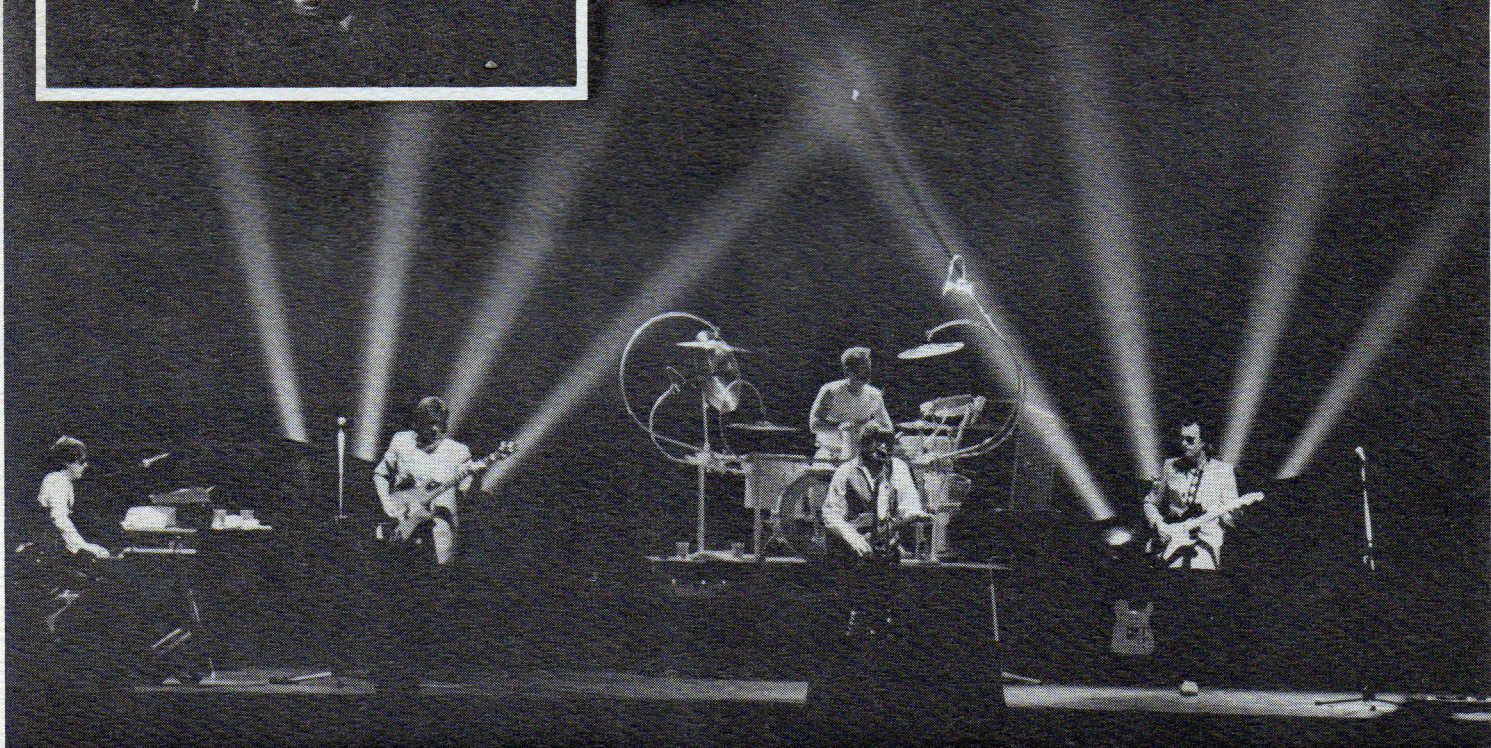
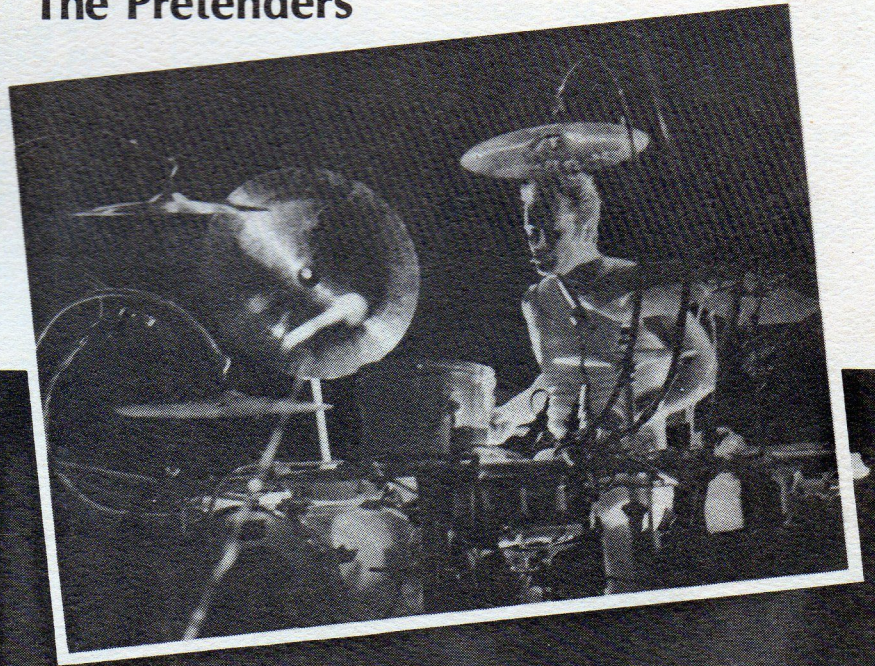


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Novus

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The Pretenders



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NOVUS

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EDITORS SCRATCHPAD

The latest word is that NOVUS will be on the air at KTUH (90.3 FM) starting March 3rd at 3pm and continuing on every Saturday at Three o'clock. What we plan to do is feature some of the music written about in NOVUS with the emphasis placed on independent releases, imports and variations thereof. Hosting and co-hosting will be done by combinations of Gary C., Lesa, Rude Boy and the Boss. It will be madness, yes; interesting, definitely; witty, nope. To be sure just listen and let us know.

A couple other items to take note of, our resident jazz station, KSHO, has fallen prey to mainland decision making. Starting in March, KSHO will change its format to easy listening rock. Two years ago when KSHO was still KJYE, Mauna Kea Broadcasting decided that Hawaii needed a jazz station. The format at KSHO changed from elevator music to jazz, all to the delight of the jazz fans. Their presentation was pretty subdued, with the delivery being just a step above muzak. But, it was jazz, and they played a good mixture of it. The sound of KSHO changed somewhat over the past two years, finally taking on a more pop jazz image. There were even crossover elements like vocal tunes by Steely Dan, Angela Bofill, Kenny Rankin and a Jimmy Cliff now and then. It may not have been the most progressive thing around but it was by far a welcomed alternative to the mush that is currently available on Hawaii's air waves.

Another change that I'm sure will impact some people's lifestyle is the closing of the Three-D Ballroom on Kuhio. Kail and Kim, the two proprietors, have announced that they will cease operation starting in March. This trendy little hole-in-the-wall club played the latest British imports and brought in bands from L.A. like the Circle Jerks and Agent Orange. Best combination of dance and slam around. Talk of the Dead Kennedys and Social Distortion appearing at the club never materialized, but so did a lot of other stories. Nevertheless, it appears that this one of closing is unfortunately true.

With Three-D going dark, the opportunity to fill the void is open to any enterprising individual. Leading the way is Kevin Donegan, mastermind of the Pacific Nu Muzik Festivals. The third in the series is slated for March 16 and 17, held over at a warehouse on 720 Iuilei Rd. Featured this time around are the CHUMS (from L.A.), PAGAN BABIES, the EFEKT, BRAINCHILD, BOBO HANDSHAKE, the SHARX, FALLOUT, MUMBO JUMBO, COMMUNIQUE, S.R.O., RATLS and BATTERY CLUB. You gotta hand it to Kevin, if it weren't for the PNM Festivals, many of these bands would never see the light of day.



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Continuing on with our listing of some of the fanzines that we have received, there's one that I get from Berkeley that measures on the top of my list. BRAVEAR Magazine covers the San Francisco new music scene very closely with some well thought out articles on bands that originate or pass through the Bay Area. The latest issue was #8 which contained rave-ups on UB40, True West, Ministry, Green on Red and Checquered Past. Well written and sharp looking graphics. The bad thing is that Lorry, editor of the mag, says that issue #9 will be their last. They are fed up with the business, coordination and sometimes lack of cooperation encountered. They will still be sending out an occasional newsletter, so write them at P.O. Box 3877, Berkeley, CA 94703 to find out the scoop.

Yes, jazz to has their fanzines. A good bi-monthly that comes out of L.A. is BE-BOP AND BEYOND (P.O. Box 54337, Los Angeles, CA 90054). Printed on glossy paper and edited by Gerald Mack, the latest issue has an extensive interview with saxophonist, Charlie Rouse; reviews of the San Deigo Kool Jazz Festival and Tommy Flanagan's return to L.A., and features on Ricky Ford and Lee Morgan.

Also out of Los Angeles is MORE MAYONNAISE (P.O. Box 2700, Huntington Beach, CA 92647). Here's a hip, trendy, style conscious mag that covers a lot of pop music ground. Just to give you an idea of how much, there are 23 record reviews, 33 bands in their Fotofile section and articles on fashion, hair, video, etc. The write-ups tend to be very concise but the sheer number of band profiles makes MORE MAYO a must for your coffee table.

Finally, thanks to all the subscribers that have either renewed or started up their subscription to NOVUS. Your subscription not only brings NOVUS to your doorstep but also helps us keep this operation going and lets us know you're out there. One of the most important things in this business is getting feedback and its through letters and subscriptions that we can gauge a response. Need I say more!

Letters to the Editor

NOVUS:

(The letter below is making reference to two letters printed last issue criticizing Lesa Griffith's review of the first Pacific New Music Festival held at LaMancha.)
BLANKSPACE(1 LINE)

Now, now girls. Can't we all be friends about this. I mean, it was only a review. Now let's be civilized and talk this thing out.

Now Lesa; what Marti and Melanie are saying is that if you can't say nice things about them and people they like, then you shouldn't say anything at all. Especially with your oh-so-recent arrival to the fringe. Why must you insist on wringing a dirty washcloth out over their beautifully arranged pupu platter? M and M don't care about your extensive record collection. They want to know what gives you the right to give your "views and opinions rather than an objective overall view." Who made you Helen of Troy? Why knock something on its infant crawl - as is the sense of community brought out by the PNM Festival? As David Carradine said once in KUNG FU: "Should not the slow-blooming rosebud be spared so that it may one day grow strong enough for blonde girls to sell bar-to-bar?" Deja entendu indeed.

