoy what I do." M

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FLASH

Yngwie Malmsteen meets John McLaughlin

OF TWO WORLDS

Apart from the guitar case he's carrying, John McLaughlin could be just another splendid-looking bon vivant sauntering down Paris' Place Vendôme. "You know, I'm quite happy to come today," he says about this interview. "But it seems that the only thing we have in common is the guitar."

On the surface, he's right. McLaughlin, 48, ascetic jazz innovator, keeper of the inner mounting flame, and Yngwie Malmsteen, 27, brash hard-rock bird of fire, are the strangest bedfellows in contemporary guitar. Scratch a bit deeper, though, and the pairing begins to make sense: note the deep-flowing classical gestures, the casual application of blinding torrents of speed picking, the shared penchant for scalloped, scooped-fret guitar fingerboards. Recent career-threatening injuries (John's hand meets a swiveling television set, Yngwie's Jaguar a tree) nearly stopped both in their tracks.

John McLaughlin had a funny name once too. He gave guitar lessons to Jimmy Page, invented fusion, used acid, wore white, and made the world safe for

By Matt Resnicoff *Photography by Deborah Samuel*

harmonic movement is. Unless you know what you're doing, you don't just start improvising. Ask any classical musicians. They have incredible technique, they can read anything, they can interpret anything, but you ask them to improvise and they won't be able to do it, because it's another way of thinking. It's work.

MUSICIAN: *Does that mean that valid improvisation can't happen early in a musician's development?*

MCLAUGHLIN: Of course it can, on the condition that he's working towards that, but if you're a classical interpreter, you don't even think about improvisation, so you cannot improvise. I have a lot of friends in the classical world. They would love to impro-

players have that certain framework in each key. That's all they play.

MCLAUGHLIN: You have to structure your thought process. You have to structure your way in music. But these structures should not be permanent. You should be ready to break them at any moment. Be ready to break down and bring into question everything you do: your phrasing, even how you look at the instrument. Listen, I'm maybe twice Yngwie's age, and I'm still doing the same work. I'm still questioning what I do. We are creatures of habit. The thing is to recognize when good habits become bad. At that moment, you've got to be ready to break them and find yourself a little bit in the unknown. But that's music.

Something happens in your life and suddenly you start to think differently, you start to hear differently what you're doing. You say, "It's time. There's something wrong. I don't like the way I go from A to B. There's another way to do it and I have to find it." So you start to break structures and the way you perceive harmonic movement, or your guitar, keyboard, whatever. It's all the same. It's a way of perception. Music is a structure. And these are what we have to be ready to break. But there are moments when I don't think that at all, and you're just flying, everything is just working beautifully.

MALMSTEEN: I understand exactly what you're saying. I'm happy right now with what I'm doing, and I feel very comfortable . . .

MCLAUGHLIN: [Patting Yngwie's back] Don't worry! It's gotta happen!

MALMSTEEN: A couple of years ago, I had a very serious car accident. That changed me. I had a brain hemorrhage and the nerve endings in my hand were not working. I started practicing like crazy like I did when I was fifteen. But this injury healed, and all the practice I put in elevated me to another plateau. I might sound a little like I'm bragging, but right now I feel like there's no boundaries to what I can do. It's *brrrr* like crazy, much more than I could do before.

MCLAUGHLIN: The value of work! Two-and-a-half months ago I broke my left index finger.

MALMSTEEN: Phew, that's a nightmare.

MCLAUGHLIN: Yeah, it was a nightmare. I was having nightmares. I was waking up in the middle of the night sweating. But there's a good side. Nothing's all bad and nothing's all good. Already this accident has affected the way I think.

MALMSTEEN: How long did it take before you could play again?

MCLAUGHLIN: I started two weeks ago. It took over two months before I could touch the instrument.

MALMSTEEN: For me it was about two, three months. I *wouldn't* do it because I knew I was going to hate myself. I was in the hospital, I was very injured, and my friends

when good habits become bad." - J. McLaughlin

vise, but they don't know *how* to. Even if you have tremendous knowledge and technique, it doesn't mean you can improvise.

MALMSTEEN: There's not *one note* in any of my guitar solos that's not *completely* spontaneous. Straight off. Every night I play onstage, it's a different solo for every song. Of course, it's in the same framework: If it's A minor, I play in A minor. I venture out to G, G major or E phrygian or do some diminished or chromatic runs or whatever, but it's always improvised. Every solo on every record. Most jazz guitar players do that, but rock guitar players don't do it, classical guitar players don't do it. If you hear a live tape of Michael Schenker or Eddie



play more classical arpeggios?" - Y. Malmsteen

Van Halen, they play exactly the same solo as on the record.

MCLAUGHLIN: I find that hard to do.

MALMSTEEN: I can't do that [laughs]. I can't remember. Too many notes.

MUSICIAN: *After playing for a while, your hands might start doing gestures they've become accustomed to doing. It's an unintentional structuring.*

MALMSTEEN: Oh, I make a great effort to avoid that. Don't ever get into a rut. For many years, I used to construct my guitar solos: "Okay, I throw in that run, some symmetric pattern, do that pattern, then do an arpeggio, then that way and this way." Now it's completely free-flowing. Most rock guitar

MALMSTEEN: Yeah, but that's very hard. Very few musicians would be able to do that in my genre of rock 'n' roll. Musicians are very boxed in, *very* boxed in. Same chord progressions, same scales.

MCLAUGHLIN: *That's dangerous, to use your word. It's hard to evolve. This is where your technique starts to run you: When you're not ready to break the structure of your mind, how you approach your improvisation, at a moment's notice. I practice and I still work hard.*

MALMSTEEN: I don't.

MCLAUGHLIN: I'm in the middle of breaking a lot of things. But I'm happy to. Because there are periods where there is no need to.

brought me guitars: "You sure you don't want to play?" "No. Take that thing away." But that was a little bit of motivation. As I said, you mustn't fall into a rut.

MCLAUGHLIN: I'm a very optimistic guy. I believe everything is a blessing, or in disguise. Anyway, I was a little crazy. I'm sure you were a little crazy after your accident.

MALMSTEEN: No, actually I mellowed out soon after that. I've always been a little bit of a madman. I wouldn't want to put myself up with the great composers, but what you hear about Mozart and Paganini, like the crazy lifestyles and women and whatever, I'm a bit like that, actually.

MUSICIAN: *John, you smile as though you understand.*

MALMSTEEN: You've been through it all.

MUSICIAN: *When you got to a certain age you cut your hair and wore white and disavowed alcohol, but here you are sitting and drinking and seem a lot more earthy than monastic. Are you more impulsive now, after moving from being young and excited, through being meditative, and then becoming a human being again and getting back into . . . ?*

MCLAUGHLIN: You know, I hate that "human being." What was I, a robot?

MUSICIAN: *By "human being" I mean accepting the limitations we have. Being in touch with one's spirituality means renouncing oneself, right?*

MCLAUGHLIN: Well, I had some peculiar views that were, years ago, more well-known. I don't broadcast them so much, but I still hold my peculiar views. They're valid to me insofar as I'm convinced of the great nature of human beings.

MUSICIAN: *But do you grip the view less tightly as you get older?*

MCLAUGHLIN: No. I think it's all a question of perception, again. Have you ever tried living a spiritual life? Well, until you make the action you'll never know, that's all I can say. You can theorize about it till you're blue in the face.

MALMSTEEN: What exactly are you referring to?

MCLAUGHLIN: Well, not that you renounce anything, but you impose a spiritual discipline on yourself. You get up at four in the morning and you meditate. You think about the nature of God, the nature of the universe, you meditate on the nature of the

void—anything that is your ideal. Whatever inspires you. But keep going.

Whether you become a Zen Buddhist or you become a Sufi, or whatever, it doesn't matter. The thing is to impose another discipline on yourself, another structure, and you start to see your life and this universe differently, and that's important. If not we're just victims of whatever's going on around us, and I'm against that.

MALMSTEEN: I've never had the motivation to do that. Because there's nothing I can do. As much as I don't want to be in this environment, I *am* in this environment, and I gotta be like what this environment is like. I can't change it.

MCLAUGHLIN: No, Yngwie, I'm not saying that there's anything wrong with the environment. Your environment is perfect. The

FRESH SCALLOPS

SINCE HIS LAST TOUR with Mahavishnu, **JOHNNY McLAUGHLIN** has been focusing his attention on the acoustic guitar, playing in duos with bassist Jonas Hellborg and with his current trio. For 15 years John has enlisted the services of luthier Abraham Wechter, who created John's first drone-string acoustic (seven drone strings and six regular strings). McLaughlin currently uses Wechter's 6-strings.

As if 30 square yards of Spandex weren't enough freight, **YNGWIE** also carries a couple dozen Fender Stratocasters on the road, some of which are the guitarist's signature model, designed after one of his 1961 pieces. The Malmsteen Strats feature a scalloped 22-fret fingerboard in either maple or rosewood, an American standard tremolo and DiMarzio HS-3 single-coil pickups. Onstage, it's Marshalls, Marshalls, Marshalls plus a selected array of effects that includes a Cry Baby wah-wah pedal and some Korg delays.

world is incredible, everything's perfect. It's the *way we view* it, that's all I'm talking about.

MUSICIAN: *Yngwie, can you foresee yourself ever doing some meditative acoustic music, cutting your hair?*

MALMSTEEN: See, I just happen to be very happy in this point in my life with what I'm doing. I find a lot of artistic satisfaction. Who knows what is gonna happen in the future? I'm very impulsive.

MUSICIAN: *But you have to keep moving. As John pointed out, part of being an artist is looking at what you're doing and saying, "This isn't good anymore. I want something more from my music."*

MALMSTEEN: Well, I change by changing, I change members of my band. I keep getting the same questions: "Why don't you change?" "How come you don't start playing

more blues?" "Why don't you do that, why don't you do this?" Listen, I just happen to be very happy with my style. In fact, if I may be so bold. . . .

MCLAUGHLIN: Be bold!

MALMSTEEN: . . . not many players can *boast* that they have their own music style. I'm happy with that. You know, *nobody* comes up to Jimmy Page or Eric Clapton and goes, "How come you don't play more classical arpeggios in your blues solos?"

MUSICIAN: *Well, there's more potential for you as a young, facile guitarist to change and to grow. You look at it as an insult.*

MALMSTEEN: Well, I don't look at it like an insult, but I just live more like . . . I feel like a big fuckin' question mark, really.

MCLAUGHLIN: The question is a trap. But if you ask me the same question—"So what are you going to do? How are you going to grow, how do you see yourself in 10 years?" This is really difficult.

MUSICIAN: *That's not the question. The question was, Do you think you constantly need to be dissatisfied with what you are in order to grow as an artist? Yngwie said, "Well, I fire members of my band." He's pretty dictatorial, which cuts down on how much he can learn from other players.*

MCLAUGHLIN: Have you ever played with him?

MUSICIAN: No.

MCLAUGHLIN: Then you don't know. When you're working with musicians, they've got to love what they do. You can give them ideas. You can say, "Okay, put the backbeat on the four, or the one," or to the bass player, "Just stay down, don't go up, stay down on the low strings." And they're going to do what they want to do.

MALMSTEEN: I give them the direction to go in. My new keyboard player added a lot to the new record. And the bass player did his own little bits.

MUSICIAN: *Yngwie had an incredible keyboard player (Jens Johansson) before he changed his band around, and because of personality. . . .*

MALMSTEEN: Nah, I'll tell you exactly why. Because I feed off of musicians. I feed off of their enthusiasm and their passion for the music, and there was no passion anymore. With the new band, I've never been so inspired, because they're really enthusiastic. To me, that's a change.

MUSICIAN: John, didn't you have a similar problem with Billy Cobham?

MCLAUGHLIN: No, no, no. You see how things get deformed. It wasn't Billy Cobham at all. Billy was always cool, but I had problems with Jan Hammer and Jerry Goodman. They were just fucking jerks! And you can print it, it's alright. Jerry's cool now, but Jan still has some weird problem with me after 20 years.

We all know how to deal with failure much more than we know how to deal with success. I could be wrong. All I know is that that's really the only bad experience, with those two, and it was curiously one of the most popular groups that I played in. Funny, huh?

MUSICIAN: Yngwie has never worked for anybody. Do you think he would benefit from a temporary commitment to someone else's music? You've said Miles was good at bringing things out that you didn't know you had in you.

MCLAUGHLIN: Yeah, but it was another world. Don't forget, in spite of everything he says—"I'm not a jazz musician"—Miles' discipline is jazz. And Yngwie is by himself. I mean, I've heard him play and he's a confirmed rock 'n' roller. I love to hear that. But the equivalent of Miles doesn't really exist in the rock 'n' roll world. Miles is like a godfather to a lot of people, including myself.

MALMSTEEN: At the same time as I say I am playing rock 'n' roll, the classical influence is so big. I mean, *all* the chord progressions are classical. Even a heavy song like "The Fury," with a *wakadumwakadum* double bass drum, if you play it on the piano, is *completely* classical. I mean, it's the way Mozart would arrange, the inverted chords. But I'm doing it with the power of rock 'n' roll: the sound of distorted power chords, a double bass drum, the big fat bombs and shit, but the arpeggios... I'm sticking in things that normal rock 'n' roll does not contain.

MUSICIAN: I also notice you're using a wah-wah pedal.

MALMSTEEN: Yeah, my Hendrix influence definitely comes in.

MUSICIAN: Ask John what it was like to jam with Hendrix.

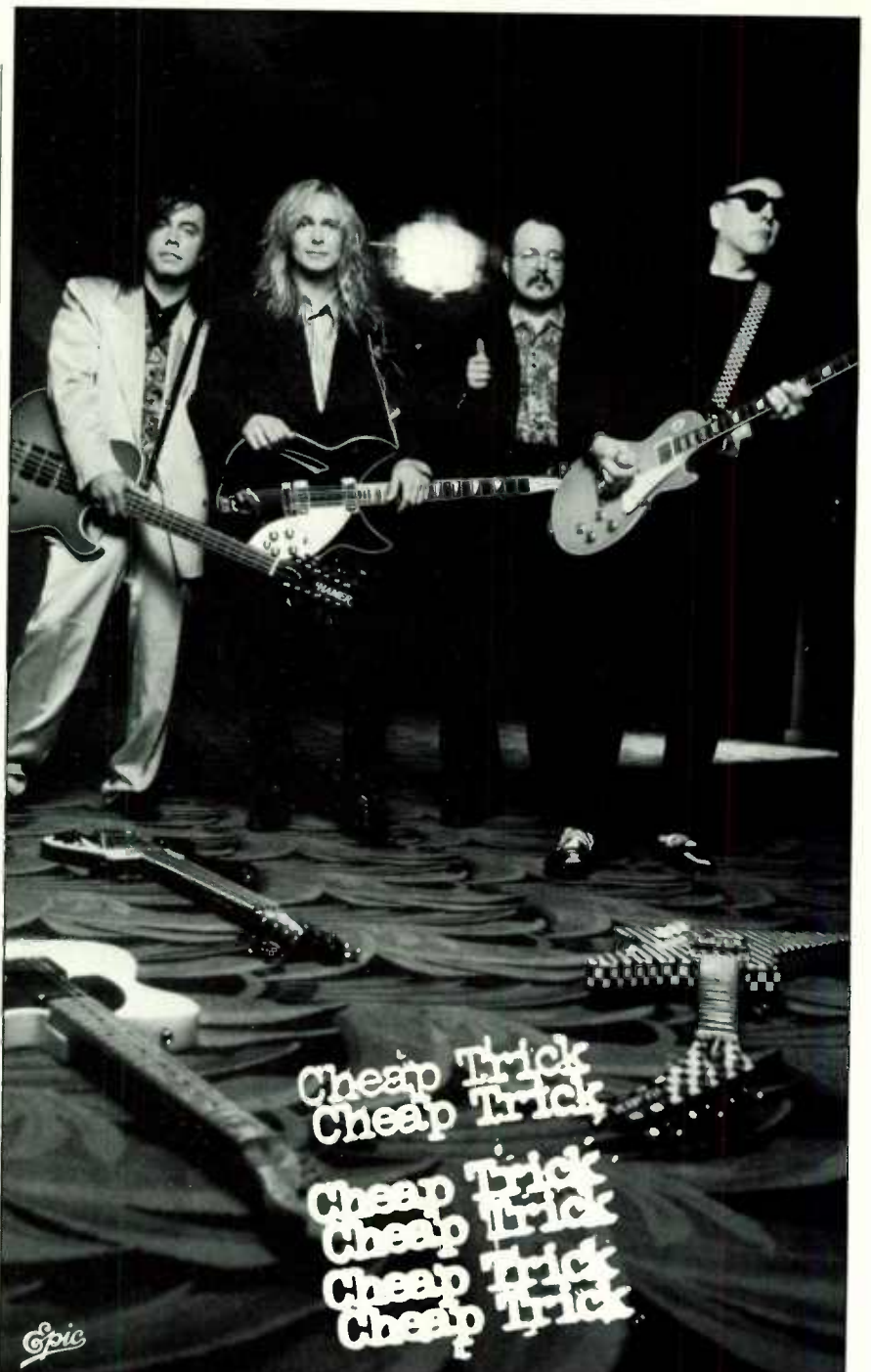
MALMSTEEN: [to John] You fuck! Sorry. Did you?

MCLAUGHLIN: [pause] Sure.

MALMSTEEN: What was it like?

MCLAUGHLIN: Gee, I loved Jimi, man.

MALMSTEEN: He's my fucking hero. I didn't mean that, I'm sorry.



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MUSICIAN

September 1990 * 75

MCLAUGHLIN: You can say anything you like, asshole!

MALMSTEEN: You know what I did? My mother gave me a guitar on my fifth birthday, right?

MCLAUGHLIN: Lucky you.

MALMSTEEN: She wanted me to be a musician. She gave me piano lessons, she gave me ballet lessons, vocal lessons, flute lessons, trumpet lessons, everything.

MCLAUGHLIN: And nothing worked.

MALMSTEEN: No, nothing. I hated music. On the 18th of September, 1970, I saw a show on television with Jimi Hendrix, and I said, "Wow!" I took the guitar off the wall, and I haven't stopped since. That's what triggered me. It wasn't the guitar *playing*, it was his *style*.

MCLAUGHLIN: Jimi was a revolutionary.

MALMSTEEN: He was so cool, man. He was the greatest.

MCLAUGHLIN: He was a revolutionary.

MALMSTEEN: As far as coolness, you know. As far as coolness, he was the coolest.

MUSICIAN: *Could you tell by being with him that his legend would grow to such huge proportions?*

MCLAUGHLIN: Oh, before I met him it was pretty easy to tell. To hear Jimi play? C'mon. I mean, he turned the world on its ear.

MALMSTEEN: You know, the funny thing is, I burned a guitar last night. I started playing because I wanted to do that; that's what triggered it off.

MCLAUGHLIN: Poor guitar.

MALMSTEEN: I burned a guitar last night, and it's always a great feeling.

MUSICIAN: *John, you'd been using distortion before Hendrix appeared, with albums like Devotion.*

MCLAUGHLIN: Long before that. In 1962, when I was working with Graham Bond, Jack Bruce, Ginger Baker. I had a big amp made because it was impossible to find, and I was using distortion on that. But it was uncontrollable because I still had a hollow-body guitar.

MALMSTEEN: That ES-335?

MCLAUGHLIN: Oh, no, I'm talking a long time ago, nearly 30 years ago.

MALMSTEEN: They made 335s in 1962, too, you know.

MCLAUGHLIN: I know, but I didn't have one. I had a Gretsch.

MALMSTEEN: Uh!

MCLAUGHLIN: An old Gretsch. [*Affecting old geezer's voice*] We were quite pure in those days, know what I mean?

MALMSTEEN: I wasn't even born.

MUSICIAN: *Another thing you guys have in common is that you're the only two mainstream guitarists to embrace the scalloped fingerboard. Yngwie, did you discover it through John?*

MALMSTEEN: No, that's funny. I used to work, for about two or three months, when I was about 14 years old, as a guitar repairman [*chuckles*], believe it or not.

MCLAUGHLIN: You were a guitar repairman?

MALMSTEEN: A luthier, yeah.

MCLAUGHLIN: I was, too. It's very interesting.

MALMSTEEN: Yeah, I was a luthier, but a 17th or 16th century lute came into the shop,



and instead of frets, the fretboard was carved out concave, and the dip in the wood was the fret. I said, "Wow, that looks so nice." I did it on one of my bad necks, just experimenting. All of a sudden I could feel a string, I got a really good grip on the string. I didn't play it like down like that, I played it normal, but it felt like very high frets. And I did it on my good necks and then went on. The first time I saw you with it it was on the cover of *Guitar Player*, and I said, "Fuck, it's cool."

MUSICIAN: *Do you both use it for the same reason?*

MALMSTEEN: I play like normal. I think you push down, right?

MCLAUGHLIN: Nooo, no.

MALMSTEEN: Somebody said you wanted to emulate a sitar.

MCLAUGHLIN: Don't believe everything

you read in magazines.

MALMSTEEN: That's for sure.

MCLAUGHLIN: I never said that. The reason was exactly what Yngwie said: You feel the string, you can do what you want with it. You don't have any friction between the end of the finger and the fingerboard. It's just your finger against the string against the fret. It's your string, your note. You get more vibrato expression from the one note. That's the only reason.

MALMSTEEN: A lot of people ask me, "Why do you do it? Does it make it easy to play fast?" No, it's because you get so much more control of the note, because the string goes perfectly into the fingertip. You can *really* shape the note.

MUSICIAN: *You both play classical, nylon-string guitar with a pick.*

MALMSTEEN: I in fact play nylon-string with a pick and the fingers at the same time.

MCLAUGHLIN: Sometimes I do that too. Occasional notes I do with the fingers, with the pick in the hand, to get the chord.

MALMSTEEN: Basically, what the classical guitarist would do with the thumb we do with a pick.

MUSICIAN: *Some players say that without alcohol or drugs, they might not have begun thinking as creatively.*

MALMSTEEN: That's bullshit, man. That's so false. No, no, no. Alcohol is like a release of tension. I don't think it enhances music at all. I think it's something you do when you *don't* play. I'm not pro-drugs at all. Against it 100 percent.