Now Marti and Melanie of the Compelled to Write Club, you see Lesa was trying to write something that people would want to read. And she succeeded nicely, I'd say. The review made many valid points about the lack of invention within the local music community; an observation that usually doesn't fit with an objective overall view. Unlike the remainder of the magazine, this review's admirable purpose was to satisfv the

critical conscience of the reporter, not to make nice. A writer goes it alone. They're not a guest in your house when they're putting the words together, why expect courtesy?

Marti, you no doubt took offense to what was written about your band, The Hat Makes the Man. The most demeaning line: "Hat is the best trendy pop band in town." Auwe! Well, so much for the Hat's career. It's all over now. They'll be lucky to get an EM Club gig after that bombshell. "The best trendy pop band?" Who does she think she is?

Any band that does 95% covers and still considers themselves "new music" should be thankful for anything they can get in the way of stray ink. In fact, all the bands involved in the Festival should appreciate what Lesa Griffith has done for them. She has thought about them. She has considered them. She has written words about them. She has crossed out those words and written new words about them. She has set herself to work with their sounds and images as motivation. She has given them the main thing for which they started playing music: attention.

Lesla is not wrong, but then neither are Marti and Melanie. They're just three people being true to their school and each were able to express themselves. Communication is a good thing. It's a necessity in the furtherment of what I hate to call, but what is best described as, The Local Scene. But let's leave the sensitivity to the hippies and cheerleaders and the seriousness to your parents.

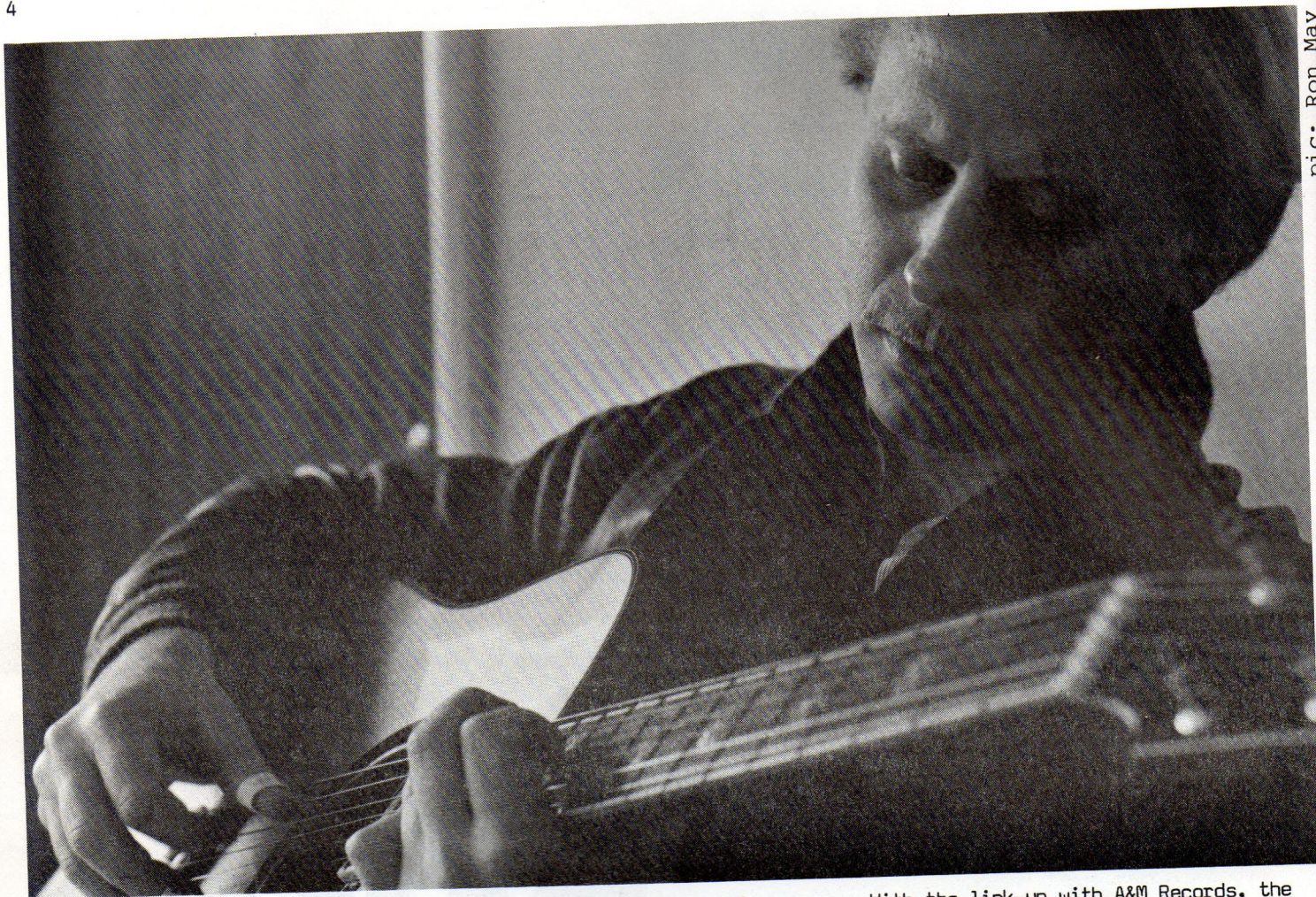


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PNM FESTIVAL 2

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pic: Ron May

William Ackerman

In all likelihood, Hawaii residents would probably key in on the name of George Winston sooner than they would for Will Ackerman. But it is the resourcefulness and innovativeness of Ackerman that brought George Winston to the ears of America. What started initially as a one record/one artist label, Windham Hill Records has grown into a multi-million dollar enterprise with more than fifteen artists on their roster and twenty-six albums in their catalog. All this is due, in large part, to the marketing savvy, eye for quality and creative sensitivity of Ackerman.

Windham Hill has just recently signed a contract agreement with A&M Records which will extend the distribution network of Windham Hill from primarily domestic to worldwide. In terms of exposure for the Windham Hill artists, the association with A&M Records will bring the audiences in Japan, Europe and Canada into ear-shot distance of their music. Something that Windham Hill, as an independent, would have difficulty in achieving.

Ackerman started as a general contractor, building homes in California and playing guitar on the side. His first album, *THE SEARCH FOR THE TURTLE'S NAVEL* was meant to be "an album for friends," but like the Pied Piper, the magic in the music captured its audience. Ackerman toured the West Coast college circuit building a loyal following. The second artist to sign to the label was Will's cousin, Alex de Grassi. From there Windham Hill began to take on a sound and image that held a unifying cord which seemed to link the music of the individual artists. People began to search, not for particular artists on the label, but for whatever was newly released. That habit continues 'til today.

In February, Will Ackerman made a brief stop-over in

performances. With the link-up with A&M Records, the picture of Windham Hill can only be painted in rosy colors. But big as they are (and still growing), it's a credit to Ackerman and his staff that they've managed to keep their feet firmly planted on the ground. They're a people oriented bunch and it shows. The following is an interview conducted just prior to a quick trip to Maui before taking off to Japan.

NOVUS: First off I wanted to talk about your most recent release, *PAST LIGHT*. I've noticed that in your latest recordings like *PAST LIGHT* and *PASSAGE*, you have incorporated more of an ensemble arrangement where guest artists appear on your album. Over the span of your five albums on Windham Hill, the emphasis has changed from solo guitarist to musician interactions. I'd like to get your comment on this.

WILL: Well, *PAST LIGHT* is in part a reflection of where I find myself from a professional standpoint; the fact that I'm running Windham Hill Records and my principle work is in guiding that label. I think of my music as an avocation and always have. Part of the reason that there's so much other instrumentation in *PAST LIGHT* is very simply because my friends came in and bailed me out. In other words, I had a musical idea that wasn't completely filled out, that didn't have every nuance and every detail that I have done in the past. In the past when I went into the studio, I knew every note, I knew every vibrato, I knew every bridge dynamic, I knew the phrase of every piece. This wasn't that way. I simply didn't have the time to hone it in that way. There are both positive and negative aspects to that. In one sense you could say, "well he's got all these guys covering for him." Well that's true to a certain extent but one of the marvelous benefits of this whole process was that more pure improvisation happened and it

pointed out the fact that I guess I'm much more confident as a musician than I've ever been and confident in my friends.

NOVUS: Do you see your role as a musician changing now?

WILL: When I recorded TURTLE'S NAVEL and when Windham Hill began and frankly when IT TAKES A YEAR and CHILDHOOD AND MEMORY was recorded, I was working as a general contractor, building houses. At that time it was avocation to. The only period in my life where music really suffered, where I couldn't write a note, was a period of time just after PASSAGE when I began to take myself seriously as a musician. And I didn't write a note through that entire period of time. It was like pulling teeth. And as soon as I relaxed and put it back into that avocational status that it's always been, it thrived again. So I think I've learned my lesson; the music will come in its own sweet time, not because I've objectified anything or forced anything but simply because something needs to be expressed.

NOVUS: As the head guy at Windham Hill Records, how do you delegate your time between your music, touring and the business?

WILL: Between music and business I would say 99 percent business and 1 percent music. In other words, I haven't played a gig since October '83 and I'm going over to Japan to play. One of the reasons why I'm taking this short vacation in Hawaii is that I literally have to practice to reacquaint myself with the songs. Every musician has the horror of being up on stage and getting to the bridge passage and forgetting it. I've never done it in my life but I think we're all terrified of doing that. It would be safe to say that the business is all encompassing and all consuming. It's very hard for me to pry myself away from work, even to come home, which causes tremendous tension in any inter-personal relationship I've had. I think it has a lot to do with the reason why Anne (Windham Hill's President) and I are no longer together as a couple. We are together as a business partner arrangement at Windham Hill. But anyone who owns their own business understands what those demands are and how much you immerse yourself in it. But when you have a business like Windham Hill that is so incredibly enjoyable and so incredibly satisfying from an artistic standpoint, from the standpoint of the response the label has had internationally, it's a terribly exciting thing to be at the top of.

NOVUS: In starting and running the Windham Hill label, did you find yourself drawing from your experience as a general contractor?

WILL: All business boils down to two things as far as I'm concerned, the first and foremost is people and it is knowing how to treat people ethically and to give them something that you are proud of and they will be proud of. A lesson I learned when I was building houses was that you haven't succeeded in selling a house when you've signed the contract to build it. It is when you're walking out of that house for the last time, handing somebody the key and they are happy with what you have done and you are proud of what you have done. In the same respect, with Windham Hill Records, the quality is evident in what we do, whether it is in the musical program, in the recording of that musical program, the mastering, the pressing, the graphics, the packaging. Absolutely every element of that is a statement of pride and love. And we have not sold that record when the person parts with their money at the counter. We have sold that record when that person takes it home, senses all of the work, all of the pride that went into it, puts it on the turntable and falls in love with it. So those are the two lessons, that all business is people, ethics and pride and then secondarily, to really be successful you want people to come back to you again.

NOVUS: I noticed that since Windham Hill first started there has been an ongoing development in appearance. There are some stark differences between your first

album cover, THE SEARCH FOR THE TURTLE'S NAVEL and your latest, PAST LIGHT. When was it that you felt that you had something with Windham Hill and began to develop its image?