MCLAUGHLIN: Well, I grew up in the '60s, so I was dropping acid and smoking dope.

MALMSTEEN: I've never done it.

MCLAUGHLIN: Which certainly had its effect on me. To alter the state of your consciousness is not necessarily bad. The question is, how do you do it, and under which circumstances.

MALMSTEEN: I'm not a party pooper. But when I'm a professional musician, I'm completely straight. And that's just my point of view.

MCLAUGHLIN: That's the only thing we're gonna hear, isn't it?

MALMSTEEN: That's right. Everyone is entitled to my opinion, you know.

MCLAUGHLIN: *To your opinion!*

MUSICIAN: *Let's look at what you've done. Yngwie was a guitar hero when we didn't*

have a guitar hero. He kind of brought it back as a solo instrument. John did the same thing a while back, before many other historical players came into their notoriety. For the next person to come along, there's got to be something you guys haven't hit on. Yngwie's taken guitar to a wild level of technique, which John almost invented back . . .

MCLAUGHLIN: Notice how he speaks about me in the past tense? You mother-fucker.

MUSICIAN: *Wait, I'm speaking of events and impact and . . .*

MCLAUGHLIN: What am I, an old man or something?

MUSICIAN: *I was about to make the objective observation that . . .*

MCLAUGHLIN: Impossible. That's an impossibility. Anyway, go ahead.

MUSICIAN: *Today, with your classical concerto, you've adopted a more traditional role that . . .*

MCLAUGHLIN: I'm not playing classical music.

MALMSTEEN: He plays with a pick.

MCLAUGHLIN: I'm playing my music in a classical formation. I've also got the trio.

MUSICIAN: *Well, the point I was going to make was . . .*

MCLAUGHLIN: Go!

MUSICIAN: *There is no point! What kind of strings do you use?*

MCLAUGHLIN: No, come on, please.

MUSICIAN: *Okay. My idea was that growth as an artist involves constant dissatisfaction with oneself, and that you seem to have gone into a traditional vein after years of innovation, as though you've completed your journey. Yngwie's old hat, in a way. He's old news to many people, too. Your contributions . . .*

MALMSTEEN: Wait a minute!

MUSICIAN: . . . *are in the past, unless you continue.*

MALMSTEEN: Shit! Five years is a long time ago?

MCLAUGHLIN: Come on, what's the question, Matt? *[laughs]* Don't screw around.

MALMSTEEN: It's like a cat and a fucking . . . I think you're talking too much about how you're gonna fuckin' evolve from this, how you're gonna evolve from that. Listen! I'm a happy camper where I'm at right now. I don't feel like I have to go anywhere else. When I feel that way, I'll do something about it. Right now I feel really good about the way I play. I don't think it's old hat! I'll tell you what's fucking old hat! My imitators—they're



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old hat!

MCLAUGHLIN: Go ahead, Yngwie!

MALMSTEEN: Where's the whole *wave* of new classical electric guitar player? Where the *fuck* are they now?

MUSICIAN: You're using that old trend as your defense. All I'm saying is . . .

MALMSTEEN: What exactly are you getting at?

MUSICIAN: What I'm getting at is . . .

MCLAUGHLIN: Shh, shh, shh, it's coming now! I've been waiting for this for five minutes already. Okay, the question is . . .

MALMSTEEN: The question is . . .

MUSICIAN: I forgot the damn question.

MCLAUGHLIN: No, you were talking about evolution, and you have to be dissatisfied. The thing is, change is going on every day. Like Yngwie is saying, tonight he's going to go and play and he's not going to play what he played last night. When I start my concerts, I'm not going to play what I played the day before, change is happening all the time. Every day we're different. You don't notice because it moves by millimeters. But over six months, you notice.

MALMSTEEN: Incredible. Incredibly great statement. I must agree. Maybe that's why I don't feel a great desire to just fuckin' shave my head and go to a monastery. Because I find variation every night.

MCLAUGHLIN: You'd look good with a shaved head [laughter]. We were talking about spirituality. If you really want to look at it, this moment that we have before us is totally unique and has nothing to do with the moment that just went by. We structure it with a perception, but it's absolutely new and, in that sense, totally miraculous. It arrives free, and here we are, and then the next one comes and here we are. This itself is the greatest miracle. Music? We're a little more exposed to it, that's all.

MALMSTEEN: May I say something? I know you're gonna say I'm full of shit.

MCLAUGHLIN: Why don't we just say it now? [laughter]

MALMSTEEN: Listen, I play guitar 20 years, and during these 20 years I've *never practiced*.

MUSICIAN: I don't believe that.

MALMSTEEN: I have *never* practiced. I've never done an exercise, I've never done a certain pattern over and over and over; ever!

MCLAUGHLIN: Remember what I was saying to you when I was listening to his tape, Matt? "This guy never practiced in his life." [laughter]

[cont'd on page 126]



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WHAT YOUR GUITAR WILL LOOK LIKE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Following today's technology to its logical conclusion

By Alan di Perna

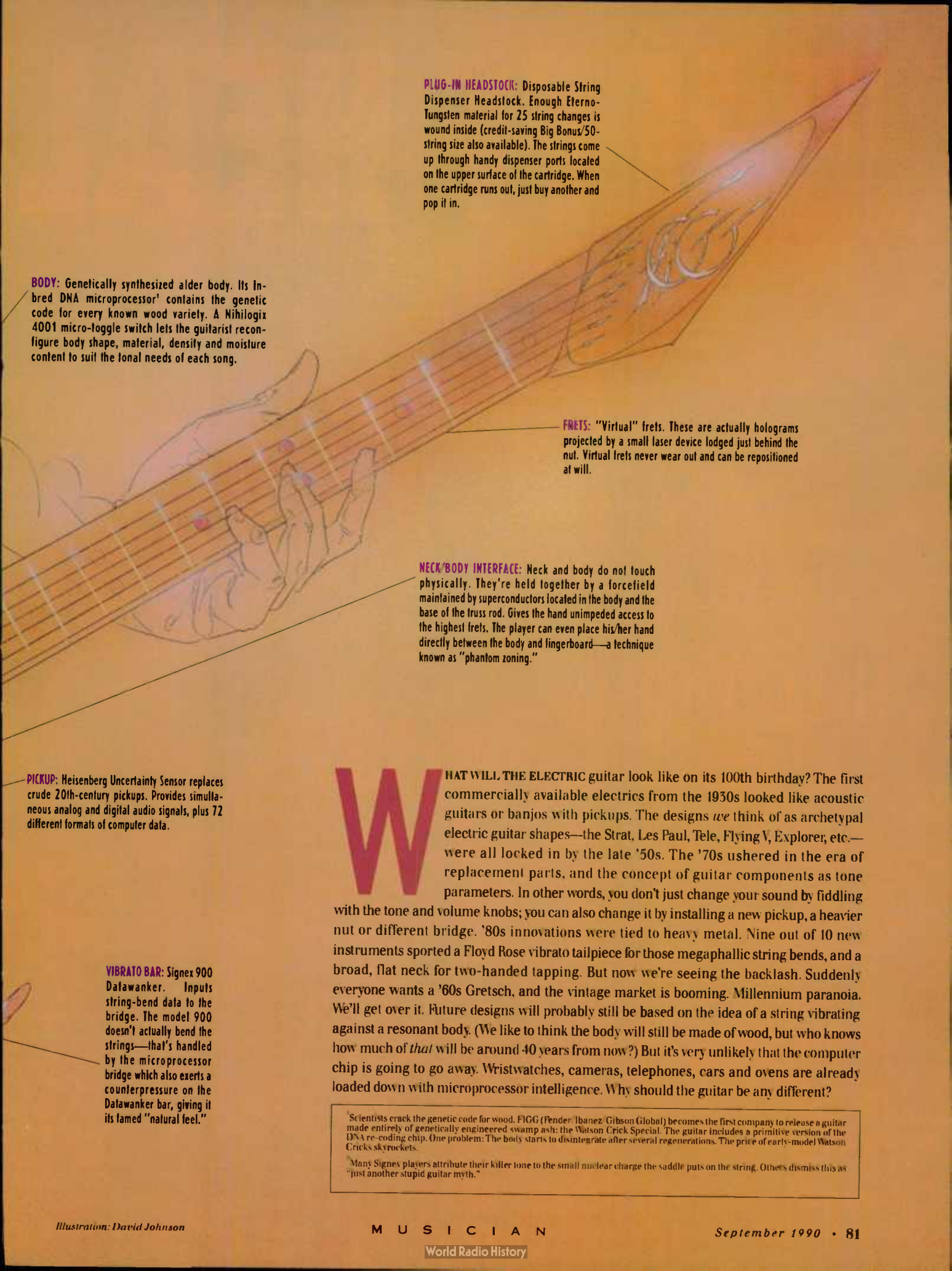
MIDI ORNAMENT (NONFUNCTIONAL): By the late '90s, all electric guitars have MIDI ports as standard equipment, but no one ever uses them. Many players unscrew and discard the things, much like the old Fender P-bass pickup covers. Others just leave them there, figuring they look cool. In 2014, Fumiko Imports Ltd.—maker of low-priced Asian instruments—produces the first guitar with a nonfunctional "dummy" MIDI port. By 2030 the phrase "He thinks his MIDI's still working" is slang for a doffing oldster.

PHOTON OUTPUT JACK: Transmits guitar signal to amps and/or data manipulation terminals at distances up to 4.5 light years (91.9 if playing in hyperspace).

TONE PARAMETER SCREEN: Kirillien Interactive Spectrograph Screen (KISS) replaces tone and volume knobs. It's a "touchless" user interface that responds to body heat from the player's fingers. The screen drives a signal-processing chip containing nine million psychoacoustic tone and effects parameters (conveniently arranged in 128,000 factory presets and 128,000 user-programmable memories). Other uses for data screen: set lists, song lyrics, interband memos.



BRIDGE: Signex 12 Databridge. Microprocessors monitor string tension. Strings are held in tune perpetually via nuclear-powered plutonium string saddles.² The bridge can store enough data for 4000 alternate tunings. Additional tunings can be loaded via the onboard cartridge slot.



PLUG-IN HEADSTOCK: Disposable String Dispenser Headstock. Enough Eternotungsten material for 25 string changes is wound inside (credit-saving Big Bonus/50-string size also available). The strings come up through handy dispenser ports located on the upper surface of the cartridge. When one cartridge runs out, just buy another and pop it in.

BODY: Genetically synthesized alder body. Its inbred DNA microprocessor¹ contains the genetic code for every known wood variety. A Nihilogix 4001 micro-loggle switch lets the guitarist reconfigure body shape, material, density and moisture content to suit the tonal needs of each song.

FRETS: "Virtual" frets. These are actually holograms projected by a small laser device lodged just behind the nut. Virtual frets never wear out and can be repositioned at will.

NECK/BODY INTERFACE: Neck and body do not touch physically. They're held together by a forcefield maintained by superconductors located in the body and the base of the truss rod. Gives the hand unimpeded access to the highest frets. The player can even place his/her hand directly between the body and fingerboard—a technique known as "phantom zoning."

PICKUP: Heisenberg Uncertainty Sensor replaces crude 20th-century pickups. Provides simultaneous analog and digital audio signals, plus 72 different formats of computer data.

VIBRATO BAR: Signex 900 Dalawanker. Inputs string-bend data to the bridge. The model 900 doesn't actually bend the strings—that's handled by the microprocessor bridge which also exerts a counterpressure on the Dalawanker bar, giving it its famed "natural feel."

WHAT WILL THE ELECTRIC guitar look like on its 100th birthday? The first commercially available electrics from the 1930s looked like acoustic guitars or banjos with pickups. The designs *we* think of as archetypal electric guitar shapes—the Strat, Les Paul, Tele, Flying V, Explorer, etc.—were all locked in by the late '50s. The '70s ushered in the era of replacement parts, and the concept of guitar components as tone parameters. In other words, you don't just change your sound by fiddling with the tone and volume knobs; you can also change it by installing a new pickup, a heavier nut or different bridge. '80s innovations were tied to heavy metal. Nine out of 10 new instruments sported a Floyd Rose vibrato tailpiece for those megaphallic string bends, and a broad, flat neck for two-handed tapping. But now we're seeing the backlash. Suddenly everyone wants a '60s Gretsch, and the vintage market is booming. Millennium paranoia. We'll get over it. Future designs will probably still be based on the idea of a string vibrating against a resonant body. (We like to think the body will still be made of wood, but who knows how much of *that* will be around 40 years from now?) But it's very unlikely that the computer chip is going to go away. Wristwatches, cameras, telephones, cars and ovens are already loaded down with microprocessor intelligence. Why should the guitar be any different?

¹ Scientists crack the genetic code for wood. FIGG (Fender, Ibanez, Gibson Global) becomes the first company to release a guitar made entirely of genetically engineered swamp ash: the Watson Crick Special. The guitar includes a primitive version of the DNA re-coding chip. One problem: The body starts to disintegrate after several regenerations. The price of early-model Watson Crick's skyrockets.

² Many Signex players attribute their killer tone to the small nuclear charge the saddle puts on the string. Others dismiss this as "just another stupid guitar myth."

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World Radio History



ERIC JOHNSON: THE MANIACAL TEXAS TONESMITH

Versatile virtuoso searches for quirks of the electric guitar

By Josef Woodard

OPENING FOR ERIC JOHNSON at the Bronco Bowl in Dallas, guitarist Chris Thomas doesn't get much of a soundcheck, as Johnson spends extra time on his. It's not that Johnson is unfeeling or greedy. He's just a timbral stickler. "He's always been a maniac for tone," says friend and former band member Bill Maddox. "He didn't call his first album *Tones* for nothing."

Johnson's career has struck a resonant chord with the release of his second solo album, *Ah Via Musicom*. Johnson doesn't fit

neatly into any school; a composite of Jimi Hendrix, Jeff Beck, John McLaughlin, Jerry Reed, Wes Montgomery, he stands apart. Part meaty blues-rocker, part fusioneer, part country-pickin' virtuoso and part pop-rock singer/songwriter, Johnson is an ambitious talent who hasn't quite found his niche. Plus, he's the nicest, humblest guy you'd care to meet.

At 35, Johnson still looks like the whiz kid who started making waves in the '70s fresh out of high school, touring the South with a fusion band called the Electromagnets. How does he keep that choirboy look? "I

sleep in a wheelbarrow of cold cream, with a little tube to breathe out of," Johnson jokes. "It's like a mummy wrap at night. And I pass out a lot of old promo pictures."

Tone lovers get their money's worth at an Eric Johnson show. Speedy displays of dexterity, high-voltage melodicism sprayed all over the fretboard, abstract psychedelic passages, the acoustic luster of "April Come She Will" and the poignancy of his new ballad "Forty Mile Town" give his show a wide musical range. Never mind the fretwork—the footwork alone's remarkable: To maximize his guitar trio's sonic palette, Johnson dances on his plethora of pedals and switches, coaxing a kaleidoscope of sounds.

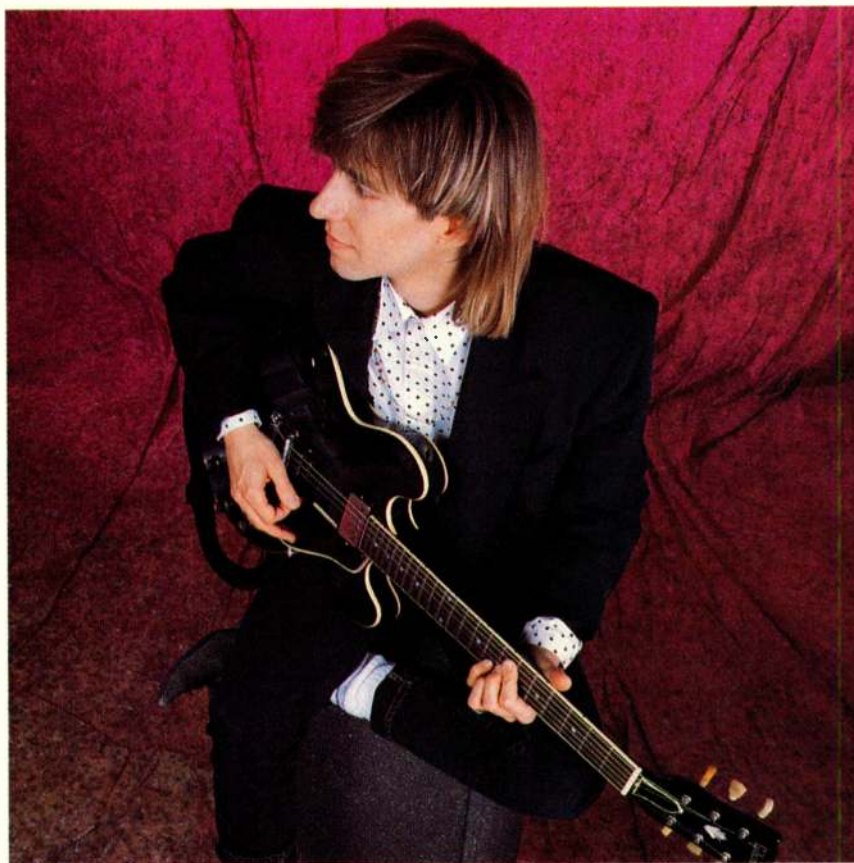
He's also his own worst critic. After rousing the Dallas crowd, Johnson and his mates—drummer Tommy Taylor and bassist Kyle Brock—are having a glum backstage pow-wow. Johnson feels less than ecstatic about the show. "I'd rather play 50,000 wrong notes and have that magic than play all the right notes and not find it." But 2000 Texans can't be all wrong.

Johnson's Hendrix influence is close to the surface on the new album: the specific effects, the phrasing, and *Ah Via Musicom*'s suite-like structure, which recalls the bridged instrumental and vocal segments on *Electric Ladyland*. "On the song 'High Landrons,'" says Johnson, "I was trying to get a Hendrix sound with the flanged guitars, that 'House Burning Down' sound. I can't take much credit for that."

When *Tones* was released four years back, the prevailing question in the guitar world—where Johnson had been a kind of hero-in-waiting for years—was "what took so long?" That album failed to ignite much commercial fire beyond the expected response among guitar aficionados. This time, Johnson spent over a year in the studio getting things right—reputedly recording the entire album three times over. *Tones*, not surprisingly, were the hobgoblin.

Some of the thick swirling textures involve playing his Strats atop pads of lap steel, bathed in volume-pedal swells and echo. Pedal-steel guitar, it turns out, has had a strong impact on his style.

"Besides the country influence of pedal-steel players, there is the influence of the way they stretch the string via the pedal. Sometimes when I stretch a string, I'll do that real positive stretch where you go right to the note, instead of waffling around trying to find the note." He sings an example.



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Richard Smith

Finding a Concept



Richard Smith is on the faculty at Musicians Institute. He is currently recording and touring with Richard Elliot, Dan Siegel and with his own group The Richard Smith Unit. He records with the CMG Label.

Producing an album is quite a balancing act. Before all of the decisions regarding music, musicians, studios, recording and touring have been made, the message or statement behind the album must fall into place. With my latest album *Rockin' the Boat*, I have tried to address several of the idioms I've grown fond of here in Los Angeles, Bossa Nova, Jazz, Classical, Hip Hop and Be-Bop have all made an indelible impression on me. My concept developed through addressing these idioms in a cohesive way, and in some cases even mixing the more compatible elements together.

The following example demonstrates the use of a complex jazz harmony fused with a Hip Hop bass and drum feel.

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"It's a more resolute stretch. Plus, steel players will pick multiple notes at once—like a piano technique. And they'll pick *up* instead of across, so it sounds like you're coughing the note out. It's a thicker sound. I prefer that kind of rhythm to just strumming through the chords."

Perilous-looking hand stretches result in chord voicings ringing with close intervals, more like piano chords than stock guitar-chord patterns (piano was Johnson's first instrument, from age five until his teens). "A lot of them *are* piano chords," he says.

TONAL TRICKS

WHILE HE'S NOT exactly an analog purist, Johnson has stuck by many standbys of guitar rigs in the past, and is ever-vigilant in finding new ways of routing his sound. "The world of electronics is intriguing to me. All the components can either work with each other or against each other. When you get that harmony together, it's amazing how you can tweak your own sound, depending on the harmony of the cords and wires and diodes and stuff."

The Fender Strat is his axe of choice—he plays '54 and '58 models—and he also uses a Martin D-28 acoustic guitar. Amp-wise, Johnson mostly goes the Marshall stack route. "I've always liked Marshalls," he says. "I like Boogies and I have a couple of Dumble amps that I like. For a lead sound, my favorite amp is an old Marshall. It's got that warm, woody tone."

In his elaborate effects loop, Johnson leans on such old reliables as a Cry Baby wah-wah, an Echoplex, a Fender tube reverb unit, a Fuzz Face, a t.c. electronic sustainer, an MXR chorus and digital delay and an Ibanez Tube Screamer. He has friends keeping watch at pawn shops for special effects.

Does he have something against the crop of guitar effects from the digital generation? "I can use an Echoplex and it's very musical sounding. It would not be impossible in any sense to make a high-tech '90s effect that could preserve the sound quality in the same way, simply by using unity gain and going in and out of the effect as quickly as possible for the direct signal, with the least amount of tapering, the least amount of bells and whistles and effects on the circuitry—at least with the direct. With everything I seem to try, it may do everything in the world, but it also ruins the natural guitar tone. It leaves it useless for me."

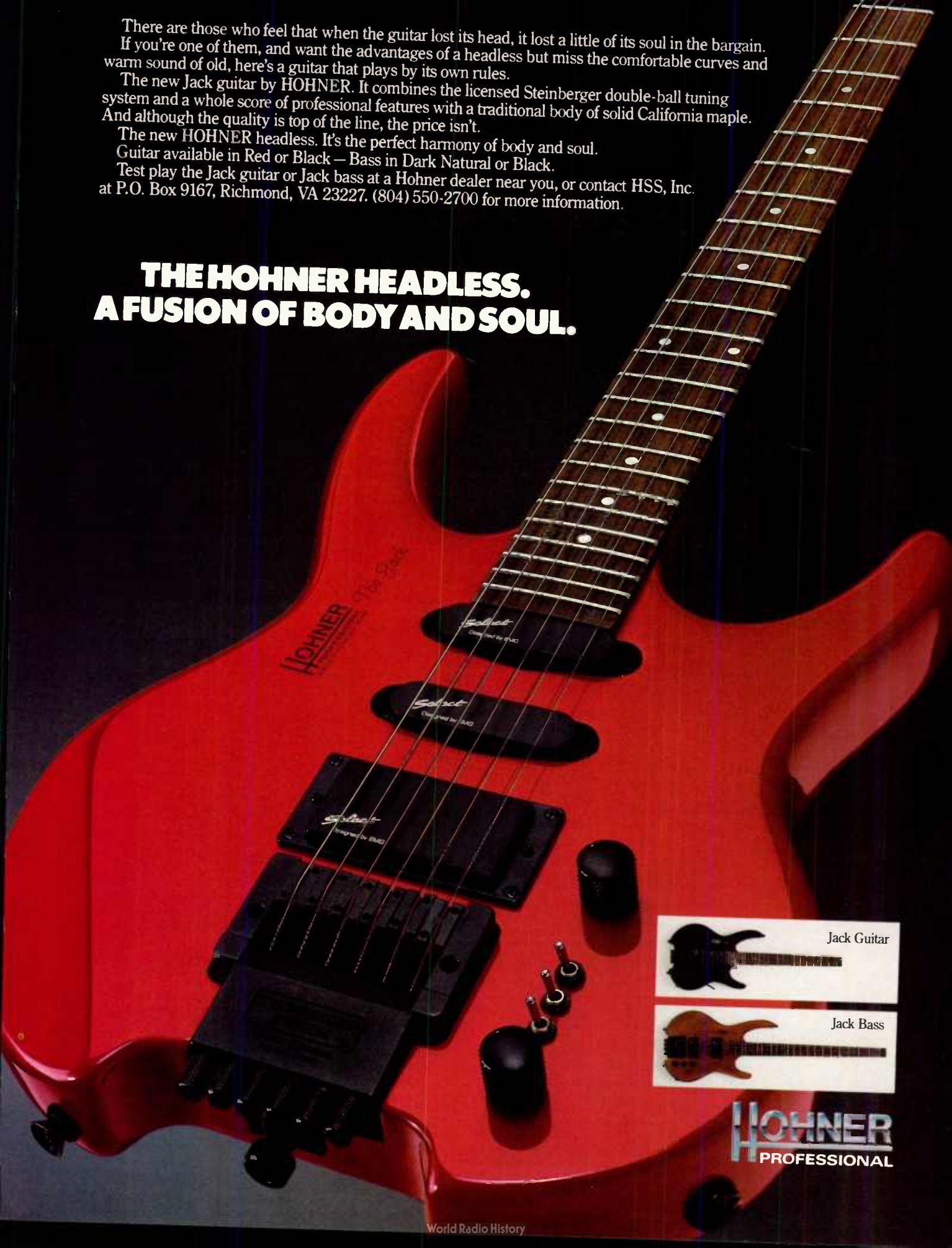
There are those who feel that when the guitar lost its head, it lost a little of its soul in the bargain. If you're one of them, and want the advantages of a headless but miss the comfortable curves and warm sound of old, here's a guitar that plays by its own rules.

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For instance, he might voice an A minor ninth chord as A, B, C, G, A (with the first A nine steps below the B) instead of using the more conventional A, C, G, B pattern.

His string-bending vocabulary is also broad, from loose bluesy bends to tightly controlled half-step bends woven into a rapid scalar run. An ethnic mix informs his playing and his effects choices, especially oriental music. "Beck started a lot of that Eastern-sounding fuzz guitar on the Yardbirds' 'Shapes of Things.' It's such a cool sound, especially when you add a buzzy fuzztone. You can make it sound like a sax from Mecca or something."

Another unusual sound Johnson draws on is a koto-esque effect, as heard on *Tones*' "Bristol Shore." "It's simple," he explains. "You just pick right in front of the fret you're playing, to get a real sharp timbre. It doesn't allow the string vibration you get when you pick it further back. It gives it more of a plucked koto sound. Then you add a sort of quivering vibrato with your left hand."

"There are a bunch of effects that I'm aware of but haven't spent the time to delve into. Take the range of harmonics. There is such an array of harmonics both on the frets and off them, you could play symphonies of songs just with harmonics."

Johnson also often works his way up and down the neck, as opposed to across it. "The big string will sound different than a thin string. Sometimes I want to just keep playing on a certain string; it keeps the tone more in the same proportion."

"I like to listen to stuff other than guitar for ideas. Classical music—Aaron Copland, Stravinsky, Debussy and Ravel. I'm starting to get into the early Miles Davis stuff, *Birth of the Cool*, and Nat King Cole."

Hailed as a modern-day guitar hero, Johnson still feels closer to a bygone era. "The function of the guitar is a bit more specified now, whereas in the past you had to get the whole persona of pop music out of it, because there weren't synthesizers then. You had to get the strange sounds, the rhythm, the lead, and embody the whole omnipotent instrument of pop."

Johnson has a spiritual bent—to hear him tell it, the guitar is more than the hot rod/love thing of instruments. "There's a real closely translated tap from the human spirit into the amplifier," he says. "There aren't a lot of complicated pathways between the two points. It's what excited me to play guitar." M



HAS STANLEY JORDAN LOST THE MAGIC TOUCH?

Tapping prodigy feels the pressure of growing up in public

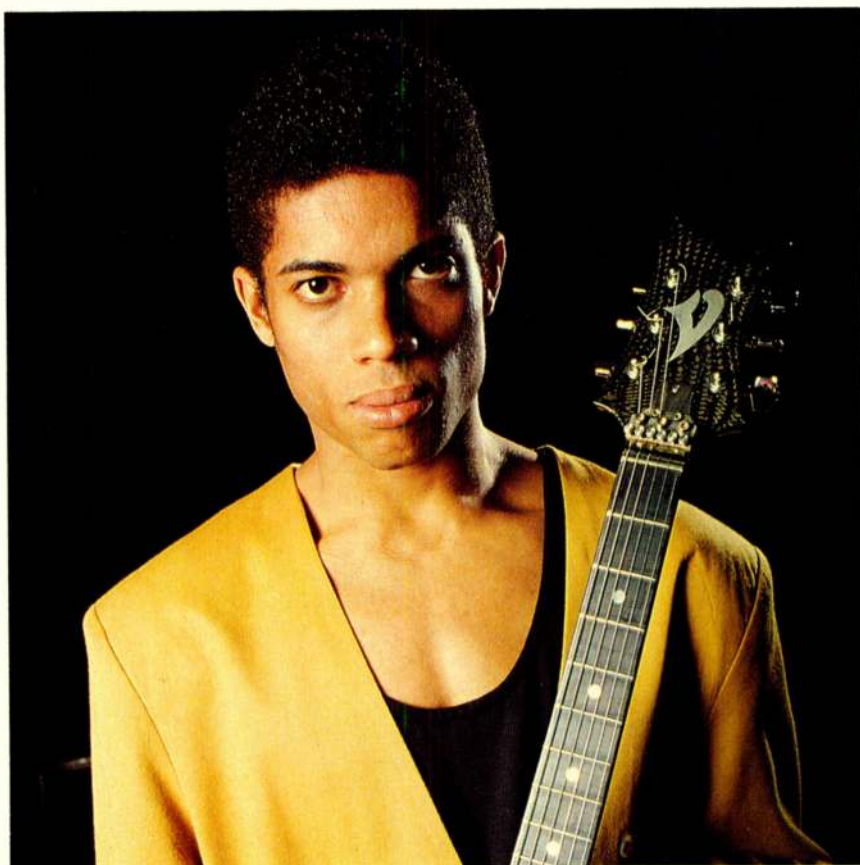
By Tom Moon

WHAT DOES THE MUSIC call for here?

There was a time when Stanley Jordan would have answered that question with a series of furiously hammered guitar runs. Whether appropriate or not, their daunting speed and dexterity commanded attention. The music hardly mattered—one magic touch fit all.

Now, a few years later, 31-year-old Jordan is sitting in his cluttered Brooklyn music room forging a more thoughtful

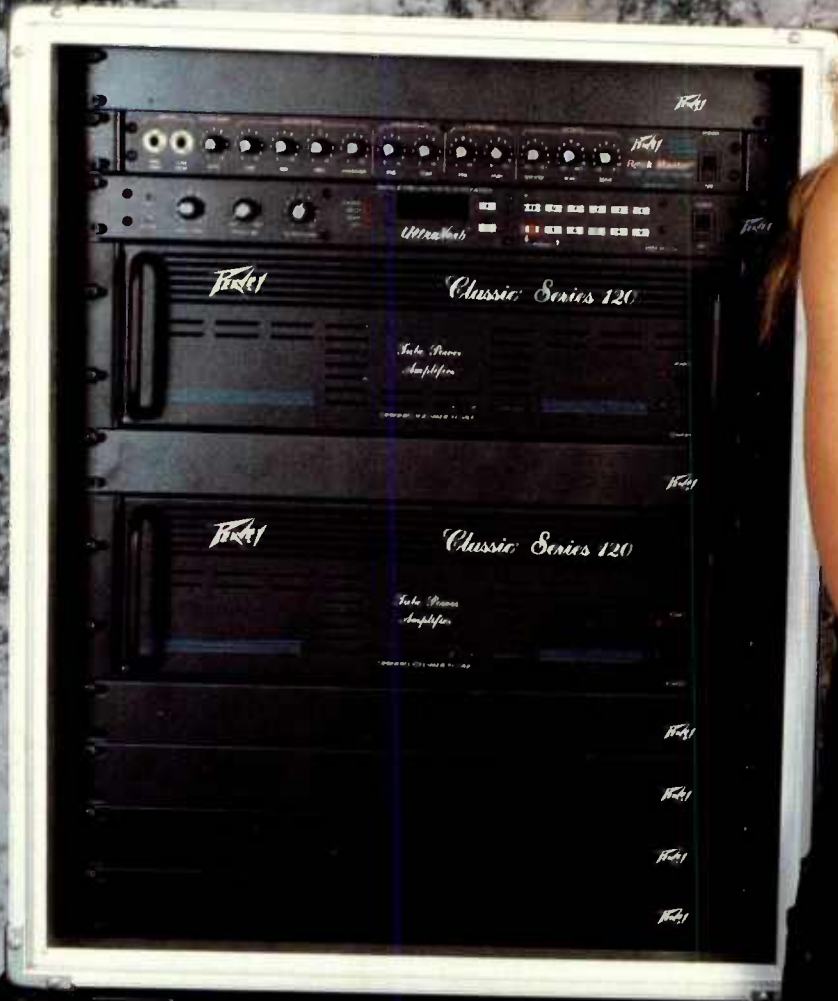
answer. Or trying to. The guitar in his hands is unamplified, but every note is audible. He is playing along with software of his own design, demonstrating how the portable Macintosh computer, perched delicately atop a road case, can act as a practicing coach. A repeating riff emanates from the Mac's speaker as Jordan interprets the grid on the screen, explaining that these cues will move him through all 12 keys. They force him to examine chord/scale relationships and more: In one pass, he'll play in two or three different tempi over a number of different rhythms, using a range



Andy Timmons

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"A while ago I mapped out how I think about music—my philosophy, basically," Jordan says, in a vocal tone that wavers between childlike wonder and computer-nerdspeak. "I realized there are so many things I need to work on, and I would never have enough time to do all of them. So the problem was how to make my practice time more efficient. When I started looking at the way I practice, it was obvious that I had been separating all the components of music, and when you make music, you do all of them at once. So I started practicing like that.

"The software forces you to do that. It throws out challenges. It'll tell me to play something with certain characteristics, and give me a certain amount of freedom to do it. The computer will hit back with something similar to what you've been working on, testing you. It's practicing on a high level: You take a phrase, you play it like a mantra, over and over until you get deeper into it. You get to the point where you feel the whole experience of playing it right—not just the sound, but also the feeling, all of the variables."

If this methodical woodshedding hasn't changed Jordan's playing overnight, it's given him a fresh outlook on music. "Anti-technique," he calls it—something akin to playing what the music calls for rather than what the ego wants to hear the fingers do. Jordan knows now what he didn't know when his major-label debut, *Magic Touch*, rode the top of the *Billboard* jazz chart for 51 weeks during 1985–86: That improvisation depends not so much on what you say, but how you say it. That a gimmick—even something as developed as his touch-tapping technique, in which the guitar fretboard is treated like a keyboard—doesn't guarantee a career.

Jordan's success has continued—his fourth album, *Cornucopia*, has sold respectably, and a trio tour featuring Jordan's latest innovation, a two-guitar setup, has drawn appreciative crowds in the U.S. and Europe. But Jordan still considers himself a student, and with good reason. He's the flip side of the now-familiar jazz prodigy tale. Unlike Wynton Marsalis, who appeared assured and musically prepared at every turn, Jordan has struggled and stumbled since his initial burst of attention. He's been inconsistent in the studio. He's been too flashy live. He's had to endure the

humbling experience of learning while in the limelight. He got there; now he must earn the right to stay.

Jordan's music room holds plenty of evidence of on-the-job study. There's the computer, a battery of synthesizers and a stack of books on computer programming; newspaper and magazine reviews are thumb-tacked onto a bulletin board. Never a favorite of the jazz press, Jordan understands that his career has been defined by criticism. He says he's learned things from some of the critics, but seems anxious to answer them anyway.

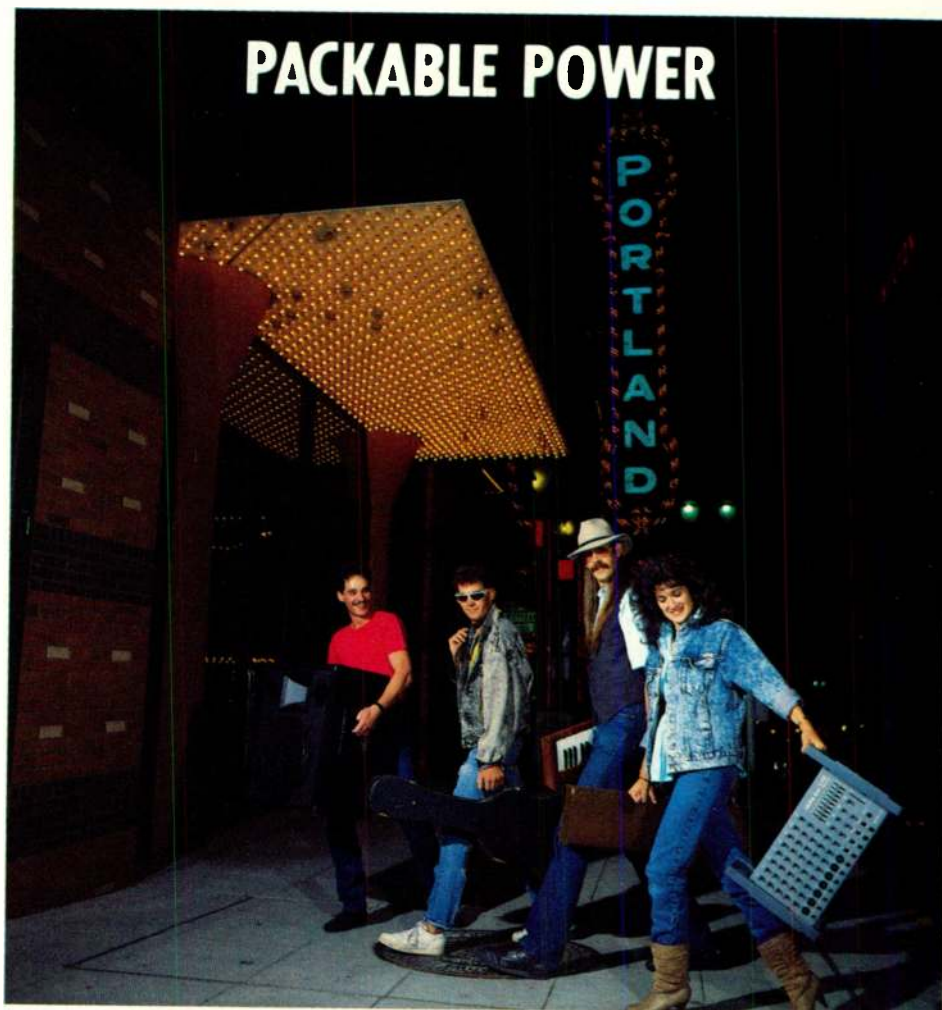
We start with the charge that his repertoire is too diverse, his reworkings of pop tunes too rudimentary for the jazz audience. "I'm trying to make a point to the older generation that these are standards, too. And at the same time, I want to reach the people who were brought up on these songs and let them know that because they're great songs, they can be interpreted in a number of different ways."

What about reviewers' claims that he's a wildly erratic live performer? "During a lot

TAPPER'S DELIGHT

STANLEY JORDAN has been working with Casio on a MIDI synth guitar designed specifically for the tap technique. It's called the PG-380, and Jordan recently received his second custom version, which he says has been modified to reflect some of his suggestions. "The most amazing thing they did is in the realm of figuring out what is a mistake. If I hit a note on some fret, and then release my finger, I don't get the open-string note. But if I want open string I can get it."

Jordan also uses the Vigier Arpege guitar and a Travis Bean. His synth modules come from Casio (V2-8M) and Korg (M1), and he uses a Lexicon PCM-70 and a Yamaha SPX90 multieffects processor. MIDI gear (mute and patch bay) comes from J.L. Cooper. The Rane ME 15 and ME 30 are his graphic equalizers of choice, and pedals include the Boss Digital Delay and Metalizer, and four Ernie Ball volume pedals. He plays Ernie Ball .010 strings on his Bean guitar and Ernie Ball .009s on his Arpege, and he's experimenting with strings from a new company, D.R. On his current tour Jordan's playing rental amps; he prefers the MESA/Boogie Mark III.



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of the '80s, I had struggles with getting my life together. Things weren't so simple all the time, being responsible for myself. I went through traumatic changes that required time to adjust, and I didn't give myself time. I did a lot of concerts I didn't feel that happy about. For whatever reason, I wasn't at my best level. I'm pretty honest about that stuff."

What about *Flying Home*, the soundly panned pop-jazz effort from 1988? "I feel that the album was misunderstood. People listened to the beats, which are very basic, and

didn't notice that the guitar was doing some very innovative things. I wanted to be a viable player in the pop world, but I didn't want *Flying Home* to be just another record. I tried to make every moment unique instead of cycling around on a vamp all the time."

And critics who nag about his limits as a player? "Before that record, people said I couldn't play with a pick. So I did 'Can't Sit Down,' which was coming out of the James Brown funky-picking school. These are the subtleties the jazz audience sometimes misses. I used to think the jazz audience

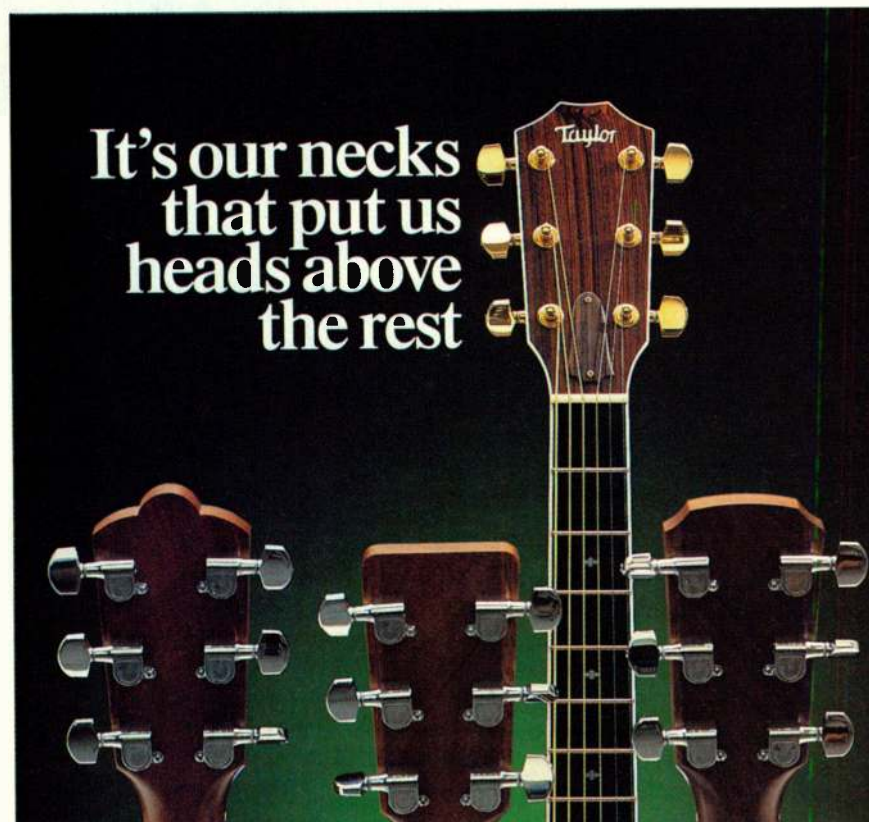
was more sophisticated than any audience, but I found they are less sophisticated in some ways."

Particularly when it comes to his newfound understatement, says Jordan. After years spent studying bebop harmony, the guitarist realized that while bop provided him with necessary tools, it wasn't his language. "I don't want to see the entire jazz vocabulary built on bebop. In my playing, I'm trying to get more out of fewer notes, and I discovered with *Flying Home* that if you take fewer notes, it makes the web of relationships between the notes more interesting, more complex. That type of sophistication is part of jazz history, too. I mean, Ben Webster knew about that."

On record and in live performance, Jordan is trying to prove that he, too, understands that. He has replaced his blazing, scene-stealing runs with simpler meditations, and is content to sit back and savor his liquid sound as it skims a series of long tones. Art Tatum is still an inspiration—Jordan does a baroque solo version of "Willow Weep for Me" on *Cornucopia*—but so are Webster, Kenny Burrell and any number of groove players.