WILL: You should have seen the original cover of TURTLE'S NAVEL. It was very similar in design but was designed by a friend of mine and printed by another friend of mine. We bought used Louisiana Prison Work Songs covers and sprayed adhesive to our covers and stuck them over those covers to sell. In the beginning, Windham Hill was nothing more than a single record, my own TURTLE'S NAVEL, which was never intend to be anything more than an album for friends. We never meant to start a record company. As things evolved and as more people became fans of what we were doing, we of course had to objectify a little bit more. We had to stand a certain distance from it and see where the thing was going, to establish trends and developments. It's been a process of becoming increasingly sophisticated. I started out knowing absolutely nothing about the record business or the recording industry. And the more one learns the more they can apply to the work they're doing. But the underlying motivation for Windham Hill has never changed, which is simply to speak a pure musical vision and to treat it with as much pride and love as possible. All the changes that you perceive are the people working at Windham Hill bringing more to the record label.

NOVUS: As you go through the screening process to select artist for the Windham Hill label, are there any qualities that you particularly look for?

WILL: The one criteria that really is most important in determining what will be released on the label is so emotional and so subjective as to defy description. I don't mean to make it sound mystical but the simple fact of the matter is that it's through my own subjective filters that all of the albums that have finally made it to Windham Hill, have had to pass. I can't describe to you what happens in me when I hear the right music but it's usually instantaneous. Literally in the first chord of Liz Story's demo tape, I knew there was something there. And in the ensuing thirty seconds I was certain we had an artist for Windham Hill. I don't know how to describe to you what takes place. It clearly is music which communicates intimately and directly with the heart, first and foremost. That isn't to say that the technical excellence of a player like Alex de Grassi or the innovation of a guitarist like Michael Hedges or the established credentials like Darol Anger are not superior in terms of their academic and technical impact but the first criteria is this ability to speak eloquently to the heart; one human being to another.

NOVUS: How do you feel about the comparisons critics have made of your label to other jazz labels like ECM?

WILL: In the first place I would say that I am very grateful that BILLBOARD and CASHBOX chart our albums in the jazz charts. It's wonderful that there is someplace where we can appear in the industry because that is an essential part of promotion and sales. But we are not, never have been and I'm certain will never become a jazz label. There is nothing of the black urban experience in our music. We do not pay any significant homage to either the traditions of bebop or swing. So by any academic criteria, we are not a jazz label. As for comparisons to ECM, I would say the greatest lesson I learned from ECM was the unprecedented degree of devotion to quality that Manfred Eicher put into ECM. It was perceived immediately by me and thousands of other people and it spoke to a much less cynical aspect of the business of music than I had ever encountered before. Now looking around I see that Creed Taylor with CTI did something very similar and earlier than ECM. I think actually there is more comparison between CTI and Windham Hill than ECM and Windham Hill. Certainly the musical format of Windham Hill

and ECM is extremely different. I think that Manfred's tendency in terms of production is to go into a much more academic and intellectual sphere. Whereas mine and Windham Hill's is much more of an emotionally evocative heart sphere.

NOVUS: We've talked about the foremost concern of Windham Hill, the amount of pride, quality and love devoted to the artists and their product, but to what do you attribute the public's interest in the music on Windham Hill?

WILL: I think that Windham Hill, early on, stripped away the multi-layered, overdubbed, tape saturated ambience of the contemporary recording scene. We put the musician and listener in close proximity to each other, one musician, one listener. Obviously we've broadened that format somewhat, but that remains the core of our sound.

In the early going there was never the desire to create a record label. Only as opportunities presented themselves did we see ourselves moving into other parts of the United States or other parts of the world. So you need to keep this historical perspective in mind when you look at what we've accomplished. Windham Hill did not evaluate a musical marketplace and try to compete in that marketplace nor did we actually attempt to provide an alternative. But simply by virtue of the fact that we were playing the music that we felt in our hearts and ignored all of the supposed limitations that existed on that form of music, did we become successful. It was honest. It was pure. It was direct. And that was missing from the scene and still is to a large degree.

NOVUS: How do you feel about the theory that Windham Hill has captured some of the folk stylings of the American heartland, has given it that West Coast image and people have been able to associate real closely with that?

WILL: I think that there is some truth to that but if you look at the recordings that Andreas Vollenweider is doing in Germany and Kitaro is doing on the other side of the Pacific, you come to realize that something is afoot internationally. And though Kitaro's music may have the flavor of the Orient to some degree and Andreas Vollenweider may have some of the academic aspect of the German/Swiss environment, the fact of the matter is that it all sounds like a very similar musical format. So these things are springing up internationally. I think it is true that Windham Hill embodies a good solid U.S. folk flavor. Those elements are embodied in the assimilation of the sound that becomes Windham Hill. But it is fascinating to me that there is almost a sense of a world music going on here in the fact that we can go to Japan or Europe and be so readily accepted. That is an indication to me that even if American folk forms flavor the label, it is a product of this part of the 20th century where media is giving us access to more information and musical stylings that we are so readily accepted in other places.

NOVUS: You recently hooked up with a major record label, namely A&M Records, which will probably significantly broaden your scope of distribution. How did this association with A&M come about?

WILL: The climate for independent labels changed drastically in 1983. In rapid succession, Arista, Chrysalis, Motown and Windham Hill left the independent distribution system in America. Somewhere in that, Pickwick Distribution, which was the biggest distribution company available to the independent labels, went out of business. Even without that, I perceived that two years down the road there was going to be a brick wall that we would run into in terms of our ability to expand. So at the time that Pickwick went out of business, we had already begun exploring avenues of greater distribution, not only in the U.S. but worldwide. It took us ten months to negotiate the contracts with A&M. You called it an

association which I think is the best word to use. There was no equity sold in the company. We didn't give up any quality control. We have complete control over how many or how few records we release. I can create as many new record labels as I want. I really have complete artistic freedom with A&M and it's been a wonderful partnership so far. We are looking at another 186 percent growth year at this point in terms of projection. Although that isn't rare to us. Our smallest growth year in our entire history was 181 percent with a growth of 597 percent in 1981-82. So the growth curve for this company is really kind of ridiculous. But A&M is doing a marvelous job not only in the U.S. market but Japan's going absolutely nuts, Canada's going extremely well and Europe is falling into place very nicely to. We have the Montreux Jazz Festival that we are doing this year that we are pulling some live recordings out of. So it's a real exciting time for the label.

NOVUS: So what is the likelihood of you playing in Hawaii?

WILL: Set me up, I'll play. I'm anxious to come over. I can't believe it's taken me this long to get to Hawaii. I mean I live in California, I don't know what the story is. But it'll be fun to see a little bit of the Islands this time around and in complete sincerity, I'd love to come over and play in a couple months or something. Maybe we can talk about that pretty quick.



An art exhibit, named Best Show of 1983 by the NEW YORK TIMES, is coming to town. The show, running from March 1st to April 8th at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, gives you a rare chance to stroll through a street in old Japan admiring the lovely shop fronts without having to worry about being tempted to go inside and spend all your money. The show includes over 100 examples of Kanban (shop signs) from the Edo and Meiji periods. Like ukiyo-e (woodblock prints), Kanban were often constructed by the leading artists of the day and have only recently begun to attract attention for their artistic value. Kanban combines calligraphy, painting, wood carving and sculpture. Some look humorous, some mythological, some very beautiful. They must be seen to be appreciated. The show is free and sponsored by Duty Free Shoppers Limited. (Do they say "Kanban desu" when it's time to go home?)



Nagisa Oshima

You probably know that Nagisa Oshima was the director who meshed a world war, two rock stars and a comedian in a provocative movie called "Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence." David Bowie plays Collier, a prisoner of war, and Ryuichi Sakamoto, a well known Japanese musician, portrays the POW camp commander as well as contributing the richly haunting, completely remarkable soundtrack. The movie is a moody exploration of cultures meeting at the human fulcrum.

Knowing that Oshima is the respected and prolific head of Japan's New Wave cinema still doesn't prepare one for "In the Realm of the Senses," which has just recently been shown in town again. A Cannes Film Festival winner, it was banned in Oshima's native Tokyo and now, people are once again wondering, who would make a film like this?

Recently, in conjunction with the annual Hawaii International Film Festival sponsored by the East-West Center, I had a chance to talk with Mr. Oshima and explore his unique views of culture and cinema. We began here with a simple word association game...

Noe Tanigawa

Nagisa Oshima

MOONLIGHT -----	SUNLIGHT
POVERTY -----	PRIVATE
CHANT -----	BUDDAH
CURIOUS -----	I AM
PROGRESS -----	WESTERN
WORK -----	I DON'T LIKE
POETRY -----	SEA
RESPONSIBILITY -----	INDIVIDUAL
CHIC -----	VALENTINO
IMAGE -----	MOVIE
SPIRIT -----	IN MY HEART
REAGAN -----	POWER
NATIONALISM -----	JAPAN
NEW WAVE -----	YOUTH
INDIVIDUALISM -----	WESTERN

NOE TANIGAWA: Why do people like movies?

NAGISA OSHIMA: Because movies are dreams?

NOE: Why are dreams important?

OSHIRA: Because they make you feel things you don't usually feel.

NOE: That's a bit lonely isn't it? Always separate from real life?

OSHIRA: But even in real life, there are people who make up, who chase, who try to verbalize dreams, but there are also people who can't. They may seek their dreams in movies.

NOE: How would you describe the Japanese spirit?

OSHIRA: First of all, the Japanese feeling is to affirm the present and not necessarily to surpass the present moment. Of course it would be bad to fall behind...to somehow trust the present and be as happy as possible. I think that's the Japanese feeling.

NOE: We are now hearing about the TV play, "Oshin." The critics say the Japanese spirit is embodied there. What do you think?

OSHIRA: Of course the Japanese of the past lived a life

of gaman (suffering and perserverance), but at present, no Japanese live with that feeling. It's just that the older Japanese are viewing that series and taking pleasure in reminiscing over their past, that life of endurance that they lived. It's just the older folks reminiscing. It's not of any great significance.

NOE: It has no connection with present life, then?

OSHIRA: Right. No connection with the present. It's unusual. It's because it has no connection with present life that they can enjoy watching it. If everyone were going through such suffering now, they wouldn't enjoy seeing themselves in that condition.

NOE: Yukio Mishima, your films...it's all very confusing for Americans because Japanese seem so passionate, almost obsessive. So we make a piece like SHOGUN with a romantic line Americans can understand.

OSHIRA: In SHOGUN, the Japanese are seen in a light that is suited to Americans.

NOE: What about Mishima's characters, Kawabata's, your characters...?

OSHIRA: Japanese in reality can't be that crazy.