On "Still Got the Blues," one of the live selections from *Cornucopia*, Jordan can be heard offering blues testimonial using his MIDI guitar not only for the traditional sound, but for a few choruses of rich, reedy Hammond organ as well. Though they don't give Jimmy Smith cause to lose sleep, these choruses show Jordan can create and sustain a tense rhythmic pocket—a skill he hasn't always communicated on record. "I've really been working on putting expression into the music, and elaborating on the feeling of the song when I improvise. The organ thing was another way to do that. Different styles of music are like different languages, but even the different languages are trying to say the same thing. I may start off a run using a harmonic minor scale straight out of Bach, then go into a blues riff to end it. Not because I want someone to analyze it, or be impressed by the change in style, but because I hear it that way."

The album was recorded over a long period, Jordan says, in order for him to capture whatever he was studying at the time. He spent months just working on stream-of-consciousness playing, and the result is the title track. He had been working on his straight-ahead jazz playing for a while by the time of the concert featuring Charnett



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Moffett, Jeff Watts and Kenny Kirkland—from which “Impressions” and the blues are taken.

He scoffs at the suggestion that the issue of commercial viability colored the choice of *Cornucopia*'s material—after all, the title track is a 15-minute solo guitar noodlefest (and that's the shorter, cassette version).

“I don't know what to do about style categories. Sometimes I think every song should get its own category. Because they are different goals, the questions of art and

commerce are sometimes going to be in agreement, sometimes not. It's an optimization problem, how to get the best out of all the things that are important to you. If you chart my history, you find that my choices are usually based on what I'm trying to develop. So education is the most important thing, and the other things, the other considerations, have to support *that*.

“It takes years to develop great music,” Jordan says. “And I intend to be making music years from now. I'm in no hurry.”

that you can stick to, it's very helpful.

“What do I practice? It changes. Today's list says, ‘Transcribe Robben Ford solo.’ I got hold of an old tape with Robben and [his father] Charles playing. I practice Bach transcriptions; there are some for guitar, or else you can play the violin sonatas the way they are. I get together a lot with a bass player and [guitarist] Wayne Krantz and just shed, trade choruses and approaches to soloing. I'll take the melody of a tune and play it all over the neck, and move it through every octave: That way I practice the whole neck, because with the guitar you sort of gravitate toward areas, and if you want fluent playing you have to play the whole neck vertically and horizontally.

“My old Berklee teacher Charlie Banacos, who I'm studying with privately again, sends me different things to do. Right now he's got me practicing scales and taking the triads out of those scales and applying them over hybrid chords and diminished chords as well. I've been working on superimposing harmonies, like Miles and Coltrane did. ‘Phoenix’ and ‘Sandbox’ both have open sections for just that. So practicing makes my writing more complicated, too.”

Stern's lyrical feel and harmonic palette had an early genesis. Born in Munich



LENI STERN'S EGALITARIAN JAZZ

Putting the ensemble spirit back into improvisation

By Gene Santoro

HE ALWAYS KNOWS where the center of the action is,” laughs Leni Stern. Her cat, Jimi Hendrix, son of Bill Frisell's cat, has wrapped himself around my tape recorder. We're sitting in her practice room, surrounded by stereo equipment, a four-track, amps, guitars, patch cords, sheet music, tapes and a box with 25 CDs of her new album, *Closer to the Light* (enja).

A writer of strong tunes, as a bandleader Stern skips the extended-solo-by-a-frontman routine. She prefers an ensemble approach that weaves lines of more or less equal importance in and out of the mix. “I guess I picked that up from Bill,” she says of Frisell, her first guitar teacher at Berklee and a member of her first quartet. “It's almost like group improvisation: your time to shine doesn't start with a solo, but when the tune starts. Actors think that way. Each piece is conceived as a whole, with cues written in for different sections. We're interested in creating textures; that's something that can be our sound. It's a way to deal with music that's coming back.”

It's also an approach that emphasizes Stern's guitar strength—her love of melody and delicate shading. “I think of taking a solo the old-fashioned way: I try to tell a story, create a feeling, develop a motif. First thing I do every day is sit down and prac-

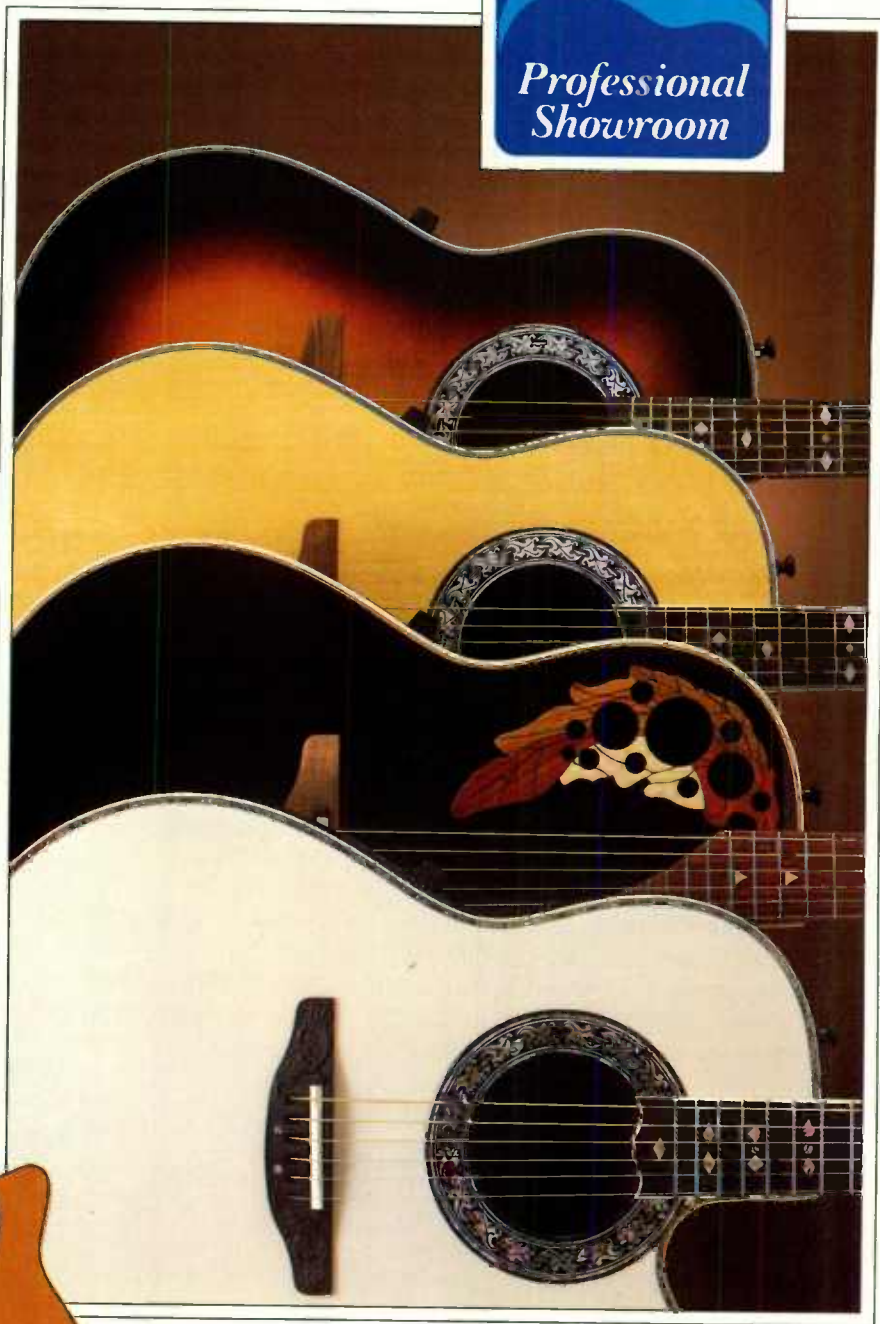
tice. I make a list of the things I want to work on. I try to make my practicing creative, so that it doesn't get boring. The hardest thing about practicing is the start. But when you have a certain routine set



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thirtysomething years ago, she studied classical piano from age six to 17. But when she was 11, she found her mother's old nylon-string acoustic guitar in the attic. It counterbalanced her keyboard regimentation. "I started playing the guitar because I liked the sound of it—stupid answer, right? I loved the Beatles; I loved Eric Clapton and Cream; I loved Johnny Winter. So I kept the guitar separate: I only took classical lessons for a year, then weaseled out of them and just learned to play folk songs. I should've stuck with that. I could've been the new Suzanne Vega," she laughs. Some promoters still assume when she shows up for gigs that, because she's a woman, she must be a singer.

"There were no role models for a woman who just wanted to play the guitar," she continues, "so I decided to become an actress." By the mid-1970s she was a regular on a German sitcom. She was also writing incidental music for theater and film. "That's why I went to Berklee," is how she explains her 1977 move. "I thought it would be a good idea to find out just what Bernard Herrmann was really up to."

Leni wound up in Boston for three years, studying theory and improvisation with Charlie Banacos ("I still send him my stuff to critique with a note like 'Help!,'" she says) and guitar with Bill Frisell. It was Frisell who introduced her to her future husband, guitarist Mike Stern: "I asked Bill to show me some rock stuff, and so he took me to this club where Mike was playing." Not long after the two were married, Mike got the call from Miles Davis and in 1980 the Sterns headed to New York, home base ever since.

While Mike was gigging with Miles, Leni was playing at local clubs and putting together a powerhouse band—Frisell, drummer Paul Motian and bassist Harvie Swartz. According to Stern, "One of my classical-composition teachers in Germany had told me, 'If you want to hear the music you compose, you have to have your own orchestra.' I guess I've always considered myself a composer first, although it's getting more and more balanced between that and playing. But the communication you develop from playing with a regular group of people was really important to me from the beginning. It's another reason my writing's becoming more complicated. When you have a steady band you can write more complex material and [con't on page 129]

PERFORMANCE OF THE MONTH

MILTON NASCIMENTO WAYNE SHORTER

By Tom Moon

AT THE NEW YORK JVC Jazz Festival's "Native Dancer Revisited" show in late June, Milton Nascimento finished singing the stately folk melody "Ponte de Areia," as though yawning contentedly through his carefree, liquid falsetto. Looking to build on the feeling, he turned to Wayne Shorter and beamed a broad smile that was part cue, part plea.

Shorter did not immediately bring the soprano saxophone to his lips to help. Instead, he returned the smile, savoring a moment he was making increasingly tense. When he did play, his petulant, baroque runs darkened the mood of fragile resolve Nascimento had so elegantly created. The two voices knotted together, and the charged temperament of their 15-year occasional partnership had been reaffirmed.


On 1975's *Native Dancer*, the two created an interactive sound that made every other Brazil-meets-jazz attempt of its day seem lukewarm. Here was a voice capable of evoking human experience at its most triumphant peaks and trembling moments of doubt, interacting with a saxophonist who can find the emotional hotspots of a song and make them even hotter, more significant.

Moments of musical confrontation like that one on "Ponte de Areia" made the concert reunion vibrant and alive, if not picture-perfect (Shorter struggled for three songs with a faulty clip-on mike). Shorter was clearly the

sideman—the *Native Dancer* material at Avery Fisher Hall was all Nascimento's. That hardly mattered: The saxophonist visibly enjoyed stirring up Nascimento's smooth incantations with quirky flights of fancy. The show offered a rare opportunity to watch the increasingly pop-oriented Nascimento improvise: Reacting to Shorter's whims, the singer would follow him with childlike yelps, or with blues asides hurled into otherwise carefully constructed phrasing. During the vocal passages, Shorter gave the enthusiastic audience—many singing along with Nascimento's wordless melodies—the chance to watch an accompaniment genius at work.

Before bringing out Shorter, Nascimento played a 10-song set that highlighted his recent pop-funk as well as the contemplative, minor-key ballads that



remain his strong suit. As lovely as these were, Nascimento shifted into high gear when Shorter hit the stage: The straightforward folk melodies of "Miracle of the Fishes" and "From the Lonely Afternoons" were stated and restated until they rang with a simple, almost symphonic significance. As Nascimento said the day after the show, "When Wayne is playing, I feel as if it is my own voice singing. We are of the same spirit." 

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TUCK ADDRESS: ALL HANDS ON DECK

The guitar octopus from Tuck & Patti always lands on his feet

By Matt Resnicoff

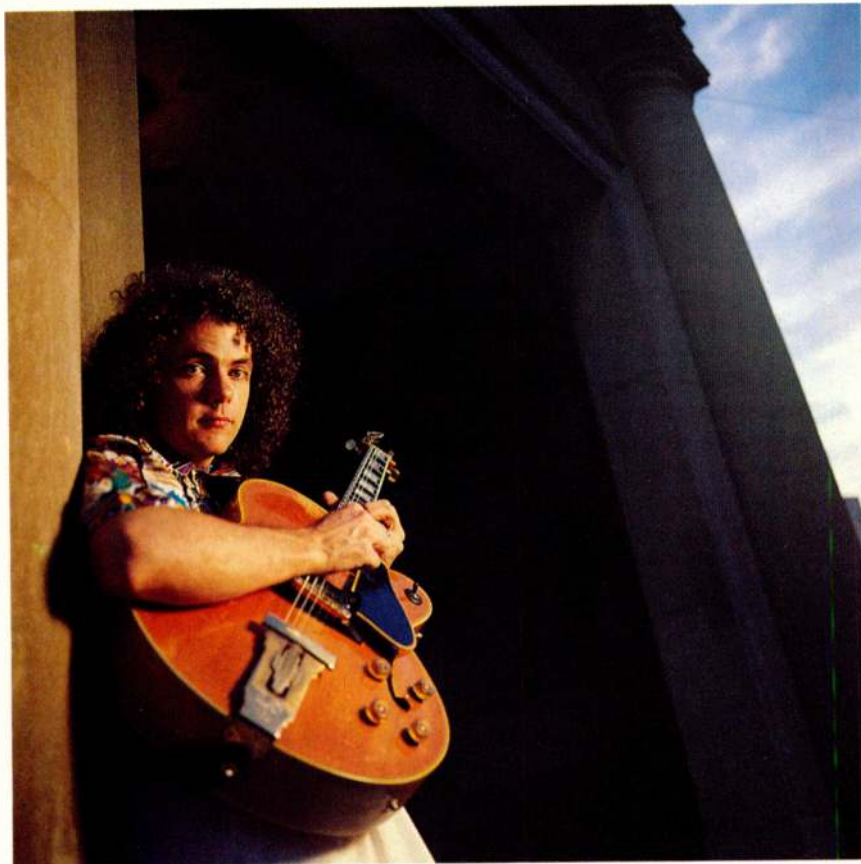
THAT'S TUCK ADDRESS onstage, gaze locked on his wife Patti as she puts a thick gospel husk to a sprawling scat. For over three minutes the duo has been vamping over a solo guitar barrage that pulls in a bit of Wes and Jimi, a dash of Michael Hedges, a sprig of Chuck Rainey, tosses in some Art Tatum for kicks and spreads it liberally across a funky groove. His slight, shuddering frame supports a fat old jazz box; the lines don't stop coming, and a wide-eyed expression on Tuck's boyish face seems to say, "Jeez, am I really doing all this?"

So where's the surprise, anyway? This is a guy who took up guitar just because he wanted to shut up the kid playing an atrocious "In-a-Gadda-da-Vida" across the street, who calls a stint with the Gap Band his most rewarding musical encounter, and is the probably the wildest musician since fellow-Okie Hedges to be shortsightedly tossed off as a new age snooze merchant. But as devastating as his spot-on torrents can be—his new solo album is *Reckless Precision*—they never stray from the musical task at hand. He just happened to first hear George Benson, Miles, Wes and Jimi Hen-

drix all on the same day; if that won't turn you into a four-headed guitar monster, nothing will.

Tuck hears music on a level more compositionally natural than the format of the guitar would seem to allow. The way he grafts seemingly opposing basslines and dense comping to scattered single-note lines without compromising the integrity or tone of each part often makes him sound like several really good guitarists playing at once. A Stanford alumnus who forsook math for music, he's always seeking ways to balance the equation. "A few years ago," he says, "I would have been hearing a band: hearing the guitar part, hearing the bass part. But I've been playing so much now that when I hear music, the whole orchestra is guitars. We did a concert with Take 6, an incredible a cappella group. They have unbelievable harmonies with all these moving lines in the middle, and I'd be fingering the changes as they went by, figuring out how I would execute the moving lines, hearing what the notes would be if I could get to them. But that process happens so fast that I immediately translate everything back to the guitar. It's possible to have both experiences at the same time: of appreciating something, but then running it through yourself. For me, that's not a major creative issue, because I've already restricted myself to a guitar without any processing. Actually," he adds with a guilty smirk, "a guitar without any processing and a voice without any processing. That's the other note in the chord."

That chord is familiar to a rather large contemporary jazz audience through *Tears of Joy* and *Love Warriors*, albums which kept Tuck and Patti in heavy video rotation and on the road for most of the past year. The duo keeps a healthy platform of tunes, including sweetly rendered covers of those by everyone from Rodgers and Hart to Hendrix, but most of their set is a function of almost telepathic ad-libbing. Tuck's solo arrangement of Wes Montgomery's "Up and At It" is a head-spinning showcase of part-upon-part mastery, while his Joycean "Grooves of Joy" caroms from blues-rock and funk to the sort of precise lines that probably grew out of an early tendency to exaggerate his articulations on a stubborn, poorly adjusted Mosrite that simply refused to put out—one of those rare cases when it was actually the guitar's fault. The stabilizing effect that had on his phrasing kept him





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from becoming a properly sloppy rock player, but he still finds ways to maintain rough edges on his usually crystalline execution.

"My ideas often change because I simply can't execute them in the first place," he explains. "It's sometimes interesting to just sit back without the guitar, suspend everything and listen quietly to what music comes to me in my head—it'll be all this unfathomable music that I couldn't possibly play. Those ideas come while I'm actually in the middle of a performance, although they go through some kind of filter, like they get lessened in priority. But they'll still get through; I've caught myself too many times reaching for a harmonic at the 11th fret because I hear an E flat harmonic and want it so bad even though I know it isn't there. Or I'll stretch to reach a chord because I hear the voicing, knowing my hand's not big enough to get there, and I'll miss one note by a half-step."

Tuck's ongoing struggle is to de-quantize his parts, to give rhythmic independence to, say, a bassline, in relation to all its surrounding voices. "I'd love to be able to drag

one part and rush another and have it sync up later," he says. "Songs that have rigid

basslines can still be varied to the point where there's tremendous freedom. Tommy Crook, the player that started me out and has been a real hero, plays solo with a drum machine so he can really lay back and catch up later, but keep the bass together right in time. That's much more flexible and realistic. I work on that, especially because my ideal role is not solo guitar anyway—it's really accompaniment. Patti seems to be just completely free. Plus she's got the perfect instrument, and that's quite a challenge for me to match. I might answer her, or do the same thing she did but with a different rhythm, or not answer the notes at all, but just answer rhythmically."

Since he's predominantly a fingerstylist, Tuck has begun applying the same declaration of independence to his right-hand approach, working on having both upstrokes and downstrokes interchangeably on and off the beat with his first and second fingers, in a manner very few players have been successful at. "We think of cats as always landing on their feet, and I'd like to get that kind of [con't on page 129]

TUCK'S PLUCKS

IT'S A NICE OLD 1953 Gibson L-5 with one Bartolini pickup and a flat Carrotron buffer preamp that changes the impedance and boosts the signal. "It's a clean wiring," TUCK says, "for a real clean signal path inside the guitar: No tone controls, only one pickup, no switch—just a gain knob for the preamp, and a volume control. Everything that would garbage up the signal path is out of there. That goes into a volume pedal and straight into the board. Live, it gets patched through a White third-octave equalizer, which is set once and checked every six months to make sure it hasn't changed. Without EQ, it would sound as bad as guitars always sound when you run them direct." Those Ernie Ball Strings sure don't hurt, either.

Tuck and Patti use no speakers; onstage and in the studio they check each other out with custom-made Micromonitor headphones.

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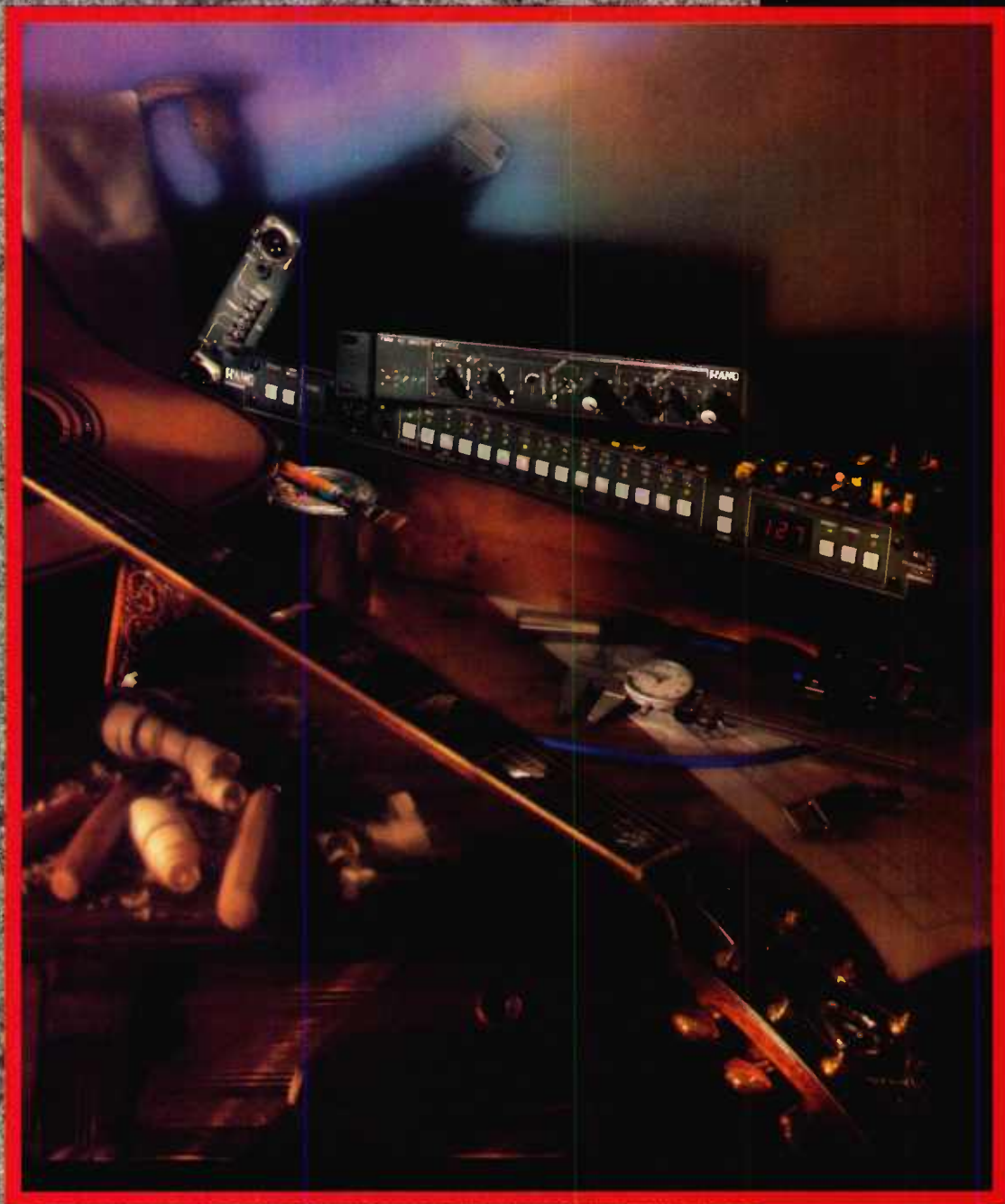
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A LITTLE LIFE IS BETTER THAN NONE, RIGHT?

Peavey provides stiff competition, but summer NAMM shows a few gems

By Alan di Perna

NO, NO, THE RUMORS are all false. Hartley Peavey most certainly did *not* leap up on a picnic table at Peavey's big twenty-fifth anniversary celebration and lead the crowd in a spirited variation on Edwin Starr's 1970 hit.

"NAMM, un-hunh....
What is it good for?
Absolutely nothin'!"

But even if he had, the sentiment wouldn't have been entirely alien. It's no secret that musical instrument manufacturers are questioning the need to have a sum-

mer NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants) show. For many of them, the big winter expo in Anaheim is enough. Ensoniq was the first to defy NAMM back in '88, when they dropped out of both the summer and winter shows. And in a sense, Peavey's anniversary blast down in Meridian, Mississippi was a sort of Anti-NAMM, held just prior to the real NAMM, complete with its own equipment expo (all Peavey gear, natch) and a big-name concert headlined by Kenny Loggins. Okay, so NAMM executive vice president Larry Linkin *was* on hand to lend official credence to the pro-

ceedings (jeepers, the governor of Mississippi even turned up). The message was still clear, especially since the actual summer NAMM show was the Dud of All Time. Why mince words? The manufacturers stayed away in droves.

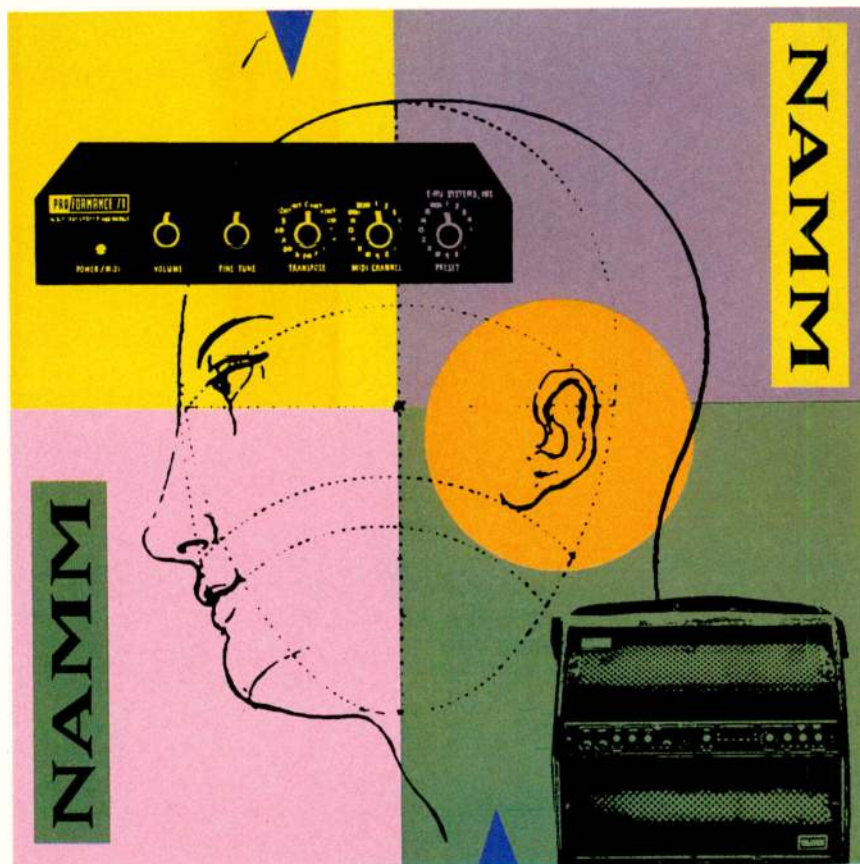
What does all this industry politrix mean to the average musician? Next to nothing, of course. The player's only stake in NAMM is in the new gear, and how soon it's going to make his/her current stuff obsolete. And while nobody can pretend this NAMM was any equipment orgy, there were a few thrills.

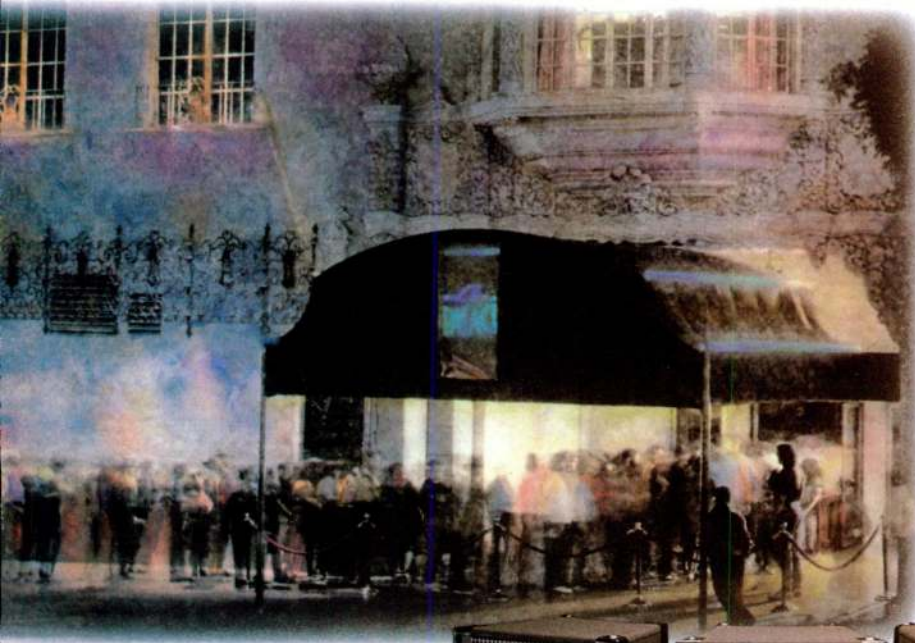
Like Fender's new HMT Tele. Have you heard about the body cavity thing yet? Sounds cadaverously gruesome, but it's the next big wave in guitar design: a kind of crossbreed between solidbodies and hollowbodies. The HMT Tele is among the first mass-production instruments to implement this idea. There's a small cavity beneath an F-hole: large enough to enrich the tone, but small enough not to be a feedback problem. And make no mistake, the HMT is a heavy metal guitar—the first Fender to have one of those Jacksonish "hockey-stick" headstocks. Despite the body cavity, the area beneath the bridge is rock-solid, so the guitar has no problem supporting a Floyd.

In a more traditional vein, there was also Fender's brand-new Robert Cray Strat. The axe is going to be made in the USA, at Fender's custom shop. Basically, it's a '50s design, with pickups and neck hewn specifically to the Strong Persuader's own specs. There was also a prototype Jeff Beck Strat with Fender Lace Sensors. And an affordable (\$880), Japanese-made version of Fender's Yngwie Malmsteen model, complete with scalloped fretboard and the whole nine Teutonic Neoclassical yards. Further probing revealed that Fender is reissuing the '83 Vibroverb amp and that they've recently picked up distribution on a line of products from Germany's No.-1 of Hamburg.

Simplified control of guitar rigs! Just the item to keep somnambulistic NAMMsters from nodding off. Ever the technoid, I switched on my MIDI detector and it instantly zeroed in on the new ART X-11 MIDI Foot Controller, which lets you program and store 128 different configurations for your MIDI effects setup. Also

Top left: Emu's new Proformance/1 stashes 16-bit piano samples in a compact half-rack box for a compact price; lower right: Trace Elliot's acoustic guitar amp comes in mono (the TA100) and stereo (the TA200S) versions with five-inch speakers ideal for the acoustic's range.





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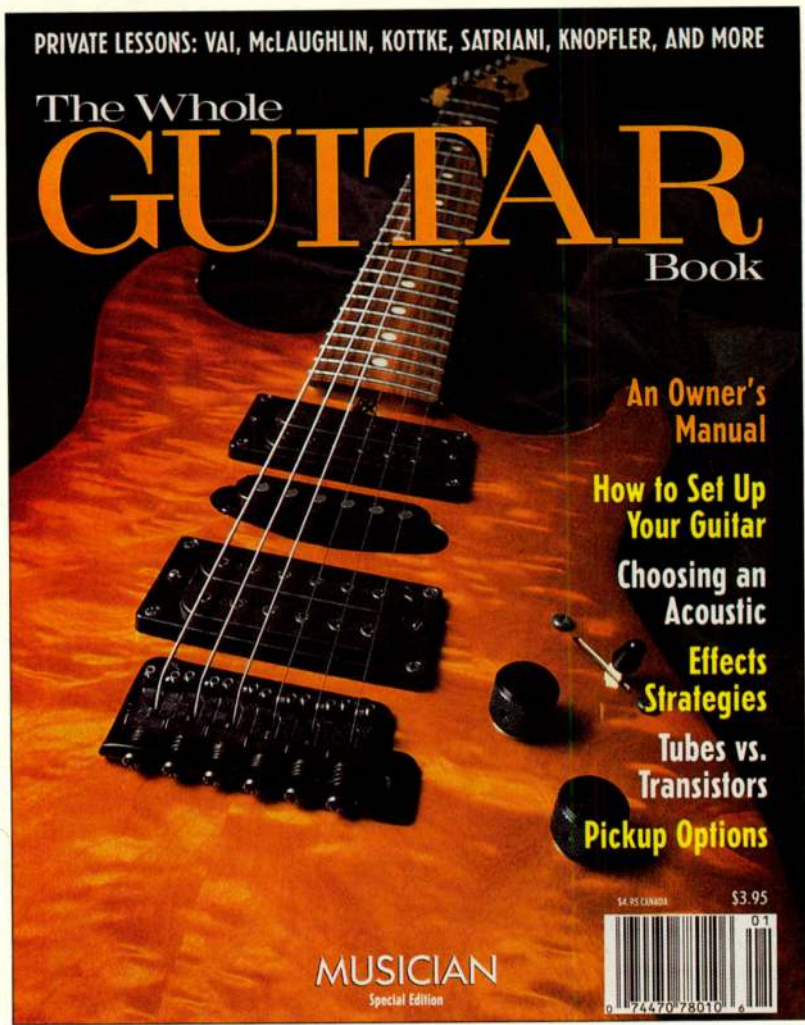
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quite impressive was the ART MDC 2001: one box that satisfies all six essential signal-conditioning needs—compression, limiting, de-essing, exciting, expanding and gating. It's stereo, too, so you only need one to process a whole stereo mix. The other new ART job is the Power Plant, the latest in what seems a growing series of solid-state amps designed to imitate tubes so accurately you'll swear you can smell the metal elements heating up.

If this NAMM was a sleeper, it wasn't due to any lack of wattage. Laney was showing a new 50W

combo guitar amp, the A5012, which is more compact but no less mighty than its predecessor. Dean Markley has a new 100W combo, the DMC-80 with chorus and a new "Drive Voicing Module" for fine-tuning crank sounds. Then there was Hiwatt, the British-born amplification giant that has recently completed a relocation to Buffalo, New York. Their whole revamped line was on hand, including the 2000 Series: heads and cabs, combos and rack-mount preamp/power amps. And let's welcome a new member to the Society of Tube Monsters: the 100W Thunderfunk 100LS.

But the biggest jolt in amplification proved to have nothing to do with power chords or crunch sounds. It was Trace Elliot's new acoustic guitar amp. Interesting design concept—seems they discovered that five-inch speakers are ideally suited to the acoustic guitar's frequency range. So the mono version of the amp (the TA100) has four fives and the stereo version (the TA200S) has eight, with the amplifier controls located at the center of the front grille area in both cases. There's a "Dynamic Correction" scheme that optimizes the speaker movement for reproducing acoustic guitar frequencies. An Alesis reverb chip comes built in the stereo model; you can get the mono model with or without the chip.

When it comes to synths and MIDI gear, old June NAMM was hardly the techno daz-

zler she'd been in past years. But the dear thing still had a few kicks left in her, like Emu's new Proformance/1. What a concept! A slew of great, stereo, 16-bit piano samples in a little half-rack box for an even more compact price of \$499. And for just a hundred bucks more, there's the Proformance/1+, which adds electric piano, organ, vibes and several bass sounds to the Proformance/1's storehouse of classic grand piano, rock piano, honky-tonk and other pianistic essentials.

Then there was Yamaha's new

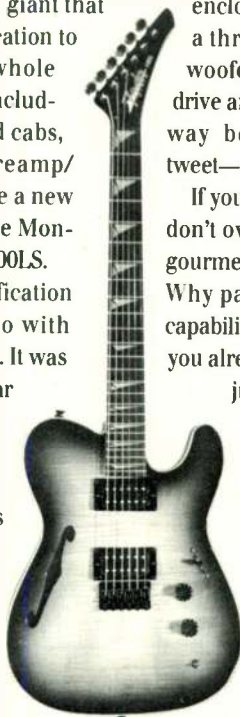
TG77, the rack-mount version of the company's hot new SY77 keyboard synth. Further exploration of Yamaha country turned up a mid-priced entry to the killer APX electro-acoustic series, a new affordable Pacifica electric and the Club Series II speaker enclosures: five models ranging from a three-way system with a 15-inch woofer, 6-and-a-half-inch midrange drive and compression tweeter to a two-way box with one 10-inch and a tweet—all in the \$300-\$400 price range.

If you're cruising for new tech trends, don't overlook the percussion module: gourmet drum sounds and nothing else. Why pay for the song-programming capabilities of a regular drum machine if you already have a sequencer? Or if you just need the sounds for live playing with pads? Kawai chose summer NAMM to unveil their contribution to this genre, the XD-5 Percussion Module. Essentially, it's a Kawai K4 tone module—loaded with drum sounds instead of synth sounds, of course. And they've bumped the sampling rate of those sounds up to 44.1

kHz. Since the thing is a synthesizer, you can take any of the basic drum sounds and filter it, modulate it...do anything you can do with a K4. There are six individual outputs, plus stereo outs, all for \$895. Kawai's M16 data mixer is pretty slick too: 16 faders (plus a master) that can be assigned to control MIDI volume or velocity for each of MIDI's 16 chan- [con'td on page 129]



Yamaha's Club Series II loudspeakers: (above) 2- and 3-way systems in the \$300-\$400 price range; Fender's HMT Tele (below): Is it a solid- or hollowbody?



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WE COME NOT TO BURY THE TUBE AMP

...but to buy spare parts from the communists

By J.D. Considine

SINCE THE RISE of *perestroika* and the fall of the Berlin Wall, things have been tough for commie bashers. Once they saw Reds under every bed; now, they'd be lucky to find more than a dozen in the entire Eastern Bloc. Where's a guy look to find communist infiltrators these days?

Have you checked a tube amp lately?

You won't hear William F. Buckley beefing about it, but virtually every tube amp on the market today uses tubes made in either the Soviet Union or China.

"In 1986, both GE and Sylvania an-

nounced that they were going out of the tube business, mainly because the U.S. Government had stopped all its purchases of tubes," explains Steve Grom, vice president of marketing at Fender. "The government had been the major purchaser of tubes for the last 20 years, and I guess they finally got to the point where they have a 300-year supply."

Like a number of other companies, Fender bought what it could before the shutdown. "We even, for about an hour, considered buying some of the tube-manufacturing equipment, but we realized that

with the kind of volume their factories were capable of, we could supply enough tubes for the entire music business in about two weeks." He laughs. "So who do you sell the rest to?"

That was the same question GE and Sylvania asked. Tube-based circuitry, though dear to musicians for its warmth and musicality, is strictly horse-and-buggy stuff as far as the electronics industry is concerned; why waste electricity on such relics when semiconductors and microchips offer far more power and efficiency?

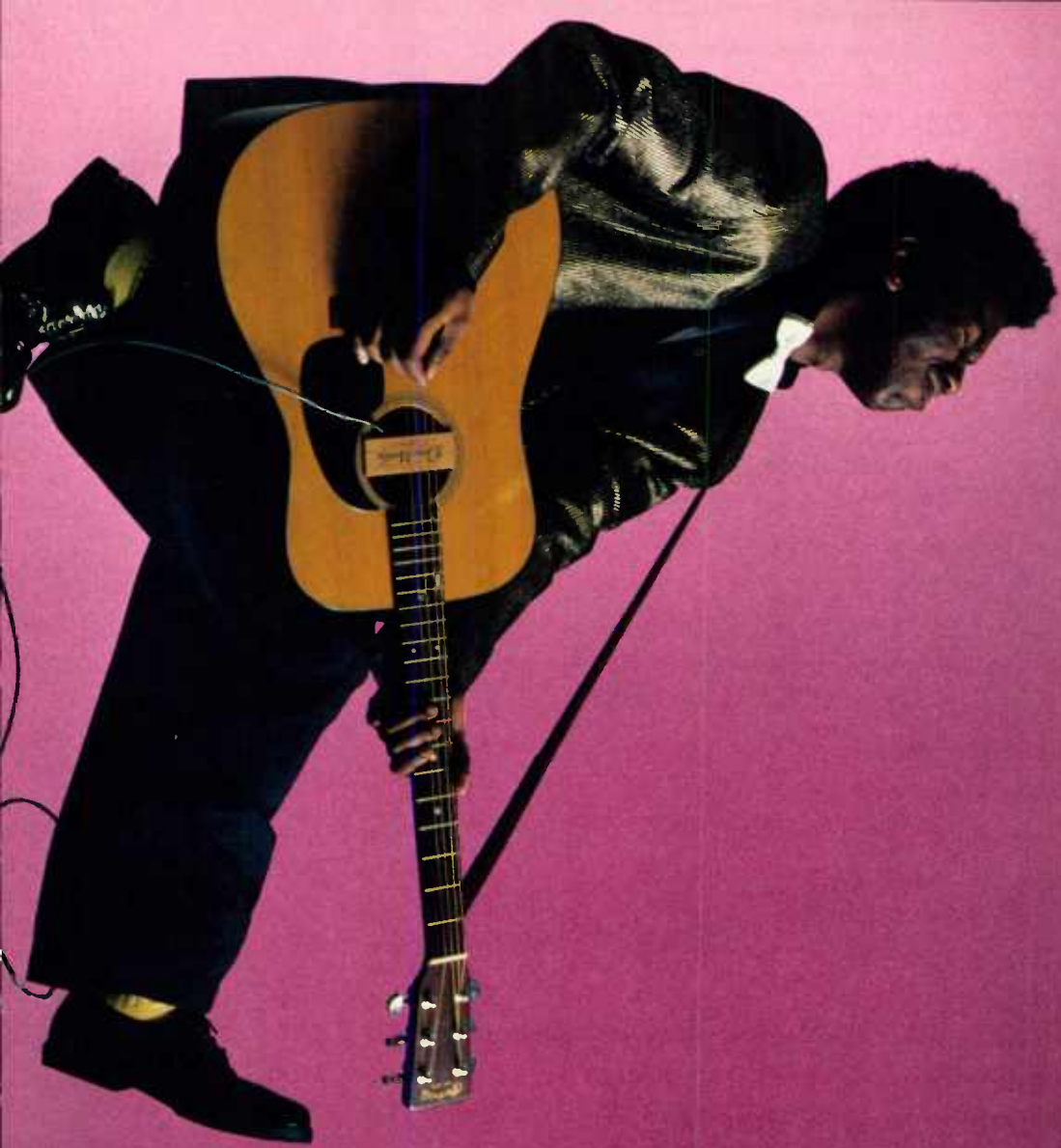
For tube-hungry amplifier manufacturers, there was only one choice: Buy red. Having been kept out of the semiconductor market by the U.S., both the Chinese and the Soviets still rely heavily on vacuum-tube technology. Unfortunately, says Mitch Colby, a senior vice president at Marshall, "The quality is not really up to our standards."

That hardly comes as a surprise to those who've had their tube amps blow up in mid-gig, as Colby well knows. "We're finding that many of the problems in the field are tube problems, rather than amplifier problems," he says. "And it really rubs off badly on the company. So we can't let it go on any longer."

This has led to heavy-duty tube testing at Fender, Marshall, Boogie, Groove Tubes and others; Colby says Marshall may shift from Soviet-made tubes to more dependable Czech and Yugoslav products. But even that may not entirely solve the problem, because, as Grom notes, a lot more is expected of today's tubes. "Fifteen or 20 years ago, when everything Fender made had tubes in it, amplifiers had a whole lot less gain in them than they do right now. A lot of the things that we're asking these tubes to do has gone beyond what these manufacturers ever intended them for—the real high-gain things, and getting real picky about microphonics."

High gain is easily enough managed in solid-state amps, and a number of manufacturers (including Fender and Paul Reed Smith) have transistorized good-as-tubes amps in the works. But will the lighter, louder, more dependable amps ever replace the head-leaking behemoths of old? "If you give them a blind test, maybe people couldn't tell the difference," says Grom. "But a lot of guys listen with their eyes, and if they go around the back of the amp and there aren't these warm little glowing things sitting there, 'Aw, that can't sound any good.'" M





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world radio history



AN AUDIENCE WITH B.B. KING

The world's most famous bluesman still puts the listener first

By Matt Resnicoff

A WALKIE TALKIE, lying on a table amid beer bottles, a few rolls of gaffer's tape and someone's purse, crackles with the voice of Bobby Blue Bland.