There's some possibility that in the recesses of their minds they want to be that way, and it gets expressed through Mishima's novels, his suicide. But in actual life, Japanese are not that way. In any case, I don't think Americans can understand the Japanese. The Japanese tried very hard to understand Americans. Once, when Japan was opened up during the Meiji Period. They felt they lost to America because they were forced to open up their country. Then, again, when they lost the Second World War. They lost twice to the Americans. It's because they lost that they want to know the people they lost to. They say Americans have an interest in the Japanese but it's really only a handful of intellectuals or a small portion of politicians and economists. I absolutely don't believe the masses of Americans want to know or learn from the Japanese.

NOE: No matter how many films they see? Are you saying that as long as you can live without understanding, there's no need for it?

OSHIRA: While the Japanese these past 100 years felt they had lost culturally to America and Europe, they tried to understand and copy them. America and Europe haven't had that experience. I don't think even in my dreams that understanding between East and West proceed smoothly.

NOE: Do you find anything boring?

OSHIRA: Mmm, up 'til now, nothing bores me. I have interest in everything. I am curious, always!

NOE: David Bowie mentioned in ROLLING STONE that he was amazed that you had prepared a hundred acres as the set for "Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence" and ended up using only a small corner. Yet, once he saw the film, he realized the feeling of the entire set. How do you create a mood for your actors?

OSHIRA: I leave everything to the actors to do as they think they should. I don't do anything myself. That's why they work very hard. If people are told what to do, then they do what they're told to do. But if they think of it themselves, then are told to do that, they work very hard at it. Actors are like that.

NOE: What motivates you to make films?

OSHIRA: It's fantasy. The things I don't understand stimulate me.

NOE: As a painter, I think, I must be an egoist! Who would even care about this stuff? Is it the same with film makers?

OSHIRA: Yes, yes. Why not?

NOE: Good heavens, you have to inspire so many people to accomplish one idea of yours.

OSHIRA: Yes, it's a luxury to be able to do all this.

NOE: Ever get tired?

OSHIRA: Oh, sure, I get tired but I'm happy. This life is an extravagance and I like it. If there is such a thing as hell, I'll probably fall into it in my next life. If, after this, I should go to heaven, that would really be too much.



A Week on the TV Treadmill: An Insider's View of a Beauty Pageant

I wasn't expecting a masterpiece. This was, after all, a Dick Clark Production, and any show with that much money and clout behind it had to run smoothly and efficiently. Things like "thoughtful content" would slow production down, lose ratings. I understood that even before I walked into room #107 at the Hilton Hawaiian Village, where the head office for "The Most Beautiful Girl In The World" pageant conducted its affairs. The production staff had gathered there for emergency schedule changes; it was the first day of shooting and they had already fallen behind. No matter. These were L.A. professionals, and even though problems were pressing and the tight schedule was bearing down, hey, no problem, it could be handled.

I had been hired as a rehearsal pianist. The music I had to play was not difficult (so I was told), just lead sheets with chords on them. All the girls needed was music to do their walk-throughs, so basically they needed a steady beat. Hey, no problem. I felt comfortable already. I then met Dee Dee Wood, who was choreographing the show, and Peter Matz, who was writing the music. (I recognized Matz's name from The Carol Burnett Show and the CHICAGO II album, so I knew the music would be decent.) Both of them were friendly and seemed easy to work with. Peter Matz even asked for my suggestions on a Beatles medley he was putting together for the show.

The first rehearsal with the 21 contestants resembled a HILL STREET BLUES roll call, further complicated by several different languages being spoken and a translator needed for each. For a group of ladies from

21 different countries, though, it was surprising how smoothly things ran; only four or five of them spoke little or no English and the rest seemed to understand what was going on. Some of them were, of course, devastatingly attractive, as I eagerly anticipated. Nearly all of them smoked cigarettes, which surprised me, because I thought that this slightly younger generation would have been more health-conscious, especially since they had turned out in their aerobics and exercise clothes. It turned out most of them were models, which explained why a lot of them looked so plain in rehearsal. (A model, it's said, keeps her face in her makeup box...that way, she doesn't get bothered so much on the street.)

Roll was called to see if everyone had arrived from the bus. "Susanne Trimble, United States," yelled Dee Dee Wood. "Susanne ASHLEY Trimble," the U.S. representative coolly corrected. The other twenty names were called, mispronounced and corrected.

Dee Dee Wood had the unenviable task of corralling the gaggle of young ladies and to teach them the dance steps and walk-throughs. My job of playing music over and over until they got it right was comparatively simple and insured a large amount of tedium and boredom.

Dee Dee was a middle-aged, bespectacled lady who, as I would discover, constantly wore a headband and sweats. She had the proper temperament for dealing with young women with short attention spans. It was no nonsense with her.

Rehearsals were not difficult or grueling except for their length; some ran for five hours, some ran all day

from ten a.m. to ten p.m. As I expected, they consisted mostly of running over production numbers (introductions, bathing suit, evening wear, selection of finalists, etc.) as well as a group aerobics number. The only "talent" consisted of their own individual aerobic routines, freestyle, each under a minute in length. More than any other pageant I'd seen, this was a true beauty contest; one either looked pretty or one didn't, talent and speeches be damned.

Most of the contestants were fairly young, 18 years old or so, but their variety was striking. I learned this as they gathered around the piano to request songs. Deborah from Puerto Rico asked for "She Works Hard for the Money" so she could dance to it; Yoraidyl from the Philippines, whose favorite singer was Jack Jones (!), wanted to hear "All the Things You Are;" Morocco's Nadia requested Michael Jackson; three or four of them sang along to "As Time Goes By."

A few wanted to play the piano themselves; Susanne from the U.S. insisted on giving a few awkward recitals of classics, just to prove that she could play; Yoko from Japan poked out "The Way We Were;" Carmen from Brazil didn't seem to care that Dee Dee had asked her to stop playing, she just kept on hitting keys even though she didn't have a song in mind.

This was about the extent of any personal contact I had with the ladies. Still, I learned a great deal about them through watching them. It was fairly obvious, for example, that a few had had previous modeling experience, including standing, moving and walking with grace and poise, while others walked down the ramps like sacks of potatoes. It didn't seem fair, I thought, that the experienced few would have an edge over the others. (As it later turned out, I was wrong, and Yoko, who could turn on the charm just like that, did not make the semi-finals.)

Before the ladies could rehearse to a master tape of music submitted by each contestant for their individual aerobics, they had to sit down and listen to the edited versions to hear if they were suitable for their routines. Most of the music was the usual Flashdance/Michael Jackson melange of either the excruciating soundtrack or, even worse, the obscure disco tune. (At least the Flashdance stuff were songs and not just extended riffs.) What threw true color into the proceedings, though, were the occasional ethnic musics from different countries. Carmen picked a romantic Latin ballad, and Antonia from Italy chose a folk song so lively, she had the audience clapping along during her performance.

The first rehearsals were held in the Hilton's Coral Ballroom #4, where it was necessary to wear thick socks, jeans and two shirts because of the oppressive air conditioning. Despite the pressure to learn the production numbers and the threat of competition, the atmosphere was fairly relaxed and friendly. All that changed when we moved into the NBC Arena for the last few days of walk-throughs, run-throughs and other polishing up.

The set at the Arena had been under preparation for days, while we had been rehearsing at the Hilton, I assumed. It included painted flowers (which looked silly in person but fine on TV), a huge black cloth drop to hide the back of the arena and a fountain that only seemed to get in the way of the camera angles. David Hasselhoff and Jayne Kennedy, the show's co-hosts, had arrived, as well as Englebert Humperdinck, who had to sing off of cue cards. Hasselhoff was wearing his black jacket from the KNIGHT RIDER TV series, but I noticed he took it off as soon as he got into his limo. He was nice enough to meet with fans outside the arena, though.

"It's not as interesting on television," the representative from Israel told her parents. I knew what she meant; as we watched the TV monitors, we could see the ladies glide glamorously down the ramp with their names superimposed below them on the screen. It was showy and well-produced, but they seemed much more natural and approachable during the earlier rehearsals,

when the pressure to perform and compete wasn't as intense. It seemed that the sets, cameras and lights had changed the way the walked, moved and spoke. They used to be perfectly nice young ladies, playful and spirited; now they took a cooler, more distanced stance. They were still attractive, but their personalities had been muffled.

This was what I'd always disliked about beauty pageants: the dehumanizing process and the enervating effect on the contestants. It annoyed me even more this time because I knew that the 21 women I got to know during the last week would not come across through the assembly-line presentation.

I spent more time sitting around doing nothing at the television rehearsals than I thought possible, and it would have been the low point of the entire week were it not for one thing: because I had to take cues from the production crew, I was given a headset. This meant I could hear all the cues to the camera, light, videotape and backstage people that gave the whole affair a new interest and excitement as to what directions the director was giving. I could also hear every rude remark and crude comment, every off-color joke and filthy insult. The contestants were bored to tears, but I was having a ball!

At one point during a break, the girls watched the monitors as practice videotapes, taped during rehearsals, were played back. The first contestant appeared with her name below. "Susanne ASHLEY Trimble," the U.S. representative informed no one in particular. Her name didn't change on the screen. "Jeff," shouted Debi of Great Britain to the director through a borrowed headset, "you're a real pain in the ass." "I love you too, Debi," came the reply over the public address system.

I may have been annoyed at the impersonal front the contestants put up for the cameras at first, but I quickly realized how important it was to do this. The TV camera is merciless and picks up every nuance of movement, every mussed hair and every facial blemish. The ladies presented themselves fairly well, but after a while, the tediousness of the run-throughs showed on their faces and in their stances.

At the last rehearsal I attended, I sat for three hours with no headset and nothing to do. The music had been recorded in L.A. and they no longer needed me. Dee Dee Wood told me I could go home. In all, I attended five rehearsals, much of that time spent reading and writing. I billed Dick Clark Productions for all of my time.

I videotaped the pageant at home and watched it in bits and pieces. Debi Brett of Great Britain won, as I hoped, but several semi-finalist choices I didn't agree with. Still, I watched transfixed, calling out the names of the contestants as they appeared on the screen. It didn't matter that I had spoken to a mere handful of them; I felt a peculiar delight in being more familiar with them than the audience was.

"Deborah...Yoko...Carmen...Debi...Lene...Susanne ASHLEY Trimble..."

ALLEN LEONG

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P.O. Box 152

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Frank Marshall Davis

It's 1940, back in the days when bands all travelled by train or bus. The Ellington band is playing a little stop-over gig in Hayes, Kansas, mid-way point between Kansas City and Denver. Of course, everybody in town is present and accounted for. Everybody's talking, socializing, trying to dance. The band rocks on. Johnny Hodges, alto sax man supreme, steps forward; breathes out a particularly seamless ballad called "Daydream." The whole room -- including the rest of the band -- falls silent. When Johnny Hodges sits back down nobody applauds. In fact, for the next five minutes nobody does much of anything; everybody just stands there stunned. Now that's the power of music.

I pass along this true story to affirm what Frank Davis says about The Duke Ellington Orchestra in his very fine portrait of their leader and piano player, Edward K. "Duke" Ellington. "Gentlemen, we are gassed" indeed. People still talk about that band. Although anybody, from Willie Nelson to Sun Ra, can play a Duke Ellington composition, Duke wrote with his very special group in mind. Often arrangements pulled together on the spot. In the studio or on the bandstand, all-star soloists carried ideas to the people in inimitable fashion. Mr. Davis' poem nicely illustrates this.

I hope you know who Duke Ellington is. As Martin Williams says "It is not uncommon to see him named as the greatest composer we have produced, regardless of musical category." Countless books, articles, records, even shows come out every year about or featuring his work. You can't talk about American music, especially Afro-American music, without mentioning, in fact, without singing the praises of Duke Ellington. He started out a painter; music called him on. He learned, really learned, how to play piano and orchestra. Yes, orchestra; you can't talk about Duke Ellington's music without mentioning, in fact, without singing the praises of The Duke Ellington Orchestra. Diamonds too, maybe, but Ellington is forever.

This is the second in our series of jazz portraits by the distinguished poet and journalist Frank Marshall Davis. Good news: he liked the first one. No "typos" even! Like I said before, Mr. Davis edited the first successful black daily newspaper in America, The ATLANTA WORLD, so he knows about typos and what it's like to walk a piece of writing from idea to print shop and out. A prize winning poet, Mr. Davis knows how to walk his writing with grace, style and life. Again we at NOVUS proudly present Frank Marshall Davis.

DUKE ELLINGTON

RAS MANU

Comes now
Taste of fireworks
In my mouth
Sound of honey
In my ear--
Gentlemen
I dig you!

Hum a hymn for the happy hip
Every hipster
Completely happy
Send 'em on a banana baloon
Riding toward a grapefruit moon

Conjure man of music
Magician of sharps and flats
Inventor of forty nine new ways to bend a chord,
shape a note
Crazy painter brushing kaleidoscopic sounds on
aural canvas
Mad sculptor melting metronomes into liquid mobiles
Pardon me: wasn't that a blackmaned lion pawing party
piano in a Park Avenue penthouse?
Who gathers the goldred orchids raining on the jukebox
sea?

Someday someone
should give a dance for the band
Let the instruments dress
and have a ball
I'd like to ease
around slow, you know
with the alto sax
in a tight silk gown
and no bra
You take her tenor sister
but keep an eye
on baritone brother
he can be mighty mean--
If somebody gave
a dance for the band
who'd make the music?
A fine quail
with rhythm in her tail
and hungry hips
for the long trombone?

Music cascades from brass and reeds in a rhythmic
rainbow waterfall
Coiled snakes of biting notes spring from bass
and drums
Through it all the piano darts like a boisterous
bumblebee
And a cool cat falls
to his knees
shouting hot hosannas
in a jingling jangling
jiving jargon
to a jazz jehovah

Light the cannon crackers
I have a taste for the exploding hot;
Turn on the cool
Give me the sound of honey
In my ear--
Gentlemen
I am gassed!



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Midnight Oil - 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1

Columbia

This album is not for the squeamish. In their first stateside release, Midnight Oil shuns the silly love songs to rail against the existing world order. And although they are one of many bands to reach us from the land Down Under, the Oils have little in common with Men At Work or INXS. They seem to be as concerned with breaking the bonds of oppressive regimes worldwide as they are with breaking into the Top Twenty. This makes for bold, idiosyncratic music that is commendable for its ambition, if not always for its result.

Thankfully, the Oils are more than the Clash from Oz. Peter Garrett's ranting singing style is similar to Joe Strummer's, and the Oils' attack is guitar-heavy, but "10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1" makes artful use of the studio and production. A wealth of pop influences find their way into these songs, sometimes all at once. "Only the Strong" begins in a Stonesey romp before the rhythms echo out, dub-wise. String and brass arrangements augment some of the hardest cuts, adding drama and punch to "Read About It" and "The Power and the Passion."

Clearly, the Oils are onto something. Their pop instincts are well-defined, yet much of the stridency in their lyrics and core riffs could be edited. Some songs contain too much message and too many mood shifts to be digested in one tune. Still, it all comes together perfectly on "U.S. Forces," where guitarist Jim Moginie's acoustic bashing drives the best sing-along chorus for a political song since XTC's ENGLISH SETTLEMENT album. And any band that proclaims, "It's better to die on your feet than live on your knees" is a band to watch.

CHRIS PLANAS

Wire Train - . . . in a Chamber

415/Columbia

David Kahne's production work is beginning to worry me. His streamlined approach to recording seems to amplify a new group's weaknesses. Even though he was responsible for the clean and ringing sound of Red Rockers' "China," the rest of their album, GOOD AS GOLD, struck me as monotonous in overall sound and tempo. The same can be said for this Wire Train record. Although it's pretty difficult to find the soul of this promising band behind the somewhat sterile sheen of Kahne's production, the heartbeat can be heard at times in singer/lyricist Kevin Hunter's intriguing poetic writing.

The flow of dream imagery is oblique at times but still engaging and the music...well, "Slow Down" at least sounds a bit different and "Love Against Me" has a nice, melancholic singalong chorus.

A better way to judge Wire Train, I guess, would be to see them live. But in the meantime, if you like Red Rockers, R.E.M. or Translator, check out IN A CHAMBER.

GARY CHUN

Burning Spear - The Fittest of the Fittest

Heartbeat

As my colleague Daniel said in an earlier issue, "Spear sings hard...His style is rugged like the hills. Like homespun clothes." Beautiful image, Braddah; I couldn't have put it better myself. Of course, Papa D. made his remarks in reference to the classic MARCUS GARVEY album. I'm reviewing a new release recorded seven years later. Even so, what he said about the Spear of those times still rings true today.

While style and fashion in the dancehalls changes like the daily news, Spear seems to grow but yet stay the same, like history or tradition. He still puts out trance music and while the sound, like his saxist Herman Marquis' waistline, has thickened over the years, it hasn't significantly changed. It's still iree. Spear has vision, that's why.

Spear sings about Africa, about black people, about repatriation. He sings about Marcus Garvey, one religion and Jah Rastafari. Whether or not you can relate to these subjects personally, you can't help but be moved by the singer. "The whole world wanna be free," he declares at one point, echoing a sentiment he's expressed before. Though Spear comes from Yard, his message feels universal, free of the contumelious posing less centered performers spew forth in the name of truth and rights.

I like this record. I like all Spear's records, from the early Studio Ones to the recent Heartbeats. One thing I especially like about the Heartbeats: Spear's incorporating more children's images into his songs for youths. "Education" on last year's FAROVER opens with a good conversation between a mother and a child just back from school. "Fire Man" on FITTEST even quotes "I'm a Little Teapot!" Who but Spear could do that without sounding like Jonathan Richman? Once a man, twice a child, indeed.

In closing I submit that MARCUS GARVEY may still be the cornerstone but this record's a welcome addition to the discography. Roots!

RAS MANU

Steve & Teresa - Ocean Blue

Kealohi

The mark of a group that's on its way up is the ability of that group to change according to the tastes of their audience. Steve and Teresa are on their way up with their new album, OCEAN BLUE. One of the most difficult jobs in the world is to improve on a proven product. This was the problem Steve and Teresa faced after their excellent first effort, CATCHING A WAVE. Undaunted by this, the duo went into the studio and created this new gem.

The new album has a very classy sound and it becomes very apparent that the pair had more money to make this album than the last. While there definitely is a "Steve and Teresa sound," in the minds of many people, they have not solidified this sound. The result is that they are still able to change styles, cross over to other forms of music and not get stereotyped as an all-Hawaiian or all-rock group. This almost makes listening to OCEAN BLUE an adventure because you are never quite sure what to expect from one track to the next.

The album starts with a Calipso/Jamaican medley of songs. "Rum and Coca-Cola Medley" has a real bouncy and animated sound. The interesting thing about the song is the vocal arrangements flow from one song to the next as if they were written for each other. This could very well be the hit off the album. The other song that has hit potential is Steve Maii's composition "Someday," a bittersweet ballad of lost love. The beautifully arranged vocals actually gave me chicken skin!

Along the more traditional lines are a couple of original compositions by Frank Hewett. Hewett is another story in himself. He is singularly the greatest composer of Hawaiian music of our time. "Lehua Makanoe" is a typical Hawaiian love song, with Hewett using many symbols to emphasize the story line. Steve and Teresa

do a real nice job of lightening the mood of the song by toning down their delivery.

The other composition by Hewett is actually a chant that Steve and Teresa set to music. In the past, many other groups have attempted to set chants to music with varying degrees of success, the most notable being the Beamers and the Cazimeros. The problem with chants is that they are more ceremonial and, being that, have a tendency of sounding sullen when set to music. To overcome this, S&T use the sweet voice of Teresa to smooth out the somber tone of the chant, then adding Steve's harmonies to give the song a different texture. The result is a very palatable arrangement that could stand against any of the arrangements by the Beamers and the Cazimeros.

A departure from the rest of the album is the final cut. With an intro by James Grant Benton that comes hard on the ears after "Prisoner of Love," the lead-in to "I'm Pau" will most likely catch you off guard.

My favorite cut is the sultry "Prisoner of Love" medley. Teresa's voice is so smooth on this song that she could charm even the Ayatollah Khomeini.

You want everybody to say you got good taste? Get this album and play it loud on your car stereo as you cruise around Ala Moana Park! All kidding aside, get a copy before your friends do. It's that good.

KEVIN CHING

Let's Active - Afoot

I.R.S.

North Carolinian Mitch Easter has found time away from producing, recording and working with groups like R.E.M., the Individuals and the Bongos to put together a band to perform his music. Let's Active's EP on I.R.S. Records contain some energetic pop tunes that sometimes hint at resembling the Monkees or the Mamas and the Papas. There's also a touch of psychedelia pervading much of the music but the folksy guitar and nasal twang of Easter's voice provides the main focus of Let's Active.

The group is now currently touring the U.S. and along with Easter are three women that make up the remainder of Let's Active. Bassist Faye Hunter and drummer Sara Romweber appear on AFOOT but the need to round out Easter's tunes in the live setting prompted the band to add Lynn Blakey on keyboards.

My favorite cut on the album is "Room With a View." It has a decisively funkier, grittier sound to it with Faye and Mitch trading vocals over a captivating interplay of computerized synth-drums and big guitar sound. There's depth here, all the way from the cutesy-pop tunes to the garage-band rock'n roll.

Next in store for Easter? The recording and production of the follow-up LP for R.E.M. probably. I just hope he and Let's Active can squeeze in enough time to pump out more music. I love this stuff.