"How you doin', chief?!"

B.B. King knows that voice anywhere. "Everything's good, 3B. How you feelin' tonight?" "I feel pretty good, black and gold." "A-hah, you're pickin' on my tour bus, go ahead." "You mean I'm pickin' on the greatest thing I've ever seen, man." "Oh, thank you very much, Mr. Blue, that makes

me feel good. Drives good; you have to ride with me sometime and christen it, see how you like it, go ahead." "Don't have to worry about that—I'll be on it the first chance I get." B.B. starts laughing. "10-4 on the first chance! Listen, I'll see you after a while. It's so good to hear your voice."

King puts the radio down and picks up where he left off. He's talking about how strict form never hemmed in the spontaneity of his blues, how little things like key changes and nuance make it new night after night. "I try to use all of that," he says, "even though you've only got a 12-bar

structure. You are so limited in the amount of changes you got, you've got to make each change *very special*." B.B. looks down at his guitar Lucille, cradling the instrument in long, black gold-ringed fingers. "You've got to try to be clever with it, because you don't have that much to work with. It's kind of like an ugly person: If you have beautiful teeth, show them." He does that and I laugh. "No, I'm serious. A guy like me, I'm big and fat, so I try and make the best out of the guitar!"

Well, it's tough to agree about that with such a nice man, but that is exactly what B.B. King is and that is exactly what B.B. King does. And therein lies the greatest paradox in the rich history of the blues: that this music of the depressed and oppressed takes on such a blissful, almost joyously self-deprecating glow in the hands of one of its most celebrated champions. B.B. never stops touring or smiling that big, beefy smile, and ever since he saved her from a burning building many years ago, Lucille has been singing like a bird—he says playing the guitar is like telling the truth. His elemental style, kind of a time-edited amalgam of moods like Django and T-Bone and so much more, strikes right to the heart of the matter, and can cut through the thickest arrangements with a fervor that rattles your bones. But the irony isn't diffused; the guy can sing about your worst nightmare, Lucille can be bawling, and he still looks so damn *happy*.

"Well, I've always thought that it all goes together," says King. "When I was growing up, we used to be told stories, and sometimes they'd exaggerate a little bit, just to make people laugh. I grew up believing that it's sort of good to see people smile. I think it's even good for them to laugh a little bit; when I get ready to do 'The Thrill is Gone' I tell a little story about we guys, when we get put out, a guy will try to play on a woman's sympathy when he's tryin' and get back in—it's no lie. I know I have, and I don't know many guys that have not. The guy will come up with, 'Nobody loves me but my mother, and she could be jivin' too,' and this hits a lot of people because most women feel that you do it anyway, even when you don't."

Even if the blues have gone through some major cosmetic changes in the late '80s, King remains a foundation-stone of the music. B.B.'s solos usually revolve around a tight, terse vibrato of the tonic—"To me, that's the most important"—where his first finger shakes the string on the force of a



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quick back-and-forth rotation of the forearm. It's one of the most elusive techniques in the instrument's vocabulary, but like just about everything else he does, B.B. simply tosses it off.

"I don't ever exercise my voice," he says. "Believe it or not. I try to learn a song, but I never do try to sing it as I'm going to sing it onstage. I just try to know the song. Then when I get to the stage, that's the one thing that makes a difference. There are many people with beautiful voices who know intervals they can sing at will. I'm not that kind of singer. Sure, I know the changes in the song, I can hear them, but all the intervals...for instance, if I'm in the key of C, sure, I can hit a dominant seventh if you asked me." How about a sixth? "Maybe," he laughs. "On the guitar, definitely, I can hear it. But *singin'*—Billy Joel or Bobby Bland would hear things that I won't hear vocally. Instrumentally I'll hear, I play it. Major seventh I would hear. But a nine, I hear it on the guitar. Sharp five, no way. A flat five, no way."

But B.B. sings that interval all the time through the guitar. "Oh, yes, but I try to be

very careful about how I use it in the blues. In other words, okay, you're in C, here's the fifth here; well, I ain't hardly gonna use this, not in a chord. I use it as a single thing. Now, the sharp five"—B.B. nails a G sharp—"yeah, but I'd hardly use it at all if I was playin'. So if I was playin' the key of C, maybe I would run the pento [pentatonic], but I'm only using it as a passing tone going to the sixth: six, the sharp five, the flat five. The ninth I would use over a chord, but to try to *sing* that—oh, they'd have to get another singer."

For similar reasons, he's long begged off playing rhythm guitar. He can't seem to sing and play at the same time. "It don't come natural, that's one thing! My first record got me playing lead guitar, so ever since, I've never been able to just sit in a rhythm section and play. After 'Three O'Clock Blues' I was always featured, and people would be yelling out, 'B.B., play "Three O'clock in the Morning"!' 'Play "The Thrill Is Gone,"' so I could never sit in a rhythm section like a lot of guys do and learn to play. Due to Commodore's Amiga computer, I have been able

to develop quite a bit in the last year in my rhythm playing, because I can play now without having to bug the dudes to rehearse. I'm talking about all rhythm playing, because even my guys'll say, 'B.B., take the lead! Go 'head, take it!' With my computer I can get in my room now, and I got my earplugs and I can sit up and don't bug nobody but me. Sometimes I have to even fight myself, because I'll forget nights when I get off work—like I won't hardly do it tonight—but most times when I only do one show and I get in around twelve, one o'clock, I'll sit up there, and man, before I know it, it's daylight, and I'm sitting up there playin'! Rehearsing on a new tune that I've picked to do. Now I've got a helper."

B.B., WHY IS IT you play larger halls and theaters while contemporaries like Albert King remain relegated to clubs and multiple-bill festival dates?

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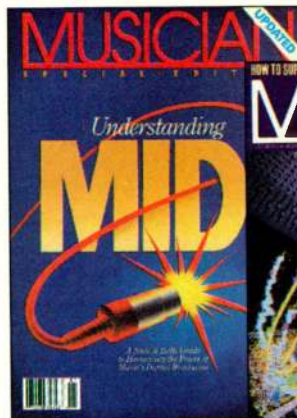
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ference between the Kings, the guitar players, with the exception of Saunders King, is I was the first one that's out playing this style. The next thing is, my manager put me in places that he thought one day would put me in the big halls, or some of the hotels that we've played. Put me in a position that has taken me around the world from time to time. I think a lot of that is like grooming your kid to be President of the United States, starting in the earliest stages of his career. I'm bein' honest with you, I know it's true. Had it been just left to me, I

probably would still be playin' in a lot of those places that my friends are playin' in. I also like to think that I listened; I don't know it all. This may sound funny to you. I might be teasing a bit, but it's the truth: It's like that commercial with E.F. Hutton. When my manager talks, I listen. I never argue with him. He don't tell me how to play the guitar. The one thing artist and management have to have is trust, and I have that. I'm serious."

B.B. King hasn't put a record out in several years. His last, speckled with guest stars

and rigid arrangements, failed to catch the rapture he wrings out of live performance. He once told the world that he cherishes the chances he takes with his music onstage. Since life is a series of chances, and the blues is a comment on life, how does that contrast measure up?

"When people go to Broadway, they rehearse," B.B. explains, caressing Lucille in his lap as his voice resonates along an empty backstage corridor. "When I go onstage, I know what I'm going to do. Some people used to think that you go out and make it up as you go—no way. The guys know, I know. We may not know the order of the tunes we may do, because I don't know that myself till I see the audience. Everything that we play up there has been rehearsed. We know it. Of course we make mistakes, but when you got your own group, you make a mistake, everybody make it together so it's not a mistake anymore. It may be something you didn't rehearse, but it's not a mistake! So I think it's serious. I like to feel when I go to a show, it's like seeing a movie or a video: You know that these people have put that together, and you know what to expect. When I go on the stage, I like my audience to know what to expect from me, and that is my best. To know that whatever B.B. King does, he's going to try to be his best.

"What I'm trying to get over to you is this: One of the things that makes us a little bit different from maybe some of the people you may see and hear playing the blues, is when I'm on the stage, I am *trying* to entertain. I'm *not* just trying to amuse B.B. King. I'm trying to entertain the people that came to see me. And I will—it sounds like Crazy Eddie—I'll do anything; I'll stand on my head to try and make 'em happy if I can. That's the way I look at it. You asked me about playin' the blues today. The audience is much more important today than ever before. It means more to me now than it ever did. I think that's one of the things that's kind of kept me out here, trying to keep *pleasing* the audience. I think that's one of the mistakes that's happened in music as a whole: A lot of people forget that they got an audience. It's not only in our music; it's happening in jazz and other types of music. We start thinking in terms of making ourselves happy, and not in terms of the audience that's in front of us. When that happens, people start to kind of look at you from the other side."

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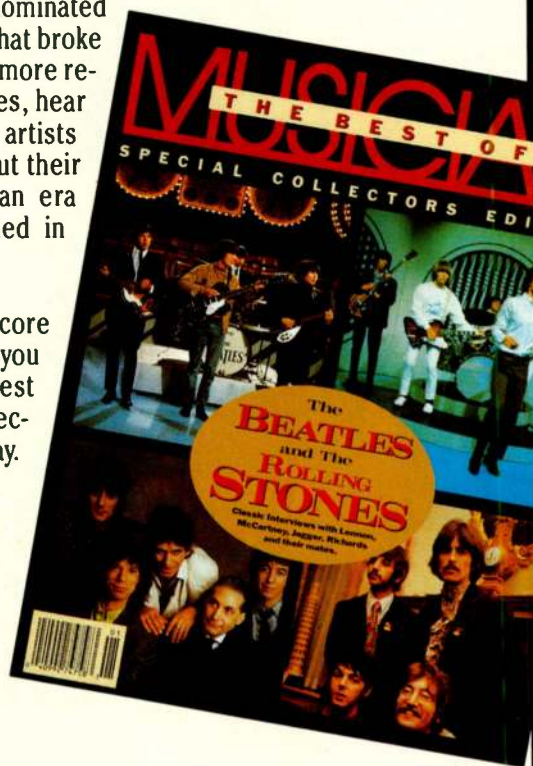
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"That may sound difficult, but it's not. In practice, it's really *so simple a child can do it* (and children do it)! Unfortunately, most of us did not learn our pitch colors the way we learned our visual colors many years ago. In fact, you may find today that you cannot distinguish *any* difference between an F and an F#—except, of course, that one pitch is higher and the other lower. Aside from 'high' and 'low,' all pitches sound pretty much alike to most people.

"But regardless of what instrument is playing—whether piano, guitar, saxophone, flute, voice, etc.—there is always a subtle difference in sound between an F and an F# which your ear *CAN* hear. You just have to know what to listen for. Most importantly,

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"Your talent for Perfect Pitch is already there, in your ear. It's totally up to you when you want to claim it."

To be continued...

(Note: Although some musicians may be visually color blind, no musician can be tone deaf. Every musician has the capacity for Perfect Pitch. Mr. Burge discusses the myth of tone deafness in a later article.)

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■
Catch a Fire/Burnin'/Natty Dread Live!/Rastaman Vibration/Kaya Exodus/Babylon by Bus Survival/Uprising Confrontation/Legend Rebel Music
 (Tuff Gong/Island)

IN APRIL, Island Records' president, Chris Blackwell, purchased Bob Marley's estate. One result is the re-release of all Marley's "real" albums on 13 remixed CDs. Impeccably remastered from the original tapes, these CDs comprise a stunning overview of perhaps the most influential popular musician of our time.

Signing with Island in 1972, and so buoyed by the princely sum of £4000, the Wailers created what is considered to be reggae music's first true album, *Catch a*



Illustration: Anders Westgren



1973: AHEAD OF THEIR TIME

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Fire. Its cumulative impact on Jamaican musicians and overseas listeners compares to *Sgt. Pepper's*. Ironically, just as they were achieving their ambitions, Marley, Bunny Wailer and Peter Tosh moved apart. *Catch a Fire* and its follow-up, *Burnin'*, showcase the final months of Jamaica's most famous trio. Sprinkled among majestic remakes of early hits are take-no-prisoners compositions like "I Shot the Sheriff," "Burnin' and Lootin'," and "400 Years," along with bawdy love songs like "Kinky Reggae" and "Stir It Up"—all highlighted by breathtaking, bell-like harmonies.

By 1974, Marley was on his own. He retained the Upsetters rhythm section, who had melded with the trio in 1970 at producer Lee Perry's studio. For backing vocals he summoned the I-Threes—Judy Mowatt, Marcia Griffiths and his wife Rita. For Marley's first solo album, *Natty Dread*, they were given free rein to underpin such classics as "No Woman No Cry," "Rebel Music," "Lively Up Yourself" and the title track.

Following this masterpiece, Island yielded to the market and quick-released an album recorded at the Lyceum in London called *Live!* to appease fans who were busy trading live tapes of Marley's tours. The album brought "Trenchtown Rock" to many people for the first time. Eric Clapton's "I Shot the Sheriff" pales beside Marley's emotional reading. "Some of that song is true, some isn't," Marley later told Clapton, "but I'm not going to say which."

His commercial peak in the U.S. came with 1976's *Rastaman Vibration*, reaching # 8 on the Billboard charts that summer and yielding timeless tracks like "War," "Roots Rock Reggae" and "Rat Race." 1977's *Exodus* was to have been the album to put Marley over the top. It contained the exuberant "Jamming" and his greatest love song, "Waiting in Vain." But fate intervened at the end of Marley's European tour when doctors diagnosed the singer's cancer. He canceled the remainder of the tour, and the momentum was lost. *Babylon by Bus* captures some of the highest moments from that triumphant tour, and bids fair for the title of greatest live reggae album of all time.

With *Kaya* (1978), critics cried that Bob had gone soft, scared out of his militancy by the December 1976 attempt on his life. But Marley had actually recorded *Exodus* and *Kaya* at the same time, and *Kaya's* hardest cuts—"Crisis," "Running Away," and "Time Will Tell"—belied the "love song" label that often

dismissively characterized the LP.

Marley's final two albums were informed by his knowledge that he had not much time left. 1979's *Survival* and the following year's *Uprising* are moody, foreboding looks by a man who feels betrayed and is looking for a way out. The new *Survival* jumbles the tracks out of their intended order; their power, though, is inescapable. "Ambush in the Night" speaks directly of his shooting; "Babylon System" and "Top Ranking" point a finger at the lies of so-called leaders; "Zimbabwe" became the anthem of the Rhodesian freedom fighters, who invited him to headline their independence celebration in 1980. "So Much Trouble in the World"—here with a new spoken intro—sums it all up.

Uprising is an album of sad farewell, slower and more evocative of the "Real Situation" than anything else in his repertoire. Marley knew that he was truly "Coming In from the Cold." On May 11, 1981, he left us, a victim of the cancer that had invaded four years earlier.

In 1983 several uncollected and unreleased tracks were gathered together for the posthumous *Confrontation* LP. That yielded the worldwide hit "Buffalo Soldier," as well as "Chant Down Babylon" and "Mix Up Mix Up." *Rebel Music*, from 1986, collects previous album cuts and a 45 B-side called "Roots." You'd be better off getting the songs in their original contexts, however.

For many people, the '70s would have been unbearable were it not for the humble prophet from Nine Mile, whose voice brought the message of Jah to the corners of the earth, from commoner to king, from here to eternity. Any of these CDs will tell you why. —Roger Steffens



The Time

Pandemonium
(Paisley Park/Reprise)

A KISS IS STILL a kiss, a sigh is still a sigh, and the Time still be funky. Though it's been six years since the Minneapolis funksters' last album (*Ice Cream*

Castle) and eight years since the original line-up last recorded together (on *What Time Is It?*), the '90 reunion pumps a sound that's immediately identifiable to Bird-lovers everywhere, and one as compulsively enjoyable as it was nearly a decade ago.

The best material on *Pandemonium* ain't nothin' new, but that ain't bad. The irrepressible Morris Day whoops, camps and guffaws through his lounge-lizard schtick as gleefully as before, and his routines with *Purple Rain* sidekick Jerome Benton add a touch of down-home vaudeville to the proceedings. The group's formidable instrumentalists remain adept at tickling, hippity-hopping grooves, with bass thumper Terry Lewis, keyboardist Jimmy Jam, and Hendrixian guitarist Jesse Johnson firing on all cylinders.

The Time ticks loudest when they stick with their strong suit of well-lubed, playful thumpers. The ballads are logy (especially the ill-timed "Donald Trump (Black Version)"), and keyboardist Monte Moir's stab at topicality ("It's Your World") pulls up lame. But when the band plays out their sex-money-and-good-times scenarios on boppers like "Jerk Out," "Chocolate," and "My Summertime Thang," they're gamboling on familiar ground, and it's hard to suppress your smile or repress your rump.

Ordinarily, a get-together like this would whiff of commercial expediency (after all, the album release is timed to coincide with the release of Prince's film *Graffiti Bridge*, in which the Time is featured). But the good-timin', chuckle-headed jive heard on *Pandemonium* makes such woofing mere gas. Did someone say, "Shut up and dance?"

—Chris Morris

Steve Earle & the Dukes

The Hard Way
(MCA/UNI)

IF ANYBODY has done things the hard way, it's Steve Earle. First gaining attention with *Guitar Town*, Earle alienated himself from country radio with his longhaired redneck persona and rock 'n' roll inclinations, which became more apparent on the subsequent releases *Exit O* and *Copperhead Road*. The latter actually garnered Earle more AOR airplay than country radio ever arranged. Now, with *The Hard Way*, Earle seems to have thoroughly abandoned his country leanings (at least temporarily),

along with his destination-point album titles. Sure, you can find the grizzled Earle strumming the occasional mandolin, and steel guitars show up periodically. But he gives equal credit to his Harley Davidson, which he "plays" on the manic "This Highway's Mine."

The almighty Dukes adapt well to this more textured rock sound, perhaps partially due to Joe Hardy's production duties, which he shares with Earle. Both band and band-leader seem to attack his latest batch of tunes



with the renewed vigor that comes when you know you're on to something good. And good it is, especially when Earle sticks to his own backwoods observations and philosophies. His musical influences are more obvious—the poignant "Billy Austin" is just a little too close for comfort to *Nebraska*-era Springsteen. But Earle has a distinct flair which separates him from that pack of imitators, be it his west Texas twang or admittedly schizophrenic politics.

It's easy to see why Earle may be his "father's worst fears realized." But he also remains a talent to be reckoned with. From the anthemic "Regular Guy" (with its chorus of white people) to the haunting "Esmerelda's Hollywood," Earle continues to expand his lyric and musical horizons.

—Ray Waddell

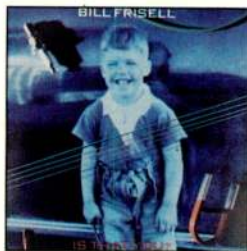
Bill Frisell

Is That You?
(Elektra/Musician)

SPEED WIZARDS COME, chopsmen go, but jazz slowhand Bill Frisell stands out as the most original electric guitarist to emerge in the past 20 years. Blessed with something less than the requisite methamphetamine fingers needed to wow the jocks, Frisell opted to become a digital dream weaver, with a subtle palette of legato inflections, pedal-steel swells, throttled blues cries and quasar blip noise—all ani-

mated by a stunning harmonic sensibility. He has made a career out of the little gesture, finding those rhythmic cracks in time others leave behind. And no matter how wild things get, he always finds a lyric focus somewhere in the maelstrom, which is why he's become one of the most popular sidemen in the new music (and the old).

But somehow, he hasn't quite gotten his due as a leader and a composer. *Is That You?* won't change that, because he still refuses to identify himself with any one style of music; as a child of the '60s, he loves it all. Who else would attempt "Days of Wine and Roses" and "Chain of Fools" on the same side, let alone in one lifetime; the former aglow in shadowy voicings and spare teardrop counterpoint, the latter pitting a cat-scratch lead against a choir of overdubbed guitars, à la Les Paul? Elsewhere, his originals pit lyric and rhythmic elements against each other in quirky collages of sound, "No Man's Land" suggesting the Weather Report of "The Unknown Soldier," while the charming "Rag" echoes both turn-of-the-century American dances and the great twentieth-century Spanish composers. On the title tune, Wayne Horvitz's keyboards, Joey Baron's drums and Dave Hofstra's tuba add color to Frisell's



chamber-like arrangement, with its rich Southwestern imagery—a kissing cousin to Bill Laswell's orientalisms. "Half a Million" is a signature Frisell electric showpiece, each chord bathed in a pool of amniotic fluid, its country and Mexican themes shyly circling in and out of each other, even as the closing "Hope and Fear" and the string-band "Twenty Years" belie Frisell's need for digital gimmickry at all.

Is That You? is a very personal vision, tearing down stylistic barriers with delicacy and sudden bursts of emotion. Frisell the composer is every bit as formidable a figure as Frisell the sideman. Someday soon guitarists will find themselves drawn to his puissant restraint.—Chip Stern



Jane's Addiction

Ritual de lo Habitual
(Warner Bros.)

FOR THE MOST PART, hard rock acts have fairly limited ambition. On a personal level, they want to get rich and get laid (though not necessarily in that order); on a professional level, they want to kick some ass. And usually, that's about as far as it goes.

Jane's Addiction, on the other hand, wants more. Not content with the usual thrash-and-burn, this band wants to pull a deeper resonance from its soundstorm of guitar and drums; disinterested in traditional sex-and-power lyrics, singer Perry Farrell instead constructs parables of attraction and dependence. In short, these guys want nothing less than to raise hard rock to the level of high art.

Talk about a thankless task . . .

It isn't that the members of J.A. fail in their attempts to elevate hard rock, or are even wrong for wanting to do so. Unlike the woe-fully uneven *Nothing's Shocking*, *Ritual de lo Habitual* not only manages to maintain its integrity throughout, but actually one-ups the sonic audacity of the band's indie debut. When the band rages through the fiery instrumental sections of "3 Days," for instance, David Navarro's trebly, sheets-of-flame guitar meshes so perfectly with the tribal thunder of Stephen Perkins' drums you'd think the two were joined at the hip; likewise, the revved-up Bo Diddley beat in "Stop" is played with astonishingly offhand precision, filling the tune with ominously pregnant pauses. In moments like these, when Jane's Addiction cuts through hard rock's usual stylistic fetishes to get to the music's emotional core, *Ritual de lo Habitual* comes very close to achieving its artistic ambitions.

But the fact of the matter is that hard rock really doesn't need reinventing. Moreover, Jane's Addiction still seems a little too brainy for its own good. Sure, Perkins and Navarro are full of fascinating ideas, but like the reedy-voiced, poetry-spouting Farrell, their

appeal is more cerebral than visceral, and hard rock (in case you hadn't noticed) isn't exactly the sort of music that thrives on introspective reflection. Should this band manage to make its sound as physically immediate as it is intellectually intriguing, Jane's Addiction may well rewrite the book on hard rock. Until then, however, theirs is not going to be an easy habit to acquire.

—J.D. Considine



Ultra Vivid Scene

Joy 1967-1990
(4AD/Columbia)

AS DECADENT PLEASURES go, Ultra Vivid Scene can't match controlled substances or even a big dose of MTV. But *Joy 1967-1990* (a too-knowing title) is alluring, depraved stuff nonetheless, an orgy of quiet thrills that blends the elegant vacuity of the Church with the eccentric angst of Robyn Hitchcock. Psychedelia buffs, take note.

This second album by Kurt Ralske (aka UVS) wears a scent of obsession, drifting through private fixations without much heed to the outside world. Wrapped around lovely melodies, his purring vocals have a creepy insistence; you can almost feel the guy's hot breath in your face as he drones dreamily on "Kindest Cut" and "Extra Ordinary." The countrified "Beauty No. 2" gets *too* close: Ralske can be heard periodically licking his lips, to repellent effect.

Of course, a full program of sweet crooning, hitched to oblique lyrics about love, alienation and who knows what else, would be numbing—and *Joy* occasionally is. In the interest of dynamics, Ralske tosses in a few rockers, including the crisp "It Happens Every Time" and the trippy "Grey Turns White," peppering the music throughout with dramatic guitar solos recalling Phil Manzanera's work in Roxy Music. (Kurt should be so inventive!) However, the lad seems most at ease making hip mood music like the entrancing "Staring at the Sun," where clanging chords and morbid asides

take a back seat to his easy-listening sigh. Those requiring more stimulation will prefer the times when emotions threaten to disrupt the hazy calm. Pixie Kim Deal's guest vocals add a tart edge to "Special One," an otherwise limp tale of failed amour. Ralske cleverly plays the sob in his voice against a see-saw arrangement in "Three Stars" to imply nagging uncertainty, and undercuts the gorgeous "Poison" with sarcastic contrariness ("I must remind myself to think bad thoughts").

So whither Ultra Vivid Scene? Between seductive comforts and uneasy impulses may lie a middle ground that allows Ralske to satisfy all his conflicting urges. Right now, he's weighing the options.—Jon Young



Various Artists

Jazz Time CDs
(EMI/Pathé Marconi)

THE FRENCH ARE GOOD for a number of things, but playing jazz usually isn't considered one of them. On the other hand, French record companies routinely shame their American counterparts with extensive reissues of American jazz. EMI/Pathé Marconi's series of Jazz Time compact discs, inaugurated last year, brings a continental thoroughness to the history of jazz recorded in France. (A couple of geographical exceptions are noted below.) Results are variable though more interesting than stateside chauvinists might expect.

Not surprisingly, the series' two most immediately appealing releases so far feature U.S. musicians. *Swing in America* (EMI/Pathé Marconi 251273-2) documents some hectic recording activity as a result of a 1946 New York visit by Charles Delaunay, the enthusiastic founder of the French Swing label. The most striking tracks aren't swing at all but full-blown bebop from a stellar group including Fats Navarro, Sonny Stitt, Bud Powell and Kenny Clarke. Not to downgrade the rest of the album, which showcases Benny Carter, Jonah Jones, Gene Sed-

ric and (from Los Angeles via Leonard Feather) Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong. Another Fats, Waller, has had his London recordings reissued numerous times, but *Fats Waller: London Sessions 1938-1939* (251271-2) squeezes all the officially released HMV sides—and a few private acetates—onto one CD.

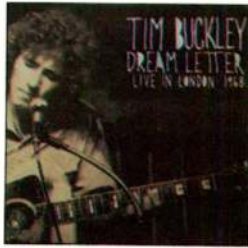
France has long attracted American players in search of respectful audiences and just plain respect. *Americans in Paris Vol. 2* (251277-2) contains 1930s recordings featuring Coleman Hawkins and Benny Carter among others, like Bill Coleman and Josephine Baker. The first volume (251276-2) digs further back and numbers among its obscurities Jean Cocteau declaiming poetry backed by a (probably bewildered) jazz group. Closer to the present are *Be-Bop in Paris* (251288-2)—late-'40s dates, mostly with expatriate guru Clarke, also including Howard McGhee and John Lewis—a relaxed 1956-vintage Lionel Hampton (251274-2) with sax and rhythm, and three sessions of *Ellingtonians in Paris* (251275-2) spotlighting Johnny Hodges, Shorty Baker, Cat Anderson and Paul Gonsalves.

France's one certifiable jazz legend, gypsy guitarist Django Reinhardt, appears in various combinations on his self-titled CD (7905602) with visiting *Americains* and the fabled Quintette du Hot Club de France. The latter also has its own Jazz Time release (251270-2). Both are excellent introductions to Reinhardt's genius. (Save domestic RCA's recent *Djangology 49* reissue for advanced study.) The other star of the Quintette, violinist Stephane Grappelli, can be heard with post-Reinhardt small groups on *Special Stephane Grappelli* (251277-2). A teenaged Reinhardt plays banjo on one cut of *Swing Accordeon* (251281-2); this Gaulois-scented compilation is borderline jazz but a fascinating examination of the milieu from which the Quintette emerged.

The Jazz Time series is a model reissue program. Each CD contains at least 60 minutes of music, informative (and bilingual) program notes, and complete discographies, *naturellement*. Risky sound processing of pre-tape source material is kept to a minimum; the ear can adjust to surface noise better than it can replace muffled high frequencies. Series creator Daniel Nevers is digging wide as well as deep; this review mentions only half the existing Jazz Time titles.

No wonder musicians move to France.

—Scott Isler



Tim Buckley

Dream Letter/Live in London
(Enigma Retro/Straight)

Brian Kennedy

The Great War of Words
(RCA)

PROOF THERE'S a God? How about that someone somewhere had the infinite wisdom to release a live album by Tim Buckley 15 years after his death? How about that it's over two hours long and features him playing his best material? How about that it's better than 99.9 percent of the records already released this year?

The only thing stranger than this record

actually being issued is the oddity that, until recently, not a single one of the nine albums Tim Buckley recorded during his brief life was still in print. But, heck, things change—the Berlin Wall comes down, all but two of Buckley's albums are out on CD and *Dream Letter* sounds like it was recorded yesterday.

Buckley is caught during his most accessible period, performing material mostly from *Goodbye and Hello* and *Happy/Sad*, and accompanied by guitarist Lee Underwood, vibist David Friedman and—surprise of surprises—Pentangle bassist Danny Thompson, who, after working with John Martyn and Nick Drake, has now covered all exceedingly hip folk singer/songwriter bases admirably. The music is superbly recorded, and the new material surprisingly good—with “Troubadour,” already out on a Buckley bootleg, the best track, and “The Earth Is Broken,” a pre-Earth Day ecological mis- sive, the most startling. Buckley's voice remains one of a kind, and though none of the remarkable war whoops which made *Starsailor* unforgettable are in evidence, *Dream Letter* may still be [cont'd on page 126]

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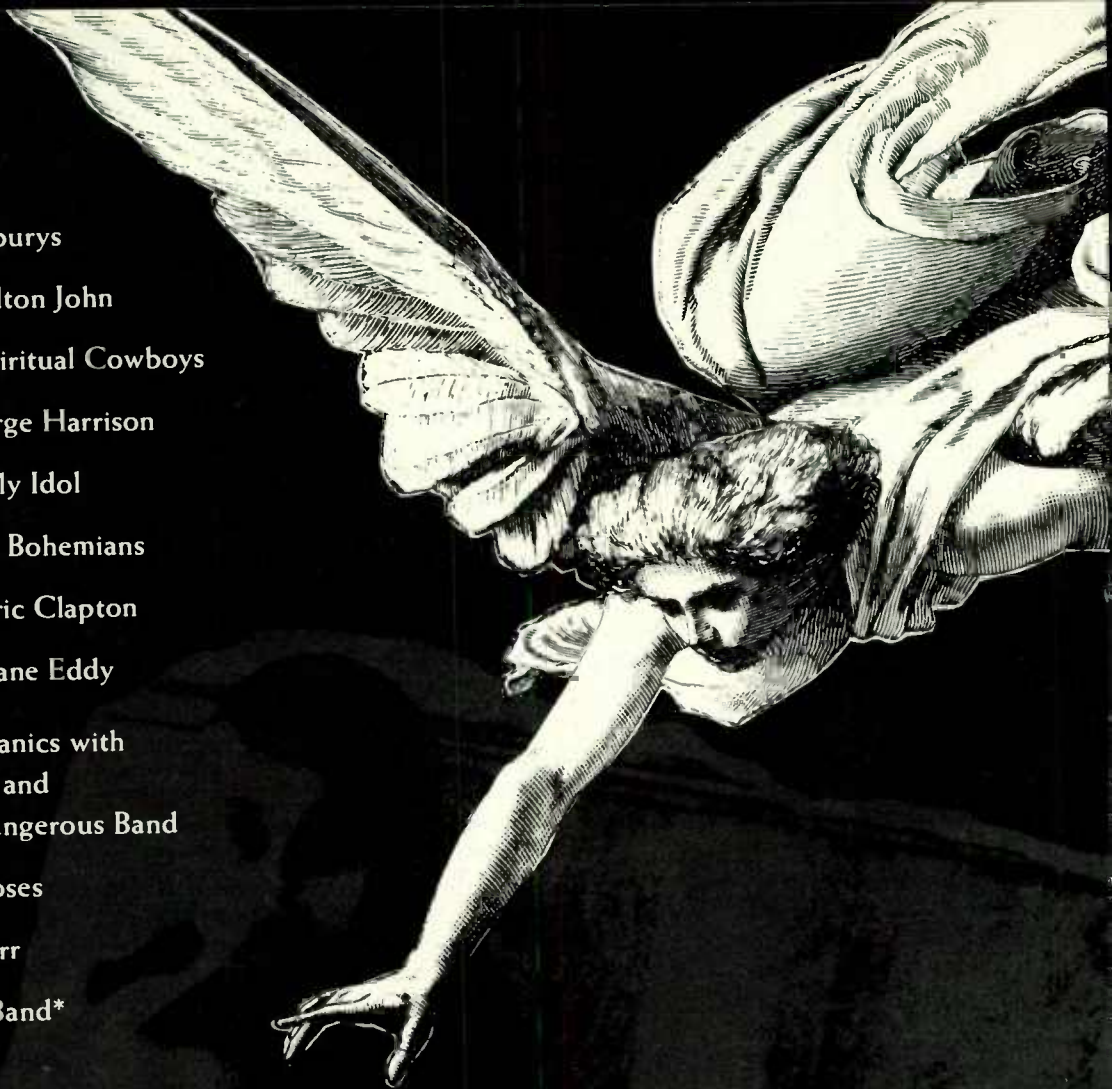
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World Radio History

SHORT TAKES

SO MUCH MUSIC, SO LITTLE TIME

ROCK

By J.D. Considine

Was (Not Was)

Are You Okay? (Chrysalis)

STRIVE AS THEY MIGHT for a chart-friendly sensibility, the Bros. Was remain too weird for the mainstream. Sure, "Just Another Couple Broken Hearts" is numbingly conventional, but it's surrounded by campy surrealism ("I Feel Better than James Brown") and warped funk ("I Blew Up the United States"). Let them take a stab at realism, though, and the album turns truly subversive; for all its salsa-flavored optimism, "Maria Novarro" ends up as the most chillingly accurate tale of domestic violence on record.

Revenge

One True Passion (Capitol)

CONSIDERING HOW MUCH these dark, bass-driven dance beats recall New Order, frontman Peter Hook's usual stomping grounds, it's fair to wonder who this *Revenge* is being exacted against. Certainly not the listener. Hook may lack Bernard Sumner's romantic fatalism, but the abrasive edge of "Bleachman" or the insistent pulse of "Slave" more than compensates. Plus, as "Pineapple Face" and "Kiss the Chrome" make plain, he certainly has a way with, er, hooks.

Alias

Alias (EMI)

FD USE ONE TOO, if I was responsible for this crap.

Marianne Faithfull

Blazing Away (Island)

EVEN MORE THAN THE all-star band—Garth Hudson, Dr. John, Marc Ribot, Fernando Saunders—what makes this live recording so exceptional is the amount of life in it. Faithfull's version of "Why'd Ya Do It?" is so steeped in sexual rage the listener can't help but squirm, but she

balances that with ballads (particularly "As Tears Go By" and "She Moved Through the Fair") that shine with a cleansing beauty. A phenomenal recording.

808 State

Utd. State 90 (Tommy Boy)

WITH ITS THROBBING BASS, quirky samples and insistent swirl of electronic percussion, 808 State has no trouble meeting the basic requirements of acid house. But why stop there? So these Manchester maniacs go further, heightening the groove by altering instrumental textures until the 808 beat covers everything from light-industrial stomps like "Kinky National" to the jazzy haze of "Pacific."

Bootsy's Rubber Band

Jungle Bass (4th & Broadway)

THE PRODUCTION VALUES may be different—house beats, Laswell-ized samples, and the like—but the sensibility remains unchanged. If anything, Bootzilla seems to have sharpened his act; not only does he spar as usual with Fred Wesley's Horny Horns, he has them quote Miles Davis' "Shhh... Peaceful." Not bad for an old guy.

David Baerwald

Bedtime Stories (A&M)

ONE HALF OF DAVID + DAVID (no, I don't know which), Baerwald has a strong sense of melody and a genius for lean, evocative lyrics. Better still, he delivers his words-and-music in a voice that sits somewhere between a Don Henley narrative and a Jackson Browne sneer. And he expects us to save this stuff for bedtime?

Eric B. & Rakim

Let the Rhythm Hit 'Em (MCA)

COMPARED TO THE LIKES OF De La Soul or A Tribe Called Quest, Eric B. & Rakim aren't just old-style—they're ancient. But so what? No matter how undynamic Rakim's knotty monotone might seem, it pushes the beat along with muscular efficiency, while Eric B. answers the title's challenge with Tyson-like intensity. Bust that.

Les Voix Bulgares de L'Ensemble Radio Sofia

Balkan (Virgin)

REMEMBER *THE NONESUCH EXPLORER*, the wonderful world-music sampler that included everything from Balinese gamelan to Shona mbira? Philippe Eidel and Arnaud Devos certainly do, and their score for the film *Bunker Palace Hotel* is a mini-world tour, leaping from Africanized percussion to synthesized gamelan to the otherworldly harmonies of les Voix Bulgares without a hint of overreach.

Mariah Carey

Mariah Carey (Columbia)

LIKE WHITNEY HOUSTON, she's a stunner with a stunning set of pipes; like Minnie Riperton, her high notes often brush the stratosphere. But she's more than just another pretty voice, because along with incomparable phrasing and deep gospel roots, Carey also has impressive strength as a songwriter. Definitely one for the A-list.

Mazzy Star

She Hangs Brightly (Rough Trade)

ALTERNATELY BLUESY AND BLANK, raw-edged and ethereal, Mazzy Star comes across as a sort of anti-chic Cowboy Junkies. Hope Sandoval may lack Margo Timmins' lustrous tone and intonation, but she also avoids Timmins' chilly detachment, and that makes the difference.

Adeva

Adeva! (Capitol/Cooltempo)

IT'S NO NEWS to the club hounds, but Adeva's is the first truly great voice to have rumbled up from the Deep House underground. And though this belated release of her first album adds little to the import, both "Warning!" and her searing remake of "Respect" ought to prove revelation enough to the uninitiated.

Hothouse Flowers

Home (London)

SPRINGSTEEN LITE.

JAZZ

Bley and Motian

Notes (Soul Note)

THERE ARE NEBULOUS moments on this disc of duets between the two Pauls, but they don't last long. Like their creators, most of these spontaneously created pieces carry distinct personalities. And, as usual in this kind of stripped-down situation, resourcefulness is the key. Besides sharing oddly singular styles—Bley's formidable skittishness and one-note drama; Motian's private but functional way of swinging—both the pianist and drummer have lots of ideas filed away. Their cunning strikes an accord, and for the better part of an hour two elder statesmen divest themselves of cliché. —*Jim Macnie*

Mark Helias

Desert Blue (enja)

THE BASSIST/COMPOSER'S last date was a blowing session. Here he's an arranger, and a fairly keen one at that. The music sounds like it has more girth than its quintet (and sometimes septet) context should allow, but getting the most out of the elements at hand is something unknowns have to deal with all day long. Helias, a steady NYC worker who deserves much more attention, is a young pro at putting the squeeze on what's in front of him to come up with a weighty whole. Without waxing schizoid, he takes the band through electric romps, sing-song bop heads and dour passages. It makes a case for focus, even while employing a throng of capricious notions.

—*Jim Macnie*

Nicky Skopelitis

Next to Nothing (Virgin/Venture)

Ginger Baker

The Middle Passage (Axiom)

Material

Seven Souls (Virgin)

YOU MIGHT AS WELL call the work of producers Bill Laswell (bass) and Nicky Skopelitis (guitar) a new world music, because on these three records they refuse to acknowledge any difference between traditional American forms and the textures and rhythms of folk musics from around the globe. Working with musicians like drummers Ginger Baker and Sly Dunbar, violinists L. Shankar and Simon Shaheen, keyboardist Bernie Worrell and percussionist Aiyb Dieng, they've created a versatile repertory company of new-world soul men who can flavor the funk any which way you like. *Next to Nothing* reflects

Skopelitis' approach to what might loosely be called traditional Delta blues, shot through as it is with strains of Irish, Greek, Near Eastern and pre-bluegrass country strains, and animated by Ginger Baker's frog-footed, dancing backbeats. Baker's own maiden voyage for Laswell's new Axiom label, *The Middle Passage*, is the drummer's finest, most personal musical vision. The whole session is so infused with echoes of the Sahara and North African music that one is tempted to label it morrock 'n' roll. Bassists Jah Wobble and Jonas Hellborg help focus the elemental simplicity of Baker's low-slow tempos and songlike patterns, which culminate in epic 12/8 solo variations on "Basil."

Finally, there's *Seven Souls*, Laswell's first release under the Material banner in several years. The disc is Laswell's personal reading of the jazz/poetry tradition, done up as a funky, medium-garde kind of Indo-pop by way of Phil Spector and Richard Wagner with Sly Dunbar manning the drums (in a decidedly unprocessed appearance). More of a formal set piece than the other two releases, it demonstrates Laswell's finely honed cinematic approach, as the music rises to match the menace of William Burroughs' recitation on the final death of men without souls. Still, I suspect that the missing visual corollary would give even more power to these epic collaborations.

—*Chip Stern*

Art Blakey, Dr. John, David "Fathead" Newman

Bluesiana Triangle (Windham Hill Jazz)

A STRANGE NOVELTY SESSION, like an after-hours jam at a jazz festival that somebody happened to tape. It never quite takes flight, though when Blakey and percussionist Joe Bonadio go on a limber nighttime stroll through the bayou on "Shoo Fly," you can almost hear the hoot owls 'n' feel the Spanish moss. And it's great to hear Blakey playing shuffle and rock 'n' roll beats—he breathes a wonderful, supple looseness into 'em. Still, the whole thing's a bit cursory. And on a couple cuts, Blakey, curiously, messes up the beat, which is like Dizzy repeatedly screwing up an arpeggio. Age? Bad day? Ya got me.

—*Tony Scherman*

REISSUE

Booker T. & the M.G.'s

McLemore Avenue (Stax)

THE BEATLES INSPIRED more "concept" albums of their music by other artists than any other rock band in history, few of which retain

more than novelty appeal. This is the looming exception, a classic of its kind that puts the Beatles' wonderful melodicism in the pocket of Memphis instrumental funk. The CD cover is of course a parody of *Abbey Road*, but the music inside, mostly in the form of medleys, is seriously soulful, as Donald "Duck" Dunn's bass and drummer Al Jackson contour tunes like "Carry That Weight" and "Mean Mr. Mustard" into unexpected rhythmic grooves, all the better to float solos by the stars, organist Booker T. Jones and guitarist Steve Cropper. Far more than session superstars, the M.G.'s had a knack for cohering distinct musical personalities into a tight, seamless style that was decidedly, uh, fab. Hey, isn't it about time for their reunion?—*Mark Rowland*

Del Shannon

Sings Hank Williams: Your Cheatin' Heart (Rhino)

ORIGINALLY RELEASED in 1964, when Shannon was still racking up hits, this remarkable set reveals a primary source of his raw emotional power. Somber versions of "Ramblin' Man" and "Cold, Cold Heart" prove that Del drew from the same well of dread that informed Hank's work—which is why the combination of Williams' honky-tonk blues and Shannon's sorrowful wail can still induce shudders, despite the familiarity of the material. It's easy to imagine young Gram Parsons digging Del as he got his own thing together.—*Jon Young*

Milton Nascimento

Animã (Verve/PolyGram)

FEW OTHER ARTISTS can lay claim to the world music mantle with as much authority as Nascimento, whose mix of styles—incorporating classical, indigenous and global folk, jazz and more—defies a narrower description. His 1982 masterwork *Animã* redefines pop boundaries, with full-blooded orchestration side by side with the minimalism of a man and his guitar. His multioctave vocal purity, often wordless and always brimming with spirit, is powerfully masculine yet tempered with a feminine sensitivity. As Milton holds one clear note, then another, over Wagner Tiso's searching piano chords on "Olha" ("Look") or when the singer glides over the gentle repetition of "Filho" ("Son"), he stirs emotions deeper than language.—*Tom Cheyney*

The Beach Boys

Surf'n' Safari/Surf'n' USA
Surfer Girl/Shut Down Volume 2 (Capitol)

WITH THREE BONUS TRACKS apiece, and two albums on each disk, these CDs come as a special treat to those of us who've already plunked down the bucks on Capitol's *California Girls* CD—the notorious bastardized version of their classic *Summer Days (And Summer Nights!!)*—and were

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used to getting shortchanged. Although I'm still waiting for *that* reissue (two-fered with *Today* and due soon, it'll be the best CD of this bunch), hearing "Farmer's Daughter," "Lonely Sea," "Surfer Girl," "In My Room" and "Don't Worry, Baby" here, from the group's first, second, third and fifth albums (don't ask) helps ease the pain. As CD reissues go, you couldn't ask for more. For once.—*Dave DiMartino*

The Kinks

The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society (Reprise)

IF YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW where all those British songwriters obsessed with the disintegration of Empire came from, look no further than this album. It will become very clear that no one's ever handled the topic like Ray Davies. Through 15 songs crammed with bittersweet wit and delicious hooks, Davies leads the original Kinks lineup for their last, and best, get-together. Audiophiles may be disheartened by the sonic grunginess of some tracks, but that shouldn't deter anyone from buying. When originally issued in '68, *Village Green* didn't even crack the Top 200, an injustice that ought to be corrected this time around.