BURT LUM

Kenny G - G Force

Arista

On this second recording for Arista Records, Kenny G has virtually unleashed himself from the influences of Jeff Lorber and proceeded on "taking charge." Kenny's head has always been into the funk sound since his gigging with Cold, Bold and Together back in Seattle during the mid-Seventies. This is his time to do what he's been wanting, to put together a dance-oriented funk album. The songs here are very catchy and commercial but borders on being a bit too sterile. Each tune seems to follow a formula that leaves little room for Gorelick to exercise some sax improvisation. That's where my disappointment lies since I know how good a reed man he is.

Five of the eight tracks are Kenny G written each having a funky Chic-groove propelled by the bass playing of Wayne Brathwaite; with clap tracks and the works. Kenny trades off on the synthesizer, lyricon and woodwinds, sounding the best when he's playing the sax.

This is great dance-party material, sure to keep your blood flowing and on that level this album is successful. To explore deeper into the creativity would be pointless. Some music functions best without having to think much about it. It's like driving on I-80 to Heavenly and G-FORCE is on the stereo; all you can think about are the ski slopes but it sure is a good feeling.

BURT LUM

Ledward Kaapana - Lema Wela!

Leahi

With the album only a few weeks old, LIMA WELA made KCCN's top 10 list. Not bad for an instrumental album in the local market. But there's a good reason why this album did so well--it's a hot album. From the first track to the last, it bounces and glides.

The engineering on this album is pretty good, the recording sounding very crisp. In fact, the sound is so crisp that, at one point, you can hear Kaapana's wristwatch beeping on the hour. (You gotta listen real close though.)

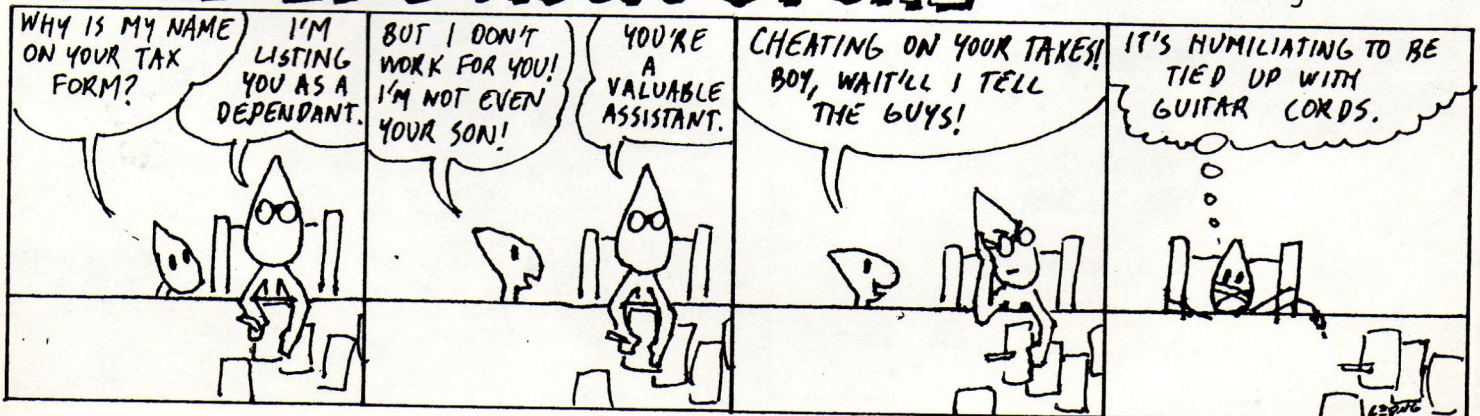
Every instrument is performed by Kaapana, and he creates some pretty spacey sounds. On "Cruisin-On" Kaapana plays congos that sound more like a synthesized "pop." The autoharp is used to good effect on "Paokalani" and "Cruisin-On."

The album also features some country-western cuts for variety. "Memphis" and "Abilene" are toe-tapping arrangements that sound like something Chet Atkins would play.

Need I say more? In fact, this album is so good that I think it should easily win a Hoku award in the instrumental category.

KEVIN CHING

UNCLE ED'S MUSIC STORE by Allen Leong



Black Star Liner - Reggae from Africa

The internationalization of reggae music in the 1970's has led to a variety of interesting hybrids. Bob Marley, Peter Tosh and Third World have exposed the world to Jah Music in ways that communicate across cultural barriers; everyone from the Police to Freddy Fender have picked up on the music and its message of political and spiritual liberation. Even here in Hawaii, local bands like the Movers and Crucial Youth strive for a roots reggae sound amenable to our island lifestyle.

Now comes BLACK STAR LINER, an excellent sampler of reggae from Africa, the spiritual homeland that has inspired reggae artists since the music's inception. A selection like this couldn't be more timely, with African and Jamaican pop music making important in-roads in the commercial marketplace.

Listening to this record is a delight for those who can hear the influences. "Carry On" and "Leaking Heart" are by a band called Sabanoh 75, who sound remarkably like the Leslie Kong studio players backing the Pioneers. "Kokolioko," by Miatta Fahnbulleh, echoes the golden sound of Lee Perry, right down to the humor in the lyrics about a woman who grows weary of her husband's advances.

But the best tunes point the way toward a true African reggae sound. On "Destiny," Victor Uwaifo fuses a rockers rhythm drum track with a more synchopated bass line, all under a distinctly African harmonized vocal. Sonny Okusun's "Fire in Soweto" can stand on its own as contemporary reggae, with an infectious roots bassline and the sweet sting of the lead guitar. This is Third World dance floor music, an uplifting testament to the musical interchange of black cultures worldwide.

CHRIS PLANAS

Heartbeat**Best of Bill Murata the Producer****Pumehana**

When Murata passed away in 1981, his loss had really been felt by all those he touched. A group of his most adamant friends and admirers hurried about trying to decide on a fitting tribute to this great man. After going through a long list of choices (that included a concert given in his honor), they decided on producing a collection of songs that best displayed the genius of this man.

At first blush, the album just appears to be another "collection of hits." But, while there are commercial hits on this album, the selections were made more for the beauty and musical type represented. A broad spectrum of songs are included, varying from a kids selection, a Hawaiian version of "Hoky Poky," to the classic by Nalani Olds, "Kalahuiipuaa."

Some of the selections were recorded years ago, but one of the drawbacks of this anthology is that the recording date of each song is not given. One of the first songs that Murata produced was a piano piece by Rene Paulo entitled "Here is Happiness." Recorded in 1950, before there was sophisticated recording equipment, the song on the album sounds like it was recently recorded. (Apparently engineer Dunbar Wakayama did some remixing on the song to bring the cut up to modern standards.)

For those who aren't too familiar with Hawaiian music, this would be an excellent sampler. Some of the more recent selections include the fantastic song "I Kona" by I Kona. The Makaha Sons of Ni'ihau make their presence felt with their song "Holi'ilua." Auntie Genoa Keawe sings "E Huli Ma Koa" in her own inimitable style. Sonny Chillingworth shows off his legendary talents on the slack key guitar on his "Meleana E/Tomo Pono."

It has been said that Murata could have been much more wealthier had he stuck with only the commercially successful artists. But it was the man's desire to nurture the newer artists and give them an opportunity to record. On the album, the liner notes said that Murata was a man of great vision but just that his timing was wrong. I disagree. His timing was excellent and I'm sure all those artists on the album would agree with me.

KEVIN CHING

Rankin Scroo & Crucial Youth - Thanks and Praise**Crucial Youth**

This is one reggae album that falls short of the mark. It's unfortunate because it's a local release from some talented people. Ranking Scroo has an easy, disarming tenor voice perfect for "lovers' rock" and he proves that on the title track and "Little Girl." It's everything else that's the problem.

Both of the aforementioned songs lead off their respective sides, and "Little Girl" boasts the services of James Kaneko on drums and our own Chris Planas adding some well-placed guitar fills. On most of the remaining songs, it's just Ranking Scroo and Sista Ginger singing and overdubbing their own playing of drums, bass, rhythm guitar, keyboards and percussion. Their playing is functional at worst, but with dub versions immediately following most of the songs, the poorly mixed instrumental tracks come to the forefront and amplify the weaknesses of the playing. The problem--and, for reggae music, it's a crucial problem--is the music doesn't kick in with enough authority and misses the groove.

Sista Ginger's singing also doesn't compare with Ranking Scroo's voice, as her solo spots on the harder numbers, "Jah Right Way" and "Rejoice" has little to capture your attention.

If "Thanks & Praises" and "Little Girl" were released as singles and got extensive radio airplay, then this album would not have been done in vain. Other than that, chalk this record up to experience.

GARY CHUN

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LiveWire

Third Annual LCC Jazz Festival

This event was truly a community affair. I was amazed with both the good turnout (a packed house) and diversity of the audience, a healthy mixture of Honolulu and Leeward residents, old and young. For the bargain of three dollars admission each, everyone enjoyed a fairly well-coordinated evening's worth of jazz in one of my favorite venues, the LCC Theatre.

Besides the attraction of two of Hawaii's well-established jazz acts, Nueva Vida and Gabe Baltazar, the festival also featured two more bands that came as pleasant surprises to me.

The Monday Night Big Band (so named because of its appearance, strangely enough, on that very same day) appeared to be a conglomeration of middle-aged -- and

some younger -- folks who played some very nice big band music. Under the direction of Jack Darvill, the band swung through such stuff as "Stompin' At The Savoy" (with a good solo spot by relative youngster Ed Weber on the piano) and an absolutely captivating rendition of that ol' chestnut "When You're Smiling." So smo-o-o-oth! Tenor saxist Manny Glass and trumpeter Eric Miyashiro also deserved special mention for their contributions to this classy community group.