—*Mac Randall*

INDIE

The Chesterfield Kings

The Berlin Wall of Sound (Mirror)

POSSIBLY THE FIRST post-modern rock band, the Chesterfield Kings have long specialized in note- and inflection-perfect tributes/rip-offs/pastiche of '60s sounds. With this album they've set their wayback machine a little further forward, to the MC5 and New York Dolls time-spasms. If the cover photo doesn't tip you off, check out "Pills," in which singer Greg Prevost imitates David Johansen imitating Mick Jagger imitating Bo Diddley. The Kings take parody way beyond parody to . . . parody. (645 Titus Ave., Rochester, NY 14617)—*Scott Isler*

The Sex Pistols

Live at Chelmsford Top Security Prison (Restless)

YOU DON'T *really* believe that title, do you? The "audience" certainly sounds suspicious, but in 1976 this would have been one of the (pre-Sid Vicious) band's classier gigs. No surprises in the repertory here, and no songwriter credits anywhere. There's enough between-song taunting, though, to inspire the all-talk *Having Fun with Johnny Rotten Onstage*. This isn't the first post-

humous Pistols release their sound engineer Dave Goodman has pulled out of his closet; let's hope there's more.—*Scott Isler*

Snatches of Pink

Dead Men (Dog Gone)

ARE SNATCHES of Pink tryin' to capture the heavy metal headbanger audience or what? Their debut album is full of harmonies that sound like college or post-college kids feeling especially young and excited about first jobs and new friends when they sang 'em, kinda like the ones on the dB's best song "Never Say When." They even have a (non-power) ballad, "Look Away," a likably unassuming unrequited love song with almost as much spunk and spirit (in that quiet way) as, say, "Skyway" or the Woods' "What About Me." Therefore, they should get rid of the Slayer appeal (black skull 'n' crossbones cover), the one guy's Dionysian hair and Axl Rose-like black snug leather pants, and a song titled "Salty Dog" and another called "Goin' Down" (neither are what you think). (Box 1742, Athens, GA 30605)—*Jill Blardinelli*

Jim Dickinson

Experimental Projects 1 & 2 (New Rose)

TWO LPS COMBINED on one CD yield an insightful portrait of Memphis producer/player Jim Dickinson (Big Star, Ry Cooder, Replacements). *Down Home* is a compilation of Dickinson's recordings of known (Furry Lewis, Sleepy John Estes) and unknown (Thomas Pinkston, Yardman Alex) blues musicians. In a different vein, *Spring Poems* excerpts his solo soundtrack compositions. These selections—some brief to the point of haiku—show the eclectic and provocative nature of Dickinson's unadulterated ideas. This disc is wildly diverse, never predictable, always great. (New Rose, 7 Rue Pierre Saurazin, Paris 75006)—*Robert Gordon*

Machito & His Afro-Cubans

1941 (Palladium)

UNLIKE THE BIG BAND sessions with Dizzy Gillespie that would later earn Machito the attention of jazz fans, these 1941 recordings tend more to standard pop fare—rumbas, guajiras and the like—with invitingly harmonized melodies taking the foreground. Don't take that to mean these tunes are hopelessly tame, though; from the vigorous "Nague" to the fiery "El Muerto se Fue de Rumba," the percussive power of these pieces is considerable.—*J.D. Considine*

The Verlaines

Some Disenchanted Evening (Homestead)

ON THE VERLAINES' third album, Graeme Downes meshes ragtime into rock 'n' roll and builds the biggest pop crescendoes since Phil

Spector. The graduate music student from Dunedin, New Zealand, is both a composer and a songwriter: He can extend simple notions into grand statements, or shrink big ideas into small packages. A three-piece is his orchestra of choice; this album features his fifth version of it in 10 years. It's reassuring to realize that beneath the sturm und drang of "Whatever You Run Into" is just a furiously strummed guitar, judicious snare and punctuating bass—like finding an elfin Who running your MIDI.—*Evelyn McDonnell*

Tom Principato/Danny Gatton

Blazing Telecasters (Powerhouse)

HERE'S WHY Danny Gatton remains the world's greatest unknown guitarist—his solos aren't the most interesting thing about his music, they're the *only* interesting thing. For guitar fans only. (Box 2455, Falls Church, VA 22042)

—*J.D. Considine*

Various Artists

Endless Grindstone: The Compilation (K.O. CITY Studio)

FOUR STONE CUTS WERE written and recorded by one Andrew Szava-Kovats, each one under a different (assumed) name. They're among the best on this compilation, which brings together several conglomerates heavily influenced by Joy Division/New Order, industrial dance music and Euro-death rock. A few song titles will get the idea across: "Brain Dead," "The Dumping Ground," "Head on a Stick." Though it flags toward the end, most of this angst exploration hits the mark. Completely pretentious, but good clean fun. (Box 255, Dracut, MA 01826)—*Mac Randall*

Memphis Slim, Big Bill Broonzy and Sonny Boy Williamson

Blues in the Mississippi Night (Rykodisc)

IN HIS LINER NOTES, producer Alan Lomax bills this as "an epic adventure from America's last frontier," a sort of creation saga of the blues. It's not. What it is is three well-traveled bluesmen sitting around in Manhattan one afternoon in 1948 swapping stories, reminiscences and opinions. It's a funny, moving three-way colloquy, and a landmark accomplishment for its day: black men telling the truth about chain gangs and lynch mobs. Lomax's presentation of it as an unvarnished expression of rural black folk wisdom is a little disingenuous: Big Bill was a sophisticated guy who'd cut records in a variety of commercial styles, and his value as a folkloric informant was, at the very least, compromised. Still, between the rich talk and the songs (some of 'em spliced in by Lomax, some of 'em on-the-spot jams), this is more than worthwhile as an early sample of oral history, a minor companion to Lomax's wonderful 1950 book, *Mister Jelly Roll*.—*Tory Scherman*

MUSICIANS AGAINST CENSORSHIP



LIFE IS POLITICAL. From the day you're born until the last breath you take, politics play a role. You have to stay alert and not take anything for granted.

The censorship issue has forced musicians and artists to speak up even more than ever before because they're getting pissed off. We're supposed to be living in a country where there's freedom to speak out, and it's frustrating to be in the same place where people are harboring a situation like restricting access to concerts and records. Who do they think they are to tell others what to do. They should look at their own back yards before telling anybody else what to listen to, look at, or do. Pretty soon they'll be telling us what to wear, then what to drive, what restaurant to eat at, what side of the street to walk on, and all that bullshit. It has to be stopped.

People are people. Teenagers are going to want to listen to music. It's rhythmic, it's part of life, and part of growing up and experiencing things. Music is a sense—you feel it as well as hear it. You can't take that away from them. Kids like rock and roll, baseball, Burger King, and going to concerts. They're smart, and see what's going on in the world around them. They've just seen the Wall coming down in Germany and Communism crumbling, and certainly don't want repression to start happening here. Because that's how it starts. Certain freedoms and rights are taken away, and then you have revolt.

Whether it's physically or verbally, it will happen. Hopefully parents will understand that the kids are just looking for means of expression. That's all they're doing.

Some people blame rock and roll for the ills of the world. They also blame movies and other media events, instead of looking at their responsibility and their own part in the situation. When a teenager commits suicide, these people are ready to point a

finger at rock music instead of figuring out why their kid killed himself. Maybe the parents weren't communicating with the kid and when their kids needed them, they weren't there. Their incompetence could be the reason the kids lack self-confidence and turn to drugs, but it's so much easier to point a finger at celebrities like Ozzy Osbourne and his lyrics. His lyrics are anti-suicide anyway. If you look at the suicide rates of teens in America, there is a minute percentage who even follow rock and roll. Why not question the other reasons? When someone commits suicide on Wall Street because of a bad business deal, no one relates that to music or the movies.

Fundamentalists will want to try to enforce their laws on everyone else, but it won't work. Instead of looking at the real issues like poverty, the deficit, the S&L, education, homelessness, and the environment, they pick on something that's an easy target. They're attempting to take over and suppress what they don't like. We don't like what they do, but we don't go around censoring them.

The enforcement of record album sticker only has the reverse effect, making people more curious to what it is that they can't have. It makes them wonder what it is about this that they can't hear or see, and they're gonna want it even more. It's only reverse psychology.

We believe in God, that there is a faith out there, and God says, "Do not do unto others as you would not have them do unto you." Don't take anybody else's inventory. That's what we preach. No one special interest group has the right to tell everyone else what can and can't be done. We believe in doing what you feel is right and what you believe in. To us, *that's* being a human being.

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Manscape (Enigma/Mute)

ELECTRONICS MAY NOT HAVE TAKEN the edge off the band's sound, but it certainly seems to have sapped its imagination. Apart from the occasional bitter bon mot (like "Frée speech and more TV," the chorus from "Life in the Manscape"), this machinescape has precious little to commend it. —J.D. Considine

Les Misérables Brass Band

Manic Traditions (Northeastern)

THE 13 TRACKS here offer funk, reggae, Bolivian marches, traditional Pakistani fare, even some Hendrix, all rearranged for two trumpets, two trombones, French horn, tuba, alto sax, clarinet and percussion. The inventive arrangements hold everything together, but it's the individual players that make the end product sing. Through all the deliberate genre-bending, the Misérables never lose their sense of playfulness. Contagious stuff, performing an invaluable service—keeping the world's traditional music alive and surprising. (Box 3589, Saxonville, MA 01701-0605)—Mac Randall

Mark Lanegan

The Winding Sheet (Sub-Pop)

WEARY, DARK AND FRAYED, Lanegan's voice slips through these songs with a mournful authority; when he sings (in the title tune) of feeling death's dread allure, you take him at his word. Yet his morbid intensity rarely compromises the music's pop appeal, filling it with the sort of downbeat charm associated with Leonard Cohen or the early Velvet Underground. Hauntingly attractive. (Box 20645, Seattle, WA 95102)

—J.D. Considine

MALMSTEEN/McLAUGHLIN

[cont'd from page 78] MALMSTEEN: All I've been doing is just playing. Playing!

MUSICIAN: *Practicing is playing, and playing is practice.*

MALMSTEEN: No. You can do a diminished scale up and down till the fuckin' cows come home, but the cows won't come home. I've never done it, believe it or not.

McLAUGHLIN: Well, I'm a worker, but I love to work.

MALMSTEEN: I hate it. I mean, I could never stand to just move my fingers, and I hate the sound of it. I hate it. It's just music that really matters, not the flesh moving over the strings. In my opinion. You're entitled to my opinion. M

RECORDINGS

[cont'd from page 119] the best overall showcasing he's ever had.

That Buckley's influence continues to grow is evident on the debut release by Ireland's Brian Kennedy, whose vocal approach borrows much from Buckley (circa *Goodbye and Hello*), some from Van Morrison and, here and there, from Joni Mitchell. In all, *The Great War of Words* is a delicately recorded album that offers much reward upon repeated listening—and indeed recalls that time when artists like Buckley, Tim Hardin and Van Morrison were making records with art rather than commerce in the forefront of their minds.

Boy, doesn't that sound weird as hell?

—Dave DiMartino

CHURCH

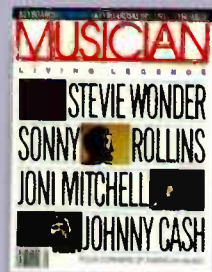
[cont'd from page 51] rare and precious—rock's mystical power of *transport*—and they don't want to risk losing it. Talk too much about the magic, and it might evaporate. Trying to tell a stranger about rock 'n' roll is still a tough one.

Maybe Kilbey is right about the words to the Church's songs not meaning anything, too. The deliciously physical onslaught of Marty's and Peter's guitars erased the language barrier at the Amsterdam show, and the audience was swept up by it: Everybody seemed glazed, appreciative—and straight! J.D. Daugherty's drumming, subtle but muscular, pushed Kilbey's bass playing and added a rock 'n' roll punch—something that Church proceedings have lacked in the past. The band's disciplined frenzy is a marvel to watch: their concerts' inexorable pacing can be breathtaking. Repeatedly, the music builds to a climax and then gradually subsides; each song seems to begin where the previous one left off, gradually elevating the level of intensity but never quite reaching a peak.

The payoff came during the second encore: ka-boom, followed by a mind-dissolving free-form dialogue between the two guitarists. Buzzing, beautifully distorted sounds hung in the air for long minutes after the Church had left the stage. The teenaged couple seated next to me erupted in delirious, enthusiastic conversation, gesturing like mad and even playing a little air guitar. I don't speak a word of Dutch, but I know what they were saying: "I wish I knew how that trick was done." M



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The Clash
Ronald Shannon Jackson



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Stevie Wonder
Sonny Rollins, Joni Mitchell, Johnny Cash



99
Boston
Kinks, Year in Rock '86



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STERN

[cont'd from page 96] arrangements because you can work it out; you don't have to learn it in a day's rehearsal." At the same time, she admits that playing with three top-notch pros both pushed her own abilities and often overwhelmed her: "Sometimes with that band, I felt like I was directing traffic." Still, the results—*Clairvoyant* and *The Next Day* (both on Passport)—offer outstanding examples of Stern's ensemble concept as well as her writing abilities.

By *Secrets* (enja), Stern had a new band, but kept the two-guitar format by replacing Frisell with Wayne Krantz. "Two guitars work well together without clashing. It's important to develop your own sound, and there aren't many two-guitar bands in jazz. It's not an unusual lineup in rock 'n' roll, is it?" she smiles. In fact, *Secrets* has more of a rock edge than her first two outings: "It's from working with young drummers: They play loud, which pushes you. And it's fun."

ELECTRIC LADYLAND

L ENI STERN uses "at least one Fender Twin Reverb, preferably two, or a Fender and a MESA/Boogie; the little Lexicon reverb; a chorus box; volume pedal and one or two Boss delays. I have a Fender Eric Clapton model built especially for me; I use light strings, .009 to .042, and medium picks. I use light picks for my acoustic, the Martin J-40XE cutaway, which is on a lot of the new album."

TUCK

[cont'd from page 100] gracefulness and unconcernedness on the guitar, so I can start anything with any finger, anytime, and not have it throw me at all. I went through a period of just hurling my finger at the guitar from a foot away and nailing the note. Hendrix inspires me the same way a cat or a squirrel does because he seems equally free wherever his hand is. You know he practiced a lot to get that, even if he was a natural. In a lot of cases there are no specific influences or regimens; your real musicianship develops when you sense what's right for the situation. It's weird that two players could play for a lifetime and technically become equally good, but one player is just more given to it. Some people just have that knack.

"I like really simple music," Tuck continues. "I went through my periods of thinking one kind of music was better than another. Increasingly, I feel that kind of thinking is not relevant. I'm happy to play C."

That's the premium, aspiring chopsmeisters. It's tough not to think of Tuck's own work when hearing him rhapsodize his idol: "Everything Wes did was so right. His timing and note choices were just perfect. He transcended technique, like all good players do, where you don't notice the fact that what he did was so hard to do. When I get lost in the beauty of the music, I know the guy's doing something right." **M**

NAMM

[cont'd from page 105] nels. Or you can stay on one MIDI channel and assign 16 continuous controllers (mod wheel, breath controller, etc.) to the faders. A useful box for just \$399.

Need a sequencer to go with all this? Try Brother's new PCD100. Externally it looks a lot like Brother's earlier MB140 sequencer, but it's actually much more powerful, with 128k of internal RAM available for sequence data, channel data or both, in any proportion. It's a 16-track sequencer, with each track capable of accepting input on all 16 MIDI channels. Full editing and quantize capabilities too. DOD's new line of affordable stereo mixers comes in eight- and 12-channel configurations. You can get them with mike and line-level inputs, or with line inputs only—which is what keyboardists need more than anything else. Well, almost.

Anyone looking for a bit of fun with digital effectors would have to go a long way to beat DigiTech's Whammy Pedal. It's essentially a pitch-shifter/harmonizer built into a snazzy red wah-wah-pedal-style box. Plug anything into it, then stomp on the pedal to change the pitch or harmonization interval.

But hey, what about the Pick of NAMM? Mine really is a pick: the Landstrom Sharkfin. A lot of guitarists got totally and hopelessly addicted to these Swedish picks when Phased Systems first brought them to the States in the early '80s. Nothing beats the slender, "fin" edge for speed picking. Then, one black day, Sharkfins disappeared and there were a lot of strung-out guitarists wandering the streets. Dunlop's version of the Sharkfin is like bad methadone compared with the original. But now D'Addario, God bless 'em, will be distributing the Landstrom Sharkfin in the States once again. Buy a gross so they'll never go away again. **M**



Madonna, Inc.

Minutes of the December 1, 1989 Meeting of the Marketing Committee

- J.R.: All in favor?
- All: Aye!
- J.R.: Opposed? Resolution 672B is passed. M comes out of the box with "Vogue," Batman's the Dick soundtrack, exposes one breast in slick magazine to be decided later. Next up, gentlemen: We've got to move the follow-up to the center of the table. Post-"Vogue," Simul-Dick: What do we see? Ideas?
- P.P.: I'm playing the S&S card again, J.R. Sex and Sacrilege. Go for three: "Like a Virgin," "Like a Prayer"...I'm hearing--"Like a Stained Glass Window."
- B.O.: Cornball! We've been to the well too often on this one, J.R.
- J.R.: He's right, P.P. Too soon, keep the crops rotating. Late '92 we can talk like a this, like a that.
- Q.B.: Like a church.
- P.P.: Like a choir.
- B.O.: Like an organ!
- J.R.: Like an organ! That's good, Buzzy! That's market-smart thinking! Get that into the system. See, P.P., that's the kind of clear insight we need. Now, back to 1990. What follows "Vogue"?
- P.P.: Well, the movie's retro, right? I say we cover our ass with a protocontempo thing: bondage, S&M. Push the envelope.
- B.O.: Oh come on, P.P! That's not pushing the envelope, that's ripping it into teeny tiny pieces! You're mixing signals! Confusing the message! This year M is doing class. Get it? Class!
- P.P.: Yeah, well, what's class to a kid? Class is what they want to hurry up and be over.
- J.R.: Buzzy, P.P., calm down. You're both right, you're both wrong. We need something sexy, something naughty, but cute. You know, no sticking, no banning, no lost stations. Raise the eyebrows but don't get the noses out of joint. Now what do you see?
- P.P.: I see whips, J.R.
- B.O.: I see an old-style nylon with a seam up the back slowly rollin' up M's leg from the painted toenails to the girdle snaps.
- P.P.: Too soft! It's "Donna Reed Show"!
- T.X.: Uh, fellows? If I could interject a mo...
- P.P.: I see whips, I see handcuffs, I see, like, plaster of Paris molds...
- T.X.: How about...
- B.O.: Awright, fishnets. Torn. And get this, she's not pulling them on, she's taking them off!
- T.X.: Has anyone considered spanking?
- J.R.: What did you say, kid?
- T.X.: Spanking?
- J.R.: What? Madonna whips some guy's ass? Who is this kid, J.R.? Hey, junior, leave the sandwiches and beat it!
- M. likes naughty. Anybody bitches we say, "Hey. It's a joke, lighten up." It's nice, it's good. Spanking. Get Herself on the horn.
- M.: What do you want, J.R.? I'm on the cycle.
- J.R.: Madonna,, I've got you on the board and we have a concept to throw at you: "Spanking."
- M.: Spanking? Let me think. Yeah, I could do something with that. It's a good tease for airplay. Gotta be funny. No child abuse implications, no "Daddy gonna spank his little girl" bullshit. Gotta be tongue in cheek, irony they can read in Alabama. Think "1, 2, 3 Red Light," think "Yummy Yummy." I'm thinking..."Spanky Panky."
- J.R.: Brilliant, Madonna.
- P.P.: Great, Madonna.
- M.: No. Too subtle. What's "Spanky Panky"? It's nothing, it doesn't exist. It's gotta be, like, "I want to have some hanky panky, I want to have a good lookin' guy spank me."
- P.P.: Great, Madonna, that's excellent, state of the art!
- M.: It's nothing! It's Lisa Lisa! It's "In the Bush, In the Bush!" What do I pay you for? It's got to be cute, it's got to be obvious, but it cannot look obvious. What should it be? Huh? Nobody? Do I have to do everything? It's got to be "Hanky panky, nothing like a good spanky!" Is that obvious?
- J.R.: Yes, Madonna.
- B.O.: That's why you're the boss, boss.
- M.: Okay, I can work with that. Get a memo to Pat and book the studio for 8 a.m. Wednesday. I'm clicking off now. Hey, who came up with that? Buzz?
- J.R.: No, Madonna. Actually it was the new fellow--Tim.
- M.: No kidding? Nice work, Timmy. Come by Wednesday morning and say hi.
- T.X.: I'd be delighted, Ma'am.
- M.: Gotta go, boys. See ya.
- J.R.: Bye, chief!
- B.O.: All right, gentlemen, I think we're finished. Oh, P.P. Tomorrow, why don't you let Tim have your chair.

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