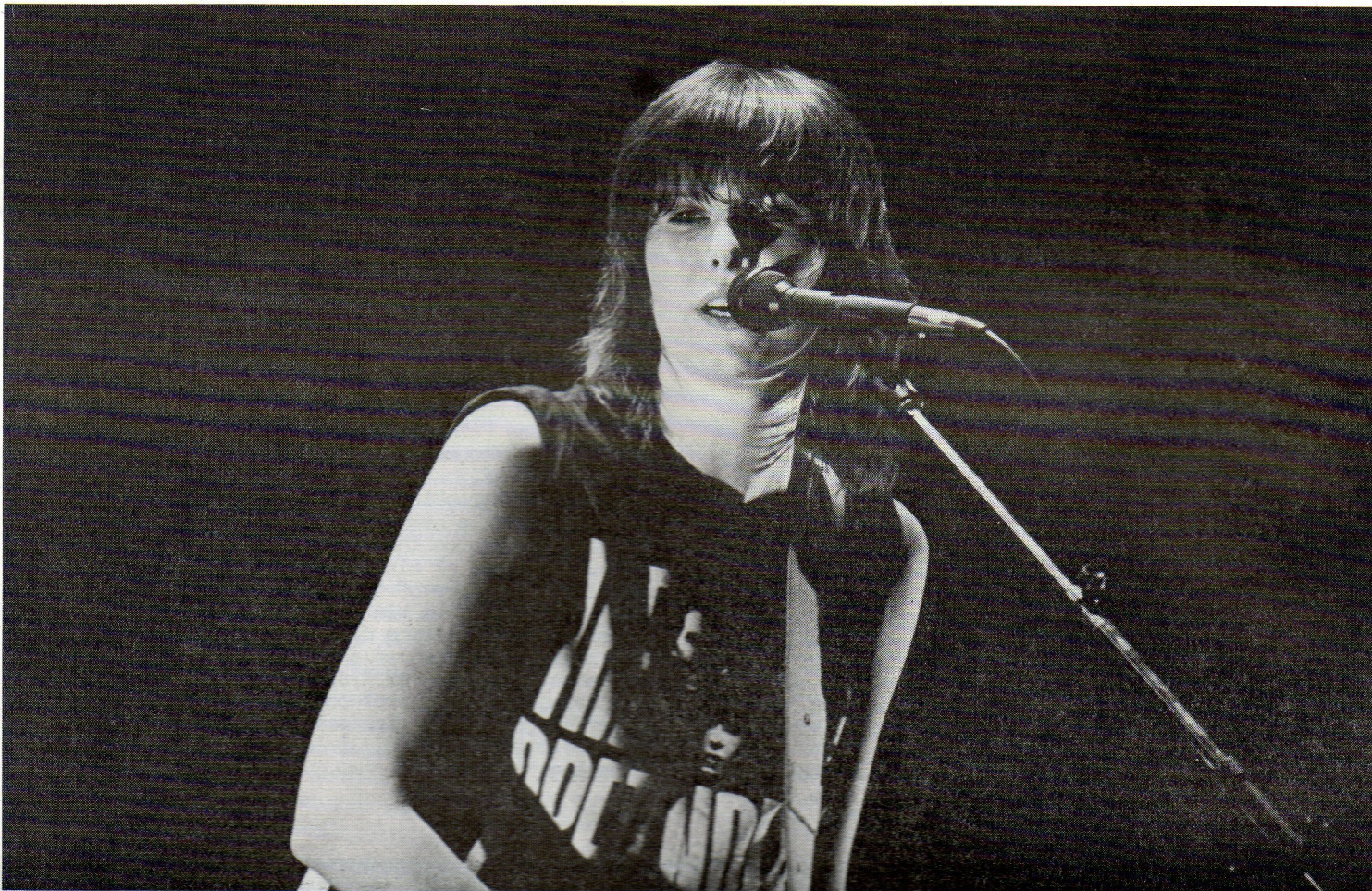
The most inventive band that January night was Quest, made up of professional musicians who played a fine set of all original material. The music ran the gamut from light Latin funk to late night blues and a ballad. With the exception of Frank Leto, who was guesting on percussion from Picante, and drummer Jack Martin, everybody else offered a well-arranged tune to the repertoire. Highlights were Danny Caparoso's fluid and supple guitarwork (akin to Joe Pass!) on his ballad "Joanne" and hornman Tom Arsisto's "Jasmine," with a neat intro by Leto on the berimbau (a South American percussive instrument) and very good flute playing by Arsisto himself.

The real attraction of the group, however, was saxist Scott Villiger, a newcomer to the Island music scene. His alto blowing on the aforementioned "Jasmine" and the "All Blues"-feel of his "Scotch on the Rocks" were excellent samplings of this man's talents, and I hope to hear a lot more from him and Quest in the future. Maybe there's an enterprising club owner out there willing to give this band a shot at a regular gig...

Thanks anyway to Tom Arsisto (who pulled double duty by playing a dual role of coordinator/performer both on- and offstage) and theatre manager Kathleen Cabral for their help that evening. I look forward to next year's gathering.

GARY CHUN





pic: George Lee

Chrissie Hynde and The Pretenders

Let us give thanks for the songs of one Chrissie Hynde of the Pretenders.

Hynde stands apart from her female contemporaries, projecting strength with her music, lyrics and vocal inflection. She doesn't play the bitch-in-Spandex like Benatar or the ice-cold blonde like Debbie Harry; Hynde's sensuality is innate, riding the vehicle of her songs. And unlike those aforementioned peers, Hynde's musical direction is not masterminded by the male guitarist in her group. With all respect to the late, great James Honeyman-Scott, this band sounds like the Pretenders and nobody else.

The Pretenders chose to re-enter the rock and roll mainstream by undercutting as many expectations as possible. Although this nine-month major comeback tour of large concert halls is being sponsored and promoted by Music Television (even MTV video jock J.J. Jackson came on a few minutes before the Pretenders to welcome them to Hawaii), the group made it be known by the integrity of their performance that they're playing the media hype game by their own rules.

Before they hit the rather austere set stage (basic black with a white drum set with cymbals set on artfully curved stands), Frank Sinatra's 1966 "That's Life" -- the original Showbiz Comeback tune if there was one -- blared over the speakers. And when the band did come on, they opened not with a fast rocker, but with the chugging, psycho-bluesy "My City Was Gone."

As evident at the Blaisdell Arena that Valentine's Day, the Pretenders' appeal lies in the great songs that Hynde writes and her cool delivery. It's no accident that Chrissie's publishing outfit is called Hynde House of Hits. You can't really dance to "Back on the Chain Gang," but thousands were singing along to it that night. And only Chrissie Hynde could chart success with

"Middle of the Road," a tough untrendy rocker that's a verbal kick in the groin to the collective lifestyle of many listeners who support her. Her songs will be classics because they say something. (The woman's got great stage presence as well, comparable to Bono of U2.)

The excellent lighting augmented the force of the performance. Using no spot lights, the band could see the reaction of the audience and play to them instead of a false and gaudy "superstar" image most other popular bands push upon the public. It was a brilliant move on the Pretenders' part. No lasers, no flash pots, no smoke bombs and no bullshit!

The band, as always, plays for the song itself, combining power with economy. Drummer Martin Chambers (along with Hynde, a surviving member of the old group) has become one of the best in the business, driving the older tunes like "Mystery Achievement" and "Precious" while playing clean and precise on "Thin Line Between Love and Hate" and "Talk of the Town." He was in constant and exhilarating motion, with water spraying off his floor toms with each authoritative thwack and drumsticks flying off his drum heads every which way into the crowd.

New guitarist Robbie McIntosh, while lacking the sheer elegance of Honeyman-Scott, is also a more fluid player who never overplays his hand. His solos and fills are charged with emotion, yet concise and melodic, yielding center stage to the songs themselves. To his credit, the older Pretenders material was rendered with just the right amount of reverence and passion. The other new member, bassist Malcolm Foster, rounded out the foursome and added to the newfound backup vocal strength with Chambers and McIntosh that was deficient in the old lineup.

And with the past behind her, two previous band

members dead of drugs and a long layoff from public performance to give birth to a new daughter, Chrissie Hynde's new songs reflect concerns far bigger than those on her first few records. On the encore "Thumbelina," Hynde leads her baby girl through the heartland of America, worried for her future in a "great big scary world." And then just to remind us that she is indeed "special," she launches into "Brass in Pocket," grinding her hips in a way that is both innocent and sexy. When she struck a side profile, hand on hip, and sang "I'M SPECIAL!/so special/I gotta have some of your... atten-shun/GIVE IT TO ME!," you couldn't help but accept her wholeheartedly. She closed with a dead-on version of Barrett Strong's "Money" and by dedicating it to the "poor people in Hawaii" showed that she was thinking about more than just broken hearts.

The sound system provided much frustration to listeners who wanted to savor the Pretenders' live sound. Opening act the Hat Makes the Man had to needlessly suffer from it as well despite a fine energetic set. Treble settings were way too high; at times the bass drum was barely audible. Feedback came often during the set and took a while to straighten out. Those unfamiliar with the intimacy of Hynde's lyrics would gain nothing from listening to her that night. The contour of her unique voice was there, but the words were hard to distinguish. It's too bad everyone involved didn't take their job as seriously as the Pretenders did. Thankfully, it did relatively little to hamper a great show.

By tour's end nine months from now, the Pretenders should be acclaimed as the best concert act of '84. I was about to append that with "...barring any more major catastrophes that have hampered the band in the past." But I take that back. I think Chrissie Hynde and the band have got the monkey off their collective backs and are clearly enjoying life's pleasures instead.

As Martin Chambers shouted to the wildly cheering crowd at concert's end, "It's good to be back!"

CHRIS PLANAS with GARY CHUN

The Bus Boys

When I first saw the Bus Boys on FRIDAYS and SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE, the sight of five black guys doing great bar band rock'n roll was unexpected, to say the least. They played up the incongruity of their act with glee. With lead singers Brian O'Neal mugging and playing up the happy Negro stereotype, Gus Loudermilk dancing and shuffling about, and rave-up songs like "KKK" and "Johnny Sold Out," the Bus Boys looked to have a bright future ahead of them in challenging the blacks-can't-play-rock myth.

On second viewing at one of their two concerts at the UH's Campus Center Ballroom, the novelty of the act seems to have worn thin, revealing nothing much in substance. The audience seemed to have a good enough time, though, but I found their material lacking and falling into two narrow categories: Brian's lightweight social commentaries ("American Worker" and "Minor Stars in a Cowboy Movie," for example) and brother Kevin's odes to horniness. I felt the Boys were content in doing the same ol' shuck'n'jive act they did when they first hit the tube.

But maybe I judged them too harshly because the opening act of Sonya and Revolucion certainly put me in an unreceptive mood. Personnel changes have been made (with the exception of holdover guitarist Chris Bovard) and the group sounds even more so like your typically anonymous bar band. That is, they do a more convincing Pat Benatar cover than a Talking Heads tune. Their original stuff was pretty indistinguishable, as well, and definitely not "new wave" in even the most banal sense of the phrase.

Oh well, you can't win 'em all (ooohh, a bad cliché ending).

GARY CHUN



The other day, I was driving my car down the Ala Wai, really getting into a song Bradda-Bradda was playing on KCCN. It might have been "Flying"...but that's not important. What is important is that the station started to fade right when I passed Kapahulu Avenue. The first thing I do is crank the volume up, because I don't want to miss the song. Then guess what happens? My ears take a sonic beating when the signal gets strong.

Has this ever happened to you? For the only all-Hawaiian music format station in the world, you would expect KCCN to be the pillar of stability in an altogether shaky world of radio biz. Not only is the signal weak (too weak to be heard in pockets of Honolulu no more than five miles away from the station), but the AM quality is bad also. All-Hawaiian Music sounds poorly engineered (which it isn't) on the AM side because it just doesn't have the clarity that the discriminating ear demands.

So, the next question is, what can be done about this problem? Do we just have to say, "well, that's the way it is?" Or do we accept the implication that Hawaiian music has not refined itself enough to merit a higher quality frequency?

I say no to both of these questions. First of all, I think Hawaiian music has really taken a backseat to other forms of music in Hawaii far too long. As far as programming is concerned, I think KCCN does a marvelous job. The personalities at KCCN are fun to listen to. The music for the most part is varied enough to keep up interest. If there is any room for improvement, that would probably be in the area of more CONTEMPORARY HAWAIIAN MUSIC.

So what about an FM Hawaiian music station? I think Hawaii is ready for this upgrade in quality and, yes, I believe Hawaiian music is refined enough to justify this. I've heard, however, that KCCN is not interested in going over to the FM side. The cost of going FM would cause a higher fixed cost for KCCN's strapped budget. An FM station, however, would virtually eliminate "fading" and clarity would be tremendously improved. One way to change this situation is to write KCCN and make them realize that we really could use a new FM station. Better yet, call up the station and let your feelings be known.

Status quo or satisfaction? You make the decision.

ABOUT TOWN

- ** If you were wondering what ever happened to I Kona lately, well, they aren't in Hawaii. They're in the San Francisco area and I heard they SOLD OUT some of their concerts. Right on bradachs, keep on spreading the great music. Ledward and the gang should be back at the Blaisdell Palm Garden by February 24th.
- ** Hawaii has lost yet another important influence in the Hawaiian music industry. Rap Replinger, the a man who gave so much joy to the people of our aina, was found dead on Jan. 25th from an overdose of cocaine. He won't be forgotten.
- ** Well, that's it for now. Until next time, I'll see you at the night clubs!

KEVIN CHING



Twelve inch records, with their "special club mixes" and "extended versions," are often frowned upon as purely commercial, money making devices. Yet how many times have you, the hapless record consumer, bought an album only to listen to the one or two singles on that 45 minute disque anyway? How else could one hear the brilliant foreign and domestic songs by would-be pop stars and bands who vanish into oblivion before an LP can be produced? Hence Lesa Griffith (and whoever else) will bring you an inconsistent column of 12" reviews noting what's hot and what's not, back and forth across time and whatever strikes their fancy.

THE SMITHS - "What Difference Does It Make?" (Rough Trade): The latest British press darlings, this foursome from Manchester live up to expectations on their third single to date. The Smiths play "real instruments" and like many current groups, there is a definite 60's influence, but they mold it into something they can call their own. I detest comparing bands, but to give you an idea of what this mesmerizing song sounds like, the guitar has that lilting, picked quality found in the Pretenders' "Back on the Chain Gang" but in no way are these bands alike. It is a rather monotonous song, setting a mood instead of a quick three minute tale of love or politics. Singer Morrissey's voice carries one along his lyrics of indifferent heartbreak with a blase tone: "So what difference does it make?/it makes none/but you have gone/and your prejudices won't keep you warm tonight." This tune is a must in an age of throw-away pop. Their first album will soon be following. -LG

MARILYN - "Calling Your Name" (Phonogram): Oh Marilyn, you live up to your name, but where will you be tomorrow? Peter Robinson borrowed the name from the famous M.M., and like her has a pleasant voice but nothing to match his friend and rival Boy George. This is an example of the aforementioned throw-away pop but it is such a pleasing, singable song, ingeniously produced and extended by Langer and Winstanley, the makers of Madness. It has that vague Motown feel, for lack of a better description of black pop, and Marilyn looks delicious dancing to it. -LG

THE STYLE COUNCIL - "A Solid Bond In Your Heart" (Polydor): The brilliant Style Council (bias? what bias?) return to the more exuberant sounds of their

first single "Speak Like A Child" on this one. Resounding piano, saxophone and orchestrated background mix with Paul Weller's strong, biting voice to celebrate young ideal love: "Feel is a word I can't explain/At least not in words that are plain/That make it easy to express/But I'll try to do my best to hit you where it counts." Quite silly really, but he just sounds so serious about it. It convinced me. -LG

MALCOLM X/Music by KEITH LeBLANC - "No Sell Out" (Tommy Boy): With the growing trend in socially conscious rap records, former Sugarhill Records staff drummer Keith LeBlanc has come up with a new twist. Using various speeches by assassinated Black Nationalist leader Malcolm X, he combines the hip hop, state of the art electronic beat box rhythms to create one of the most unusual 12" discos of last year. The punchy electronics and the blunt, challenging directness of lines like "If you're afraid to tell the truth, why you don't even deserve freedom," breath new life into thought provoking dance music. Highly recommended. -VS

AFRIKA BAMBATAA AND SOUL SONIC FORCE - "Renegades of Funk" (Tommy Boy): The full color "Marvel" comic book cover makes the Soul Sonic Force look like the "A" Team of hip hop culture. Perhaps they are. Musically it's similar to last year's hit "Looking for the Perfect Beat" except there are two different vocal versions. "Renegade Chant" is the more interesting, using New Orleans creole chanting similar to the Wild Tchaptoulas. Tommy Boy mixes are now starting to sound less like they're coming out of a telephone, but I've come to expect more from the father of the Zulu Nation. -VS



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Independently Speaking

by Gary Chun and Victor Sam



The Moderns - SERVE AND PROTECT (Imaginary): Despite the blase monicker and rather muddy recording, this cassette contains a solid side of power pop (the other side can be used for recording your own favorites). You can hear a bit of The Police ("On the Beach") and Rush ("I've Got A Secret"), but this trio sounds original enough that I look for better things to happen to this band. An impressive outing...but the name has got to go! -GC

Men & Volts - HOOTERSVILLE (Eat): Capt. Beefheart meets Tom Waits. Music with a goofy smile on its face. They laugh like crazy and sing what they see through their cracked rose-colored glasses. Another kindred spirit of theirs is Harry Nilsson. The Men even do a slowed-down, more maniacal version of "Lime in the Coconut." An original, "Red Hair Girl," should be a minor classic in a couple of years. As the lyrics say, she's a great combination! a wonderful mixture! a grand concoction! So's this record. Get happy and visit HOOTERSVILLE. -GC

Vinny - OLAS DE SEXO (Eat): The best-sounding album of this month's stock, recorded at The Cars' Boston studio and co-produced by drummer David Robinson. Ralph Fatello leads his band through sleek electronic heartbreak tunes and drum-filled jaunts to the beach. A lot of good ideas that, over an album's length, just don't mesh together well. -GC

The Visible Targets - AUTISTIC SAVANT (Park Avenue): The best and most original sister act from Seattle since the Wilsons of Heart. This is their second EP and with prime production help from Mick Ronson (guitarist who toured with such luminaries as David Bowie, Ian Hunter and Bob Dylan), their sound is so confident and emotionally powerful that it makes this record a "must listen" for anyone who takes rock music seriously. Laura, Pamela and Rebecca Johnson, along with drummer Ron Simmons, have been staples on the Pacific Northwest scene for several years now. Although Laura, I think, does most of the lead vocals (Pamela plays guitar, Rebecca bass), the three harmonize on the great chorus of the title track and play off each other instrumentally with the expected sympathy found amidst close siblings. There's a certain degree of objective coolness in their delivery that heightens the drama of their carefully wrought tales of "abnormal objectivity" (as autism is defined). By the way, this is great dance music, too. -GC

The Golden Palominos - THE GOLDEN PALOMINOS (Celluloid): The Golden Palominos were probably the most critically acclaimed "No Wave" avant-funk band of last year. Lead by drummer Anton Fier (formerly of Pere Ubu) and guitarist Arto Lindsay (formerly of DNA), the band performs with a variety of "all star session" players including Bill Laswell and Michael Beinhorn from Material, Jamaaladeen Tacuma and others. This, their first album, is not as danceable as I would have expected but it's certainly challenging music in terms of textures and moods. The state of the art production and streetwise input from co-producer Laswell leads me to believe that this would be THE band to see if one had the opportunity to visit New York City. -VS

PART SIX - REGGAE: RUB-A-DUB

In 1979 rockers relinquished its crown to a new style of reggae, rub-a-dub, also called dance hall style. Again, as with rockers, the innovations took place at Channel One Recording Studio, but this time the innovators were relative newcomers to the Kingston recording circuit, namely producers Hyman Wright and Henry "Junjo" Lawes, and the band Roots Radics.

They developed a new hard hitting sound characterized by a drumming style with the main four beats played on the bass drum, sounding very much like American funk syncopations. The sound was quite different from rockers, the bass and drums were mixed way up front, while the top line instruments beeped in the background. Aurally, the end result was essentially a song being sung over a near-dub mix, hence the name rub-a-dub. If you listen to "Bounty Hunter" (Jah Life) by Barrington Levy, you can see why. This record is probably the first with that rub-a-dub mix. It also marked the debut of the Roots Radics band and producer Hyman Wright.

Rub-a-dub proved immensely popular and triggered a sort of renaissance of reggae, which in 1979 seemed quite stagnant. This was the sound of young Jamaica, the pulse of the ghetto youth. The dance halls, after a long period of violence, were once again packed. Most of the new singers and deejays nurtured their talents with the mega-sound systems in the dance halls.

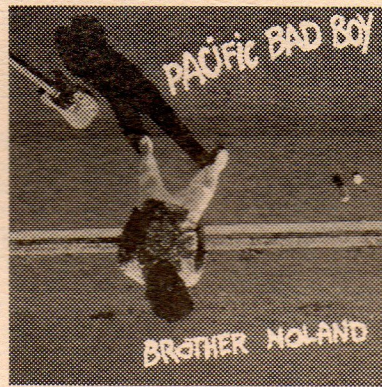
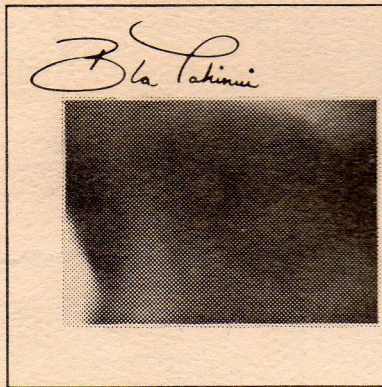
The new riddims in the dance halls became strickly rub-a-dub, but they were mostly familiar and well-loved ones despite being dressed in new threads. Many of these riddims were popular over fifteen years ago in the heyday of rock-steady, so some of them could now be well into their fiftieth incarnation. This may sound boring and terribly repetitious to some of you, but repetition (with variation) is precisely what the Jamaican reggae fan loves. In this way, reggae continually draws from its glorious past, perpetuating a self-imposed and popularly sanctioned orthodoxy.

At the same time, that innovative drum and bass duo of the great rockers band, the Revolutionaries, Sly and Robbie, were busy experimenting with sonic inventions of their own. When working with other, usually more conservative producers, they stuck to the basic rub-a-dub format laced with their own sonic embellishments. But on their self-productions, they seem to forget the meaning of conservatism and let loose with the wildest and funkiest sounds to emanate from Jamaica, or for that matter, anywhere else. They combine several international influences (mostly funk) to create a thick brew of pulsating dance music. Sly and Robbie's riddimic creations could very well be called "techno-reggae." But with careful listening, you'll realize that even they respect that orthodoxy. Underneath the weaved layers of synthesizers, guitars, keyboards and percussion, lurks that relentless backbeat of the drums and bass, so typically Jamaican and assertively roots.

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